



## AFRICAN AMERICAN JOURNEY TO ISLAM

For decades, Ahmadi scholars have lamented over the seemingly intentional absence of Ahmadiyya in historical religious discourse and the role Ahmadiyya has played in laying the Islamic foundation of the United States. Likewise, and equally as regrettable, has been the omission of African-American contributions in creating the beautiful tapestry of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. The rich contributions of the African-American who successfully facilitated inroads in uncharted communities are the focus of this ground-breaking exhibit.

.... and they prayed too.

In 1889 a spiritual revolution began that would change the landscape of religion in America and the world. The Ahmadiyya Movement, founded by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, was a reformist movement in Islam. A return to the original tenets of the faith, Ahmadiyya presented an Islam determined to bring humanity together in unity.

In the last decade of the 19th century, most of the world was under the threat of colonialism by the western world and Christian missionaries. Many oppressed peoples found little relief under such



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad  
(Promised Messiah and Mahdi)

advances. The message of peace and equality in Ahmadiyya was very attractive to African-Americans in a post-slavery, reconstruction America.

African-Americans would find religious freedom and spiritual harmony in Ahmad's Messianic Islamic message. Through the suffrage of Black life, Ahmadiyya would offer a message of Divine relief and salvation to those who were considered the least of society. African-Americans would be lifted in this movement and the foundation for Islam in America planted for generations to come.



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*"Ahmadiyya was unquestionably one of the most significant movements in the history of Islam in the United States in the twentieth century." - Islam in the African-American Experience, Richard Brent Turner*

*"Since obedience to the Five Pillars of Islam is the cornerstone of Ahmadiyya rites, their followers were the first African Americans to learn and practice salat (Muslim prayer)." - Black Pilgrimage to Islam, Robert Danin*

*"The first and continues to be the most effective model of a multi-racial community experience for black people in the religion (Islam)." - Islam in the African-American Experience, Richard Brent Turner*

*"Their prolific production of texts and newsletters were valuable assets for the promotion of Islam. The Ahmadi provided a majority of the literature available to all African American Muslim communities." - African American Islam, Aminah Beverly McCloud*

*"Through their proselytizing, Ahmadi missionaries in the United States have had a great impact on the formation of African-American Muslim identity." - Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History, Vol. 1 Edward E. Curtis IV*

*"Ahmadi missionaries played a significant role in the early decades of the century in attacking what they saw as the blatant racism of American society." - Islam in America, Jane I. Smith*

**The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam has been recognized by historians as the most influential Islamic organization and contributor to American Islam. It has been described to have influenced the most dynamic African-American movements while maintaining its focus on spiritual development and its presentation of a multicultural, peaceful and egalitarian Islam.**

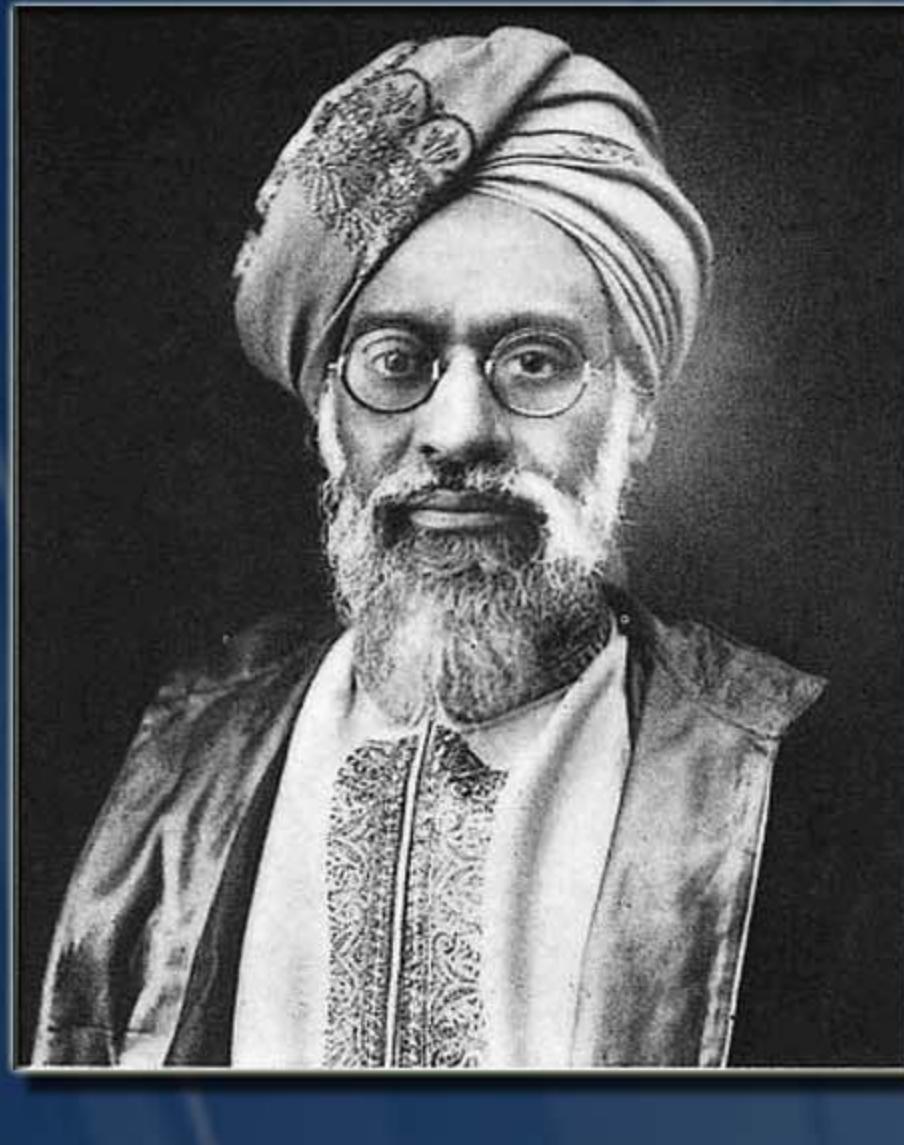
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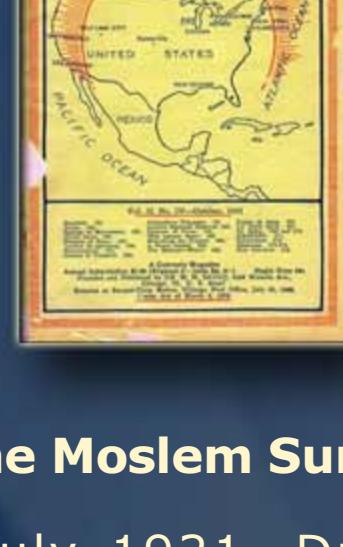


On January 24, 1920, as daybreak settled over London's streets, an elderly, light-brown complexioned man with spectacles boarded the S.S. Haverford bound for America. His dark green and gold turban and his amiable but mysterious manner attracted the attention of several Chinese passengers, to whom he introduced himself as "Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, missionary for the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam". This was the beginning journey of Ahmadiyya coming to America. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq was a companion of the Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. He spent time in London teaching and spreading Islam. Everywhere he landed, he gained new members to join the movement.

**Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq**



Sadiq addressed his ministry through lecturing and writing. During his first year of missionary work in America, he delivered 50 public lectures in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Dowagiac, Sioux City, and Sioux Falls. He wrote dozens of articles to various American periodicals and newspapers. He created and published the Moslem Sunrise, the first American Muslim periodical. During the first 15 months, Sadiq received 4000 inquiries by mail and distributed 15000 leaflets on Islam. One thousand pieces of literature were sent to libraries across the country and information mailed to many celebrities such as Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and then President Warren Harding. He worked in America for less than 3 years, yet, his missionary efforts were unparalleled and started the spiritual revolution, Ahmadiyya in America.



**The Moslem Sunrise**

In July 1921, Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq published the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's first english publication.

In 1922, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq moved the Ahmadiyya American headquarters from Highland Park, Michigan to Wabash Avenue on the south side of Chicago. A converted house served as a mosque and mission house from which the Moslem Sunrise was published. An Islamic dome was constructed by Brother Muhammad Yaqub (Andrew Jacob) to distinguish the building as a Mosque. The Chicago headquarters became the 'Mecca' of Islam in America.



In 1917, the Ahmadiyya Movement provided the first Holy Quran w/ english translation in America.



**Chicago Mosque**  
Chicago, Illinois

**Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq's arrival marked the renaissance of Islam in America. Muslim immigrant communities existed in America but Ahmadiyya brought the earliest Muslim missionaries to America with the purpose of spreading Islam and providing the first Islamic literature and Holy Qurans translated to English. Sadiq arrived in 1921 becoming the first missionary in Islam to actively proselytize Islam in America.**

**Author, Richard Turner describes in his book, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, "Ahmadiyya was unquestionably one of the most significant movements in the history of Islam in the United States in the twentieth century, providing as it did the first multi-racial model for American Islam. The Ahmadis disseminated Islamic literature and converted black and white Americans. They attacked the distortions of Islam in the media, established mosques and reading rooms, and translated the Quran into English".**

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**“Come change your name,  
get back your religion.”**

Sheik Ahmad Din (Preaching from soapbox)



**Madam Rahatullah**  
(Mrs. Garber)

Sadiq's most active female convert and proselytizer in New York was Madame Rahatullah (Mrs. Garber), according to Sadiq, "has been busy in New York and has already secured one American convert and one Muslim to the Ahmadiya order. Madame will start lecturing in New York assisted by Mrs. Emerson (Allahdin)." – Moslem Sunrise, Vol2, 1921



**Brother Hakim**  
(Dr. T. H. Humphreys)



**Brother Omar**  
(Mr. William M. Patton)

"An energetic Moslem trying his best to bring others to the fold of Islam." – Moslem Sunrise, 1922

**St. Louis Post Dispatch**

Published 1922

"In the language of a writer of popular songs, Ahmad Din is the kind of Sheik who does his sheiking once a week. Not before a movie camera, but before a devout group of Negroes, Turks and a sprinkling of Whites, who gather at Sheik Ahmad Din's Moslem Mission at 2658 Olive Street on Sunday nights to hear him preach the doctrine of 'Al ham do lilah rabbil al amen' or 'All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.'"

**Sheik Ahmad Din**  
(P. Nathaniel Johnson)

In 1922, Sheik Ahmad Din led a group of devout Muslims that included African-Americans, Turks and a small number of Whites. An article about Ahmad Din in the St. Louis Post Dispatch reports that he had acquired 100 converts during the first 6 months of his mission in St. Louis.



**Many African-Americans were members of the earliest known Islam-based organization founded by Noble Drew Ali, the Moorish Science Temple of North America. Other organizations included Marcus Garvey's, United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The attraction of Islam by African-Americans was supported by the racial tension of the era. Islam presented a religion without racial inequalities. Mosques were places that Blacks and Whites would be**

**seen praying side by side. Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq said, "There are people fairer than North Europeans living friendly and amiably with those of the darkest skin in India, Arabia and other Asiatic and African countries....In Islam no church has ever had seats reserved for anybody and if a Negro enter first and takes the front seat even the Sultan if he happens to come after him never thinks of removing him from the seat." – The Moslem Sunrise, 1921**

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### Four American Moslem Ladies

Right to left: Mrs. Thomas (Sister Khairat), Mrs. Watts (Sister Zeineb), Mrs. Robinson (Sister Ahmadia), Mrs. Clark (Sister Ayesha)

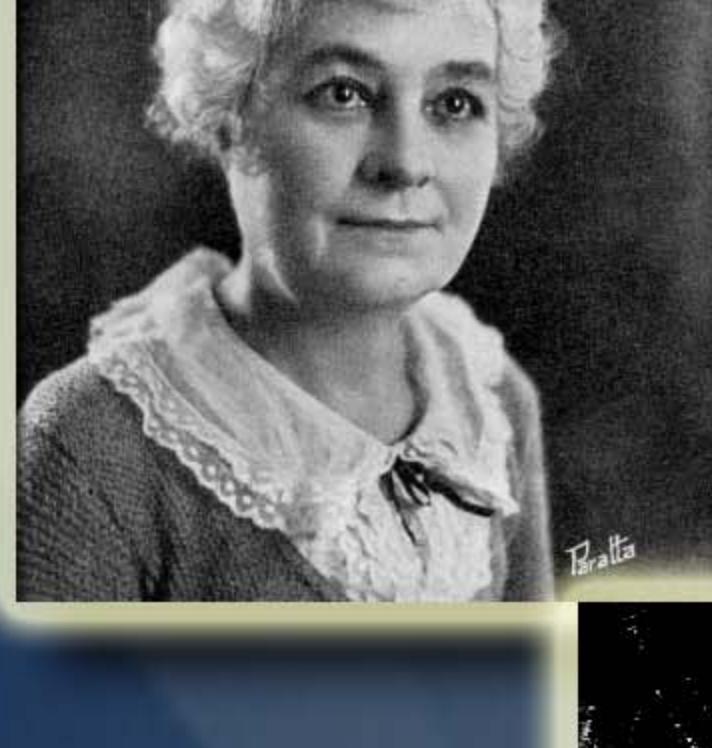
**“The Ahmadis were particularly successful among African Americans, and Ahmadi women in full Islamic dress were among the most visible in the fledgling American Muslim community.” –**

*Muslim Women in America: the challenge of Islamic identity today*



### Sister Aliyya Ali

In 1921, was visiting relatives in Chicago from Kenner, LA. She received a flyer on Islam that was distributed by Mufti Muhammad Sadiq. She went to the Mosque and is considered among the earliest African-Americans.



