MEDIATION B.I.P.
A CONFLICT MANAGEMENT COMPANY
WWW.MEDIATIONBIP.COM

In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

Islam and The Nation of Islam

YASIR UQDAH - October 2025

Preliminary remarks

This short paper attempts to shed light on some of the sensitive issues surrounding the Nation of Islam and its link with Orthodox/Sunni Islam.[1] Its primary target audience are former members of the Nation of Islam (or their offspring). Its secondary audience are those who are currently in the Nation, Muslims in general, and people simply interested in the topic (Muslim or non-Muslim). Hopefully it can provide clarity that can ideally relax some of the tensions (internal and external) between African American brothers and sisters, who may have opposing views, by stating some clear classical Islamic standards and beliefs.

Introduction

Staying away from intoxicants, being an entrepreneur, avoiding the consumption of non-nutritious foods, being respectful to your parents, cleaning up your community, not sending your children to schools that will emotionally and intellectually poison them, and physically protecting your family. These are just some of the things taught in the Nation of Islam, as experienced by those directly in the movement and outside. The Nation was an organizational safe haven for many African Americans.[2] A place to learn. A space to develop.

What can be difficult is separating what people experienced and felt from what something is, at least in some aspects. Said more clearly, some of our brothers and sisters had (and/or have) a very positive experience within the Nation, and when someone is critiquing an aspect of it, not the whole, people find it hard to grasp the criticism, as it feels like one is attacking their entire experience. Further, it's like someone is attempting to besmirch and invalidate their history. This is what makes writing about things that are dear to people's hearts a little complicated and delicate. To avoid the awkwardness of certain emotions and complexities, we have to be honest,

[1] Orthodox Islam, meaning the beliefs and practices as mentioned in the Quran, exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), and consistently emulated by Muslims for over 1400 years throughout the world (i.e., Sunni Islam). When we're referring to the Nation of Islam, we may just say the 'Nation.'

[2] The term African American is used to describe those who identify as such with a reasonable degree of credibility. We intend to avoid the arguments explaining the differences between 'Blacks,' 'Africans of the Diaspora,' or any other names that usually spark controversy. As we know, 'black' is not an ethnicity, nor are the terms African or Hispanic. This is why some amongst us debate what to call ourselves. Specificity can be somewhat gained by knowing our ethnicity (a common cultural background (language, morals, etc.). Bu due to the Transatlantic slave trade, unfortunately many of us are not aware of such. And for those who are, the connection between the people of our original ethnicity and now are so distant, that the need for some self-identification is important, just not in the scope of this paper.

fair, and cordial. Appeasing or placating people through falsehood is not something that should be encouraged, no matter the verbal backlash one may receive, or how uncomfortable the topic may be.

Muslim Defined

If one singularly defines a Muslim as a black person in America fighting against injustice, and someone fills that description, then they're Muslim. If one singularly defines a Muslim as a person who is trying to better himself by being a part of a productive organization, and someone fills that description, then according to the proposed definition, they're Muslim. But a cat is not called a dog. A book is not called a building. And a motor vehicle is not a large body of water. Words have standard definitions. No black person would accept someone calling their mother the b-word, and presenting to them that the word is used for beautiful black queens and those who are offended are misunderstood! Nor would most black people in America accept white Americans changing the word baboon to mean a kind and generous black person, and calling us such. We rightfully wouldn't tolerate it. In addition, one would be looked at with amusement and disdain if they called themselves a Mayor of a city, or Governor of a state, when they're not. People would not take them seriously.

In this context, the Arabic word '*Muslim*' is someone who willfully and sincerely submits to Allah (ﷻ), starting with the correct and core beliefs, followed by actions that are in sync with such core beliefs. This is what happens when a person bears witness that there is nothing or no one worthy of worship, except Allah (ﷻ). And that Muhammad ibn Abdullah (from the 6th and 7th centuries CE)(ﷺ) is Allah's last and final Messenger sent to all of mankind.[3] People can define words the way they want in their own mind; however, when presented to the public, the people who know the chosen language of use, word origins, and their normal usage based on context, can reject the formers' misinterpreted definitions.

Was the Nation of Islam Muslim?

Organizations don't become Muslim, people do. And no one person can have certainty that everyone who belonged to the Nation of Islam wasn't Muslim or were Muslim, according to the classical definition. Meaning, no human can pierce the heart of everyone that was and is in the Nation, to find out what they truly believed or believe. Nevertheless, for clarity on the teachings and the organizational directives (past and present), we can speak with those who were and are in the Nation and research first-hand publications of the Nation (e.g., Message to the Blackman in America, recorded interviews, etc.), to gain a high-level of confidence about what was taught, especially in its formative years.

