

# Farrakhan discomfits ABC-TV interviewers

by Katherine Nötley

With eight days to go before the Million Man March on Washington, the Nation of Islam's Hon. Minister Louis Farrakhan patiently explained on "This Week with David Brinkley" to ABC News correspondents Cokey Roberts and Sam Donaldson, and columnist George Will, why the march is called a "march for atonement." "America is dying spiritually, morally, politically, socially, and economically," he said. "And the black community is as well. And so, we feel that our atonement should be to reconcile our differences first with Almighty God, and then with one another. And that reconciliation with God will give us the power to redirect our lives and to change the reality under which we live."

"I cannot atone for what the press has said that I said that I didn't say, nor can I atone for your failure to accept my explanation of what the press said that I said," he told Roberts, after she baited him, with the question: "Will you be leading the atonement" because "a lot of people think that you personally have a great deal to atone for—that you have said things that are anti-Semitic, anti-white, anti-Catholic, anti-female?"

The march, which takes place on Oct. 16, is not to present a laundry list of complaints to the government, the minister explained, and is being held in Washington "because Washington is the capital of our oppression. . . . We're not coming to beg Washington. Our days of begging white folk to do for us what we could do for ourselves are over. We're coming to Washington to make a statement. Our plea is to Almighty God. Our atonement is to Almighty God. And it is He whom we are trying to reconcile our differences with."

## 'Anti-Semitic' slur rebuffed

The baiting was turned over to columnist George Will, who first insisted that Minister Farrakhan describe some oppression, and then cut him off when the minister began to detail the history of dirty operations, now exposed as Operation *Frühmenschen*, against "black leaders and black organizations" by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. "All we need to do is go back to the counterintelligence program of J. Edgar Hoover, which was paid for by our tax dollars—" he began. "Hoover's dead," snapped a decidedly uncomfortable Will. "Let's leave the past then," said Will, and proceeded to demand that Minister Farrakhan "prove" he's not anti-Semitic or anti-white by naming Jews or whites he admires.

Sam Donaldson, ABC's *enfant terrible*, chimed in by

quoting Minister Farrakhan that "little Jews died while big Jews made money in World War II. Little Jews were being turned into soap [in the concentration camps], while big Jews washed themselves in it." Rather than evince horror about the revelation expressed in the minister's harsh metaphor, Donaldson asked, "Do you understand how that sort of rhetoric makes people suspicious that you are anti-Semitic?" Farrakhan responded that he had read reports that "there were certain Jews that financed Hitler." He continued, "Now, if certain Jews financed Hitler, and Hitler slaughtered Jews, then some Jews profited from what Hitler did. . . . Now, that is horrible."

No points for Donaldson there. He turned the subject to a point that Minister Farrakhan had made connecting the 1913 establishment of the Federal Reserve, the IRS, the FBI, and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL). Drawing on his earlier remark about the FBI, Farrakhan replied, "Well, if you look, the FBI and the ADL have worked very well together, and the Federal Reserve was set up in 1913, and then the IRS was set up. How else is the Federal Reserve going to be paid interest on money that America borrows, except through taxing the American people?" Is that anti-black? Donaldson, fishing for the "conspiracy," wanted to know. "It seems to me that it's anti-American. America is nearly \$5 trillion in debt," replied Farrakhan. "And America does not seem to be able to balance that debt, to pay it off. She's paying almost \$300 billion a year just to service the debt—not paying the principal on the debt. . . . So, the mismanagement of the wealth of America, and the human resources of America should not be scapegoated on the black and the poor."

The Nation of Islam leader corrected Cokey Roberts, who offered up the tired refrain that this is "a sexist march": "Women have been included in this march from the very inception. Women have helped to plan it, to organize it, and women back it," he said, and pointed out that Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women, poet Maya Angelou, and civil rights veteran Rosa Parks would be addressing the marchers. "It's not a macho day," he stressed. "It is a day in honor and respect of our women, but it is a day that we are calling on black men to stand up and take the responsibility of freedom, the responsibility of their wives and their children, and the responsibility of building our communities."

Minister Farrakhan closed by responding to reports that President Clinton will be out of town that day, and White House staff will not be given the day off to attend the march: "I think the President will see that the march has great value and significance," he said. "After all, if we can organize black men to go back into our communities, pool our resources intellectually and financially, to create job opportunities for our people, to lessen the burden of crime and violence in our community, that would be a blessing to America. What intelligent person wouldn't want to embrace that kind of idea?"