



Washington, D.C. (1950s)



Munir Hamid

My first introduction was around 1954 or 1955. My sister was in the singing group called the Capris. She met Lynn Hope, and he was a Sunni Muslim and a saxophone player who was very well known and had several albums out. He would wear a turban and say "as salaam alaikum." He had some moral qualities the other musicians didn't have. I became interested and started to read as much literature as I could. I was fifteen years old. I met a friend. Instead of hustling money, he gave me a book to read, *Our Promised Messiah*. He was having a meeting in his house in West Philadelphia on Hobart Avenue. The Ahmadi missionaries, Nur Haq-Anwar and Muhammad Sadiq were teaching a bunch of brothers in Philadelphia. The rituals made an impression on me so that when I went home I decided to become Muslim. But I hesitated. In Washington, D.C., I was stationed on Andrews Air Force Base. Khalil Ahmad Nasir, the Ahmadi missionary, invited me to come out for Friday Jummah, 1955—I was sixteen. I converted then.



Chicago Mosque 1952 - Mubarika Malik, Mahmooda Malik, Hameeda Chambers, Aliyya Ali, Suleiman Saeed, Nur Islam, Hanif Ahmad, Abdul Malik, Mubarak Ahmad, Rashid Ahmad, Koonzi, Khalil Nasir



Chicago Mosque (1950s)



St. Louis (1950s)



Percy Smith was known to host popular jazz musicians at his home in California. There they would practice and discuss spiritual revolutions and religion. In 1953, Percy joined the Ahmadiyya Movement, saying, 'it was the thing to do'. Ahmad Saeed (Percy) returned to East St. Louis to become an integral member of the St. Louis Ahmadi community. During the 1970s and 1980s, absent of a missionary, Saeed took the lead on educating the young and old in Arabic and Islamic studies. During summers, he would feed the neighborhood kids around the Mosque and involve the Ahmadi youth in various activities. Every Friday and Sunday he would consistently hand out a hearty smile and candy to the young. His commitment to the youth, Islamic education and service to the community has developed a legacy of Ahmadis in St. Louis.



During the 1950s African-Americans were still under the duress of an American, federally supported racial caste system known as Jim Crow. Jim Crow allotted a stance of separate but equal, however equality was rarely enforced between 'Blacks' and 'Whites'. During these times, the Ahmadiyya Movement maintained its multi-racial Islamic principle, as directed by the Prophet of Islam in 632 A.D. in his last sermon, "All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action." African-Americans were not allowed to greet or shake hands with 'Whites', unable to use the same restroom or water fountains, unable to sit or

ride together in public spaces, and when church divisions were based on race, Ahmadis of all races and nationalities could be found in a single mosque, praying side-by-side, shaking hands and embracing another despite the rules and laws of the general public. Ahmad Saeed relates the story of when he first came into the movement in 1953. "Traveling to different cities would be challenging and dangerous. We would take the back roads in hopes not to be stopped by authorities because there would be a couple of so-called blacks, an Indian missionary and maybe a white all riding together in a car with no distinction of who sat where." During these times of segregation, Ahmadiyya continued to publicly proselytize equality amongst all Americans and set the example within its own walls a true administering of 'unalienable rights.'

AFRICAN AMERICAN JOURNEY TO ISLAM

... and they prayed too.

