

The Minister for Hate

Farrakhan heads down-under

By **Kenneth Stern**

Forty thousand people crammed into Atlanta's Georgia Dome on October 18, 1992, to hear Nation of Islam leader Minister Louis Farrakhan. He spoke about black self-help. He spoke about electoral politics. And he spoke about Jews.

Alluding to the Atlanta Jewish leadership's refusal to meet with him, Farrakhan said his differences with Jews were "theological-not political." The 40,000 listened intently while Farrakhan delineated these "theological" differences: "We didn't ask you [Jews] to apologise for helping put our fathers into slavery," he said. "We didn't ask you to apologise for Stepin Fetchit and for giving us Aunt Jemima roles in Hollywood. You have the power but you don't have the power of the god I represent... He'll smash you in the twinkle of an eye... If you're angry and pained because our [black] people in Atlanta have accepted us, get over it."

Farrakhan's comments on Jews garnered the loudest applause of the evening. And with Farrakhan preparing to visit Australia - he is currently applying for a visa - Australians will soon learn at first hand exactly what the Nation of Islam leader has to say about his many targets of hate.

Bigotry has always existed. Increased integration has not eradicated prejudice, and Farrakhan argues, with force, that integration alone can never end racism. Farrakhan argues that blacks should separate from whites and thus gain control over their own lives. It is a message parallel to one heard from time to time in many ethnic communities that look inward with nationalistic tones in time of perceived crises. Farrakhan has perverted that nationalistic message by injecting hatred as a driving force.

The problem most Jews have with Farrakhan is not so much that we disagree with his insular calls, although most do. It is that his insularity is inherently bigoted and anti-Semitic. From 1984 to today, the Nation of Islam has invested tremendous energy in trying to promote hatred of whites-and especially hatred of Jews-throughout the African-American community.

Minister Louis Farrakhan, born Louis Eugene Wolcott in the Bronx, New York, in 1933, was a calypso singer in the 1950s when he attended a speech by Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Black Muslim movement. "I was looking for all my life to help the Black man," Farrakhan recalls. "I became instantly converted by the logic of his arguments."

Rising quickly through the movement, Farrakhan became an assistant to Malcolm X at a Boston mosque. When Malcolm X was transferred to the movement's premier Mosque No. 7 in Harlem, Farrakhan was given the ministry at Boston. When Malcolm X broke with Elijah Muhammad, Farrakhan had a key role in keeping the Black Muslim movement intact, partly by strong oratory against his former colleague ("The die is set," he warned, "and Malcolm shall not escape, especially after such evil, foolish talk [about Elijah Muhammad] . . . Such a man is worthy of death."). Following Malcolm X's assassination in 1965, Farrakhan was reassigned to the Harlem mosque.

Farrakhan's orations included anti-Semitic images of conspiratorial Jews controlling the media and Hollywood. The mass media is "Jewish controlled," he said in 1974, and black politicians "should not bow to Jewish pressure" because they would become "a pawn of Zionism and Jews in America against the just causes of the Arabs today." Under Louis Farrakhan, Mosque No. 7 was one of the major New York outlets for the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the nineteenth-century czarist anti-Semitic forgery that fuelled many pogroms by promoting the myth of Jewish conspiracy. Farrakhan's mosque sold other anti-Semitea as well including a Pakistani book entitled *A History of Jewish Crime*.

In 1978, Farrakhan formed his own "Nation of Islam."The NOI was to be what the Black Muslims under Elijah Muhammad had been-a separationist, self-help operation. Rigid dress codes and a paramilitary disciplining unit known as the Fruit of Islam were revived.