[3] A person is considered Muslim if they sincerely utter the *shahaadah*, free of coercion or under the influence of intoxicants. However, if they verbally and intentionally negate the *shahaadah*, they leave Islam, no matter what they call themselves.

Connection to Islam's primary sources

One of the subtle but extremely important things to determine is an organization's connection to Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ). Specifically their *isnaad*.[4] Its Arabic root is *sanada*, which can be described to mean '*to support*.' *Isnaad* is the uninterrupted chain of authority on which a tradition is based. In the context of the *deen* (revealed way of life), it's how we trace things back to Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ). In general, there are three parts of *deen*: our beliefs (*Iman/Aqeedah*); our outward actions (*Fiqh*); and character building/being proficient (*Akhlaaq/Ihsaan*). All three are necessary to be a good well-rounded Muslim. For example, if you have just the first one (proper beliefs), but you don't pray, fast, cover properly, or treat people well. You are Muslim at your core/heart, yet grossly deficient in not matching your beliefs with your actions. If you just practice the outward actions in the religion and attempt to refine your character, you will be apparently good, but you are not a Muslim at your core. Because the pertinent question is: who did you do all the actions for? The community, black people, white people, your country, your ancestors? Muslims, or those who have submitted wholeheartedly to Allah (ﷻ) at least in their hearts, do things to gain spiritual closeness with Allah (ﷻ), for we believe that we'll be questioned about everything we've done, and who we sincerely did it for. In Islam, it all starts with our core and correct beliefs. The '*why*' is of utmost importance. And our answer is '*for Allah (ﷻ)*,' of course knowing He is in no need of us.

Therefore, each aspect of the *deen* and its subcategories need to have an *isnaad* connecting us to Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ) for correctness in our beliefs and practices, and this is ideally done through human contact. If not, we're creating our own way of life, which people are free to do, but they just shouldn't call it Islam, or term the followers Muslim. A Muslim can't say they love Allah (ﷻ) so much that now they'll start to make four sunset (*maghrib*) prayers per night. Nor can a Muslim man marry seven women at the same time because of his love for honoring and protecting women, and the importance of procreation. Why can't they if they love Allah (ﷻ)? Because it's opposed to what Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger, Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ), said do. We hear and obey. This isn't difficult to conceptualize once we've entered Islam through wholehearted submission (*shahaadah*). All matters must first go back to the main sources in Islam, the Qur'an and the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ). Believing in the Oneness of Allah (ﷻ) and that there's no new *shariah* (Islamic revealed law) after the Qur'an, is relatively easy. But being an authority in the Arabic language is not. Remember, every group must meet this standard. Whether they're black, white, green, purple, speak Arabic or not. For Muslims, all matters need to be checked in light of the main Islamic sources, and from those who possess the knowledge to do so with precision. Arabic grammar (*nahw*); biography (*seerah*); rhetoric (*balaghah*); morphology (*sarf*); jurisprudence, (*fiqh*); the sayings, actions, and tacit approvals of Nabi Muhammad (ﷺ)(*ahaadith*); and principles and methodologies for deriving legal rulings (*usul al-fiqh*), are just some of the necessary skills to

[4] The words *sanad* and *isnaad* are used interchangeably in this paper.

interpret the primary, secondary, and tertiary sources in Islam.[5] To be clear, the aforementioned disciplines are not necessary to be a really good Muslim and have Allah's favor. But to be relied upon and known to have a level of authority in the religion, they are essential.

Problematic historical figures

One of the reported statements by Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ) is (paraphrasing in the English language):

> *In my nation there will be twenty-seven great liars and impostors, among whom are four women. Verily, I am the seal of the prophets, and there is no prophet after me.*[6]
>
> *Source: Musnad Aḥmad*

The words used for great liars and imposters were *kadhdhaabun* and *dajjaalun*, respectively. These are very powerful terms. Thus, anyone after Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ) calling themselves a Prophet (*Nabi*) or Messenger (*Rasul*) from Allah (ﷻ) is the very thing that negates their Islam or them being termed Muslim, with all the accompanying rights and responsibilities. Moreover, that person is to be rejected as a prophet or messenger. Not based on any African, European, or Arab person's opinion, but based on the primary sources in Islam, regardless of whether people are familiar with such sources or not. If a Muslim emotionally and/or psychologically wrestles with such information, it's on them to reconcile internally and courageously act moving forward, even if it's against their emotional attachment. The sources aren't hidden or encrypted.

One imposter in early Islam was Sajah. Who married (apparently) another imposter, Musaylimah the Liar. And even back then, all of their supporters didn't necessarily believe they were a Prophet and Prophetess, but they erroneously stuck by their side because of tribal connections and/or apparent power. *Alhamdulillah*, by the end of Sajah's life she rejected such impostership, and lived ascetically until her death. While Musaylimah was killed in the apostate wars (*riddah*), specifically in the battle of Yamama (took place in the 1200's CE).

