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*Muslim African-American Activism: From the Civil
Rights Movement to Post-9/11.*

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my dearest parents, most of all for giving me all the love and support I need, and for the large amount of patience and inspiration they have given me during my writing period. May Allah bless you with good health and righteous long life.

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Abstract

Muslim African-Americans today form a significant proportion in the American Muslim population. They stand among the three largest Muslim groups in the country, and they have had a significant presence in the history of the U.S. From the first day they arrived in America, they have endured a lot of hardships. Despite their strong commitment to their faith and African traditions they were forced into Christianity and assimilation in a way to obey the white hegemony. Muslim African-Americans are distributed in different places across the U.S. and despite the fact that the majority are poor, live in the suburbs or ghettos, they stood up to face all the harsh living conditions. By the twentieth century they initiated a wave of reconvertng to Islam as way to refuse the oppression and the racism they faced. In that period African-American Muslims under the leading of the Nation of Islam became the government's main proponents. They utilized their own ways and methods to fight the segregation and the injustice of the American Society. This period also marked the emergence of strong and charismatic figures, who came to play a significant role in the Civil Rights Movement. A new struggle was at the doors waiting for them after the 9/11 attacks, as Muslims they became once again a target for the hatred and the bias of the Americans. The experiences they had gone through in the Civil Rights period had shaped their activism and reaction to this backlash. Muslim African-Americans had also led the fight against Islamophobia to protect their beliefs and religions. They were the first to call for unification of efforts of all Muslims, their struggle made them aware not to neglect any minority and work for the better of all Muslims. This great population made a name for itself as a symbol of strong resistance.

ملخص

يشكل المسلمون الأميركيون الأفارقة في الوقت الحاضر نسبة كبيرة من السكان المسلمين الأميركيين عامة. حيث يعتبرون من بين المجموعات الاثنية الأساسية الثلاثة في المجتمع المسلم في البلاد، وقد لعبوا دوراً مهماً في تاريخ الولايات المتحدة. منذ وصولهم أول مرة إلى أمريكا تميزوا عن باقي العبيد و تمكنوا من احتلال أماكن مرموقة عند اسيادهم. لكن على الرغم من التزامهم القوي بإيمانهم وتقاليدهم الأفريقية، فقد أُجبروا على اعتناق المسيحية والانصياع الي هيمنة الجنس الأبيض في أمريكا. يتوزع المسلمون من أصل أفريقي في كل نواحي الولايات المتحدة، حيث أن الأغلبية فقيرة، يعيشون في الضواحي أو الأحياء الفقيرة، اذ يواجهون ظروف معيشية قاسية. مع بداية القرن العشرين عاد المسلمون الأميركيون الأفارقة الى اعتناق الإسلام ورجوع اليه كطريقة لرفض القمع والعنصرية التي يواجهونها. تلك الفترة أصبحت جد مهمة في تاريخ الولايات المتحدة، أصبح المسلمون الأميركيون الأفارقة تحت قيادة منظمة " الأمة الإسلامية " أول تهديد للحكومة. لقد استخدموا طرقهم الخاصة في محاربة التمييز والظلم في المجتمع الأميركي، كما عرفت هذه الفترة ظهور شخصيات قوية ومؤثرة، حيث كان لهم دور مهم في حركة الدفاع عن الحقوق المدنية. هجمات 11 سبتمبر مثلت صراع جديد ينتظرهم على الأبواب، حيث أصبح المسلمون مرة أخرى هدفاً للكراهية والتحيز لدى الأميركيين. لقد طبعت التجارب التي مروا بها في فترة الدفاع على الحقوق المدنية رد فعلهم ونشاطهم تجاه هذه الهجمة. وكان الأميركيون المسلمون من أصل أفريقي قد قادوا أيضاً المعركة ضد العنصرية و التحيز لكونهم مسلمين من أجل حماية معتقداتهم ودياناتهم. كانوا أول من دعا إلى توحيد الصف بين جميع المسلمين، نضالهم جعلهم على ادراك تام بعدم إهمال أي أقلية والعمل من أجل تحسين أوضاع كل المسلمين للأفضل. لقد جعل هذا الشعب العظيم اسماً لنفسه كرمز للمقاومة.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

9/11	September 9, 2001
AMP	American Muslims for Palestine
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
CAIR	Council on American-Islamic Relations
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
ICNA	Islamic Circle of North America
MAAs	Muslim African-Americans
MANA	Muslim Alliance in North America
MAS	Muslim American Society
MLFA	Muslim Legal Fund of America
MSTA	Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple of America
MUNA	Muslim Ummah of North America
NOI	Nation of Islam
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
USCMO	United States Counsel of Muslim Organizations
US	United States
USA	United States of America

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Introduction

Today, Islam is one of the three largest religions in the United States of America. The events of September 11, 2001 brought the Muslim minority to the spotlight of American attention. Most of this attention, however, has gone to immigrant Muslims and particularly to those of Arab origins because they were associated with the attacks. Muslim African-Americans, who represent around one third of the total number of Muslims in America and have always played a significant role in the history of the U.S. tend to be ignored in most of the academic accounts on the status of Muslims in the aftermath of the attacks.

This study sheds light on the Muslim African-American group highlighting primarily their contributions in two significant eras in U.S. history. The first era was the period of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s when Muslim African-Americans made significant contributions to Blacks' fight against segregation. The second period is the era following the 9/11 when freedoms and civil rights of Muslims have been largely eroded and Muslims of African-American origins had to join the efforts to resist the anti-Muslim backlash.

The study examines the life of Muslim African-Americans from the first day they arrived to the U.S. up to present days. It goes through the main events and experiences undergone by this minority. Starting by the period of slavery and the fight for liberation, to the Civil Rights Movement and their fight against racism and segregation, and finally their fight for to practice their religion which they still suffer up to this day. The study surveys how Muslim African-Americans reacted to these kinds of racism, inequalities, and disadvantages. And how these experiences have shaped their vision and their lives.

The first chapter deals with the different estimations of African-American Muslim population and their proportion compared to the numbers of Muslims from other origins.

Moreover, it gives a brief overview about Muslim African-Americans' social status and life conditions in general including household, education, jobs and most importantly their geographical distribution in the U.S. After that, the chapter gives a brief overview on the main events in the history of Muslim African-Americans, highlighting the most important experiences that helped in shaping their lives.

Mainly the focus will be on how they were brought to the new world; their numbers when first arrived in contrast to the other African-Americans. Some examples of notable Muslim-African slaves who stand out from their counterparts as literate persons and the positions they held as slaves would be mentioned.

Muslim African-Americans were the first to introduce Islam to the new world. As a matter of the fact, a noteworthy number of the African slaves who were kidnapped and brought to the United States from west and central Africa were Muslim. Most of Muslim slaves were literate, and able to both read and write the Arabic language and verses from the holy Quran. With time they gradually integrated into the American culture, which helped in westernizing their beliefs and ideas, and they were forced to give up on their religion which is Islam and convert to Christianity.

However, the turn of the twentieth century marked a new beginning for them .Many African Americans reconverted to Islam. This conversion was a way to search for their lost identity; they had remained largely invisible to the American populations, till the formation of Black Muslim nationalist groups in the 1930s. The most known was the Nation of Islam, which helped making Islam within black America rather visible.

The second chapter goes through the struggle for their civil rights and liberties. African-American Muslims have contributed significantly to this movement especially during the 1960s. The efforts and teachings of the Nation of Islam and the leadership of Malcolm X left

a huge mark on the African-American Civil Rights Movement. This dissertation shows how African-American Muslims had proven themselves by forming advocacy bodies, nationalist black groups, and strong organizations that worked on preaching people and converting them to Islam through using different ways and targeting as many places as they could.

They were able to hold their rights and freedom and helped the other groups to win theirs, among Black Muslim groups were the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam. From another side there were a lot of individuals that inspired people to fight the unjust treatment mentioning Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad and many others. These main activists either individually or in groups had contributed in the fight for the Civil Rights Movement.

Most importantly the Nation of Islam came to hold a major part in the life of Muslim African-Americans as social, political and religious organization. It worked on improving the life of Black Muslims who were taken by the criminal life style, which included drugs, robbery and especially those in prison. The dissertation traces the history of the NOI from the first day it was created in 1930 by Wallace Deen Fard Muhammad up to present days under the leadership of Louis Farrakhan.

The last chapter deals mainly with how Muslim African-Americans reacted to the post-9/11 backlash, and how they were not as surprised as the other Muslims in the United States. It also shows how their activism back in the time of the Civil Rights Movement 1950s and 1960s helped them in leading another fight for keeping their faith and stand against discrimination. If the struggle of African-American Muslims was not the worst among the other minorities, it certainly was not the lightest. They faced all sorts of discrimination, violence and hate crimes.

They were specifically singled out because the blackness of their skin, and also, they were looked down upon because their Islamic ideology. The dissertation investigates the reaction

of African-American Muslims to the anti-Muslim backlash after the attacks on the twin towers in 9/11. They were not surprised by the anger and the detestation thrown at them by Americans in comparison to the other Muslim minorities in the United States. In fact, African-Americans were not the main targets of the post-9/11 backlash and they may not have faced the same hostility and discrimination as other Muslims of Middle Eastern or Asian origins.

The attacks, however, which targeted mosques, community centers, and symbols of Islam like the veil, have not distinguished blacks from non-blacks. African-Americans were more prepared to face the wave of rage heading toward them, simply because they had gone through similar experience in the Civil Rights Movement. However, being a person of colour in a culture that is still recovering from racism and being a Muslim when a new era of backlash is invading the country was not an easy situation for them.

Chapter One: An Overview on African-American Muslims

Nowadays, Islam has grown to be one of the three most dominant religions in the United States. A religion that recognizes neither race nor ethnicity, but rather combines all those groups under one umbrella. Due to this American Muslims seize a great percentage of the total U.S. population, among them those Muslims from African-American origins who hold a considerable portion in comparison to the other Muslims.

Thus, this chapter introduces various estimations taken from different sources about the numbers they hold, comparing them with other numbers of Muslims from other origins. Later on, it gives a brief overview about Muslim African-Americans social status and life conditions in general such as household, education, jobs and the areas that most likely to live in.

Furthermore, this chapter goes through the history of Muslims African-Americans, highlighting the main events that took part in shaping their lives and the main experiences that they went through. Mainly the focus will be on how they were brought to the new world; their numbers when first arrived in contrast to the other African-Americans. The names of some very significant Muslim-African slaves would be mentioned, they stand out from their counterparts as literate persons and the positions they hold as slaves.

This chapter also explores the main reasons that led Muslim-African Slaves to give up on Islam and the ones that forced them to embrace Christianity, either it was forced upon them by their masters or by the hard-living conditions they faced back then. After that I will talk about how Muslim African-Americans reconverted to Islam as their natural religion, and how they chose to embrace their black African culture instead of the one forced upon them. At last and concerning this exact point I will state several main organizations and influential

Muslim African-American figures that played a tremendous role in converting so many Black Muslims to Islam.