### Sister Ayesha (Mrs. Augusta Atkinson)

A zealous Ahmadi Moslem lady (of Hermosa Beach, California), who embraced Islam about a year and a half ago. My Allah bless her here and hereafter. (Sadiq, Moslem Sunrise, 1922, vol1.)



### Sister Noor (Mrs. Ophelia Aphant)

An enthusiastic Moslem Lady from St. Louis, Missouri (Moslem Sunrise, 1921 vol 2)

Before the early 1930s, women worked synchronously with the men in developing, teaching and preaching Islam. Among the first to accept and promote Ahmadiyya in America, they worked at the helm of this new spiritual movement. These sisters were the epitome of liberation in a western society where women's rights socially, politically and economically were still being defined. The pioneering spirit of these women were instrumental in the formation of Muslim communities across the country. "In Pittsburgh, the women's auxiliary, Lajna Imaillah (Maid servants of God) was

established. It began with women members coming together in what they called "Sewing Circles". In 1933, Dr. Yusef Khan appointed Sister Aliyyah Muhammad as the women's "Sewing Circle" first president. Many sisters were professional cooks and seamstresses. Their talents inspired beautiful handicrafts and sumptuous meals for fundraising. Meetings were held in sisters' homes where they reviewed lessons on Islam, developed fundraising schemes and socialized. When the name, "Lajna Imaillah," was introduced in the United States in 1936, Sister Aliyyah Muhammad became Lajna's first elected local president in America." – Nycemah Yaqub

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## Crescent Or the Cross?

**A Negro may Aspire to Any Position  
Under Islam Without Discrimination.**

Moslem Sunrise, article excerpt, - Sadiq

### True Salvation of the Negroes

#### The real solution to the Negro Question

My Dear American Negro—Assalaam-o-Alaikum. Peace be with you and the mercy of Allah. The Christian profiteers brought you out of your native lands of Africa and in Chrisitanizing you made you forget the religion and language of your forefathers—which were Islam and Arabic. You have experienced Christianity for so many years and it has proved to be no good. It is a failure. Christianity cannot bring real brotherhood to the nations. So, now leave it alone. And join Islam, the real faith of Universal Brotherhood. We have opened a School of Islam and Arabic Language. Join Islam in the Ahmadi movement founded by Ahmad of India, the Prophet of the day and be blessed.

Moslem Sunrise,

"I saw black people walking past two and three white churches before he dare stop to say his prayers. And I saw white people walking and riding past dozens of black churches before they would stop to say their prayers....The question of color must be erased from the church service..."

Moslem Sunrise, article excerpt, - Sadiq

### "Muhammadanism is the Cure to the Race Problem"

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq

"Just as the UNIA was the Universal Negro Improvement Association with universality in the political sphere, the Ahmadis connected the faithful to a worldwide, multiracial, but 'non-white' religion." - *Islam and the African American Experience*, Richard Turner

"Thus, its global perspective was as expansive as Garvey's and almost as radical in its strategies for the liberation of people of color."

- *Islam and the African American Experience*, Richard Turner

According to Gomez (*Black Crescent*, 2002), "...but, in fact, the group now known as the Nation of Islam was influenced profoundly by the Ahmadiyya..."

- *The End of Empires: African Americans and India*, Gerald Horne

#### Moslem Priest in Chicago Wins 700 to His Faith

"Muhammadanism is the solution of America's race problem", say[s] Dr. Sadiq, now in Paris on his way back to Bombay after converting seven hundred Chicagoans to the Moslem faith. Mixed congregations of white and colored converts mingle without prejudice at the mosque, 4448 S. Wabash avenue, but the Moslem missionary foresees a hot scrap between his people and the Ku Klux Klan.

Moslem Sunrise

**Sadiq continued to support African-Americans in their religious and spiritual development and on occasion addressing the racial issues plaguing America in this new century of freedom. Often urging to African-Americans that Christianity was not a religion of equality, he made a profound statement in his Moslem Sunrise article, 'Crescent or Cross? A Negro May Aspire to Any Position Under Islam Without Discrimination'.**

**Ahmadiyya was the catalyst for the development of other orthodox Muslim (Sunni) and proto-Black movements. Latent in the message of Ahmadiyya was a theological response to imperialism,**

**colonialism and racism and its misappropriation of the tenets of Christianity. Ahmadiyya was viewed as a liberating movement for oppressed peoples, sending missionaries to African nations and America. Its proselytization of a spiritual revolution became the model for change in Black America.**

**As Richard Brent Turner writes about Sadiq, "His impact on American religion during this period, however, cannot be adequately measured by numbers...the Ahmadiyya community published the first Muslim newspaper and the first Quran in English in America – and most of the Islamic literature that would be available to African-Americans until the 1960s."**

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## List of New

## Members:

1921 - 1923

Moslem Sunrise, 1921-1923

Detention House Converts:

Mr. Louis C. Tilford, of British Guiana (Mamoon)  
 Mr. Andrew Mek Gilme, of Jamaica (Saleem)  
 Mr. Lloyd Henry, of Orange River (Hameed)  
 Mr. Joseph Kane, of Poland (Yousaf)  
 Mr. Gueda Cohen, of Russia (Yaqob)  
 Mr. Aetens diz Gare Mesderista, Azores (Hossain)  
 Mr. S. C. Tessolo, of Azores (Ahsan)  
 Mr. Ethen Bodden, of Honduras (Saeed)  
 Mr. Albert Kramer, of Belgium (Mahmood)  
 Mr. Mathew Feizithman, of Germany (Kareem)  
 Mr. Alex Beirnband, of Poland (Haleem)  
 Mr. K. Rossan, of Spain (Saeed)  
 Mr. Florencio Clagas, of Lisbon (Fazal)  
 Mr. Paul Virgne, of Bones Ayres (Karm)  
 Mr. Leopold Orlando, of Italy (Ahmad)  
 Mr. Guaror Victor, of France (Hemeed)  
 Mr. Mario Covarror (Momin)  
 Mr. Selle (Ameen)

S.S. Haverford

Mr. Popovitch, of Bosnia (Noor)  
 Mr. John O'Neill (Yahya)  
 Mr. Wa Hsiang, Chinese  
 Mr. Chang Wan Chut, Chinese  
 Mr. Mu Wen Shu, Chinese  
 Mr. Wang Han Chen, Chinese  
 Mr. Ahmad bin Ali, of Syria

American Converts, 1921

Mr. Robert Bednell, of Greenwich (Abdullah)  
 Miss Elizabeth Barton, a learned lady (Zeineb)  
 Mr. Louis W. Lawyer, of Connecticut  
 Mr. Ralph Totten (Basher)  
 Mr. Harold Johnson, of New York State  
 Mr. John Ammo, of Illinois (Ahmad)  
 Mr. S. A. K. Oroung, of New York (Abdullah)  
 Mr. W. A. Pence, of Canada  
 Mr. Lewis Holt, of Chicago (Fateh Din)  
 Mr. Andrew Jacob, Chicago (Muhammad Yaqob)  
 Miss Green, of Pennsylvania (Freeda)

Mr. P. J. Talmam, of Missouri

Mr. Isidore Lenine, of Ohio (Omar)

Mr. Ellis Russell, of Chicago (Gulam Rasul)

Mr. Joseph Livingston Mott, of Louisiana State

(Shaikh Abdullah Din Muhammad)

Mrs. Calorion Bush (Hameeda)

Mrs. Virginia Olivas (Haleema)

Mrs. Mike Abraham, of Indiana (Hajrah)

Mrs. Louisa Joseph, of Michigan (Zareefah)

Miss Louicelle Fraser, of Michigan (Feeroza)

Mr. Kasey Maroo (Momin)

Mr. Seely (Ameen)

Mr. Lee Hutchinson (Muhammad Ali)

Mr. Moses Johnson (Moosa)

Mr. Mir Ahmad F. L. Andersen (Ist Ahmadi US)

Mr. Islam Zene Chato, of Pennsylvania

Mr. Ilaqad Din Nuri Sodick, of Russia

Mr. Kemal El Quadri, of Indiana

Mr. S. M. Eusoff ben H. G. Akbar, Honduras

Madam Siddica-tun-Nisa Rahatulla (Ella Garber)

Mr. Yaseen Osman, of Milwaukee

Mr. Abraham Hossni, in Pennsylvania

Mr. Othman Karroub

Mr. Subhee Hareeri

Mr. A. L. A. Mustafa

Mr. Hussain Haage, of Michigan

Mr. Muhammad Moshaiikh, of Detroit

Mr. Azeerudin, of Assam

Mr. Ali Sher Khan (Indian)

Mr. Abdul Azeem (Indian)

Mr. Ghulam Ahmad, of Punjab

Mr. L. Roman, of Bengal

Mr. Reched Sveydam, of Sioux Falls

Mr. Shahil Ahmad El Hage, of Sioux Falls

Mr. Ali Muhammad, of Sioux Falls

Mr. Ahmad Es-safa, of Sioux Falls

Mr. Zaidina Hossain, of Sioux Falls

Mr. Kasim Muhammad, of Sioux Falls

Mr. Hussain Hassan, of Sioux Falls

Mr. Abdul Rahman, of Indiana

Mr. Ali, of Kurdistan

Mr. H. Alberto, in Florida (Mubarik)

Mrs. B. Alberto, in Florida (Berket)

Mr. T. Don (Abdur Rashid)

Miss Victoria Soilder (Mrs. Ameen Khader)

Mr. C. C. Cohan, of Butte Montana (Amanullah)

Mr. B. White, of Chicago (Kabirud Din)

Mr. Joe Davis, of Chicago (Ahmad Din)

Mr. Henry Bell, of Chicago (Sirddeek)

Mr. J. H. Durden, of Chicago (Omar)

Mr. Anthony Burkhardt, of New York (Muslim)

Mr. R. R. Torres, of Texas (Abdur-Rahman)

Mr. Henry Hill, of Chicago (Mustaq)

Mr. Edward Bryan Lester, of New York (Islam)

Dr. Charles D. Allen, of Tampa (Hakeem)

Mrs. Francis Russell, of Chicago (Fatima)

Mrs. Anna Jacob, of Chicago (Amina)

Mr. Robert C. Jackson, Mo. (Abou Bekr)

Miss Helen M. Kent, Mo. (Khadeeqa)

Mrs. Fred Carter, Mo. (Omar)

Mr. M. Brooks, Mo. (Osman)

Mr. Edward Shefield, Mo. (Allie)

Mr. Lewis Mitchell, Mo. (Hassan)

Mr. James Black, Mo. (Zobeir)

Mr. Robert Wisdom, Mo. (Khalid)

Mr. James Haliberton, Mo. (Abdullah)

Mr. John Smith, Mo. (Moosa)

Mr. William Coleman, Ohio (Gulam Ahmad)

Mr. Sylvester Stanton, Ill. (Saleem)

Mr. Huston Chamblee, Ill. (Mukhlas)

Mr. J. D. Gibson, MD, W. Va. (Muhammad)

Miss Annie Ackison Shaheen, W. Va. (Sajida)

Miss America Cowford, W. Va. (Aalia)

Mr. Joseph Wm. Reynolds, Mo. (Wall Muhammad)

Mrs. Smiley, Ky. (Ayasha)

Mr. Henri R. Francois, Ill. (Abdul Haf)

Master Francois, Ill. (Abdullah)

Mrs. Amelia Francois, Ill. (Ayesha)

Marguerite M. Francois, Ill. (Omara)

Miss Delfina Segoviano, Pa. (Saleema Saleem)

Hassan bin Hajee Dahell of Java

Mr. W. M. Mansoor

Mr. Howard Cartebs (Hammad)

Mr. Anderson Jackson (Ahmad Jaleel)

Mr. C. Johnson (Jan Mohammad)

Mr. John Santiago (Shamsud Din)

Mr. Olive Pibsoy (Peer Muhammad)

Mr. Virgil Washington (Abdul Wodood)

Mr. Rotherel Mason (Monawar)

Mr. James Mason (Moneer)

Rev. J. D. W. Ross (Abdullah Saifur Rehman)

Mr. John Samson (Jan Muhammad)

Mrs. Emma Wilson (Amanat)

Mr. Lee McGruder (Lutfullah)

Mr. Walter Walker (Muhammad Saleem)

Mr. Janer Hill (Hilmi)

Mr. Troy Logan (Soleman)

