

BETWEEN THE LINES**When do mouthpieces in blackface cross the line with our trust?**

By A. Asadullah Samad

It is becoming increasingly more obvious that black self-determination is under attack. The issues that evolve around the collective approach to our progress (operational unity, it's called) offer the opportunity for many views to be heard. Including the enemy's. While he may not be in the room, physically, his mindset is there — in blackface, and the blackface (that looks like us) offers views as if he was talking for "the man" himself. But he is.

The recent L.A. Times editorial by Armstrong Williams, criticizing Minister Louis Farrakhan's trip to Lybia and meeting with Lybian President Muommar Gadhafi,

was a prime example of a blackface undermining black trust by insinuating that Farrakhan is not to be trusted for "meeting with a terrorist." Inferring that this country's interest should be Farrakhan's interest and vice versa, and if somehow that is not the case, then something sinister must be going on. And with prime space on the Times' "ed-op" page, understand that Williams' opinion was more than his opinion. You could almost see the strings attached to his mouth. But who was doing the talking — the puppet or the puppeteer?

The Honorable Minister Farrakhan was on a World Friendship Tour meeting with

government heads of ten African nations, laying the groundwork for a worldwide "Day of Atonement" in October 1996. Armstrong's commentary didn't state this and made it seem like he went solely to meet Gadhafi against America's wishes (America currently doesn't have diplomatic relations with Lybia). Minister Farrakhan was establishing diplomatic relations on behalf of the American Negro, who has no diplomatic relations with anybody in the world outside his former slavemaster and himself. Well, not really himself because the Negro barely gets along with each other.

The point being that it is time for American Africans to establish relationships with West Africans and Mideastern Africans and Eastern Africans, just like Western cultures and European cultures have diplomatic relations, even when their interests don't jive. How many countries that didn't have our best interest at heart did American officials meet with? Was South African government's interest the same as the indigenous Afrikaans interest before Mandela (who Farrakhan also met with)? And did Mandela come to America (first time) to

promote his country's interest or bring attention to his country's atrocities? Are our issues being discussed in a global context by American diplomats? I don't think so. Yet, let the blackface tell it, Farrakhan shouldn't be trusted anymore because he didn't go with America's blessing. Then he goes on to rehash past aspersions that mean little to us and everything to his puppeteer, who wishes to minimize Farrakhan's growing global appeal.

Bosnians and Serbs can establish diplomatic relationships and they're considered enemies. Jews and Palestinians can establish relationships through historical strife. North Korea and South Korea can come together. Can you imagine America telling one of them that they can't dialogue for the sake of progress? I don't think so.

The more critical issue here is that if the mainstream press, the popular conservative politic, the image makers and image breakers can advance their divergent views through mouthpieces, in blackface, as if it were their own (though it is), then they have crossed a colorline of a different kind. Blackfaces that espouse counter-culture views as if "what's

good for them is good for us" and "what's bad for them is worse for us" when they know it's not the case, suffer from a cultural dyslexia that is hard to correct. One reason being is that they have all the press they can get.

Like freak shows, they're put on display — "Come here the cat bark and the dog moo and the zebra that thinks it's a horse; they are creatures of a different kind and can't be trusted to represent our truest sentiments. This new "black attack" on black issues by black (looking) people is bizarre because, on their face, they're seen as one of us. Their sole purpose is to advance the counter-culture's company line. Say something the other man can't say and not be called for what he really is (largely because he, himself, doesn't believe what he tells us).

For it to come from something that looks like us is supposed to give it credence, more validity, when in fact it's just as insulting and foolish as if the man had said it himself. However, there is something somewhat disarming about the blackface that makes us tolerate their madness. Maybe it's because since they look like us, we assume they really are harmless in their few (but growing)



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numbers. But they're very dangerous. They are, in fact, imitations (blacks imitating other's views while imitating that they somehow speak for us too). A hybrid if I ever saw one.

We see them out there everyday — talking against their own people as if we put ourselves in these social conditions and economic predicaments. One that we created over four hundred years ago, yet is supposed to end overnight — an analogy as simplistic in scope as they are in reason. And now that we're trying to pull out in a global perspective, they want to criticize that too. The

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TO BE EQUAL**Why African Americans cannot, should not and need not go it alone**

By Hugh B. Price, President, National Urban League

African American history is filled with true stories of interracial collaboration.

Heroines and heroes — like Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Fannie Lou Hamer and Martin Luther King, understood the potential and power of joining forces with other races to achieve our goals.

Courageous white abolitionists joined with blacks in fighting slavery and operating the underground railroad that helped our people escape the South.