1.1- A Brief Historical Background on Muslim African-American Slaves in the United States

One cannot truly know a group of people without knowing their history first. When talking about the history of the first African-American Muslims, we should start from the very beginning of America itself. The known story about the African-American Muslims is that they were kidnapped from different countries around West Africa, simply because this area in particular is somehow proximate to the United States Geographically speaking. Later on they were shipped, and brought to America to eventually work as slaves.

In addition, the real names of the African-Muslim slaves were changed, and they were given other non-Muslim names. Richard Brent Turner explains that masters tried to deculturate their slaves by changing their real Islamic names, and imposing anglicized, and comical names on their subjects. He argues that: “emblem of the cultural pain inflicted on Africans” (45). there is few primarily documentation about the journey of African-American Muslims to America, however these facts became clear due to the discovery and the translation of the slave narrative (McCloud 1). All in all, this chapter will give a brief explanation concerning the history of this religious minority.

African-American Muslims differ from the other Muslim immigrants, who willingly immigrated to America in order to achieve their dreams. African-Americans were forced to come to the United States and against their will they were brought to the new world through the slave trade during the colonial and post-colonial America. The historian Michael A. Gomez explains that black African Muslims came to America “by the thousands, if not tens of thousands” (66). Some of the African Muslims were from ruling families, and they were

highly literate and educated in their religion compared to the other less educated African slaves.

However, what they encountered in the new world as slaves was nothing like they ever witnessed. Sylviane Diouf stated that:

Nothing in their cultural and religious background could have prepared the African Muslims for what they encountered in the New World. Those who had ever been slaves or who had been slaveholders found a system they certainly would not have condoned at home. Even the former slaves could not have expected what was in store for them. (179)

The existence of Islam in the United States dates back to the Atlantic slave trade. That was proved by the works of three important historians who made significant contributions in documenting the history of African-American Muslims, Allan Austin, Michael Gomez, and Sylviane Diouf. Both Austin and Gomez claimed that a huge number of African slaves who came to America were Muslims.

The numbers they provided are by some means similar. they both argue that 10 percent of African slaves were Muslim, which means a total of 30,000 Muslim slaves arrived to America from 1711 to 1808 (Austin 355). Considering the numbers that were given by Austin and Gomez, we can say that Muslim African-Americans formed a considerably large community back at that time.

According the historian Daniels Roger, in the period from the mid fifteenth century to 1870 more than ten million Africans were abducted from different countries such as Angola, Benin and the Gold Coast to be sold as slaves in the United States during what was called the African slave trade. Yet, it is estimated that between 1, 25 to 3, 15 million Africans lost their lives because of the harsh treatment, and the bad conditions they faced on the ships. Only the

few 350,000 who survived were sold as slaves in the United States (57-53). What we can deduct from this is that slaves faced cruel circumstances in their journey to the new world, which led to the death a considerable number among them.

Many scholars such as, Ivan Van Sertima in his work *They Came before Columbus* argues that African Muslims have discovered most of the American land, even before the time of Christopher Columbus's venture in 1492, and he mentioned that an African Muslim from Morocco named Estevan as the first African-Muslim in America (qtd. in Gibson 2). They inter-married, and lived together with the native Americans, the few art works, and crafts they left behind worked as an evidence to their existence at that time (Austin 355). In a web article titled "A History of Black Muslims in America" Sulayman Nyang, a professor of African studies at Howard University argues that, Muslims have come to the United States before Columbus. However, the real countable arrival was during slavery through the Black-Muslim slaves (Keyes).

Islam was one of many different religions in Africa; one which had a large effect on them being a part of each aspects of their lives and traditions. Due to this Muslim African-Americans brought Islam with them to America in the fifteenth century during the transatlantic slave trade the African slaves. The social anthropologist Robert Dannin estimated the percentage of Muslim slaves, stating that they represent about fifteen to twenty percent, and he argues that nearly half of the African slaves who were shipped come from societies where Islam has an influential role (qtd. in Elisabeth Harnes 28).

In the other hand, The British explorer, Mungo Park claimed that one seventh of Africans shipped to the U.S for the slave trade were able to both read and write Arabic, and that most of those literate slaves there were Sunni Muslims. Taking this into consideration can work as

a proof for the existence of Islam in the U.S from the early beginnings of the British settlement (qtd. in Harnes 28).

It is most likely that the first Muslims arriving to America were brought by the Spanish explorers in the 1500's as West African slaves (Akbar 8). The historian Sylviane Diouf argues that the Muslim slaves were more likely to be trusted and encouraged by their masters, he states that: "there is some indication that the Muslims succeeded in the slave structure, that they were promoted and trusted in a particular way" (Diouf 102).

This view supports the claim that most of these Muslim African-Americans were able to read and write in Arabic, and that their literacy skills helped them in holding better positions in their works. However, this did not help them in maintaining their freedom in practicing Islam; neither did it stop their masters from forcing them into Christianity. As Allan D. Austin explains, Muslim slaves faced a lot of obstacles in maintaining, and practicing their religion, and also marrying Muslim spouses (qtd. in Omanson 8).

Islamic schools were wide-spread in West Africa, and they played significant role in teaching illiterate African how to write and read verses of the Holy Quran. Thus, a good portion of the Muslim slaves who arrived to America could read and write. The Same fact was also proven by the scholar Franklin Frazier, who in his work entitled *The Negro Family in the United States*, argues that most of the Muslim slaves were already literate, and were able to both write copies of the Quran from memory and pen autobiographies (qtd. in Karman 15-16).

This is why it is believed that Islam was brought to the United States by the African Slaves, and that most of the Africans were taken from countries or tribes where Islam had a central position, such as Wolof, Serer, Mandinke, Bambara, Fulani, The old kingdoms of Gha-na, Mali, Songhay, Senegal and Nigeria (qtd. in Karman 20-22).

In his book, Michael A. Gomez describes slaves' hierarchy in which Muslim slaves had certain privileges that enabled them to hold higher positions, and power over the other slaves on the plantation fields (66). Additionally, another historian Sylviane Diouf, *Servants of Allah* stated that the life of Muslim slaves was shaped by their literacy, and the way they maintained their identity, and their special traditions. They had a better life in comparison to the other African slaves in America. According to Manning Marable and Hishaam Aidi, Muslim slaves were perceived as more intelligent, and they were given positions of power over the other non-Muslim counterparts by their masters (qtd. in Gibson 3).

Upon the works of these historians, we can say that the Muslim slaves were given higher positions by their masters, and the main reason behind this is the literacy skills that they had compared to the other slaves. Being educated among of all those illiterate slaves presented better spot for them.

Well-documented examples of those literate slaves are Prince Ayub Ibn Sulayman Diallo, who was abducted in 1731 as it was mentioned in the book of Jane I. Smith (qtd. in Muska Kamran). In his novel "Roots" Alex Haley describes the Muslim practices that were offered up as long as any living person there could remember. Haley also talks about how they used to pray while chained in the bottom of a slave ship. Muslim slave narratives continue to be discovered throughout the United States, one of the very famous slaves by their autobiographies are Job Ben Solomon's and Ibrahim ar-Rahman's (Gibson 2).

Other Muslim slaves who were also discovered, and documented in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the narratives of Shaykh Sana Sees of Panama, in 1999, and of Nicolas Said of Alabama, in 2000 (Diouf 107). In addition to Omar Ibn Said in North Carolina, Bilali Mohammed and Salih Bilali in the Georgia Sea Islands, and Abd al-Ruhman Ibrahima in

Mississippi who were known through the manuscripts that were written in Arabic (Turner 23-46).

Mohammed Ali ben Said is very famous Ex-slave, and a teacher in Detroit. Through his autobiography in *The Atlantic Monthly*, he describes how he was born to a family of merchants and military people in West Africa, and then he was enslaved in North Africa, Turkey, Russia, and the Americas before his arrival in Detroit (qtd. in Omanson 9).

1.2 - Converting to Christianity

At first the numbers of the first African-Muslim to arrive to the United States were very significant, but by the coming years what lasted is only few shattered communities that kept their Islamic identity. Michael Gomez in his book *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*, states that Muslim African-slaves made a lot of efforts to maintain and pass their religion to the coming generations (qtd. in Gibson 1).

However, by 1700, Slaveholders forced those Muslim slaves to leave their religion and embrace Christianity instead. The demand for slaves to be baptized increased severely during this period and as an effect Islam did not endure in the United States into the twentieth century (Gibson 1). In relation to this exact point the researcher Mattias Gardell explained:

The memory of Islam ... proved to be alive as late as the 1930s... It is however, obvious that we encounter a memory, not a living faith. While some Muslim slaves were able to pass their faith to their children, Islam seems to have been transformed into a curiosity in the minds of their children. (35)

What one can infer from this statement is that by the twentieth century what left from Islam, that was brought by the African slaves, was a memory, an idea or only a history

however the faith itself did not survive. Muslim African-Americans were forced to leave their religion in order to adapt to their new situation, Ghana Bassiri stated:

Conversion to Christianity was arguably the most widespread method by which African Muslims reconfigured their religious practices and beliefs to adapt to their new context and to form new communal relations. While we do not know exactly when and how (or even whether) the open practice of Islam completely ceased in nineteenth-century United States, it is clear from our sources that the American-born children of African Muslims did not practice Islam nor did they self-identify as Muslims. (Williams)

In his book entitled *Slave Religion: The invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* Raboteau explains that the American governors were instructed to force the Muslim-African slaves into Christianity. In 1660 Christianizing the Muslim-African slaves was by all means a goal that must be achieved, and that is exactly what Charles II through the Council for Foreign Plantations ordered. Orders were given to colonial governors such as Culpeper of Virginia in 1682 and Dongan of New York in 1686, to do whatever it takes in order to “facilitate and encourage the Conversion of Negroes and Indians to Christianity” (qtd. in Harnes 26).

The British government and missionaries demanded the slaveholders to force Christianity on their subjects, yet the masters feared that by doing so the slave will have much powerful status, and eventually they will demand for their freedom. However, by 1644 to 1706 the government passed legislation in six colonies prohibiting any kind of changes in the slave condition (Baer and Singer 4). This Legislation calmed down the fears of the slaveholders and eased their worries about not being able to control their slaves if they forced them into Christianity (4).

As a result, Muslim slaves found themselves struggling with keeping the requirements of their religion, and passing it to their children, or even proselytize it to the other slaves (Gibson 5). Another reason that made Muslim slaves embrace Christianity is pointed by the historian Michael A. Gomez. Who argues that the reasons that forced the African-American Muslims into embracing Christianity are their wish to make an Africanized version of Christianity and use religion as a means of social control (160).