Mr. Harvey Fuggens, Ill. (Akram)  
 Mr. Clark King, Ill. (Saeed)  
 Mr. Arthur Rocker, Ill. (Khaer)  
 Mrs. Mary Joseph, Ill. (Saeeda)  
 Mr. Henry Douglas, Ill. (Amjad)  
 Miss Lena R. Gardner, Ill. (Janat)  
 Mr. Jeff Wallen, Ill. (Ahmad)  
 Mr. Colonial Dugger, Ill. (Nasirah)  
 Mr. James Buchanan, Ill. (Hidar)  
 Mr. Saeul W. Rhyne, Ill. (Ally)  
 Mr. Raymond Haliday, Ill. (Omar)  
 Mr. P. Nathaniel Johnson, Mo. (Sheik Ahmad Din)  
 Mr. J. w. Rubin, Ill. (Abdur Rahman)  
 Mr. Elmore Taylor, Ill. (Abdul Jaleel)  
 Mr. John Brooks, Ill. (Abdul Raheem)  
 Mr. Harry Brown, Ill. (Akbar)  
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 Mr. Joseph Carbin Davis, Ill. (Abdullah)  
 Mrs. Adder Walter, Ill. (Fatima)  
 Mr. Jose Clarence White, Ill. (Ahmad)  
 Mr. Joe Zahra, Mich. (Selma)  
 Mr. Alfred Carbin, Ill. (Abdul Raheem)  
 Mr. John Brooks, Ill. (Abdul Raheem)  
 Mr. Harry Brown, Ill. (Akbar)  
 Mr. Joseph Carbin, Ill. (Abdullah)  
 Mr. Alfred Lemons, Mo. (Adam)  
 Mrs. P. Nathaniel Johnson, Mo. (Fatima)  
 Mr. Alexander Walker, Ill. (Shafee)  
 Mr. S. F. Ruffin, Mo. (Laeg)  
 Mrs. Ida Redding, Mo. (Hafsa)  
 Mrs. James H. Emmanuel, Mo. (Hafeez)  
 Mr. Will Sims, Mo. (Jaahid)  
 Mrs. Argelia Carter, Mo. (Salika)  
 Mr. O. B. Swain, Mo. (Aziz Ahmad)  
 Mr. Joe Campbell, Mo. (Muhammad)  
 Mrs. Sarah L. Stickney, Mich. (Safeeah)  
 Mrs. H. Carr, Mich. (Naema)  
 Mr. William McSwain, Ill. (Usman)  
 Miss Hatie Huford, Ill. (Sikenna)  
 Mrs. Florence Watts, Ill. (Zeineb)  
 Mr. Isom Harold, Ill. (Rashed)  
 Mr. Hohn Wesley Avant, Mo. (Hasan)  
 Mr. Alex James, Mo. (Hossain)  
 Mr. Douglass Gaines, Mo. (Ahsan)  
 Mr. Lewis Graham, Mo. (Insan)  
 Mr. W. M. Fields, Mo. (Haemek)  
 Mr. J. H. Humphries, Mo. (Hakim)  
 Mr. Chas. Williams, Mo. (Kamil)  
 Mr. Demon Draper, Ill. (Habeeb)  
 Mr. Bessie Porter, Ill. (Barkat)  
 Mr. Jess McNair, Ill. (Mobarik)  
 Mrs. F. Robinson, Ill. (Ahmadiyah)  
 Mr. George Malow, Chicago (Amjad)  
 Mr. John Wilson (Majid)  
 Mr. Edward Rupert Myert (Majeed)  
 Mr. Eliphan Standard (Ishad)  
 Mr. I. W. Silber, St. Louis (Ismael)  
 Mr. Isaac Robertson (Aaqil)  
 Mr. Zack Merimelker (Sawbit)  
 Mr. George Malow, Chicago (Amjad)  
 Mr. John Wilson (Majid)  
 Mr. Edward Rupert Myert (Majeed)  
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 Mr. I. W. Silber, St. Louis (Ismael)  
 Mr. Zack Merimelker (Sawbit)  
 Mr. Samuel Diab (Bashieh)  
 Mr. Joseph Williams (Mamoon)  
 Mr. William D. Harris (Mobashir)  
 Mr. Asa Hicks (Seed)  
 Mrs. Virginia Powell (Habeeba)  
 Mrs. Joice Edwards (Ameena)  
 Mrs. Eliza Diap (Amina)  
 Mrs. Jessie Bowman, Detroit (Jannat)  
 Mr. Arthur Johnus (Noor-ud-Din)  
 Mrs. Effie Smith (Alefah)  
 Mr. Joseph Johnson (Habeeb-ur-Rahman)  
 Miss Sadie Thompson, Detroit (Saadee)  
 Mr. John Jackson, Ill. (Naema)  
 Mrs. Parabed Thomas, Ill. (Khaireen)  
 Mrs. B. G. Sullivan, Ill. (Burkut)  
 Mr. Henry Kimball, Ill. (Hamid)  
 Mr. Jenno Colb, Ill. (Muhammad)  
 Mr. Elijah Smith, Ill. (Muhammad)  
 Mrs. Anna Brown, Ill. (Hameeda)  
 Mr. Allen Brown, Ill. (Ahmad)  
 Mr. Robert Marshall, Ill. (Hameeda)  
 Mr. Milton Diamond, Mo. (Ahmad)  
 Mr. Thomas F. Glenn, of Chicago (Abdul Kareem)  
 Miss Irene Lero, of Reading, Ohio (Enver)  
 Mr. John Keel, of Chicago (Yahya)  
 Mr. Adam Jackson, Ill. (Ahmad)  
 Miss Nicie Jackson, Ill. (Naema)  
 Mrs. Mary Smith, Ill. (Mariam)  
 Mr. Tom Taylor, Ill. (Abdullah)  
 Mr. William Proctor, Ill. (Abdur Rahman)  
 Mr. Pricill Brooks, Ill. (Raheema)  
 Mrs. V. C. Clark, Ill. (Ayesha)  
 Mr. William Youm, Ill. (Muhammad Yar)  
 Mr. Edward Seymour, Mo. (Yawsen)  
 Mr. A. Hamilton, Mo. (Yehya)  
 Mr. Joseph Churchill, Ill. (Abdul Hamid)  
 Mr. Simon Buford, Ill. (Abdul Sattar)  
 Mr. Harry Coley, Ill. (Sadeek)  
 Mr. Sam Weston, Ill. (Habeeb)  
 Mr. Harrison Bradley, Ill. (Asim)  
 Mr. George F. Crawley, Ill. (Abdus-Sameea)  
 Mrs. Lillian Bradley, Ill. (Ismael)  
 Mr. L. Coleman, Ill. (Abdul Ahad)  
 Mr. J. Walter Pleasant, Ill. (Abdul Qayyum)  
 Mr. Henry H. Brooks, Ill. (Abdul)  
 Mr. Arthur Gayles, Ill. (Khalid)  
 Mr. Adam Williams, Ill. (Adam)  
 Mr. Clarence Earls, Ill. (Abdul Kareem)  
 Mr. Anderson Doolittle, Ill. (Hakeem)  
 Mr. Wilson Branch, Ill. (Kareem)  
 Mr. Dewey Lucas, Ill. (Sabit)  
 Mr. Harry Coley, Ill. (Sadeek)  
 Mr. Sam Weston, Ill. (Habeeb)  
 Mr. Robert Marshall, Ill. (Abdul)  
 Mr. J. W. Dams, Ill. (Swabit)  
 Mr. Anderson Doolittle, Ill. (Hakeem)  
 Mr. Wilson Branch, Ill. (Kareem)  
 Mr. Dewey Lucas, Ill. (Sabit)  
 Mr. Harry Coley, Ill. (Sadeek)  
 Mr. Sam Weston, Ill. (Habeeb)  
 Mr. Edward Flint, Ill. (Dado)  
 Miss Margaret Clark, Ill. (Raheema)  
 Mrs. Willi Carswell, Ill. (Savjeda)  
 Mr. Laurel Carswell, Ill. (Abdul Waly)  
 Mrs. Evalina Johnson, Ill. (Hadya)  
 Miss Jamie Johnson, Ill. (Alema)  
 Miss Louella Johnson, Ill. (Aleema)  
 Mr. Charles Patterson, Ill. (Fanz)  
 Mrs. Hattie Armstead, Ill. (Shafeeqa)  
 Miss Ethel Churchill, Ill. (Nafeesa)  
 Mr. James Nobis, Ill. (Abdul Jaleel)  
 Mr. George Officer, Ill. (Abdul Azeem)  
 Mr. Ben Terry, Ill. (Saim)  
 Mr. John B. Winkley, Ill. (Abdul Rasheed)  
 Mr. David Flint, Ill. (Dado)  
 Miss Margaret Clark, Ill. (Raheema)  
 Mrs. Willi Carswell, Ill. (Savjeda)  
 Mr. Laurel Carswell, Ill. (Abdul Waly)  
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 Miss Margaret Clark, Ill. (Raheema



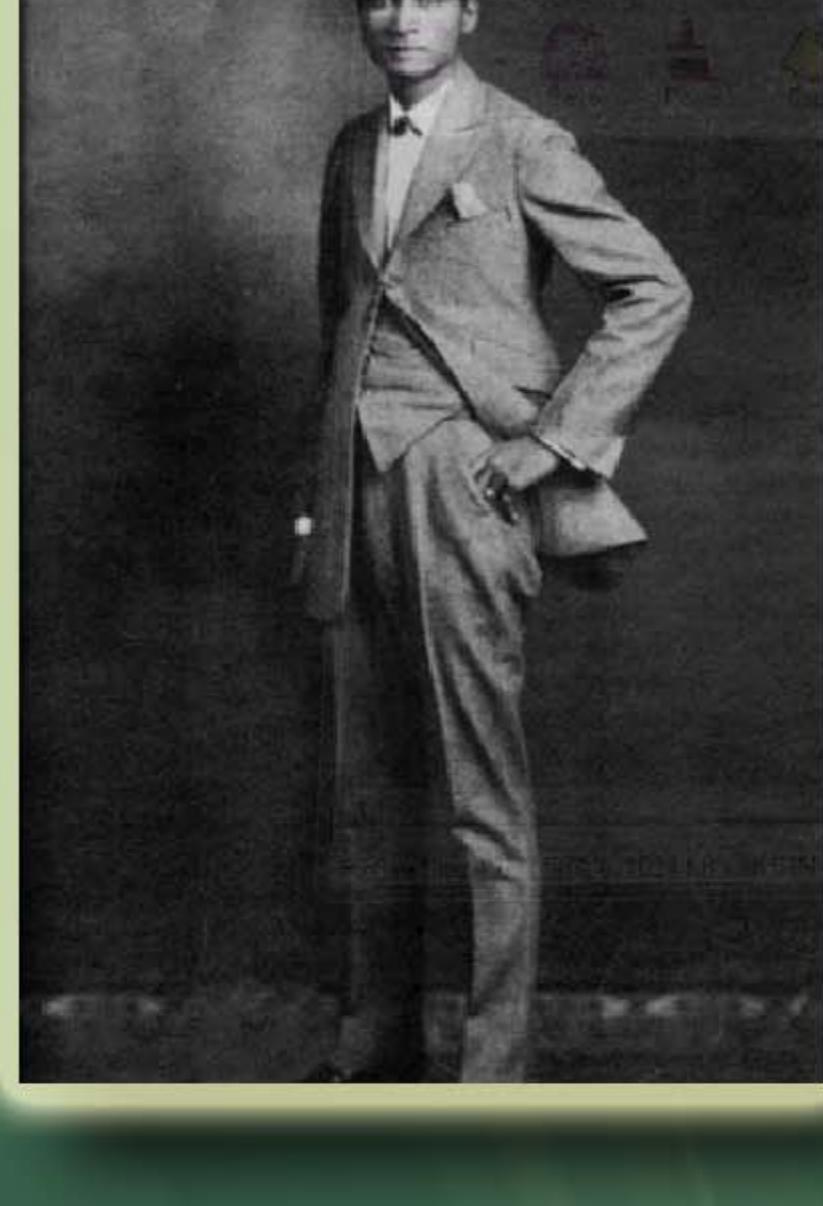
In 1930, Sufi M. Rahman Bengalee was sent to America as the missionary-in-charge and editor of the Moslem Sunrise. Bengalee moved the national headquarters from Wabash to 56 E. Congress, Suite 1307.

#### Ahmadiyya Missionary Will Lecture in St. Louis

The missionary of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam in the United States, Sufi Mutur Rahman Bengalee of Qadian, India, is in St. Louis to lecture on the principles of his faith which he claims is the Mohammedan religion. He is a graduate of Punjab University in India and has been in the United States for two years establishing missions.

"Islam menas peace," Bengalee declared in explaining his religion. "The master prophet Muhammad is the founder of Islam. A Moslem honors and believes in all the divine teachers of the universe, including Krishna, Buddha, Moses and Jesus. We are mono-theistic."

Bengalee will announce the time and place of his lectures late. (The East St. Louis Journal, Sept. 26, 1930)



#### Ibrahim Khalil

When he heard about the Ahmadiyya Movement and the claims of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, he went to Chicago to meet with Sufi M. Rahman Bengalee. Br. Khalil owned the Pyramid Barbershop that featured arabic writing of Bismillah hir-Rahman nir-Raheem, (In the Name of Allah the Most Gracious, Most Merciful)and Laillaha illala Muhammadan Rasulillah (There is no God but Allah) in the front window. It also hosted a sign "Jesus Did Not Die on the Cross".

