

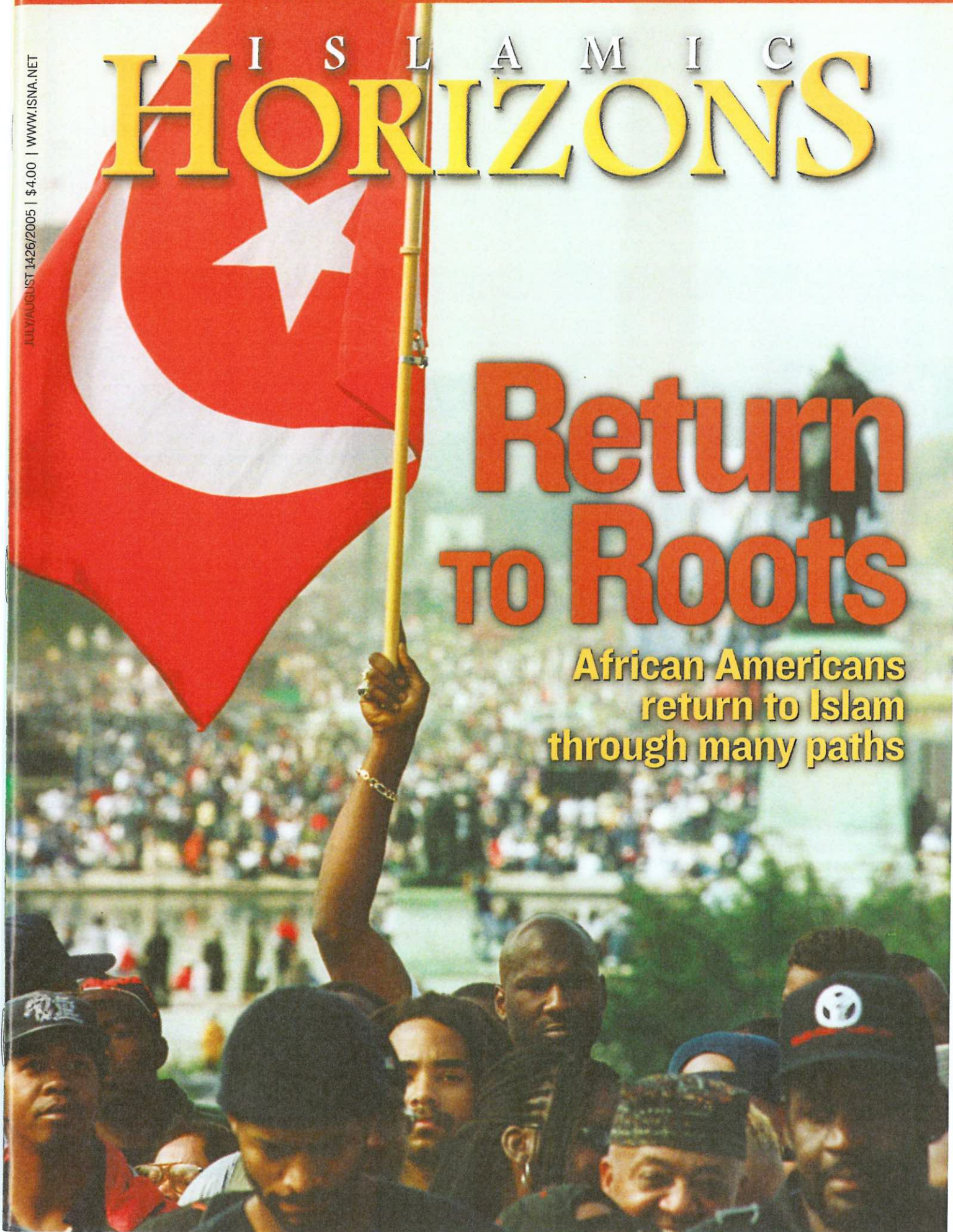
PEOPLE TO PEOPLE - HERITAGE SHOWCASE

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**Return
to Roots**

**African Americans
return to Islam
through many paths**





RETURN T




COVER STORY

Restoration, resistance, and reformation mark three stages of Islam's history in Black America

BY ZAHEER ALI


DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION in the 1930s, Shadrack Hall told the Savannah Unit of the Georgia Writers Project about his great-grandfather Bilali and his family, who would “pray at sun-up and face duh sun on duh knees an bow tuh it tree times, kneeling’ on a lill mat.” Hall was just one of many ex-slaves and their descendants living on the Georgia Sea Islands who recalled their parents’ and forbearers’ religious practices. At the time, it was unclear whether those interviewed or their interviewers made the explicit link between those practices and Islam, but the connection was there.

It is estimated that at least 10 to 40 percent of the slaves brought to the Americas came from Muslim-dominated regions of West Africa and were, therefore, likely Muslims. During the 18th and 19th centuries, a few of these Muslims in America attracted the attention of their slave-masters or other whites curious about their prayer rituals, their apparent mastery of the Arabic language, and their continued identification with Africa. >>



A man holds a flag bearing the familiar symbol of Islam as he listens to the speech of Minister Louis Farrakhan during the Million Family March, October 16, 2000 on Capitol Hill in Washington.

O ROOTS



“Islamic Horizons” invited **Kauthar Umar** to serve as special editor for this issue. A graduate of the American University, Kauthar not only provided valuable insights and wrote for this issue but also helped in others areas, including contacting authors, copyright holders, and photographers.