A very polarizing figure in Islamic history is Yazid ibn Muawiya. He was the leader of most of the Muslim world after his father passed away (Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan (may Allah be pleased with him)). On Yazid's watch as a *khalifah*, many atrocities happened to Muslims. And scholars have differed on how to refer to him. After we mention his name, should we curse him? Should we invoke an honorific? Or should we remain silent, are just some examples of the views. For the most part no one questioned whether or not he was Muslim, it was deep concerns about his practices and/or apparently turning his back on the wrongs done under his authority. Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam until his death in 1975, said and did many things, some good, and some clearly not consistent with the Qur'an and the Prophetic practice. And like every other person who has passed away, Elijah Muhammad is in the intermediate world

---

[5] The primary source in Islam is the Qur'an; however, throughout this paper sometimes we lump the sayings, actions, and tacit approvals of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) with the phrase "primary sources." Some other legal (*shar'i*) sources are: Ijmaa, Qiyaas, 'Amal of Medinah, and Istihsaan.

[6] The normal translation of the word *ummati*, is my nation. Coming from ummah and the suffix expressing possession (i.e., my). In this context *ummah* or nation means: a group of people with shared values, not necessarily a political nation-state with defined borders, flags, or military and financial autonomy.

(*barzakh*). A place we are all fastly approaching. What is he experiencing? *Allahu 'alam* (Allah knows best).

"Do not curse the dead, for they have reached the result of what they have done." reported to be said by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) - Source: Sahih Bukhari

With that being said, it behooves us to learn the proper aspects of the *deen* and practice them with *ihsaan* (beauty and thoroughness), in order to increase our chances of having a pleasant experience in the afterlife. And avoid speaking ill about the dead, unless it's absolutely necessary (e.g., warding off harm, historical accuracy, analyzing our lineage, etc.).

RIGHTS

In Islam, rights (*huqooq* - plural) are different from rights as espoused in America. A right (*haqq* - singular) is linked to a responsibility (*amaanah*) to fulfill such a right. To illustrate, an infant has a right to be taken care of, and its parents have the responsibility to fulfill that right. If it's not fulfilled (without a legitimate excuse), an act of wrongdoing or oppression (*zhulm*) has occurred. In America, we say things like, 'I have a right to get a job.' But there's no one that is responsible for getting you a job. Sometimes American Muslims mix-up the use of the terms 'rights' and 'permissibilities.' There have been Muslim men saying they have a 'right' to have a second wife. But that's not exactly accurate. They may have a permissibility *(ibaahah*) to marry another woman, of course with many pre-conditions and conditions. Because if Muslim men have a 'right' to marry multiple women at the same time, whose responsibility is it to fulfill that 'right'? All the single women? Of course not. That's why it's important to distinguish between a right and a permissibility.

There are a multitude of rights that Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ) has, and Muslims in particular, have a responsibility to fulfill. If not, we're committing an injustice that we'll be accountable for in the afterlife (*aakhirah*), and in some cases, our beliefs may be in jeopardy. The following list of rights are not meant to be exhaustive, but essential. They are: to believe in him; to believe he is the final Messenger; to love him; to emulate his practice (*sunnah*); to obey him; to pray (*salawaat*) for him; to believe he was truthful in delivering the message (e.g., *tawhid*); and to believe that he delivered the message appropriately.

As you can see, some of the rights that Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ) has, and Muslims of all races, ethnicities, social status, and times, have the responsibility to fulfill, are very disparate from some of the core things taught in the Nation of Islam.

In addition, if any of us claims that they were Muslim upon joining the Nation, and they did not perform the daily prayers, fasting in Ramadan, paying of *zakat*, etc., there are Islamically legal (*shar'i*) ramifications that need to be remedied when a Muslim doesn't perform obligatory acts (*waajibaat*). Those are rights (*huqooq*) that are due, either to Allah (ﷻ) or the appropriate people (e.g., recipients of *zakat*). Becoming a Muslim entails very serious expectations with regards to our beliefs and actions. Self-identified name usage (i.e. calling yourself Muslim) cannot substitute for the proper beliefs and actions. Again, rights need to be fulfilled, and ignorance is normally not an excuse.