But Farrakhan became known to most Americans during the 1984 presidential campaign. Farrakhan supported Democratic hopeful Jesse Jackson. His Fruit of Islam provided security for the candidate. On February 13, 1984, the Washington Post reported, "In private conversations with reporters, Jackson has referred to Jews as 'Hymie' and to New York as 'Hymietown.'" In the controversy that followed, Farrakhan first claimed that Jackson's slur was no slur at all: "Hyman comes from a Hebrew word, chaim ... it means life ... New York City is a city where the vital instruments of life are controlled by the Jewish people." Then he spouted a litany of anti-Semitic threats. On March 11, he said: "Here come the Jews [sic] don't like Farrakhan, so they call me a Hitler. Well, that's a good name. Hitler was a very great man. He wasn't great for me as a black person, but he was a great German. He rose [sic] Germany up from nothing. Well, in a sense you could say there's similarity in that we are rising our people up from nothing." When asked to clarify this, Farrakhan said that Hitler "was indeed a great man, but also wicked-wickedly great." As further clarification, Farrakhan "explained" that "The Zionists made a deal with Adolf Hitler, the same people that condemn me for saying Hitler was great but wickedly great."

After the 1984 presidential race, Farrakhan was frequently quoted in the media, providing good anti-Semitic copy. During one radio program, Farrakhan proclaimed that Israel would "never have any peace because there can be no peace structured on injustice, lying and deceit and using the name of God to shield your gutter religion under his holy and righteous name.... The presence of a state called Israel," he said, "is an outlaw act." (Farrakhan later claimed he was misquoted, that he had called Judaism a "dirty" religion rather than a "gutter" religion.)

Throughout 1984 and 1985, Farrakhan told his audiences that Jews were responsible for slavery, that they were "sucking the blood of our poor people that [they] might live well," that "Anti-black Jewish schemes [kept] blacks from moving on up," that "Jewish shopkeepers and landlords... swarmed the ghetto to prey upon our people ... like vultures."

On October 7, 1985, Farrakhan spoke to 25,000 at New York's Madison Square Garden. In a fiery delivery, he told the crowd, "Farrakhan has a controversy with the Jews. Jesus was hated by the Jews. Farrakhan is hated by the Jews. Jesus was scourged by Jews in their temple. Farrakhan is scourged by Jews in their synagogue.... They called him a devil. They call me a devil.... The Jews talked about "never again." I am your last chance too, Jews. I am your last chance. Listen Jews. This little black boy is your last chance because the Scriptures charge your people with killing the prophets of God. I am not one of the prophets of God. But if you rise up to try to kill me, then Allah promises you that he will bring on this generation the blood of the righteous. All of you will be killed outright. You cannot say "never again" to God, because when He puts you in the oven, "never again" don't mean a thing."

In 1988 he excoriated Jews in the *Washington Post*. "We've been loyal to you. We've cleaned your floors, and when you asked us, 'And you do windows, don't you?' we said 'Yes'. We left our homes uncleaned to clean yours. We left our children unkempt to clean yours. We give you our talent. You manage us. You get the money. We get the fame and then end up on drugs with no money. You are our managers, you are our agents. You run the institutions quietly behind the scenes."

Farrakhan also built alliances with people and groups known for their anti-Semitism. Former Ku Klux Klan leader Tom Metzger - who would later be found responsible, along with his White Aryan Resistance organisation, for the brutal skinhead murder of a black Ethiopian immigrant in Portland, Oregon - was a guest at Farrakhan's 1985 Los Angeles speech. Metzger donated \$100 to Farrakhan, and the two created an alliance as their anti-Semitic and separationist agendas dovetailed. That same year, Farrakhan invited Arthur Butz, one of the world's best-known Holocaust deniers, to speak to the Nation of Islam's Saviour's Day celebration.

In 1986, Farrakhan and a delegation of Nation of Islam leaders visited Libya to attend the "Second International General Conference for a World Forum to Combat Imperialism, Zionism, Racism, Reaction and Fascism." The trip violated US laws banning travel to Libya. When it was unclear whether Farrakhan would be prosecuted (he was not), his chief spokesman, Khalid Abdul Muhammad, said that if Farrakhan were charged, "the people will burn this country to the ground." He threatened that Nation of Islam members would "walk up to the car where your police officers are taking a break and blow their damn brains out." He said his organisation would kill "anything that's white, that ain't right, that's in sight."

In 1991, the Nation of Islam "Research Department" published a 334 page book entitled *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks And Jews: Volume One*. Presented as a scholarly text (it has 1275 footnotes), the book "chronicles Jewish writings that testify to their involvement in the slave trade and the oppression of Black people" (*Final Call*, May 4, 1992).

