

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Farrakhan's admission step toward healing

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan on Sunday confirmed what many attuned to circumstances of Malcolm X's murder already knew: That the charismatic second prodigy of Nation of Islam founder Elijah Muhammad exacerbated the tense climate surrounding Malcolm X's bitter split from the group and that words penned two months before the Feb. 21, 1965 assassination fomented a tsunami of sentiment against Malcolm Little.

"Such a man is worthy of death," wrote Farrakhan, denigrating Malcolm X for publicly chastising Elijah Muhammad for fathering children out of wedlock.

In some ways, Sunday's "60 Minutes" telecast in which Farrakhan publicly and personally repented was a final step in the healing process for the Shabazz family — Malcolm X's oldest daughter Attallah Shabazz sat across from him. In some ways, it softened the tenor of Farrakhan's often obscured message of unity among Muslims, among African-Americans and among all people. And in some ways, it was a clarion call for Farrakhan to carve out a more palatable legacy for himself and the Nation of Islam.

"Where we are responsible, where our hands are a part of this, we beg God's mercy and forgiveness," Farrakhan told Attallah Shabazz. Said Shabazz, "I thank him for acknowledging his culpability and I wish him peace." (Farrakhan reconciled with Malcolm's widow, Betty Shabazz, after her daughter Qubilah was charged in 1994 with plotting to hire a hitman to kill him. The charges were later dropped).

Does Farrakhan care about history's perception of him? You could argue that the answer is yes. Gone are the eloquent-but-no-less-vicious verbal slights of Jews and of white power proponents, replaced with still-strong calls for American-Americans to huddle their economic might and calcify efforts to rekindle the village-raises-a-child concept.

In reality, Farrakhan's goals haven't changed. His methods of delivery has. For too long, his message was muted by jaundiced-eyed Americans seeking a black supervillain on whom they could unleash their pent-up racism and aggression. Farrakhan obliged by providing endless fodder for press clips and soundbites.

In recent years, Farrakhan hasn't caused so much as a ripple. In an effort to repair the somewhat fractious relationship between factions of U.S. Muslims, Farrakhan earlier this year publicly embraced W. Deen Muhammad, son of Elijah Muhammad. W. Deen Muhammad embraced a more orthodox form of Islam shortly after his father died.

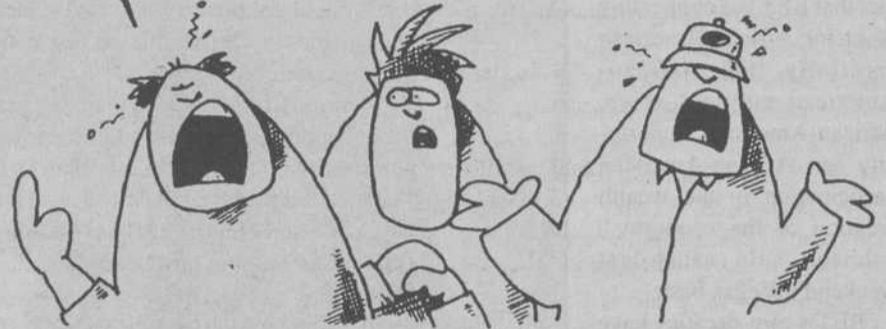
Is this a kinder, gentler Farrakhan? Some say yes and they credit his changed stance to an acceptance of mortality — the 66-year-old leader is fighting prostate cancer — and an earnest attempt to cement a lasting legacy of fostering self-empowerment through political awareness, reducing government dependence and nation building.

THE CENSUS BACKLASH

THEY ONLY WANT TO KNOW WHEN I GO TO WORK EVERY DAY SO THEY CAN COME AFTER ME WITH BLACK HELICOPTERS.

IF I TELL THEM I HAVE A KITCHEN WITH A FRIDGE THEY MAY SEND IN JACK-BOOTED THUGS TO STEAL MY LEFTOVER EGG SALAD...

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER, AND IF THE GOVERNMENT KNOWS HOW MANY TOILETS I HAVE, WHO KNOWS WHAT SORT OF EVIL SCHEME WILL ENSUE...



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New chance to reclaim lives worth reclaiming

Special to Sentinel-Voice

America's unprecedented, nine-year period of economic prosperity, the nation's longest stretch of uninterrupted growth, continues to tighten the supply of available workers by continuing to draw huge numbers of Americans into the workforce.

As a result, the nation's unemployment rate continues its steady march downwards to levels not seen in three decades.

The jobless rate is now down to 3.9 percent, having dipped under 4 percent in April for the first time in thirty years, according to the latest figures from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Even though that decline stems in part from the hiring of tens of thousands of census takers and other temporary workers, there's no doubt that the American economy is continuing an astonishing prosperous journey — and spreading its beneficence to an ever-widening pool of Americans.

The proportion of Americans holding jobs now increased in April to a record 64.9 percent, up from 64.7 percent in March.

Even more striking, the April unemployment rates for African-Americans and Hispanic Americans fell to the lowest levels ever recorded: to 7.2 percent and 5.4 percent, respectively.

It strikes me that the good economic news of the so-called Long Boom is making a number of things long de-

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price
President
National Urban League



bated in the social and political realms clear, and giving the nation as a whole a great opportunity to address the employment needs of those Americans at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder.

For one thing, the Long Boom has thrown on the trash heap all that rhetoric of years past that the overwhelming number of jobless are jobless because they don't value work and don't want to work.

We now have the proof multiplied by millions that if the jobs are there, the low skilled and the unskilled will come, even if the jobs pay low wages.

The poor and the low-skilled and unskilled value work as highly as other Americans.

That's what the Labor Department's tracking of the rush of the unskilled to jobs in the low-wage sector shows.

That conclusion is seconded by the findings of a report released last year by the Cambridge, Mass.-based think tank, the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Its national study of more than 300 metropolitan areas, led by professors Richard B.

Freeman, of Harvard, and William M. Rodgers III, of the College of William and Mary, found that the economic good times has, finally, begun to spread its benefits in significant fashion at the very bottom of the economic and occupational ladder: It's opened up jobs to young, poor, and poorly-educated black males.

The study found that black males, age 16 to 24 with a high school education or less, a cohort that's endured double-digit unemployment for three decades, are working in greater numbers and earning bigger paychecks than ever before.

One result of this, the report said, is that levels of reported crime have fallen sharply in black communities — the areas where declines in joblessness have been greatest.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported on another, related breakthrough of the economic expansion.

It declared that the "tight labor market is accomplishing what years of pleas and programs from penal experts and social scientists failed to do: It is persuading America's employers to hire ex-convicts."

True, statistics are still skimpy.

But the Journal stated that the figures that do exist, plus its own interviews of employers and other observers, suggest "that companies are hiring [ex-offenders] at higher rates than ever before."

The positive experiences many businesses are having with ex-offenders as employees could give a significant

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