

On Life

By Bayyinah Sharrieff

One of the first facets of life in the Republic of the Sudan which I observed and subconsciously studied was the female. Being that I was forced to spend most of my time with females in the girls' hostel at the University of Khartoum, Sudan, I watched them very closely. I wanted to see if their outward appearance of calmness and security was real.

~~I COULD NOT believe at that~~ time that the woman in Islam was content, not dating and mixing with men as she appeared to be. Most of my time was spent with the university students and they passed their time studying and conversing among themselves. Occasionally they would go to the cinema, but when they did it was in one large group and they all sat together in the reserved seats for the female students.

When they walked outside of their homes and the hostel before the public their postures were straight and tall, their eye serious. They would avoid any types of conversation which would make them laugh or cause them to let down their guard in public.

They did not walk slowly, but quickly to their destinations. They did not linger around store fronts. I do not remember seeing one of them run on the street. If they passed a man on the street they would glance down so as not to look in the man's face. Many of the women would pick up their tobés, which covered

their hair, and bring the cloth across their faces. If they saw a man looking in their direction, so that the man could not see their faces.

They did not go out of their compounds much except perhaps to the market place with a male relative to select cloth and shoes, or the like. They did not go to buy their own groceries alone. Their husband, son or a male relative or house helper would buy the groceries and produce which she would need for her family.

THE SLOWEST that I saw any of them walk was on the campus when changing classes. Of course when they were together they were at ease and relaxed. It was here that I realized femininity. I saw grace in the movements of the Muslim woman when she was within the wall. Her care to her person was a wonder to my eye and I realized the beauty of cleanliness, bathing three times a day, not to mention their preparation for prayer, and washing the hair at least once a week, often twice.

The joy of pleasing others: this is what the Muslim woman wants. I saw this in the Sudan. If they could cause a smile to come on the face of another, pleasure then joy would be seen in their eyes. This was peace. They were very particular about

their garments. The folds in their tobés (national dress) had to be just right.

They were shy about their persons—even those who were tall and had heavy frames. They knew their duty was to please. Their smile was a cherished charm which they did not display openly in public to strangers. It was relished in the family. I used to wonder why my female colleagues did not smile or laugh in public. They would become angry with me if I tried to make them laugh in public.

Now that I am a follower of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, I have an understanding of why my female colleagues looked down when passing a male in public, even one of their own colleagues. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad points out in the Holy Qur-an 24:31 . . .

“ . . . say to the Believing women that they lower their gaze . . . and do not display their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers or the fathers of their husbands . . . ”

These are universal teachings of Islam. Had these students looked into the man's face they would be heavily criticized by their society and not respected as a decent woman.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad has special training classes for the woman in Islam to teach them the knowledge of their true selves: their actions and attitudes which correspond to being the comfort to the original man and their offspring.

Those in the Islamic society in the Republic of the Sudan had not been exposed to any practices other than their own which were based on the teachings of decency (Islam). I being one in their society was forced to take on their practices for I was outnumbered. This was not difficult for I was not allowed to do anything which they did not do and after submitting to their practices I appreciated them and appreciated learning how to be myself (feminine).

THE REMARKABILITY of the teachings of decency of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad is that those who follow him are in the minority. The Majority are doing other than what the world respects in the line of decency. Yet his followers are standing tall trying in the midst of this filth to be upright.

I know that his teachings are universally in accord with Islam for I have been to the Sudan and Egypt in the Muslim community a total of 23 months and have seen the respected woman in Islam. All praises are due to Allah (God) for raising “ . . . a Messenger from among you (Black man) who purifies you and teaches you the book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know” (Holy Qur-an 2:151): “and guides you into all truth” (John 16:13).