

**“Message to the Black Christian
Why I Chose the Nation”**
by Vaughn Muhammad

Excerpt from the forthcoming book:

It was a girlfriend of a friend of mine that one day said to me, “You wanna come hear Farrakhan with us tonight? I have an extra ticket.” There that name was again. *‘Who or what was a Farrakhan?’* I thought to myself. The year was 1991 and Minister Farrakhan was on the ‘Stop the Killing’ lecture tour. I was seventeen or eighteen years old and had just graduated high school. Curiosity had gotten the better of me having heard this name in my favorite rap records. I accepted the invitation. Being advised to arrive early, we did so but still ended up standing in a line that stretched several street blocks. The buzz of activity around the building as we got closer to the door was amazing. Men in suits and bow ties stepped lively in and out shouting, “Step right this way, brother!” Men were guided in one direction and women in another. I was patted down in a light search procedure as we entered the auditorium and I thought, *‘who is this man and why does he require this level of security?’* The last time that I’d been to this venue was to see one of my favorite rappers and it was packed as if that same entertainer was going to perform that evening. The audience was made up of young and old, male and female. I noticed there was even a sprinkle of White folks around the room. They were probably just as curious as I was. People were dressed nicely as if they had just left church. The local news channel truck was outside and I saw reporters and important looking people carrying equipment to the front to record what the minister was going to say. We were politely ushered to our seats and listened to several introductory speakers. And then we heard, “And now is the time that you all have been waiting for! Here he is! Please help me receive the Honorable...Minster...Louis...Farrakhan!” The entire audience jumped to its feet and the room erupted with applause as if Marvin Gaye had just walked on stage.



He was flanked by men who walked on either side of him as he walked towards the podium. He wore an all white suit and with him being a light-skinned man, the stage lights seemed to reflect from him giving the appearance that he was glowing. I thought to myself, *‘Black people love this man. Why did no one ever tell me about him?’* As he took the podium, the standing ovation continued for what seemed like forever until he smiled and gently signaled them all to take their seats. What followed for the next two hours I will not go into detail about here. Get the tape (smile). For lack of a better term, Minister Farrakhan had performed a mass exorcism ridding the heart and mind of that which was against the Will of God. I just remember walking out different from the way I

walked in. I don't remember walking back to the car, in fact. It was as if I floated back to the car. I didn't sleep for what seemed like days as my mind kept me awake with the sound of the minister's voice, which played again and again. The truth that was spoken that night wrestled with the Negro (the old me) I was attempting to hold onto. The Negro did not die easily. Although I didn't rush right to the nearest mosque to get fitted for a suit and bow tie, I did become a frequent reader of the baddest, boldest, most feared publication on the street: The Final Call Newspaper. It was there that I found current stories of the Black Struggle that not only informed me of the reality of our condition and what was needed to redeem us, but also who the redeemer was: The Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad and his student Minister Louis Farrakhan.

The Million Man March

I relocated to Atlanta, Georgia in 1994 in search of a musical career. I was 21. Having grown up around so much music, it was inevitable that I would desire to pursue a life in the limelight. Unfortunately, the limelight I so fervently sought managed to evade me. You've heard it all before: starry-eyed kid moves to the Big City in search of the Big Dream. It was Halloween day, in fact. As ghosts and ghouls ran the street in search of treats, it was me who ended up receiving the trick. You've heard this part before, too: A promising opportunity (or so I thought it was) reneged on its promise. Here I was in another city with no back up plan but determined not to return to my mother's home. I could not return as a failure. I figured I could survive. As the winter became the spring, an acquaintance I'd made told me about a mass rally taking place in Washington D.C. in October and said I should check it out. The event was called The Million Man March. It was on the lips of every human being I knew. I could not conceive what *a hundred thousand* people looked like, let alone one *million*. Every time I turned on a T.V. or radio, there was a debate featuring some Black preacher saying why we shouldn't go to the march. As I listened to each reason, it all boiled down to one critical issue: Farrakhan was the convener. I remember the words of one preacher who said, "If Jesus ain't in it, neither should you be."

