

# RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER OF REFORM JUDAISM

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## CONFIDENTIAL AND PERSONAL

To: Mrs. Corretta Scott King, Rev. Walter Fauntroy, Bill Lucy, Rev. Jesse Jackson, William Gibson, Rev. Ben Chavis, Lane Kirkland

From: Rabbi David Saperstein

Date: August 13, 1993

cc: Rabbi Alexander Schindler, Lawrence Rubin

We have been looking forward to participating this year in the Anniversary March for Jobs, Peace and Freedom.

Our final follow-up letter to hundreds of synagogues and Jewish organizations all over the Eastern seaboard was going to be mailed Monday urging them to send delegations to the March.

In the past 24 hours, however, two major problems have arisen. The first is that I understand that a tentative decision was made yesterday to invite Rev. Louis Farrakhan. I do not need to tell you what a devastating blow this would be to the solidarity of the coalition supporting the March.

While he participated in 1983, that was before all of the blow-up over his extreme statements generally, and his anti-Semitic statements in particular, beginning with his "Judaism is a gutter religion." For a decade, these problems have escalated. I have enclosed a July 18, 1993 Chicago Sun-Times editorial (following a 3 hour interview with him) in which the paper concluded that: "Farrakhan Message is Still Anti-Semitic."

I thought this issue was resolved in 1988 when the decision was made not to invite him.

The controversy over Rev. Farrakhan's participation will overwhelm the entire March. The media's traditional obsession with such controversies, and Black-Jewish tensions particularly, (around Rev. Farrakhan above all) will become the the major story of the March. The substance of your talks and what the March represents will be totally drowned out. Obviously, all of the Jewish groups, (and, I suspect, other groups) will be forced to withdraw from participation in the March.

The Religious Action Center  
advances social justice and  
religious liberty by  
mobilizing the American  
Jewish Community and  
its many allies  
in the nation's capital

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of Temple Youth.

I have also been informed by the March officials that a decision was made to extend invitations to representatives of the Palestinian and Israeli peace delegations to speak. I want to suggest that this too is a major tactical error. First, we have always agreed to keep the Middle East conflict out of the March in keeping with the position that we would not invite people to participate who would attack other groups participating in the March. The Jewish and Arab American groups had all agreed to this in the past two anniversary marches.

These invitations raise the prospect of the Middle East Palestinian-Israeli conflict being debated publicly at the March in front of the world. Do we really need Israeli speakers talking about PLO and Hezbollah terrorism and Palestinian speakers criticizing Israeli policy on the West Bank at the March. It will split the crowd and force other speakers -- including the Arab-American and Jewish groups -- to weigh in on the merits of that debate. The problem is further complicated by the fact that it is extraordinarily unlikely that the Israeli Government could permit any representative to participate on the Jewish Shabbat adding to the perception that this is not only a radical departure from past agreements but a slap in the face to the Jewish community.

A final word on process. During the 20th and 25th Anniversary Marches, I was fully in the loop in the development of the platform and program. I am exceedingly disappointed, considering how closely I have worked with all of you over the years and how strongly you must have known the Jewish community would react to these decisions, that these decisions were not only made without my participation and ability to share my community's concerns, but without even the courtesy of prior consultation. This feels like a major breach of good faith.

Please reach me at my office 202-387-2800 or my home 202-363-4375 any time that is convenient for you to discuss this further.