

Farrakhan to mayors: Detach the strings

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

COLUMBUS, Ohio (NNPA) – Nation of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan challenged a group of more than 300 Black mayors to free themselves from political and economic constraints that prevent them from empowering poor and Black communities.

“What does it profit a man to become a mayor or a senator or a congressman or a president of a college and lose your soul, because with every advancement that you take, there’s a string somewhere and the question is ‘Who is pulling that string?’” Farrakhan asked those attending the 31st annual National Conference of Black Mayors.

“If we, with new thought, don’t produce a new mind in our people, the money will continue to slip through our fingers, and we’ll be having meetings like this ad infinitum and woefully saying what White folks are doing to us. They’re doing nothing to us. It’s what we refuse to do for ourselves.”

A two-hour conversation that featured Farrakhan and Columbia University history and political science professor Manning Marable was moderated by George E. Curry, editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association New Service.

Farrakhan’s appearance at the convention was denounced by the head of the



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Ohio State Republican Party. Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman, an African-American, is a candidate for governor. He did not attend the session—a point that was not lost on Farrakhan.

“You’re the mayor of the city, but you’re afraid because you want to be governor, so you scratch where you don’t itch, and you bend, and you bow. It’s you. It’s not White people. It is your fear of them that keeps you under control,” Farrakhan said to loud applause.

Coleman later told the NNPA News Service that he was attending to city business at the time of Farrakhan’s appearance before the group. Coleman declined to say where he was, or what he was doing.

“Believe it or not, as the mayor of the city of Columbus, what I do is unite people, bring them together. That is my track record, and that is what I’ve done. When Farrakhan was in town, I also had to perform my duties as mayor, as well as being host to hundreds of other mayors.

And I welcome everybody to my city and conferences,” Coleman said.

“There are some things that [Farrakhan] has said in the past that I simply do not agree with. But, he has the right to speak in this city,” Coleman added.

Asked how he has disagreed with Farrakhan, Coleman replied, “I’m not going to go into that.”

In the discussion with the Black mayors, Marable of Columbia University called for a new civil rights movement, one that would deal with the more insidious forms of discrimination that African-Americans now face, and rebuff highly organized efforts to erase past gains.

“Beginning in the early 1990s, or over the last 15 years, we have witnessed collectively, a broad assault against the Black freedom struggle in this country. That assault has been ideological, economic, cultural and political,” he said.

Marable cited the assault on affirmative action and at-

tempts by conservatives to distort Dr. Martin Luther King’s words as part of a Right-wing movement to remake America.

“There was a dedicated effort by conservatives to literally rewrite the language of the civil rights movement and turn it upside down—in effect, to rewrite the American public’s memory about what had actually transpired in this country in the fight to literally overturn Jim Crow racial segregation in the 1950s and 1960s,” Marable said.

While that battle continues, Marable argued, African-Americans are realizing that electoral politics has its limitations.

“We felt deeply that the sisters and brothers that we advanced as mayors of our cities would never forget it. And many of you have not forgotten it. And you have kept the faith, and you live by that,” Marable explained. “But some of you did not. And we have to talk truth. Many did not and, then, they forgot about the constituencies that the minister quite correctly said, ‘placed them there.’”

It’s not just in politics where Blacks in leadership roles have fallen short, Curry pointed out as moderator.

“Let’s talk about the preservation of our Black institutions,” he said. He pointed out that the Motown recording company, Johnson hair products, Black Entertainment Television, *Essence*

magazine, *Africana.com* and *BlackVoices.com* were all sold to White companies.

“Particularly, when we’re talking about the media, are we in danger of having institutions taken away and having no place for free expression?” Curry asked.

Farrakhan replied, “When you look at what Brother George Curry advanced about the loss of Black institutions, this is real. When you get to a point in this country where you are becoming a multi-millionaire and have a chance to go beyond, what is unseen is the offer that they

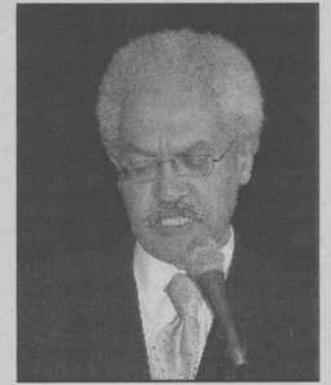
have.”

And that’s not much, according to Marable. He pointed out that the average Black household has only 7 percent of the net wealth of the typical White household. “We must rely on ourselves to advance ourselves. This is absolutely crucial,” Marable said.

Farrakhan suggested that Blacks and Latinos take control of their political destinies. Farrakhan indicated that he may use the 10th anniversary of the Million Man March to urge Blacks and Hispanics to bolt from both

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— Manning Marable
Professor at
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can’t refuse. Business in the country and in this world is a form of warfare, and as long as you build your business and don’t have soldiers, then you get your business to a certain level; those who have soldiers will give you an offer that you can’t refuse. This is why [if we don’t have] any effort to organize our people to become, not just intellectuals, not just entrepreneurs, but to become warriors, to defend and protect what was built, then we lose what we

Democrats and Republican and form their own political party to be known as POP—“Party of the Poor.”

Criticizing former Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, Farrakhan said Kerry never mentioned the poor, only the middle class. “Do you think he was talking about you?” he asked the mayors.

“You might be the mayor, but you’re just the working poor,” he said to rousing applause and laughter.

‘Hangman’s Noose’ trial to begin Monday in Carolina

By Cash Michaels
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WILMINGTON, N.C. (NNPA) – A federal judge has cleared the way the prosecution of a White employee of the North Carolina Department of Transportation to stand trial for trying to intimidate African-Americans by displaying a hangman’s noose.

In an April 15 court order, Senior U.S. District Court Judge W. Earl Britt ruled that federal court has jurisdiction over the 2002 case of a hangman’s noose being hung up in a North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) maintenance shop in Raleigh by a White employee, allegedly, to intimidate Black coworkers.

Judge Britt also ruled that the hanging of the noose and subsequent remark by the White coworker that Black people should be hung was “clearly racial in nature.”

“A fact finder could reasonably find both the racist remark and the noose to be unwelcome conduct based on the [plaintiffs’] race,” Judge Britt wrote. NCDOT officials have maintained that there was no racial intimidation

going on, and that the “noose” in question was actually a “tool.”

When officials did admit that the rope in question was a noose, they alleged that the Black plaintiffs put it up themselves over the weekend, and then took pictures of it so they could sue the state agency for money.

The plaintiffs in this case are seven African-American DOT workers assigned to the equipment maintenance shop on Beryl Road in Raleigh.

According to court documents, between February 1, 2002 and March 7, 2002, the workers—James Isaac, William Stewart, Alvin Williams, Gerald Agnew, Waymond Chavis, James Mitchell and Lydell Landrum—allege that White co-worker Raymond Powell “...hung a rope over his workstation that plaintiffs state was tied in the form of a hangman’s noose” to protest Black History Month and to intimidate African-Americans.

Court documents continue, “Mark Hartman, a White depot supervisor, pointed out the noose to a White coworker and they

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