

**Racializing Antisemitism:
Black Militants, Jews, and Israel,
1950-Present**

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ABSTRACT

From the 1950s, black militants in the United States openly promoted an antisemitic worldview, forging their new identities by denigrating Jews. Racializing antisemitism, they held Jews responsible for the subjugation of all people of color in the United States, Africa, and the Middle East. They taught that Jews, relying on systems of oppression drawn from the Torah and Talmud, had extracted all their wealth from the people of color. Black nationalists appropriated central elements of the historical narrative of the Hebrew Bible, identifying blacks as the true “Children of Divine Promise”, while substituting a counter-narrative for the iniquitous Jews. Militants also adopted a strongly anti-Zionist ideology, drenched with antisemitism, the hoary anti-Jewish tropes now applied to “Zionists.” Masters of deceit, Zionists posed as progressives, founding Israel as a base from which they could crush the rising of the people of color in Africa and the Middle East, even recognizing this as their “divine mission.” Gamal Abdel Nasser, president of Egypt, enlisted the nationalists to disseminate his anti-Zionist message in America.

In the late 1950s, black militants, many identified as black nationalists, roused antisemitism — a notoriously light-sleeper — from its brief nap in the United States, as they openly leveled anti-Jewish charges and often embraced an antisemitic worldview. Many taught that American Jews — and the Jewish state — were, and had long been, the central obstacle to blacks’ progress. Reviving an old antisemitic trope, Cecil Moore, the head of the Philadelphia branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a candidate for mayor of the city in the mid-1960s, characterized Jews as “Shylocks with their hands in my pockets, their knives in my guts, their feet in my behind.” Much in demand as a speaker nationally, he boasted that ninety percent of Philadelphia’s blacks were “anti-Jewish,” and blamed the recent black riots in the city on a Jewish furniture store owner. In America’s heartland, “every speaker” brought to the University of Minnesota by the Africana Student Cultural Center in the late 1980s “hates Jews” and announced to “the world it should hate Jews too.” Steve Cokely, former aide to the acting mayor of Chicago, revealed to crowds of students on campuses around the country that Jews were currently “building gas chambers to kill blacks.” In the years of

the Black Death, Jews had been accused of killing Christians by poisoning their wells. Six hundred years later, Cokely disclosed that Jews were responsible for the contemporary lethal epidemic among blacks, now injecting them with the AIDS virus, which they had invented. When pressed, Louis Farrakhan (formerly Louis X), head of the Nation of Islam from 1977 to the present, conceded, “I do not know whether [Cokely’s claim] was true,” but added ominously that “it well could be ... a manufactured virus.” He voiced little doubt, however, about the origins of the other plague targeting the black community. Referring to himself in the third person, he informed reporters that as soon as “Louis Farrakhan became the voice of the poor” and “nearly 50,000 came out in New York” in 1985 to hear him speak, at what many at the time labeled a modern Nuremberg Rally, “the crack epidemic exploded.”

To the much-honored black playwright and poet LeRoi Jones, whose work was supported by federal grants, Jews were themselves a disease, who “have done my people nothing but disservice.” Interviewed on television in 1966, he admitted, “I find them inimical to the most beautiful qualities of the human spirit; I find them oppressing, oppressors; I find them connected with the worst filth in the country, in the world.” Although he initially attempted to limit the charges to “the Jews who have the owner complex syndrome,” he quickly withdrew the qualifiers. When a member of the audience accused him of antisemitism, Jones defended himself: “I am not a Nazi. The Nazis were white people. That was your family quarrel.... I was just a spectator.” Fourteen years later, Jones (now Amiri Baraka) confessed that he was “a former antisemite.” He had, however, left that behind. He had converted, he announced, to anti-Zionism.¹

¹ “Memorandum on Boston Appearance of Cecil Moore,” 29 Nov. 1967, Box 67, Jewish Community Relations Council Papers (henceforth, JCRC), American Jewish Historical Society (henceforth, AJHS), Boston; *Minnesota Daily*, 27 Nov. 1989; “Excerpts of Interview with Louis Farrakhan,” *Washington Post*, 1 Mar. 1990; American Jewish Committee (henceforth, AJC), “LeRoi Jones,” November 1968, typescript, Box 67, JCRC Papers; Eunice G. Pollack, “African Americans and the Legitimization of Antisemitism on the Campus,” in *Antisemitism on the Campus: Past & Present*, edited by Eunice G. Pollack (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011), 220–21.

SPREADING ANTISEMITISM

Increasingly, from the late 1950s, black militants, especially black nationalists, were provided with numerous platforms from which they disseminated their antisemitic message far and wide. Inspired by the newly-independent African states, which had emerged from colonial rule, and promoting themselves as waging a “counteroffensive to white nationalism” at home, the number of black nationalist groups “mushroomed.” New York City alone now had at least twenty black nationalist organizations; the largest of them, the Nation of Islam (NOI), boasted branches in eighty cities. Elijah Muhammad, the head of the NOI from 1933 to 1975, now reached millions through his weekly radio program, broadcast on more than fifty stations, and through his regular column in the widely-read black newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Although formerly their audiences had been limited largely to inner-city blacks, now the nationalists were assiduously courted by the mainstream media, publishing houses, and student organizations at elite colleges and large public universities. In 1959, the prominent television commentator Mike Wallace devoted a full week of his program to the Nation of Islam, featuring films of meetings, interviews, and incendiary speeches, which, in turn, generated extensive coverage in the national print media. Malcolm X, head of the NOI’s Harlem mosque, was already much in-demand as a speaker and debater on campuses where, cleaving closely to the teachings of his mentor, Elijah Muhammad, he electrified students with his relentless denunciations of white devils and perfidious Jews. A few years later, Huey P. Newton, the “minister of defense” of the Black Panther Party, renowned at the time for distributing free breakfasts along with free indoctrination in bigotry to inner-city youth, was invited to co-teach a seminar with the eminent psychologist Erik Erikson at Yale University. Seeking authenticity, students wanted to learn from “street niggers,” not from “representatives of the button-down [white or] black bourgeoisie.”²

² C. Eric Lincoln, “Extremist Attitudes in the Black Muslim Movement,” 1962, typescript, Box 3, Julius Bernstein Papers, Tamiment Library (henceforth, TL), New York University; AJC, “Temple of Islam,” Dec. 1960, typescript, Box 67, JCRC Papers; Alfred Balk and Alex Haley, “Black Merchants of Hate,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 26 Jan.

Publishers also greatly extended the reach of the black nationalists, as they found that regardless of quality, virtually every work on African Americans “soared in sales.” In addition to the white middle class market, a bookseller observed that blacks who “can barely write their name” were buying and “struggling with” these books. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, with its antisemitic charges and caricatures of Jews, and characterization of Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, as only “a cordial man of great dignity,” sold an astonishing 200,000 copies in 1967 and 400,000 in 1968. Many volumes consisted only of collections of the militants’ speeches or harangues. LeRoi Jones’ plays, in which whites and Jews wound up dead, circulated widely. As did his poems, such as the relatively benign:

Atheist jews double crossers stole our secrets ... The Fag’s Death/
they give us on a cross. To worship.... the empty jew/betrays us....

At the time, the novelist Harvey Swados deplored the “courting and publishing of untalented young men merely because they were black” — but his was the rare voice of dissent. This was the beginning of the suspension of judgment, the pandering, the uncritical adulation of these writers. In 1968, Richard Gilman, the critic for the *New Republic*, simply refused to assess “this kind of Negro writing.” He explained, “I am willing to stand back and listen, without comment, to these new and self-justifying voices.” Thus, as many black nationalist writers engaged in “the act of creation of the self” by denigrating “the Jew,” often critics simply looked the other way. When the prominent historian Christopher Lasch wrote a lengthy review of Harold Cruse’s *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967) in the *New York Review of Books*, he ignored its pervasive antisemitism. Never even addressing how Cruse had managed to blame Jews for blacks’ “latent antisemitism,” Lasch only celebrated the work as

1963; Harvey Swados, “Old Con, Black Panther, Brilliant Writer and Quintessential American,” *New York Times Magazine*, 7 Sept. 1969. Black nationalists championed black separatism over integration. They saw oppression as based on race, not class. They called only for racial unity and expressed little or no solidarity with white workers. The Panthers were a militant group that at times identified as “internationalist” and Marxist-Leninist, and unlike nationalists, welcomed white leftist supporters to their conventions.

a “monument of historical analysis.” The University of Michigan soon offered Cruse a permanent professorial position, though he had never completed college.³

Universities across the country rushed to satisfy students’ demands for African-American Studies courses and autonomous, black-controlled departments. John Henrik Clarke, who had finished eighth grade, became a much-honored professor of African World History for decades at Hunter College in New York City. Although quick to label others, with whose statements on Jews he disagreed, “black pseudo-scholars,” Clarke taught, “I have no argument for or against the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. I have not been able to authenticate it one way or the other.” And when the Nation of Islam published *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* (1991), which incredibly claimed that Jews had dominated the Atlantic slave trade, Clarke pronounced it “a competent piece of research. The documentation is good.” By contrast, leading “traditional” scholars of slavery assessed its scholarship as consistently fraudulent, the “extreme example of antisemitic accusations masquerading as a documented history of Jewish involvement in the slave trade.” Many of the departments became — and remained — highly politicized, embracing “an extra-academic mission.” Enforcing ideological conformity, one Afro-American Studies department conducted what some dubbed an “inquisition,” when it discovered that in his recent book a faculty member, an African-American Jew, had condemned what he considered the novelist James Baldwin’s antisemitic statements. He escaped the siege and was spared “a trial” only by agreeing to transfer to the Judaic Studies department.

³ Geraldine Rosenfield, “Jews as Seen by Some Black Writers” [1970], typescript, Box 24, Morris U. Schappes Collection, TL; Malcolm X (with Alex Haley), *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 283, 335, 372–73; “Three Poems by LeRoi Jones,” *Evergreen Review* (Dec. 1967): 48–49; Swados, “Old Con, Black Panther”; Morris Schappes, Commentator, Panel on “Black Anti-Semitism: Myth or Reality?” American Historical Association Convention, 30 Dec. 1972, typescript, Box 20, Schappes Collection; Christopher Lasch, “The Trouble with Black Power,” *New York Review of Books*, Special Supplement, 29 Feb. 1968.

Although black militants, including nationalists, lectured, taught, and published widely — the African-American Studies departments and programs generally endorsing and strongly defending their black student organizations' choice of speakers — several nonetheless contended that they were being silenced — strangled by the ubiquitous tentacles of Jewish power. Closely echoing Malcolm X's accusation, Amiri Baraka charged,

a nigger wants to put down the Zionists [his new word for Jews] and the Zionists control the radio, the television, the movies, the education, the intellectual life of the United States.... The minute you condemn them publicly, you die. They will declare a war on you forever.⁴

Many of the black militants were certain that it was only a fear of the loss of “Zionist money” that prevented black leaders and organizations from acknowledging their support for the nationalists' views. Eddie Ellis, an acolyte of Malcolm X, knew that it was only “Zionist influence” that had “stilled the voices of many stout Black hearts,” and now proclaimed, “Nevermore!” “This fear is over.” The militants contemptuously dismissed any prominent African Americans who denounced their antisemitism as “crawling dogs,” whose responses were “dictated” by their Jewish “slave masters.” Whitney Young, Jr., executive director of the National Urban League, was only the Jews' “puppet”; and Henry Louis Gates, the Harvard professor who characterized the NOI screed *The Secret Relationship* as bogus scholarship and antisemitic, just “another hired gun,” employed — deployed — by the Jews. They christened Martin Luther King, Jr. “honey boy” or, more often, Martin Luther Queen, impugning his manhood for prostrating himself before Israel and Jews. Thurgood Marshall, who in 1967 would become the first African American on the U.S.