Later on, the converted African-Americans formed their own “Black Church”, which worked as the only refuge to hide from the hostile treatment of their masters. As the scholar and the Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier argued:

The Negro Church with its own forms of religious worship was a world which the white man did not invade but only regarded with an attitude of condescending amusement. The Negro church could enjoy this freedom so long as it offered no threat to the white man’s dominance in both economic and social relations. And, on the whole, the Negro’s church was not a threat to white domination and aided the Negro to become accommodated to an inferior status. (qtd. In Gibson 6)

With the increase in the numbers of converts to Christianity, Islam started to vanish a bit by bit, and by the 1960s, it was totally replaced by the Black Church as the most important institution in the life of African- Americans.

Furthermore, some scholars consider Muslim African-American as non-Muslims, claiming that Black Muslims had developed a new kind of Islam which is far from the orthodox real Islam practiced by Muslim immigrants. In this particular matter, Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis throughout their book *Islamic Values in the United States* state that: “In the most general terms, the Muslims of North America can be divided into two distinct groups: immigrant Muslims and indigenous Muslims (3).

This means that they classify the Muslim American populations into only two groups, assuming that all African-Americans are heterodox, and all the immigrants are the orthodox. This belief was built on the assumption that Islam began in the United States in the 1920's with the coming of Muslim immigrants (Omanson 18). Basing on this work one may think that African-American Muslims are practicing unauthentic, incorrect Islam which will make them non-Muslim in the eyes of those who follow the orthodox Islam.

Edward Curtis However strongly disagrees with the argument above, stating that non-Sunni African-Americans should not be excluded from being Muslims. He said:

Wherever and whenever a person calls himself or herself Muslim, scholars should include this person's voice in their understanding of what constitutes Islam. The mere fact that one has labeled oneself a Muslim indicates some sort of participation, however slight, in the process of Islamic history. (6)

1.3- Reverting to Islam (Reversion)

By the early beginnings of the twentieth century, Islam had reappeared among the African-American community. For many African-Americans, re-converting to Islam was a form of resistance against white supremacy, and their inferior status (Gibson 7). They sought the process of converting to Islam as reaction and protest to racism, according to Elijah Muhammad the leaders of the most influential African-American organizations the Nation of Islam: "Islam is righteousness and he who would believe in it and do the will of Allah must be by nature one born of Allah.

The only people born are the Black Nation of which the so-called Negroes are descendants" (qtd. in Tinaz 94). Most of the African-American Muslims share this belief, thinking that Islam is their natural religion, and that all African slaves first to arrive to the new world were Muslims, and for that every African-American should be Muslim too. For

them, being Muslim is a way to reclaim what theirs all along and to refuse the whites domination including Christianity (Faisal).

As mentioned previously a significant number of the slaves were Muslims, this fact worked as another reason for converting to Islam. Thus, becoming Muslim for African-Americans was racially and ethnically like coming back to their history and their ancestors (185). So, we can say that converting to Islam Muslim is like returning to their roots, and their African culture. That is why most of them like to describe their religious and identity transformations as 'reversion' rather than 'conversion'.

In addition to this, African-Americans regarded Islam as the faith of equality, and tolerance regardless of race and ethnic origin. For them, Islam was a sign of hope to stand against the racist practices of White Americans, the injustice, economic deprivations, and the hegemony of the whites. African-Americans perceive Islam as Conrad Worrill said “more fighting religion against racism whereas Christianity is seen as kind of passive turn-the-other-cheek religion” (qtd. in Tinaz 96).

1.4- Prominent Muslim African-American Organizations

By the first decades of the twentieth century, numbers of nationalist groups contributed in the process of converting African-Americans to Islam. And promoting the idea of Islam as a lost part of Blacks' identity starting by as Howell wrote: “For many it was Marcus Garvey's Negro World, the newspaper the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) established in New York in 1914, that first popularized the link between Pan-Africanism and Islam. By 1920 the UNIA had more than 100,000 members and 800 chapters worldwide” (Williams).

Other Muslim African-American organization was the Moorish Science Temple (MST), which was founded in the mid-1920s, in Chicago under the leadership of Noble Drew Ali

(Gibson 8). The organizations' aim was to fight the white hegemony and to reject the inferior status of African Americans, thus they worked on establishing various temples across the United States, such as Detroit, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh (Baer and Singer 119).

The leader of the Moorish Science Temple, declared that Islam is the true, natural religion for all peoples of color, specifically African-Americans, and that their ancestors were Canaanites who descended from Noah's son, Ham (Haddad and Esposito 164). In 1929 The MSTA's leader, Ali was arrested for murder, and after he was released Ali died in odd circumstances. His followers believed that he was treated in very brutal way by the police during the period his spent in prison and that was the cause for his death.

The Nation of Islam (NOI) is considered the most influential Muslim African-American organization, which played a significant part in the re-emergence of Islam among African-Americans in the twentieth century. In 1930, W.D. Fard Muhammad founded the Nation of Islam in Detroit, a period that was marked by the Great Depression and the ongoing migration of African-Americans from the South to the North (qtd. in Gibson 13). There is no specific information about Fard's life, yet he most likely was an immigrant Muslim from Asia (qtd. in Omanson 10).

Fard's ideology was that the original people of the earth were blacks, and that the white with their evil nature were created through a scientific experiment done by black scientist. Therefore, Fard came to rescue the black from the devilish whites, and to prepare them for Allah's destruction, by showing them their true religion which is Islam. Soon after, Fard met Elijah Muhammad in Detroit, and he left a significant impact on him to the point that Muhammad thought that Fard was a divine presence (Omanson 10). Edward Curtis explains in his book, *Islam in Black America*, how Elijah Muhammad believed that Fard was a God, he said:

Fard, Muhammad believed, was God in the flesh; Muhammad understood himself to be His Messenger...Muhammad later claimed that Fard was an immigrant from Mecca, Saudi Arabia, who came in 1930 to 'mentally resurrect' the so-called Negro from his deceptive views of self. (63- 69)

Next to take the leadership was Elijah Muhammad or as he was known by Elijah Poole a son of a former slave from Sandersville. In 1923 Elijah went to Detroit where he met Fard and by 1930, he became assistant minister in the NOI. After the mysterious disappearance of Fard in 1934, Elijah Muhammad took over the leadership of the NOI. He held the title of "Minister of Islam." Later on, he formed the NOI's second temple and moved to Chicago. Elijah was arrested for violating the Selective Service Act and he was taken to jail from the 1942 to 1946, where he worked on recruiting African-American inmates as members in the NOI and turning them into Islam as a mean of salvation.

In the period of Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X was the most known minister in the NOI. He used to be known as Malcolm little, but as the other members of the NOI he changed his last name to X. Malcolm X grow to be one of the most powerful figures in the NOI, and his life became an remarkable journey that influenced many African-Americans to change their lives by adapting Islam (Reddie). He had a rough childhood starting by the killing of his father, his mother was drifted to insanity, all his brothers and sisters were sent to foster families across the city and His family had been scattered over night (Leon 164).

Malcolm X dreams were being crashed not only by the poverty he suffered from, but also by the racism of the white men. All of these reasons had forced him into adapting a criminal lifestyle, in which He started stealing at the age of thirteen. He was arrested for robbery and sentenced for eight years in prison in 1946. There, he dedicated all his time to reading in

order to educate himself and that is when he knew all about Islam, so he made his choice of converting to it.

In this period, he also heard about the NOI from his brothers and sisters, which later on will join. While in the NOI Malcolm X will emerge as one of the country's most vocal advocates of Black Nationalism and militancy in the early 1950s. due to his various talents His career moved fast from a new convert to the most trusted lieutenant, assistant minister, minister, and finally a national minister, national spokesman and representative of Elijah Muhammad.

By 1975, and after the great success under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, and his minister Malcolm X, Warith Deen Mohammed assumed the leadership of the NOI. However, he was a Sunni Muslim, which made it difficult for him to accept the racial religion that his father created. Thus, Warith Deen Mohammed worked on changing the Nation of Islam into a Sunni Muslim community, based on the Qur'an and the Five Pillars of Islam. Though, many disagreed with this notion and before the death of Warith Deen Mohammed in 2008, Louis Farrakhan broke away from him and continued on the path of Elijah Muhammad and Fard till the present day (Omanson 11-12).

African-American Muslims form an undeniable part of the American Muslim community in general, and they continue to be the major source for the growth of Muslim population due to conversion and High birth rates. However, they seem to be overlooked part of Islam in the United States, in a way that today they are occupying an underprivileged position in the American society being a minority within a minority. Studies show that Nowadays Muslim African-Americans had made a position in the American society holding a significant portion from the American population as whole.

Since their first arrival to the United States, they went through many challenges and encountered many hard situations. Many of which forced them to give up their African traditions, beliefs and even their faith. The twentieth century was the next period in the history of MAAs which was marked by a sense of residence through giving up on the beliefs forced upon them and embracing their true natural religion Islam. The experiences undergone by Muslim African-Americans also shaped their current position in the society and taught them how to stand up in the face of discrimination and call for their rights. No matter if they were discriminated because of their color by being Blacks or nowadays because of their religion by being Muslims.

1.5- population size

Even though Scholars and Muslim American advocacy groups claim that there is no official statistics for the numbers of Muslim population in the United States, mainly due to two reasons; the first is that the U.S. Census Bureau has a policy that prevent asking people about their religious affiliation, and the second reason is the rich diversity of the American Muslim population. However, several surveys and demographic studies were made to estimate the numbers of American Muslims in general, and those from An African-American origin specifically. Recently in 2017, Pew Research Center estimated the numbers of Muslims living in the U.S. about 3.45 million of all ages. In other words, Muslims represent 1.1% of the overall population of the United States (Besheer).

These studies had proven that the Muslim communities in the U.S. are highly diverse; taking into account the various ethnic, racial and cultural groups they came from which are located all around the world. Through a study made by The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) they declared that American Muslims are now holding a portion of six to seven million which is seen as a highly significant.

Regardless of the diverse nature of the Muslims population, there are mainly three dominant groups African-Americans, Arabs, and Asians. Muslims of African-American origin form today a significant portion of the Muslim American population as whole, though estimates of their size vary considerably like in the case of Muslims in America in general.

A survey in 1992, conducted by one of country's largest Muslim lobbying organizations the American Muslim Council, place the percentage of African-Americans as the highest minority, in comparison to both Arabs, and Asians. According to this source in particular Muslim African-Americans represent about forty-two percent of the total Muslim population. An interview with 1,033 Muslim by PEW research showed that twenty-three percent of American Muslims identify themselves as African-Americans, thirty percent as white, and twenty-one percent as Asian ("A Religious Portrait of African-Americans").

According to PEW research center more than half of native-born Muslims are African-American many of whom are converts to Islam. In other words, total of twenty percent from the overall thirty-five percent native-born Muslims are African-Americans, unlike the sixty-five percent who were born somewhere else, and the thirty-nine percent of those who came to the United States as immigrants by the 1990s (Kohut, Keeter and Smith 1). Another similar statistics were introduced by Stone in 1991, in which he argues that native African-Americans represent over thirty percent of the American-Muslim populations. While twenty-eight were from the East or North Africa, more than twenty-six percent came from east Europe, and only eleven percent are Asians (qtd. in Kobeisy 54).