Br. Khalil, according to Sultan Latif's, 'When Nations Gather', is the first Native American to convert to Ahmadiyya.



**"Approximately 1,000 Moslems are said to live in Chicago. Twenty thousands are scattered throughout the country."**

- The Chicago Herald Examiner



#### Ibn Yamin (Benjamin Leddbetter)

One of the earliest members of the St. Louis Ahmadiyya community join date is unknown. He was a member of the Islamic Brotherhood Society in America before coming to Ahmadiyya. He was an eyewitness, on the American continent, to the solar and lunar eclipses prophesized in the ahadith (sayings) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad concerning the advent of the Mahdi.

*"When the eclipses were shown in the American skies (1895 in the western hemisphere), a small child who saw it kept the memory all his life, he said, he felt it to be very special. Many years later, he happened to read the claim of the Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who said God the eclipse as a sign in his favor. Astonished, he took it as a sign of truth and dedicated his life."* - Bilal Rana

**During the next two decades, the Ahmadiyya Movement would continue to grow and influence the African-American community. African-Americans continued to struggle through the Great Depression, discrimination, Jim Crow laws and racial inequities. Through the challenging years of the 1930s, Ahmadiyya communities remained committed to uplifting and spreading the message of Islam. Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq instituted a system of training local, indigenous members to be preachers and leaders. These 'Sheiks' were vital to the spread of Ahmadiyya in burgeoning African American communities. Robert Danin takes note, "Before returning to India in 1922[3], Sadiq had ordained at least a dozen**

**indigenous "sheiks" who, in his opinion, were doing their utmost to promote Ahmadiyya doctrine. Their efforts has spread throughout a network of approximately sixteen missions in cities stretching from the Mississippi to the Atlantic. Besides Sheik Ahmad Din, Sheik Ashiq Ahmad and their protégé Wali Akram, one must include Sheik Nasir Ahmad and Sheik Saeed Akmal of Pittsburgh, Sheik Ahmad Omar of Braddock, Pennsylvania, Abdullah Malik of Columbus, Ahmad Rasool of Dayton, and Shareef Ali of Cincinnati. The largest contingents were in Cleveland and Pittsburgh, each with approximately three hundred converts."** - *Black Pilgrimage to Islam*

## AFRICAN AMERICAN JOURNEY TO ISLAM

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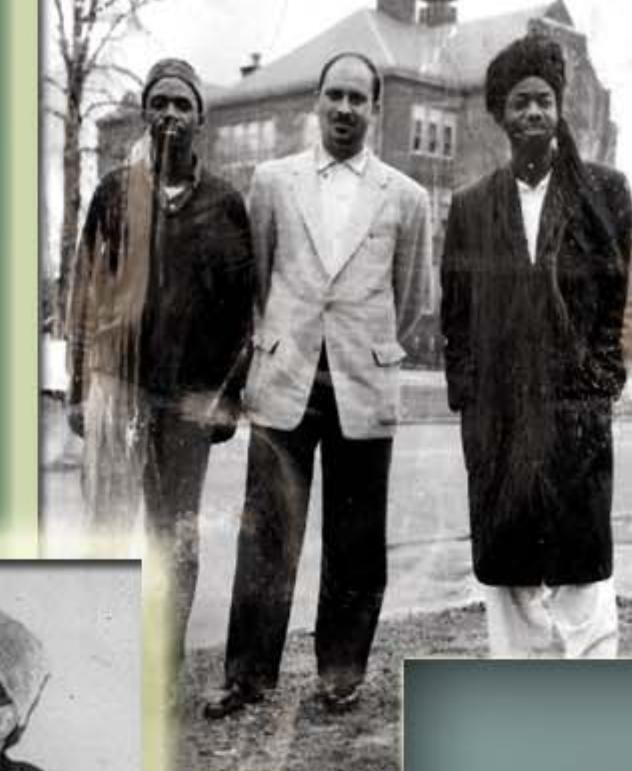


**Rashid Ahmad** recalls his search for God early in life. Although his family was Christian, he insists this was a culture they followed without thought. Rashid found himself constantly searching and asking questions about God, but seldom did he find satisfaction.

After a series of frustrating experiences in search of God, Rashid followed the only thing he truly valued – money. Engulfed in an environment of hustlers, drugs, and crime, Rashid came across an unusual sight on the streets of Chicago. A man was crying out that Jesus did not die on the cross. Rashid was intrigued enough to ask where he could get more information. The man told Rashid to go to The Muslim Sunrise on 220 South State Street or the mosque located at 4448 South Wabash.

In 1946, Rudolph Thomas (Rashid) decided to visit the mosque located on Wabash Avenue in Chicago where he met an Ahmadi missionary named Ghulam Yasin. Thomas was determined to get to the bottom of what he thought was a money making scam, so he kept coming back at all the times for prayers. Thomas eventually was convinced of the truth of Ahmadiyyat and accepted it in the course of the year. He frequented The Muslim Sunrise office on a daily basis to respond to letters and mail out issues to interested Americans.

He had written to the Second Khalifa, Hadhrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad who told him to come and visit Pakistan. In 1949, Rashid traveled to Rabwah Pakistan, becoming the first African American to study at the Ahmadiyya Missionary School (Jamia). In 1954, he returned to the states to become an important figure in Ahmadiyya in America.

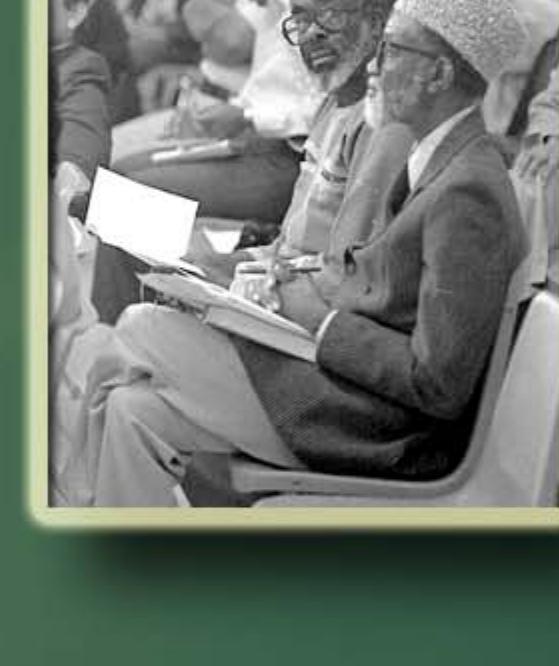


**“The internationalist identities of its African-American members are extraordinary; they are probably the most widely traveled among Black American Muslims.”**

Islam in the African American Experience



**Khalil Mahmud** took his family to various countries such as Ghana, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Niger, Morocco, India, Syria, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Ethiopia, Republic of Benin, Togo, UK, France and The Netherlands in an effort to educate his children about Islam and expose them culturally. He made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1972 with his wife and three of his children. Dr. Khalil Mahmud completed studies in various countries including Al-Azhar University in Egypt, additional studies in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Germany.



By 1945, the Ahmadiyya missionaries had established a beachhead among African Americans in Boston. Bashir Ahmad, a Philadelphia native and devout Muslim, was a vocal advocate of Islam for the Ahmadiyya movement in Boston. Adorned in Pakistani robe and headpiece, Ahmad's highly visible proselytizing paid high dividends when jazz pianist Stephen Peters embraced Islam later that year changing his name to Khalil Mahmud...Mahmud's close friend, musician Blazely Perry, introduced him to a young aspiring trumpet student named Malcolm Jarvis. In addition to expressing interest in learning more about Islam, Jarvis arranged to bring his friend, Malcolm Little, to meet Mahmud. Although not a musician, Little represented the growing number of African American urban men, disenchanted with Christianity and religion as they knew it, yet almost

hypnotized by the singers and artists of jazz, blues, and bebop...Unfortunately for Jarvis, he and his buddy Malcolm Little [later to become Malcolm X] were both arrested and consequently convicted for burglary before the meeting with Mahmud ever came to pass.

Traveling around the world as an Ahmadiyya missionary and educator, Mahmud spent time living in London as well as West Africa. In London Mahmud and theologian Howard Thurman met by chance. The meeting impressed young Thurman so greatly that he recorded it in his autobiography (Thurman, 1979)...Khalil Mahmud's career culminated as librarian and professor of religion in the Department of Religion and Langston Hughes Memorial Library's Special Collections, Lincoln University. - African American Islam, McCloud

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## 1946 Farewell to Sufi M.R. Bengalee

Chicago, Illinois



## 1947 National Convention

(Jalsa Salana), Dayton, Ohio.



This photo was taken on the site of what was to become the 1st mosque (Dayton Mosque) built in America by American converts.



Dayton Mosque

**“...only one process for an African American to become Muslim during the 1940s and 1950s; the Ahmadiyya Movement.”**

- Muslim Minorities in the West

The Great Migrations from 1910 to 1960 brought hundreds of thousands of blacks from the South to Chicago, where they became an urban population. They created churches, community organizations, important businesses, and great music and literature. African Americans of all classes built community on the South Side of Chicago for decades before the Civil Rights Movement. The Ahmadiyya Movement began to welcome new missionaries who aided Sufi Bengalee spreading the message of Ahmadiyya in America. Established communities had spread to New York, Washington D.C., Pittsburgh, Detroit, and St. Louis with pockets of Ahmadis established in Florida, Louisiana and other Midwest and southern states. However, Chicago remained the Headquarters and heart of the Ahmadiyya Community. With 25 years in Chicago, the Ahmadiyya Community said

farewell to Sufi Bengalee while ushering in a new era for the Movement. African-Americans continued to play critical roles in this still new and most influential religious community. This era also marked the beginning of African-Americans starting Muslim families. Young Muslim children raised learning Arabic and Islamic principles of equality and inclusion while still having to navigate through a segregated society. The dedication of the ‘first’ converts from the 1920s and 1930s was evident in the establishment of families and continued growth in America. As America was engaged in war in the 1940s, the Moslem Sunrise continued to promote the peaceful nature of Islam and continued to encourage readers to follow the dictates of Islam and overcome hatred, prejudice and inequity.

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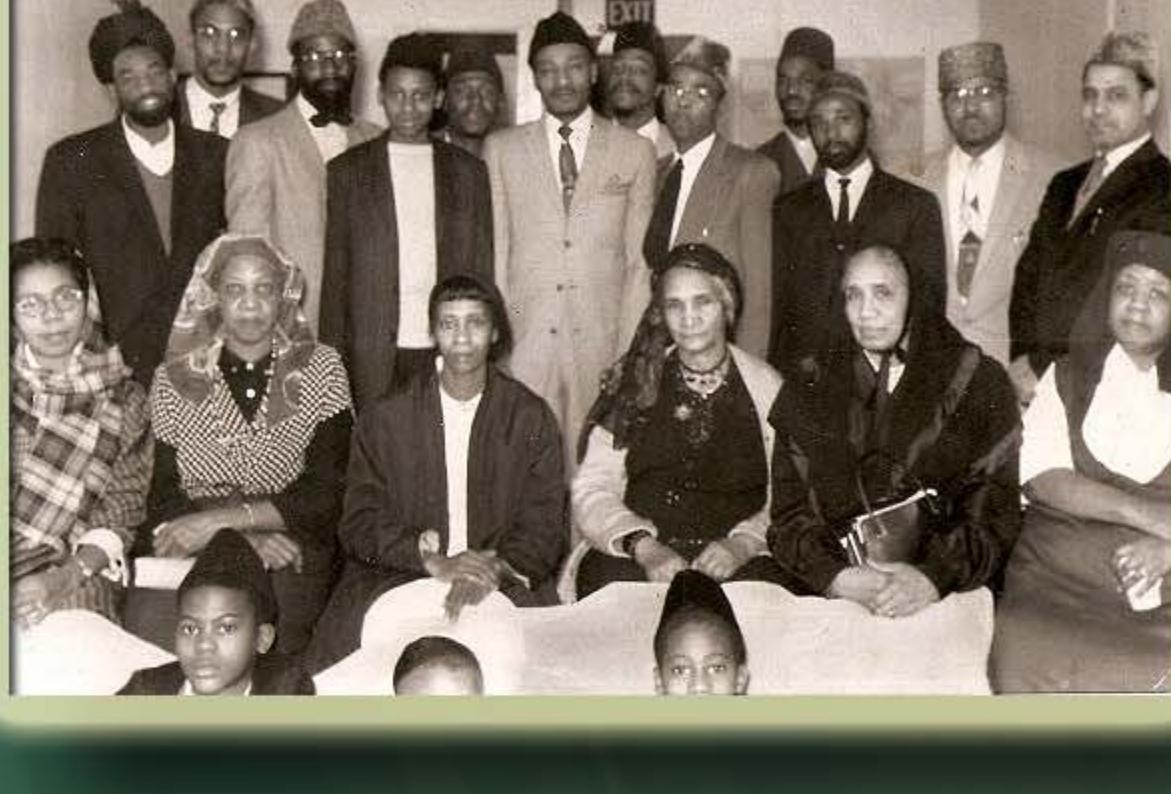
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Washington, D.C. (1950s)

**Munir Hamid**

My first introduction was around 1954 or 1955. My sister was in the singing group called the Capris. She met Lynn Hope, and he was a Sunni Muslim and a saxophone player who was very well known and had several albums out. He would wear a turban and say "as salaam alaikum." He had some moral qualities the other musicians didn't have. I became interested and started to read as much literature as I could. I was fifteen years old. I met a friend. Instead of hustling money, he gave me a book to read, *Our Promised Messiah*. He was having a meeting in his house in West Philadelphia on Hobart Avenue. The Ahmadi missionaries, Nur Haq-Anwar and Muhammad Sadiq were teaching a bunch of brothers in Philadelphia. The rituals made an impression on me so that when I went home I decided to become Muslim. But I hesitated. In Washington, D.C., I was stationed on Andrews Air Force Base. Khalil Ahmad Nasir, the Ahmadi missionary, invited me to come out for Friday Jummah, 1955—I was sixteen. I converted then.

