
Min. Louis Farrakhan

A day of atonement and reconciliation

The following are excerpts selected from the transcript of the speech by Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader, Nation of Islam, at the Million Man March at the West Front of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 16. Subheads are added by the editors.

I would like to thank all of those known and unknown persons who worked to make this day of atonement and reconciliation a reality. My thanks and my extreme gratitude to the Rev. Benjamin Chavis and to all of the members of the national organizing committees, to all of the local organizing committees, to Dr. Dorothy Height and the National Council of Negro Women, and all of the sisters who were involved in the planning of the Million Man March.

But to all of you—and we thank you, mass media, too, because even though you planned it for mischief, God planned it for good. So we thank you very much for helping to make this day successful.

If so, truth has to be spoken to justice. We can't cover things up, cover them over, give it a pretty sound to make people feel good. We have to go to the root of the problem.

Now why have you come today? You came, not at the call of Louis Farrakhan, but you have gathered here at the call of God, for it is only the call of almighty God, no matter whom—through whom that call came, that could generate this kind of outpouring. God called us here to this place—at this time—for a very specific reason.

And now I want to say, my brothers, this is a very pregnant moment, pregnant with the possibility of tremendous change in our status in America and in the world.

And although the call was made through me, many have tried to distance the beauty of this idea from the person through whom the idea and the call was made. Some have done it mistakenly, and others have done it in a malicious and vicious manner.

Toward a more perfect Union

Our brief subject today is taken from the American Constitution and these words, "Toward a more perfect Union." Now, when you use the word "more" with "perfect," that which is perfect is that which has been brought to completion. So when you use "more perfect," you're either saying that

what you call perfect is perfect for that stage of its development, but not yet complete. When Jefferson said, "toward a more perfect Union," he was admitting that the union was not perfect, that it was not finished, that work had to be done. And so we are gathered here today not to bash somebody else. We're not gathered here to say all of the evils of this nation. But we are gathered here to collect ourselves for a responsibility that God is placing on our shoulders to move this nation toward a more perfect union.

Now, when you look at the word "toward," "toward," it means in the direction of; in furtherance or partial fulfillment of; with a view to obtaining or having; shortly before; coming soon; imminent; going on; in progress. Well, that's right, we're in progress toward a perfect union. Union means bringing elements or components into unity. It is something formed by uniting two or more things. It is a number of persons, states, etc., which are joined or associated together for some common purpose. We're not here to tear down America; America is tearing itself down. We are here to rebuild the wasted cities.

What we have in the word "toward" is motion. The Honorable Elijah Muhammed taught us that motion is the first law of the universe. This motion which takes us from one point to another shows that we are evolving and we are a part of a universe that is ever evolving. We are on an evolutionary course that will bring us to perfection or completion of the process toward a perfect union with God. In the word "toward," there is a law, and that law is everything that is created is in harmony with the law of evolution, change. Nothing is standing still. It is either moving toward perfection or moving toward disintegration, or under certain circumstances doing both things at the same time. The word for this evolutionary changing, affecting stage after stage until we reach perfection, in Arabic it is called *rab*, and from the word *rab*, you get the word "rabbi," or teacher, one who nourishes a people from one stage and brings them to another stage.

Well, if we are in motion, and we are, motion toward perfection, and we are, there can be no motion toward perfection without the Lord Who created the law of evolution and is the master of the changes.

Our first motion then must be toward the God Who created the law of the evolution of our being. And if our motion toward Him is right and proper, then our motion toward a perfect union with each other and with government and with the peoples of the world will be perfected.

The slaveholders' recipe for control

Let's look at a speech, delivered by a white slaveholder on the banks of the James River in 1712, sixty-eight years before our former slave masters permitted us to join the Christian faith. He said, quote:

"In my bag, I have a foolproof method of controlling black slaves. I guarantee every one of you, if installed correctly, it will control the slaves for at least 300 years.

My method is simple. Any member of your family or your overseer can use it. I have outlined a number of differences among the slaves. And I take these differences, and I make them bigger. I use fear, distrust and envy, for control purposes.

"These methods have worked on my modest plantation in the West Indies, and they will work throughout the South.

