



ON THE AVANT GARDE

BY TANG NIVRI

Finding the Courage

I first met minister Louis Farrakhan in Dallas sometime during the spring of 1984. It was just after he had made his most famous remarks regarding Judaism, exacerbating a terrible wound that had erupted as a result of a careless remark made during the presidential primary by then-candidate Jesse Jackson. Like many, I had heard much about Farrakhan but had not met him in person. I sat on the front row in the huge auditorium hoping to catch a glimpse into his eyes, to watch his hands, and to look at his feet.

I frankly don't remember much of what he said, other than he thought about the relationship between Jews and blacks had been one-sided, and that many successful blacks were not truly independent but were nothing more than "Charley McCarthy" dolls.

I remember him speaking strongly of the need for black folks to do for themselves — to be self-sufficient.

He finished and I made my way to the side of the stage, allowed by his bodyguards to spend a brief moment to speak and shake hands. As we stood in the grip of each other's hands, I was struck by the warmth and the delicate feel of softness emanating from the hand of a man whom I had only known as a prophet of hate and exploitation. "How could these be the hands of such a man?" I wondered. Surely, there was much more to this man's soul than just inflammatory rhetoric.

"Gateways: A God-sent Opportunity?"

God granted this community with an opportunity, a privilege to do something most would deem extraordinarily foolish — all in the name of love. This community served as host to a three-day symposium called "Gateways: Classical Music, and the Black Musician," featuring some of America's best classically trained black musicians. A foolish idea because the event also included violinist Louis Farrakhan, spiritual leader of the Nation of Islam.

"Gateways" was organized by concert pianist Armenta Hummings, who thought it a good idea to expose young black children to the discipline and rigors of the world of classical music. Her idea was shared by others including the Delta Fine Arts Center, who for over 20 years has promoted the visual arts, music, literature, drama, history and folk arts to people in this community and beyond.

Without Farrakhan there would be little trouble in raising funds needed for this event. But Farrakhan was coming — not to speak or to proselytize — but to play the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, a work that demanded musical genius at the hands of someone who would have a warm heart. But who could be sure with Farrakhan, and what about the risks of confrontation?

Hummings and the Delta Fine Arts Center couldn't do it alone. They needed the support of others willing to stick their necks out. But where were they?

They needed people who would have the courage to be caught trying to do good, people about whom others could whisper as having "lost their good judgment in the heat of a moment."

Giraffes: People with Long Necks!

This community needs more giraffes, people unafraid to stick their necks out. Few of us have the courage to blink while looking into the eyes of another. It is a sign of weakness, an admittance that we are unsure.

We prefer to strike with hammers, instead of the light of the silver moon beam. We prefer to draw dark lines instead of using the slopes and tangents of curves. We prefer the precision of geometry rather than the uncertainty of theology. Is this not why we suffer so much?

We gather in our small groups and whisper what must be and what must not be; we utter these things in the comfort of those who would agree. Yet when confronted with the deeper reality of our own conscience, of our own sense of what is right and wrong, we fall away. We are not found . . . yet happily, there are those among us who have identified themselves as giraffes, standing tall, willing to forgive even when it would cost them their necks.

There are some among us who have identified themselves as willing to be misunderstood; willing to go to bed worrying about decisions made but awakened still committed to the ideal.

If We are Lucky

If we are lucky, there will come a time in our lives when we will find the courage to reach out to our fellow man and say things we thought never possible.

We will do things for those whom we thought beneath our dignity, beneath our humanity, unworthy of our love.

And if we are lucky, there will be someone who will listen to us as we beg for an audience. If we should be so blessed, there will be people who will look at us not for who we were then, but who we are trying to be today, for whom we wish, so much, to be tomorrow.

No, we will be greeted by the grace of redemption, forgiveness and love. There is great wisdom in this way — forgiving thy neighbor as thyself.

Community

Clayton Tells NAACP to Fight Discrimination

By KAREN M. HANNON
Chronicle Staff Writer

Fighting discrimination must continue to be a part of blacks' agenda, Congresswoman Eva M. Clayton said.

And although it may not be as blatant as in years past, discrimination is "alive and well," she said.

"It is far more sophisticated these days," Clayton said. "No one calls you 'nigger' to your face, they just treat you like one. Racism has taken a new form. It is now in the neighborhood. It is now in the failed opportunity to get that loan to expand a business."

Clayton addressed a crowd of more than 800 at the Winston-Salem branch NAACP's Freedom Fund Gala last Friday at the Benton Convention Center.

The Warrenton native who represents the 1st Congressional district in eastern North Carolina and has been a children's advocate for years, challenged those present to work for the children of communities in order to broaden their socio-economic opportunities.

She applauded the NAACP for its continued work in the community.

"It is indeed good to know that you have been around and about the things that made life better — better not only for the struggle of economic development but for social justice for decades," Clayton said. "It is your commitment to make all people equal and enjoy the constitutional rights that are accorded to all citizens that you enjoy."

