

# Muhammad

(Continued from Page 1) murder. Fauntroy said, "There was no evidence that our committee uncovered, that implicated in any way the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson or Rev. Samuel Billy Kyles in the conspiracy to kill Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."

In a signed editorial, Editor-in-Chief James Muhammad said, "I apologize and accept full responsibility." He explained, "I failed in my responsibility to look deeply into the allegations presented in this article, and it has caused distress to the families of Dr. King, Rev. Jackson, Rev. Kyles, Minister Farrakhan and untold others."

Although he did not mention it in print, Muhammad resigned from the paper.

Eric Ture Muhammad, a former Washington-based staff writer for the "Final Call," now assigned to Atlanta, also resigned. Officials say that even though Donna Muhammad shared a byline, she did not help write the story.

In an interview with the NNPA News Service, Jackson said: "I don't want to respond because there's nothing to respond to. I don't know why they did what they did, but I am glad Farrakhan and Leonard [Muhammad, the Nation of Islam's chief of staff], when they saw it, knew that it was wrong and they retracted it. That's good enough."

James Muhammad had

served as editor-in-chief of the "Final Call" for almost a decade and won praise for greatly expanding the paper's international coverage, using more independent journalists, and improving the paper's overall design and display of photographs.

Equally important, others say, Muhammad would lead by example, doing everything from writing and editing stories to taking photographs for the paper.

Although many within the Nation of Islam expected Minister Farrakhan to sharply discipline James Muhammad rather than accept his resignation, they point to Farrakhan's history to explain, in part, why he took such strong action against his top editor.

"We have to build relationships, we have to deal with people in public life and the minister was a victim of the very same thing himself in the case of Malcolm X," says Akbar Muhammad, the minister's long-time assistant and now his international representative, based in Ghana. "And for our newspaper to follow in the footsteps of those who wanted to make him the enemy of the Black community by accusing him of being involved in the assassination of Malcolm and then we turn around and allow our paper to do the same thing to one of our brothers was unacceptable."

Although he will no longer

be editing "The Final Call," some of James Muhammad's friends say that he definitely plans to remain with the Nation of Islam and will perform whatever duties Minister Farrakhan assigns him.

Ironically, Farrakhan was quick to accept the resignation of Muhammad even though Jesse Jackson had repudiated him during the civil rights leader's 1984 presidential campaign. The relationship became so strained at one point that Jesse Jackson would stand on the opposite end of the stage to avoid being photographed with Farrakhan.

According to Akbar Muhammad, Minister Farrakhan spoke with Jesse Jackson and members of the King family before making his decision to accept James Muhammad's resignation.

Dr. King was assassinated as he and his top aides were preparing to leave the Lorraine Motel to have dinner in the home of Rev. Kyles, pastor of Monumental Baptist Church in Memphis.

In discussing Jesse Jackson's reaction to Dr. King's death, the "Final Call" article rekindled questions about one of the greatest mysteries of Jesse Jackson's public career—his insistence on maintaining that he was the last person to cradle Dr. King before he died.

In the most authoritative biography of Jackson during that era, "Jesse Jackson: The

Man, the Movement, the Myth," written by Chicago journalist Barbara Reynolds, most of King's top aides directly contradict Jackson's version of the events.

"The only person who cradled Dr. King was [Ralph] Abernathy," Hosea Williams, the head of SCLC's voter registration project, told the author. "The last man King spoke to was Solomon Jones. It's a helluva thing to capitalize on a man's death, especially one you professed to love."

Reynolds quotes Abernathy: "I am sure Reverend Jackson would not say to me that he cradled Dr. King. I am sure that Reverend Jackson would realize that I was the person who was on the balcony with Dr. King and did not leave his side until he was pronounced dead at St. Joseph's Hospital in Memphis. I am sure that he would not say to me that he even came near Dr. King after Doc was shot."

What was even more disturbing to other King lieutenants was that Jackson returned home to Chicago the night of Dr. King's assassination and appeared before the Chicago City Council the following day, claiming to still have the blood of Dr. King on his cloth-

ing.

