

# Farrakhan-A Moral Leader?

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Contributor

Louis Farrakhan.

The name of the minister and leader of the Nation of Islam can evoke controversy or reverence, depending on who you talk to, their prior experience with him and how the media portray him.

In his Nov. 9 speech at N.C. A&T, Minister Farrakhan was a smash success, judging by the reaction of the crowd in Corbett Sports Center who witnessed his perennial mix of controversy, condemnation and inspiration. But for me—after paying for the ticket, enduring the trip on a rainy night to Greensboro and waiting in line to be searched by the Fruit of Islam for weapons—I left Farrakhan's speech somewhat dejected.

Why? I wasn't disappointed in his speech *per se*. For all intents and purposes, the man is a fiery orator, inspirational and very dynamic; there is no doubt he can move the crowd. What disappointed me, however, was the rather thin *content* of several arguments he made in his speech. At this point in our struggle for equality, rights and power, inspiration and dynamism are not enough. It is time for critical appraisal of our leaders.

We need more than just "telling it like it is" and calling Whitey on the carpet for their deeds. We also need competence, excellence, common sense and an intelligent, intuitive eye to look past the obvious, set an agenda for progress and take us to a higher plane. And that is precisely what the minister failed to do in his speech.

At times some points the minister argued sounded extremely good when he said them, but when I examined his thoughts afterward, they were almost as sturdy as the newsprint of this fine publication. And when your arguments are that flimsy, it is time to check yourself.

Ostensibly, the overall tone of his speech seemed to be an answer to Jesse Jackson's call at the 1988 Democratic National Convention in Atlanta that "leadership must meet the moral challenge of its day." But ultimately, his moral tone put Farrakhan in line with some unlikely company (but more about that later).

He talked about issues such as our population in this nation, the challenges and hypocrisy African-Americans faced in the impending war with Iraq and the recession in the United States, abortion, the "program" for African-American women and our position as African-Americans in a nation where demogra-

phers say non-whites are scheduled to outnumber Whites by the year 2056. But in all those arguments were points that made up the disappointment I felt by the end of the night.

## A Black Nation?

So what if we African-Americans can "breed ourselves into power" by the middle of the 21st Century, as he so stated? African-Americans alone will not be in power. Do we really think that we can hold power just by having more African-Americans, Asians and Hispanics here than Whites? I hope not. Remember, South Africa is populated by 27 million Africans and only 5 million Whites—and the majority does NOT have the power.

At best, nonwhites (not just African-Americans) will be in the majority, yes—but our position would be the same as that of the Africans of South Africa, provided reforms are continued and apartheid is eventually brought down. In that case, we would be part of a group that held the numbers but not the educational, political or economic power needed to have a say in the running of the country. It is obvious, then, that a numerical majority alone is not the answer. If we are to be in power, then we African-Americans need to organize and continue for ourselves some sort of multilevel agenda for self-improvement on a political, economic and educational

basis in which we work not only as voters but legislators, not only consumers but producers, not only teachers but administrators—positions in which we all have the power to control the means of production, whether we produce laws, goods or educated minds.

Then, we need to enter into a coalition with other nonwhites so that when the day comes when we reach the majority in this country, we can coexist, stand united with other nonwhites and wield more power more successfully without again falling prey to the theory of "divide and conquer."

## Of Women and Men

I was not impressed with his talk about African-American women and men. If the African-American woman of 1990 holds as much social power as Farrakhan said she does, he is stupid to suggest they give up that power in exchange for helping our men by taking for themselves traditional, subordinate roles—and she would be stupid to give up the power she has gained in almost half of Black American families as a role model and provider, in the process enslaving herself and maybe dooming us all if our men are unable to step into the position of power Farrakhan says women should give up.

We don't need women giving up their power. We don't need women or men holding absolute power. What we need is for our African-American men to stand up and empower themselves, while

women remain strong and men get stronger.

We are all survivors, yet as a people are still up against many challenges that threaten the very survival in this country. The obstacles we face as a people are dire indeed, but in those obstacles lies the opportunity for a better system. If we are facing such dire times, perhaps by strengthening the men and keeping the women strong, we can create a new social system where we all let go of traditional roles in exchange for a system where all are powerful and contribute to the advancement of the whole.

If either women or men are weak, we are all compromised. But if we could develop a new social order while at the same time organizing and mobilizing ourselves for empowerment in alliance with other nonwhites, then the result could be a model for the future in which the chief objective would be group advancement and not domination. Now is not the time for African-American women to create stronger African-American men at the expense of the power and responsibilities they have earned (which, incidentally, far too many African-American males abdicated in the first place).

## Abortion—or Humane Behavior?

The third issue which I didn't agree with was the issue of abortion, which he brought up at the end of the night in a testimonial designed to evoke emotion.

see "Farrakhan," p. 12

