

# FORUM

## America's Own Child: Minister Louis Farrakhan

# Can America feel the healing warmth of its Black Rage?

Harvard's official watcher of African-American life and culture, Henry Louis Gates, would have loved it. Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, came to Winston-Salem the other night. The local media trumpeted his coming to speak at WSSU, heralding him as "the controversial leading spokesman of black rage in America." Visions of treachery and treason and agitating otherwise peaceful politics abound. One would have thought that Attila the Hun had returned, on Martin Luther King Drive, no less.

There were throngs of police escorts and bow-tied Fruit of Islam security guards on rooftops and behind bushes and cars. The air was expectant of a fiery oration filled with anti-white denunciations and tongue-lashings.

But the next day, after the bright lights went down, Mr. Farrakhan's detractors, adherents, and disciples alike all went home — to the same America that was there before he came. The America Farrakhan speaks of — at once with comical simplicity and sarcasm, and, in the next sentence

In what is really a conservative, pull-yourself-up dictum, he challenges them to relieve and improve the conditions in neighborhoods comprised entirely of people who are debased, slack and offensive. Not always through fault or making of their own.

Who out there these days, besides Farrakhan, is speaking about that part of America that is decidedly

less)? Who else challenges the most dispossessed — America's legions of black ex-offenders — to clean themselves up, to get off drugs, to stop the fratricide, and to take on responsible and manly behavior?

He strikes fear mostly in the hearts of white liberals, who, it seems, sometimes want to rid society of its ills. But they want to do it in their oft-times disputable ways: where blacks would be dependent on them and the government. Louis Farrakhan is respected by many because he is up-front. He is nothing like the executives at Texaco or Avis Car Rental. He's never been caught "on tape" belittling whites and plotting to destroy his documented actions. He speaks forcefully and nondefensively about his right to have open relations with certain African and Arab leaders who are considered despots and dictators.

Neither can he be found following "legal ambulances, running to the corporate trough." He never seeks the spoils of race discrimination lawsuits and diversity consulting contracts. Some other African-American leaders and business people can't say that. Some can be heard, in the rhetoric of what is little less than blackmail, "deal with us, or deal with Farrakhan."

He exposes and terrorizes the "us" that is "them," the so-called black underclass.

Farrakhan also puts the cuffs on middle class blacks, who are wary of charges that they are not genuine and who suffer from deeply-felt racial uncertainties. Most blacks find his Baptist preacher-like oratory alluring, even if they don't agree with his messianic message. But, since Martin Luther King was killed, African Americans have continued to look for the messiah. Not entirely unexpected of a people who, for every one son graduating college, 100 go to prison.

America's relationship with Louis "Man of Fire" Farrakhan — the man too many love to hate is symbolized by an ancient Ethiopian proverb: "A cow gave birth to a fire; she wanted to lick it, but it burned; she wanted to leave it; but she could not, because it was her own child." Until further notice, we will always need and have a Minister Louis Farrakhan, who freely says that America made him what he is today. Even Harvard's Gates agrees that some alternatives to Farrakhan are frightening.

(Dr. William Turner is a regular freelance columnist for the Chronicle.)



### LIFT EVERY VOICE

By DR. WILLIAM H. TURNER



with loud biting realism — is still there. He is on to the next place, like any good evangelist.

When the murmuring stopped and the students went to sleep, America, even Winston-Salem, yet had a critical mass of its citizens of African descent — that Mr. Farrakhan neither invented nor perpetuates. Those faces stuck at the bottom of the well. Beyond the platitudes, including Mr. Farrakhan's, there are some stark realities in Black America that may well, without him, fester over even worse.

Perhaps he alone can articulate it; but whatever other purpose they serve, his eloquent utterances provide a venting to African Americans. Until somebody else, perhaps someone keen to "making people feel good about America" comes along, Farrakhan actually helps people, especially young black males. He helps them to discharge the frustrated thinking that comes with the simple act of reading about the goings-on in urban America in "Jet" every week. If they don't read, all they have to do is walk out their front doors and get bashed in the face with a brick. Others look to the pages of "Readers Digest" and the "Wall Street Journal" to read about a generation of remorseless killers and radically impulsive black teenagers: those whom former Drug Czar Bill Bennett calls "super-predators."

chaotic and dysfunctional: those places where far too many black kids live in Godless worlds, where millions of these blameless children, more than half of them in poverty, are fatherless (and if their fathers are around, they are job-

## We Need to Turn Welfare Repeal Into Real Reform

Pat's daily battle to escape an abusive husband and keep a roof over her child's head has not always been victorious.

