

Says Mr. Muhammad Tends 'Garden of Allah' Preparing Black Man's Future

By Abdul Basit Na'eem

I stated in my column last week that "for several months I have been spending a rather excessive amount of time clipping important and interesting items from a variety of American magazines stacked on my home library shelves . . ."

ANOTHER activity that has recently taken up a good bit of my time (and energy) is gardening — a childhood hobby that has never ceased to fascinate me.

The backyard of our present residence (in Brooklyn, N.Y.) is hardly suitable for gardening. It is extremely small in area, and right in the middle of it stands a tree which allows little sunshine to reach and nourish ground foliage.

The soil, too, is poor, mixed as it is with generous proportions of coal dust, ashes, concrete components and bits of discarded bottles and cans. In spite of it all, ever since the last visible traces of winter disappeared I have been putting in several hours each morning "puttering around" with a shovel, pitchfork and rake.

ORIGINALLY, I intended to plant a few flowering an-

nials — African daisies, marigolds, morning glories, verbena, snapdragons and zinnias — and some vegetables (peppers, radishes and tomatoes). A couple of weeks ago I decided to add a small number of hybrid rose bushes (which are perennials) to my little garden.

This brought a quick comment from one of my older children: "Rose bushes require extra care as well as special 'food.' Yet they'll produce only a handful of flowers this summer but many more in 1968 and the years after. We won't be here then to see them."

"True, it does seem sort of extravagant," I told my son, "but why look at the matter from an entirely selfish point of view? Even if we can't fully enjoy the result of our present effort, isn't it likely that others who will later occupy this house would appreciate it? Besides, you know that I consider gardening a source of relaxation, a respite from reading, writing and related pursuits."

I AM NOT sure whether my words made an impression upon my son. However, reflecting on the episode did somehow turn my own mind in the direction of another

and infinitely more interesting and noteworthy "garden" — the NATION OF ISLAM in America.

"A 'garden' indeed, the NATION OF ISLAM is," I said to myself — silently but fully believing in the validity of my assumption.

Then I thought: "Now — imagine the hard work put in by the noble and gentle tender of that garden!"

"Yes, imagine the grave perils and serious hardships experienced over the years by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad," I continued to coax and challenge myself.

"HERE IS a 'gardener' who has had to face innumerable, real obstacles and difficulties — first in caring for the 'seeds' (initial members of the Muslim movement) and then in keeping the seedlings apart from potentially harmful 'weeds' (i.e., so-called 'Negro' members of the white-devised and white-dominated Christian church) and simultaneously guarding them against destruction at the hands of the wicked 'devils' who are by nature averse to beauty and peace (ISLAM)."

Contemplating the Messenger's career a bit more

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Messenger Tends Garden of Black Man's Future

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deeply, I realized, again, that ever since the first "sacred seeds" (of Islam) were sown in this wilderness — by the Almighty God (ALLAH) Himself — the U.S. Muslim leader had known no sustained reprieve from the rigors of his exceptionally arduous task.

FURTHERMORE, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad had evidently never concerned himself with even the thought of "enjoying" the fruit of his labors, knowing

that his mission could not mature "overnight."

Nevertheless all of us can rest completely assured that the said ("Nation of Islam") "garden" WILL in time bring forth a million blossoms and bear abundant ripe fruit.

"Why?" — That's easy to explain: The Honorable Elijah Muhammad is by no means an ordinary, insignificant "gardener" such as I am. The noble Messenger tends a Garden of Allah — the forerunner of a coming paradise-on-earth (black man's "promised land" of