Scholars like Ba-Yunus and Siddiqi who are interested in the life and the history of African-Americans state that, African-Americans represent the second minority in the United States holding a percentage of twenty-nine percent, the first are Arabs by thirty-two percent, the remaining are Asians, and Latins (qtd. in kobeisy 54).

Aminah Beverly McClouds another researcher on Muslim African-Americans states in the introduction of her book that they are currently the biggest minority in the United States. Recitation that they consist of 1.5 to 4.5 million distributed across at least seventeen distinct communities (1).

Taking into consideration all these statistics which was made through different studies and scholars, we can say that it is highly difficult to decide which Muslim minority hold the biggest part in the whole Muslim-American population. Besides that, the numbers of these dominant three groups are very close to each other's. Thus, each group from Arab Americans, Asian Americans, and African-Americans make up about twenty-five to thirty percent of the Muslim American population ("Religious Beliefs and Practices").

1.6- Socioeconomic conditions and the Demographic distribution of Muslim African-Americans in the U.S.

The scholars Haddad, Smith, and Esposito portray the socioeconomic condition of the African-American Muslims, stating that they usually have a lower socioeconomic status in comparison with Immigrant Muslims. In their book Religion and Immigration, they argued:

The immigrant community has at least ten times the wealth of the African, Hispanic, European, and Native American community. They therefore have the best facilities, including those for providing Islamic schooling, and can take advantage of ready access to the Muslim world. (172)

Taking this into consideration one can say that a large part of the African-American Muslims in the United States is living in poverty and facing poor conditions that stand in the way of their education, work, and even their social life.

The economic status of the Muslim Immigrants in the United States is so much better than that of the African-American Muslims. Most of the Muslim immigrants belong to the middle, or the upper class, unlike African-American Muslims who are usually classified in the lower end of the capitalist system as the scholar and the writer Jamillah Karim describes it in her book *American Muslim Women* (56). For Muslim immigrants their status gave them an access to superior education, living conditions, and better jobs.

In the other hand most of the African-American Muslims are less educated, with hard living condition, and simple jobs (Omanson 22). These conditions also affect their residential living patterns, in way that many African-American communities are in poor and unfavorable urban centers. Jamillah makes this fact a bit obvious, she states: “this residential division, often spoken of as an inner-city versus a suburban division, is a major theme in intra-ummah discussions of race” (40).

In her thesis under the title of *African-American and Arab American Muslim Communities in the Detroit UMMAH*, Lisa Gail Omanson argues that most of The Muslim African-American communities are situated in metropolitan cities such as New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Detroit. The focus of her study was on Detroit, mainly because this city in particular represents an important part in the history of African-American Muslims, being a major city of the Great Migration, which was as she states a demographic and cultural factor that influenced the conversion of thousands of African-Americans to Islam in the twentieth century (18).

Another point is that African-American Muslims have their own mosques different from those of the Muslim immigrants. To investigate this, point a study was made in Los Angeles by Ghanea Bassiri Kambiz and she found that African-American Muslims built most of their mosques in the inner cities, places that Muslim Immigrants did not visit or attend the

mosques there (175). The reasons for why African-American Muslims have chosen these areas in particular to build their mosques are simply to fight the issues that most of them were facing, such as poverty, racism, and the hard-living conditions in general (Omanson 27).

The African-American Muslim community grew to include black American members of mosque, African-American follower of Salafi and Wahhabi, African- American Shi'is, African-American Sufis, Five Percenters, Sunni followers of Wallace D. Muhammad, members of the Moorish Science Temple, members of local Muslim Student Associations, and followers of Minister Lois Farrakhan, who reconstituted a version of the Nation of Islam in 1978. However, many black Muslims are still not associated with any organized group.

Chapter two: Black Muslim Nationalism during the Civil Rights Movement 1950-1960.

Muslims from African-American origins, along with African-Americans of other faiths, played a significant role in the historical movement known as the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. This chapter demonstrates the main contributions of Muslim African-Americans to this historical movement, shedding light on the main organizations, actions, and attitudes they made during this period. The chapter provides an overview on the Civil Rights Movement in general, its timing and the major reasons that triggered it.

Moreover, the chapter explores the most known Muslim African-American representative organizations, which were already in action When the CRM started in 1950s. Mainly the most known among Muslim African-Americans was the Nation of Islam. This chapter also examines the main actions and efforts taken by this organization to support the freedom and the liberty of Blacks in general and Muslim African-Americans specifically. It describes the NOI's ideology and how it worked on advocating Black Identity and Black Nationalism, through the total rejection of the white race and through calling for a separate nation only for Black people.

Additionally, the chapter provides portraits of some prominent Muslim African-American leaders, who took a major role in promoting the civil and the human rights of African-Americans during the CRM. Most of these figures were leaders of the NOI, yet one in particular made a significant mark in both the history of the NOI and the CRM. Malcolm X was considered as the most charismatic minister in the NOI in the early 1950s, and he had many contributions to the CRM.

2.1-An Overview on the Civil Rights Movement in the United States

The Civil Rights Movement which shaped US affairs during the fifties and the sixties is of great significance in the American history. Despite the fact that the Civil War had emancipated many African-American slaves and granted few basic rights for them, yet the executions of those rights were rare occasions and segregation continued to exist specially in the American South. These factors forced African-Americans into an altering journey in which African-Americans fought for equality in economy, politics, justice, education and for better social conditions. Their main objectives were to end the racist crimes against them, the segregation they faced and the daily discrimination.

The movement mobilized every black family in the United States and pushed them to work to achieve their rights either by cooperation with their own race only or working in non-violent way together with white people of the United States. It was first triggered by the brutal killing of the young boy Emmett Till, simply because he addressed a white woman. His case was an urgent call for Blacks to change their status. Another reason and maybe the spark that ignited the movement was that of Rosa Parks, a black woman who disobeyed the bus driver when he asked her to leave her seat for a white man, but she refused and at the next bus stop she was arrested “for violating the municipal ordinance mandating segregation on publicly owned vehicles” (Stikoff 37-38).

After These two incidents and many others the movement was all around the U.S. Many Americans from African origins engaged in sit-ins, boycotts and marches. In addition, they formed many organizations to call for a Black Nationalism, the most important for Black Muslims was the Nation of Islam. In his book *From Black Muslims to Muslims*, the scholar of black nationalism Clifton E. Marsh tried to portray the circumstances that circled the creation of the Nation of Islam, the most active and prominent Muslim organization during the CRM. The NOI was founded in 1930 in Detroit, in a period that was marked as a critical socio-economic phase in the history of the United States (7).

In his book, Marsh specified two distinct periods that contributed to Black discontent. The first event was the Great Migration when many of the African-Americans migrated to the north for the hope of better living conditions. The second phase was After the First World War, the Great Depression hit the United States severely, which crushed the hope of African-Americans and made their status worse than it had been (7).

2.2 - Brief history of the Nation of Islam

The Nation of Islam is certainly the single major organization that represented Muslim African-Americans and fought for their rights during the CRM. It was the most prominent and influential Muslim Black Nationalist organization during the fifties and the sixties. The founder of the NOI Wallace Deen Fard assured African-Americans that Islam was their real religion, and that Christianity was the faith of the white and the cause for all the discrimination they faced. The whites were according to him devils who happen to exist because of a mistake in a scientific experiment, and who are inferior to the black race.

In his book *A History of the Nation of Islam* Dawn Marie Gibson explains the adopted ideology of the Nation of Islam. According to Gibson, the early leaders of the NOI such as Wallace Fard and later on Elijah Muhammad adopted certain ideology mainly from two other

organizations, the Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) (13). Hence, the teaching of the NOI was not new to African-Americans, but rather many of whom were part of organizations which already existed and this provided them with certain ideas that shaped their behaviors and visions toward the white race (13).

As a social movement the Nation of Islam worked to help Muslim African-Americans politically and economically, and also worked as a Black Nationalist movement that helped in building a sense of pride of Black race and culture and to raise consciousness among Muslim African Americans (Marsh 7). Fard focused his attention on the working class to spread his ideology, considering the fact that they suffered the most. He started by discussing their problems in the United States; criticizing the whites and Christianity and promoting Islam to be their natural religion. Fard took advantage of the economic, religious, and social crises that African-Americans were going through to build the basis of the Nation of Islam (7).

In a short period of three years, Fard was able to build a strong Organization for promoting Black Nationalism. In 1934, however, and after a short period, Fard disappeared leaving the leadership of the NOI in the hand of his minister Elijah. Elijah Poole who afterward changed his name to Elijah Muhammad, was one of the first followers of Fard. By the 1950s, the NOI grew to include thousands of MAAs and they managed to build few Temples across the U.S. Later in 1952 the NOI welcomed one of its prominent figures Malcolm X. When Malcolm X first joined the NOI, he took the position of the Nation's spokesman, which helped in making the NOI well known among African-Americans and across the United States ("Message to the Grassroots").

The members of the NOI were known as "Black Muslims", this term was first used in 1956, by Dr. C. Eric Lincoln. It became widely known and purely linked to the NOI's

members. That is why Lincoln, in his book *The Black Muslim in America* tried to give a clear definition for who are Black Muslims, and what they believe in stating the follow:

Who are these faithful, these true believers, these Black Muslims? Most simply, a Black Muslim is an African American who is a follower of Elijah Muhammad, “Spiritual Leader of the Lost-Found Nation in the West.” Black Muslims are distinguished from orthodox Moslems not in the mere spelling of the word (strictly speaking, either form is correct) but in their belief that the leader, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, is the Messenger of Allah, directly commissioned by Allah himself, who came in person (under the name of Fard) to wake the sleeping Black Nation and rid them of the whites’ age-old domination. (20)

However, Muslim African-Americans rejected this term and refused to be labeled as such. MAAs saw themselves as any other American-Muslims, who follow the mainstream Islam and rejected the distinction this term had brought.

2.3 - Contributions of the Nation of Islam during the Civil Rights Movement

The NOI had a great impact on the CRM, in a way that it empowered MAAs to fight for their rights and stand up in the face of racism and segregation. They worked on teaching MAAs the history of their African ancestors, which gave them a sense of unity and belonging. The aim of the NOI is to bring all African-Americans together as one unit in front of the white race. As Malcolm X said:

One of the things that made Black Muslim movement grow was its emphasis upon things African. African blood, African origin, African culture, African ties. And you’d be surprised—we discovered that deep within the subconscious of the Black man in this country, he is still more African than he is American. (Taylor 109)

The NOI success lied in the fact that it managed to shed light on all the brutality committed by the White against the Black race, notably the dreadful execution of about three thousand African-Americans in the period between 1882 and 1968. “typically, the victims were hung or burned to death by mobs of White vigilantes, frequently in front of thousands of spectators, many of whom would take pieces of the dead person's body as souvenirs to help remember the spectacular event” (Logan 239).

