

However, this reader regrets the decidedly western flavor of the article topics (public lands, wildlife conservation) and the failure to include a discussion of the Clean Air Act or any of the hazardous waste laws, most notably the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Finally, some of the statements in the book, such as “The history of water policy shows that states managed their water resources effectively until the federal government intervened to expand its control” (page xvii), suggest that readers review other studies of environmental protection prior to reaching the same conclusions as these authors.

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

by Robert Singh. Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 1997. 352 pp. Cloth, \$60.00; paper, \$17.95.

The thesis of this book is that the Nation of Islam minister, Reverend Louis Farrakhan has had a phenomenal rise to national African-American leadership ranks and once in those ranks has become a phenomenon in and of himself. This being the case, he deserves close scrutiny and very careful analysis. Robert Singh states his motives thusly: “Farrakhan represents an appropriately menacing, divisive, and sharply polarizing political figure for the fin de siecle and, hence, an especially rich and compelling subject for study” (p. x). To capture this phenomenon, the author uses uncritically historian Richard Hofstadter’s conceptualization of the paranoid leader in American politics along with historical, documentary, rhetorical, polling, and theological data. From these data sources comes a characterization that is part populism, part authoritarianism, part African-American conservatism, part modified Islamism, part individualism, part capitalism, completely paranoid and completely extremist. This is the phenomenon that this leader can be all of these paradoxical things at the same time and in the same moment. Such a leader bodes ill for the African-American community, the white community, and the nation-state.

But the mere characterization of this phenomenal leader is only part of the thrust of the book. In point of fact, the paranoid conceptualization comes in chapter four, the midpoint of the book. The first part of the book (chapters 1–3) is devoted to how this phenomenon rose to national leadership, while the second part of the book (chapters 5–7) discusses how he stays in power by analyzing his base of followers and supporters. The logic and the argument of the book is clear, and it is the binding theme of the work: without African-Americans, the American political scene would not be burdened and threatened by such a troubling presence.

As the author sees it, despite a host of other independent variables, Jesse Jackson’s 1984 presidential campaign, the Congressional Black Caucus 1993 covenant with the minister, the 1993-1994 NAACP recognition, Malcolm X’s wife Betty Shabazz’s reconciliation with him even though the evidence points to his having a role in murdering her husband, and the Million Man March on 16 October 1995 gave Farrakhan a mass base and led to his becoming a national leader and phenomenon.

Likewise, using a panoply of survey and polling data, the author asserts that Farrakhan is widely loved, honored, and worshipped in the African-American community. In fact, the author reveals that although the minister constantly and continually demeans, stereotypes,

and reviles African-Americans and does it with relish, the African-American community still loves and cherishes him. Ultimately, the book is poorly conceptualized and is not conversant with the literature on African-American leaders; it omits the seminal insights of noted historian Nathan Huggins, who penned the central theoretical piece on African-American leadership. Singh is subjective in picking and choosing between independent variables. He makes faulty use of polling and survey data, where he refers to African-American polling data in one instance and that of white conservative polling data in another, as if they are both of equal value and explanatory power, to say nothing of the small subsamples that exist in such data and the interpretation of this material by using repetitive statements. The end result is that instead of being a useful critical assessment of the Farrakhan phenomenon it is a work that makes African Americans responsible for their own victimization.

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Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963–65 by Taylor Branch. New York, Simon & Schuster, 1998. 720 pp. \$30.00.

Thirty years after orchestrating America's greatest civil rights victories, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Lyndon B. Johnson continue to fascinate scholars. Numerous authors have tried to make sense of these two complex individuals whose private behavior did not always conform to their public actions. The architect of the Great Society had an abusive streak of pettiness and hypersensitivity in him, and the civil rights icon suffered from bouts of depression and committed adultery. Both understood the need to use power to bring about social change, though Johnson did so in conventional ways through established political processes, whereas King worked outside traditional channels to force reform.

In the second volume of his projected trilogy on America in the King years, Taylor Branch devotes considerable space detailing the relationship between the president and the civil rights leader. This volume tracks the black freedom struggle in several southern communities from 1963 to the spring of 1965, as well as reporting corresponding events in Washington, DC. In addition to covering struggles in Birmingham and Selma, Alabama, St. Augustine, Florida, and Mississippi, Branch describes the Byzantine politics within the federal government as officials tried to contain the protest movement. The author explores the dark side of this effort by detailing the surveillance by the Federal Bureau of Investigation of Dr. King. Driven by J. Edgar Hoover's obsession with destroying King, the agency fed the president, politicians, and journalists damaging material about the minister's personal life and alleged connections to communism. This book renews admiration for King in his ability to absorb such brutal psychological punishment, though it certainly took its toll on him and the movement. One also comes away with a better understanding of how Johnson tolerated Hoover's blandishments, while at the same time he manipulated the reluctant FBI chief into taking stronger action to pursue Ku Klux Klan murderers in Mississippi and Georgia. Johnson and King engaged in similar balancing acts: the president made overtures to keep the right wing of the Democratic party behind him, and King attempted to harness the movement's left wing. Differences in style and outlook, however, kept the two leaders from trusting each other.

This is no ordinary biography, and Branch focuses more on the times than on the life of King. There are scores of pages in which King disappears while the travails of community