



# Twisting the tongue of Louis Farrakhan

A modernized frontman who is able to capture the short attention span of his audience

## AFTER THE LIES AND THE LIARS COME TRUTH

by Rosie McCobb

The morning after I went to UMass-Amherst and saw and heard The Minister Louis Farrakhan in the flesh, I was standing at the office copy-machine, making copies of the various articles that splashed over the pages of the Boston daily newspapers. The manager of the PR office I work in, who has stringy, unkempt, dyed-blond hair, doesn't use deodorant, and speaks loudly with a Boston accent, stuck her nose over my shoulder, and with a self-assured shrug, said, "That Farrakhan, he's nothing but a hate-monger."

"You think so?" I asked, "I didn't get that kind of vibe last night."

"Last night?!" she exclaimed. "Yeah, I saw him at UMass."

"They let you in?"

"Of course they did, all you had to do was buy a ticket."

Sudden switch: "You went to UMass? That was my school, I love UMass!!!"

That same day, one of the letters in the editorial section of the *Boston Globe* read "Louis Farrakhan makes a hate-filled statement. The press covers it. While trying to clarify that he does not hate, he makes more hate-filled statements... wouldn't it be better to ignore Louis Farrakhan?"

Farrakhan makes a hate-filled statement. The press covers it. I think the real problem here is starting to emerge. Statements. The press. Coverage. Could it be that our beloved sources of information, in an attempt to stamp out and condemn the very voices that they are supposedly (unless it is an editorial) writing "objective" pieces on, are giving the public only one side of the story? One statement to represent several different thousand statements made?

It's no secret that the media is what creates popular opinion. Everything from clothing trends, supposed youth movements, to hip-happening-hey-now bands and viewpoints on high-profile figures are dictated by what the media chooses to focus on and pump up, or, put down. Louis Farrakhan is the media's wet dream. He wears tacky suits, Elvis sunglasses, cheap shoes and sticks his hair back. Unlike his famous predecessor, Malcolm X, who came across as more studious, more intense, more humble and yet more fearsome, Farrakhan, earlier known as "Genie Wakot" who spent his early twenties performing at various clubs as a Calypso singer, knows how to "work it." While it is certainly hard, at times, to take a man seriously who looks more like Jim Bakker than the spokesman for the so-called "Black Muslims," one cannot deny the commotion that erupts every time he opens his mouth. And consequently, the press makes him stick his foot in.

The day Farrakhan was scheduled to speak to the "black community" at the Strand Theater in Dorchester, the front page of the *Boston Herald* read: "No Whites or Women Allowed," referring to the comment Farrakhan had made the night before at UMass that the meeting would be "specifically addressing the problems and concerns of the black man in Dorchester and Roxbury." Now, how does focusing specifically on one group of people, turn into excluding groups of other people?

The *Herald* claimed that the Nation of Islam was "promoting" the event by saying "No whites or women were allowed." While I do think the Nation got themselves into a sticky situation by having the meeting at a public place where "all citizens" are supposed to be allowed entry, if they paid to rent out the space (much like the Nation did throughout the early '60s when Malcolm X was the National Minister, and the Nation would rent out concert halls and sports arenas to accommodate thousands of Nation of Islam members and interested, secular Afro-Americans; even then, "no whites" were allowed), why is it such a crime to only grant certain persons entry?

If a group of lesbians rented out space in Cambridge to have a meeting "specifically addressing the concerns of lesbians in Cambridge," one highly doubts the front page of the *Herald* would read: "No men or heterosexual women allowed!" If a bunch of Italian guys with mob connections were having a "private party" at Caruso's Diplomat on Rt. 1 in Saugus, should the front page read: "No Women or Irish People Allowed!" No. So why is it so hard for the masses of people who were upset by the restrictions on this meeting to see the real story?

If not a lesbian, or a mob guy, or a black man living in Roxbury or Dorchester, why would someone even want to go to these meetings?

The UMass lecture was being "promoted" as a public forum where all were welcome. The Strand event was sort of Louis Farrakhan's own personal meeting, in his own "home." The topic was to be about black-on-black violence, and how the black community hasn't got enough positive female role models for the gun toting, drug selling, high school dropouts who do these things because they don't see anyone else doing any differently in their own neighborhoods. If you were white,

why would you want to attend this meeting? How many white people can claim to have grown up in the black ghetto areas of Roxbury and Dorchester? How many white people live in the neighborhoods in Roxbury and Dorchester plagued with black-on-black violence now? The Nation of Islam's number one platform is, and always has been, Afro-American self-empowerment. They aren't asking for the help of white philanthropists to erase the problems within their own community. They want to make their own community strong by setting an example for their youth.

