

Farrakhan seeks sequel to march

NOI leader stumps in Atlanta

By Maynard Eaton
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"I have been rejected and hated without a cause"

— Louis Farrakhan

ATLANTA (NNPA) - It was a memorable, if not historic event. Muslim Minister Louis Farrakhan — an admired figure with the masses of African-Americans but often perceived as a divisive ogre who is routinely shunned by Whites and Black leaders — was lovingly embraced by the Georgia Association of Black Elected Officials (GABEO) during a rousing Friday speech hosted by the Atlanta Life Financial Group, the first of his four consecutive Atlanta appearances. The Nation of Islam leader labeled the famous Atlanta Life building a "sacred place" and a disturbing reminder of the strength and success of the Black business community during segregation.

"It is one of the few remaining landmarks of what Black people accomplished under segregation, but lost a lot during so-called integration," Farrakhan told an estimated 200 African-American politicians and invited guests. He said that owners of Black insurance companies, bus companies, motels, restaurants "would turn over in their graves to know that everything that we built to serve our own needs is now gone." Farrakhan laments that other races are allowed to profit from the Black community "without putting anything back. This is sad."

While the magnetic Farrakhan has always had a high profile and been held in high regard by working class and low income Blacks, his reputation has often been sullied by being labeled as a hate-monger and anti-Semite because "they are scared to death of a Black man who will not compromise" his values and virtue, he said. The Muslim leader has been considered so controversial that he has been banned from speaking on Black college campuses. This past weekend was the first time he has been allowed to speak at an Atlanta University school since 1980, for example.

"I am not a bad person. I have done nothing but good for Black people for 50 years of my life," he said to a standing ovation. "They know what I have in my mouth and what I have in my heart will free our people. They don't want you listening to me."

GABEO president Atlanta state Rep. Tyrone Brooks believes Black America is now truly listening and responding to Farrakhan's message.

"All of these Christian ministers who fought him 10 years ago are now supporting him. Those who did not understand the call of the Million Man March are now on board," Brooks said. "That is just profound."

Unlike many other Black business leaders in the past, Atlanta Life president and CEO Ron Brown says he has no qualms about a backlash for supporting Farrakhan and allowing him a forum.

"He's bringing a message that if anyone is against that message, I don't need to be dealing with them anyway," Brown said.

Farrakhan prophesized that as a people "we are programmed for extinction" and that the masses of Blacks are on a "death march into the oven of social deterioration, broken homes, broken marriages, broken minds, broken spirit evolving from a string of broken promises by government and leadership."

That's why the spiritual savant campaigned passionately in Atlanta and is crisscrossing the country to garner widespread support for spearheading a return to our nation's capital on October 16 for the 10th Anniversary Commemoration of the Million Man March — a remarkably successful congregation of some two million Black men that captivated Black America and shocked the world because it was such a peaceful, positive, powerful and productive protest — and one pessimists said could never be done. Farrakhan says this time, this "mobilization," which has already reportedly been endorsed by the NAACP and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), will, by necessity, focus on men and women.

"The enemy has socially engineered a change in the (See Farrakhan, Page 11)



Sentinel-Voice photo by Les Pierres Streater

Mentors, coordinators and young female participants in S.I.S.T.A.'s Rites of Passage program rejoice after completing graduation ceremonies in the lobby of the West Las Vegas Library Theater. The multifaceted program lasted 22 weeks.

Rites

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do in the future."

Hudson added: "People in the community are always saying that our young girls need help, and that no one is doing anything about it. So, Kianga and I said that we were going to put our money where our mouth is, and we're going to do this. The girls need to be led in the right direction. If we can affect just one girl in the program, we know that this one girl can make a better decision about her life to keep her from going down the wrong path. This is all we need to show that we were successful."

The keynote speaker at the graduation ceremony was Anika Johnson-Cunningham, a former administrator with the Clark County School District. She

said the event was important to her and that she values it "anytime I have an opportunity to teach children."

As she spoke about the students, she said "When I was asked to do this presentation, I hesitated because I do not take this opportunity lightly... I found that I had to dig deep down to find what I was going to say to them, to motivate them, and to inspire them to be the best that they can be. I needed to speak to them about the future and about what they are going to do with their lives. And it came to me, two simple words that are so profound: know thyself."

Johnson-Cunningham elaborated on that theme: "...to me it meant that you have to know your culture, and know who you are. Over the years, it changes and

evolves. It becomes even more profound when you think about the fact that we represent Mother Earth, the first woman on Earth — Mother of all humanity. You are the descendents of all humanity. Mothers have an awesome job: we are the first teachers of our family. The ultimate purpose on this earth is to become God-like. What can you do to help yourself become good and God-like?" she asked.

Johnson-Cunningham implored the girls to "live a good life, get an education, have a purpose in life and believe in your Maker."

The student graduates of the Rites of Passage program are: Brianna Beene, Domineque Daniels, Artesia Fleming, Amber Hausey, Felicia Hayes, Taylor Heath, Jennifer Whitfield, and

Sabrina Wilson.


Two of the graduates, Daniels and Hayes, shared their impressions about participating in the program.

Daniels said, "It's been educational. I've enjoyed the part of learning how to become a young lady and how to conduct [myself] in the presence of others. I hope to take away from this experience something positive that will assist me as I look forward to a future career as a cosmetologist."

Hayes commented, "It's been eventful. I had a good time participating in the program and I learned a lot. In the future, I plan to go to college in Arizona and become a veterinarian. This experience will help me to become a successful individual with a career that is meaningful and challenging."

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