⁴ *City Sun*, 26 Aug.–1 Sept. 1992; Eunice G. Pollack, “African-American Antisemitism in the 1990s,” in *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History*, edited by Stephen H. Norwood and Eunice G. Pollack (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 1: 195–200; “Peter Thompson's Afro-American Flap,” Radio broadcast, WFCR, 1 June 1988, typescript, Box 21, Schappes Collection; Amiri Baraka, *Raise, Race, Rays, Raze* (New York: Vintage, 1972).

Supreme Court, was roundly condemned for having “consciously or unconsciously accepted Zionism as a philosophy,” and labeled the “Ugly American,” “who has made a career out of being an Uncle Tom.”⁵

It was evident that manhood was problematic for many of the black nationalists, who, like Louis Farrakhan, “hardly knew” their fathers or had seen them only as weak. Flaunting their independence of the imagined all-powerful Jewish “masters” became an obsession. The measure of their manhood was their readiness to condemn, to stand up to, the Jews. Antisemitism had become their route to manhood, to manliness.

Interviewed in his Chicago mansion, Louis Farrakhan, the country’s most relentlessly vocal antisemite, bragged to John F. Kennedy, Jr. about the reverence he was, albeit secretly, accorded by African Americans. “I have had over 2,000 Christian pastors sitting at this table over the last three or four years,” he divulged.

As God is my witness, when we left, there was embrace ... even tears. Even Christians who looked at themselves as prophets came and kissed my hand and pulled at the hem of my coat, saying, “If we could just touch the hem of his garment....”

But, Farrakhan explained to Kennedy, “when they get before the public, they are so frightened by what Jewish people and financial contributors will think that they won’t tell you how they really feel about Louis Farrakhan,” again referring to himself in the third person. They all saw him as their savior, a father — and a man. Unlike them, he was unafraid of the Jews.⁶

ANTISEMITES DENYING ANTISEMITISM

Although the black nationalists focused obsessively on Jewish money, power, cunning, and conspiracies, almost all insisted they were not antisemitic. Even Farrakhan “heatedly denied” the charge that he was an antisemite. After all, he

⁵ Eddie Ellis, “Semitism in the Black Ghetto, Part 3,” *Liberator* (Apr. 1966); Lincoln, “Extremist Attitudes”; *New York Times*, 27 June 1967; *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 Aug. 1967, 23 Jan. 1993.

⁶ John F. Kennedy, Jr., “One in a Million,” *George* (Aug. 1996).

had “performed a full violin concerto of the Jewish composer Felix Mendelssohn.” The specious argument aside, neither Farrakhan nor Kennedy mentioned that Mendelssohn had converted to Christianity, and therefore was not a Jew at all. In 2011, still disavowing his antisemitism, he explained that the only reason he spoke so much about Jews was because “My job is to pull the cover off of Satan so that he will never deceive you and the people of the world again.” It was incumbent upon him to warn the world that “Zionists dominate the government of the United States of America and her banking system.”

Other black nationalists and their throngs of student followers shrugged off accusations of bigotry by averring that they could not possibly be antisemitic because black people “are the original Semites.” *Nommo*, an African-American student newspaper at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), featured such assertions, along with the announcement that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was historical “truth” that had “never been refuted.” The chair of the UCLA Committee for Jewish Studies, who conducted campus workshops on a day devoted to “Jewish–African-American dialogue,” found that such beliefs, drawn from the students’ “faulty education,” were “deeply felt.” They were “part of a worldview ... experienced as ... enhancing to African Americans.”

Almost all black militants, joined by their legions of apologists, insisted that the charges they hurled at Jews — or “Zionists” — were simply “objective” responses to Jews’ execrable behavior. Commentators characterized the clashes as no more than expressions of class conflict by the exploited African Americans — the lower class rising up against the lower-middle class — ignoring that during the Harlem riots, for example, the shops that displayed signs announcing “THIS IS A CHRISTIAN STORE” were left unscathed. Social scientists tried to blunt the assaults still further, identifying them as merely another means used by African Americans to effect ethnic succession in their neighborhoods and schools. To the historian Lucy Dawidowicz, by contrast, the charges and justifications echoed those of Russian pogromists and the tsar. The accusations made it hard, she added, “to distinguish Black Power from Black Shirts or Black Hundreds.”

Recognizing they would always find defenders, the black nationalists could deny their bigotry, even when laying down terms for the survival of the Jews. Huey Newton explained that he and the Black Panther Party were not antisemitic because he believed “the Jewish people have a right to exist” — but only “as long as they exist to down the reactionary Israeli government.”⁷

**STOLEN HISTORY:
ANTISEMITISM AND THE INVENTION OF A
BLACK HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

Barely a generation after the Holocaust, when corporate America was beginning to open its doors to Jews and restrictive covenants that had long barred Jews from numerous housing markets were finally struck down, black militants mounted a relentless, full-throated assault on Jews. Although the West had already slashed the sentences of Nazi war criminals, the black militants now took the lead in openly countering any remaining guilt Americans harbored about antisemitism or their abandonment of Europe’s Jews. As Malcolm X and his acolytes insisted, there was no need “to cry no tears for no Jew”; Americans should only focus on blacks and racism. After all, as Farrakhan explained, “The holocaust of black people was 100 times worse than the holocaust of Jews.” Or, as his Minister of Information flatly intoned, “The holocaust was nothing.” Not only was the “European holocaust ... small,” but antisemitism, according to the militants, was nonexistent. Even the charges Farrakhan leveled had nothing to do with “Jew-bashing.” “I have to tell the truth,” he explained. There was only

⁷ Kennedy, “One in a Million”; *Jerusalem Post*, 2 Mar. 2011; Pollack, “African American Antisemitism in the 1990s”; Janet Hodd to Morris Schappes, 25 Aug. 1991, Schappes Collection; *Jewish Times*, 24 Sept. 1964; Lucy S. Dawidowicz, in *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America*, edited by Shlomo Katz (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 15–21; Herbert J. Gans, “Negro–Jewish Conflict in New York City: A Sociological Evaluation,” *Midstream* (Mar. 1969): 3–15; Huey Newton, “From a Press Conference,” *Jewish Currents* (Feb. 1971): 5–7.

racism toward people of color, and it alone was pervasive and central to America's historical narrative.⁸

Indeed, the Nation of Islam taught that the Jews — and Judaism — had been responsible for the subjugation of blacks since the first Africans arrived in Jamestown “four hundred years ago.”⁹ It was the Jews who were “guilty of the worst abuses of slavery and the Jim Crow system of white empowerment.” Characterizing Judaism as “a dirty religion,” the NOI preached that the Torah had invented black racism, which was responsible for slavery in the New World, and the Talmud had introduced sharecropping, which kept the blacks in bondage ever since Emancipation. With great fanfare, the nationalists announced that they had uncovered the entire “Jewish blueprint for success in America.” The Jews’ “strategy,” they had found, “was completely dependent on the enslavement of the Black Africans ... and continued unabated under the notorious Southern Jim Crow system.” In fact, Jews had made “all of their money on Black economic muscle.”

Nationalists informed their members and audiences that Jewish philanthropists had always posed as the friend of black people, but were only the main instruments of “keeping the Negro (Knee-grow) in his place.” In a series of articles, the black nationalist Eddie Ellis explained that it was through their “financial control of Black education” that these “progressive” Jews had created “freak factories,” where Negroes were taught “the spirit of humility and acceptance of their inferior status.” Here they had produced “black lackeys,” “freak Black men with white minds.” Through their cunning and deceit, the Jews had managed to “absorb, contain and destroy any Black man who voiced dissent toward the established order.” The militants had updated — racialized

⁸ “Malcolm X Exposes White Liberal Jews,” video of Malcolm X speech; *Boston Globe*, 13 Mar. 1994; *Jewish Advocate*, 24 Apr. 1992; *City Sun*, 26 Aug.–1 Sept. 1992; FinalCall.com, 18 Jan. 2011.

⁹ In a keynote address to 600,000 black men gathered on the Mall in Washington, D.C. on October 16, 1995, Farrakhan announced that blacks had first landed at Jamestown in 1555, which was, he confided, “the height of the Washington Monument in feet.” (No matter that Jamestown was not founded until 1607 and the first blacks arrived in 1619.)

— the hoary doctrine of Jews as Judases. The Jews, they proclaimed, were more “treacherous” than Bull Connor — klansman and Commissioner of Public Safety of Birmingham, Alabama, the symbol of raw racism, who had unleashed ferocious attacks on civil rights protestors — because at least you “know Bull Connor’s face.”¹⁰

The nationalists were driven to turn the Jews’ historical narrative on its head. LeRoi Jones denounced “cohen-edited negro history,” although many Jewish scholars had, in fact, fashioned a relentlessly heroic African-American narrative. The Nation and its legions of sympathizers, by contrast, were determined to deny any positive account of the Jews’ historical experience, while appropriating central elements of that narrative for themselves. Gerald Early, an African-American scholar, commented that he had “learned this about the black American mind: that blacks are in awe and jealous of the enormous achievements of Jews ... and we feel inferior to them.” Doubtless, this provides a partial explanation of the Nation’s “strategy, ... devaluation of Jews.”¹¹

In his single-minded effort to invert the Jews’ narrative, Farrakhan identified himself with Jesus, as depicted in the gospel of John. Here Jesus is said to have announced to his fellow Jews, “I ... came from God.... He sent me.” Farrakhan now informed a “cheering crowd” that the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, “who met with God,” “sent *me*.” And just as Jesus had come to unmask the Jews, Farrakhan would now reveal the “invincible truth” about them. He had discovered that the Jews had crucified Jesus because he “was exposing the identities of those who ruled based on falsehood and [was]

¹⁰ FinalCall.com, 18 Mar. 2011; Eddie Ellis, “Semitism in the Black Ghetto, Part 3”; *New York Post*, 7 July 1965. Ellis’s career as an agitator was cut short when, in 1969 at age twenty-four, he was charged with murder. He spent the next twenty-five years in prison, twenty-three in a maximum security facility. Bianca Vazquez, “‘A True Democracy’: Talking with Eddie Ellis,” in *Racializing Justice, Disenfranchising Lives: The Racism, Criminal Justice, and Law Reader*, edited by Manning Marable, Keisha Middlemass, and Ian Steinberg (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 267–80.