What made the NOI's ideology more credible is the fact that MAAs became more aware of the brutal crimes made by the white devils against their race. In addition to teaching that the Black race is superior to the white race; MAAs were finally able to face any one who stands in their way of having their fundamental human rights and helped in spreading a sense of awareness among AAs to the crimes committed against them.

The Nation of Islam had come to play a very important role in the Civil Rights Movement especially during the period 1960 to 1965. The NOI ideology taught MAAs that the white man is a devil that “robbed, raped, beaten and destroyed the Black man” (Lusher). For this reason, integration with the whites was impossible, and the establishment of a separate nation for African-Americans only had become a necessity (Skutsch 25).

As it was documented the leader of the organization Elijah Muhammed fought for the freedom, equality, justice in front of the law; freedom for all the Muslim prisoners, and most importantly the right to establish a separate state in America (Skutsch 25). MAAs started to lose hope in the American government, and they began following the NOI bearing in mind all the efforts that were done by its leaders to fight for the rights of Blacks in general.

In his book *A History of the Nation of Islam*, Dawn Marie Gibson argues that the empty promises given by the United States' government for achieving equality and freedom to African-Americans on one hand, as well as the continuous segregation they faced each day in

the other hand helped in providing a solid ground for the Nation of Islam to be built upon (34).

The years of the CRM witnessed a rise in the membership of the NOI that is when many black youths began to realize that the non-violent strategies of the civil rights movement leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr, were leading to nowhere. They noticed that the participants in the peaceful actions like sit-in protests, boycotts, and marches suffered from beatings and petrol bombings. This pushed them to abandon the idea of integrating with the whites and joined the Nation of Islam which supported the idea that the rights of African-Americans in general and those of the Muslims minority within them were to be accomplished only by being separate from the source of their sufferance.

Many scholars such as the sociologist C. Eric Lincoln argue that Muslim African-Americans had their own way in fighting for their rights, and they did not follow the mainstream of the Civil Right Movement. In one of his works, *The Black Muslims in America*, C. Eric Lincoln, wrote that MAAs “engage in no sit-ins, test no segregation statutes, and participate in no marches on Washington or anywhere else.” (3-4).

What is apparent is that MAAs became more aware of the racist crimes against their race and that they had to face it not only by engaging in peaceful protests but rather taking actions against this violence. Hence, they decided to take a completely different course to fight for their liberty, and to achieve their aims.

When Elijah Muhammad took over the NOI, he continued to follow the Fard’s ideology emphasizing on Black pride. Elijah called for Black separatism and refused the idea of integration with the whites. He worked on establishing religious centers only for Blacks and stressed the need for African-Americans to create their own businesses and to foster their economic status by selling and buying only to and from other African-Americans (Ness 230).

In 1942 Elijah was arrested, for not serving in the American army during the Second World War and was taken to federal prison. During his time in prison he recruited many African-Americans to NOI; one of them is going to be the Nation's most known voice, Malcolm X.

Elijah encouraged all African-Americans to adapt Islam and promoted the idea of Black race superiority. Under his leadership in NOI, he called for a separate Nation for African-Americans, thus the NOI bought large pieces of land in the South to build temples, to set up their own business and to form their independent economic force. Later on, during the Second World War Muhammad warned the members of the NOI not to participate in the draft (Simkin). Elijah Muhammad focused on those MAAs who were most vulnerable and exploited, he helped many of them to heal from their drug addiction and to leave the criminal lifestyle they were following.

His insistence on hard work and self-mastery encouraged many Muslim African-Americans to improve their economic status. Additionally, he built more than seventy Muslim temples across the United States (Melton). Elijah Muhammad died in 1975 and was replaced by his son Wallace Dean Muhammad. The latter attempted to bring the NOI into orthodox Islam and changed the name of the Nation to the World Community of Islam.

In the year of 1975, W. Deen Mohammed took his father's place as the leader of the NOI, then he commenced in turning the NOI into more Orthodox Islam. Thus, in 1985 he dissolved the organization in order for its members to join the world wide orthodox Islamic community (Ness 230). He explained the teachings of his father Elijah Muhammad and promoted the ideas of "tauhid". Mohammed called Muslim African-Americans to get more Islamic education and educate them about the real Islam aiming at fostering interracial and interreligious cooperation. He later on changed the name of the NOI to The World Community of Al-Islam, and then The American Muslim Mission

W. Deen Mohammed also worked on destroying the racial barriers that the NOI used to call for and changed what Black Muslims used to call Temples into real Islamic houses like mosques and Masjids. He also published a weekly journal and broadcasted radio and television shows that helped in extending the numbers of Muslim African-Americans to two million. In 1960, Wallace Deen Mohammed Was sent to prison because he refused registering with the selective service. In fact, he chose to serve in federal prison rather than the State Hospital, thinking that serving in the hospital would indirectly help in the war (“Warith Deen Mohammed...”).

Many members in the Nation of Islam were against Wallace Deen Mohammed’s ideology, and they continued the path of Fard and Elijah. The most known of them was the Nation’s Minister Louis Farrakhan. In 1978, Louis Farrakhan created the “new” Nation of Islam, which is basically the same as the old one with the same teachings of Elijah Muhammad (Gibson 112). Through this new nation Farrakhan tried to stand in the face of racism and the disintegration of African-Americans.

hence in 1995 he organized the Million Man March on Washington. A March which made a huge success and attracted millions of African-Americans together and helped in the improvement of the NOI to its current state. Despite the fact that there were less than 30,000 members in the NOI; Louis Farrakhan succeeded in making it a significant icon and an influential force in the United States (Gibson126-127)

2.4- leadership of Malcolm X

Even though the Nation of Islam was present during the 1930s and 1940s, yet it experienced a period of extraordinary growth between 1953 and 1961. This period witnessed the rise of a young leader of the NOI who would give a boost to the activism of the organization. This was Minister Malcolm X, who rapidly became a significant member in the

organization. Malcolm X contributed significantly in rendering the NOI well-known to the U.S community. He worked on establishing new temples for the NOI across Boston, Philadelphia, Harlem, Atlanta and many other states (Ness 31).

Malcolm X's attitudes, eloquent speeches and charismatic actions had played a vital role in changing the lives of so many Muslim African-Americans. In a time when they were suffering from the dilemma of their existence in the United States, they found him as an example to follow. After the disappointing results of the peaceful ways that African-Americans followed, Malcolm's ideas started to be very appealing to them. He called all African-Americans to defend themselves "...by any means necessary. If someone puts a hand on you send him to the cemetery" (Enisuoh).

2.5- Rise and early activism

Malcolm X, later on known by EL-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, rose to prominence becoming the most influential figure in The Nation of Islam. He was known of his extremist thoughts and his dedication to the fight for Black freedom. Malcolm X drew a perfect example for MAAs to follow as it was said: "What made Malcolm X a great man, is that he had the guts to say what nine-tenth of American Negroes would like to say but don't have the guts to say" (Nimtz) He also helped increasing in the membership of NOI.

Malcolm X initially called for separation and self-defense to achieve the black dignity. Thus, in 1961 he made a very important step for the sake of the organization, when bought of piece of land for the NOI's separatist program. This land was used later on by Malcolm X himself to establish some of the NOI's temples (Marshall 68).

Malcolm X used Islam and its tolerance and non-racist nature to attract as many African-Americans as he can to the Nation of Islam. When it comes to Islam Malcolm X stated that "I

believe in a religion that believes in freedom. Any time I have to accept a religion that won't let me fight a battle for my people, I say to hell with that religion” (Abdul-Karim 86). In addition to the religious factor, the sense of strength and ambition that Malcolm X delivered through speeches empowered many Muslim African-Americans and made their voice loud and heard all over the United States of America.

Malcolm X has the credit of making the NOI famous, and his numerous contributions to the organization helped on its improvement. Being such a fluent and persuasive speaker attracted thousands of African-Americans to join the Nation of Islam, in fact the membership of the organization rose from 500 in 1952 to 30,000 in 1963 (Bowen 18-19). According to Marshall, Malcolm X is the one who initiated “Muhammad Speaks” the first NOI’s newspaper, through which he spread the messages of the Nation of Islam to the whole country. In addition to this, his interviews in other media like the radios and the televisions gave the NOI a national and international voice during the CRM (68).

Malcolm X promoted the idea of Self-Help, explaining that Muslim African-Americans should have their own businesses and their own decent homes like all members of the other ethnic groups. He continued to call all the MAAs to hire and to patronize their own kind, in this way they will be able to build up sort of Black pride and identity for their own. Malcolm X claimed that AAMs are not in need of the white, but rather they need to depend on their own to earn the respect they need first from themselves and then the whites (Sunstein 1).

Furthermore, Malcolm X called AAMs to practice their American citizenship by participating in the elections and chose their representatives as any other citizens in the United States. The vote for Malcolm X was very important in the process of liberation. One of the civil rights Malcolm X supported and called for is the voter registration. He called for

all black people to vote for black officials that represent them and promote their interests. In one of his speeches he stated:

The campaign that they have in Mississippi for voter registration is a good campaign...it put them in a position to strike right at the base of all their misery, if our people down there are risking their lives so that they can register...what do you and I look like in New York City, with the registration booth only a few blocks away and we haven't been in it? (18)

He also delivered another speech in Harlem rally, in which he spoke to huge number of African-Americans, inviting them for practicing their rights of being American citizens. He stated: "it's a sin for you and me not to be registered so we can vote in New York City and in New York State, or throughout the North" (18).

For Malcolm X the only way to establish the goals that Muslim African-Americans are fighting for is through racial separation from the white, he focused on this point stating the following:

[A]s long as our people here in America are dependent upon the white man, we will always be begging him for jobs, food, clothing, and housing. . .The Negro here in America has been treated like a child. A child stays with the mother until the time of birth! When the time of birth arrives, the child must be separated, or it will destroy its mother and itself.... The child cries for and needs its own world! (Sunstein 197)

Malcolm X 'continuous fight for the rights of MAAs, and his unique strategies made him a prominent leader and outstanding voice in the U.S in the period of 1960-1965. While other civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr called for peaceful protest to affect the American government, Malcolm X called for militant, direct actions against the racist crimes practiced against African-Americans. Thus, as reaction to the famous speech of Martin "I

have a dream”, Malcolm X commented “while they’re dreaming, our people are living a nightmare” (Enisuoh).

The debate between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr continued to exist till the very end. When Martin got the Nobel Peace Prize, Malcolm took the chance to show people that their ways are very different and started to question is Martin really faithful for the CRM or he was all talk with no action. Malcolm stated “he got the peace prize, we got the problem. I don’t want the white man giving me medals. If I’m following a general and he’s leading me into battle, and the enemy tends to give him rewards or awards, I get suspicious of him, especially if he gets a peace award before the war is over” (Enisuoh).

