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The Harlem Project: The Weapon That Ended the War
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Guest Commentator

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The following is a transcript of a tape sent anonymously to the Washington Post, ostensibly from a meeting of high-level US government officials that took place in the resort town of Vonn's Eye, Pennsylvania. Its authenticity has not been confirmed.

VOICE: ...to introduce to you my good friend and a great American, Ike [inaudible].

[APPLAUSE]

NEW VOICE: Thank you, thank you, Dick. Dick and I go way back. To Nam, right? We both had to sit that one out. Trick knees, you know. [LAUGHTER]

But seriously, gentlemen – and lady – we're here to discuss a problem of interest to us all, indeed the world. It's a problem that has been the thorniest, most intractable problem in international relations any of us have ever known. The Palestinian problem.

It's a problem that most of us have wrestled with our entire careers, a problem that's been with us since before many of us even finished school.

Now, I know this will come as a shock. But what I am about to tell you is not new. In fact, what I'm here to say is that not only can we solve the Palestinian problem, *the solution has already been laid out for us..* It's already worked: with a different people, and at a different time, but it's already been proven effective.

Gentlemen – and lady – I'm here to present to you a complete, and final, solution to the Palestinian problem.

[DISTURBANCE]

OTHER VOICE: [INAUDIBLE]

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VOICE: No, no, I guess that was a poor choice of words. God, I hope no one's recording this. No, I'm not talking about *that*. I'm talking about something far more devastating: *Integration*.

Let me explain.

In the 1960s and early 1970s we had a little intifada of our own. Black Panthers were running around toting guns and talking revolution. How did we stop it? We had the stick, sure, but we also had the carrot. And we had a King in our hand.

And that's the key. We need to make the Palestinians think there are alternatives to violence. What we need to do gentlemen, is create a Muslim Martin Luther King.

How can we do that? Not directly. We can't send him to Gaza in an Apache helicopter with marines for bodyguards, the way we did with Chalabi. That blew up in our faces like an IED. What we need to do is make them think he's homegrown, not a CIA stooge.

We set up a contest for the best young orator in Palestine. The grand prize should be a full scholarship to a college in the United States. It will be a scholarship named after Martin Luther King, maybe to Stanford, where he can work with Clay Carson on the Martin Luther King Papers Project. (You're friends with him, right?) [INAUDIBLE]

This guy will then go back to Palestine thinking the way we want him to think. He won't be pro-American, he'll be anti-occupation all right – you can't get very far in Palestinian society unless you are – but he'll tell them to oppose the occupation the way we want him to, non-violently. He'll lead a couple marches and maybe government soldiers will make some mistakes and kill a couple people, but that will just make our man stronger. Just like King in '63 after the Birmingham bombings. And once our man gets the Nobel Peace Prize, he will be the undisputed leader of the Palestinians. Exactly what we want.

But that's not enough. In the '50s, black people in this country – pardon me, Afro-Americans – didn't have any options. You could have a Ph.D. like Dr. Rice here and not get a job as a shoeshine boy. Boy, was that dumb of us. That was real dumb.

We got smarter in the '60s and '70s. Some of us in the conservative movement think that affirmative action was a mistake from the beginning. But I'm here to tell you that affirmative action may have just saved this country as we know it from a Marxist revolution.

A young black kid growing up in Watts or Detroit or Oakland or Harlem in the late '60s would have had no choice but to admire the Panthers. Young, powerful, strong, bold, masculine, sexy,...um...Got a little off track, sorry. Where was I? Oh yeah, the Panthers were everything a young black kid wanted to be. Except dead. But before the '70s, we didn't give that kid an alternative, did we? It was join the Panthers and die or don't join the Panthers and die.

Affirmative action gave him a choice. *He didn't have to fight us*. He could, possibly, just possibly, become president of Brown University or CEO of Time Warner. He didn't have to pick up a gun or a suicide belt. You see where I'm going?

