



# The Farrakhan Phenomenon: Race, Reaction, and the Paranoid Style in American Politics

*Robert Singh*

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In this penetrating critical analysis of Louis Farrakhan's ascent to national influence, Robert Singh argues that the minister's rise to prominence is a function of race and reaction in contemporary America. Singh probes the origins and significance of Farrakhan in American politics.

Drawing on published and unpublished records, personal interviews, and Farrakhan's writings and speeches, Singh places Farrakhan expressly within the "paranoid style" of such reactionaries as Jesse Helms and Joseph McCarthy. Examining Farrakhan's biographical details, religious beliefs, political strategies, and relative influence, Singh argues that Farrakhan is an extreme conservative who exploits both black-white divisions and conflicts within the black community for personal advancement.

Singh proposes that Farrakhan's complex appeal to African-Americans is based on his ability to orchestrate the diffuse forces of African-American protest against the status quo. Paradoxically, says Singh, Farrakhan has achieved his position in part by positioning himself against most African-American political leaders, a tactic made possible by the extent to which black American politics now displays the same basic features as American politics in general. By stoking the fires of fear and hatred yet effecting no real changes, Farrakhan poses a greater threat to black Americans than to whites.

*The Farrakhan Phenomenon* is written in a clear, accessible style that will appeal to general readers concerned about race relations as well as to scholars of American history and politics. It reveals a shrewd opportunist who has capitalized on America's continuing failure to deal with its serious and abiding race problems.

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