¹¹ Baraka, *Raise, Race, Rays, Raze*; Early, quoted in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, in Julius Lester, “Blacks, Jews and Farrakhan,” *Dissent* (Summer 1994): 368.

disproving their claims.” And this “is exactly what is happening now,” he explained. The Jews are ruling the people of color “based on falsehood,” and as he “disproves their claims,” the Jews are now determined to crucify him.¹²

As the Nation promoted its narrative of black superiority and counter-narrative of the depravity and duplicity of the Jews, Farrakhan admonished his audiences to dismiss the negative responses his teachings evoked. He divulged that in the 1990s he had met with “several prominent Jewish rabbis and leaders,” and this “influential group” openly warned him that “No one has been written of well in history who has not been a friend of the Jewish people.” But, Farrakhan proclaimed, “The Masquerade is over!” He was compelled to share the truth the Nation had uncovered: Although the Jews have always claimed to be the Chosen of God, his close reading of the Book of Revelation had allowed him to discern their true identity. When Revelation teaches, “Count the number of the beast ... his number is six hundred three score and six,” Farrakhan recognized that it is exposing that the Jews are the beasts, the handmaidens of Satan. Thus he had “deciphered the [real] meaning of the symbol adopted by Jews and Zionists, the Star of David, which consists of two equilateral triangles ..., form[ing] six sides, six angles at sixty degrees each.” Add to this that “Satan was given 6,000 years to rule,” all of which points “to the true identity of the Satanic people” — the Jews.

The Jews claim to have been slaves in Egypt for 400 years, but the Nation reported that “there is no historical record of anybody named ‘Jews’ in bondage in Egypt for 400 years.” It was, in truth, only the black people who had been in bondage for 400 years. The Jews had simply stolen the black narrative. Indeed, far from being slaves, the Nation taught, it was the Jews who were the dominant slavers, who had forced the blacks into bondage.

And contrary to the Jews’ cries that they were the victims of racial bigotry, it was they who had been “The Architects of White Supremacy.” Instead of the major victims, the Jews were the foremost victimizers. Although the Jews insist

¹² FinalCall.com, 13 July 2010, 18 Jan. 2011. The founder of the Nation of Islam, W. D. Fard, claimed to be God in human form. Hence, Elijah Muhammad had “met with God.”

that they were the ghettoized, it was, in fact, they who had colonized the ghetto. They were the “ruthless exploiters” of people of color — those who had always subjugated them — while pretending to be their benefactors. It was, the Nation declaimed, “these wealthy Jewish ‘philanthropists’ [who had] insisted that Black organizations they financed ha[ve] NO ECONOMIC AGENDA!” That is, far from promoting social justice, the duplicitous “Jewish-financed and supported organizations ... actually *prevented* Blacks from developing ... economic knowledge ... and pushed them away from any ability to ever challenge Jewish business dominance...” The wily Jews, their “four-hundred-year-old enemy,” had “bamboozled” the innocent people of color once again.¹³

Driven by their ideological agenda, black nationalists would also invent a racialized counter-narrative of the Biblical Jews. John Henrik Clarke taught his thousands of students that far from being the Israelites’ oppressor, as the Jews charged, ancient Egypt, the land of an African people, had been their benefactor. When the “sons and daughters of Abraham [] were fleeing from starvation in Western Asia,” as he referred to Europe, the Egyptians welcomed them, offering them “food, clothing and shelter.” Indeed, the Egyptians, whom Clarke identified as blacks or people of color, also provided them with “the foundation for Judaic culture, language and religion.” Yet “the majority of these guests” responded to the Egyptians’ magnanimity by “joining the invaders, the Hyksos,... rather than form an alliance to defend the country” that had succored them. Thus, contrary to Jews’ claims, Clarke concluded, there was not, and had never been, “an historical alliance between Blacks and Jews.” From the beginning, the Jews had always betrayed the African peoples who befriended them. Even as the nationalists were appropriating the Jews’ narrative as their own, casting the blacks as the true “Seed of Abraham,” they were maintaining that it was the Jews who had robbed them.

Invited by “Black History Committees,” Stokely Carmichael (now Kwame Ture), the long-time antisemitic agitator, toured the colleges, instructing the students: “Africans created Judaism. Jews [*sic*] were the first monotheistic

¹³ FinalCall.com, 13 July 2010, 18 Jan. 2011, 18 Mar. 2011; Ellis, “Semitism in the Ghetto, Part 3.”

religion. Africans were the first monotheists. Therefore, Africans were the first Jews.” Somehow, his audiences followed his syllogism and “applauded and laughed along with whatever he said.” By racializing and inverting the old Judaic narrative, the nationalists had assured, as one put it, that a black man would now “be able to feel that, as a Negro, I had a valuable heritage.”¹⁴

FASHIONING AN ANTISEMITIC HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OF THE JEWS

The more the nationalists denied and defaced the Jewish narrative, the more African-American students cheered them as their “liberators.” For many, Farrakhan, Kwame Ture, and Malcolm X had become “iconic figures,” beyond reproach. Louis Farrakhan, widely considered “an incarnation of the beloved Malcolm X,” was revered as a “mythic hero ... in the tradition of Nat Turner,” leading a modern slave revolt. Black student leaders closely studied videotapes of their speeches and carefully “replicated their phrases, mannerisms, intonations, [cadences], and ideas.” When Jewish students at Tufts University objected to the tirade delivered by the NOI Minister of Information, the black students jeered, “The truth hurts, now lick your wounds and deal with it.” The Minister’s antisemitic rant had become the new gospel truth.¹⁵

Since the 1930s, the Nation taught that blacks, “the fathers and mothers of all the races on the planet,” had developed the highest of civilizations at a time when whites and Jews were savage cave-dwellers, copulating with dogs. This racial rendering of the distant past, along with its explanation for the reversal of blacks’ fortunes since that time, has been a major source of the Nation’s appeal. Over the last twenty years, however, in lectures and privately published tracts, it has updated and elaborated on its narrative to account for the racial arrangements of the modern world, placing the Jews — “the Draftsmen” of the

¹⁴ *City Sun*, 26 Aug.–1 Sept. 1992; FinalCall.com, 18 Jan. 2011; *Detroit Jewish News*, 5 Mar. 1993; *New York Times*, 2 Mar. 1961; Philip Foner, Commentator, Panel on “Black Antisemitism: Myth or Reality?” American Historical Association Convention, 30 Dec. 1972, typescript, Box 20, Schappes Collection.

¹⁵ *Minnesota Daily*, 24 May 1984; *Guardian*, Special Supplement, 17 Oct. 1990; *Jewish Advocate*, 24 Apr. 1992; *Ironwood (Michigan) Daily Globe*, 26 June 1991.

Idea of White Supremacy and “the system’s biggest beneficiaries” — at the center of the catastrophes that have befallen the blacks. The anonymous members of the Historical Research Department of the Nation of Islam found that “Everything you see in the Western world — its cities, institutions, and wealth,... name the place, and its riches are built on the backs of the Black man and woman.” More specifically, they “discovered” that “Jewish wealth in America was ... completely dependent on Black slavery.” They explained that this “research” has “forever consigned” the “incessant Jewish mantra of ‘hard work’ ... to mythology.” Blacks are “the most productive people on earth,” and the Jews’ wealth has all been stripped from them. They are the source of the “gigantic bank accounts” of “the Lehman Brothers, the Seligmans, and even the Rothschilds.”¹⁶

According to the Nation’s worldview, the blacks are “still sharecropping” for the Jews today. In what was billed as “an historic message,” delivered before a large Atlanta audience in 2010, Farrakhan railed that the Jews remain leeches, sucking the blood of blacks: “See, we have the talent, and the Jews ... attach themselves to our talent.... That’s why our Black artists ... died poor, because somebody else got their money. While the Jews sent their children to the finest schools, and were able to continue to rule, [] you pass on nothing to your children....” He went on to explain that this was the Jews’ “old strategy ... ‘Let them die broke,’ but today, they’ve developed a new strategy, ‘Let’s make our Negroes rich.’” Still, he had come to warn them that the insidiously clever Jews nonetheless remain the blacks’ masters: “I’m here to tell you, No Black man, or woman, becomes a multi-millionaire without friendship in the Jewish Community.” The National Basketball Association is a Jewish plantation: “You’re just a piece of meat, throw balls in hoops, they’ve got dogs that can do that!... You’re a rich slave, and you’re sharecropping again!” He informed his audience that “Jews manage most of the Black Hip Hop artists,” who acquire “bling bling and a nice car.... But if you could see the breakdown of the record

¹⁶ FinalCall.com, 13 July 2010, 18 Mar. 2011, 18 Jan. 2011, 13 June 2011.

deals, they end up with nothing.” As has long been their wont, the Jewish masters are still bleeding the black people.¹⁷

Apparently, the Jews thought Barack Obama worked on their plantation as well. He was “nurtured by Jews,” who planned to anoint him “the first Jewish president.” The goal of the perfidious Jews, Farrakhan explained, was to “use him to trick Black people away from the Promise of God,” which would release them from their bondage at last. The Jews “were telling you, ‘We own the brother.’” Farrakhan recognized that Obama was “not a willing participant in madness, but Satan [the Jews] understood The Time.... They selected him — and what could we do?” One “citizen of the Nation of Islam” sneered that, as usual, the Jews demanded nothing less than total control, and so, “despite his almost fawning affection for ANYTHING Israel may do,” they call him “antisemitic.” Farrakhan dissented somewhat, seeing Obama as even managing to defy “all the Jewish presidents of major organizations ... [who] told him to ‘go easy on Israel and settlements in the West Bank.’” He agreed with the “citizen,” however, that Obama was “upsetting them” — because he refused to be their slave.

Still, Farrakhan continued, the Jews retain enough control that “Obama can’t talk about ‘Reparations.’ He’s not going to be bringing that up!” Instead, as the NOI’s Historical Research Department declaimed, “The people who should be sending us REPARATIONS for their immeasurable role in our oppression are [being] generously rewarded.” It followed from their “historical research” that since the Jews have “coerced billions of Black tax dollars out of the inner cities” and given them to “that unrighteous state of Israel,” which “practices apartheid,” it is both the “American Jewish neo-slavemasters” and the Israeli recipients of their largess who must pay the reparations.¹⁸

¹⁷ FinalCall.com, 18 Jan. 2011.

¹⁸ FinalCall.com, 18 Mar. 2011, 18 Jan. 2011, 19 May 2011. Sharing their views of Israel, Farrakhan developed strong ties to the rulers of Arab/Muslim states. His bonds with Muammar Gaddafi of Libya were particularly close—and profitable. In 1985, Gaddhafi extended a \$5,000,000 interest-free loan to Farrakhan, and in 1996 honored him in Tripoli with the \$250,000 International Prize for Human Rights. At the same time, he

Thus in June 2010, Farrakhan sent a “900-page memorandum ... to all of the Jewish neo-slavemasters” to “force [them] to confront the ugly origins of Jewish wealth in America — namely, Black slavery and Black sharecropping.” He announced that he had also sent complimentary copies of two NOI tracts, including “one called ‘Jews Selling Blacks,’ ... to President Obama, to Rahm Emanuel, to David Axelrod, to Timothy Geithner, to Larry Summers, to Ben Bernanke — to all the people who should know what was done to us.”

pledged \$1 billion to enable African Americans and Arab Americans to form “a card stronger than the Jewish card” in the 1996 election campaign.