In the '60s, the Great Society was great because we bought off the radicals. Instead of joining the Panthers, they joined government-sponsored anti-poverty programs. They're not going to fight the government if they work for the government. So what we need to do in Palestine is the same thing. A massive expenditure – hear me out – a massive expenditure for jobs programs and non-violence training programs in the disputed territories.

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I know many of you think it was our flooding the ghetto with drugs that killed the Black Power movement, but that really only came 10 years later. It was affirmative action that killed it. It worked like a charm.

Now there's one essential difference between Afro-American culture and the Palestinian culture: the Palestinians *have* a culture. They have a language, they have a history. Afro-Americans have neither. Slavery took care of that. Sure, Afro-Americans have their music, but even they do not describe it as "black" music. They use monikers like *urban*, *inner-city*, anything to avoid calling it black. Which is a good thing. Because that allowed people like us – Elvis and Eminem – to take it over. But I digress.

How can we destroy Palestinian culture? We have to make it a bad thing to be Palestinian. So when we admit them into mainstream society, as businessmen, as students, what have you, there have to be sanctions if they in any way refer to their Palestinian identity. For example, none of us here treat Dr. Rice as a black woman, do we? And she wouldn't have it any other way. Neither would I. So when we give the Palestinians this pressure valve, the possibility of becoming successful and middle-class without having to blow themselves up, we need to still leave an enforcement mechanism. We will give you a chance if you renounce your identity. Maybe you don't have to renounce it explicitly, but at least you have to do it subliminally.

Here's an example: In the December 11, 2002 edition of that left-wing rag *The Nation* [HISSES] – I know, I know, why do I read that tripe? – John Nichols wrote about a black professor at a Southern university who publicly criticized the founder of the Ku Klux Klan. Immediately, a nationwide group of 30,000 individuals forced the university to sanction the professor, who ultimately had to leave. Not a single black organization had the spine to defend him. That's what I mean by a self-regulating enforcement mechanism. If they cross the line – and that includes defending anyone who crosses the line – the retribution must be swift and sure. But for everybody else, there's the escape hatch, the pressure valve, the possibility to attain wealth and happiness in our great society. They won't, but they'll think they can, and that's what matters.

In short, we want to achieve a situation like the one we have in America today: Thanks to the pressure valve and the enforcement mechanism, few if any successful blacks today identify in any way with the radical politics of their forebears in the '60s and '70s. Hell, many of them even vote with us. [LAUGHTER] Affirmative action, my friends, was the weapon that ended the culture war that began in the 1960s.

But culture is not so easily expurgated. Look at rap, look at jazz. No Afro-American today can speak a single word of Yoruba, but the culture is still there. Like a bump in a rug. But we can deal with that too. What weapon do we have in our arsenal that is so powerful that it can eviscerate an entire culture's will to resist? The answer, my friends, is simple.

Send in the clowns.

Send in the gangsta rappers! Their message is *exactly* what we want the Palestinian youth to hear. Faux rebellion without a trace of a real political message. Your parents don't like it? It's because they're not hip. All that matters is money and ho's? (If you'll pardon me.) Perfect. Then the youth won't be worried about history or UN resolutions.

We want to focus on music because it's one of the non-threatening aspects of culture. Today, in America, during Black History Month, all you get regaled by are stories told by, well, story-tellers. And not stories about slave revolts either. They're festivals of food and fun, as I heard someone put it once. Nothing angry.

If we can fuse Arab culture with gangsta hip hop, we can destroy it from the inside. So what we need to do is what we did with Eastern Europe. There, we sent in Coca Cola, so to speak. It totally undermined the Soviet culture, paving the way for free markets and prostitutes – I mean, profits.

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All this is just a sketch. We need to fill in the details. But hopefully, by 2020, we'll have solved this most vexing of problems.

And if that doesn't work we can always infect the blood supply.

[APPLAUSE]

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