Quoting "Jewish sources," the book sports chapters with titles such as "The Jews and the Confederacy," "Jews and the Rape of Black Women," "Jews and the Economics of the Civil War," etc. The book seemingly lists every reference to any Jew involved in the slave trade in one volume. By all but ignoring the infinitely greater role of non-Jews, states, Arabs, blacks, and others in the slave trade, the book repaints slavery as a Jewish enterprise. Blaming Jews for slavery is the ultimate anti-Semitic act in the black community, and is clearly why Farrakhan is spreading this hate propaganda. The book is the Nation of Islam's version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, blaming Jews for the evils befalling blacks throughout history, just as the Protocols blamed Jews for the Western world's problems.

Farrakhan paints Jews as the greatest perpetrators of slavery when, for example, in 1830, of the 12,000 Southern slaveowners who had 50 or more slaves, only 20 were Jewish. That's two-tenths of 1 per cent. And Jewish slave merchants accounted for only 10,000 of the 10 million slaves brought to the New World. That's one-tenth of one per cent.

The Nation of Islam's book on Jews, and its newspaper, the *Final Call*, are not the only means through which Farrakhan seeks to poison black American views against Jews. His cadre of speakers-frequently heard on college campuses - target the next generation of black leaders.

Khalid Abdul Mohammad frequently speaks to college students. He described American Leon Klinghoffer, who was murdered by the PLO and dumped overboard from the Achille Lauro, as "some crippled Jew in a wheelchair"; termed Columbia University "Columbia Jew-niversity in the city of Jew York," and compared the "crimes perpetuated by Hitler against the Jewish people" with "the crimes perpetuated by the Jewish people against Palestinians."

To younger students he is even more explicit. Speaking at Brooklyn Public School 258, he said "Nobody wants to talk about what the Jews did. They are always talking about what Hitler did to the Jews. But what did the Jews do to Hitler?"

Interviewed by the *Washington Times* on February 27, 1992, Farrakhan said, "We have no hope that we can effect true reconciliation between blacks and whites in this country ... the answer ultimately is going to be separation." That agenda explains Farrakhan's cooperation with racist, extremist organisations like Tom Metzger's in the past, and why the NOI leadership in Washington, DC, is working with, and growing ever closer to, the extremist anti-Semitic LaRouche organisation. That year, Farrakhan stepped up his efforts to achieve two seemingly contradictory goals: "mainstreaming" the Nation of Islam, and promotion of hatred against whites, Jews and others. This two-track agenda is a no-lose proposition for him: it keeps media attention on the Nation of Islam, and disrupts-even threatens to pull apart-the civil rights community, whose pluralistic agenda is antithetical to Farrakhan's vision of America.

In September, 1993, Congressman Kweisi Mfume, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), invited Farrakhan to participate in a meeting of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Mfume said the CBC had entered into a "sacred covenant" with the Nation of Islam. Also in September, Rev. Ben Chavis, the new executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), said that it had been a mistake for the organisers of the march commemorating the 30th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington to exclude Farrakhan from that event.

While Farrakhan was reaping the success of his calls for black unity, his organisation was all-the-while promoting its agenda-hatred of whites, Jews, Catholics, gays and others. On November 29, 1993, Khalid Abdul Muhammad, Farrakhan's chief spokesman, gave his usual campus "stump" speech at Kean College in New Jersey. It was a densely packed performance of across-the board bigotry. In a talk on "The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews," he said, among other things:

"[T]he old no-good Pope-you know that cracker, somebody need to raise that dress up and see what's really under there. Jesus was right; you're nothing but liars. The book of Revelations is right; you're from the Synagogue of Satan.

"Who is it sucking our blood in the black community? A white imposter Arab and a white imposter Jew. "[Y]ou call yourself Mr. Rubenstein, Mr. Goldstein, Mr. Silverstein. Because you been stealing rubies and gold and silver all over the earth. That's [why] we can't even wear a ring or a bracelet or a necklace without calling it JEWelery.... You're the rogue that's stealing all over the face of the planet earth. You don't have a home nowhere. No-good bastard.