Farrakhan also formed a powerful bond with Sudan’s president Omar Hassan Bashir, and in 1994 was his “honored guest” in Khartoum. He ignored the reports that Bashir owned black slaves and denied all the evidence that his troops routinely conducted slave raids in South Sudan. In 1996, when journalists for the *Baltimore Sun* reported on these raids, even buying the freedom of two slaves, the *Final Call* dismissed their findings by charging that “the *Sun* is a Zionist Jewish daily.... Don’t let the Zionists get away with damn lies.”

Farrakhan is also a great admirer of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the current president of Iran. In September 2010, when Ahmadinejad came to New York to address the UN General Assembly, he had a “secret,” “hush–hush meal” at the Warwick Hotel with “over one hundred Muslim leaders from across the country” at which Farrakhan was the guest seated closest to him, “in the first seat in the front.”

A determined defender of Iran, Farrakhan spoke for about two hours to almost 700 students attending the Afrikan Black Coalition Conference at the University of California, Berkeley on March 10, 2012. He warned the students that Israel’s prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu is “trying to provoke a war with Iran,” and that “Israel [is] pulling America into another war.” He asked rhetorically, “Do you think that Iran is any real threat to Israel?” and in response assured the audience that “Iran will never attack Israel even though she’s being provoked to attack.” He knows Iran will never attack because “Our Islam says we are never to be the aggressor.” He then announced, “I will never advise young ... Americans to ... spend the lifeblood of Americans for Israeli aggression. I’m asking all Americans to become conscientious objectors.” The students gave him a standing ovation. *Wall Street Journal*, 20 Oct. 1995; *New York Post*, 26 Sept. 2010; *FinalCall.com*, 28 Sept. 2010; *theblaze.com*, 24 Feb. 2011, 22 May 2012; *sfgate.com*, 13 Mar. 2012; *youtube.com* [Israel, Zionists Pushing America into War with Iran], 14 Mar. 2012.

Farrakhan then declared triumphantly that all of them had thereby been warned — because “God is going to put an exclamation point behind this lecture—a calamity of great magnitude is going to strike America!”¹⁹

Adhering closely to the Nation’s paradigm, the texts — or dramas — it prepared cast the Jews as the central players in the oppression of all people of color. True to the NOI script, the villainous Jews always appeared at center stage whenever indigenous people were dispossessed. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as “British, French, and American armies ... ethnically cleansed the indigenous Native Americans from their ancient lands,” “many” of the merchants who supplied them were Jews. And “once the bloody deed was done..., it was those merchants who surveyed and divided the land ... and began selling them [*sic*] to white settlers.” That is, “right from the very start,” Jews were “usurpers, land grabbers,” instrumental in robbing people of color of their land and transferring it to whites. (It mattered little to the NOI that even so late as 1820, Jews were less than 0.1 percent of the population of the United States.)

At the same time, according to the NOI’s anonymous researchers, the Jews were also responsible for the dispossession of African Americans, as they “dominated” the Atlantic slave trade. (By contrast, David Brion Davis, a leading historian of slavery, observed that “Jews and Jewish names are virtually

¹⁹ FinalCall.com, 19 May 2011, 18 Jan. 2011.

Obama’s only known link to Farrakhan was through the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, minister of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, to which Obama belonged for twenty years. Obama considered Wright his “moral compass,” his “spiritual advisor,” and prayed with him just before declaring his candidacy for the presidency in 2007. The same year, the church’s organ, *Trumpet Newsmagazine*, published and edited by Wright’s daughters, gave its Trumpeter Award to Farrakhan, who, it stated, “truly epitomized greatness.” Wright added his praise of Farrakhan for his “integrity and honesty.”

Wright’s close connection with Farrakhan is long-standing and in 1984 Wright accompanied him on his trip to meet Muammar Gaddafi in Tripoli. In 2008, Wright predicted, “When [Obama’s] enemies find out ... I went to Tripoli to visit [Gaddhafi] with Farrakhan, a lot of his Jewish support will dry up quicker than a snowball in hell.” Richard Cohen, *Washington Post*, 15 Jan. 2008; the blaze.com, 24 Feb. 2011; *Chicago Tribune*, 21 Jan. 2007.

absent from the texts and indexes of all the scholarly works on the Atlantic slave trade and from recent monographs on the British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese branches of the commerce in slaves.”) Moreover, the Nation had uncovered that it was “Medieval Jewish rabbis” who provided the theological justification for “the targeting of Africans,” as they “asserted that God cursed ALL BLACK PEOPLE with black skin, thereby marking them forevermore as permanent slaves to white people.” (No matter that this interpretation of the Curse of Ham was developed by Muslims, not Jews, to legitimize the Arab slave trade, which involved far more blacks than were transported across the Atlantic.) In the grip of the Nation’s schema — or demonology — Farrakhan informed journalists at a press conference that Jews had owned 75 percent of the slaves in the American South. (The actual figure is minuscule.)²⁰

The second act of the NOI tragedy, set largely in the post-Emancipation period, once again featured “the Jews,” now effecting the political and economic strangulation of the freedmen, through whom they amassed their great wealth. In the aftermath of the Civil War, when the Ku Klux Klan and other counter-revolutionary terrorist groups committed to the restoration of white supremacy were formed, it was, the NOI claimed, the “Jewish merchants” who “armed, robed, and hooded” them. Although the Jews would devise new means to tighten their economic rope around the blacks in the post-bellum period, the NOI uncovered the “Kosher Kotton Konnection” they had first established in the *ante*-bellum years. Here lay the secret, “the math behind the acquisition of Jewish wealth in America,” as “highly skilled Jewish merchants jammed themselves deep in the Mississippi Delta” where, “under the burning sun and stinging lash, Black slaves tilled, cultivated, picked, and baled [cotton], and Jews collected it from the cruel planters and shipped it around the world for millions of dollars.”

²⁰ FinalCall.com, 13 June 2011, 13 July 2010; David Brion Davis, “Slave Trade and the Jews,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 15 June 1995; Ephraim Isaac, “Genesis, Judaism, and the Sons of Ham,” *Slavery & Abolition* 1 (1980): 3–17; “AHA Council Issues Policy Resolution about Jews and the Slave Trade,” *Perspectives* (Mar. 1995).

Although Jews comprised at most 0.5 percent of the South's white population at the time, Farrakhan discerned the grip of their tentacles everywhere. It was, his researchers discovered, "Jewish people owning the land. They were the majority; they were the merchants; they were the traders." They sent the cotton "up to New York, where the brethren of the Jewish people in the South ... were the masters of the needle trades." They were everywhere. Immediately after the Civil War, the landowners all over the South replaced slavery with sharecropping, "the Talmud-based economic system" that, in effect, re-inscribed slavery by another name. The NOI concluded with what it had known all along: that it was, above all, the Jews who had extracted "extraordinary profits" from this system. And it was from this ill-begotten wealth that they had financed "scores of Southern Jewish banks ... and department stores and skyscrapers" — indeed, the entire infrastructure that sustained the Jim Crow South, which had throttled the blacks' advancement for the next hundred years.

In the climactic scene of the NOI drama, the main characters — or caricatures — are, as always, the innocent blacks and the iniquitous Jew. The setting is the contested presidential election of 1876 and the Compromise of 1877 that settled it by awarding the disputed electoral votes to the Republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes. In return for the presidency, Hayes promised to withdraw the remaining occupation troops from the South. According to the NOI plot, by this act "Blacks were returned to virtual slavery, and assigned to permanent political, social, and economic inferiority." The villain of the piece was William Levy, "a Jewish congressman," who "gave the speech that convinced the lawmakers" to accede to "this wicked act." That is, a Jew was responsible for "the most devastating single event in the history of Blacks in America." It is, however, not at all clear that Levy was a Jew. When he died five years later, the funeral was held at his town's Episcopal church and he was not buried in the Jewish cemetery. Moreover, the troops had already been withdrawn from eight of the eleven states of the Confederacy, and it would have been much worse for the freedmen if the Democrat, Samuel Tilden, who led in the popular vote, had been awarded the disputed electoral votes. In these years, the Democrats were the party of the white South and, unlike the

Republicans, had opposed the Reconstruction amendments to the Constitution, which granted the blacks civil and political rights.²¹

All was not lost, however. “On THE SAME DAY that those White politicians decided to end Black progress forever, Allah decided that the Saviour to the Black man and woman will be born.” That is, although the Jews persuaded the whites, in effect, to crucify the blacks, W. D. Fard, the blacks’ deliverer — the *Mabdi* — founder of the Nation of Islam, come to “crush [the blacks’] enemies” and destroy them in a lake of fire, was born. This is the historical narrative that Farrakhan “presented as gifts to all of the Black student leaders” at Howard University, where he received “a rousing reception and stellar reviews.”²²

BLACK MILITANTS’ ANTI-ZIONIST AGENDA

In the worldviews of black militants and nationalists, Jews were not only responsible for the subjugation of blacks in America, but of people of color in the Middle East. In their system of classification, Arabs were people of color, and ancient Egyptians, “black.” Indeed, according to Malcolm X, “All white people who have studied history and geography know that Christ was a black man.” Unlike the people of color, however, who were indigenous to the Holy Land, the Israelis were all “Ashkenazi Jews,” without “any genetic connection to the Jews of the Bible.” Moreover, just as their fellow Jews had robbed Native Americans and African Americans of their patrimony, these “unkosher imposters” had seized the birthright — had ethnically cleansed — the Palestinians. Jews, they alleged, had created segregation in the United States and were now shaping “Israeli Jim Crow 6,000 miles away.”

From the 1950s, it was not only the Black Muslims — as the Nation was often referred to at the time — but non-Islamic black nationalist groups that were relentlessly opposed to Israel and Zionism. Headed by Georgia-born

²¹ FinalCall.com, 13 June 2011, 18 Mar. 2011, 18 Jan. 2011. See Lawrence H. Tribe and Thomas M. Rollins, “Deadlock: What Happens if Nobody Wins,” *Atlantic* (Oct. 1980); and Kurt F. Stone, *The Jews of Capitol Hill: A Compendium of Jewish Congressional Members* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2010).

²² FinalCall.com, 18 Mar. 2011, 19 May 2011, 13 July 2010.

