

AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

THE HONORABLE ELIJAH MUHAMMAD

By Gwen Walker

Elijah Poole was born on October 7, 1897 at Bold Springs, Georgia, a small town between Macon and Atlanta. His first home was a sharecroppers shack that barely managed to accommodate Wali and Marie Pool's large family of thirteen (13) children.



GWEN WALKER

In the early 1900's Elijah was walking along the wooded road home and heard footsteps. He ran and hid among the bushes. The next sight was one that would haunt him for the rest of his life. Little Elijah observed several white men dragging a Black man by a rope around his waist to a tree. Elijah could see the fear in the Black man's eyes, but saw a face full of pride and he wouldn't let his capturers see how afraid he was. They hung the Black man and after his body stop trembling the white men passed a whiskey bottle around as if to celebrate. This horrible tragedy would haunt Elijah for the rest of his life, and he often used this experience in his speeches.

In 1923 Elijah and his family moved North to Detroit, Michigan. After arriving in Detroit, Wali Poole took a job at the American Can Factory, and later the Chevrolet Motor Company. His soft spoken manner made him popular with other workers and his dependability impressed the white employers, but because he was Black, there was little opportunity for economic advancement.

The senior Poole soon joined the Garvey Movement and became a corporal in the Chicago Division of the UNIA. Very shortly afterwards the stock market fell and the depression hit.

In the summer of 1930 a brown skinned man by the name of Wallace Fard arrived in Detroit. Acting as a door to door peddler, he managed to make himself welcome in the Black neighborhood. Fard claimed to be a prophet from Arabia who had come to America to help Blacks discover their dual African and Islamic heritage.

Elijah Poole became one of his followers and was quoted as saying of Fard, "I recognized him to be got in person and he said he was, but he forbade me to tell anyone else." Fard's teaching's were significantly different from that of traditional Islam, which promotes brotherhood between people of all races.

Recognizing Fard to be God, Elijah became known as Elijah Muhammad; The name change Fard explained as a spiritual rebirth by giving up names that whites had replaced of their African names.

Elijah's wife and two brothers, all converted. His wife Clara Poole was known as Sister Clara. "Sister" being the proper title for addressing a Black Muslim woman. She adopted the modest style of dress and covered her head with a white headdress while wearing a floor length white garment. By 1934, Fard and Muhammad had recruited over 8,000 members.

Fard, garnered so many followers because he taught discipline and gave a direction to the people to strive for. He required special diets, refraining from alcohol, drugs and cigarette, and promoted the aspiration to aspire to personal thriftiness, and cleanliness. As usual, the powers to be could not deal with Blacks becoming well organized and many confrontations ensued with local authorities.



ELIJAH MUHAMMAD

In June 1934, Fard disappeared and Elijah Muhammad's rise to power was automatic. A national movement began for the "Black Muslims." A well recognized, and respected movement it was and many changes have taken place over the years. Elijah Muhammad's son Wallace, is now the leader of the movement. The rest is history.

Read more at the West Las Vegas Library.

LARGEST BAPTIST ORGANIZATIONS OPPOSE CLARENCE THOMAS

By Gwen McKinney (NNPA News Service)

If African American leaders of religious and civil rights organizations were casting the vote on Judge Clarence Thomas's confirmation to the Supreme Court, Thomas's desire to succeed Justice Thurgood Marshall would be chalked up as a defeat of what some call the Bush Administration's tactic to divide and rule the African American community.

But a united core of opinion has emerged against Thomas from leaders of major organizations who stress that views and actions of Thomas, a former chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, run counter to the interests of African Americans.

"We're not surprised that a president who consistently op-

CHURCH SUES

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ponents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and testimony from IRS officials named in the case, clearly detail a long history and unchanging pattern of IRS improper, harassing and illegal activities against the Church in order to cause "a final halt" and the "ultimate disintegration of" Scientology.

Three of the defendants — William Connett, Phil Xanthos and Al Lipkin — were among IRS officials named by a Congressional subcommittee to have been involved in "wide-spread corruption and influence peddling" during the 1980's. Hearings chaired by Rep. Doug Barnard, Jr. (D-GA), also found that the corrupt activities of the Los Angeles office "took place during the tenure, and with the apparent approval of then IRS Los Angeles District Director (William Connett)."

Rev. Heber C. Jentzsch, international president of the Church, said that, "Our long history of exposing IRS criminality and abuse of power has resulted in prolonged retaliation against Scientology. We are the only group that has consistently stood up to the IRS and exposed its abuses of taxpayers' rights and violations of its own laws and regulations."

He cited the Church's exposure of the infamous IRS "hit list" of the 1970s as an example of innocent groups and individuals targeted by the agency for selective prosecution. The lists later were found by a Senate Select Committee to be "an effort to employ tax weapons for essentially non-tax purposes."

Rev. Jentzsch noted that the IRS' bad faith against the Church of Scientology has repeatedly become a matter of court record

poses enactment of a new Civil Rights bill and who opposes sanctions against apartheid South Africa would attempt to put (someone) on the Supreme Court who would further dismantle hard won judicial victories concerning equal protection and equal justice," maintained Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis, executive director of the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ (UCC).

The first religious organization to oppose Thomas's nomination, UCC has been joined by the three major denominations of Baptists including the National Baptist Convention. Boasting a membership of more than 8 million, the National Baptist Convention is the largest African American Baptist denomination in the world.

Also going on record

against Judge Thomas is the 42 million member National Council of Churches which took a unanimous position against his confirmation. The same stand was taken by the Progressive National Baptist Convention which adopted a strongly worded resolution assessing the nomination of Thomas "as part of a dangerous trend to promote confusion, division and open the African American community to abuse and exploitation."

Beyond the religious community, other prominent organizations have stated opposition to Thomas including the NAACP, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational fund, AFL-CIO, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, National Bar Association, National Conference of Black Lawyers and a host of other labor and social

justice organizations.

Opponents cite Thomas's stated opposition to important civil rights precepts such as affirmative action and set-asides for minority businesses. Thomas has also gone on record opposing Black studies and has often criticized the civil rights movement characterizing it as a "series of follies and blunders."

Thomas, who attended Yale University as the result of an affirmative action program, has urged an end to affirmative action on college admissions.

Thomas supports, on the other hand, point to Thomas's accomplishments, having risen from an impoverished background to the position of a distinguished Judge.

A decision by the full Senate is not expected until October.

in recent months, with federal judges ordering the agency sanctioned and costs and fees awarded to Scientology plaintiffs. A California District Court decision of June, 1991, another case, in April, 1991, Federal Judge Consuelo Marshall found the IRS' litigation tactics to have

"the sole purpose to either harass, cause unnecessary delay, or needlessly increase the cost of litigation."

"The IRS is an agency gone mad. It has lost sight of its propose of serving the people," observed Rev. Jentzsch. "It operated outside the law."

Americans have long fought such tyranny; it's now time for the courts to act.

What is at stake is nothing less than religious freedom in our land in the very year that we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights."

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