

**By Bayyinah Sharrieff**

With references to a letter written by Mrs. Sandra D. Suliman of Washington, D.C. dated July 16, 1968 and printed in the August 16, 1968 issue of this newspaper, **Muhammad Speaks**, regarding life in the Sudan: Mrs. Sandra D. Suliman stated that she lived in the Sudan a few months, that her husband has been executive secretary for the Sudan Swimming association; that the people go in the evenings to bathe and swim in the Nile because they are too poor to have the proper bathroom facilities, and that there is no ban on Muslim Sudanese joining the various clubs in the Sudan.

**I BELIEVE** that Mrs. Suliman was writing primarily of life in the capital city of Khartoum, Sudan.

I would like to point out that there are two distinct separate groups in Khartoum. The main and dominate one is the Muslim Sudanese society. The other is a combination of foreigners and Christians (whites and "uncle toms"). I am a Muslim, this paper is made possible by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, our Leader and Teacher. In this article I write primarily of the Muslim Sudanese society, not of the foreign community in the Sudan.

I have lived as a student, a Sudanese, and a foreigner in the Sudan for twenty-two months. And, I have associated with both Muslim and non-Muslim Sudanese for approximately nine years.

**MRS. SULIMAN** mentioned that the people go swimming off of the Mugrin (the junction of the Blue and White Nile rivers). No one in their right mind would swim at the Mugrin, for this is the junction of two very swift moving bodies of water. I do believe that Mrs. Suliman was a little confused to state that one can see people swimming at the Mugrin. The boat to which Mrs. Suliman refers in her open letter to the Editor does not dock at the Mugrin due to the same reason.

During my stay in the Sudan, I saw two southern Sudanese who were neither Christian nor Muslim, but pagans, washing off along the steep walls of the reinforced Nile banks. To see them, one had to go over to the edge of this wall and look down. One seldom, if ever, sees people

bathing or swimming in the Nile at Khartoum. Mrs. Suliman did point out one reason for this as being the strong undercurrents. However there is the possibility that a crocodile might have come up from the south, which does happen occasionally, and there is a fish in the Nile which gives electric shocks which can paralyze a swimmer.

True Muslim Sudanese will not lower and disgrace themselves in the public by making an open show of themselves in the manner which swimmers do on beaches in America and Europe.

**IT IS** true that many of the people in the Sudan are poor, materialistically, when compared to those of western societies, but they are not so poor that they have to bathe in the Nile due to inadequate bathroom facilities. Every Muslim Sudanese home no matter how poor has a shower. They are very clean people and bathe two and three times a day.

The membership of the Sudanese Swimming association which Mrs. Suliman mentions in her letter comprises of foreigners and Sudanese men who have been educated in Europe or America. They usually bring back foreign wives. This club was created to bring some of their practices of sport and play from the western to the Muslim Sudanese society. The families of these Sudanese men are not content with their son's actions, and many of them cut off communications with their sons for these reasons. The only females who are members of this association are Christians and foreigners. If Mrs. Suliman will examine the membership of this association she will see that what I have stated here is true.

**ECONOMICALLY**, the Sudan is not controlled by the Greeks, as stated by Mrs. Suliman. We must admit that the Greeks and the Indians own the larger percentage of the businesses, but the Sudan economically is dependant primarily on England and America.

Mrs. Suliman is gravely mistaken if she believes that any

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## On Life In

## The Sudan

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Sudanese can join these separate clubs (Italian, Greek, American, etc.). She is evidently not aware of the fact that even if an American is married to a Sudanese that, that Sudanese cannot come to the American club, even to watch a movie, or go swimming with their marriage partners!

That only those who are citizens of that respective country can join the clubs of that country. Mrs. Suliman mentioned an Arab club. How many Sudanese Muslim women did she find there? Very few I am sure. No Muslim Sudanese family will permit their daughter to go to these clubs.

I advise Mrs. Suliman to go

and see more of the Sudanese life before making such statements. The Muslim Sudanese women do not go out at night unless they are with their husbands, or a male member of their family.