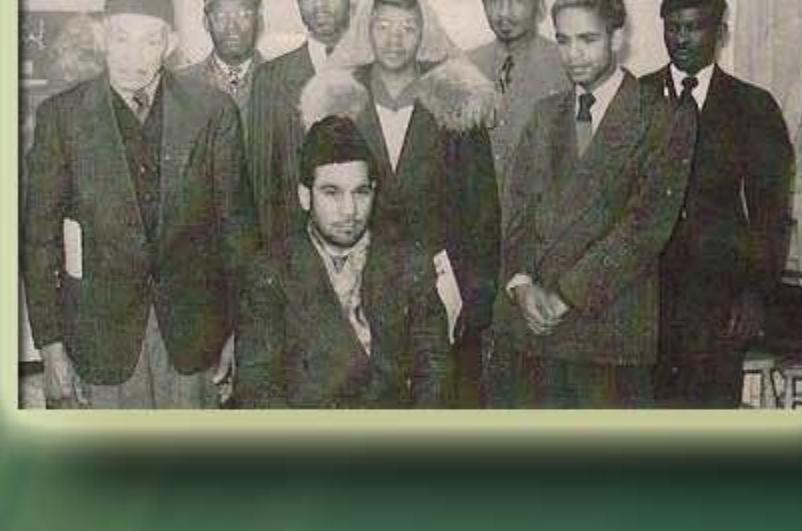


Chicago Mosque 1952 - Mubarika Malik, Mahmooda Malik, Hameeda Chambers, Aliyya Ali, Suleiman Saeed, Nur Islam, Hanif Ahmad, Abdul Malik, Mubarak Ahmad, Rashid Ahmad, Koonzi, Khalil Nasir

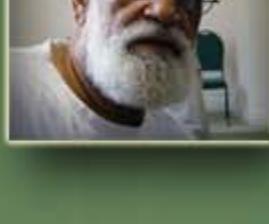


Chicago Mosque (1950s)

St. Louis (1950s)



Percy Smith was known to host popular jazz musicians at his home in California. There they would practice and discuss spiritual revolutions and religion. In 1953, Percy joined the Ahmadiyya Movement, saying, 'it was the thing to do'. Ahmad Saeed (Percy) returned to East St. Louis to become an integral member of the St. Louis Ahmadi community. During the 1970s and 1980s, absent of a missionary, Saeed took the lead on educating the young and old in Arabic and Islamic studies. During summers, he would feed the neighborhood kids around the Mosque and involve the Ahmadi youth in various activities. Every Friday and Sunday he would consistently hand out a hearty smile and candy to the young. His commitment to the youth, Islamic education and service to the community has developed a legacy of Ahmadis in St. Louis.



During the 1950s African-Americans were still under the duress of an American, federally supported racial caste system known as Jim Crow. Jim Crow allotted a stance of separate but equal, however equality was rarely enforced between 'Blacks' and 'Whites'. During these times, the Ahmadiyya Movement maintained its multi-racial Islamic principle, as directed by the Prophet of Islam in 632 A.D. in his last sermon, "All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action." African-Americans were not allowed to greet or shake hands with 'Whites', unable to use the same restroom or water fountains, unable to sit or

ride together in public spaces, and when church divisions were based on race, Ahmadis of all races and nationalities could be found in a single mosque, praying side-by-side, shaking hands and embracing another despite the rules and laws of the general public. Ahmad Saeed relates the story of when he first came into the movement in 1953. "*Traveling to different cities would be challenging and dangerous. We would take the back roads in hopes not to be stopped by authorities because there would be a couple of so-called blacks, an Indian missionary and maybe a white all riding together in a car with no distinction of who sat where.*" During these times of segregation, Ahmadiyya continued to publicly proselytize equality amongst all Americans and set the example within its own walls a true administering of 'unalienable rights.'

**AFRICAN AMERICAN JOURNEY TO ISLAM**

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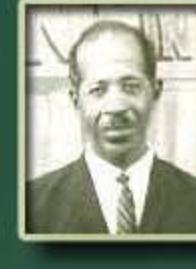
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St. Louis community members welcome new missionary (1953)

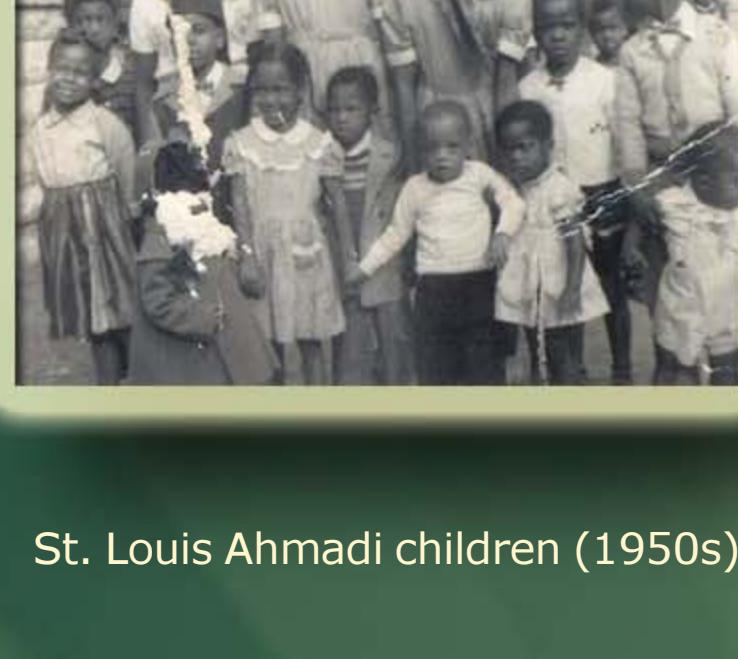


**Usman Khalid**

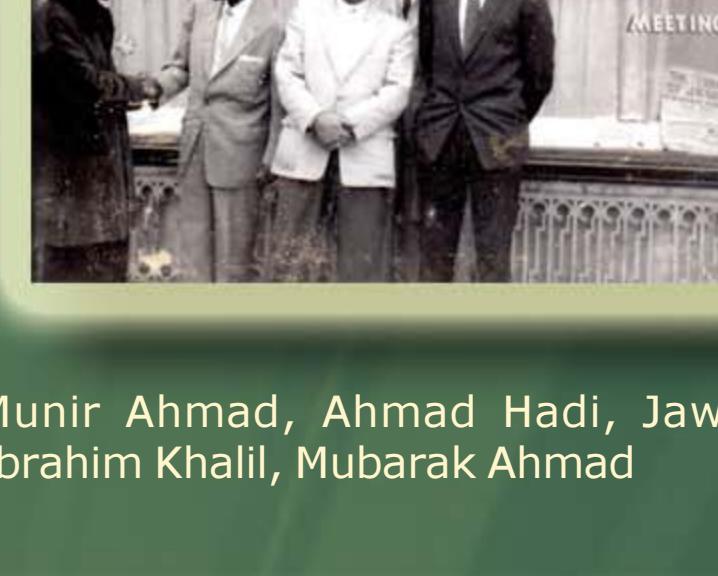
In 1947, Usman Khalid accepted Ahmadiyya under the auspices of Ibrahim Khalil. During those days there were not any official missionaries visiting St. Louis. Ibn Yamin and Ibrahim Khalil worked diligently to spread the message of Islam in the area. Usman became an active and dedicated member. His wife, Aminah Khalid, became so impressed with his complete moral change and dedication that she also accepted. Usman and Aminah Khalid would serve and support the St. Louis Ahmadiyya community for decades to come. They worked as Presidents and counselors to countless members, neighbors and friends. Their legacy lives on with three generations of Muslims continuing to serve.



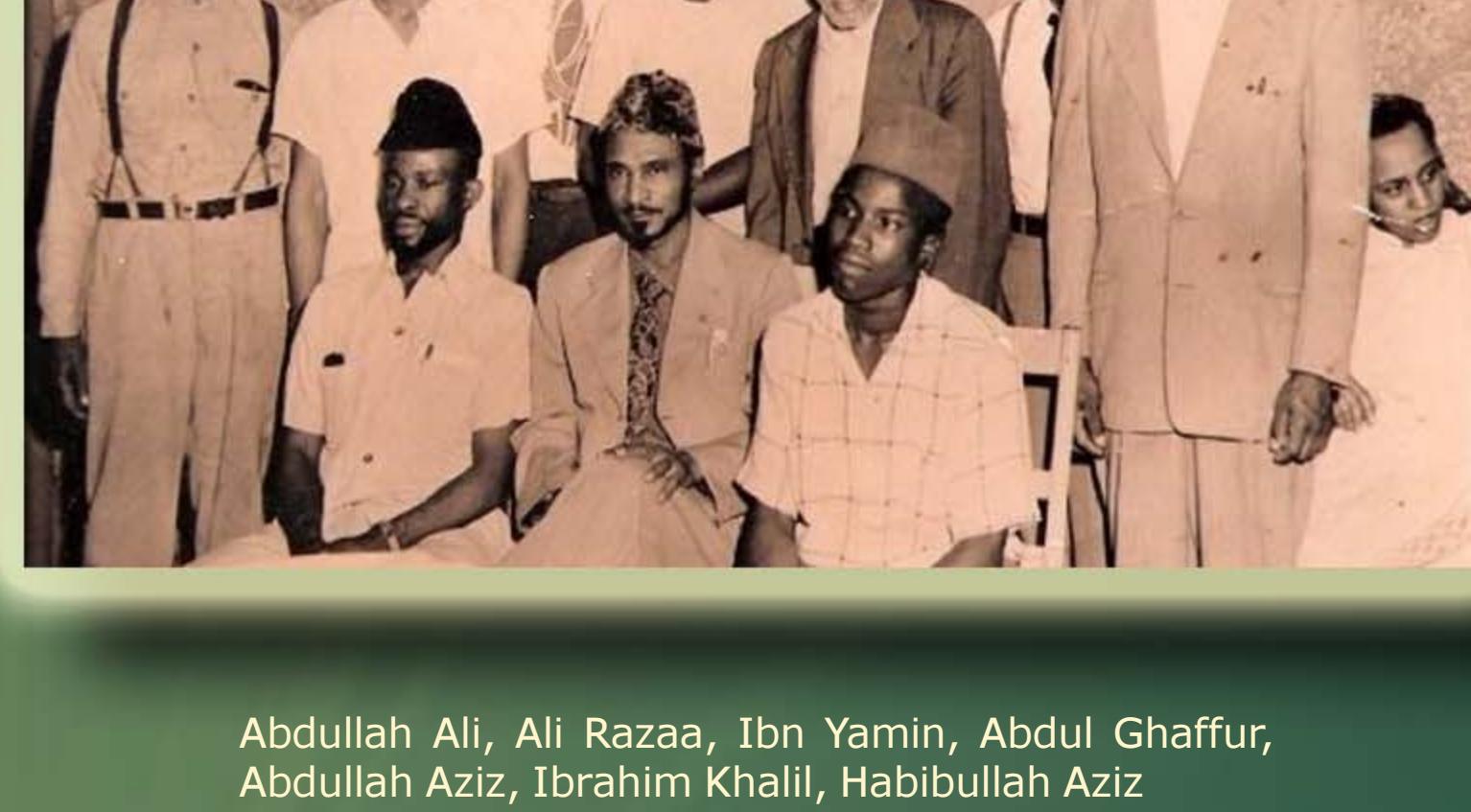
## St. Louis Community, 1950s



St. Louis Ahmadi children (1950s)

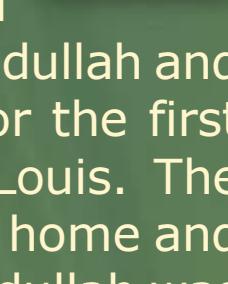


Munir Ahmad, Ahmad Hadi, Jawad Ali, Ibrahim Khalil, Mubarak Ahmad



Abdullah Ali, Ali Razzaq, Ibn Yamin, Abdul Ghaffur, Abdullah Aziz, Ibrahim Khalil, Habibullah Aziz

### Abdullah Ali



Abdullah Ali was one of the eldest living members of Ahmadiyya. It is said he died at the age of 99. The actual date of his joining Ahmadiyya is unknown. But his dedication and commitment is unparalleled. In the 1950s, Abdullah and his wife, Almas, would provide residence for the first official missionary and family assigned to St. Louis. The Ali's would hold Friday service (Juma) at their home and provide support for community members. Abdullah was well known for his call to prayer (Azan). Every New Year's, when neighbors would shoot their firearms, Abdullah would go to the top of his roof and call his most melodious Azan.

