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We MSEMAJI YUSUF AL-AMIN and ALVARO BALLESTEROS
Interviewee (print) Interviewer (print)

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Jacksonville, Alabama

on the date(s) of March 23, 1995

for the oral history collection being compiled by Dr. Marshall.

Msemaji Yusuf Al-Amin
Interviewee's signature

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Date March 23, 1995

Alvaro Ballesteros
Interviewer's signature

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INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: Msemaji Yusuf Al-Amin M/F Male
 Address: Campus INN Apt. 2 Jacksonville, AL 36265
 Phone number(s): 782-7736
 Approximate age or date of birth: June 24, 1940
 Mother's Name: Ottie Simmons
 Father's Name: Thomas Green
 Places lived and when: Harlem, NY ; Bronx, NY ; Queens, NY ; N. Carolina ; Alabama
 Education: High School ; will graduate from college in 1995.
 Religion: Catholic ; Yoruba ; muslim.
 Business, political and social memberships (past and present):
Health Food store ; Democratic ; black nationalist
 Present occupation: student
 Former occupations: manager and teacher
 Special Skills: giving speeches.
 Major Accomplishments: being a active part of the Civil Rights Movement.
 National Events in which interviewee has participated: Civil Rights Movement ; Black Muslim Movement.
 Local Events in which interviewee has participated: _____
 National born U.S. citizen? Yes/No
 Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No Date: _____
 Country from which he/she emigrated: _____
 Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in the possession of the interviewee:
Written speeches from Malcolm X
 Individuals recommended by the interviewee who might be candidates for an oral history interview: _____
 Additional information: _____

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Oral History Interview
with Msemaji Yusuf Al-Amin
by Alvaro Ballesteros
on The Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s

History 202
Professor Suzanne Marshall
17 April 1995

The Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s

By the late 1950s, a growing restlessness was becoming apparent beneath the placid surface of American society. Pressures from African Americans and an increasing poverty were only some of the discontent that were making themselves felt in the nation's public life. Furthermore, the decade of the 1960s became one of the most notorious eras of the twentieth century. The main concern of the nation during the 60s was to provide justice and equality to African Americans.

Msemaji Yusuf Al-Amin was born in June 24, 1940, in Harlem, New York. He lived through the 1960s and the Civil Rights Movement as a young man. The Movement changed his whole life. After the Civil Rights Movement he became more aware of the social and economical problems of the American society. The roots of the Movement started back in 1954 when the Supreme Court announced its decision in the case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS. The Brown decision became the culmination of decades of effort by black opponents of segregation. Between 1954 and 1960 the media played a major role in informing the people of what was going on, but during those years Msemaji was having fun and

partying rather than paying attention to the various racial issues. Before the 1960s Msemaji, was an integrationist because of his catholic background, and really did not care about the racial issues. It was in the early 1960s when he was ready to go into the work world and came face to face with various racial issues. In 1960, J.F. Kennedy was elected as president, and for better or for worse Kennedy introduced the racial issues into his political campaign. The racial issues of those years became more popular among young people, because it was always in the media, especially on television.

Consequently, the Nation of Islam started becoming very popular with Malcolm X. Malcolm X was a former drug addict who had spent time in prison and had rebuilt his life once joining the movement. He was the most celebrated of the Black Muslims and became one of the movement's most influential spokesmen, particularly among younger blacks. Malcolm X did not advocated violence, but he insisted that the black people must protect themselves, violently if necessary, from those who assaulted them. Msemaji became a member of the Muslim community and followed Malcolm X's ideas throughout the decade of the 1960s. The Nation of Islam started getting negative publicity from the media. The media was trying to

show the Black Muslims saying how much they hated white people, but as Msemaji says:

From my personal own experience, that's not what they were saying. But the media would pick~~ed~~ up on various things that they were saying, and give bits of that. They showed Malcolm X in television saying that the white man was the devil, but that's part of political rhetoric that every political organization uses.

