

BUSINESS

Farrakhan: Black Press, other groups should coalesce

By Byron V. Garrett
Special to Sentinel-Voice

PHOENIX — Nation of Islam Leader Minister Louis Farrakhan officially opened the National Newspaper Publishers Association's Mid-Winter Workshop last month issuing a stern call to the more than 200 publishers in attendance to form a coalition with black businesses and black clergy.

"Black Press, black clergy and black business need to come together as we approach the next frontier," he said.

Calling this the only way to halt the destruction of African-Americans, the minister said, "Fifteen years ago, Time magazine said in half a century blacks would be the majority. If you were in power what would you do if you received that report?"

"Many wonder why HIV has become the number one cause of death for our people with no cure. Many wonder why prison futures are traded on the stock exchange. Surely, you don't invest in cells to be empty. With the destruction of our people we will be very few in the next century."

Farrakhan told NNPA that as a priority it should create a national treasury over the next year or two with about \$300,000.

"If you want to cover a story in Africa, the Middle East or wherever, you could send a few reporters, right now the dollars are the issue. Publishers cannot afford to individually send reporters on stories, but collectively it's a must, not an option."

He proposed that smaller



Photo special to Sentinel-Voice by Photogenics
Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan presents NNPA president Dorothy R. Leavell an award during last month's NNPA Mid-Winter convention in Phoenix.

papers contribute \$1,000 to the fund and larger ones between \$5,000 and \$10,000, "so we can get accurate news."

Not what UPI or Associated Press have to say, but first hand from our own."

The minister also

announced the formulation of a new political coalition to represent the disenfranchised.

"Do you realize that if we

can get the 18-35 year-olds registered to vote we could move mountains. I'm going after the black, hispanic, asian and poor white communities. We need to come together and go for those in the dissatisfied party.

"The dissatisfied Republican, dissatisfied Democrat, dissatisfied Liberal, the dissatisfied whatever."

Meanwhile, he said he is beginning a 40-city tour in March to prepare for the Million Family March in the year 2000.

"Our focus for 2000 is on God-centered marriages, God-centered communities, God-centered families...it's not a black agenda, [but] an agenda for all people since everything came from the black man," he said.

Lessons from the Air Jordan effect: How much has changed?

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Much of the world heaped well-deserved praise on NBA superstar Michael Jordan following the announcement of his retirement. But, there are several cautionary lessons that can be learned from his career.

Jordan's towering fortune and fame profited wealthy White owners, and a few elite superstar Black athletes but hid the blatant racism within the sport, sewing more fields of delusions among many young Blacks.

Fortune. Jordan was more than just a once-in-a-lifetime gifted athlete. He was a fabulous cash cow to NBA owners, TV executives and corporations. He generated an estimated \$100 to 200 million, or 10 to 20 percent of the NBA's annual \$2 billion revenue.

He caused millions more viewers to tune into NBA games which meant millions more in ad revenue. He paved the way for the league's 4-year \$2.64 billion contract with NBC and Turner Network Television in 1997, more than doubling its TV money the year before.

He boosted ticket sales by \$165 million. He bagged \$3 billion more for the NBA off the merchandising of basketball paraphernalia. He topped this all with \$10 billion more for corporations in the sale of books, movies, men's fashion wear, toiletries and athletic gear.

While this brought Jordan and a handful of NBA superstars wealth beyond their imagination, it masked the fact that the average NBA player's pay is much closer to the league's minimum average scale of \$275,000 than to the pay of the multimillionaire superstars. It also hid the naked exploitation of many players who are cut, traded, often harassed, and intimidated by owners, coaches and managers, and eventually dumped from the league with little savings or career prospects.

Racism. Although Jordan was the NBA's top attraction, he was still an employee of the Chicago Bulls and made no management decisions. He was not consulted by the NBA owners about policy during their player's lockout.

Although Blacks make up 79 percent of the players in

COMMENTARY

the NBA, 70 percent in the NFL, and 20 percent in major league baseball, the chance of any of them owning, running, managing and working in a non-player capacity for pro teams after their playing days are over is dismal.

In 1998, there were no Black owners of any football, basketball or baseball teams.

There are few Black managers in baseball or general managers in basketball, and the virtual absence of Black head coaches in pro football is an abomination.

Between 1996 and 1998, 21 NFL teams hired head coaches, none were Black. There was one Black team doctor in baseball, none in football, and only a handful of Black team trainers in all the major sports combined. The plight of the Black sports agent is even worse. In almost

all cases, Black athletes are represented by White agents.

But, this is not how the big money is made anyway for non-players. In 1996, pro owners bagged \$14 billion in product marketing, franchising, leasing and licensing fees. Yet, they turned a deaf ear to complaints that they've done nothing to create more opportunities for Blacks to get a piece of that lucrative action.

Fields of delusions. Jordan did not graduate with his class from the University of North Carolina. But, he is not the only Black pro athlete without a degree. The report card on the graduation rate for Black athletes at the 50 NCAA Division I schools is a national disgrace. During the 1990's, the majority of these schools graduated less than one-third of their Black players.

Many athletes waltz through three or four years at these colleges and still emerge as educational cripples taking a curriculum jammed with physical education, crafts, recreation and piles of general studies courses.

Yet, thousands of young Blacks fervently believe that they can ride the same super fast track that Jordan took to the pinnacle of the sports world. This is a myth. The chance of a Black high school athlete making it in major pro sports is one in 18,000. Only about two percent of the estimated 10,000 college

football seniors are drafted by the NFL. The odds are 250-to-1 that the wannabe Jordans will ever don an NBA jersey.

NBA owners, TV and corporate executives should've bowed down in gratitude to Jordan for delivering the goods for them. But, the real goods such as education, professional security, business opportunities and confronting the rampant racism in sports remain just as elusive as ever for the aspiring Air Jordans.

Earl Ofari Hutchinson is the author of "The Crisis in Black and Black."

Alicko Business Management
James Pride, CEO
POSTAL EXAM SEMINAR
FEBRUARY 1, 1999 • 6:30 PM PROMPTLY
Seminar will include guaranteed methods to increase your test score by 90% to 100%. Study booklet included. \$30.00 per person.
ADDISON EDUCATION CENTER
1122 N. "D" Street • RSVP 642-1419

ABC Insurance Agency
High Risk? Accidents? DWI? Cancelled?
Low Down Payment • Low Monthly Payments
IMMEDIATE SR-22's
Aubrey Branch Broker/Agent Quincy Branch Consultant
1700 Civic Center Drive N. Las Vegas 649-1029
BUSINESS • HOMEOWNER • LIFE 310-6055

XTRAVAGANZA
A New Class of Elegance
Classic & Unique Event Planners
presents
Dynamic Industry Experts
featured at
"A Business Networking Gala"
Saturday, February 6
7 pm to 12 midnight
Bellagio Hotel & Resort
3600 Las Vegas Blvd. S.
Sherri Fuller 631-5443
Partial proceeds to benefit: KLVX Channel 10 and E.O.B. Micro Business Program