Chauncey Eskridge, the attorney for Dr. King, told Barbara Reynolds, "If anyone could have gotten blood on their clothes, other than Abernathy, it must have come from the balcony after King's body was removed. Jackson's appearance at Chicago City Council with blood on his shirt was not only deception but sacrilege. The City Council meeting offered him a public forum to be seen and heard, and that was what prompted him to appear."

Even to this day, rather than acknowledge that he had made a mistake in his youth, Jackson has stuck by the same story that practically all of King's aides have strongly disputed.

Of the dozens of books written on the King assassination, none has ever implicated Jackson or Kyles in the civil rights leader's death. And the panel that raised questions about Jackson and Kyles included a disproportionate number of conspiracy buffs and lawyers who had represented James Earl Ray, the confessed killer of Dr. King, or others suspected of abetting Ray.

The questionable "Final Call" article says, "...According to the SCLC confer-

ence panel in Memphis, 'Fact or Fiction: The Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.,' a part of the new evidence included Rev. Jackson and Rev. Kyles.

The panel consisted of Dick Gregory, Steve Cokely, attorneys William Pepper and Lewis Garrison, Martin Luther King III, Rev. Bernice King and others. They entertained questions regarding someone knowing that Dr. King was to be on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel at 6 p.m. and someone—if not the same person—had to be responsible for freezing Dr. King on the balcony, in order for his murder to take place."

The article continued, "He was here and I stood there. Only when I moved away so that they would have a clear shot, then the shot rang out," Rev. Kyles said in a news conference videotaped April 3, 1998..."

Akbar Muhammad said Eric Ture Muhammad breached journalistic ethics.

"He was on the panel (purportedly implicating Jesse Jackson and Kyles in Dr. King's death)," Muhammad said, referring to the author of the controversial article. "That was a clear conflict of interest and he shouldn't have written that article."

## Reparations

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ment spearheaded the formation and participation of the Durban 400 as a non-governmental organization.

The group is now mobilizing for a follow-up rally at the United Nations on Sept. 13, as a follow-up to the one held at the Capitol last year, under the "Millions for Reparations" banner. Organizers are looking to influence heads of state who are sympathetic to the reparations call, who will be attending the session of the General Assembly scheduled to begin in September. The rally's objective is also to have millions of people involved in the process of organizing, so that reparations can be on everybody's mind, Wareham said.

"When we bemoan our restrictions on higher or quality education, when we look at the health problems we face, when we complain about the fact that we don't have any Black-owned multimedia, reparations is a way to begin dealing with all of that," he added. "We were collective victims of a collective injury and a collective crime, and we still are. Reparations is a collective response to the damage that we suffer."

For information on how to get involved in the Sept. 13 Millions for Reparations rally, call (718) 398-1766; visit the web address [www.millionsforreparations.com](http://www.millionsforreparations.com); or write to: Millions for Reparations, 456 Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11216.

Dora Muhammad writes for Final Call.

## Cuba

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tradition of assimilating music and culture from abroad, and not just from the United States. Rap music in Cuba gathered strength among the island's youth amidst the economic crisis resulting from the dissolution in the 1990s of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc, which had been the main trading partner of the island.

The ensuing recession and free-market changes to confront it brought social inequalities, drugs, prostitution, a dollar market that excluded many, and a rise in emigration.

"The young people began to recount what was happening, and the form of expression of

that time was rap, which has served as a social chronicle, an honest voice that has put the good and the bad on the table, but in a constructive way," Fernandez told IPS.

It is a phenomenon that is not so different from what the young people of the 1960s did with "Nueva Trova" in the early years of the revolution led by Fidel Castro, said the magazine editor.

The 'trovadores' (troubadours) "made controversial music that was ultimately accepted as a new cultural movement," said Fernandez, recognizing that the "harsh" political criticism in rap lyrics is not always so well accepted in today's Cuba.

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