



6-13-1994

Fight Muhammad's 'Secret' with Facts

Kenneth Lasson

University of Baltimore School of Law, klasson@ubalt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/all_fac

 Part of the [Civil Rights and Discrimination Commons](#), [First Amendment Commons](#), and the [Religion Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fight Muhammad's 'Secret' with Facts, *The Baltimore Sun*, June 13, 1994

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at ScholarWorks@University of Baltimore School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@University of Baltimore School of Law. For more information, please contact snolan@ubalt.edu.

Related Articles

Censure, not censor

February 8, 1994

Anti-Semitic comments shouldn't be tolerated

January 27, 1994

Local blacks stand by Nation of Islam

February 6, 1994

Jew who urges dialogue with Farrakhan has nerve

August 2, 1997

Farrakhan Turns the Tables

February 5, 1994

Find More Stories About

Muhammad

Fight Muhammad's 'Secret' with facts

June 13, 1994 | By Kenneth Lasson

IT'S HARD not to listen when the Rev. Dr. Khalid Abdul Muhammad speaks. He is a master rhetorician -- more provocative than Louis Farrakhan, as charismatic as Martin Luther King, as mesmerizing as Uncle Remus -- an altogether fascinating study in the sheer power of words well spoken.

Not only does Khalid Muhammad revel in his right to preach violence, even as he is victimized by it, but he fervently believes in what he has to say. Such as that Jews dominated the African-American slave trade and continue to be the primary oppressors of black people.

Dr. Muhammad's primary text for this thesis is "The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews," published by the Nation of Islam, of which until recently he was the national spokesman. His demand that recitation of "The Secret's" truths be heard is satisfied by both the media and large audiences, his provocations protected by the Constitution. But he also challenges anyone who would dispute its litany of facts to put up or shut up. And in that, too, he's right.

"The Secret's" unnamed authors blame the Jews for a variety of sins, but mostly for their long history of enslavement of black people from biblical times to the present. In fact the Old Testament's passages about servitude are couched almost totally in terms of basic human rights and dignity, in stark contrast to the considerably more brutal ways by which many other societies practiced slavery in ancient days.

"The Secret" reports that Jews introduced black slaves to the colonies, when in fact slavery in North America predates the first Jewish immigrants by more than three decades. Even the few Jews who came here in the 17th century settled mostly in New Amsterdam (now New York).

"The Secret" ignores its own sources on rabbinical debates over the Civil War, which make it clear that the "biblical" theory of slavery was in fact advanced by white Christians. As Henry Louis Gates Jr. (chairman of Afro-American studies at Harvard) points out, American Jewish merchants accounted for the importation about 2 percent of African slaves brought to the New World.

While even that may be 2 percent too many, nowhere does Khalid Muhammad or "The Secret Relationship" ever mention the other 98 percent -- a mercenary combination of diverse white Christians and Moslems, doing bustling business with a great many black African warlords who were all too happy to sell their conquered tribespeople into bondage.

"The Secret's" real secret is that it masquerades as a calmly reasoned, carefully documented academic treatise, when in fact is dishonestly selective in its sources, contains deceitfully inaccurate footnotes and quotes legitimate historical scholars grossly out of context.

Khalid is especially dangerous because his persuasive powers are put to work on impressionable college students, some of whom graduate beyond the rote responses of "amen, brother!" into fledgling racists-in-training themselves.

Meanwhile, the media, ever voracious for a sensational quote, are rendered meek and helpless when confronted by his "sources" and slick rhetoric. Dr. Muhammad's interviewers, from college journalists to professional pundits, are ill-prepared to question his historical data. Instead they buffet him with his own strident quotations, thereby allowing themselves to become pliant playthings. (What exactly did you mean, asks an outraged Phil Donahue, when you said, "Lift up the pope's skirt to see what's under there"? "Don't you understand, Phil," Khalid oozes, "that's a metaphor . . . symbolic language" to suggest the evils perpetrated by the Catholic Church against blacks.)

So, too, do many academic administrators and scholars appear to be stupefied or intimidated upon discovering the likes of Khalid Muhammad's professorial counterparts in their tenured midst, the most notorious of whom are New York University's Leonard Jeffries and Wellesley's Tony Martin. They're reduced to wringing their hands (or ringing the bell of free speech) when student groups invite hatemongers.

Those who would dismiss Khalid Muhammad as just another rabble-rouser -- or who nurture the rights of his student proteges to express themselves as the politically correct thing to do, or who furnish an open forum to his somewhat-more-muzzled mentor Louis Farrakhan without forcefully denouncing what he stands for -- all abdicate the civic and moral responsibility presupposed by the founders when they created the First Amendment.

All of which illustrates the importance -- and the perils -- of the philosophy behind the guarantee of free speech: that abhorrent ideas will fester if suppressed, but will wither and die if confronted by the truth in an open and vigorous debate.

Unfortunately, that noble sentiment didn't work in Germany when the Nazis first slithered into view. And it won't work here, either, unless Khalid Muhammad and his articulate colleagues-in-bigotry are confronted with both higher-minded rhetoric and unabridged history.

As Uncle Remus might have put it, "That's the truth, it's actual" -- but until all the facts are laid out for all the listeners and readers, everythin' is far from satisfactual.

Kenneth Lasson is a professor of law at the University of Baltimore.

Recommend { 1

Tweet

0

G+1

MORE:

[Why expansion tank is needed](#)

[Wrestler found shot dead family has lost five sons Latest tragedy apparently a suicide](#)

[How to treat bone spurs](#)

[Senator's wife recounts terror, helplessness as victim of obsessed stalker](#)

[Ga. Tech's Peacock suspended](#)

[Ravens tackle Michael Oher takes big brother job seriously](#)



[Index by Keyword](#) | [Index by Date](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

Please note the green-lined linked article text has been applied commercially without any involvement from our newsroom editors, reporters or any other editorial staff.