

Black Leaders Condemn Anti-Semitism

Some Concede Farrakhan's Role in Stoking Jew-Hatred

Courtesy of the FOCUS Project

A growing number of Black athletes and journalists have publicly condemned Anti-Semitism and acknowledged its acceptance by some within the African American community. In responding to a recent spate of antisemitic remarks from Black celebrities, including Nick Cannon, Ice Cube, DeSean Jackson and Stephen Jackson, some critics cited the influence of Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

Recent remarks against Jews are a “troubling omen for the future of the Black Lives Matter movement, but so too is the shocking lack of massive indignation,” said NBA legend and racial activist Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. The hall-of-famer also criticized white comedian Chelsea Handler for posting videos from “notorious homophobe and anti-Semite Louis Farrakhan.” Cannon, Ice Cube, DeSean Jackson and Stephen Jackson have all recently praised Farrakhan. Fellow NBA great, Charles Barkley, addressed them in his statement: “We can't allow Black people to be prejudiced....I don't understand how you beat hatred with more hatred.” He echoed earlier remarks from Pittsburgh Steeler Zach Banner: “...To the Black and brown community...we need to uplift [Jewish people]...when we talk about the BLM and about elevating ourselves. We can't do that while stepping on the back of other people.” Several Black ESPN journalists made public statements:

Jemele Hill – “The unfortunate truth is that some Black Americans have shown a certain cultural blindspot about Jews,” wrote Hill in *The Atlantic*. “Stereotypical and hurtful tropes about Jews are widely accepted in the African American community.” She also acknowledged “Farrakhan's long, vile record of Anti-Semitism” and DeSean Jackson is “far from alone among Black Americans in his support for Farrakhan.” Hill told CNN the lack of outrage from Black people about antisemitism stems from their not wanting to be accused of “undermining and undercutting” BLM.

LZ Granderson - “Farrakhan's repulsive words about the Jewish community became too much for me to ignore. I just don't believe you need to tear another group down in order to lift your group up.”

Michael Wilbon - Stephen Jackson's series of comments “undermines everything [he] said so eloquently on behalf of Black Lives Matter....He has no credibility now.

He has undermined all his previous good work with this garbage.”

A day after being fired by ViacomCBS over his recent remarks, Nick Cannon apologized: “I extend my deepest and most sincere apologies to my Jewish sisters and brothers for the hurtful and divisive words that came out of my mouth,” he tweeted. “They reinforced the worst stereotypes of a proud and magnificent people and I feel ashamed of the uninformed and naive place that these words came from.” He has engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Rabbi Abraham Cooper.

The following are important points to remember and act upon:

Challenge efforts that seek to divide Blacks and Jews. “Far more unites Black and Jewish Americans than divides them,” say two leading Holocaust scholars. Civil rights heroes Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and recently departed US Rep. John Lewis both knew Jewish and Black Americans have a “special relationship” beyond their shared status at the core of white supremacists' hatred: “MLK knew that both peoples were uprooted involuntarily from their homelands....that both peoples were shaped by the tragic experience of slavery. He knew that both peoples were forced to live in ghettos, victims of segregation....that both peoples were subject to laws passed with the particular intent of oppressing them simply because they were Jewish or Black.”

Louis Farrakhan is the most popular Anti-Semite in America. He has repeatedly called Judaism a “gutter religion,” referred to Jews as “Satan” and “termites,” denied today's Jewish people are really Jews, stated that Jews caused the Holocaust, said “Hitler was a very great man,” declared the re-establishment of Israel an “outlaw act” and that the country “does not belong to the white Jew,” accused American Jews of “dual loyalties” between the US and Israel, and blamed Jews for the slave trade, “sucking the blood” of African Americans, controlling the US government, 9/11, promoting homosexuality and perverting famous African Americans. He has also attacked LGBTQ Americans, mocked Asian Americans, and banned women from attending past speeches. True, Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, which the Southern Poverty Law Center labels a hate group, has a record of community service. But if anyone should succumb to “cancel culture,” it's a hatermonger like Farrakhan.

Those willing to call out antisemitism from the Black community almost always make the same key point – fighting hatred against one's own group requires fighting hatred against all. Charles Barkley: “I don't understand how you beat hatred with more hatred.” Kareem Abdul-Jabbar: “No one is free until everyone is free...If it's OK to discriminate against one group of people...it must be OK to do the same to others....Illogic begets illogic.” Jamele Hill: “The thirst for liberation and equality can never come at the expense of dehumanizing other marginalized groups.” Zach Banner: “We can't [elevate the Black and brown community] while stepping on the back of other people.” LZ Granderson: “I just don't believe you need to tear another group down in order to lift your group up.”

Those willing to call out antisemitism from anywhere almost always prescribe the same solution – so do reformed offenders. Nick Cannon: “I want to express my gratitude to the Rabbis, community leaders who reached out to help enlighten me, instead of chastising.” DeSean Jackson: “I'm taking this time to continue with educating myself.” Chelsea Handler: “Part of the process of educating ourselves...is recognizing and working through our mistakes.” Jamele Hill: “When I apologized to Jewish friends about my Hitler reference, they offered their support—but also an overdue education in how dangerous casual anti-Semitism can be.” LZ Granderson: “Both Jackson and Cannon have pledged to educate themselves on the subject....No group owns suffering and no one is too old to grow.” Zach Banner: “We need to have a deep understanding of the history of the Jewish community and the Holocaust....We need to educate ourselves.”

Just as Jewish Americans were one of the most actively involved non-Black groups in the Civil Rights Era of the 50s-60s, they are also showing up in solidarity for #BlackLivesMatter. Organizations that issued supportive statements for #BLM included ADL, StandWithUs, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Union for Reform Judaism and dozens more. As massive racial justice rallies continued across all 50 states, the insertion of antisemitic messages by fringe groups was rejected by the vast majority of #BlackLivesMatter protesters. Jewish support for ending persistent systemic racism against Black and brown communities in America is

different from supporting any particular organization, such as the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), which approved a platform in 2016 that includes an anti-Israel plank.

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ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

Call upon other Black leaders you respect and you admire to increase their emphatic condemnations of Anti-Semitism. If other communities are attacked, it is equally important that Jews stand in solidarity with them.

Celebrities willing to be educated about antisemitism deserve our praise and thanks.

Invest in the time to educate yourself before rushing to judgment.

M4BL is planning to convert #BlackLivesMatter into a political agenda ahead of the 2020 election. Supporters of ending systemic racism who don't want anti-Israel politics inserted into #BLM should contact M4BL member organizations, such as #BLM Global Network, National Conference of Black Lawyers and the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights to weigh in on the conference platform.

Black leaders publicly condemned Anti-Semitism and acknowledged its acceptance by some of the African American community, most publicly voiced by TV host Nick Cannon. Nearly all of them made the same key point – fighting hatred against one's own group requires fighting hatred against all. Call upon other Black leaders you admire to condemn all forms of hate, including antisemitism.

<https://www.newstimes.com/entertainment/article/Kareem-Abdul-Jabbar-Addresses-Anti-Semitism-in-15408921.php>

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IN MEMORIAM

Americans lost a civil rights and social justice giant when Representative John Lewis passed away over the weekend. May his memory be a blessing. You can learn more about his legacy by clicking here:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/john-lewis-and-the-jews-6-moments-that-showcase-an-enduring-alliance/>

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The Focus Project develops and distributes weekly talking points on timely issues to help influencers and organizations in their efforts to combat antisemitism and delegitimization of Israel. The objective is to enable the community to speak with more consistency and focus, so that its messaging has greater resonance and reach with the general public. www.focus-project.org