James R. Lawson, who had been “decorated” by Emperor Haile Selassie, the United African Nationalist Movement identified with the Orthodox Ethiopian (Coptic) church — and strongly condemned Zionism. Calling for full “economic self-determination in all black communities” in America, and “independent black nations” in Africa, Lawson could not accept Jews in the Middle East, and insisted they had simply stolen the Arabs’ land — the land of people of color. Because “[Arthur] Spingarn, a Zionist Jew,” was the NAACP’s president (1940–1965), he rejected it as illegitimate. Still, Lawson’s group, although Christian, was closely allied with the Muslim Brotherhood U.S.A., which was led by a West Indian convert to Sunni Islam, who sought to distance his followers from the unorthodox version of Islam developed by the Black Muslims. Lawson avidly supported Egypt in the Suez conflict, and proudly announced that Gamal Abdel Nasser had authorized him to transmit his greetings to the African people in the United States. Similarly, Edward Davis, president of the African Freedom Movement, expressed his hatred of Zionism, warning that he would whip Ralph Bunche, who had “saved Israel from annihilation” by mediating the February 1949 armistice with Egypt, “if I ever see [him] in Harlem.”²³

Still, as Muslim, the NOI was even more fully identified with the Arab cause. At the time of the Suez crisis, Elijah Muhammad lauded “the heroic people of Egypt” and, above all, hailed “the beloved president of Egypt who emerged victorious while Eden [the British prime minister] failed.” In 1959,

²³ Alex Haley, Interview with Malcolm X, *Playboy* (May 1963); John Henrik Clarke, paper presented as part of Panel on “Black Anti-Semitism: Myth or Reality?” American Historical Association Convention, 30 Dec. 1972, typescript, Box 20, Schappes Collection; FinalCall.com, 19 May 2011; *New York Times*, 25 Jan. 1960, 1 Mar. 1961, 2 Mar. 1961; AJC, “Black Supremacist Movements Catapulted into Prominence,” August 1959, Box 67, JCRC Papers. In 1959, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood U.S.A., Talib Ahmad Dawud, having just completed the hajj, denounced the NOI as “phonies,” with “no connection whatsoever” to Islam, and stated—incorrectly, it turned out—that “neither Elijah Muhammad nor his followers can get into Mecca.” Claude Andrew Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 132–33.

when Muhammad went to Egypt and met with President Nasser, he informed him that the best way to promote “the Arab case against Israel in the U.S.” would be through the NOI. In 1963, Nasser heeded the advice and sent Dr. Mahmoud Shawarbi, a Cairo University professor, to New York City to work with the NOI — and especially with Malcolm X — to extend the reach of his anti-Zionist message among American blacks. After Muhammad’s return from Egypt, as he and his lieutenants lectured around the country, they distributed anti-Israel literature obtained from the Egyptian consulates and incorporated their propaganda into their talks. Increasingly, *Muhammad Speaks*, the NOI organ, reprinted entire articles issued by al-Fatah, a military arm of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to warn its readers that the “Zionist enemy” was “menacing the entire world.”

While the NOI supported Fatah and opposed a separate state for the Jews, it always sought an independent nation of its own. Although eagerly anticipating the apocalypse foretold by its founder, which would destroy only the white world, in the interim the NOI demanded that black Americans be ceded their own region. Often mentioned was the large area west of the Mississippi and south of Denver or, alternatively, several of the southeastern states. Malcolm X specified that blacks should receive one-seventh of the states because blacks comprised one-seventh of the U.S. population. Moreover, as the land was to be set aside only for blacks, presumably all others who lived there would have to be “ethnically cleansed.”²⁴

Although black nationalists had been vehemently anti-Zionist since the mid-1950s, from the time of the Six-Day War in 1967, large numbers of black militants came to share their view. The militants and their organizations often divided over strategies, issues, and goals, but were now united in their endless, vociferous condemnation of the “so-called State of Israel.” Delivering the keynote address to the Organization of Arab Students convention at the

²⁴ Isadore Zack, Memorandum, “Temple of Islam Movement,” 25 Nov. 1957, Box 67, JCRC Papers; Carl C. Seltzer, N.E. Zionist Council, Memorandum, “Nasser and the Black Muslims,” 21 Oct. 1963, Box 3, Julius Bernstein Papers; *Muhammad Speaks*, 17 May 1968. See too, Clegg, *An Original Man*, 41–67.

University of Michigan on August 31, 1968, Stokely Carmichael, prime minister of the Black Panther Party at the time, confessed that “a few years ago I was for the Jewish people of Israel.” He had, however, come to understand that was only “because the Zionists have a very effective, offensive propaganda.” Now, he exclaimed, black people had “begun to see this trickery of Zionism! We have begun to see the evil of Zionism, and we will fight to wipe it out wherever it exists, be it in the Ghetto of the United States or in the Middle East....” He assured his audience that black militants “feel very close to the commandos in Palestine.... [I]hey are the group that will get most of our support,” and announced that blacks are “ready to take up arms and die if necessary to help the Arabs free Palestine.” Revealing the profound limits of his historical knowledge, Carmichael proffered his solution to the conflict: the “Zionists — I want to make sure I use the correct term because I don’t want to be called antisemitic — ... should take the land for their home state from Germany, since it was Germany who fought them.”

Similarly, the Black Panther Party organ was rabidly and unrelievedly anti-Zionist. Readers were informed that “the term, Israel, is like saying racist United States.” Shown an “atrocious photograph” of a supposed “Arab Victim of Zionist Napalm,” they were taught that “the Zionist fascist state of Israel ... must be smashed.... All of the property stolen by the Zionists with their fascist storm troopers ... must be returned to the people of Palestine.” The “Zionist State of Israel” was, after all, only a “flunky” and “boot-licker of U.S. imperialism.”

Eldridge Cleaver, the Panthers’ Minister of Information, echoed these themes when he addressed a crowd at al-Fatah’s headquarters in Algiers in July 1969, characterizing “the Zionist regime that usurped the land of the Palestinian people as a puppet and pawn” of the United States. He had come in part to open a two-story Afro-American Information Center, which was “supported by the Algerian government and lavishly stocked with Black Panther pamphlets and posters.” Still in Algiers, later that year he and Yassir Arafat “hugged and kissed each other,” as Cleaver delivered “a fierce attack,” this time on “*American Zionists*.” In an interview, he elaborated: “Zionists, wherever they may be, are our enemies.” The next month a CBS radio news

commentator reported that al-Fatah “is discussing training Black Panthers in actual combat against Israel to prepare them for a sabotage and assassination campaign in the United States.”²⁵

Anti-Zionism had become so central to the black militants’ identity that it was the price for their participation in the National Conference for New Politics in September 1967. Organized by the New Left, the Conference was billed as “the most significant gathering of Americans since the Declaration of Independence.” Though the Black Caucus formed a small minority of conference participants, it quickly introduced a set of nonnegotiable demands, at the center of which were calls for “50 percent black representation on all committees” — and that the conference condemn the recent “Imperialist Zionist War.” When a white woman tried to “get a few words in for ‘little Israel,’” she was “roundly booed.” When a white man tried to soften the resolution, a member of the Black Caucus shouted, “What right has the white man got amending the black man’s resolution!” Defeated, a Jewish man stalked away from a heated argument with the lament, “*Goyim* do not understand Zionism.” As “the walls of the Palmer House [where the conference was held] dripped with guilt,” the demands were accepted “by a 3:1 majority,” who then “treated themselves to a standing ovation.” The next year, Stokely Carmichael assured the Arab Students’ conference, “If white people who call themselves revolutionary or radical want our support, they have to condemn Zionism.”²⁶

²⁵ Stokely Carmichael [Kwame Ture], *Stokely Speaks: From Black Power to Pan Africanism* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1971), 131–43; “The Black Panther Party: the Anti-Semitic and Anti-Israeli Component,” 23 Jan. 1970, typescript, Box 67, JCRC; Rosenfield, “Jews as Seen by Some Black Writers”; *New York Times*, 23 July 1969, 31 Dec. 1969. For further discussion of the American Left and the Panthers, see Stephen H. Norwood, *Antisemitism and the American Far Left* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²⁶ *New York Times*, 24 Sept. 1967. See also, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 6 Sept. 1967; Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks*, 140. For further discussion of the American Left and the conference, see Norwood, *Antisemitism and the American Far Left*. Like black nationalists, the Black Caucus viewed issues only through the prism of race. The Conference’s

PLAYING THE RACE CARD: THE ARAB-BLACK MILITANT ALLIANCE

The Organization of Arab Students (OAS), in turn, actively encouraged the black militants' anti-Zionism. Founded in 1952, the OAS raised its profile in the mid-1960s, when 6,000–8,000 Arabs attended about 100 American colleges and universities. Most — some claim, all — were members of the organization. Holding well-attended annual conventions at major universities over three or four days, the OAS was considered by the Arab League to be its propaganda army on the American campus. Addressing the 1966 convention at the University of Colorado, the director of the Arab League Information Center in the United States, Rachad Mourad, urged the audience to “infiltrate student organizations” and to do all they could to promote the view that “Israel stands for colonialism” and supporters of Israel are only “accomplices of colonialism and imperialism.” Representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization called on the students to be “ambassadors” in the effort “to eliminate Israel from the Middle East map.” To achieve their goals, the Arab students were advised to cooperate with “natural anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist elements” on campus, forming “a common front” with blacks, as well as with other students of color.²⁷

Above all, the OAS appealed to black students by playing the race card, stressing that unlike Israel, which discriminated against darker Jews and Arabs, Arab states were racially egalitarian. Never mentioned was that black slavery had flourished in Arab lands from the seventh century through the 1960s — and beyond. Notably, even in the 1950s, mainstream black newspapers had publicized Arab claims that Islam was “unequivocally committed to racial equality,” that even “one of Mohammed’s wives was a Negro.” Accepting the veracity of the claim of equality, the *Chicago Defender* reported that as a result, “Islamic missionaries are ... winning far more converts than Christian

endorsement of its demands reveals how much the New Left had distanced itself from the class analyses of their forebears in the Old Left.

²⁷ “Arab Students: Conspiracy in the United States,” *ADL Bulletin* (Dec. 1966): 1–2; *New York Times*, 24 Oct. 1966, 27 Feb. 1967.

missionaries in West Africa,” where Christianity is viewed as only a “white man’s export.” In the 1960s, when the OAS occasionally voiced its “unflinching support for our brothers, the black people in America,” and for their “ever-increasing resistance ... to a power structure of de facto inequality,” it was mainly to point out the parallels with the “struggle of the Palestinian Arabs in Occupied Palestine against Zionist invasion and exploitation.” More often, however, the OAS focused on recruiting black students to their cause by identifying Israel as just another blatantly racist state. At the 1967 OAS convention, held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), resolutions repeatedly identified the “policies of racial discrimination, denial of human and civil rights, and the subjugation of peoples, as flagrantly practiced in South Africa and Rhodesia,” with those that allegedly prevailed in Israel.²⁸

Assuming that their fellow-students had never learned about the *dhimmi* condition to which Jews (and Christians) had been consigned for centuries in Islamic lands, Arabs taught that their countries not only practiced racial equality, but religious equality. Determined to fulfill the Arab League’s charge to serve as “soldiers of the homeland,” the students would “enlighten public opinion” whenever they could. Atif Debs, who had come from Lebanon in 1960 to study electrical engineering at MIT, and who in 1967 was president of the Arab Club there, addressed all the faculty and students of nearby Newton Junior College, who had been required by the school to attend. Debs assured his audience that unlike Israel, which accords Palestinian Arabs “no rights,” “Arabs treat Jews as equals in Arab countries.” In fact, he explained, “In my country there are thousands of Jews” — adding that they even “control the stock market there — as they do everywhere.” After receiving their degrees, the Association of Arab-American University Graduates continued to disseminate the same myths, proclaiming, “History indicates that the Arabs were always

²⁸ *Chicago Defender*, 9 Aug. 1958; Resolution, OAS in the U.S.A., 16th Annual Convention, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 28 Aug.–2 Sept. 1967, Box 124, JCRC.

hospitable to the Jewish population, while the Western, Christian world had committed all of the atrocities against them.”²⁹

The Black Panther Party fully accepted the Arabs’ paradigm, and at a press conference in 1970, Huey Newton announced that unlike the Palestinians, Israel “operates [at] the height of chauvinism and ethnocentrism.” Thus, he had concluded that it would be the “Palestinian people” who will lead the “revolutionary struggle to transform the Middle East.” To be sure, a few African-American civil rights leaders of the older generation strongly dissented from such views. Whitney Young, Jr., executive director of the National Urban League, who had been to Israel in 1969, extolled the population who, having come from all over the world, with skins of many different colors, “mix freely without the hysterical color-consciousness we find among too many Americans.” Indeed, he added that Israel’s “tolerance toward Arabs surprised me.” Black militants, in turn, always disparaged and discredited any pro-Israel “Negro leaders.” Amiri Baraka, provided a platform by *Newsweek* magazine, explained that they had been “bought and paid for like them sleepy ho’s on Lexington Avenue near Grand Central.”³⁰

THE COSMIC STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE NATION OF ISLAM AND ZION

The militants viewed the Arab-Israeli conflict as a racial divide. Seen from the vantage point of the Nation of Islam’s schema, however, the racialized conflict assumed cosmic proportions. The world was approaching the “end of days,” which, if the Bible were understood correctly, meant only the end of the white world — and the triumph of the people of color. And since, according to the NOI, “Muhammad, an Arab, was a member of the black nation,” it also meant

²⁹ “Arab Students: Conspiracy in the United States,” 2; “Lecture on Israeli-Arab Conflict,” 14 Nov. 1967, Box 124, JCRC; “Additional Information on Debs’ Lecture,” Box 124, JCRC; Association of Arab–American University Graduates, Inc., 14 Nov. 1969, Box 124, JCRC.