"It is only when you know that you are a child of God and that no one can put you in a position of second-class citizenship unless you accept it," Clayton said. "Thank you for not accepting it."

Clayton, the first woman elected to Congress from North Carolina, also commended the NAACP for selecting the Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis, a close friend of Clayton's,

as its new executive director. She said the North Carolina native, who succeeds Benjamin F. Hooks, is a man of "proven leadership, scholarship, commitment and courage."

As a lifetime member of the NAACP, Clayton said although the civil rights movement has removed some socio-economic barriers, there is still room for improvement.

"We have yet come a long way," Clayton said. "We can stop at any hotel in America and order any room. But often many of us do not have the resources to pay for that because many of us are underemployed, if employed, and others are jobless or perhaps threatened by that. But the majority of us can say that we are better off than before."

But Clayton said even though African Americans have made strides toward greater opportunity, the struggle is not over. She said that in recent years, society has begun to ask the African American, "What more do you want?"

"If you believe we have come too far, why can we say today that the measure of this community can be judged by its children?" Clayton said. "If we have come too far, why are there more children born into poverty than ever before? Every forty-six seconds of a school day, a black child walks away from school and never comes back. And guess what happens when that happens? All society pays for that child. Every one of us pays for the failures of us not to respond to the least of us."

Clayton said only until each child has an equal opportunity can we say, "We have made it."

She said African Americans need to help to remove the stereotype that young blacks will not excel.

"We need to remove the myth that blacks have a distinctive barrier for learning," Clayton said. "We can do that by not enforcing mediocrity in our schools. We can excel, but it requires discipline and hard work."



Eva M. Clayton (left) prepares to address a crowd at the NAACP "Freedom Fund Gala" at the Benton Convention Center last Friday as Mazie Woodruff, Forsyth County commissioner pins a corsage on her lapel.



Kenny Faulkner, chairman of the Finance Committee of the local NAACP (far right), presents Aliya McMillan (center) the Charles McLean Award on behalf of her father, Joseph T. McMillan, as local president, William Tatum (left, standing) looks on. Seated are (l. to r.) Judge Loretta Biggs and Congresswoman Eva M. Clayton.



C.B. Hauser (left), Life Membership chairman of the NAACP, presents Life Membership plaques to Lena C. Turner and Naomi W. Jones.



Pictured are (l. to r.): Isaac "Ike" Howard, Judge Loretta Biggs, Eva M. Clayton, Hazel Brown and local president, William "Bill" Tatum.

Rep. Stephen Neal to Speak in Winston-Salem

The public is invited to hear Rep. Stephen Neal speak at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 25, in the Auditorium of the Winston-Salem Public Library, 660 W. 5th Street.

Rep. Neal will be discussing his proposed Savings & Loan legislation, Foreign Aid and Campaign Finance Reform at the monthly meeting of United We Stand, Amer-

ica, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County. A question and answer period will follow.

This will be an open UWSA

meeting and all Fifth Congressional District residents are encouraged to attend.

If additional information is needed call 768-1100.

Crisis Control Ministry Observe Anniversaries

Downtown Church Center and Crisis Control Ministry are both celebrating important anniversaries in 1993. On April 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the Downtown Church Center will celebrate 25 years of urban ministry in the Winston-Salem community at an open house in their offices at the Augsburg Community Center, 502 N. Broad St. Directly following this event, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Crisis Control County at an open house and rededication at the Ministry, 200 E. 10th St.

A brief ceremony, including a ribbon-cutting for the newly expanded pharmacy will start at 2:15 p.m.

The career Center photography classes of the Winston-Salem/

Forsyth County high schools will exhibit photographs depicting the Crisis Control motto, "Bringing together people in need with people who care."

The public is invited to attend both events.

Church leaders who founded both ministries perceived the great needs of people living in the inner-city during a time of social upheaval and racial tension in the late 60's and early 70's. Under the direction of the late Rev. Ron Rice in 1968 the Downtown Church Center was created to bring a Christian response to those people.

The center developed programs for older adults, such as, home visi-

tation, transportation, Adopt-a-Grandparent, Saturday Night Fellowship, and care-giver support groups.

For inner-city children, after-school and summer programs, and camp scholarships were created.

Within the next few years several important ministries dealing with the specific areas of need were spawned by this "parent ministry."

Crisis Control Ministry was one of these. Created by religious leaders in 1973, under the direction of Rice, to provide basic essentials such as food, clothing, medicine, rent, fuel and utility assistance to people in severe crisis, this ministry has, over the years, become the largest provider of emergency ser-

vices in Forsyth County. Many hundreds of volunteers have given time and direction to keep these ministries strong and viable through the years.

They will be honored at several special events during this anniversary year.

In October a community worship service will be held at Wait Chapel at Wake Forest University, sponsored jointly by both ministries. Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund will be the principal speaker.

For further details, call Downtown Church Center of Crisis Control Ministry.

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