

ranks of Black America. But near the end of the lecture, he urged black women to keep their children and reject abortion as an option. What is so contradictory about that? Absolutely nothing. But the *reason* why Farrakhan asked the young women in the audience not to choose abortion certainly was. He relayed a story of how he was conceived, years later by his mother's first husband after she had divorced him, re-married, and already had given birth to her first son (his older brother) by his step-father. He said his mother had told him on her death bed that she had tried to abort him three times, but obviously failed, giving birth to Louis Farrakhan. And he said, with a large grin spreading across his face, that if his mother had succeeded in aborting him, "Look what the world would have been deprived of." While others applauded wildly like robots, I sat there stunned. This man says arrogance has no place in black leadership, yet he told us this story only to showcase his own arrogance and conceit, not to mention refueling his boundless ego. Here was an arrogant leader telling me that arrogance has no place in the ranks of black leadership. You figure that one out.

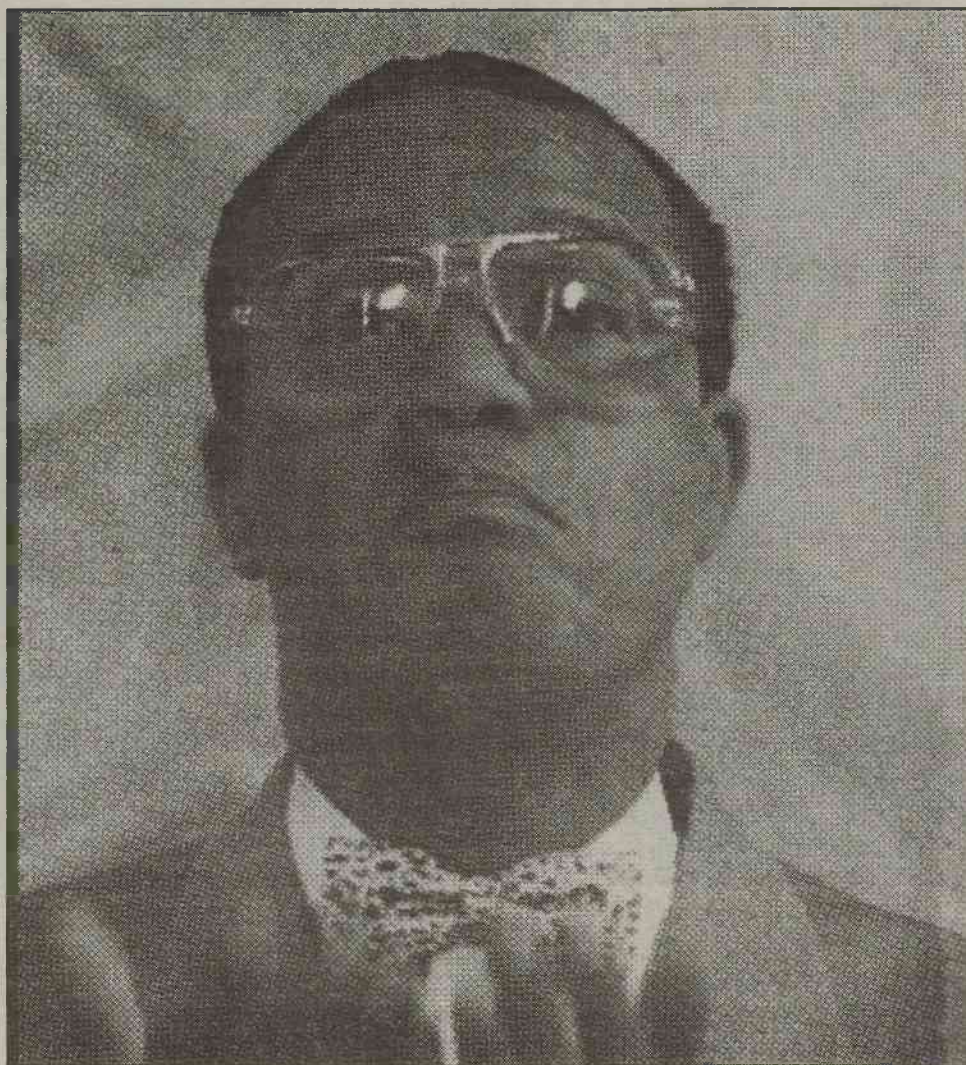
But that is not all. During the lecture, Farrakhan pulled out a twenty dollar bill, saying it was "only a piece of paper with a dead white man on it." He crumbled it up, threw it on the ground, and stepped on it, remarking that money is not so important that it "feels" or responds like humans. He concluded that money is not important in itself and that people of African descent had no business being so concerned about money. Amid all of the applause, I began to get a sinking feeling in my stomach. Then I thought for a minute — HEY! I just paid this man five dollars to tell me that my money is not important! Meanwhile he is taking five dollars from all of the thousands of brothers and sisters in the building, telling them the same thing. So now Farrakhan has thousands of unimportant dollars. In addition, he is charging seven dollars for a bean pie, ten dollars for a tape of his lecture, and twelve dollars for his book! And this money is not important? If the money is unimportant, then why is he asking for so much of it? What kind of fool does he think I am? What kind of fools does he think *we* are? Well friends, regardless of whether the money is important or unimportant, it is now in his hands.