³⁰ “Black Panthers, Jews and Israel,” *Jewish Currents* (Feb. 1971): 6; Whitney Young, Jr., “Israel as Seen by Whitney Young,” *Israel Horizons* (Aug.–Sept. 1969): 17–18; “Black and Angry,” *Newsweek*, 10 July 1972, 35.

the victory of Islam. The world would revert to its original state — when all were black and Muslim, and the big-headed scientist Yacub had not yet artificially created the “race of white devils.”

Always drawing heavily on the Hebrew Bible, viewed through a racial lens, the NOI had concluded that “it is OUR TIME to rule the world.” “We weep with joy to know that [this is our destiny.]” In fact, Elijah Muhammad proclaimed, “There is no part of our planet that was ever given to the white race. The planet belongs to us, the nation of Islam!” The “Bible teaches ... that it belongs to us. You shall soon come to know.”

From its earliest years to the present, the NOI taught that the blacks — sometimes only American blacks — were God’s “Chosen People,” and that the Bible, “if understood,” is all about them. The blacks are “The Real Children of Israel” and “unto us He will deliver His Promise.” Echoing his mentor Elijah Muhammad, Louis Farrakhan warned that “somebody has usurped our position ... has taken the Promise of God to the Children of Israel, and claimed it for themselves.” He admonished “all of those who feel that the Children of Israel are over in that place they call ‘Israel’ — you are mistaken.” Also adhering closely to Elijah Muhammad’s exegesis of Genesis, Malcolm X had divulged that “all of the ancient prophets” were speaking only about the black people, not the Hebrews, who would be “strangers” in a “strange land,” where they would endure 400 years of bondage. Similarly, the NOI informed its followers, “The Book of Deuteronomy.... It’s all about you!” Elijah Muhammad, introduced to his audiences as “a man who has seen God, a man who has heard God” — as well as “the smartest black man in America” — was “that Moses” — “and his Aaron and his Joshua” — sent by God to deliver blacks from the modern Pharaoh, and to lead them, “the Seed of Abraham,” “the Children of Divine Promise,” to the Promised Land.³¹

³¹ Malcolm X, “God’s Angry Men,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 1 June 1957; Elijah Muhammad, “The Bible and Qur-an,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 June 1956; Elijah Muhammad, “The Islam World,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 31 Aug. 1957; Lincoln, “Extremist Attitudes”; Elijah Muhammad, “Mr. Muhammad Answers White Faith Crusader,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 Mar. 1957; FinalCall.com, 18 Jan 2011; Balk and Haley, “Black Merchants of Hate.” A vast gulf separated the belief-system of the NOI and

Viewing Israel through the crosshairs of its racial lens, the NOI had delegitimized the Jewish state. But the NOI's animus was further inflamed by its conviction that it was from this base that Jews planned to launch their conquest of the world. This placed the Jews on a collision course with the Nation, whose doctrine predicted the imminent arrival of the prophet Ezekiel's "wheel within a wheel," which would destroy the "white devil race" and restore the black Muslims' dominion over the earth. Writing from Cairo in September 1964, six months after leaving the NOI and beginning to receive instruction in orthodox Islam, Malcolm X continued to reflect the Nation's views, explaining that "the Israeli Zionists not only believe their present occupation of Arab Palestine is the fulfillment of predictions made by their Jewish prophets," but "they also religiously believe that Israel must fulfill its 'divine' mission to 'rule all other nations with a sword of iron.'"

The Nation's view of the Jewish state was also profoundly influenced by the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, which Malcolm X had originally introduced to the members years before. Projecting their own determination to rule the world onto the Jews, the NOI leaders found the *Protocols* entirely credible. The Elders had been present at the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland in 1897, where they conspired to establish Israel as the launching

that of orthodox Islam. The NOI's teachings about its founder W. D. Fard even contradicted Islam's fundamental tenet that Allah could not take human form. And while orthodox Islam had pronounced the prophet Muhammad the last messenger of Allah, the NOI identified Elijah Muhammad as fulfilling that role. Although Elijah Muhammad was aware at least since the 1950s of the depth of the ideological divide, he refused to introduce any fundamental theological changes. He responded to his Orthodox critics that "slavery and systematic brainwashing by the slavemasters" necessitated the racial form of Islam the NOI propounded. He understood that this was in fact the core of its appeal to his followers. Indeed, the NOI maintains that unlike "the Holy Koran that was revealed to the prophet Muhammad ... 1,400 years ago, ... that which the Honorable Elijah Muhammad received from Master Fard Muhammad [W. D. Fard] is brand new and the world does not know the reality of that revelation at this time." Clegg, *An Original Man*, 133 – 35; FinalCall.com, 8 May 2011.

pad for Jewry's drive to subjugate all the peoples of the world, thereby denying the blacks their destiny.

The *Protocols* had also confirmed the NOI's doctrinal image of Jews as "wicked by nature." Racializing the *Protocols*, the NOI recognized its own portrayal of the conspiratorial Jews, creating chaos, pretending to befriend the people of color only to create divisions among them, weaken them, and ultimately dominate them. Indeed, in 1990, Farrakhan not only informed reporters of the *Washington Post* that he had been transported onto the "Mother Wheel," where (the deceased) Elijah Muhammad had spoken to him, but he also confided that he had recently met with an apparent modern-day Elder. The Elder divulged that his "small clique" now assemble in Hollywood or on New York's exclusive Park Avenue, where the members plot to "use their power and their knowledge to manipulate the masses against the best interests of the people" — that is, against the people of color.³²

The Nation of Islam had been the first among the militants to insist upon the deep and inextricable bonds between black Americans and the Arabs. After the Six-Day War, when "black power" advocates endorsed "the cause of the Arabs" and took strong anti-Zionist stands, their views hewed closely to those of Malcolm X, whose approach had been shaped for over thirteen years entirely by the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and the NOI. In 1970, when Whitney Young, Jr. denounced "the myth of Arab-black friendship," he was dismissed as only the voice of the older generation, in the pocket of the Jews.

Central to the foundation narrative of the Black Muslims had always been the unwavering conviction that the American blacks and the Arabs were "blood brothers." According to NOI dogma, almost sixty-six trillion years ago, the Tribe of Shabazz, "a black-skinned straight-haired people," with "soft and delicate, fine" features, settled in the Nile River Valley where, over time, they established "a glorious civilization called Egypt and a sister civilization in

³² Lincoln, "Extremist Attitudes"; "Excerpts of Interview with Louis Farrakhan"; Malcolm X, "Zionist Logic," *Egyptian Gazette*, 17 Sept. 1964, Box 46, George Breitman Papers, TL; *New York Times*, 16 Aug. 1964; Elijah Muhammad, "The Islam World," *New York Amsterdam News*, 31 Aug. 1957, 7 Sept. 1957.

Mecca, Arabia.” (Notably, after leaving the NOI, Malcolm X would nonetheless take the name Malik El-Shabazz.) It was only after some members of the tribe, hoping to toughen themselves, migrated to the sub-Saharan African jungles fifty thousand years ago that their hair “coiled,” their “lips swelled,” their noses broadened, and the “cultural legacy of their forefathers” was lost.³³

Although a belief in the close kinship of blacks and Arabs was at the core of NOI ideology, it was only in 1957, the year after Egypt’s president Nasser had nationalized the Suez Canal, challenging the imperial powers of the “white West,” that Elijah Muhammad formed a relationship with him, initially through correspondence, and then in telephone conversations. Earlier, during World War II, the Black Muslims had championed the Japanese, seeing their victories as “proof ... that ... a non-white power” could defeat the “white civilization.” In 1942, Muhammad had been charged with “sedition and seditious conspiracy,” receiving a sentence of three years in federal prison, for urging that blacks who were drafted should request to be sent to the Pacific theater, “where they could defect to the Japanese” or, if sent to Europe, to “‘shoot everything white — in front and behind’ — to reduce the number of whites” that would be left to destroy at Armageddon. In the Nation’s racial typology, however, the Japanese, unlike the Arabs, were considered morally inferior to the blacks.³⁴

Seeking to cement the Nation’s bond with the Arabs and to connect with the larger Muslim world, in November 1959 Elijah Muhammad traveled to the Middle East. In Egypt he went to the holy sites, toured the pyramids, which the Nation contended had been built by the Tribe of Shabazz, and was warmly received by Nasser at his palace, “like a father meeting his son,” in Muhammad’s words. In Saudi Arabia, he undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca,

³³ Malcolm X, “We Are All Blood Brothers,” *Liberator* (July 1964): 4–6; “SNCC Attack Draws Attack,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 Aug. 1967; Gene Roberts, “The Story of Snick,” *New York Times*, 25 Sept. 1966; Clegg, *An Original Man*, 45–47. Malcolm [Little] became deeply attached to the Black Muslims during the years of his incarceration, which began in 1946, and formally joined upon being paroled in 1952.

³⁴ Clegg, *An Original Man*, 122; Zack, “Temple of Islam Movement”; Lincoln, “Extremist Attitudes.”

where he made “the *umra*, or minor *hajj*.” To Muhammad, orthodox Islam had now accorded him and his movement a measure of legitimacy. Nasser, in turn, had found a constituency through which he could spread his virulently anti-Zionist message to Americans.³⁵

MALCOLM X AND “ZIONIST-DOLLARISM”

For Malcolm X, during his years in the NOI until his assassination eleven months after he left, the bonds with the Arab and Islamic worlds were of critical importance for psychological as well as ideological reasons. In 1956, he likened American blacks to the “Biblical Lazarus ... dead mentally and spiritually.” And in 1964, he explained that they “are in a sense zombies, because they don’t know who they are.” When not filled with rage, his comments were often plaintive, betraying feelings of abandonment by the motherland. Considering the Arab lands as part of “East Asia,” as the NOI taught, Malcolm X bitterly lamented, “Our brothers from the East even failed to recognize us as their long-lost brother who had been kidnapped from the nation of Islam 400 years ago....” They “came here from the East and neglected to convert us back to the original religion (ISLAM) of our foreparents.... Our brothers ... passed us by, and instead tried to lecture on Islam to our Slavemaster, so foolishly thinking they would be successful in turning the Slavemaster into a righteous Muslim.”

