

Louis Farrakhan makes a statement for Cuba

Manning Marable



Black nationalism has always had two conflicting tendencies - conservative vs. progressive. Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association in the 1920s attracted over 1 million followers.

Some were Marxists and socialists, while others advocated strict racial separatism and black capitalism. Advocates of Black Power such as Floyd McKissick and Roy Innis of the Congress of Racial Equality became apologists for conservative Republicanism. Conversely, Malcolm X moved from the conservative black nationalism of the Nation of Islam in the 1950s toward a revolutionary Pan Africanist politics by the time of his death in 1965.

One finds the same contradiction in the politics of the Nation of Islam and Louis Farrakhan. In the 1970s, the Nation of Islam's newspaper, Muhammad Speaks regularly presented information sympathetic with the national liberation struggles in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The most popular and prominent opponent of the Vietnam War, for many people throughout the world, was heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali, a devout member of the Nation of Islam.

On domestic issues, Farrakhan adheres to a conservative social agenda: opposition to black feminism, reproductive rights, and gay and lesbian rights. Farrakhan's economic strategy is essentially Booker T. Washington's century-old program of black entrepreneurship and racial segregation, patronizing black-owned businesses as a means to build African American economic power, while failing to recognize how globalization and corpo-

rate capitalism have fundamentally transformed the rules of the economic game for millions of working people regardless of race.

On some international issues, Farrakhan has also taken conservative and even outright reactionary positions. His defense of his visit to the Nigerian dictatorship, only months after the execution by that regime of human rights activists, was shameful. Conversely, Farrakhan has defended the progressive political right for all American citizens to travel abroad and to dialogue with other countries that our government opposes, such as Iraq. Black radicals such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson took similar positions, and were victims of Cold War repression.

In his recent visit to Libya, Farrakhan expressed a desire to his host, that he would like to travel to Cuba. Representatives of the Cuban government were contacted, and Farrakhan was invited to come to the island. In September, 1996, Farrakhan and a delegation of about twenty members of the National of Islam went to Cuba, as part of a tour throughout the Caribbean region.

During the visit, the delegation spent most of its time examining two issues - education and public health care. Farrakhan asked numerous questions about Cuba's successful health programs, and its educational institutions. In an informal conversation with Cuban leader Fidel Castro, Farrakhan discussed a wide variety of topics, including philosophy and religion. At the conclusion of the tour, Farrakhan talked at length about his impressions of Cuba.

As reported in the Cuban press, Farrakhan declared his opposition to the U.S. embargo against Cuba, and the recently passed Helms-Burton legislation which greatly restricts economic, social and cultural contacts between the American and Cuban people. Farrakhan stated that "Cuba is on the right path", and asked why a country should be "punished for attempting to make its own way in the world, through its own efforts." He stated that

"Cuba must be allowed to build its own destiny."

When asked if he and others in his delegation were concerned about having their passports seized by U.S. officials for travelling to Cuba, Farrakhan replied that confiscating their documents "would be a mistake," because the group had "come on a religious mission." Farrakhan explained that while he and others in the delegation "had learned about the shortages of medicine and other essential goods" inside Cuba due to the US embargo, that they had also recognized that "the fundamental strength of the Cuban people is their spirit, their will and their capacity for resistance."



Farrakhan

Farrakhan charged that the U.S. government's policies against the Cuban people were inhumane and indefensible. "President Clinton should remember what happened in Babylon," Farrakhan warned. In that ancient country, "those who were responsible for wrongdoing received the hearts of animals in place of human hearts." The U.S. today suffers from "the same symptoms as ancient Babylon," the same "arrogance" and "insensitivity."

Progressives who support Cuba's right to self-determination and who favor direct dialogue, economic and cultural exchanges with that country, find themselves agreeing with Farrakhan on this issue. This only reinforces the fact that while black progressives and feminists disagree with Farrakhan on many issues, that we can ill afford to refuse to engage in a real dialogue with him. People who hold different political perspectives can in many instances work together for common purposes.

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In support of diversity

By Sylvia Perry
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
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Unity in the community and all around the nation appears to be the current chime of the year. However, an integral part of unity is understanding - understanding the diversity and differences that make us all unique.

One of the biggest fears that people have is differences. The Pilgrims didn't like the Native Americans because they were different. Catholics didn't like the Jews because they were different. The Americans fought with the British because they wanted different laws. In college, AKAs didn't like Deltas because their colors were different. Omegas didn't like Kappas because their images were different. Republicans don't get along well with Democrats because they have different philosophies. Homosexuals are not liked by conservatives because they are viewed as different. Whites didn't like blacks because they were different. We could go on. Yet, the one common characteristic that we all share, no matter how many differences we have, is that we are all human beings.