By the beginning of the sixties it becomes obvious that Black Muslims and Christian African-Americans had taken different roads to call for their rights. Martin Luther King Jr and his Christian followers decided on non-violent methodology to gain their rights, Black Muslims with the leadership of Malcolm X and The Nation of Islam were ready to take any means to achieve the equality and the freedom they were fighting for. However, the path taken by Black Muslims was not very welcomed by the American government, and they were conceived as a threat.

Malcolm X was the voice of many African-Americans; he worked on spreading their cause not only in the United States but all around the world. He had good ties with the third world nations, where he made a tour of more than six months. “Our problem is your problem” this was the statement by which Malcolm X convinced some of the African leaders to bring the United States before the united Nations and charge her with violating the human rights of twenty-two million African-Americans (Flamm 55).

2.6 – The split from the Nation of Islam

With time passing, Malcolm started to see the Nation of Islam as merely a religio-cultural organization that had nothing to do with the politics of the civil rights movements. He came to the conclusion that the philosophy of the NOI was too limited and helpless, he said: “it took part in nothing that black people in this country were doing to correct conditions that existed in our community” (Cone 18). Thus, Malcolm X decided that he was no longer a member in this organization, and in a way or another NOI approach toward the Civil Rights Movement needed to be changed, thus he decided to leave the NOI.

There were many reasons why Malcolm had chosen separation from the NOI. Elijah Muhammad was regularly absent from the NOI, due to his scandalous affairs with African-American women (2). In addition, some members in the NOI started to develop a sense of jealousy and envy toward Malcolm’s success. However, the main reason was when Malcolm disobeyed the order of Elijah that it is forbidden for any member of the nation to talk about the assassination of the American president John F Kennedy.

Malcolm X was suspended from the NOI for almost ninety days for his comment on this incident saying “the chickens have come home to roost. Being an old farm boy myself, chickens coming home to roost never did make me sad; they’ve always made me glad” (Enisuoh). Even after the ninety days had passed Malcolm X was no longer allowed to speak on behalf of the NOI. For this reason, Malcolm X chose another path to continue his journey for the civil rights fight. Thus, in March 8, 1964, he officially left the NOI to form his own organization.

When he formed his own organization, Malcolm X explained his ideologies. Concerning his violent strategy, he made it clear that any African-American have to respect and to obey

the laws, however if they were to be abused in any way they must defend themselves. In one of his speeches Malcolm X called all Muslim African-Americans to be:

Peaceful, law abiding-but the time has come for the American Negro to fight back in self-defense whenever and wherever he is being unjustly or unlawfully attacked. If the government thinks I am wrong for saying this, then let the government start doing its job. (Enisuoh)

The new course that Malcolm X took was rather considered as a threat for the whole Capitalist system in the United States of America. The voyage to Africa was an eye-opening experience for Malcolm to notice that the United States was following a system that would by any means lead to racism and discrimination. He argued that:

While I was traveling I noticed that most of the countries that have recently emerged into independence have turned away from the so-called capitalistic system in the direction of socialism...most of the countries that were colonial powers were capitalist countries...you can't have capitalism without racism (Enisuoh).

After his trip to Africa and a pilgrimage to Mecca, the vision of Malcolm X to Black Nationalism had also changed completely. He realized that the idea of separation from the whites was not necessarily a good one, bearing in mind the huge numbers of Africans who are whites. After his meeting with the Algerian ambassador, Malcolm X made a statement which would summarize his current vision towards the Black Nationalism, and change his attitudes toward the CRM:

I used to define Black Nationalism as the idea that the black man should control the economy of his community, the politics of the community and so forth. But when I was in Africa in May, in Ghana, I was speaking with the Algerian ambassador who is extremely militant and

is a revolutionary in the truest sense of the word...When I told him my political, social and economic philosophy was Black Nationalism; he asked me where did that leave him? Because he was white. He was an African but he was Algerian and to all appearances, a white man. And I said I define my objective as the victory of Black Nationalism – where did that leave him? Where does that leave revolutionaries in Morocco, Egypt, Iraq and Mauritania? So he showed me where I was alienating people who were true revolutionaries, dedicated to overthrowing the system of exploitation that exists on this earth by any means necessary. So I had to do a lot of thinking and reappraising of my definition of Black Nationalism. Can we sum up the solution to the problems confronting our people as Black Nationalism? And if you noticed I haven't been using the expression for several months. But I would still be hard pressed to give a specific definition of the overall philosophy which I think is necessary for the liberation of black people in this country. (Breitman 64-69)

In addition, he also gave up on the idea of separation and declared that Muslim African-Americans are willing to work with the whites or any other ethnic group but first thing is that all African-Americans must unify with each other. He said “we will work with anyone, with any group, no matter what their color is, as long as they are genuinely interested in taking the type of steps necessary to bring an end to the injustices that black people in this country are inflicted by” (Enisuoh).

The nationalist and the leader Malcolm X in this period was under a serious threat, first his house was firebombed. Week after on 21st of February 1965, Malcolm X was murdered at a party meeting in Harlem by Three other Black Muslims. It was said that the people involved are members in the Nation of Islam (Atwal). His continuous fight for the rights of African-American Muslims, and his rejection for the led him to this tragic end. As He said “Just as a chicken cannot produce a duck egg”, he charged, “the system in this country cannot produce

freedom for an Afro-American.” And he added that if it did, “you would say it was certainly a revolutionary chicken.” (Felber)

Muslim African-Americans took a great part in fighting for the civil and the human rights of Black race in the CRM. They worked hand in hand with the other African-Americans, and their contributions cannot be ignored. Through this chapter it became apparent that the racism and the discrimination Muslim African-Americans faced raised their sense of Black identity and Black Nationalism. They were conceived as second-class citizens in front of the supremacy and the hegemony of the white people, thus they decided that it is high time to fight for their rights.

They adopted the ideology of unity among African-Americans and the separation from the white to call for their lost rights including equal education, job opportunities, and fair treatment in the society. Nevertheless, Muslim African-American strategies of taking any means necessary to achieve their goals had given them bad reputation and stigmatized them as aggressive and violent. That resulted a kind of rejection toward the NOI as it was often regarded an extremist and radical organization that contradicted the stream of the Civil Rights Movement.

The presence of the Nation of Islam within the US during the CRM, built a sense of unity and strength between Muslim African-Americans. The NOI in general and Malcolm X specifically gave the Black Muslims a voice that would impact their fight for their rights. However, the journey did not stop here and the discrimination would increase after the attacks of 9/11.now MAAs will face the double racism and the hatred they already faced because of their color and of their faith.

Chapter three: African-American Muslim Activism in Post 9/11

Tuesday 11 September 2001 is one of the most tragic days in the history of the United States. The long shadow of that day soon reached parts of the world thousands of kilometers away. It was a watershed that altered life in America and the entire world. Devastating wars followed targeting Muslim-majority countries; Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Muslims living in America and other Western countries have also lived under mounting pressure since that day.

No one could feel the ramifications of the post-9/11 backlash as African-American Muslims did. Yet there is not much documentation about their ordeal or the efforts they made to face this backlash. This chapter would go through the particular experience undergone by Muslim African-Americans after the attack of 9/11 and their response to the anti-Muslim backlash. At first the chapter would briefly discuss the rigorous backlash toward Muslims in the U.S. and how they managed to face it. Yet the main focus would be on Muslims African-Americans, and the ways they participated in the fight against Islamophobia and the discrimination they faced from the American public

Because the attacks were associated with Muslim extremist groups, no matter what origin you are, after that day if you are a Muslim, look like one, or have a Muslim name you are very likely to face all kinds of attacks and assaults. The civil rights of Muslims in America, as in Europe, have been largely eroded and they have been treated as the enemy within.

The U.S. Muslim communities and their representative groups doubled their efforts to help overcoming the increasing Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims. Muslims from different ethnic and national origins have been victims of the backlash on the basis of their religion and, therefore, felt the need of unification and working together.

Though most accounts and literature on the post-9/11 anti-Muslim backlash in America and on the response of Muslims have focused on Muslims from Asian and Arab origins, Muslim African-Americans, who form a considerable part of the U.S. Muslim community, have also been victims of the backlash. The mounting Islamophobic attacks did not distinguish between a mosque of black Muslims and one of Pakistanis; or between an Arab Hijabi woman and a Black Hijabi woman.

Moreover, among all Muslim groups in America, those of African origin have the advantage of earning the experience of the Civil Rights era. They are more familiar with the kind of pressures made on Muslims post-9/11 and thus more likely to be aware of the best strategies to deal with the government and the resist discrimination. This chapter is, therefore, an attempt to shed light on the impact of the backlash on MAAs in particular and to examine their reaction to it and their contribution to the Muslim community's fight against that backlash. It also studies how the backlash has affected the relationship between MAAs and other Muslim groups in the country.

3.1- Anti-Muslims Backlash

“Since the attacks, people who look Middle Eastern and Muslim, whatever their religion or nation of origin have been singled out for harassment, threats and assaults” (Lichtblau). For all Muslims living in the United States, it was an overwhelming period and everything would change in their lives. As Arshad Khan described it “... September 11.2001, changed America. The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center brought home to Americans something they had heard about but never really experienced...” (1)

Muslim African-Americans were not surprised of the American Backlash towards Muslims; they understood the familiar anger, which gave them the ability to be once again the leaders of a movement for their rights. This explains the way African-American

Muslims reacted particularly at the social and the political levels. Their efforts have been focused mainly on three main objectives. Fighting and rejecting stereotyping and racism, working hard to improve the status of the minorities, and finally building strong ties with other Muslim immigrants in the USA.

There have been fundamental contributions of the Muslim African-American organizations and advocacy groups to improve the status of Muslims after 9/11. They have been active during this struggle; the ways they followed in helping other Muslims get over the backlash were innovative.

The 9/11 events initiated a new era in the lives of American Muslims, an era in which they would be victimized and oppressed for being Muslims. The Black Muslim minorities within the U.S community suffered a double ordeal. They have been victimized on the basis of their color and on the basis of their faith too. The increasing attacks mainly targeted symbols of the Islamic religion and worship houses; mosques and Islamic centers. These attacks failed to distinguish between blacks and whites, Muslims were the target.

The post-9/11 backlash touched all Muslims across the United States, and the rates for hate crimes increased in that era. It is mainly manifested in arsons at mosques, assaults, shootings and threats of violence. Since the beginning of 2015, new research findings by California State University found that lately the hate crimes towards Muslims were up seventy-eight percent (Lichtblau). Besides, American Muslims also faced the risk of being arrested for no reason, or even traveling in the same plane with others became an unsafe task. In addition, after 9/11, many Islamic organizations were under the threats, they received all kind of messages, e-mails and even phone calls that were full of hatred and violence.