"Everybody always talk about Hitler exterminating six million Jews. But don't nobody ever ask, 'What did they do to Hitler? What did they do to them folks?'

"[W]hen we gain enough power from God Almighty to take our freedom and independence [in South Africa], we give [whites] 24 hours to get out of town by sundown. That's all. If he don't get out of town before sundown, we kill everything white that ain't right that's in sight in South Africa. We kill the women. We kill the children. We kill the babies. We kill the blind. We kill the cripples. We kill them all. We kill the faggot; we kill the lesbian. We kill 'em all.

"You say why kill the babies in South Africa? Because they're gonna grow up one day to oppress our babies, so we kill the babies. Why kill the women? Because they lay on their back. They are the military or the army's manufacturing centre. They lay on their back and the reinforcements roll out from between their legs. So we kill the women too.

"You gonna kill the elders too? Kill the old ones, too. Goddamnit if they have a wheelchair, push em off a cliff in Cape Town. How the hell you think they got old? They got old oppressing black people. I say kill the blind; kill the cripple; kill the crazy, goddamnit, and when you get through killing them all, go to the goddamn graveyard and dig up the grave and kill em a-goddamn gain, cause they didn't die hard enough."

In early December, Dr. Edward Goldberg-New Jersey's Chancellor of Higher Education- denounced the speech and complained about the institutional silence. He also lambasted Kean College for allowing the Nation of Islam to provide the security for the event. Weeks later the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith printed a full page ad with excerpts from Muhammad's performance. Leaders, black and white, were shocked by the Nation of Islam's message, as well as by reports that some in the audience had laughed and applauded Muhammad's remarks. Black leaders, including Jesse Jackson, William Gray III, Ben Chavis and many others denounced the speech. On February 2, 1994, Congressman Mfume called a press conference to reiterate that the Congressional Black Caucus had never actually voted on a "sacred covenant" with Farrakhan, and that the CBC had no plans to move closer to the Nation of Islam.

Farrakhan was under growing pressure to denounce Muhammad. On February 3, 1994, he called a press conference, during which he "disciplined" Muhammad for the "tone" of his remarks, but reiterated the "truths" that Muhammad spoke. Holding a copy of *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, Farrakhan commented that Muhammad would not have got into trouble if he had only stayed with the "truths" included in the text.

"Zionists [use the term anti-Semitism to] stifle legitimate criticism of the errant behaviour of Jewish people vis a vis their relationship with the non-Jewish population of the world," he said. "Our warning is to white people. If we make that truth so filled with bitterness and hatred that it becomes repugnant, people may turn a deaf ear and lose their lives."

Even though Farrakhan managed to confuse some with the meaningless criticism of his assistant's "tone," leaders in the black and Jewish communities-who found the issue of Farrakhan distracting them from their important communal and intergroup activities-hoped that the issue had been put to rest for the moment. The next day, however, Rev. Ben Chavis issued a statement not only reiterating the NAACP's desire to work with the Nation of Islam, but also stating that "The NAACP is prepared to believe Minister Farrakhan's statement that he is neither anti-Semitic nor racist." The American Jewish Committee issued

an unprecedented press release, noting that "it may mark one of the saddest days in the long American civil rights struggle when a leader of one of the most respected civil rights organisations not only turns a deaf ear to bigotry, but also seeks to rehabilitate the bigot."

On the other hand, Congressman Major Owens released a statement reiterating the need for a "coalition of the caring majority" in order for American's urban agenda to be tackled effectively. This agenda, he argued, cannot include hatemongers, but must include caring people of all backgrounds-noting, among other things, that Jews, far and above any other predominantly white group, share voting patterns with blacks. (Owens was among the more than 250 leaders from all walks of life who signed on to an AJC ad repudiating the Nation of Islam's hateful agenda.) Owens was praised by many of his constituents for his stance, but was surprised when some mentioned his "courage." When he reportedly asked why speaking out against bigotry was courageous, he was told, "because this is the same group that assassinated Malcolm X."

