

Clarifies Ali's Status

brought about this decision was, No. 1, he's a national spokesman, and since I came into this position of leadership, I have been asking that we organize here at Chicago so that my office would be as effective and as efficient as we possibly can make it, you see."

In his younger years, Muhammad reportedly twice strayed from the Nation of Islam in favor of "orthodox Islam." When asked if he was steering the Nation in that direction, he answered, "As far as I'm concerned, there is no such thing as orthodox Islam. . . . The Nation of Islam has a book and that book is what we stand upon. That is the Holy Quran. This book is the Bible of Muslims all over the world.

"I don't say that I left the Nation of Islam but I have left my position in the Nation of Islam and gone abroad and studied. I found many Muslims in the so-called orthodox Islamic world who understood the teachings of the Hon. Elijah Muhammad."

Muhammad also cleared up the issue of heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali's standing with the Muslims.

He explained that Elijah suspended Ali because he would not retire from the ring and Elijah opposed "to all white sport and play." But he later reaccepted him. Ali is now recognized as an "unofficial minister."

"He can (officially become a minister) whenever he's ready. . . . I want him to box, but he'll be much greater as a minister."