The welfare system she turned to in times of great need was not perfect. She often called it "a major roadblock" — another "trauma" of life for a woman with few skills and a child to raise alone. Sometimes trying to get help was so hard that she nearly went back to the abusive husband whose violence had driven her and son Jonathan out into shelters and even onto the streets.

But when the welfare check came, she felt there was some chance to crawl out of her situation and create a better life. The check certainly didn't make her rich — no Cadillac, no penthouse, no fancy wardrobe — but it gave her some hope, and a little more time to think and get herself together.

Pat is one of the many women who have turned to the welfare rolls with their babies in tow. By and large, they are neither teen mothers nor daughters of women who had been on welfare. Nor are they "welfare queens." Many rely on welfare only when emergencies hit. Most have held some type of job before. Most are victims of domestic violence. All live near the edge, one step from falling over.

Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), created in 1935 as a joint state and federal program, ensured that women

like Pat could get the help they needed, regardless of the state they chanced to live in during recessions and times of economic peril. The states chose how much to pay, but all who met basic eligibility guidelines were ensured crucial, though meager, government cash assistance to help their families survive crises. For a poor family, AFDC was making all the difference between having a place to live or not. Data show that those not getting assis-



### CHILDWATCH

By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

tance ended up on the street at three times the rate of those who got benefits. AFDC was the life preserver many clung to on stormy seas while they searched for a way to shore. But the welfare revisions passed by Congress and signed into law by the president abolished this six-decade-old guarantee for poor chil-

dren and their families, without putting anything in place to help people work. As a result, many may go under, unless President Clinton, Congress, and governors act to ensure jobs and adequate supports to help parents work and protect their children. The saddest thing about the welfare legislation is its assault on working families and legal immigrants who work every day.

More than two-thirds of the nearly 13 million people on welfare are children, who cannot work to support themselves or vote, so they were easy targets in an election year. In 1997 we must insist that our political leaders turn welfare repeal into real reform by acting to lift children out of poverty and getting them off to a healthy start. Pat's child is not the cause of all of America's current problems, but he is a part of America's future. Will it be a productive or dependent one? The answers lie with the choices we and our leaders make today.

To find out how you can help your state protect children under the new welfare law, please call (202) 662-3542.

(Marian Wright Edelman is the president of the Children's Defense Fund, and a leader of the Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC), whose mission is to leave no child behind. For information, call 1-800-ASK-BCCC.)

### Winston-Salem Chronicle

THE CHOICE FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN NEWS  
USPS 067910

617 N. Liberty Street  
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102

The Winston-Salem Chronicle is published every Thursday by the Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc.

The Winston-Salem Chronicle was established by Ernest Pitt and Ndubisi Egemonye in 1974.

The Chronicle is a proud member of:  
• Audit Bureau of Circulation • National Newspapers Publishers Association • North Carolina Press Association • North Carolina Black Publishers Association, Inland Press Association National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc. • 45 West 45th St • New York, NY 10038 (212) 869-5220

### How to Reach us...

910-722-8624 • Fax 910-723-9173

NEWS STAFF  
MAURICE CROCKER  
SAM DAVIS  
723-8428

CIRCULATION  
DON NAYLOR  
722-8624

(Call to start or stop delivery or to report a delivery problem)

SALES STAFF  
LEXIE JOHNSON  
722-8628

BUSINESS OFFICE  
ERICKA ASBURY  
VICKIE WARREN  
722-8624

PRODUCTION  
ROGER MARTIN  
DAVID SCHLOSSER  
COREY DSNEIL

### To subscribe...

722-8624  
Call for new subscription information or any questions about your current subscription.  
Subscription Rates  
Single Copy 75 cents  
In County  
2 years.....\$40.95  
1 year.....30.72  
6 mos.....20.48  
3 mos.....10.24  
Out of County/State  
2 years.....\$45.95  
1 year.....35.72  
6 mos.....25.48  
3 mos.....15.24

## Winston-Salem Chronicle

### HOME DELIVERY SUBSCRIPTION ORDER

YES. Please send me the **Winston-Salem Chronicle**  
 2 Year-\$40.95 •  1 Year - \$30.72 •  6 mos. - \$20.48

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

check enclosed •  please bill me

Mail to: Subscription Department  
**Winston-Salem Chronicle**  
P.O. Box 1636  
Winston-Salem, NC 27102