A potential problem for the Nation of Islam is the incongruity of its anti-violent image and its violent message. A new documentary entitled *Brother Minister, The Assassination of El Hajj-Malik Shabazz Malcolm X* shows a clip of Farrakhan, speaking in Chicago in 1993. "Was Malcolm your traitor or was he ours?" Farrakhan asks. "And if we dealt with him like a nation deals with a traitor, what the hell business is it of yours? You just shut your mouth and stay out of it-because pretty soon we're going to become a nation, and a nation's got to be able to deal with traitors and cutthroats and turncoats ... there are certain paths you don't cross!"

Less noticed than the Nation of Islam's hate speech or questionable programs, but perhaps more significant in the long run, has been Farrakhan's focus on the campus and his alliance with those who are constructing an academic-based ideology of black supremacy.

Not generally reported from Khallid Abdul Muhammad's speech was his attribution of much of his hateful rantings about black-Jewish relations. "Dr. Tony Martin," he said, has "done much of this research for us." Tony Martin is a professor at Wellesley College who first came to note in 1993 for using *The Secret Relationship* as truthful text in a course, and thereafter published his own anti-Semitic book entitled *The Jewish Onslaught: Despatches from the Wellesley Battlefield* (which is being sold through Nation of Islam outlets).

Martin, like his better known colleague Dr. Leonard Jeffries of the City University of New York, and others lesser known, such as Dr. John Henrik Clarke and Dr. Yosef Ben Yochanan, are constructing an academic-sounding, eugenics based, revisionist form of black racism that fits well into Farrakhan's political agenda. Their brand of Afrocentrism defines whites as biologically inferior (because they lived in caves during the Ice Age and/or, according to Farrakhan, they were a genetic mutation created by a black scientist named Yakub 6,600 years ago), and blacks as biologically superior (because of the skin pigmentation melanin). Much like Nazism did with its vision of the Aryan, it rewrites history to define all knowledge as emanating from Africa. Any other contribution-of the Greeks, for example-must have been "stolen" from Africa, they claim.

On October 16, 1995, Farrakhan led his by now famous "Million Man March" on Washington, DC. Although the vast majority of those who attended did not do so for reasons of anti-Semitism, the event demonstrated that the ideal of unity remains stronger for many within the African American community than the rejection of racist and anti-Semitic leaders.

The Million Man March unfolded with Farrakhan's predictable dance with the media, using anti-Semitism to build up an event. In an interview shortly before the march, he called Jews "bloodsuckers." And while the anti-Semitic rhetoric was subdued for the march itself, which was on CNN, it was on full display on the weekend preceding the event, at a "Black Holocaust Nationhood Conference," also held in Washington, DC where Farrakhan's aide, Khalid Abdul Muhammad was the keynote speaker.

Other speakers included Leonard Jeffries, former head of the City College of New York black studies department, best known for his anti-Semitic statements as well as his teaching about "ice people" and "sun people"; Steve Cokely, a former Chicago mayoral aide who claims Jewish doctors are infecting black

babies with the AIDS virus; Tony Martin, and suspended New York attorney Alton Maddox, who defended Farrakhan's repeated use of the term "bloodsuckers" to describe Jews. "You'd better be glad that the only thing we are doing is calling you bloodsuckers," said Maddox. "This is about blood. The price of victory is blood... You got to spill some blood if you want to be free."

Farrakhan emerged from his march on Washington newly empowered. The hundreds of thousands of participants, as well as the presence on the podium of people such as Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rosa Parks and Maya Angelou, solidified Farrakhan's position as an important leader in the black community. Many wondered, with his new-found clout, would he develop a new strategy to impact the "mainstream." Instead he wasted little time in squandering his post-Million Man March strength. In early 1996, Farrakhan embarked on a five-week "World Friendship Tour" to twenty three countries, some among the most despotic in the world. In Nigeria, he defended the ruthless military dictatorship. Asked about the junta's execution of Nigerian environmentalist and author Ken Saro-Wiwa (whose supposed crime was seeking oil profits for the Ogoni tribe), Farrakhan said, "You hanged one man. So what?"