But for some strange reason, I do not think the audience was concerned about the money, the contradictions, or anything else. Maybe there is some validity to the notion that Farrakhan possesses such charisma that it does overshadow

any negative aspect of his presentation. Maybe black folks are spellbound by the pride and discipline of the Nation of Islam, so much that they forget that such individuals are just as human as we are. In the ultimate display of mass attraction and blind following, Farrakhan had the entire audience, save a few others and myself, praying in Arabic and English. The Arabic portion was entirely unintelligible for us non-Arabic speaking individuals, although many still prayed along with him. The atmosphere was sinister, reminiscent of the occult. You could feel the power this man had over the audience. I chose not to participate in this activity and stood silently. Then my stomach began to tighten. I began to perspire. Suddenly, I felt alone in my beliefs, out of place like a stranger in a strange land; like I no longer belonged.

I chose not to fall victim to this man's incredible charisma. I was strong enough to maintain an objective viewpoint regarding his lecture. I was able to sit back and assess his arguments, evaluate his statements, analyze his charisma, and see the effect that each had on the audience. Farrakhan is a predator. He preys on the weaknesses of his audience. He assures the black woman that she is right in her pursuit of a career, but reminds her that a woman's primary role is to help the black man and that she needs to pick up and support the him. He tells the black man that he is not the animal that the media portrays him as and that his time for success is not far off. He provides solace for blacks who feel insecure in white society. Farrakhan provides the opportunity for African Americans to have victories within their hearts when the external successes and victories appear out of reach. As Bayard Rustin, a noted civil rights strategist, once said, "What can bring satisfaction is the feeling that he is black, he is a man, he is internally free." Maybe it is not so important that he contradicts himself or that he back up all of his statements with facts. Maybe what really counts is how he makes us, as African Americans, feel about ourselves. Despite the many problems I had with his presentation, he still managed to say some things that touched me. I know I felt good about myself when I went to the door to exit the building. It feels good being among thousands of brothers and sisters. Everyone being civil. Everyone, for once, acting like human beings. You could sense the unity of the audience. Then we opened the door and walked out into the cold, pouring rain. The wind began to howl. Freezing and soaking wet, we slowly went our separate ways, five dollars poorer, but richer in spirit.

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How Can I Hate Him?

By Jarvis T. Harris
Contributor

As a young African-American, I had heard of Minister Farrakhan, but to say that I knew a lot about him and his beliefs, I cannot.

To alleviate some of my ignorance about this man of seemingly great importance to people of color, I decided to travel to North Carolina A&T University to hear him speak. I had many expectations of what I thought might happen going into the Sports Center, but when I came out my expectations were fulfilled—and then some.

I pictured Minister Farrakhan as being a cold, dogmatic, militant person. Maybe I am a victim of the media in this society, but Minister Farrakhan was anything but cold and harsh.

He came out and addressed us in a very serene and calm voice that expressed his gratitude for our patience and determination in coming to see him speak. I could not believe that this was the same man hated by so many. Later during the speech I would understand why he is feared and hated.

Minister Farrakhan espoused some serious ideas in his speech; ideas and thoughts I had not thought about before. His speech forced me, as well as the

other members of the audience, to see things that go on in our society in a different light and with a different mode of thinking. While sitting and listening to Farrakhan, I began to notice the number of African-Americans in attendance, and it became clear to me why Farrakhan is feared and hated—Minister Louis Farrakhan says some inflammatory things. Farrakhan is also hated, in my opinion, because he has the power to make 6,000 African-Americans want to stand in line in the cold and rain to hear him. I guess Farrakhan is really "dangerous" if he can rally this many of the supposedly least united and concerned people in this country.

I left the sports arena with new ideas and thoughts about my place in this society. Though I failed to agree with everything that Farrakhan said, I had to appreciate his candor and his love of the truth. I can see how many people are and will be offended by Farrakhan's speeches.

Farrakhan puts it best when he says, "The truth only hurts the guilty." The question that everyone should ask themselves is, "Am I guilty?" No matter how extremist he sounds or becomes, it would be hard for me to hate a man that loves me and my people as much as he does.

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