



Nation of Islam Recreational Activities

Reprinted from the book, BLACK NATIONALISM, By E.U. ESSIEN-UDOM

Tuesday evenings are set aside for a social get-together known as the Unity Party. Muslims and non-Muslims meet in a relatively informal atmosphere. The men come dressed in suits, and most of the women in their Muslim dress. The Muslim girls are less "traditional" than the older women, and they frequently come in blouses and skirts, but with a head-tie. The party is held in the auditorium of the University of Islam, where food and soft drinks are served.

There is usually no program and no speech making. Men and women sit together at long tables and chat. Occasionally three or more people stand together and talk. On the whole the atmosphere appears rather subdued. Conversation is carried on in low voices. They party is orderly, and Muslims are particularly cordial to the visitors. A visitor is impressed by their friendliness and decorum.

Organized entertainment is provided on feast days. Feasts may be given by the Messenger, the Temple, or one of the organizations within the Temple - P.T.A., F.O.I., M.G.T. & G.C.C. Recitation of poems, music by a band consisting of followers who were professional entertainers before joining the Temple, and "fire-eating" demonstrations are featured.

Sometimes the members present a concert or play. The most popular play is "Ornega," subtitled "A Negro Speaks Backwards." It is a portrayal of a stereotyped American Negro. The "Trial" is another play usually combined with "Ornega" into one play. It is a harsh indictment and trial of the white man for all his "crimes" against the so-called Negroes (The Nation of Islam). The trial takes place before an all-black jury which finds the white man guilty of the charges. The play was written in 1956 and directed by Brother Louis X and Lonnie X of the Boston Temple. Minister Louis X plays the leading role in it. A brochure distributed to the audience states: "Ornega was not written out of malice toward any racial group, but...to show the so-called Negro that he is someone with a great culture, history, and heritage..."

Other organized activities include the showing of documentary films on such topics as education in Muslim countries, sanitation, and some scientific themes. Teams of Muslims visit the museums regularly. "Places of Educational Interest" recommended to Muslim visitors during the 1960 Annual Convention included the following: "Adler Planetarium, Natural History Museum, Museum of Science and Industry, Art Institute of Chicago, Lincoln Park Zoo, Cortez W. Peters Business College, Stock Yards, Merchandise Mart, Supreme Liberty Life Insurance Company." Private swimming parties are arranged by the F.O.I. and the M.G.T. members. Followers are not participants in popular spectator sports.

Saturday is about the only day for which there is no scheduled activity. Many members, especially unmarried male adults and new converts, spend considerable leisure time in activities of the Nation, which help them to withdraw from participation in activities of the "normal" society to which they were accustomed and facilitate their adjustment to the "new" way of life. Several members were asked what changes took place in their use of leisure time since joining the Nation. Many members felt that they were too busy for recreation.



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