In the Sudan, Farrakhan defended the ruling party against Western criticism for its promotion of terrorism and met with Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir who, according to the Wall Street Journal, personally "owns African slaves from southern Sudan." What about the vast evidence of Sudan's ongoing enslavement of blacks? Farrakhan dismissed these claims as the concoction of a "Jewish conspiracy."

Among Farrakhan's other visits were those to the three highest-profile terrorist-sponsoring nations: Iran, Iraq and Libya. In Iran he was reported to have said "You can quote me: God will destroy America by the hands of Muslims.... God will not give Japan or Europe the honour of bringing down the United States; this is an honour God will bestow upon Muslims."

In September that year, Farrakhan turned his attention to domestic politics. With the help of ousted former NAACP leader Ben Chavis), Farrakhan convened a "National Political Convention" at the TWA Dome in St. Louis. The event was a dismal failure. The presidential candidates were invited. Only anti-Semitic conspiracy theorist Lyndon LaRouche came. Organisers predicted attendance of 20,000 and 30,000. But, according to Reuters, "fewer than 500 people attended."

On October 16, 1996, the one-year anniversary of the Million Man March, Farrakhan organised a rally called the "World Day of Atonement" at the United Nations Plaza in New York. The event unfolded by script: Farrakhan again offered to meet with the Jewish community; the rhetoric of anti-Semitism was downplayed at the rally; police estimated the crowd at 38,000, but organisers said that as many as 200,000 showed, despite the fact that the rally permit was for less than 50,000.

Following the event, Farrakhan held a press conference sponsored by his Libyan friends at the United Nations. Leading Iranian cleric Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi also had praise for Farrakhan. Speaking in Teheran he said that "[T]he hand of God has inspired [Farrakhan] to gather the Muslims in the heart of the Great Satan [The United States]. This is what the Imam [the late Ayatollah Khomeini] meant by saying that our revolution would be exported."

While Farrakhan drew most of the press attention, the Nation of Islam as a whole was active during the year, continuing to churn out anti-Semitic publications such as *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*. As in recent years, Nation of Islam-linked security forces continued to receive government funding for patrolling public housing. But in November, 1995, in Baltimore, HUD ordered the termination of a such a contract.

And, in New York, in September, 1996, Governor George Pataki ruled that a state- financed housing project must end its contract with a Nation of Islam-linked security group called the "X-men," after the group had been discovered distributing anti-Semitic literature.

In response New York-based NOI minister Conrad Muhammad referred to Assemblyman Jules Polonetsky, an outspoken critic of the X-men and the security contract, as a "snotty nosed Jewish politician." Such comments from NOI ministers continued during the year. A few weeks before Conrad Muhammad's statement about the housing project he confronted me at a television studio. Muhammad called me a

"racist dog," a "brownshirt," a "fascist" and a "Nazi," because neither I nor any other AJC official would appear on camera with him at a television talk show to "debate" whether Farrakhan should have been able to take a \$1 billion gift from Colonel Gaddafi of Libya. (Gaddafi had earlier offered the money to Farrakhan, describing it as "a loophole to enter the fortress [the US] and to confront it from within".)

Farrakhan's desire to inculcate younger NOI members with anti-Semitism was also reflected in statements of Quannel X, NOI's national youth minister at the October 1995 Washington "Holocaust" Conference. "I say to Jewish America: Get ready ... knuckle up, put your boots on, because we're ready and the war is going down ... The real deal is this: Black youth do not want a relationship with the Jewish community or the mainstream white community or the foot shuffling, head-bowing, knee-bobbing black community.... All you Jews can go straight to hell."

Such hateful language must not be dismissed as abstract, for while the Nation of Islam is not a paramilitary organisation like the militias, words nonetheless have consequences. In December 1995, a store in Harlem was torched by a man who had demonstrated in front of the establishment, calling its Jewish owners "bloodsuckers". Seven non-Jewish people inside died in that inferno.

There are also indications that off-shoots of the Nation of Islam with a more violent agenda may be appearing. In Georgia such a group, called the Five Percent Nation, was allegedly preparing for guerilla warfare and buying weapons for that purpose, financing their operation through a spree of robberies of fast food stores. Members went on trial in October, 1996.

