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the nation of islam emerged in the 1920s as a loose conglomerate of "black muslims" who adopted the tenets of islam and used it as a catalyst to address the plight of african-americans. founded in detroit by wallace "willie" muhammad, one of elijah muhammad's early followers, in the 1920s, the noi later gained a national network of followers. elijah muhammad's nation of islam would prove to be the most extensive, influential and durable of african-american self-generated organizations. combining black cooperative entrepreneurship with indigenous islam-tinged culture and spirituality, the noi pursued a collectivist nationalist agenda which sought to advance the black masses cause within america or without it. at its collectivist height, the noi achieved a \$95 million empire of interlocking black muslim small businesses and farmsproviding a model for bootstrap self-development by the marginalized and dispossessed, worldwide. muhammad and his followers, a sect of islam, were born and raised in medina, the tribe of quraysh. the tribe is headed by its chieftain, abu sufyan, who was as wealthy as the tribe itself. his residence in mecca is often called the house of abraham. his deputy in mecca, abu jahl, is a wealthy nobleman of the tribe, and the leader of the meccan opposition to islam. in time, abu jahl became the primary enemy of muhammad. during a time of famine in madina, muhammad sought to persuade the wealthy quraysh to help the poor of medina. abu sufyan refused, claiming that the poor were sinners. muhammad and his followers, who had been meeting in secret, were driven out. muhammad and his followers eventually settled in a cave in the desert, from where they were threatened by abu sufyan and the quraysh. abu sufyan then enlisted an army of meccans to attack muhammad and his followers. this army numbered 7,000 warriors. muhammad and his followers met their enemies in the battle of badr, where more than 700 were killed on both sides. a truce was declared between the muslims and the quraysh, and peace was restored in madina. the quraysh agreed to escort muhammad and his followers to the holy lands of palestine, where muhammad and his followers were to establish an islamic kingdom. on the way to palestine, however, abu sufyan attacked, and the meccans killed many of the muslims. the leaders of the muslim army then separated, and the muslims agreed to a truce. the muslim army soon realized that muhammad had been betrayed, and it returned to medina. in the following battle, the meccans killed more than 500 muslims. muhammad and his followers fled again, and established a new community at a place called yathrib (later renamed madinah). in the following years, muhammad and his followers were attacked by the meccans. the quraysh led by abu jahl became the most bitter enemy of the muslims. during a time of famine, muhammad and his followers were again driven out of their city of madinah, and wandered in the wilderness for years. finally, muhammad and his followers were granted permission to return to madinah. the muslims' homecoming was celebrated by a feast in which muhammad and the muslims ate from plates of gold. the muslims returned to madinah and were besieged by the quraysh. after a year of siege, the muslims won a victory. from this point on, the muslims were able to conquer and to defend their city and its surrounding areas, and to expand to other areas. the muslim army often consisted of an army of 12,000 to 15,000 warriors, including the people of madinah. as the muslims conquered the areas around madinah, they were met by others who had converted to islam. the muslims were able to have a peaceful relationship with the new converts. in time, the muslims were able to conquer the entire country of makkah and its surrounding areas. at that time, the muslims called the people of makkah the ummah. muhammad's successor, abu bakr, who succeeded muhammad after the latter's death in 632, was a muslim from the ansar (companions). abu bakr formed an alliance with the christians and the jews. he was buried in medina, a city that was islam's spiritual capital and was established as the first islamic state. abu bakr's successor, umar (muhammad's son-in-law), was a muslim from medina. under umar, the muslims were able to spread islam in all areas of the world.