The Nation of Islam was trying to get people to stand up and do something for themselves. The rhetoric they were using was just to get popularity and to attract the attention of the media. Prior to the Civil Rights Movement Msemaji, was a stereotype^{ical} individual, but after the movement he was more politically^{ly} aware of what was going on around him. He learned during the 60s most of the things that he's being taught now in college. Msemaji got banned from Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners, because he was pro Malcolm X and was constantly telling everybody that he was a black nationalist. It took him a while to assimilate^d all the ideas of the Nation of Islam because of his catholic background. During this time Msemaji still didn't believe in the total

separation of the races and in integration either. By 1961 Msemaji started seeing the point that Malcolm X was trying to make to the young people. When Malcolm X was assassinated in New York in 1965, Msemaji thought about changing and creating his own community. He dropped out of the society for completely with the idea of his utopia.

In the 1963 March on Washington is where Malcolm X and the black muslim movement made their distinction. This march turned out to be a conspiracy organized by Kennedy and other black leaders to calm down the people that were revolting. Malcolm X and his people were really angry and totally against the march on Washington. They thought it was directed to integrate the black people into the white society instead of giving them freedom.

The media never paid attention to the real creators of the Civil Rights Movement. They only paid attention to the leaders of the movement. The people ^{who} ~~that~~ were fighting for a real change never got the publicity. They wanted freedom instead of being part of a society that have^enⁿslaved them. They were going to fight back ^{who} ~~would~~ tried to assaulted^d them. Prior to the movement Msemaji never saw a future for himself as a^rimportant part of society. It wasn't

until the 1960s the importance of education and self-awareness to be a member of society. Msemaji learned during the 60s that,

It matters not about size, it matters not about quantity. It matters not about how much power somebody's got. All those things are really superficial.

Furthermore, Msemaji and his community formed their own government based ^{on} in the same model that prophet Mohammed in Saudi Arabia used 400 years ago. Msemaji acquired a sound knowledge about different types of government by dealing with people in his community.

From Msemaji's point of view, the racial revolts of the 60s were not really revolts. They were peaceful demonstrations, and he totally disagreed with them. He also experienced several racial riots at his high school in New York, but they were the result of the publicity that the media was given to the racial problems occurring in the South at that particular time. As Msemaji explains:

A revolt to us was a conscious attempt to take over the government. We knew we couldn't take over the government, so we decided to created our own

government. But those people that were just fighting and rioting, we were not a part of that. We believed that the answer was self-government.

Msemaji and many others were investigating every system they knew to form a system of their own. Subsequently, Msemaji created the Society of Efel, but it only lasted about a year. This society was an effort to go back to Africa mentally and picked up the good aspects of that culture. During the 60s more blacks~~g~~ Americans started becoming aware of the need of college education. Before the 60s education was more limited for blacks at the college level than at the high school level. One of the best ways to go to college was getting a basketball or football scholarship. When the 60s came, education became more available to black Americans.

The Civil Service was the easiest access to financial success in New York City for black people, because they couldn't be discriminated as they were in the south. During that time there were several anti-discrimination laws that allowed blacks to work almost wherever they wanted. Even though there were laws against discrimination, racial problems were still everywhere. In the 1960s many jobs opportunities were opening up for blacks, especially in the

big cities. Although many physical changes occurred in the nation's public life, the mentality of the young people remained the same for many years after the Civil Rights Movement. The economical problems of the 60s only affected Msemaji and his family in a favorable way. His family achieved an unusual economical¹ success among most black families. All the members of his family had good jobs that provided extra money for their living. Msemaji notes that his family was compared to a high middle-class white family in those days. He doesn't^{Y now} anybody in his family without a college degree in his family, "so this one of the reasons that motivated me to be in college at the age of 55 years old."

Msemaji's feelings toward the white race haven't changed since the 1960s. He explains that he really never hated the white people, but he was against them in a spiritual way. Msemaji has been practicing Yoga for many years and has learned the principles of this spiritual art. When he relates the principles of Yoga to his feelings toward white people, he affirms that,

Me as a one self being should realized that
everything that I see outside of myself is but a
repetition or a replica of me. So if I hated the

white people or black people, I would be hating myself. Therefore I do not hate anyone, because I definitively cannot and will never hate myself.

Grd
ending
quote!

Excellent

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