**THERE ARE** Sudanese women many of whom I studied with at the university who will verify that which I have written in this newspaper column as being Truth. They have read these articles and have yet to say that I have "colored the truth a little." If I am not mistaken, I believe that I met Mrs. Suliman when I was in the Sudan. She did not stay in the Sudan very long. At that time I was known by the slave name of Christine Wilson.

## Letters From Our Readers

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This column is an open forum for all viewpoints or comments on subjects of general interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. No unsigned letter will be considered, however, names may be withheld upon request. The opinions expressed are entirely those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the outlook or policy of Muhammad Speaks.*

### Reader Gives Added Highlights to Accounts of 'Life in the Sudan'

Dear Sir:

First of all, I wish to congratulate the author of the article "Life in the Sudan." To those who would know nothing about the country, I am sure it is enlightening.

**MY HUSBAND** is Sudanese and I lived there for a few months. I have several Sudanese friends here in Washington who are attending school and working at the embassy.

As you probably know, there are two Niles. The White Nile and the Blue Nile. The two join in Khartoum and continue on throughout most of Africa. Where the two Niles join together in Khartoum, there is a lovely park called the "Mogrun" where people go with their families during the evenings and twice a week the different bands will play music, after dark.

There are many tables and chairs where one could sit and there are waiters around to serve drinks (whisky, lemonade, punch, etc.).

My husband has been, for many years, executive secretary for the Sudanese Swimming Association and they have a large boat, much like the Mississippi

river boats, that is used as their headquarters. This boat sits in the Nile right off the Mogrun and many of the members fish and dive off of it.

**IN THE EVENING** one can see people going to the banks of the Nile to bathe and swim. In the Arabic Muslim Religion its believers are to keep themselves very clean, washing their bodies in a certain way. Many people are poor and there are many who are not so poor but do not

have proper bathroom facilities.

These people will go to the Nile to bathe themselves. All along the Nile one can see people swimming from time to time and there is nothing to prohibit it except the danger of undercurrents but many people brave this and go into its waters anyway.

In no way would the people think it "filthy" to cleanse themselves or enjoy a swim so I do honestly feel that the author has colored the truth a little.

**AS FAR** as the private clubs of different nationalities, this is true. The author failed to mention that economically the country, for the most part, is controlled by the Greeks as are most Arab countries. In the Sudan the people are free to mingle and mix with whomever they choose and it just goes to prove that we all seek our own. It was probably the Greek; and the British who started this trend and as others came they continued it but there is no bar to people of other nationalities joining.

The Greeks are a cloistered bunch and are not liked, at all, by the Sudanese and there is the

possibility of them not letting other nationalities joining but because of the Greek-Sudanese situation, I kind of doubt this. One thing the author failed to mention is that there is a very beautiful Arab Club there also.

**IN THE SUDAN** almost all buildings, houses, clubs, many offices, etc., are surrounded by walls. This is an Arab tradition. In most Arab countries they are there to protect the females from the eyes of men and to keep out thieves. In the Sudan they are mainly there to give privacy and keep out thieves.

The majority of the women have keys to the gates so that they may go and come and at night or when the car is not

driven it is locked inside for protection. Inside most of these walls are lovely gardens and it's a type of courtyard, as we know it. No one in the Sudan would consider building a house or small business without building a wall around it.

It is a way of life, so I could hardly expect the different clubs to do otherwise.

One must understand that in the Sudan one of the greatest pleasures is privacy and the walls provide this, plus allow its inhabitants to maintain a very precious way of life.

**THERE IS** a famous author here, working in his foreign service at the Sudanese Embassy and I have spoken to him about this article as being quite favorable to the Sudanese people and he will be sending out for a paper today. There is the possibility that he may write you.

My husband's father is an author and it may be that he would contribute articles to your paper. If you like you may write him at:

Mr. Mohamed Suliman  
c/o Abassya Postal Agency  
Omdurman, Sudan

Thank you for the time you took to read this letter.

Sincerely yours,  
Sandra D. Suliman

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# Magnificence