**In 1922, St. Louis became one of the first established Ahmadi communities in America. The extraordinary missionary efforts of Sheik Ahmad Din exposing hundreds to Islam in the St. Louis area. By the mid-1930s, changes in local leadership and challenges by black nationalist groups, affected growth in the community and caused some indifference amongst a few members. However, a smaller group of Ahmadis continued to preach and serve creating another wave of new converts to join. Of these second wave of conversions, were Ibrahim Khalil and Ibn Yamin. They re-established the Ahmadiyya community of St. Louis and continued to reach out to African Americans. Some of their early converts came from other Muslim groups. Abdullah Ali and Usman Khalid are said to have come from Muslim organizations as such. It is important**

**to note that many of these predominantly African American Muslim organizations at this time were break-offs or splinter groups from the Ahmadiyya Community. This phenomena of splintering was not unique to St. Louis but had taken place at the major Ahmadiyya centers around the country. These years were turbulent for African Americans in general and some Ahmadis differed on how religion should address the social justice issues of the era. The Ahmadiyya model focused more on self-transformation and inclusiveness for all races. This model remained attractive and successful for many in search of both physical and spiritual liberation. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s the Ahmadiyya Movement continued to be the prominent Muslim organization, particularly, for African Americans.**

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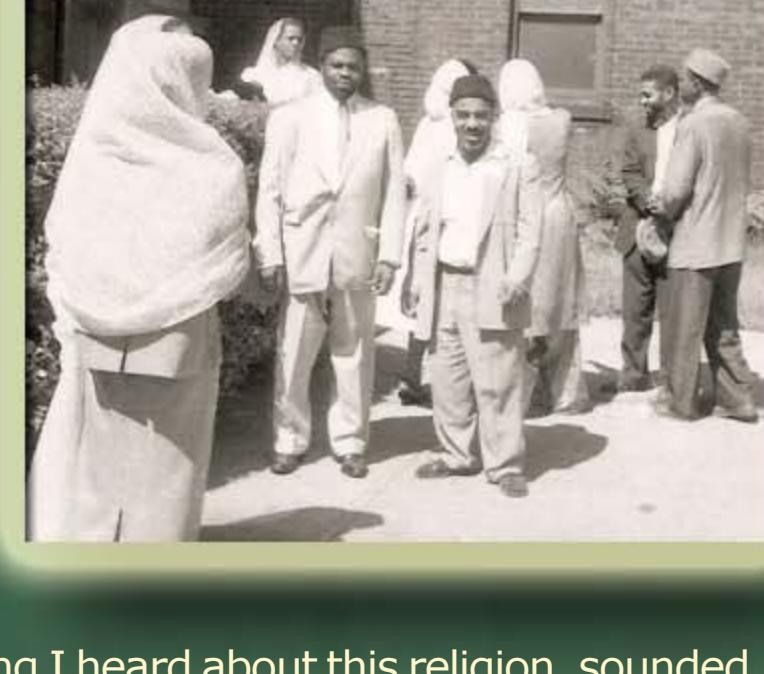


Ahmad Shafeed,  
Ahmad Nurullah,  
Ali Razaa and  
Khalil Mahmood



**Muhammad Sadiq**  


"I became a fairly good jazz musician and it started to pay well. So, I decided to make it my career and pursued it further. In those days, there were not too many opportunities for the people of African descent...As a musician, I used to hear people talk about Islam, but everything I heard about this religion, sounded so foolish that I did not care much about it. Then, one day in 1947, a friend gave me a book, "The Life of Muhammad," written by Sufi M. R. Bengali. I was in tears after reading that book....I prayed to Allah for forgiveness of my past sins and took a solemn pledge to live a life of piety."



## Cleveland, Ohio 1956

Prince Hall Auditorium



Hanif Ahmad, Abdullah Muhammad,  
Mubarak Ahmad, Abdul Malik



**Abdul Malik**  
While serving in the U.S. military in North Africa Abdul Malik met an Ahmadi Muslim. After returning home he found the U.S. Ahmadiyya headquarters in Chicago, IL. For two years he would drive from Milwaukee, through 'Jim Crow' counties to the Chicago Mosque. There he received lessons and orientation into Islam from the then Head Missionary, Khalil Ahmad Nasir. After accepting Ahmadiyya in 1946 he was given permission to start an Ahmadiyya mission in Milwaukee.

Bashiruddin Usama, Muhammad Ameen, Mubarak Ahmad, Ali Razaa

**"The Dayton community was another important indication of the consolidation of African Americans in the Ahmadiyya movement. This community was almost one hundred percent black in the 1950s, and African Americans planned, funded, and built the Ahmadi mosque [Dayton Mosque] there in 1955. This was probably the first mosque built in America exclusively by African American converts. Also in Ohio, Wali Akram, a black Ahmadi led another African American Muslim community that flourished in Cleveland in the 1950s. This Mosque of more than two hundred Ahmadis maintained extensive records of its members and was noted for its "inter-ethnic marriages." The Ahmadiyya movement also shaped the religious ideas of an African American group**

**of Sunni Muslims in Lincoln Heights, Ohio during these years.**

**Thus, a dynamic group of African American Ahmadi leaders developed in the 1950s, including Mursil Shafeek, president of the Dayton community, who was fluent in Arabic, though limited in formal education; Muhammad Sadiq, a jazz trombone player in the 1940s who became president of the New York City and New Jersey communities; Bashir Afzal, a New York City leader in the 1950s; and Rashid Ahmad, who went to Pakistan to prepare for missionary work in the late 1940s and became an important Ahmadi figure in St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, and New York in the 1950s." – *Islam and the African American Experience*, Richard Brent Turner**

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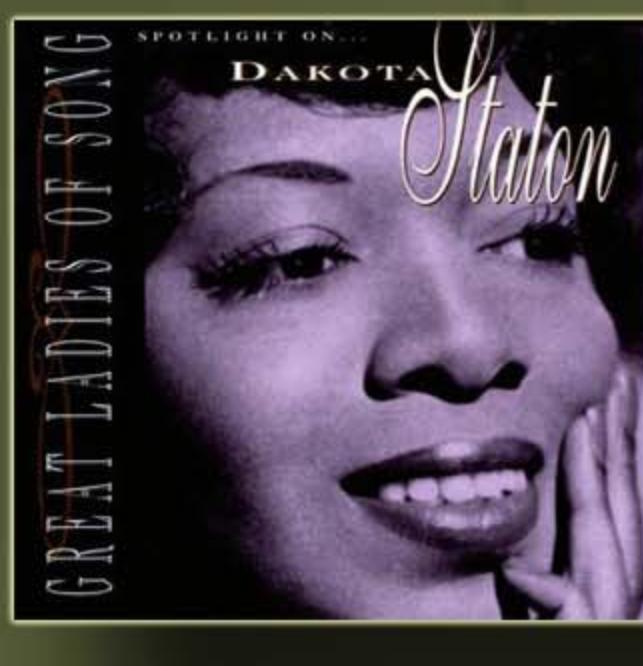
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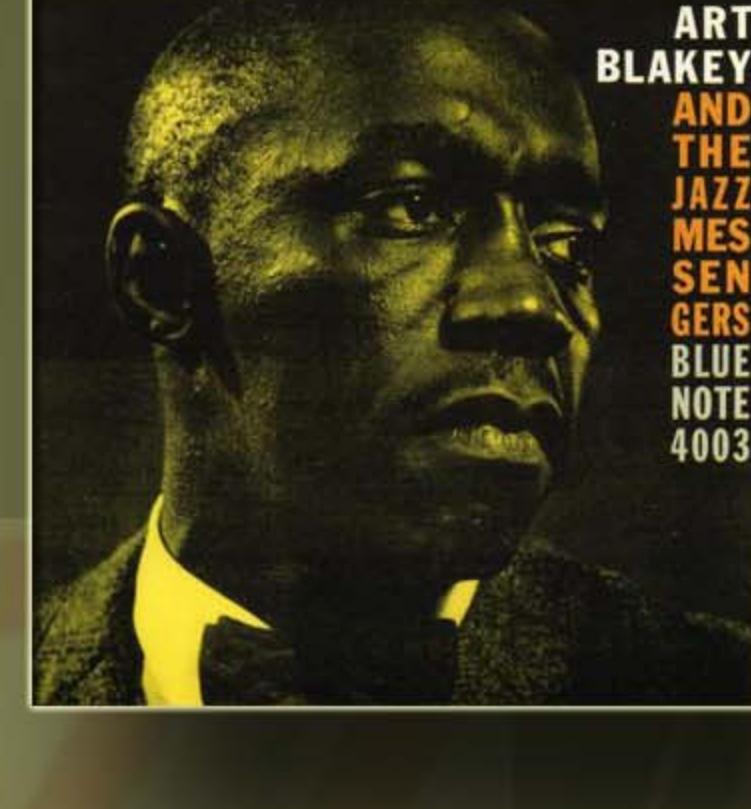
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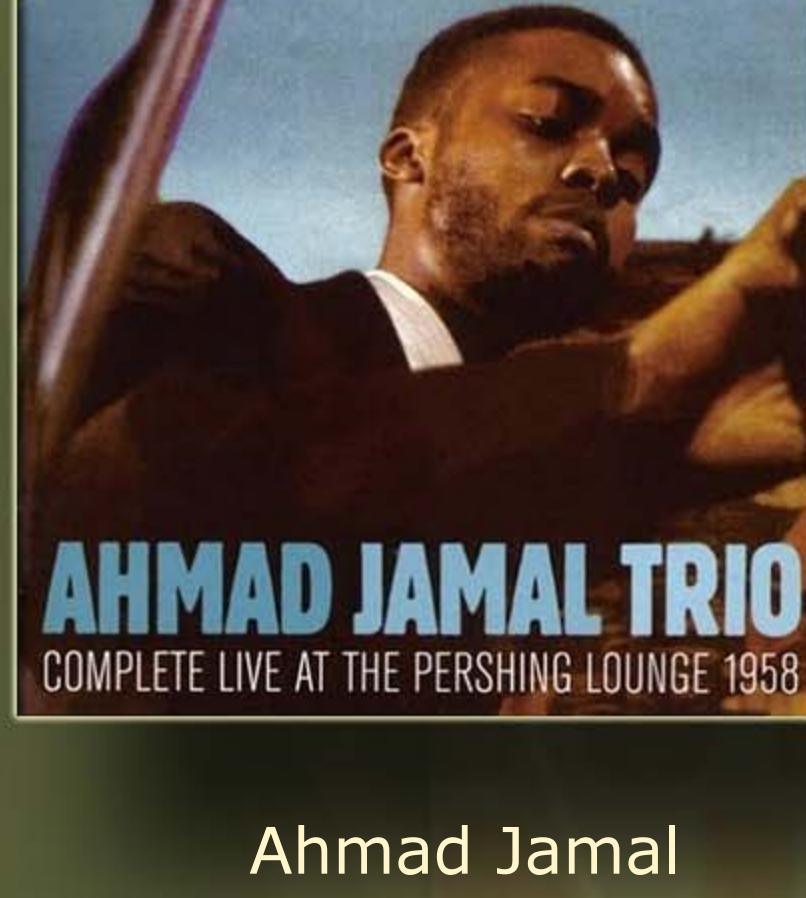
Aliyah Rabia  
(Dakota Staton)



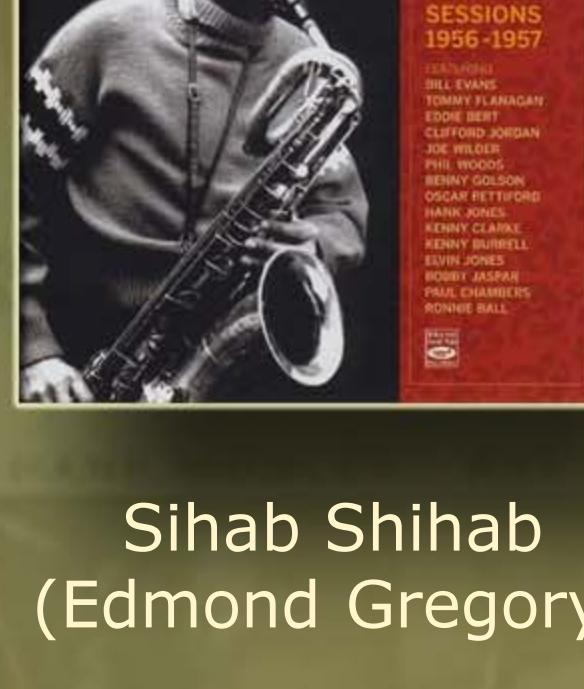
Hajj Rashid  
(Lynn Hope)



