



Campaign 2000

Media Reality ✓ Check

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After Eight Days, Most of the Press Still Missing, Despite Question to Clinton, Fox's Grilling of Daley

Lieberman Respects Farrakhan: No Story?

On September 27, eight days ago, the first press reports revealed that Democratic vice presidential nominee Joe Lieberman said he would be willing to meet with Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, who has called Judaism, Lieberman's faith, a "gutter religion."

In an interview with April Ryan of the American Urban Radio Networks, Lieberman said, **"Look, Minister Farrakhan said a few things earlier in the campaign that were just not informed. But I have respect for him, and I have respect for the Muslim community generally."**

Where's the furor? The story first came on Wednesday from the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* Jodi Enda and hit the Knight-Ridder national wire. *USA Today* mentioned it. Ryan questioned President Clinton about it in a briefing aired live on CNN. Clinton seemed surprised: "I didn't understand. What did you say about Joe Lieberman and Louis Farrakhan?" When Ryan explained that "Joe Lieberman told me yesterday" that he would meet with Farrakhan, Clinton only said, "Well, if anybody has got the standing to do it, he certainly does."

That night, Ryan appeared on Fox's *O'Reilly Factor*. Host Bill O'Reilly asked if she challenged Lieberman on his statement. She said yes: **"He said, but it's time for us to come together. And he's trying to win. That's basically what it is. He wants to win an election and the African-American vote is crucial."**

Last Thursday, the story was picked up by UPI and the Associated Press in the tenth paragraph of a story on the upcoming "Million Family March." On Friday, the Anti-Defamation League, whose earlier criticism of Lieberman

for religious talk on the stump drew all-network coverage, warned Lieberman would be "legitimizing a bigot."

It hit television on Sunday. On NBC's *Meet the Press*, Tim Russert asked Rick Lazio if he'd meet with Farrakhan. (He said no.) On *Fox News Sunday*, Tony Snow asked Gore

campaign chairman Bill Daley about Lieberman. "Does he do that with the Vice President's blessing?" Daley said no, "Joe makes those decisions on his own. He obviously doesn't have to get approval from Al Gore to have meetings."

On Monday, AP reported its first full story on Lieberman's remarks, based on criticism from RNC Chairman Jim Nicholson. On Tuesday, *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen wrote about it, concluding, "It would be hard now for Lieberman to repudiate Farrakhan, but it would be

harder still for us to respect someone who will not."

But now, eight days in, **let's list who is still missing on this story: *The New York Times*. *The Los Angeles Times*. *The Washington Post* news pages. *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. CBS. CNN's newscasts. NBC's newscasts. ABC arrived this morning.** Are the media being tough on both sides? Can a press corps that celebrated Lieberman's faith now ignore it? — *Tim Graham*

Diane Sawyer Asked Mrs. Lieberman

"There has been criticism from the Anti-Defamation League of Senator Lieberman's statement that he would be willing to meet with Louis Farrakhan, head of the Nation of Islam, and indeed he was quoted as saying 'I have respect for him.' And this is a man who several years ago called Judaism a 'gutter religion.' How do you feel about that personally?"

"...Again, I think of the haunting thing you have said about hearing your mother wake up in the middle of the night, crying out in fear because of her experiences during the war. Is it possible for you to say you have respect for Louis Farrakhan?" — Diane Sawyer's questions to Lieberman's wife Hadassah on today's *Good Morning America*. (She supported her husband.)

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