The scholar of Muslims in America, John L. Esposito states that the fear of Islam and Muslims in the United States is not new, and has long been considered as threat to the West:

Fear of Islam is not new the tendency to judge the actions of Muslims in isolation, to generalize from the actions of the few to the many, to disregard similar excesses committed in the name of other religions and ideologies (including freedom and democracy) is also not new ...Islam is a triple threat: political, civilization and demographic. The confrontation is often portrayed as a clash of civilization. (218-219)

As Edward E. Curtis described it in his book entitled *The Black Muslim Scare of the Twentieth Century*, Islamophobia was not new to the American society and the U.S government perceived Islam as a danger and challenge to its political system even before the events of 9/11 (75). He also stated that these reactions and supervision practiced by the government can be dated to the 1930s, when many Muslim African-American Organizations and their members were perceived as extremists and violent like in the case of the Nation of Islam.

He argued that Black Muslims made it clear that they are a strong voice and a symbol of power when it comes to the fight for their Blackness and for their beliefs (76). Therefore, at the time of the incident of 9/11, Muslim African-Americans were already seen as a symbol for strong resistance and violent actions. According to Edward E. Curtis:

For much of the twentieth century, it was not Muslim immigrant, but rather indigenous African American Muslims who were, from the point of view of federal authorities, the public and potentially dangerous face of American Islam. The parallels between earlier and later periods of state surveillance are striking. We seem to be living in a new age of consensus in which, like the late 1940s and 1950s, a vital center has identified Islamic radicalism, and by extension Muslim American dissent, as an existential problem, a dangerous expression of extremism. (qtd. in Khan and Siddiqui)

Walter Mosley, an African-American crime writer, essayist and activist, talked about 9/11, and the impact it had on the life of Black Muslims specifically and the role Black Muslims could play in empowering the disadvantaged Muslim communities in the country. He argued:

Black people know that most Arabs and Muslims are good people, that their beliefs are just as valid as Christian beliefs that they have been at the receiving end of American so-called foreign policy for years. As a people of colour, we know how America treats other people of colour - with suspicion or disdain. What I am saying is that because of our unique position, we should be at the forefront of a new peace movement that starts the process whereby Americans start to see the world, and themselves, differently. (O'Hagan)

After the 9/11 events, the U.S government initiated a series of policies and laws that were supposed to fight terrorism. They were, however, openly targeting Muslims from all origins. American Media, in its turn, portrayed Islam as a religion of terror and violence that would threaten the country. The views of the officials, the propaganda that was promoted through the media and even the law forces such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) contributed in shaping the views and the actions of the American population toward the Muslims. It is true that these visions targeted more those Middle Eastern Muslims, yet Muslim African-Americans also suffered, and the backlash failed to distinguish between Blacks or Whites as long as you identify yourself as Muslim (Brooklier).

According to some data provided by the FBI, the hate crimes against Muslims started directly after the terror attacks of 9/11. They counted 481 crimes in 2001, between 105 to 160 by the years from 2002 to 2014, and 257 crimes in 2015 which is considered as a high number comparing it to the period before 9/11. Despite the fact that Muslims are only a small

minority, they are victims to the biggest hate crimes percentage against American Population by 4, 4 percent (Levin).

Research revealed that most of the attacks that were directed towards Muslim immigrant communities post-9/11 were mainly based on their race and physical appearance. Jamillah Karim, in her book *American Muslim Women* argued that African-American Muslims were less to face this backlash, stating that “in the face of the post-9/11 backlash, it is better to be an African-American Muslim than an immigrant Muslim” (40).

In an article entitled “Reflections of an African American Muslim in a Post 9/11 America” Jameelah Xochitl Medinah, a published author, considered that the treatment of people to Muslim African-Americans before 9/11 had been shaped by their color and race, and after 9/11 they were treated based on their religious identity. According to her, this affected MAAs attachment to Islam; for many their belief got stronger and for others they started to give up on their faith (Medina).

Medina went on sharing her personal experience during both the 1980s and post 9/11. She stated:

The often hostile social environment after 9/11 has made me even more thankful to have been born black in U.S. America and to have experienced all the overt and covert racism through the 1980sand ‘90s living in a rural area of Southern California. All the racist micro-aggressions prepared me for the negative experiences that I have endured as a Muslim woman in the USA after 9/11. Thankfully, the great experiences outweigh the horrible ones (Medinah).

3.2- Contribution of Muslim African-American Bodies

As it was mentioned before, the animosity towards Muslims was in no way a new phenomenon. It is rather deeply rooted in the U.S. history. The experience of Black Muslims in the U.S. gave them a sort of advantage compared to their coreligionists from other ethnic backgrounds. For Muslim African-Americans, things did not change that much, they were used to the discrimination and the racism of the American Society. They had been oppressed since they first arrived to the shores of America, a country which they had played a great part in its construction.

9/11 and the backlash it brought to Muslims was kind of familiar to them. That is why they were sure that being silent or laying low would not lead them to their goals. Muslim African-Americans were known of their determination and strength to fight for their rights, and their wisdom in dealing with such kinds of hatred, so 9/11 was a new beginning for a new fight. At this hard period many prominent politicians and interfaith leaders have fought forcefully in favor of the Muslim community.

Leaders of the Muslim African-American community showed their commitment to defend American Muslims against the organized campaign against them and their religion. According to Imam Warith Deen Mohammed, son of the historic leader of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad, the backlash against Muslims post-9/11 brought some favorable changes to Muslims as it mobilized them and brought them closer to each other.

As Imam Mohammed puts it “this is the worst time for Muslims in America and this is also the best time for Muslims in America” (“What is the...”). American Muslims made the headlines of the news and become the topic of the hour. They therefore become more visible than ever before.

American Muslims in general and those from African-American origins did not stand still, but instead they immediately started mobilizing their organizations, and groups that represented Muslims and proclaimed their rights as normal American Citizens. MAAs benefited from their experience in fighting racism to defend themselves against the new attacks against them, this time they face the challenge of prejudice and discrimination on the basis of their religion MAAs political activism during the civil rights era helped them in shaping their way in this critical era.

Amy Melissa Guimond argued that the fear of Muslims and Islam has been long associated with Black Muslims protests against the white (47). African-American Muslims' strong fight to end racial inequalities, and the image they draw to what they were capable of had drew many to engage in Black Muslim organizations (47). By the beginning of the twenty-first century, new organizations were established to represent Muslim African-Americans and fight for their rights.

Under the leadership of Siraj Wahhaj, the Muslim Alliance in North America was the first national "indigenous" Muslim African-American organization. The organization was established in 2002 as reaction to the arrest of Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin, they are a co-member in the USCMO. Their aims were clearly stated; first they work on improving the social and the economic conditions of the Muslim community, it also aims to unify African-American Muslims all over the U.S.

The members of this organization tried to discuss the diverse social, political and even the religion issues that face MAAs, by fixing these issues they will help in improving MAAs status ("About MANA"). The leader of this organization is known of his anti-American ideology, he stated: "If only Muslims were clever politically, they could take over the United States and replace its constitutional government with a caliphate".

An Article entitled “Black Muslims Face Double Jeopardy, Anxiety in the Heartland” describes how Muslim African-Americans hold a double burden. Being an ethnic minority as Black in the land of white hegemony, and a religious minority as Muslim in the land where Muslims are considered terrorists is a duel struggle (Akinyi). Thus, many Muslim Organizations and Muslim leaders had called for the rights of Black Muslims such as The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), which has supported Black Lives Matter. They also called for solidarity with Muslims affected by the rise in hate crimes (Akinyi).

Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative is “a multiracial Virtual Education and training organization that works on racial justice initiative through anti-racism programming and online media campaigns”. It aims at unifying Muslims and end discrimination among them through an online consulting and training, in addition to work as an advocacy group to inform Muslim organizations about the values of diversity and anti-racism work. Muslims all around the U.S started a social media campaign that stood against racism against Muslims and specifically Black ones. It started from various tweets such as #BeingBlackAndMuslim, #IAMMuslimARC, and now it grew to become a known campaign that includes anti-racist Muslims across the United States of America.

Bakar Osman described how the American Muslims including MAAs are an influential and important minority in the United States; they are also considered as the fastest growing population there. Therefore, this minority had a great impact on the Islamic World, the West and their future mutual relationships. The leaders of the U.S took notice of its huge effects on world peace. Thus, they started building bridges with them by denouncing some of the already existing policies caused the deterioration of these relations (Bakar).

The 9-11 terrorist attacks according to Warith Deen Mohammed was a wakeup call for all African-American Muslims in this community on the fact that they need to be more engaged

in the larger Muslim society and to contribute to the civic and political life of the country . He called for financial support of Black Muslims stating." We have to finance the religion. Our imams have to depend on charity". According to Mohammed they need to support Muslim entrepreneurs with loans and other assistance (Terry).

After Warith Deen Mohammed had assumed the leadership of the NOI, he changed the name of the NOI to the World Community of Islam in the West, then the American Muslim Mission and finally the Muslim American Society. Which now has around 200.000 active members and other estimated them as one million across the U.S. and Mohammed as the chief Imam. It is considered as the biggest population of Muslim African-Americans in the United States, the group became very active and more involved in the political arena (Terry).

However, by the time of the 9/11 attacks, Mohammed argues that the Image of Islam has been hijacked by a band of extremists, who does not represent Islam in any way. In 2003 he retired from the Organization and created a charity under the name of the Mosque Cares (Terry). In 2014, the Mosque Cares (ministry of Imam Warith Deen Mohammed) joined other seven major U.S. Muslim organizations to establish the U.S. Counsel of Muslim Organizations (USCMO), the largest umbrella representative body of U.S Muslims, unifying the efforts to empower the community. It is seen as the first Muslim brotherhood that is considered as both religious and political party at the same time.

The founding members of USCMO were the Mosque Cares (Ministry of Imam W. Deen Mohammed), Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA), Muslim American Society (MAS), Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA), and Muslim Ummah of North America (MUNA). The main Aims of these organizations are

to protect the rights of Muslims across the USA no matter what origins they come from (“Genesis of the U.S. Council ...”).

The leader of the new organization stated: “this is the dream of every American Muslim, to unify the approach, agenda and vision of the Muslim community. In the past many people tried to unite on limited agenda, but this is a broad agenda for the American Muslim community” (“Genesis of the U.S. Council ...”).

The USCMO works hard to end stereotyping and racism against Islam and Muslims through One America Campaign. They believe that scapegoating and discrimination against persons because of their faith, would only build a nation that is less safe and more prejudiced. In addition to a National Open Mosque Day, which aims to increase interactions between American Muslims and Non-Muslims also. Another program they worked on is to form strong alliances with interfaith partners, social justice groups and other minority communities that were victims to racism or hatred also (“What is The...”)

The U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations’ purpose is to unite Muslims, their leadership, and their organizations together. It aims to the improvement of the social conditions of American Muslims in general, which would be very beneficial for the Black Muslim communities bearing in mind that most of them belong to the working class. It plans at engaging them into the social American life to challenge all kinds of bias and racism.