But, drawing once again on the Nation’s racialized “Old Testament” — he rarely even mentioned the Qur’an — Malcolm X pointed out that “Almighty God Allah” had promised to “send Elijah to the lost sheep (so-called Negroes of America) in the ‘last days’ (of the white men’s world) to teach us the truth that would ... turn our hearts and minds back toward our own kind (our forefathers) in the East.” And more important, “in that last day the hearts of our people of the East would be turned again toward us (Isaiah).” The “last

³⁵ Clegg, *An Original Man*, 138–39, 141–42; Seltzer, “Nasser and the Black Muslims”; *Boston American*, 27 Feb. 1961.

days,” it appeared, were approaching, for “the Honorable ELIJAH MUHAMMAD” is “this same Elijah who was predicted to come.”³⁶

Malcolm X spent three weeks in the Middle East in July 1959, preparing for Muhammad’s sojourn later in the year, returning in 1964 to make the *hajj*, almost immediately after breaking with the NOI. At both times his needs to identify with the motherland — or the mother — occluded his views of reality. Writing from Saudi Arabia on his first trip, Malcolm X insisted that the people there “are just like our people in America in facial appearance.... none are white.... 99 percent of them would be jim-crowed [segregated] in the United States of America.” Determined to support the Nation’s teaching that Arab and African were one people, he stressed that “the majority of this Arabian population cannot be distinguished from the people of Africa. In fact,” he continued, “the darkest Arabs I have yet seen are right here on the Arabian peninsula.” Malcolm X could not, or would not, acknowledge the origins of the latter in the centuries of the Arab/Muslim slave trade, though slavery and slave markets continued to flourish in Saudi Arabia while he was there.

In his time in the “homeland,” both before and after he left the NOI, Malcolm X reported — really, exulted — that he had found “no color prejudice among Muslims.” He had, in short, confirmed Elijah Muhammad’s premise — and promise — of a racial paradise — and had found acceptance, a place in which he belonged. Writing back home in 1964, Malcolm X once again gloated that “Islam ... erases from its society the race problem.... The ‘white’ attitude

³⁶ Malcolm X, “We Are Rising from the Dead Since We Heard Messenger Muhammad Speak” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Dec. 1956; *New York Times*, 24 May 1964. Malcolm X’s recurring focus on abandonment by the motherland appears to be, in part, the displacement of intense feelings that his mother, who spent “about 26 years” in a “mental hospital,” had abandoned him. Indeed, earlier, when a court had determined that she could not control Malcolm, who had become a thief, it had removed him from her care, placing him with another family and then in a “detention home.” Malcolm had also felt abandoned when, after his father died (or was killed), when he was six, with the family living in extreme poverty, his mother became pregnant, giving birth to her eighth child, followed by her breakdown. Malcolm X (with Alex Haley), “Nightmare,” *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 1–22.

was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam.” He had encountered, he claimed, only “the *color-blindness* of the Muslim world’s religious society and the *color-blindness* of the Muslim world’s human society.” His host had assured him that any “problems of color which exist in the Muslim world, exist only where, and to the extent that, that area ... has been influenced by the West.” Malcolm X had managed to overlook the fact that black slavery had persisted in Arab and Muslim lands for a millennium before the West had developed the Atlantic slave trade. His powerful psychological and ideological needs had led him to deny the pervasive racial prejudice toward blacks that scholars have readily identified. Indeed, Malcolm X was convinced that “whites of the younger generation, in the colleges and universities [of the United States],... will ... turn for spiritual salvation to the religion of Islam and force the older generation of American whites to turn with them.” Through conversion to Islam, racism would disappear. He could even be at home here.³⁷

Malcolm X had long condemned the Jews of the *Yishuv*, who “drove our Muslim brothers out of their homeland, where they had been settled for centuries, and took over the land for themselves.” Similarly, his mentor Elijah Muhammad had insisted that Israel “belongs to the Arabs and not the Jews,” and had included Jews “as colonial enemies of native African people.”³⁸ But as Malcolm X moved closer to the Arab/Islamic, and also black African, worlds, staying there for months at a time, he propounded a fully-blown anti-Zionist ideology, whose antisemitic foundations were barely concealed. Where antisemites had long attributed capitalism and communism to “the Jews,” Malcolm X now blamed them for perfecting the modern evil of “neo-colonialism.” Writing in Cairo, he declaimed, “The number one weapon of 20th century imperialism is Zionist-Dollarism, and one of the main bases for this weapon is Zionist Israel.” Drawing on the hoary antisemitic image of the

³⁷ Malcolm X, “Arabs Send Warm Greetings to ‘Our Brothers’ of Color in U.S.A.,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Aug. 1959; Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 335–40; Bernard Lewis, *Race and Color in Islam* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); *Washington Post*, 9 May 1964.

³⁸ C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 129; Clegg, *An Original Man*, 255; Zack, “Temple of Islam Movement.”

duplicitous Jew, which he had absorbed from the teachings of Islam (the Qur'an) and the Nation of Islam, he explained that it was, above all, "the Zionists [who] have mastered the science of dollarism." Confident of their proficiency in the art of deceit, "the Israeli Zionists are convinced they have successfully camouflaged their new kind of colonialism. Their colonialism appears to be more 'benevolent,' more 'philanthropic,'" and thus "has fast become even more unshakeable than that of the 19th century European colonialists." However, he assures his credulous readers, "This new kind of Zionist colonialism differs only in form and method, but never in motive or objective." For Malcolm X, one paradigm fit all Jews. Just as American Jews pose as the Negroes' benefactors only to dampen and derail "the real Black Revolution" there, ever-scheming Israeli Zionists, bearing gifts, are bent on crushing the rising of the people of color of Africa and the Middle East.³⁹

According to Malcolm X, "Israeli Zionists" even used Judaism to legitimize the stranglehold they sought to impose on people of color. If the Curse of Ham had earlier served to justify black slavery, the Hebrew Bible was now being used to enslave people of color in a new way. Distorting and mocking the concept of chosenness, Malcolm X taught that "Israeli Zionists religiously believe their Jewish god has chosen them to replace the outdated European colonialism with a new form of ['well-disguised'] colonialism." They believe it is their "divine mission" to establish "a different form of iron-like rule, more firmly entrenched even, than that of the former European Colonial Powers."

Drawing directly on Malcolm X's paradigm, in 1984 his protégé Louis Farrakhan, speaking at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., characterized Judaism as a "dirty religion." In 1990, still cleaving to the formulations of Malcolm X, he explained to the *Washington Post* that he had

³⁹ Malcolm X, "Zionist Logic"; Malcolm X, "God's Judgment on White America," speech delivered on 1 Dec. 1963, *Evergreen Review* (Dec. 1967): 55–57, 98–101. Certainly Malcolm X's intense preoccupation with the supposedly duplicitous Jews has many roots, but one of them is likely the displacement of his view of the seemingly benevolent mother, who betrayed him.

only meant that Israel had converted Judaism into a “dirty religion,” as a cover for its “lying, stealing and murder.”

As early as the mid-1960s, the martyred Malcolm X had been raised to sainthood, and militants embraced the Zionist-Dollarism mantra. Shortly after the Six-Day War, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), whose “members in good standing” could quote “at length” from the speeches of Malcolm X, featured a virulently antisemitic article in its newsletter. Illustrating it was a sketch of the Egyptian president Nasser and the heavyweight boxer Muhammad Ali, representing the world’s peoples of color, with a rope tied around their necks. The hand that clenched the rope was marked with a dollar sign and a Star of David — Zionist-Dollarism lynching the people of color.⁴⁰

Indeed, Malcolm X, along with his ever-lengthening trail of acolytes, was certain that Israel had been *founded* to serve pressing neo-colonialist needs. With the *Protocols* as his apparent guide, he traced the roots of “the Zionist-capitalist conspiracy” to settle the Jews in Palestine to the time of the first Zionist Congress. What had happened, he explained, was, “At the close of the 19th century, [] European imperialists wisely foresaw that the awakening masses of Africa would not submit to their old method of ruling through ‘force and fears.’” Therefore, “these ever-scheming imperialists had to create a ‘new weapon’ and to find a ‘new base’ for that weapon.” Thus they set about creating “Zionist-Dollarism” as the “new weapon” and “Zionist Israel” as one of its “main bases.” They “wisely [determined to] place Israel where she could geographically divide the Arab world ... and also divide the Africans against the Asians.” Thus conceived in a truly sinful union, the *Yisbuv* and Israel were born.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Malcolm X, “Zionist Logic”; *Washington Post*, 1 Mar. 1990; Philip Baum and Carol Weisbrod, “Israel, Africa, Colonialism and Racism: A Reply to Certain Slanders,” American Jewish Committee, Sept. 1967, 5; Robert G. Weisbord and Richard Kazarian, Jr., *Israel in the Black American Perspective* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 32–33.

⁴¹ Malcolm X, “Zionist Logic.”

Unconstrained by historical evidence, this paradigm was a central component of his enduring legacy to black militants, who, in Stokely Carmichael's words, "picked up where Malcolm X left off." Stressing only that after the Holocaust, imperialist Britain "helped [Zionists] wrest Palestine away from the Arabs, the rightful owners," Malcolm X overlooked the 1939 White Paper that had denied Jews a refuge in Palestine, ignored Britain's pressure on Commonwealth countries to vote against the partition of Palestine, and could not acknowledge all the British officers who trained, or fought for, the Arabs in 1948. In a press conference five years after Malcolm X was struck down, Huey Newton clung to the old mantra. Israel had simply been "created by Western imperialism and maintained by Western fire power." "The motive for [the Jews'] national liberation," he explained, had been "solely to create a capitalist state so that the ruling circle ... can align itself with United States imperialism." Theirs is only "reactionary nationalism," and therefore "cannot be supported by" the Black Panther Party. (Newton appeared unaware of the dominance of the Labor coalition in Israel, which would last until 1977.) In Algiers a few months before, Newton's disciple Eldridge Cleaver greatly pleased his hosts when he declaimed, "The Zionists are used to torpedo the struggle of our people for liberation." "Zionists, wherever they may be, are our enemies."⁴²

Similarly, SNCC revered Malcolm X and never questioned his doctrine. At a press conference called to defend the antisemitic article featured in its June–July 1967 newsletter, Ralph Featherstone, the program director, charged, "The facts have been completely hushed up by the news media. Israel is — and always has been — the tool and foothold of America and Britain in the exploitation of the Middle East." He challenged the audience to "refute the charges, if you can." The article claimed, "The U.S. government has constantly supported Israel and Zionism by sending military and financial aid to this illegal state ever since it was forced upon the Arabs in 1948." Once again, the militants had clung to their inherited ideology, ignoring the mass of evidence that belied it — that the U.S. had barred the shipment of arms to the embattled

