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Jewish Theater Shuns Nobel Laureate

June 11, 2007

By Nicole Kristal

Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka drew ire from the [Jewish Theater of New York](#) after lauding Louis Farrakhan during a keynote address to the Theatre Communications Group June 8 at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis.

According to statements released by the Jewish Theater and the [Anti-Defamation League](#), Soyinka referred to the Nation of Islam minister as "an exemplary human being" and suggested that others follow in his footsteps. Farrakhan said in a March 18 interview on Al Jazeera television, "The real anti-Semites are those who came out of Europe and settled in Palestine and now they call themselves the true Jews."

A Jewish Theater representative said Tuvia Tenenbom, JTNY founder and artistic director, criticized Soyinka during a Q&A after the speaker's address.

Soyinka responded by saying that "certain groups" frequently complain about racism and stated that Farrakhan has scaled down his anti-Semitic comments in recent years. Soyinka said he selected Farrakhan as a concept more than a man.

In a press release sent today, the JTNY expressed shock that none of the American theatre leaders at the event spoke out against Soyinka's comments.

"We have no doubt that if a Jewish speaker had uttered similar comments about the black community he would be taken off the podium at once," the statement said. "We are wondering: Is Jewish blood less red than African blood? In the Jewish Theater we have a policy of zero tolerance toward any racism&hellipand we demand an immediate apology from Mr. Wole Soyinka. His blind racism should not stand."

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