We often forget these things when we make references to others who are not like us. Instead of shedding light on a subject over which we find ourselves at odds, we immediately ridicule or put each other down. So what if it's not for you? So what if it's different? Why do you worry? All of the energy that's put forth into generating negative vibes, could be turned into positive energy - an asset for you.

Celebrate the diversity of others and relish the characteristics that make them different. Broaden your own horizons while strengthening your understanding of mankind. No matter how many letters you may have following your name, the greatest gift you can give yourself is a Ph.D. in Diversity. The kind of degree you can't buy, but must earn by experience and knowledge. The first time I saw a white pride shirt, it floored me. It was the confederate flag on a shirt that read, "You wear your X, I'll wear mine." It made plenty of sense after I read it. Who was I to be mad at what someone had on their shirt. If the shoe was on the other foot, I would probably be ready to fight if challenged about my choice of apparel.

After I thought about it and got over my shock, I politely smiled and kept going when I saw them again. That was the weekend I decided to read up on the confederacy and the lifestyle of whites in the south during that era. There's nothing for me to relate to, but at least I took the time out to educate myself about them before passing judgment. And, though I do not agree with their praising of the old ways, I accept and respect their opinion as I would expect them to respect mine.

When you have a free moment, take the time out to really talk with someone who is different from you. Don't limit yourself by color, race, creed or religion. They're all types of inter-cultural differences that separate us.

There is so much that we can do to help ourselves understand others, but it all begins at home. Don't expect anyone else to give you any more respect than you're willing to give. And remember no matter how you look at it, we are all the same. If you pinch me I will hurt. If you cut me, like you I will bleed. Celebrate diversity, celebrate others and you will find great spirit and strength in celebrating yourself.

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To keep pro basketball, Charlotte needs new arena

By Ed Brown
SPECIAL TO THE POST

We need to re-focus the debate.

Does Charlotte want to keep its National Basketball Association franchise long-term?

That is the central question. It has been obscured by the media reports and resultant discussion this week surrounding the possibility of a new Uptown arena as the centerpiece of an economic development proposal.

There will be a detailed presentation to Charlotte City Council and the Cameron Blue Ribbon Committee on Nov. 11. Prior to that meeting, any discussion of the specifics of the proposal we are trying to assemble would be inappropriate.

But there is some pertinent background that helps explain why we have worked for more than six months to put together a proposal worthy of consideration by City Council.

The central issue is whether the Charlotte Hornets can remain a viable NBA franchise while continuing to play in a building that does not provide the team revenues comparable to other NBA teams. It is increasingly obvious that the answer is a resounding "No."

And league-wide trends are working to further erode Charlotte's position. NBA Commissioner David Stern

Why city needs to support Hornets

recently stated that by 1999, all but on team in the NBA either will be playing in a new-generation arena (one that includes substantial premium seating revenue) or have one under construction.

Unlike the NFL, the NBA includes all revenues, including premium seating revenues, in determining salary cap. Therefore, the salary cap will continue to rise significantly over the next few years. And unfortunately, as we all recognize, the Charlotte Coliseum offers negligible premium seating revenue. By way of example, Charlotte is projected to rank 25th out of 29 NBA franchises in gross arena revenue for the '96-97 season.

The consultant hired by the City of Charlotte to review this situation has concurred that the Coliseum is not adequate to generate the required revenues for an NBA franchise. Additionally, the consultant determined that modification of the existing facility is neither structurally feasible nor a long-term solution.

In the end, the franchise will need a new, competitive playing facility—and the tens of millions of dollars spent on renovation would have been wasted.

So, the short-term question: Does Charlotte want to field a

competitive NBA team? And again, the long-term question—the real question—is: Does Charlotte want to retain its NBA franchise?

If the answer to that question is "yes," then a new arena must be built. The details then become where and how. The two most obvious possibilities for a new site are on the Coliseum property or Uptown.

(Some news stories earlier this week reported that the private sector would buy the existing Coliseum as a part of a development proposal for a new arena. This is factually incorrect. That site is city property, and City Council will decide the future of the Coliseum. That is not part of the plan we are developing.)

The existing Coliseum site has been an economic boom for Charlotte, which is testimony to the city's foresight in making major infrastructure investment in the Tyvola Road area. The result has been the creation of thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars added to the real estate tax base for the city and the county.