"Now, take this simple little list, and think about it. On the top of my list is 'Age,' but it's only there because it starts with an 'a,' and the second is 'Color' or 'shade.' There's 'Intelligence,' 'Sex,' 'Size of Plantation,' 'Status of Plantation,' 'Attitude of Owners,' whether the slaves live in the valley or on a hill; north, east, south or west; have fine hair or coarse hair; or is tall or short. Now that you have a list of differences, I shall give you an outline of action.

"But before that, I shall assure you that distrust is stronger than trust, and envy is stronger than adulation, respect or admiration. The black slave, after receiving this indoctrination, shall carry it on and will become self-refueling and self-generating for hundreds of years, maybe thousands of years.

"Now, don't forget, you must pitch the old black male against the young black male, and the young black male against the old black male. You must use the female against the male, and you must use the male against the female. You must use the dark-skinned slave against the light-skinned slave, and the light-skinned slave against the dark-skinned slave. You must also have your white servants and overseers distrust all blacks.

"But it is necessary that your slaves trust and depend on us. They must love, respect and trust only us. Gentlemen, these keys are your keys to control. Use them. Never miss an opportunity. And if used intensely for one year, the slaves themselves will remain perpetually distrustful.

"Thank you, gentlemen." End of quote.

So spoke Willy Lynch 283 years ago. And so as a consequence, we as a people now have been fractured, divided, and destroyed, filled with fear, distrust, and envy. Therefore because of fear, envy, and distrust of one another many of us as leaders, teachers, educators, pastors, and persons are still under the control mechanism of our former slave masters and their children.

And now, in spite of all that division, in spite of all that divisiveness, we responded to a call. And look at what is present here today. We have here those brothers with means and those who have no means; those who are light and those who are dark; those who are educated, those who are uneducated; those who are business people, those who don't know anything about business; those who are young, those who are old; those who are scientific, those who know nothing of science; those who are religious, and those who are irreligious; those who are Christian, those who are Mus-

lim, those who are Baptist, those who are Methodist, those who are Episcopalian, those of traditional African religion. We got them all here today. And why did we come? We came because we want to move toward a more perfect union.

And if you notice, the press triggered every one of those divisions. You shouldn't come, you're a Christian; that's a Muslim thing. You shouldn't come, you're too intelligent to follow hate. You shouldn't come, look at what they did, they excluded women, you see? They played all the cards. They pulled all the strings. Oh, but you better look again, Willy. There's a new black man in America today, a new black woman in America today.

Now, brothers, there's a social benefit of our gathering here today, and that is that from this day forward we can never again see ourselves through the narrow eyes of the limitation of the boundaries of our own fraternal, civic, political, religious, street organization or professional organization. We are forced by the magnitude of what we see here today that whenever you return to your cities and you see a black man, a black woman, don't ask him, what is your social, political or religious affiliation, or what is your status. Know that he is your brother, and if he needs help, you are obligated to help your brother because he is your brother. You must live beyond the narrow restrictions of the divisions that have been imposed upon us.

Why America is divided

Well, some of us are here because it's history-making. Some of us are here because it's a march through which we can express anger and rage with America for what she has and is doing to us. So we're here for many reasons. But the basic reason that this was called was for atonement and reconciliation.

Now I want you to follow me. When you go to a doctor, you're not feeling well. The doctor says, "What's wrong?" "Well, I don't know, Doc." "Well, where's the pain? Tell me something about the symptoms." You want the doctor to make a correct diagnosis. You don't smack the doctor when he points out what's wrong. You don't hate the doctor when he points out what's wrong. You say, "Thank you, Doctor. What's my prescription for healing?"

Now look, whoever is entrusted with the task of pointing out wrong, depending on the nature of the circumstances, is not always loved.

But, President Clinton, America is also wounded, and there's hostility now in the great divide between the people. Socially, the fabric of America is being torn apart, and it's black against black, black against white, white against white, white against black, yellow against brown, brown against yellow. We are being torn apart, and we can't gloss it over with nice speeches, my dear Mr. President. Sir, with all due respect, that was a great speech you made today. And you praised the marchers, and they are worthy of praise.

You honored the marchers, and they are worthy of honor. But, of course, you spoke ill, indirectly, of me as a purveyor of malice and hatred.

I must hasten to tell you, Mr. President—that I'm not a malicious person, and I'm not filled with malice.