Bringing all these Islamic Organizations under one major umbrella would create a sense of collectivity and unity that would promote the idea of one community for all Muslims no matter what origins they are. The USCMO does not focus only on those problems faced by immigrants as the other organizations, but rather it has a national agenda to solve all the common issues of the Muslim community (“Our Vision”).

Late in the 1978, Louis Farrakhan broke away from the NOI to form his own original NOI. He built his organization with only a few thousands of followers to become nowadays one of the most active National movements to represent Muslim African-Americans and to fight for their rights after the 9/11 (Svirsky). Through time Farrakhan took over most of the NOI properties, most importantly the headquarters Mosque number 2 in Chicago known as Maryam Mosque.

The NOI supported its leader Farrakhan's claim that Jews are to blame for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The NOI leader Louis Farrakhan condemned the act of 9/11 stating that it was "vicious and atrocious" and that the American Government had always targeted Muslims and blamed them for whatever considered as an extremist act to cover their own deed. Thus, he argues that the ones should be blamed for this act is Jews (Nation of Islam Provides...). On the 9/11 attacks, Louis Farrakhan held a press conference and answered many questions about this issue. He stated:

This that happened on September 11 could be a trigger of a war that was predicted regarding this time. The scriptures warn us that when the horror of this war begins, that if God had not shortened these days for His Elect's sake, no soul would be left alive on the Earth. This is what we face. We cannot march off into war saying, "Hip, Hip, and Hooray." We have to march off into war guided by the knowledge of what this is, and if we can avert war, we should do everything we can to avert it because, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God." ("NOI responds to...")

The new decisions of Donald Trump on suspending visas for immigrants from several Muslim countries, the conditions became more difficult for American Muslims had brought a wave of responses from African-American Muslims. Black lives Matter, a national organization that aims to build the Black liberation movement denounced this policy. They showed the support for as they state "our Black Muslim, immigrant, and refugee family."

They declared that these discriminatory acts must be stopped «We cannot allow this injustice to continue, since the order, thousands of people have gathered at airports across the nation demanding the removal of the ban and the immediate release of detainees. Local Black Lives Matter chapters have been in the fight; we know that an attack on any of us is an attack on all of us" (Diamond).

3.3- Strengthening the Links with Immigrant Muslims

The aftermath of 9/11 is certainly one of the hardest times for Muslims in the United States in general and for MAAs in particular. Nevertheless, it was also a time of opportunity for them. The discrimination and victimization they faced on the basis of their faith may have very bad effects on their lives in America; however it brought all those who identify themselves as Muslims together. Muslim immigrants and Muslim African-Americans have come closer as their religious identity becomes primary due to the backlash. Each group had something special to offer which the other group lacks. For example Muslim African-Americans has their long history and their battles to defend their rights and their faith, they have gone through a lot of harsh experiences that helped them to be politically aware on how to deal with the American system.

Nevertheless, Muslim immigrants as Imam Talib put it, are the link between Black Muslims and the real heritage of the Islamic world (Elliott). In addition, Muslim immigrants have a very advanced economic status which gives them an advantage compared to MAAs who are generally either poor or middle class citizens. Muslim African-Americans were in need of financial help, which Muslim immigrants could afford. For this reason the alliances created new opportunity for having this economic help that would help MAAs in improving their conditions.

In an interview about this matter, Warith Deen Mohammed, one of the most known leaders of Black Muslims and the leader with the largest following of them declared that “Given the extreme from which we came, I would say that the immigrant Muslims have been brotherly toward us,” (Elliott). “But I think they’re more skeptical than they admit they are. I think they feel more comfortable with their own than they feel with us” (Elliott).

The words “We are all brothers and sisters,” are how the Muslim African-American Imam Talib began his speech in front of the Muslim immigrants. As it is known Muslim mosques are divided by race and culture, and MAAs have their own mosques apart from the other Muslims. Talib is an of an African-American mosque, is located in Harlem, yet he went to a mosque for immigrants in an attempt to foster unity among Muslims. After 9/11, MAAs started sharing their experiences with the discrimination. They found themselves in a familiar position, which enabled them to give advice for other Muslim immigrants to help them in initiating a civil rights campaign (Elliott).

Muslim African-Americans and Muslim Immigrants are largely separate groups, which were unified by the tremendous attacks of 9/11. Muslims from different origins find out that in order to face all the racism and islamophobia they have to combine their efforts. Muslim immigrants start to accept MAAs more often; some even hired Muslim African-Americans to leadership positions in some of the largest organizations. The two Muslim communities which were apart from each other are now a political force, forming coalitions and backing the same candidates. They even called for intermarriage between MAAs and Muslim immigrants, as the New Yorker African-American Imam Siraj Wahhaj said “Muslims will not be successful in America until there is a marriage between the indigenous and immigrant communities,” (Elliott).

It became apparent that the September 11th terror attacks had brought a very severe social, cultural and economic effect on the American Muslims as a whole, especially on Muslim African-Americans. This time they have been victimized not for being Black, but rather for being Muslim. They faced all sorts of hatred from physical attacks, offensive comments, to the burning of the mosques and the Qur'an. According to Richard Schaefer, Islamophobia "manifests itself in Discrimination against Muslims, social exclusion, verbal and physical harassment; hate crimes, attacks on mosques, and vilification of Islam in the media" (36-65).

Muslim African-American Organizations' efforts and contributions to the fight for Muslim rights cannot be ignored. They were active both socially and politically, starting from holding conventions to conferences to reject racism and stereotypes. They form protests and marches around the U.S to denounce the rising rate of hate crimes committed against Muslims and especially those from African origins. In addition they deliver speeches and denounce the racist and the Islamophobic legislation of the American government against Muslims.

Unifying the different Muslim representative organizations under one umbrella body to combine their efforts and to unify the agenda for better representation of U.S. Muslims was among the greatest achievements of Muslims in their struggle to fight back against the backlash. The participation MAA groups in that major effort is a proof of their huge contribution to Muslim activism post 9/11.

Conclusion

African-American Muslims suffered severely throughout their history in the United States being a minority within a minority. They are a minority within African-Americans and a minority within Muslim Americans. They started their struggle when they were kidnapped and enslaved by the white explorers. After that mainly during the 1950s and 1960s the black color of their skin put them in fight against racism, segregation and discrimination which came up to be known as the Civil Rights Era. And by the 9/11 attacks they witnessed another kind of oppression for a different reason which is being Muslim and holding Islamic beliefs.

The first chapter showed that African-American Muslims are very important minority in the United States. They hold an undeniable part of the American Muslim population in general and continue to be the major source for the growth of Muslim population due to conversion and high birth rates. However, they seem to be an overlooked part of Islam in the United States, in a way that today they are occupying an underprivileged position in the American society being a minority within a minority. However, recent studies show that nowadays Muslim African-Americans have made a position in the American society holding a significant portion, and being among the three largest communities in the U.S.

The dissertation surveys the historical background of Black Islam in the United States of America. It clearly states that Muslim slaves who were kidnapped by the Spanish explorers from West Africa are likely to be the first Muslims in the Americas in the 1500's. In addition, that many of them were from notable families, and they were often able to read and write in Arabic, and recite holy Quran. This had given them a privilege over the other African slaves, they became the favorite of their masters to hold a better position in plantations, and they were look up to from the other slaves as leaders.

However, this did not mean that they were free to practice their Faith or African traditions; they faced many obstacles to keep and transmit their faith, mainly because they were forced into Christianity, they were isolated and they were not able to marry Muslim spouses. Many scholars traced the history of those slaves through manuscripts that were written by Muslim slaves in Arabic, and the history had kept several significant Muslim names who left their marks in the history of slavery.

The chapter also examined the re-emergence of Islam in the early twentieth century, when many African-American Muslims began to re-convert to Islam. It surveyed some of the reasons that led to this conversion, and the most important African-American organizations that helped them in returning to Islam, such as the Moorish Science Temple of America, and most importantly the Nation of Islam.

Under these same organizations, Muslim African-Americans took a great part in fighting for the civil rights of African-Americans in the Civil Rights Movement, and their contributions cannot be ignored. Through the second chapter it became clear that the racism and the discrimination Muslim African-Americans faced raised their sense of Black identity and Black Nationalism. They were conceived as second-class citizens in front of the supremacy and the hegemony of the white people, thus they decided that it is high time to fight for their rights.

They were the first to call for unity among African-Americans and their independence from the white hegemony. They fought for their lost rights including equal education, job opportunities, and fair treatment in the society. Nevertheless, Muslim African-American strategies were different from the movement's main stream. They chose to take any means necessary to achieve their goals. These ideologies were adopted mainly by their chief representative organization, the Nation of Islam.

The Nation of Islam's ideologies had given them a bad reputation and stigmatized them as aggressive and violent. That resulted in a kind of rejection toward the NOI as it was often regarded an extremist and radical organization that contradicted the stream of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet, the presence of the Nation of Islam within the U.S. during the CRM, built a sense of unity and strength between Muslim African-Americans. It had given the Black Muslims a voice that would largely impact their fight for their rights.

After a hard and long journey of fighting for their rights, they encountered a new burden. After the attacks of 9/11 they were not seen as blacks anymore, but rather as Muslim terrorists. The discrimination would increase and double after. Now Muslim African-Americans will face the double racism that they already faced, first because of their color and second because of their faith.

The last chapter described the wave of hatred towards African-American Muslims, and how they reacted to this new way of racism. It clearly stated how the September 11th terror attacks brought a very severe social, cultural and economic effect on American Muslims as a whole and on Muslim African-Americans specifically. They faced all sorts of hate crimes, physical attacks and offensive comments.

Muslim African-American were familiar with such kind of rejection and discrimination from the American Society, thus they were more than ready to stand once again against it and to fight for the rights of Muslims as a whole. Their aims were to end this stereotyping and bias against the U.S. minorities, they fought for the improvement of their conditions as African-Americans , and finally they were to call for unity and solidarity between all the oppressed communities specially immigrant Muslims at this period.

Muslim African-Americans established new organizations, which made efforts and contributions to the fight for Muslim rights. They were active both socially and politically,

starting from holding conventions, conferences to reject racism and stereotype. They form protests and marches around the U.S. to denounce the rising number of hate crimes committed against Muslims and especially those from African origins. In addition, they deliver speeches that denounce the racist and the Islamophobic decisions of the American government against Muslims. Establishing Islamic schools and mosques all around USA in order to spread the real Islamic values and to change the wrong image that was given to Islam after this attack.

The dissertation's focused on three main periods that marked the history of Muslim African-Americans. From the Atlantic trade, when they were brought as slaves to work for the white masters, tracing every important experience they went through back then. Up to the period of the Civil Right Movement, examining how they had been active. The organizations they created, the ways they chose to face racism and segregation, and the main Black Muslim leaders. The last period started by the tragic event of the 9/11, a period for a new struggle and heavier burden on Muslim African-Americans. They were already perceived as other in front of the white hegemony and now they are the other as Muslims.

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