Conclusion

We should be able to appreciate our history as black people in America and the stepping stones that were necessary for a sizable amount of us to properly believe and practice traditional Islam. While at the same time being honest and clear with our language, avoiding any violence or hatred of individuals. This would allow us to be accurate and balanced in our understanding, while also not confusing current and future generations. And more importantly, to be able to stand before Allah (ﷻ) free of being amongst the wrongdoers. The list below should serve as a summary and reminder, *inshaaAllah* (God willing):

1. The most important words a person can say is the *shahaadah* (bearing witness): I bear witness that there is nothing worthy of worship except Allah, and that Muhammad (ibn Abdullah) is the messenger (the seal of the Prophets/Messengers) of Allah. If a person believes this statement in their heart, they are Muslim. The subsequent verbal pronouncement affirms what's in the heart, and makes matters clear for other Muslims to recognize you as such, with all the rights, responsibilities, expectations, and privileges attached. The worst thing someone could say is the opposite or that which negates the *shahaadah*.
2. Part of our core beliefs is that Allah (ﷻ) is not like His creation. Allah (ﷻ) is not a man or restricted by space, time, etc. He created everything: Adam, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, the sun, the moon, white people, the sky, etc.
3. No group has a monopoly on good or bad behavior.
4. The Nation of Islam did not require the *shahaadah* for people to be considered Muslim. (It's important to remember that no one can suspend or kick a Muslim out of Islam, for it's an internal phenomenon that is backed-up with the appropriate outward behavior.)
5. The core theological beliefs in the Nation were not consistent with the Qur'an and the Prophetic practice.
6. In its entirety, the Nation of Islam was not a revealed way of life. It incorporated or appropriated some of Orthodox/Sunni Islam. Thus, it was more akin to an organization and/or movement. Yet a very instrumental one.
7. The practical application of some of Islam's duties, norms, or etiquettes, although good on their own, doesn't replace Islam's core beliefs, and actions that stem from such beliefs. Both are essential (proper beliefs and proper actions).
8. The Nation taught remnants of Islam, mixed with other sources, some being antithetical to Islam, some being perfectly aligned with Islam (getting married, being clean, no drugs or alcohol, etc.).
9. Many black people tangibly benefited from being a part of the Nation, which cannot and should not be denied or overlooked.
10. The Nation of Islam was one of the impactful and necessary voices exposing the corruption, subjugation, targeting, and injustices black people experienced and are experiencing.
11. Not everyone in the Nation agreed with the core beliefs and teachings of the leadership within the Nation.

12. Muslims by definition believe there will be no new prophet or messenger coming to people after Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ). He was the seal of those sent (and specifically with a revealed book).
13. All matters, espoused by anyone, especially religious in nature, need to be viewed in light of the Qur'an and the Prophetic practice. Thus, everyone is expected to meet the same standard when giving direction in matters pertaining to Islam. If not, they can not be considered authoritative in their understanding, and should not be followed with regards to sound Islamic knowledge.
14. Those who have a good grasp on the Qur'an and the Prophetic practice should help those who have forgotten them or are unaware, explaining things via an unbroken chain leading directly back to Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ). Explaining things with mercy and an appropriate amount of respect.
15. Our brothers and sisters in the Nation should know that for Muslims, the *shahaadah* has the highest value. Therefore, when anyone goes or seemingly goes against that, in words or actions, inevitably there will be push back. Hopefully fair and cordial. If the *shahadah* is diametrically opposed to any of the values in the Nation, this is another reason why we need to provide clarity.
16. Interactions between those who adhere to traditional Islam and those from the Nation doesn't have to be all or nothing. Legitimately, one group may excel in a certain area, where the other lacks, in a given geographic area. The problems in America that we continue to experience as black folk can be mitigated at the very least, with meaningful collaboration, tethered to clear rules of engagement by the leadership.
17. If you used to be in the Nation, but now you follow Orthodox/Sunni Islam, it's necessary that you keep all the beneficial things you were taught. For example: hard work, discipline, modesty, etc. Islam doesn't require you to throw the baby out with the bath water. However, correct understanding of the core beliefs and actions are of paramount concern.
18. If you are currently in the Nation and are interested in understanding more about Islam, specifically from an unbroken chain of authority, going back to Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ), this should begin with sincerity, asking God for guidance, then attending a local masjid or speaking with someone knowledgeable in Islam for further inquiries.
19. All of us should avoid unnecessary conflict, speaking ill of the dead without a need, and try to expend more energy in being better people, linking our beliefs with our actions, improving our communities, standing up against injustice, collaborating with each other in areas of common goals, and leaving the unknown and unseen matters to Allah (جل جلاله).

"*Love (for the sake of Allah) others moderately and hate (actions (not necessarily people) for the sake of Allah) others moderately. Some people were extreme in their love of others and were destroyed by it, and some people were extreme in their hatred of others and were destroyed by it. Do not be extreme in your love and do not be extreme in your hatred*…"

- Hasan Al Basri (r)[7]

Allah knows best!

[7] One of the great scholars from amongst the *taabi'een* (students of the companions of Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ)).