

Farrakhan steps aside as NOI leader

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that the Nation of Islam is more than the charisma, eloquence and personality of Louis Farrakhan," he said in a letter to his supporters. "In this period of testing, you can prove that the Nation of Islam is under-girded by an Idea that represents the Kingdom of God on Earth, an Idea that can never be uprooted, never be destroyed and can only increase its power, effect and influence over the hearts and minds of the people of the Earth."

During this period of recovery and testing, Farrakhan said, "I will be available to give guidance in any major situation that may arise, but I would prefer that the Executive Board of the Nation of Islam help solve the problems of the Nation, without asking me."

The Nation of Islam leader is recovering on his large farm in Michigan.

In his letter, Farrakhan

said: "Commandante Fidel Castro had a very serious operation and he relinquished power to his brother and all those who were trained to carry on in his absence. While many rejoiced — believing and thinking that, if Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution expired, they could move Cuba and the Revolution in a new direction — his absence from the helm only proved that Cuba will not fall apart over the absence or passing of their illustrious leader. Such a challenge is before us."

Ironically, it was on a trip to Cuba in March that Farrakhan's current illness was diagnosed. Upset by the slow response to Hurricane Katrina, Minister Farrakhan led a 23-member delegation on a 9-day fact-finding mission to learn how Cuba prepared for and reacted to natural disasters.

"On my trip to Cuba to learn disaster management

preparedness, I spent most of my time there being examined and tested by some of the finest doctors in Cuba," Farrakhan said. "They discovered an ulcer in the anal area, similar to the ulcer that I had in 1998-1999 that almost caused the loss of my life."

"The doctors in Cuba felt that my health at that time was near perfect, except for that ulcer, but from that time, March 2006, I have been steadily fighting serious pain and infection. In the last month, I had lost nearly 15 lbs. And over the last six weeks, I have lost over 20 lbs."

Upon being examined at Howard University Hospital, Farrakhan said it was discovered that he was dehydrated, anemic, low in protein, albumin and iron.

"Although I have some of the finest cooks who always prepare the finest meals for me, I was in a seriously nutri-

tionally depleted state, because the pain that I was in took away my appetite," Farrakhan said. "The Howard University doctors discovered serious infection and inflammation, which is presently being treated, and now I am forced to do what is necessary to restore myself nutritionally. Otherwise, my present condition could be life threatening."

Farrakhan made it clear that he is not stepping down for good.

"I do not believe that my earthly work is done," he said. "I know that you (the Believers) will accept the challenge to move our Nation forward, being ever watchful for any smart, crooked deceiver and hypocrite who would create confusion over my present condition."



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Dose of African MDs for Charlotte

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Francis Obeng of Alfa are good friends, and examples of the growing community of African doctors that now call Charlotte home.

"I've met a lot of African doctors here in Charlotte," said Ighade, a native of Liberia, who attended medical school in Nigeria. "Actually, I read an article stating that there are around 60 Nigerian doctors [with practices] in the Charlotte area. That is a large amount."

Though he knows a good deal of African doctors, Ighade doesn't get a lot of African patients.

"I'd say less than 1 percent of my patients are African," he said.

For Obeng, the opposite is true. A native of Ghana, Obeng has only met one Ghanaian doctor with a practice in Charlotte, however he has a lot of Ghanaian patients. Similar to having someone who speaks fluent Spanish on staff, Obeng has found that the patients come because they are comfortable speaking to him.

"Their comprehension of English and their grasp of the language is not so good," said Obeng. "It is comforting for them to speak with someone who knows the local dialect. They can tell me what's wrong and ask questions because we know the same language."

Both doctors attended medical school in Africa, but continued their training here in the states.

"Ghana has some residency programs," said Obeng, who has an uncle practicing medicine in Maryland. "I got inspired to do my graduate training here instead of the UK."

Obeng, an internist, completed his residency in a joint program with Columbia University and Harlem Hospital in New York.

"I think this is a better choice. The training here is more streamlined than in the UK and there are better opportunities to find a job."

"Nigeria has programs...but they are still in the development stage," said Ighade, who continued his studies at Howard University. "Everyone wants to be a doctor in Nigeria. It is very saturated. There are more opportunities and the economy is better here."

Despite having been in the United States for several years, both have experienced growing hostility toward immigrants.

"Throughout my residency, I found people who judged...and did not want to associate with me because I was not from this country," said Obeng.

Both thought it was ironic an ironic attitude for members of a country built by immigrants. "When they establish themselves, they start looking out at others as the problem," Obeng said. "The only difference between you and other people is that they were not born here."

"But that is the nature of humans," he adds smiling, "how easily they forget how they or their grandparents...or so began."

The doctors met here in Charlotte while working at Americare Health. They found the scheduling commitments did not allow them to properly serve patients, and so they decided to open side-by-side practices.

"I think the bottom line is to be a blessing to other people," said Obeng.

Crump honored for filmmaking

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on Charlotte-born artist Romare Bearden, the exploits of black paratroopers and the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II and black photographers who covered the civil rights era. He's also covered Bosnia's attempts to recover

from sectarian and ethnic violence and the history of African Americans in thoroughbred horse racing.

Crump's latest film, "Smoketown: A Treasure To Remember," recalls his Louisville, Ky, neighborhood. The evening will include

clips from eight documentaries and commentary from luminaries like broadcasting legend Chatty Hattie Leeper and sit-in protest leaders Franklin McCain and Charles Jones.

Tickets are \$15 and available at www.carolinatix.com or (704) 333-9755.



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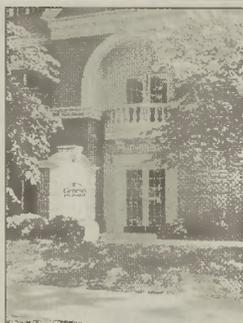
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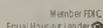
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