What was it about this man? People either hated him or loved him. There was no middle ground when it came to how you thought of him. He was a lightning rod for controversy, it seemed. Having heard him speak before, I was already sold. My acquaintance was a sister who was in Atlanta attending law school. Her name was Jacqueline, but at that time, I always called her 'Jack'. We'd become very good friends. Jack was very serious about Black Folks. She always wore something that told you she was Black and proud: one day a long flowing African garment with a matching head wrap or the next day something as simple as a button that said something regarding Black Pride. She was a sorority girl. An AKA, I recall. Normally, I wouldn't have anything to do with a sorority girl because every one I'd ever met was a little conceited. Jack, on the other hand, was quite the contrary. She was one of the most down-to-earth people I'd ever met and as genuine as they come. With the way she loved her people, it was going to be great to have someone like her on your side in a court of law or just plain on your side. I include her in this story because she single-handedly pressed me to go to this march more than any other person I knew. There were some sisters who weren't happy with the fact that they were not invited to the march. Jack, however, saw clearly the reason why the Black Man needed this march above all. We needed atonement. We needed reconciliation. We

needed to apologize for our mistreatment of our women and neglect of our communities. I was only 21 years old and although I hadn't fathered any children, left a woman scorned (well, that's debatable, but that's another book) or hurt another brother, I knew that all of the above applied to me. If it affected my community, it *was* affecting me. On the evening of October 15th, 1995, I got on the bus.

The spirit of God was present as the sun rose on the mall that day in D.C. and history was made by the time the sun had set. I could go into detail and tell you what I saw when we arrived but it would only be redundant because you saw it, too. Moreover, you *felt* it. Whether you went or not, the Million Man March was watched all over the world. Its impact was felt just as far and wide. I will, however, tell you about its impact on me personally. With each speaker that mounted the podium, the Jumbotron screens positioned all over the mall revealed a tear in each of their eyes. In every direction I looked, tears could be seen in the eyes of nearly all that were present. Including me. No moment like this had ever occurred before in history. As I wiped the tears from my eyes, I shared hugs from strangers that were strangers no more. Brothers who'd never met embraced each other as if they were siblings that were separated at birth. I would later come to understand that this was, in fact, the case. The institution of slavery had separated us so thoroughly that the mind set that it created in Black males lasted up until that very moment. I was present to witness the spell of separation, Black machismo, false pride, self hate and hopelessness finally be broken. There was not one arrest that day. Not one fight. Only a living sea of peace. Through Minister Louis Farrakhan, God called an army and the Million Man March was a glimpse into what that army's Kingdom looked like.

People would go on to say that the minister's motive was for vain purposes and to only lift up himself. That day he never said '*come join me and the Nation of Islam*'. He only said 'atone with God and each other'. He said go back home and join a church, a mosque or any organization and work to improve your communities. In my young adulthood, I was not a religious person nor did I frequent a church. I never said it in as many words, but I had given up on the church although I was a product of it. I'm sure they would say I just never fully accepted Jesus "as my lord and savior." Perhaps they would have been right, but that day on the mall in Washington D.C. is the day I gave my life to Christ. On that day, Jesus was not just a reason to sing, clap and dance. He wasn't just for the purpose of saying His name while jumping over the church pews and hoping that everything would be all right. That was the day that Jesus had become what He truly is: a living, breathing and tangible example. Now let me clear that up so no one will say that we worship Minister Farrakhan. Jesus, in my mind at the time, was an icon that was never to be attained, but only worshipped from afar. Minister Farrakhan just happened to be the person that implored us to 'pick up *our* cross' and let us know that we, too, could become like Jesus. The sheer power of being present in what can be called nothing else but an army had opened my eyes to what my purpose was in life. In the Lord's Prayer, it says that God's Kingdom would be on 'earth as it is in heaven'. My purpose was to help bring such a kingdom into fruition. Was building God's kingdom not a worthy cause to fight for? To live for? To die for? This was the first glimpse into what the kingdom would look like. Perfect peace. Was this not the very cause Jesus stood for?

I decided to pick up my cross that day.