

Polymorphous politics

The *New York Times* only hinted at the real story of wacko witch-doctors Fred Newman and Lenora Fulani. Their “political” enterprise is actually built around a string of off-beat psychotherapy fronts, including: the East Side Center for Social Therapy, the Castillo Cultural Center of Greenwich Village, the All-Stars Talent Show Network, the East Side Institute For Short-Term Psychotherapy, the Center for Developmental Learning, and the Gaygles (a “multisexual musical comedy improvisational group”). Fulani, who is on Ross Perot’s short list of possible running mates, is still a “clinical staff member” of the East Side Center in New York.

Fulani (née Lenora Branch) was recruited “to politics” via one of Dr. Fred’s sex therapy fronts. As she tells us in her autobiography, *The Making of a Fringe Candidate 1992*:

“Fred Newman and I first met when Lois Holzman introduced us in 1978. Lois—now an internationally prominent developmental psychologist—and I were colleagues at Rockefeller University. . . . At that time I had been in individual therapy with a Black lesbian gestalt therapist for about a year. I wanted to be in group therapy, but my therapist only saw people individually.

“I was intrigued when I first came to [Newman’s] New York Institute for Social Therapy and Research. They were talking about therapy and psychology in very progressive ways and they did group therapy, which I found very stimulating intellectually. . . .

“I pulled together a meeting of about 25 Black women psychologists and invited them to meet with Fred so we could decide whether we wanted to join the staff of the Institute,” Fulani wrote. “We asked Fred to lead a study group on politics so we could learn more about who he was and who we were. We wanted to read the *Communist Manifesto* with him.”

Marx’s ideas are at the very core of social therapy, in the Newman cosmology. Lois Holzman recounts that Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, “called the difference between what one can do ‘with others’ and what one can do ‘by oneself’ the Zone of Proximal Development. . . . The ZPD is where and how human beings—determined, to be sure, by the circumstances in which we find ourselves—totally transform those very circumstances. . . . Following Karl Marx, we call this process *revolutionary activity*” (Newman and Holzman, 1993).

Beneath Perot’s conservative veneer beat the fevered imaginations of these libertines, seeking to draw converts into their “group grope.”—*Dennis Speed*

name only. Drs. Newman and Fulani practice a bizarre brand of psychotherapy (see box), and do most of their “political” recruiting through group-grope sessions with their patients. Even the *New York Times*, in an Aug. 21, 1996 profile, wrote: “Some critics call the New Alliance Party a cult that used Dr. Newman’s national network of unusual psychotherapy centers, where clients receive short-term therapy in groups as large as 25, to attract and isolate vulnerable young people, then sold them on the idea of participating in, and contributing to, the New Alliance Party as a kind of ‘social therapy.’ ”

In the early 1970s, Newman and his gang made a brief, unsuccessful effort to infiltrate the political association of Lyndon LaRouche. They were given the boot, when their polymorphous “therapy” methods were discovered.

Perot has apparently done no such diligent investigation. Perot’s links with Newman and Fulani go back as far as the 1992 elections, when attorneys from the New Alliance Party were instrumental in winning Perot ballot access in several states. By 1995, the New Alliance Party had insinuated itself into a nascent Patriot Party, headed by a Pennsylvania Perot backer, Nicholas Sabatine. When Perot’s chief political operative, Russell Verney, was first launching the Reform Party, and was desperate to win ballot status in California, he turned to New Alliance member-turned Patriot Party California

chairman, Jim Mangia, to mobilize for Perot’s petition signatures.

Now, Perot has even allowed Fulani’s name to be floated among the possible choices for his vice presidential running-mate, according to a recent story in the *Washington Post*.

Rupert Murdoch’s *New York Post* jumped on “Perot’s Fulani Connection” in an Aug. 18 lead editorial, which warned: “Perot himself has a mainstream political sensibility—but his compact with Fulani & Co. suggests that hidden dangers lurk behind his crusade.”

Fulani, a self-professed black nationalist, has used the Perot platform to conduct her own war of words against leading figures in the civil rights movement, including Nation of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan, Rev. Benjamin Chavis, and Rev. Al Sharpton. She has singled out Farrakhan and Chavis for their collaboration with Lyndon LaRouche, and for their continuing, albeit guarded, support for President Bill Clinton. Fulani is unabashed in her zeal to defeat the President at all costs; and she is trying to steer as many African-American voters as possible into the Perot circus tent. So far, not surprisingly, she has failed miserably in that effort, by her own admission. But, with \$30 million in FEC cash now being provided to Perot’s otherwise non-starter of a campaign, the dirty tricks that could come out of this menagerie cannot be dismissed.