We can continue to expect much the same pattern from Mr. Farrakhan and his organisation as we have in years past. The printing presses will continue to churn out anti-Semitic tracts, while Farrakhan insists that he is not anti-Semitic, in fact that he wants to meet with Jews, and discuss the differences civilly.

While the Jewish community and many in the black community can see through this ruse, its transparency is not clear to many others. Following the Million Man March, Urban League leader Hugh Price - an eloquent voice against bigotry - commended Farrakhan's offer to meet with Jews; author and journalist J.J. Goldberg wrote in *The New York Times* that such a meeting should be held; and the media has repeatedly asked why Jews won't meet with Farrakhan.

In November, 1995 the American Jewish Committee, in an op-ed page message, explained why we would not accept Mr. Farrakhan's offer. We were not defensive and we were not being unfair. We have continued to explain why we won't meet with the head of any organisation that promotes anti-Semitism and racism, reaffirming the basic premise that should be a commonplace that one cannot and should not separate the message from the messenger, whether it be a David Duke or a Louis Farrakhan.

Furthermore, we have continued to point out that Farrakhan wants to meet with us precisely because the organised Jewish community has a long standing policy against meeting with hatemongers. If we met with him, but not with Duke, the meeting itself would be an implicit statement that he is not such a bad anti-Semite after all. And, of course, Farrakhan would use such a meeting as a stick to wield against the many black leaders who have been keeping their distance from the Nation of Islam.

It is important for the media to understand Farrakhan's inevitable next offer for dialogue not as "news," but as an old ploy to which he keeps returning precisely because the press treats it as "news." The media must look beyond the latest sound bites of Farrakhan and other NOI leaders and into its ongoing program of sponsoring anti-Semitism and racism through its publications, conferences and pronouncements.

We also need to educate our partners in the civil rights community about the central role of racism and anti-Semitism in the Nation of Islam. One leader commented to me that he thought anti-Semitism and racism were problems for Farrakhan and a few other NOI members, but were not an issue for the group itself.

I asked him, "Do you know why the Nation of Islam believes there are white people?" He seemed surprised to learn of the NOI tenet that whites were created in the laboratory of a black scientist 6,600 years ago.

We also have to be careful in our assessment of Farrakhan's perceived strength within the black community. On one hand, there are no other contemporary black leaders who seem able to stage a rally with the numbers Farrakhan can draw. This fact reverberates because black leaders know this.

But look beyond the Million Man marchers and a different picture emerges. In the 1996 electoral season there was not one black Congressional candidate who asked Farrakhan to appear with him or her on the stump. In fact, when Georgian Democrat Rep. Cynthia McKinney's campaign was criticised for her father's anti-Semitic comments, she mentioned Farrakhan by name as an example of the type of bigotry she "absolutely abhor[s].")

Farrakhan's attempt to exert black political muscle at his St. Louis conclave was also an abysmal failure. And even when he held a rally on a fine fall day in New York in front of the United Nations, it was Rev. Al Sharpton, Kwame Toure (formerly Stokely Carmichael), Dick Gregory, Cornel West and Winnie Mandela who stood with him, not Congressman Charles Rangel or Coretta Scott King or even NAACP head Kweide Mfume, who had helped legitimise Farrakhan by entering into a "sacred covenant" with NOI when Mfume had been head of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1993.

Farrakhan, a little more than a year after the Million Man March, is still feared by many within the black community: feared for the numbers he can draw, but feared as a kiss of political death by people who aspire to work within the mainstream.

When NOI minister Conrad Muhammad confronted me in the TV studio in September, 1996 his most passionate words were: "I don't need you to meet with me for my identity." The Nation of Islam wants the Jewish community to meet with it precisely because it has an identity problem. Regardless of how fervently NOI members may believe the group's ideology, the failure of organised Jewish groups to recognise it and meet with its leader reminds NOI members that they are marginalised in American society.

* Mr Farrakhan was repeatedly asked by the *Review* to respond to the issues raised in this report but refused to do so.