

## On Life In The Sudan

By Bayyinah Sharrieff

If one who is visiting a country, or a people, wants to be comfortably accepted in and by that country or people, that one must blend in with the people of that country and become a member of that society. One must show (exhibit) the same social and moral habits as the native occupants of that country.

**WHEN I WENT** to the Republic of the Sudan my intentions were to blend into that society and as a student, be accepted as a member of that society.

The peoples within the Sudan look very much like my people (the Black man) here in America. They range in color from Black to very light. Their hair ranges also in texture from very wooly to near straight. I could therefore blend in appearance with the people, but I had a problem within myself adjusting to the moral customs and social habits of the peoples of the Sudan.

The women in the Sudan wear a wrap of 10 yards of fabric called the Tobe. This tobe is worn over a dress with short sleeves with a gathered, pleated or a-line skirt which reaches down pass the knees to near the ankles. The Tobe is worn whenever a female leaves her home, and whenever she is in the company of men, or in a position to be seen by men. I, being born and raised in the American society, first thought it was senseless to have to go through what I termed trouble and unnecessary bother to cover up myself before going in the presence of men.

After being in the Sudan a few weeks, my female colleagues told me that the clothing I had brought with me from America was not the clothing of a decent woman in the Sudan. And, that if I continued to wear them, I would be classified automatically as a prostitute. Think about this: The clothing that I wore was just common shirt dresses without sleeves. All of the women of America would be considered prostitutes by their dresses alone if viewed by the peoples of the Sudan. And as I became more acquainted with my own peoples in Asia, I learned that this was already their opinion.

I naturally did not want to be classified as a prostitute, I wanted to blend into that society as I stated above. I adjusted my garments to their level of decency.

**I WAS** an American Black product, black on the outside with a white subconscious on the inside. I patterned myself after those in authority, the white race, and looked to the white college student, business and career woman as a means for me to guide my social behaviour. In my conscious mind I was a Black woman wanting to learn more about my black kind and had turned my attention from the white institutions of higher learning to Black institutions for higher learning. This is why I went to the Sudan, but then my subconscious brought forth many ways which were like the whites I was turning from. That was because I was born and raised in America and knew no better.

I pray that the readers of this article think about what I have just stated: Black consciousness but white subconsciousness. This in reality is where the larger percentage of my so-called "Black Power," and "Black Nationalist" Brothers and Sisters are now.

to be continued...