

ADL attacks on African-Americans suffer setback at NAACP conference

by Dennis Speed

The transparent and persistent attempts by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith to dictate to the nation's civil rights movement who the leadership of America's 30 million African-Americans should be, backfired resoundingly in June and July. With the inclusion of National of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan in the proceedings of the June 12 African-American leadership summit, largely at the urging of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Executive Director Ben Chavis, the attacks of last year by the ADL on Chavis and representatives of the Congressional Black Caucus for "consorting with an anti-Semite like Farrakhan" have been rendered impotent, for the moment.

Over the past year, and particularly since September 1993, the ADL had, under various pretexts, carried out a campaign, designed in 1991 at its conference in Montreal, to tar African-Americans as the nation's leading "anti-Semites." For various reasons, this campaign singled out Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. As late as May, ADL officials were part of the security-stripping that helped provide the opportunity for the shooting of Khalid Muhammad, a former spokesman for Minister Farrakhan, in California. The ADL also released a special report on the "links" between Farrakhan and physical economist Lyndon LaRouche, shortly after the shooting, having earlier previewed its contents in a May 12 press release.

All of this, however, fell short of its desired effect. Though ADL members and others demonstrated against Farrakhan in Baltimore and at the several sites of the African-American summit meeting, and, though Richard Hirschhaut, Midwest regional director of the ADL, stated that the NAACP was "rallying around a messenger of hate, intolerance, and anti-Semitism," the ADL was unable to foment division using Farrakhan as a scapegoat.

'We don't care what reporters think'

The rejection of these scare tactics was nowhere more in evidence than at the press conference given by Chavis on June 10. To reporters who queried him on rumors of "dissension" in the ranks of the NAACP because of Chavis's "new directions"—a veiled reference to his dialogue with Farrakhan, who is a lifetime member of the NAACP—Chavis responded, "We don't give a damn what you think." He also

singled out *Newsweek* magazine for what he termed "weakness in analysis," in reference to his leadership.

While columnists such as Richard Cohen and Thomas Sowell flatulently pontificated about the NAACP's impending demise—Sowell, for example, went so far as to assert that "Chavis has lent the NAACP's prestige to conferences of hoodlum gang leaders and to disreputable academics"—the membership of the NAACP, the nation's largest civil rights organization, has grown from 490,000 in April 1993, to 675,000 in June 1994. Approximately 65% of those members are under 24 years old. And, while the *New York Times*, in an article by Don Terry on July 10, smirked that "the granddaddy of the movement [the NAACP was founded in 1909] sometimes seems trapped in its past and still uses the word 'colored' in its title," Chavis has repeatedly made it clear that he intends to recruit Asians and Hispanics into the NAACP as well.

"The demographics of America have changed. It's not just a black and white situation. There's a 'browning' of America. That's why I don't want to change the name. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—people of color—is right on target," Chavis was quoted saying in the *Chicago Tribune*. Which makes the actions of NAACP dissenters such as Michael Myers, a New Yorker who contends that the organization is being taken over by "black extremists," and who has appeared on East Coast television calling for the ouster of Chavis and NAACP Chairman William Gibson, rather suspect. (Gibson has also been blamed for the overture to Farrakhan.)

Access to the White House

A particular cause of concern for the ADL, and their masters, however, may be the unusual access the NAACP enjoys to President Clinton and the White House. It was not simply the presence of Vice President Al Gore at the conference on June 12 that illustrated this. According to Chavis, in an exclusive interview with the *Chicago Defender*, "The Washington [NAACP] director is in the White House almost every week. I've sat with the President of the United States no less than 20-30 times. . . . What we're doing now is making clear to the administration where we stand on the various issues."

One of those issues may well be the impending military

strike against Haiti. Considering that Chavis has made it clear that he *opposes* any invasion of Haiti, which invasion is currently supported by some members of the Congressional Black Caucus who contend that Clinton is “racist” for not conducting a military action, Chavis’s access to the President may prove a positive countervailing influence in this situation. Perhaps Chavis and the NAACP would find themselves in agreement with Lyndon LaRouche, who states, “It is . . . absolutely immoral to impose . . . sanctions upon the helpless people of Haiti, in genocide which ranks with and exceeds President Bush’s bombing of densely occupied, wooden tenement buildings in Panama in the early morning while the families with the wives, men, and children were sleeping. . . . The United States has got to stop committing genocide. And above all, stop committing genocide in the hypocritical name of supporting democracy.”

This sort of dialogue on urgent matters of foreign and domestic policy, among politically diverse groupings, would heartily distress the ADL, which was proven in a San Francisco police investigation in 1993 to have spied on the NAACP and a thousand other organizations, including the Nation of Islam and the LaRouche movement. It is precisely to prevent such a “policy dialogue” from occurring, that the decades of spying, sabotage, bribery, and corruption have been carried out. Thus, the press hysteria should be seen in light of this emerging dialogue, to prevent which, the ADL has recently released reports such as “Partners in Bigotry: The Connection between Farrakhan and LaRouche,” and an attack on their

former friends in the “religious right.”

Recall also that Chavis was a political prisoner in the United States who served four years for a bombing conviction that was later thrown out. He was incarcerated in 1976-80 in connection with the “Wilmington Ten” case.

At the convention, LaRouche organizers were told by NAACP members, “Chavis is being gone after by the same people that went after LaRouche.” Over 3,000 copies of the “Exoneration Brief” on the complicity of sections of the government in the incarceration of LaRouche, and 2,000 copies of the book *The Ugly Truth About the ADL*, were distributed to delegates. Also, hundreds of attendees signed statements supporting the exoneration of LaRouche.

In the normally staid middle-class environment of the NAACP, Chavis is an anomaly. Certainly, more than any NAACP leader of the recent past, Chavis knows firsthand what it means to fight as the “underdog.” For example, he earned a masters degree while in prison. The impending exoneration of LaRouche, and the exposure of that apparatus that unjustly and illegally put LaRouche in jail, and targets Farrakhan for assassination, are topics that must interest him, and his organization, if he, and it, are to survive the impending escalation of attacks the ADL will undoubtedly attempt.

For the moment, however, the ADL—more properly termed the “African-American Denigration League”—is smarting. And, somewhere, Frederick Douglass, and Heinrich Heine, are enjoying a good belly-laugh at their expense.

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