As for women not being allowed, it's the case of Mafia wives. The Nation of Islam has never pretended that they view men and women as equal or interchangeable. The Muslim women are respected, but are specifically told that their energies should be focused on the more traditional, female tasks: child rearing, nutrition, teaching, and various other domestic things. While I doubt one could find any non-Nation female who would agree with this kind of sexism, one is prompted to ask if you can't take the heat, then what are you doing in the men's locker room?

The bottom line is, of course, that America, as we know it, has gone to the dogs, and your average citizen is too lazy and too stupid to get the real story, or if they have the real story, they're too afraid to open their mouths. We've all been conditioned to look down on people whose ideas are not the same as the so-called "popular" public opinion. To open one's mouth and question popular opinion is like a bi-coastal act of insubordination. We, as a nation, are no longer encouraged to think for ourselves, or to seek out information or knowledge. No one wants a student who questions what he/she is being taught and suggests other possible theories. No one wants an employee who wonders if maybe there might be an easier or more logical way in which to accomplish a task that is assigned to them by their overseer. And no one wants a "minister," disguised as a greasy used car salesman, ranting and raving about the plight of the black man in America. This kind of person is a troublemaker.

How dare you question the word of (mostly white male) authority! I know all, and if you agree with me, you will do well in life. You will get that A. You will be liked by your boss; you will get that raise. You will be treated just as well as any white man. No one wants to be told that they don't know it all. No one wants to know that someone can do their job better. No one wants to hear that they're being discriminatory. So unlike in those days (were there really those days?) when one was rewarded for original thought, when one was revered as an employee and thought of as a company asset for making intelligent suggestions, when one was respected for trying to do something positive for the black community, one is now given bad grades if that per-

son doesn't serve our educators their ideas in our own words, one is labeled a person with an "attitude," or gets verbally reprimanded if that person doesn't meekly acquiesce to the ridiculous whims and wishes of our bosses. And one is called a "hate-monger," a "modern-day Hitler," when that person chooses to speak about issues that inadvertently implicate other people.

What very few people fail to recognize about "The Honorable" Minister Louis Farrakhan is that amidst the pomp and circumstance, somewhere in between the sketchy rhetoric about the relations between Afro-Americans and Jews, is a man who isn't afraid to point out the offensive elements in American society that everyone else is too PC or too "team oriented" to make a stink about. "Hey, it's anti-Semitic to point out 'wrong' things that the Jews did."

Personally, I don't condone Farrakhan's endless ramblings on the history of the Jewish slavemasters, and how all of the shop-owners and businessmen in the '50s and '60s were Jewish (but I did have to laugh when walking home from work one day, I passed Striberg's Furniture on Washington Street in Roxbury, specializing in "affordable layaway plans") and how this somehow fits into the scheme of things today. When Farrakhan spent a good hour of his lecture defending his side, as well as going over the historical details, I zoned out. I am not and never have been all that keen on anything relating to religion, and unfortunately, I do not know enough about those historical facts in order to determine what part of Farrakhan's repertoire is completely full of shit, and what isn't. What some fail to remember is that Farrakhan is the spokesman for a religion that gets a lot of flak. Hence, he spends a great deal of his time using historical details to defend that religion, and that is where he most seems to be dancing a fine line between hypocrisy and reality. But because the press always seems to focus their headlines and stories around the most obvious and unimportant aspects of the Minister's platform, one can never even get past the basics and find out what's really going on.

On the layman's level, there are some things Farrakhan speaks about that cause a snap to attention. While I would hesitate to put Farrakhan in the esteemed category of great original American thinkers, the fact that he was talking about what happens to people who try to use their intelligence and propose new, so-called "radical" ideas awoke that rebel spirit in me. When he brought up how many minds are being wasted because they can't afford an education, and how the government chooses to support those in other countries before it offers its own people assistance, many in the UMass crowd stirred.