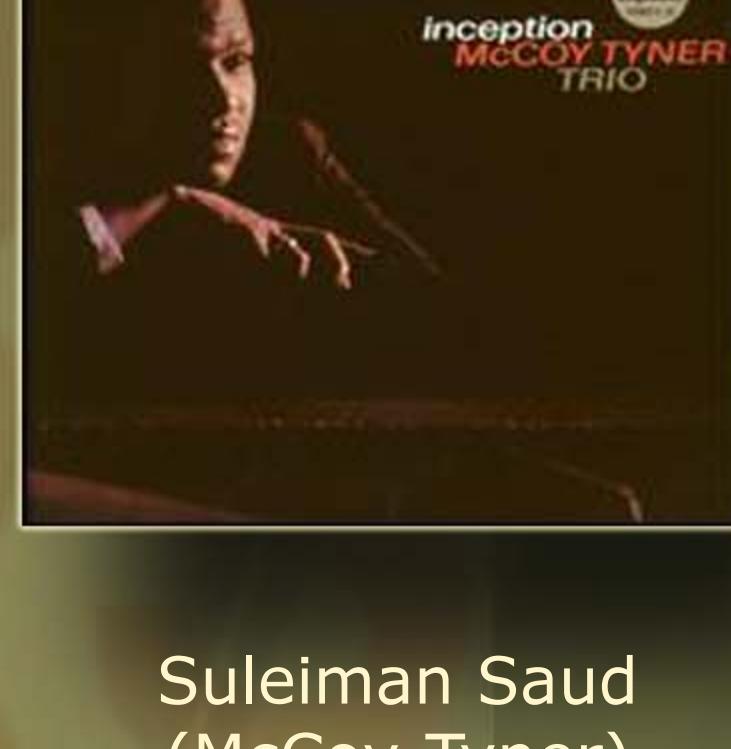
Abdullah Ibn Buhaina  
(Art Blakey)



Ahmad Jamal  
(Frederick Russell Jones)



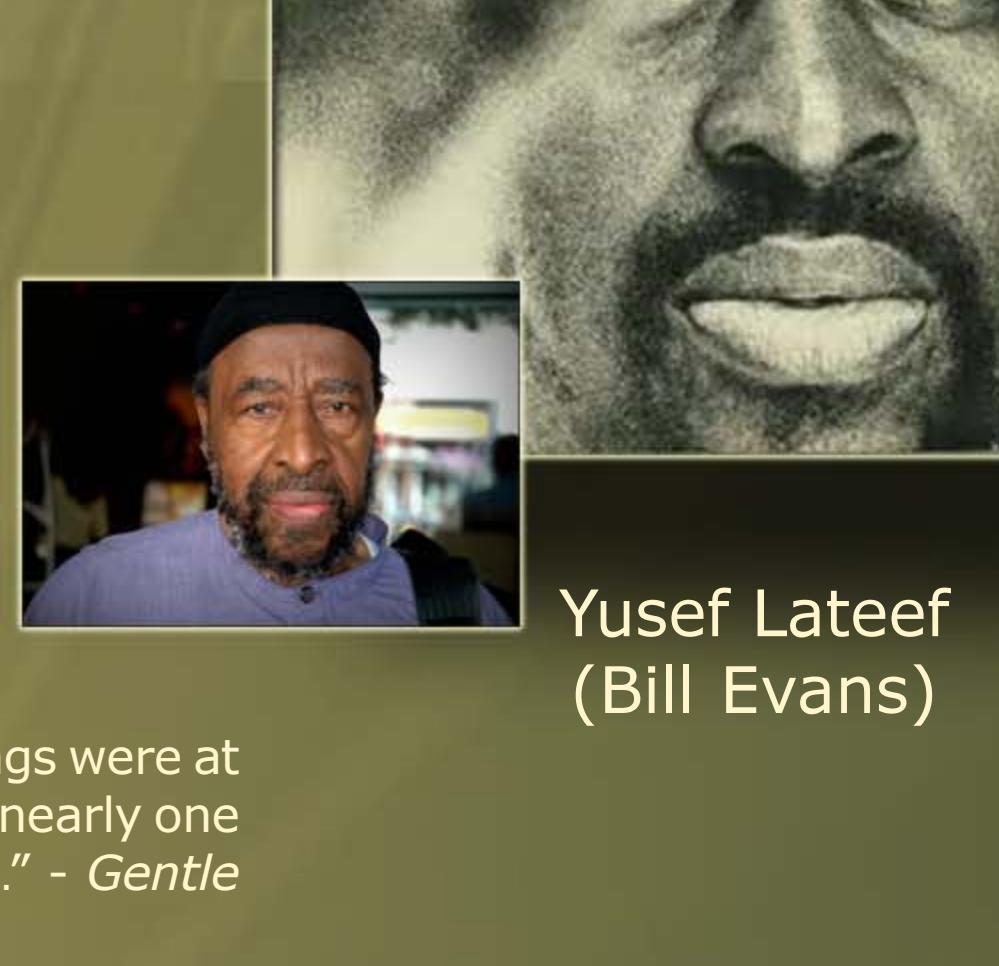
Sihab Shihab  
(Edmond Gregory)



Suleiman Saud  
(McCoy Tyner)



Liaqat Ali Salaam  
(Kenny Clarke)



Yusef Lateef  
(Bill Evans)

"My embrace of Islam came about in 1946 while I was working with the Wally Hayes Band in a club on the west side of Chicago. One night a trumpet player named Talib Dawud sat-in with us. He told me that he was an itinerant musician and that he was practicing Islam as a member of the Ahmadiyya Movement...To complement my reading, from time to time I visited the Ahmadiyya Mosque in Chicago...After I left Chicago with Gillespie, the headquarters for the religion was in New York, and I continued to attend the meetings...At this time the meetings were at Abdullah Ibn Buhaina's house; he was formerly Art Blakey...For nearly one year I studied the religion and finally decided to embrace it..." - *Gentle Giant, the Autobiography of Yusef Lateef*

**Amina McCloud observes, "Ahmadiyya converts to Islam drew heavily from jazz musicians and created a distinctly Islamic culture that was highly visible in African American urban centers between 1917 and 1960...these musicians were major propagators of Islam in the world of jazz even though the subject of music was often a source of debate with the subcontinent Ahmadis. Some even developed a distinct jargon—a unique blend of bebop and Arabic."** - *African American Islam*

**"...Gillespie's big band was a training ground for many of the great names in modern jazz...Curiously, it also proved to be fertile soil for Islamic dawa. In Philadelphia, Rainey met Sheik Nasir Ahmad. He soon converted to Islam, taking the name Talib Dawud. The**

**band's young tenor saxophonist, Bill Evans, followed him, taking the name Yusef Lateef, as did Lynn Hope, who became Hajj Rashid after making pilgrimage to Mecca in 1958. The drummer, Kenny Clarke, changed his name to Liaquat Ali Salaam and Oliver Mesheux became Mustafa Dalil."** - *Black Pilgrimage to Islam, Robert Danin*

**"Islam was a force which directly opposed the deterioration of the mind and body through either spiritual or physical deterrents. Among musicians the religion began to grow when Art Blakey, Talib Daoud, Yusef Lateef, Ahmad Jamal, Sahib shihab and other musicians raised money to bring Moslem teachers of the Ahmadiyya movement from Pakistan to the United States..."** - *Coltrane: A Biography, C. O. Simpkins*

## AFRICAN AMERICAN JOURNEY TO ISLAM

.... and they prayed too.



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Dayton Ahmadi Community (1960s)



Sultan Latif (1965)

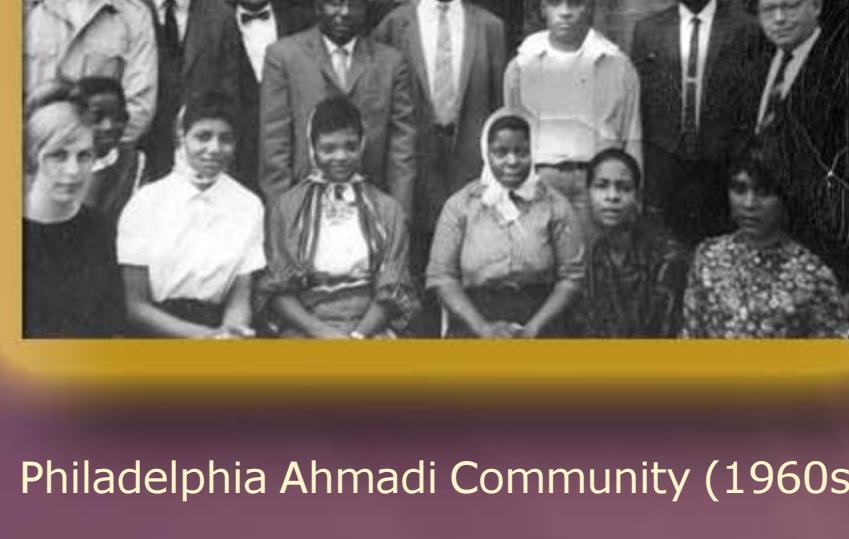
National Meeting, Dayton, Ohio (1965)



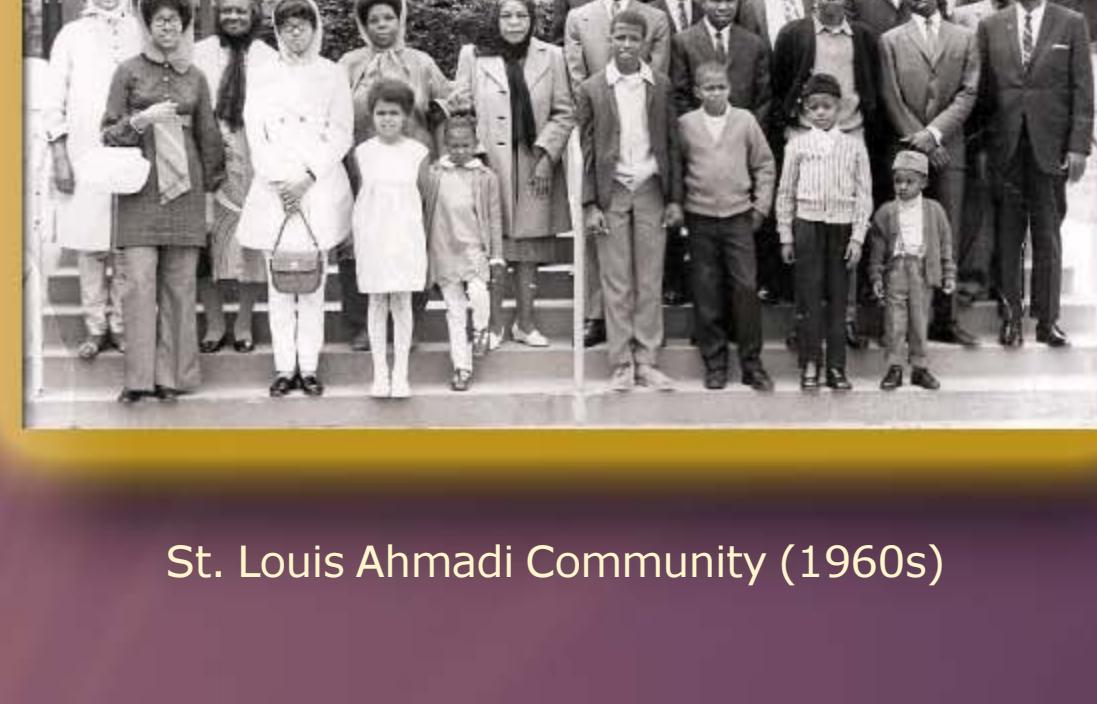
Pittsburgh Ahmadi Community (1960s)



National Meeting, Dayton, Ohio (1965)



Philadelphia Ahmadi Community (1960s)



St. Louis Ahmadi Community (1960s)

The 1960s for African-Americans marked a number of turning points. With the efforts and sacrifices of the previous decades, African-Americans, after countless, sit-ins, boycotts, marches and other significations for equality, gained a major victory in the liberation struggle with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This period also marked the assassination of two prolific voices in the struggle; Dr. Martin Luther King and El-Hajj Malik Shabazz (Malcolm X). As both of these champions of equality moved towards a more broad, inclusive ideology of peace among the races in America and the World, the Ahmadiyya movement, who had always professed an inclusive model was also met

with challenges. The media had taken notice to the separatist philosophy of the Nation of Islam and in a time of high racial tensions, promoted the Black (only) Muslim group over, the also well-known, Ahmadiyya movement. In *Islam in the African American Experience* by Richard Brent Turner, the late Muzaffar Ahmad Zafr, says, "The American press or media found it more controversial to highlight Elijah Muhammad rather than the Ahmadis who were conducting a multiracial movement that America was not ready to deal with." Ahmadiyya offered a solution to the race problem at a time when places of worship remained segregated. It would continue to attract those in search of peace and equality.