So, the city investment served as an unbelievable catalyst for economic development, and the return on that investment has been gratifying. All that is true despite the fact that the Coliseum was not built as an NBA facility. Its original intent was to serve mainly as a college basketball arena.

An Uptown site for a new arena appears to offer much of the same potential. As the Panthers have proven with Ericsson Stadium, the citizens of this region are ready to come Uptown. As the Performing Arts Center proved with "Phantom of the Opera," the citizens of this region are ready to socialize Uptown.

If a new arena were to be built Uptown, the citizens of this region will come Uptown to enjoy the Hornets, the just-announced women's NBA team, the circus, ice-shows, concerts and other events.

And if a new Uptown arena is built, the city then will have the opportunity to determine how to maximize taxpayer's investment in the Coliseum property. On any score, given the economic boom that has occurred in the Tyvola Road area, that public investment has been excellent.

As to the second detail—the "how" of building a new arena—many cities around the country have determined that substantial public dollars from a variety of sources are justified. Generally these kinds of analyses have concluded that the economic impact on a community by a professional sports franchise benefits the entire community. By way of example, some economists estimate that the Charlotte Hornets have a \$200 million a year impact on this community.

A bridge back for returning ex-offenders

By Dennis Schatzman
SPECIAL TO THE POST

While on the reelection circuit, Gil Garcetti, the embattled Los Angeles County district attorney of O.J. Simpson fame, promised a powerful group of black ministers he would draft legislation that would require offenders who are high school dropouts to earn a general equivalency diploma before being released.

If Garcetti makes good on his promise, he would be prudent to find a community-based correctional care facility with a proven success rate to implement the program. One such facility is Bridge Back, an inmate outreach center right smack in the middle of South Central Los Angeles. But I warn you, although the place houses up to 77 non-violent offenders serving the last four months of their sentences prior to parole, you have to look very hard to find it, unless you know exactly where

it is. These inmates are rarely seen and seldom heard.

Bridge Back is operated in a quiet unassuming building that sits near the busy corner of Western and Vernon Avenues. One doesn't see young black men standing around chillin', drinking 40 ounce beers, shooting craps or engaging in any other ne'er-do-well type activity. Instead there are dozens of young men inside working, studying, going out on jobs, attending schools and the like. As they carry out their daily activities, you don't hear a peep out of them.

A reporter who used to catch the bus at the corner every day never knew the place was there until he heard the residents were about to be moved back to county jail by the Department of Corrections as "a precautionary measure" during the final days of the federal trial of the four LAPD officers charged with beating black motorist Rodney King. Celes King, III, state

president of the Congress of Racial Equality of California and the members of the local businessmen's association heard about the discriminatory move (similar centers located in white neighborhoods were not forced to relocate) and "persuaded" the state to put a stop to such action. They argued successfully that the Bridge Back residents were never involved in the April 29, 1992 riots that followed the officers' Simi Valley acquittals. So why the harsh treatment, they asked?

King, a local bail bondsman and prominent civil rights leader, has been a long time friend of Roy Evans, Bridge Back's founder, administrator and proprietor. "I have known Roy for nearly 30 years," beams King, whose office is walking distance from the facility. "We answered his call for help on that matter mainly because Roy is the kind of guy who doesn't cry 'wolf.' When he says 'let's, we say 'go.' When he says 'Hal,

we say, 'leluha.' It's as simple as that. And CORE makes no apologies about its support of Bridge Back." Evans founded Bridge Back 14 years ago. He operates the facility of a \$950,000 yearly budget. A staff of 16 persons provides 24 hour service (which includes job preparation, placement, substance abuse assistance, stress management,



Schatzman

victim awareness training and computerized educational services), seven days a week. Two parole agents are assigned to the premises.

Since its inception, over 5,000 people have passed through its doors, receiving food lodging, counseling and training before being reintroduced to their home communities.

"Bridge Back has come a long way from its beginnings as an anti-substance abuse program," Evans explains. "In the early days we took advantage of the opportunities provided by the War on Poverty and Model Cities programs to create and establish programs of our own through which attacked some of the problems overwhelming our community. We networked, we opened our organizations, staffed them, and started to work on the needs among our people." In a community where nearly one-third of all black men are either in jail, on parole or on probation, correctional services has unfortunately become an unwelcome growth industry. Yet it is usually the court system, the lawyers and the jail houses that reap the lion's share of the benefits. Evans believes more Bridge Back-type facilities are needed.

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