⁴² "Story of Snick"; Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 278; Newton, "From a Press Conference," 7; *New York Times*, 31 Dec. 1969.

state in 1948; had taken the lead in demanding that it withdraw from the Sinai in 1956; and provided no material support when its existence was threatened in the recent three-front war. The Panthers also blindly affirmed their hero's gospel: the Six-Day War, it appeared, had been a "war of aggression against the Arab countries launched by the U.S. and Israel," the government of the United States supplying the armaments. By 1993, the dogma had changed slightly. Gerald Horne, a professor of African-American history, who championed SNCC as "a staunch opponent of all forms of bigotry," explained that although Israel had been founded by "utopian socialists and ... progressives," it had "quickly devolved into a Cold War bastion of support for Washington's bellicose policies in the region."⁴³

MALCOLM X: CONVERTING BLACK AFRICA TO ANTI-ZIONISM

After Malcolm X broke with the Nation of Islam in March 1964, he focused his attention not only on the Arab/Islamic world, but increasingly on the emerging nations of black Africa. In October, at age thirty-eight, just four months before his death, he announced that he was henceforth to be known as Malik El-Shabazz, indicating his new identification with both Northern and sub-Saharan Africa. (This was unlike Elijah Muhammad and the NOI, who always displayed a much more ambivalent attachment to black Africa.) He had discarded his "X", reinventing himself as a member of the tribe of Shabazz, which, according to the NOI narrative, had migrated from their Arab homeland to the African jungle. Spending extended periods of the last year of his life there, he founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). Modeled on the Organization of African Unity (OAU), formed the year before, it was to represent what he called the "22 million colonized Afro-Americans." And just

⁴³ AJC, Memorandum, "The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee: A Current Appraisal," 28 Aug. 1967, Box 67, JCRC Papers; *New York Times*, 14 Aug. 1967; Baum and Weisbrod, "Israel, Africa, Colonialism and Racism"; Arnold Forster, "Black Panther Party for Self-Defense," Anti-Defamation League, 19 Mar. 1968; Gerald Horne, "The ADL: Spying on a Black American," *New York Amsterdam News*, 28 Aug. 1993.

as Malcolm X had accused American Jews of colonizing the black ghettos, “sapp[ing] the very life-blood of the so-called Negroes,” Malik El-Shabazz now indicted “the Israeli Zionists” for colonizing black Africa. Relying on their age-old mastery of the arts of deceit, they had captured and bled their unsuspecting prey in Africa, just as they had in America. Thus earlier he had urged Afro-Americans to “separate from” — spurn — Jews, and now he demanded that black Africa separate from — reject — Israel.⁴⁴

Malcolm X — and the legions who repeated his preachings — were determined to show that the Israeli Zionists, like their American kin, had only donned the mask of the progressive, in an effort to conceal the well-known, age-old predator Jew. The Israelis hoped that Zionist-Dollarism would “enable them to deceive the African masses into submitting willingly to their ‘divine’ authority and guidance, without ... being aware that they are still colonized.” “Simply by getting their potential victims to accept their friendly offers of economic ‘aid,’ and other tempting ‘gifts’ that they dangle in front of the newly independent African nations, whose economies are experiencing great difficulties,” they would realize their goal of “ruling” — of colonizing — them.

The Zionists were not only conspiring to subjugate black Africa, however, they were also causing the underdevelopment of the Arab states. “Zionist Israel’s occupation of Arab Palestine,” Malcolm X explained, “has forced the Arab world to waste billions of precious dollars on armaments.” This was what was “making it impossible for these newly independent Arab nations to concentrate on strengthening the economies of their countries and elevate the living standard of their people.” His ideological commitments had not only obscured reality, but had turned it on its head.

Writing initially in Cairo, “the continued low standard of living in the Arab world” was of particular concern to Malcolm X because, he asserted, it “has

⁴⁴ *Sun Herald*, 28 Feb. 1965; Malcolm X, “We Are All Blood Brothers,” 5; Lincoln, *Black Muslims in America*, 166; Malcolm X, “Zionist Logic.” In both cases, Malcolm X may, in part, have been acting out—and reversing—the traumatic separations of his youth. This time, *he* would be the one rejecting—separating from—those who wore the mask of the benevolent caregiver.

been skillfully used by the Zionist propagandists to make it appear to the Africans that the Arab leaders are not intellectually or technically qualified to lift the living standards of their people.” This was the insidious means they had used to “induce Africans to turn away from the Arabs and towards the Israelis for teachers and technical assistance.” The “Zionist-capitalist conspiracy” had created “economic cripples” and at the same time assured they would ally with the very power that was thwarting their development.⁴⁵

Elaborating on Malcolm X’s model, SNCC’s newsletter charged that Israel had, in fact, been founded expressly to colonize black Africa. SNCC asked its readers if they knew that “the famous European Jews, the Rothschilds, who have long controlled the wealth of many European nations” and who “control much of Africa’s mineral wealth,” “were involved in the original conspiracy with the British to create ‘the state of Israel.’” Having apparently learned that the Balfour Declaration took the form of a letter to Lord Rothschild, stating that “His Majesty’s Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...,” it had found the money power — found the villainous, all-powerful Jew. Israel had been established to enable the Rothschilds to fasten their grip more firmly on Africa’s mineral wealth. Malcolm X, SNCC, the Nation of Islam, and the other militants had updated — and racialized — the centuries-old antisemitic trope that had Jews obsessively conspiring to extract money and labor — now, from people of color — the source, they insisted, of all Jewish wealth. American Jews’ wealth had been stripped from the backs, and stolen from the pockets, of Afro-Americans, and Israel’s wealth, from black African miners.⁴⁶

Malcolm X was, in effect, increasingly serving as Nasser’s ambassador to the black African nations, in a determined effort to lure them and their United Nations delegations away from Israel. In 1959, when Nasser reputedly offered Elijah Muhammad a 75-room palace in Cairo if he would act on his behalf to turn black Africa to the Arab cause, Muhammad had rejected his entreaties, preferring to focus his efforts on American blacks. In 1963, when Nasser

⁴⁵ Malcolm X, “Zionist Logic.”

⁴⁶ *New York Times*, 14 Aug. 1967.

dispatched Dr. Shawarbi to New York, he was charged with pressuring the black African delegations to reverse their stand on Israel and with enlisting the aid of the NOI in this effort. Immediately after Malcolm X severed his ties to the Nation the next year, Shawarbi spent long hours tutoring him in the Qur'an and Malcolm X became, in effect, Nasser's emissary to black Africa.

Notably, Nasser's cablegram to the Organization of Arab Students meeting at MIT, two-and-a-half years after Malcolm X's death, read as if both men had drawn their texts from the same script. Nasser taught, "We used to say Israel was an imperialist bridge-head. Yet Israel has become the headquarters of imperialism." The Zionists' (and the West's) "one aim" is "to treat us as master treats slave.... to make us ... an easy prey whereby our resources can be looted to satisfy their ambition and greed." Like Malcolm X (and those who followed him), Nasser reminded the students, "This, in fact, has been the gist of the matter since Zionism thought to secure a foothold in the Arab homeland." Concluding, he rallied the students to the "battle" at hand: "Since its establishment and until this very day, Israel has always taken the initiative in launching aggression, violating the sanctity and resolutions of the United Nations." Although "we have unmasked [the Zionists] to the world," it now remains to "secure the votes necessary to record [their] condemnation" in the UN "before Israel repeats [its] aggression" and further realizes its "expansionist aims."⁴⁷

At the time, the challenges Malcolm X and Nasser confronted appeared formidable. Far from viewing Israel as a "colonialist tool," in mid-1966 Jomo Kenyatta, president of Kenya, conveyed to the Israeli prime minister, Levi Eshkol, "our appreciation of the assistance which your government and people have extended to this country." To Kenyatta, the Jewish state served as a model for black Africa: "Your people have shown what a small country can do for itself through hard work and faith in its destiny." Similarly, the prime minister of the Congo expressed black Africa's identification with Israel. He recognized

⁴⁷ Clegg, *An Original Man*, 139; Seltzer, "Nasser and the Black Muslims"; Organization of Arab Students *News*, 28 Aug.–2 Sept. 1967, Box 124, JCRC; *Washington Post*, 18 May 1964.

that “the countries of Africa have something in common with the State of Israel — they were all victims of racial prejudice and fought obstinately before retrieving their place in the concert of nations.” Felix Houphouët-Boigny, president of Côte d’Ivoire, the former French colony, summarized these apparently pervasive sentiments: “How can I fail to stress the ties that draw every African closer to the Jewish people....” When, at a committee meeting at the UN the year before, the Saudi Arabian delegate accused his colleague from Côte d’Ivoire of having been “bought” by the Israelis, the latter responded powerfully: “The honorable representative from Saudi Arabia is no doubt an expert on buying and selling people, since his compatriots *still* engage in the slave trade among the poorer tribes of my own country.” Unlike the black nationalists, he refused to obscure the continuing Arab/Muslim traffic in slaves. Also starkly contradicting the black nationalists’ ideologically driven claims, the president of the Malagasy Republic declared “Israel’s national unity [] a subject to be pondered”:

One single ideal ... has made it possible to create lasting ties between cultures hailing from far and wide, possessing ... every imaginable upbringing.... For countries with a tribal structure, Israel displays a fine example of national homogeneity that acts as a dynamo of energy.

In 1970, it once again fell to Whitney Young, representative of an older generation of American blacks, to reproach those who sought to draw black Africa away from Israel. Reproving an unnamed correspondent, who had written to protest his having signed a statement supporting Israel that had appeared in the *New York Times*, Young responded dismissively: “I know of no real aid oil-rich Arab countries have given the struggling new nations of black Africa, although the Israelis have a very impressive program of technical assistance of the no-strings attached variety.” Still, ignoring the evidence and

upholding their ideology, the black militants hammered away and increasingly, after the Yom Kippur War, the persistent propaganda prevailed.⁴⁸

From the 1950s, black nationalists were in the forefront of a movement to identify the oppressed as the people of color. Characterizing Arabs as non-white, they cast the Arab-Israeli conflict as a racial divide and embraced the Arab-Palestinian cause as their own. The black nationalists assigned themselves a central role in the global struggle to liberate people of color because they were situated, as they put it, in the belly of the beast.

To them the beast was bicephalous, white America joined with Zionist Jews, together bent on strangling the people of color in the United States, Africa, and the Middle East. The Jews, who, according to the nationalists, had perfected the “modern evil of neo-colonialism,” now conspired with the U.S. government to deploy Zionist-Dollarism to subjugate them. This time the Satanic Jews were not driven to overthrow Christendom, to destroy the Aryan race, or even to undermine Islam and poison its prophet, but to colonize all people of color. Racializing centuries-old antisemitic tropes, the black nationalists depicted the Zionist behemoth as now focused on victimizing, enslaving, bleeding, and deceiving the innocent people of color.

⁴⁸ Baum and Weisbrod, “Israel, Africa, Colonialism and Racism”; Theodore Bikel, “Farewell to SNCC,” *Jewish Civic Leader*, 7 Sept. 1967; *New York Times*, 1 Nov. 1970.

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