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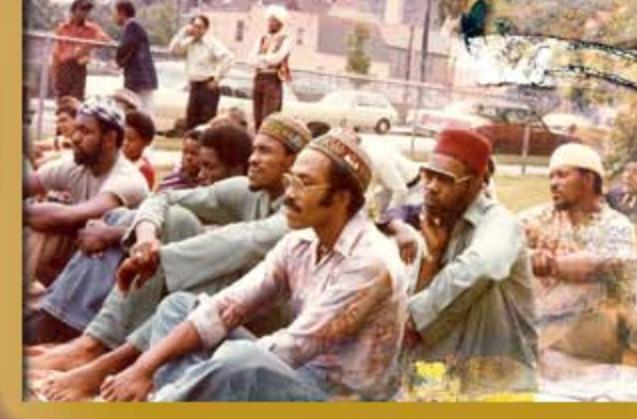


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Mirza Tahir Ahmad, prior to his election as Fourth Khilafa (International Spiritual leader), addressing members in Chicago, Illinois. He would later become Khalifa in 1984.



#### Meeting of Presidents

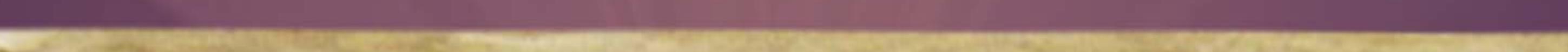
Midwest Region Presidents planning the 1972 national convention-- Munir Ahmad (St. Louis, MO), Hasan Hakeem (Zion, IL), Rashid Ahmad (Milwaukee, WI), Abdul Karim (Chicago, IL), Missionary Shakur Illahe (1970s)



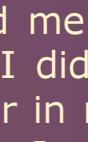
National Leadership Members (1970s)



National Meeting, Lake Forest, Illinois (1972)



#### Jalaluddin Abdul Lateef



"I first heard about Islam from a follower of Elijah Muhammad of the Nation of Islam. His name was Columbus Wayland. He introduced me to some very abstract interpolations of Islam. I didn't hear much more about Islam until much later in my life, when I had moved to New York. There I was reacquainted with some of my old friends from New Jersey. One of them, Akbar Tshaka...he started preaching to me the teachings of Islam. At that time I was not particularly attracted to religion and did things that young men are usually interested in. It was during this period that many young men like myself enrolled into the military. After leaving the military I went to Boston where I got married...one day Akbar came across a book by the name of the Teachings of Islam. He read the book and was greatly impressed by its contents and the author. On the back of the book, there was a list of centers of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam in the United States. One of these centers was that of Brooklyn, New York.. I still continued to read whatever I could get my hands on. After some time, with Akbar's steady persuasion I was convinced that I should go to the Brooklyn mission house myself. I believe it was Akbar who suggested that I should take the ba'i'at."



**The Ahmadiyya Movement continued to attract African-Americans from various segments of the community. College students and professionals, black nationalists and civil rights activists, preachers and politicians, artist and musicians, religious and nonreligious, found a life-changing, God-induced, redemptive power in Ahmadiyya. Just as in previous years, members joined the fold because they heard the light of truth in the message, some came from disenfranchised communities and found sisterhood and brotherhood and others who**

**found their backs against the wall, found hope and salvation. They all accepted the reformatory teachings of this Messianic Movement and the unifying power of Islam. This period also marked the arrival of significant numbers of immigrants following the repeal of the Oriental Exclusion Act, which federally limited the number of immigrants allowed in America. The faces of Islam in America would begin to change and the Ahmadiyya Movement would welcome its new brethren from the eastern countries to the American movement.**

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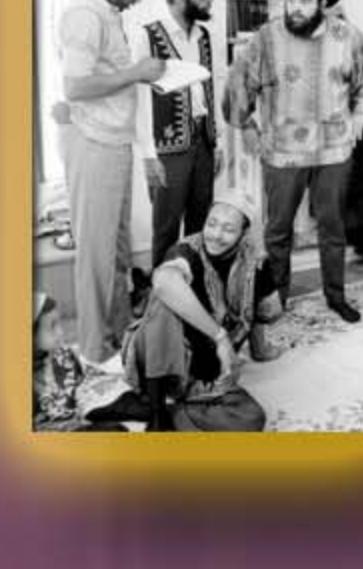
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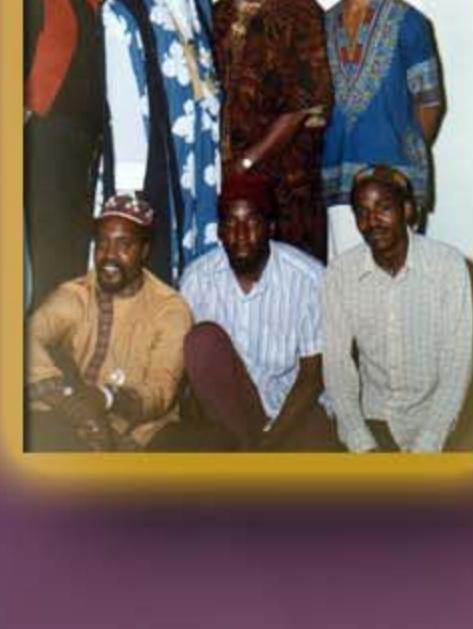
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**“A Nation cannot be reformed without the reformation of its youth”**

*- Mirza Bashirud-Din Mahmud Ahmad,  
Khilafatul Masih II.*



**Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya**

*- Men's branch of Ahmadiyya dedicated to service.*

At a time when African-American men were moving out of the social movements of the 1960s and trying to find a meaningful place in mainstream America, the Ahmadiyya Movement offered a specific branch for young men between the ages of 15 to 40. This branch, created by Mirza Bashirud-Din Mahmud, the second successor and son of the founder of the Movement, was established in America in 1969, lead by Munir Hamid. Its goals; provide leadership and

mentoring to the younger men as they develop into maturity and become new leaders of a nation. The Khuddam, Arabic for servants, would conduct regular meetings, camps, outreach efforts, recruit new members and provide support for the internal community. The importance of this branch is reflected in the words, *“A Nation cannot be reformed without the reformation of its youth”*. - Mirza Bashirud-Din Mahmud Ahmad.

**AFRICAN AMERICAN JOURNEY TO ISLAM**

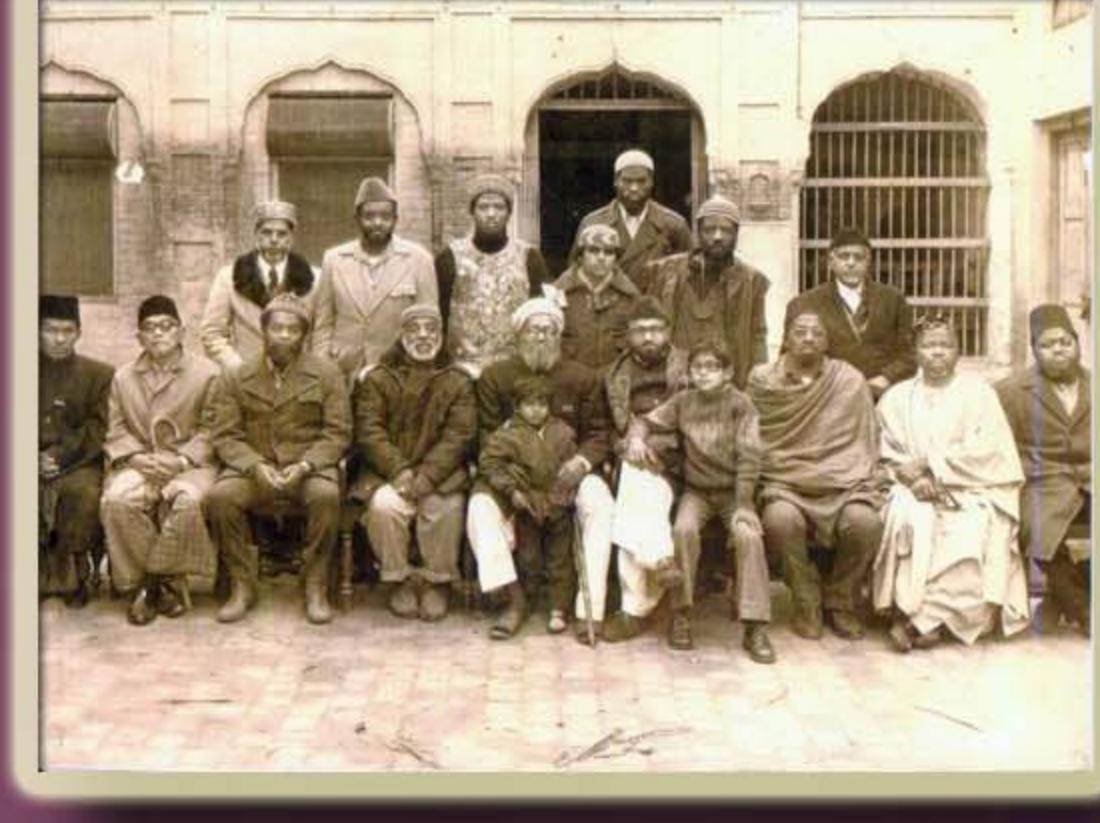
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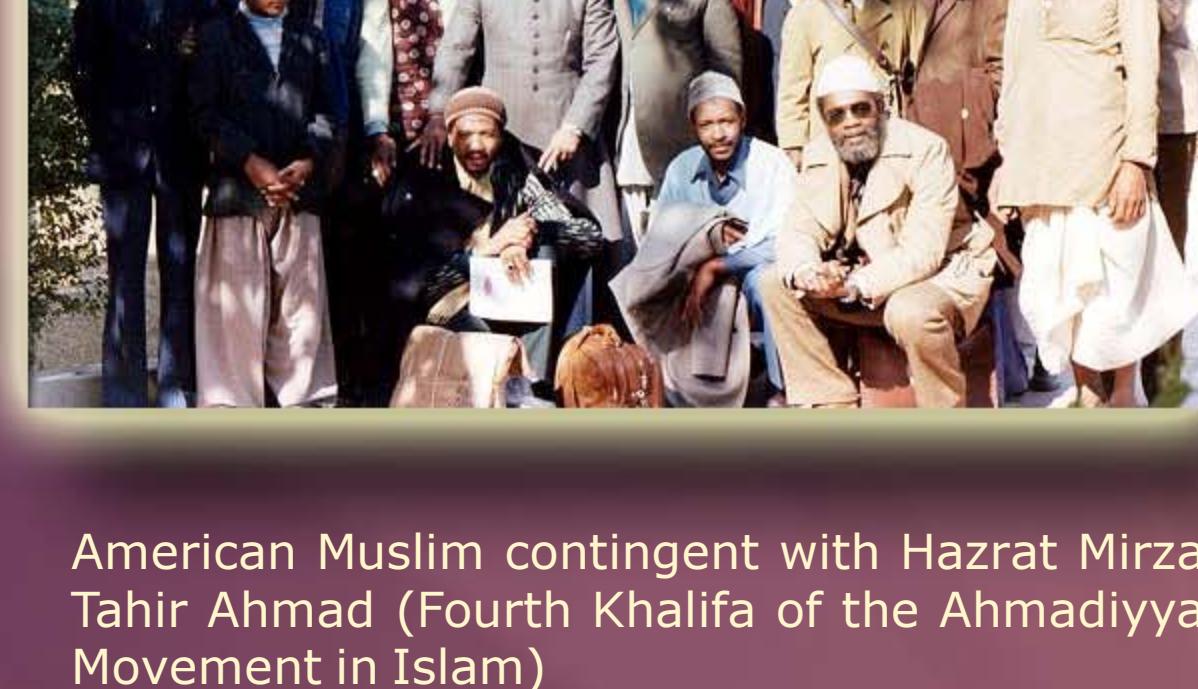
**“The internationalist identities of its African-American members are extraordinary; they are probably the most widely traveled among Black American Muslims.”**

Islam in the African American Experience



American Muslim contingent with Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad (Third Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam)

## Qadian, India



**African-American Women and Men would sacrifice to make sojourns to the Holy lands.**



American Muslim contingent with Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (Fourth Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam)

The tradition of travel continued with the third generation. They would make special efforts in visiting other Ahmadi communities and attending national events. These groups of African-Americans, women and men, would embark on a number of journeys to Hajj and

the Ahmadiyya Founder's land of origin. Many of them common people with humble financial means, would sacrifice to make these holy sojourns. Their efforts would provide leadership and inspiration for a growing nation of Muslims in America.

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As the community moved into the 1980s, its roots were firmly planted in cities across America, the immigrant community had grown significantly and African-American Ahmadis from the 1950s and 1960s had established Muslim families well-grounded in their respective communities and Islam. A fourth generation of African-American Muslims were being raised in a time when names like Jamal and Kareema had become more common, non-muslims could be seen with head coverings and the diversity of Islam was more recognized. It was a time for appreciation for those elders, women and men, who dared to choose their God and accept equality of all humanity. The sacrifice and commitment of these members of the Ahmadiyya Movement provided the foundation for Islam in America.

Special thanks to all those that contributed stories and photos to produce this historical exhibit. In remembering the pioneers highlighted in this exhibit and the countless names of pioneers not mentioned, we pray our most earnest prayers of gratitude for their service, steadfastness and dedication in blazing the path that American Muslims continue to travel today. May Allah bless their efforts and raise them to paradise in the hereafter. Ameen.

**Sponsored by:**  
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA, Tabligh Department  
African American Ahmadi History Committee

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