But I must tell you that I come in the tradition of the doctor who has to point out, with truth, what's wrong. And the pain is, that power has made America arrogant. Power and wealth has made America spiritually blind. And the power and the arrogance of America makes you refuse to hear a child of your slaves pointing out the wrong in your society.

But I think if you could clear the scales from your eyes, sir, and give ear to what we say, perhaps, oh, perhaps what these great speakers who spoke before me said, and my great and wonderful brother, the Rev. Jesse Jackson said, and perhaps, just perhaps, from the children of slaves might come a solution to this pharaoh and this Egypt, as it was with Joseph, when they had to get him out of prison and wash him up and clean him up because Pharaoh had some troubling dreams that he didn't have any answer to. And he called his soothsayers, and he called the people that read the stars, and he called all his advisers, but nobody could help him to solve the problem. But he had to go to the children of slaves, because he heard that there was one in prison who knew the interpretation of dreams. And he said, "Bring him. Bring him, and let me hear what he has to say."

God has put it for you in the Scriptures, Mr. President. Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar couldn't read the handwriting on the wall. But Daniel had to read the handwriting for him. *Mene mene tekel upharsin*. Your kingdom has been weighed in the balance and has been found wanting.

And so the eighth stage is perfect union with God. And in the Koran it reads, "Oh, soul that is at rest, well pleased with thy Lord and well pleasing." Oh, brothers, brothers, brothers, you don't know what it's like to be free. Freedom can't come from white folks. Freedom can't come from staying here and petitioning this great government. We're here to make a statement to the great government, but not to beg them. Freedom cannot come from no one but the God Who can liberate the soul from the burden of sin. And this is why Jesus said: Come unto me. Not "some" who are heavy laden, but "all" that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

America the beautiful

America. America the beautiful. There's no country like this on the Earth. And certainly if I lived in another country, I might never have had the opportunity to speak as I speak today. I probably would have been shot outright, and so would my brother Jesse, and so would Maolana Karenga and so would Dr. Ben Chavis and Rev. Al Sampson and all the wonderful people that are here. But because this is America,

you allow me to speak even though you don't like what I may say. Because this is America, that provision in the Constitution for freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and freedom of religion, that is your saving grace, because what you're under right now is grace, and grace is the expression of divine love and protection which God bestows freely on people.

So either, Mr. Clinton, we're going to do away with the mind-set of the Founding Fathers. You don't have to repudiate them like you've asked my brothers to do me. You don't have to say they were malicious, hate-filled people. But you must evolve out of their mind-set. You see their mind was limited to those six European nations out of which this country was founded.

But you got Asians here. How you going to handle that? You got children of Africa here; how you going to handle that? You got Arabs here.

You got Hispanics here. I know you call them "illegal aliens," but, hell, you took Texas from them by flooding Texas with people that got your mind—(laughing). And now they're coming back, across the border, to what is northern Mexico: Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and California. They don't see themselves as illegal aliens. I think they might see you as an illegal alien.

The Native American is suffering today. He's suffering almost complete extinction. Now he learned about bingo. You taught him. He learned about blackjack. You taught him. He learned about playing roulette. You taught him. Now he's making a lot of money. You're upset with him because he's adopted your ways. What makes you like this? See, you're like this because you're not well.

You're not well. And in the light of today's global village, you can never harmonize with the Asians, you can't harmonize with the islands of the Pacific, you can't harmonize with the dark people of the world, who out-number you 11 to 1, if you're going to stay in the mind of white supremacy. White supremacy has to die in order for humanity to live.

Now, atonement goes beyond us. I don't like this squabble with the members of the Jewish community. I don't like it. The Honorable Elijah Muhammed said in one of his writings that he believed that we would work out some kind of an accord. Maybe so. Reverend Jackson has talked to the 12 presidents of Jewish organizations, and perhaps in the light of what we see today maybe it's time to sit down and talk, not with any preconditions. You got pain, but we got pain, too. You hurt; we hurt, too. The question is, if the dialogue is proper, then we might be able to end the pain. And ending the pain may be good for both and ultimately good for the nation. We're not opposed to sitting down. And I guess if you could sit down with Arafat, where there are rivers of blood between you, why can't you sit down with us, and there's no blood between us.