When he asserted that many of today's youth are getting disillusioned about their education, because they aren't even awarded jobs that use their talents upon graduation, I felt like yelling out "Yes, sir! These 'truths' seem painfully obvious, but one wonders why the press never prints headlines like "Farrakhan speaks out against the death of the American mind!" Or why even catching a bit of that part of the speech hasn't caused some reporter to go head to head with Farrakhan and see just what he proposes we, as a nation, do about it.

"The Honorable" Minister Louis Farrakhan tends to speak in circles. But how many people who get as much media coverage as Farrakhan does ever even come close to addressing the issues he does? How many are rallying for the underprivileged, ghetto youth and has the success rate that the Nation of Islam does in cleaning up black men and women who used to live their lives on the street? How many media heavies are bringing up how the corporate, "team oriented" mentality does nothing more than promote subservience and closed-mindedness?

And how many are given as bad as a rap as he is for basically reiterating the same radical "truths" that Malcolm X once shocked the nation with? One thing the media and those who cry "hate-monger" should take note of, is that the "job" of The National Minister of the Nation of Islam is basically to act as a spokesman for the original "chosen one," The Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad. When Elijah Muhammad named Malcolm X his National Minister, it was Malcolm's job to be the front man, the media man, the PR man, for the ideas and teachings that Elijah Muhammad invented. Malcolm X proved worthy as a public speaker, but due to that intelligence factor—that yen to learn and speak about things that were not part of the Nation of Islam's vision, that were not part of the US government's vision—he got himself in trouble.

With Farrakhan, we get a modernized front man, a person who is able to capture the short attention span of his audience in a more '90s kind of way. While I don't agree with a lot of what Farrakhan has to say, and he hardly seems as hard-working and open-minded as Malcolm X was, I feel that as the National Minister for the Nation of Islam, he's doing his job. To some, that job is making vicious statements and being a robotic, closed-minded hypocrite. To others, it means spreading the words of The Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad. To others, it's trying to build up the black community's self-esteem and pointing out all that is wrong with society today. Maybe Farrakhan himself should make up his mind what his own job is.

The mainstream consensus would like us to think that all issues are black and white; a person is either good and evil; an idea is either perfect or imperfect; a campaign is either full of proposals that meet the needs of all people, or lacking benefits for "the majority." One asks, who is "the majority" these days, and more importantly, who is 100 percent perfect? [Besides your illustrious editors, you mean?—ed.] Is the Minister Louis Farrakhan a sketchy religious leader, or is he truly giving those living their lives on the streets a reason to clean up? And instead of devoting newspaper headlines to trash, why isn't anyone investigating deeper into the Nation of Islam's platforms and history, instead of implicating one man?

As one Nation member stated, "Farrakhan is nothing. He is no one. If it wasn't for the Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad, he would be nothing. He's just spreading the word." ♦

ILLUSTRATION ROS ZAMMARCO

February 25, 1984—In a speech given by Minister Farrakhan at a rally for Jesse Jackson, Farrakhan noted the unusually bitter attacks on Jackson by Jewish leaders and organizations. These included over 200 death threats, and the organization "Jews Against Jackson" bought a full page ad in the *NY Post*, mocking Reverend Jackson with the headline "Ruin, Jesse, Ruin," a play on the popular chant "Run, Jesse, Run"...

**FARRAKHAN:**  
"I'm saying to the Jewish people who may not like our brother, it is not Jesse Jackson that you are attacking. Remember this now. You're not attacking an individual. Jesse's gone past that now. When you attack him, you attack the millions that are lining up with him. You're attacking all of us. That's not intelligent. That's not an intelligent thing to do. That's not wise. We know that Blacks and Jews have had a good relationship

in the past. We've gotten along well, because you're a suffering people and so are we.  
But my dear Jewish friends, you must understand that everything comes of age. We cannot define our self interest in terms of your self interest. And because our self interests differ because we've come of age, why dislike us? Why attack our champion? Why hurl stones at him? Why feed the Press so that they can create a climate into which hatred and bitterness and strife

can be poured, creating the same kind of climate that led to the assassination of John Kennedy, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and Bobby Kennedy.  
Why create that kind of climate when you have the power to turn it around and show the world you have more sense? Don't you realize what you're doing? Press, don't you realize what you're doing? Are you as blind as the government? And if the blind lead the blind, both fall in a ditch. You are blind." ♦