Great African American institutions, such as Howard and Spelman, that have been so important to our development, were created in a spirit of racial cooperation and even named after whites.

Whites journeyed alongside blacks on the Freedom Rides.

Many whites lost their lives for our cause.

Jewish civil rights workers Andrew Goodman and Stephen Schwerner were slain alongside James Chaney in Jackson, Mississippi.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us, it is morally wrong to hate or harbor animosity toward any people, whether immigrant or native born, African American or Asian, Jewish or Latino.

We must not wallow in our resentments of the past.

We haven't the time to hate. There is too much hard work ahead. I commend Minister Farrakhan for his overture to the Jewish community before a worldwide audience.

I hope it will be reciprocated and that the serious work of interracial healing and collaboration will begin.

We must partner with all people of good will who are prepared to help build a society that is competitive, compassionate and



HUGH B. PRICE

inclusive.

We who are engaged in the struggle for a just society need kindred spirits of all races and religions pulling on the oars together. Otherwise, those who would divide and conquer will watch with glee as we zig and zag, go round in circles, run aground, and never reach the shore.

During a recent visit to a college campus, several students challenged me on the benefits of the civil rights movement and its relevance to our development. Let me dispel any such doubts right away.

The movement changed the complexion of college campuses and corporate America forever.

Several black folk stand on the brink of becoming CEOs of Fortune 500 companies in the next decade — Barry Rand of Xerox, Dick Parsons of Time Warner, Ken Chenault of American Express and Ann Fudge of Maxwell House, among them. Our presence inside corporations has benefited African American businesses enormously. They make sure our firms have a shot at corporate contracts.

In other words, one bottom line of the civil rights movement is that our entry into corporate America has fostered the formation and growth of black businesses, institutions, jobs and wealth.

It has been good for the economic development of our community. This isn't a separatist agenda. Rather, it's a recognition of the basic rule of surviving and thriving as we approach the 21st century.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL**A legend in her own time**

By Bernice Powell Jackson

Who could ever forget her deep, thundering voice with that wonderful elocution and the brilliant thoughts behind the words? If you ever heard Barbara Jordan speak, you never forgot it. You never forgot the moral authority, the integrity, the brilliant analysis and the truth of her words.

February is Black History Month and Barbara Jordan was a Black History maker from her college days. A graduate of Houston's segregated schools, she attended the all-black Texas Southern University, where she joined the debating team. It was that team which maneuvered the Harvard debate team to a tie. "When an all-black team ties Harvard, it wins," Ms. Jordan recalled.

She made history again when she became the first African American ever to be elected to the Texas state Senate and the first black elected to the Congress from the South since Reconstruction. "She proved that black is beautiful before we knew what it meant," said President Lyndon Johnson, who was Jordan's mentor.

She spent only seven years in the U.S. House of Representatives, but she will be remembered forever in our nation's history. "There is no black woman in politics today that is not in her



Bernice Powell Jackson

debt," said Eleanor Holmes Norton, Washington, D.C.'s congressional delegate.

Barbara Jordan will be remembered forever for her fierce determination to protect the U.S. Constitution during the Watergate fiasco and the ensuing Congressional impeachment hearings. "My faith in the Constitution is whole, it is complete, it is total, and I am not going to sit here and be an idle spectator to the diminution, the subversion, the destruction of the Constitution," she said during those hearings. But then she reminded the nation that she had felt left out of the Constitution by the mistake of George Washington and Alexander Hamilton, "but through the process of amendment, interpretation and court decision I have finally been included in 'We, the people.'"

Barbara Jordan will be remembered forever for her integrity and her ability to call the

nation into account. Most recently, as chairperson of the Commission on Immigration Reform, she spoke out against a proposal to deny automatic citizenship to the children born in this country to illegal immigrants, saying, "to deny birthright citizenship would derail this engine of American liberty."

In 1979, after serving only three terms in the House of Representatives and stricken with multiple sclerosis, Barbara Jordan announced her retirement and her plans to return to Texas to teach at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. Her courses were so popular that students had to enter a lottery to take them and her students remember her always

having a copy of the Constitution in her purse.

Barbara Jordan once said that she never intended to be a run-of-the-mill person and clearly she succeeded in her goal. The daughter of a Baptist minister who worked two jobs to pay for her college tuition, she recently visited the elementary school named for her in Austin. She told the students, "Study hard in school, and don't let people put you in a box and close it." Barbara Jordan didn't let anyone put her in a box. Had her health held out, she may have added the Vice Presidency or even the Presidency to her list of firsts. Barbara Jordan was a Black History maker who lived in our time. She was, indeed, a legend in her own time.

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