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FOCUS

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Inside the Million Man March

Personal Observation and a Howard University Survey Reveal That the Participants in the October Event Were Among Black America's Finest

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POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

PERSPECTIVE

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Toward a Beloved Community in Black and White

by Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.

These are, as the old Chinese curse has it, "interesting times." First came the attacks on affirmative action, then the O.J. Simpson verdict, and most recently, the Million Man March. Suddenly, race relations—which had been invisible—have moved to center stage. Suddenly, the idea of a colorblind America in which race no longer matters much has been exposed as a fantasy. Suddenly, settled notions about the role of race in our lives and in our society have been thrust into a sea of doubt and contradictory feelings.

Like many others, I'm trying to make some sense of the tremendous events of the past several weeks, and I have to tell you I'm not getting far. But I am not alone—just about everything I've heard or read about those events tells me that no one else has either. That may be because events are at odds with the conventional thinking about race by blacks and whites on all points of the political spectrum.

All Americans must now confront the Kerner Commission's warning that we are becoming "two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." And all Americans must be shaken by the strength of intolerance and extremism, and by the threat of retreat into racial isolation. As long as black and white Americans continue to see each other as stereotypes and not as people with the same dreams, ambitions, and values, this nation will be frozen in suspicion and hate.

Unless people of goodwill can move swiftly to bridge the racial divide, the short-term emotional charge many black Americans felt in recent weeks may turn into increased suffering over the long term. For example, the net result of the Simpson trial could be revised criminal laws that compromise the rights of the accused and put more of our young people behind bars. And the net result of the march could be that both whites and blacks succumb to the siren song of separatism, and become trapped in the false assumption that the problems of the black community are self-inflicted and only solvable through black spiritual renewal.

Self-renewal is critical to black progress. But so is a concerted, biracial attack on the social and economic causes of black disadvantage and alienation. The truth is that we can't solve America's racial problems separately, for at the root of those problems is separation itself. The solution lies not in withdrawal but in reaching out.

But that view is in danger of becoming irrelevant in the wake of a successful march expressly limited to black men. So we need to look at why it happened, and why it was so successful. I do not fully understand it. But I do know that the march reflects something profound that is going on in America today. An analogue to the march is the growth of the predominantly white Promise Keepers movement, which fills stadiums with masses of men affirming their faith and responsibilities.

There seems to be a yearning for spiritual renewal in America that crosses the racial divide and finds expression in movements such as the Million Man March, the Promise Keepers, and others. Are these male-oriented movements a reaction to the new role of women in our economic life and the change in family structures? Do they derive from economic insecurity driven by vast technological changes that have shattered old certainties and economic relationships?

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When people are caught in the throes of sweeping economic changes beyond their control and when income inequality shakes their self-image, they often turn to spiritual pursuits and traditional values. And where will such movements go from here? Will a withdrawal to spiritual concerns mean abandonment of such public concerns as economic justice and social integration?

One might understand the march's stress on atonement in that light. What is atonement? Does it presume that it is wrong to pursue the American dream of a little white house with green shutters and a white picket fence, a car in the garage, a TV in the den, beer in the cooler, tuition for the children, two weeks at the beach, and an estate free of debt?

That question is relevant because most of the marchers were middle class—better educated and more affluent that most black people. Did the march have a political component? The polls found that four out of five marchers were registered to vote. Will they retain their commitment to the political process and intensify it by getting others to register and vote?

Finally, I have to ask whether the march was just another one of those feel-good events where people let off steam, substituting marching for concrete action to change the root causes of their dilemma. Words are not a substitute for action. But the march was a form of action—people traveled to the capital, disrupted their daily lives, pledged to act differently, and behaved with great dignity. And yet, the march remains shrouded in ambiguity.

If I am right in thinking that it reflects something going on in America that transcends race, then we need to figure out what it is and how to use it positively for black people and the nation. That's a job for the institutions in our community equipped with the researchers and know-how to do it—the Joint Center, Howard University, and other repositories of black intellectual prowess. They can help us understand this new, elusive spirit of our times and help us decide upon a course of action.

But as we do, we must also understand the roles and functions of the division of labor in our community, especially as they have changed since the 1960s. For there are now five distinct new leadership classes that have arisen alongside the traditional ones of Du Bois' "talented tenth," such as the black church, the press, the colleges, and civil rights groups. These new leadership groups include: one, black elected officials, many of whose constituents are white, Hispanic, and Asian; two, managers of predominantly white institutions, ranging from school superintendents and police chiefs to foundation heads, college presidents, and cabinet officers; three, indigenous community leadership, whose local organizations represent welfare families, public housing tenants, and other community-based entities, and whose backgrounds are similar to those of their constituents; four, black entrepreneurs who produce goods and services for markets that extend beyond the black community; and five, blacks in corporate America, as exemplified by the Executive Leadership Council.

These new leadership groups all share the experience of negotiating the deep and sometimes treacherous waters of majority institutions. Thus, they are well situated to bring a wider perspective to the issues. That perspective is necessary if we are to make progress without being ensnared in futile arguments about self-defeating separatism and blind nationalism.

The new leadership groups can help inoculate us against demagoguery and extremism. They can bring powerful assets such as resources, skills, and knowledge of the world beyond the confines of dysfunctional communities. We hope that they can help answer the question asked in such pain and wonder in the heart of the ghetto—"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?"

As we assess the march, we should recall the words written many years ago by the great black historian, Carter G. Woodson: "The race needs workers, not leaders. If we can finally succeed in translating the idea of leadership into that of service, we may find it possible to lift the Negro to a higher level." Perhaps that is the true meaning of the march—the yearning of so many black men to be of service to the community.

But what about those who were not invited to the march—black women, white people, Hispanics, Asians—all of whom must participate in America's renewal and in bridging the gap between the races? They must not be ignored, for the gap cannot be closed without them because the only sane course of action lies within the context of an open, pluralistic, integrated society.

In *The Invisible Man,* Ralph Ellison wrote: "Our fate is to become one, and yet many. This is not prophecy, but description." We are a long way from that goal, and the path to it is an arduous one. There will be diversions along the route from both white racists and black separatists. But it is the only route that leads to the attainable goal and to a goal worth attaining.

From time to time, it will be tempting to withdraw from the struggle, to seek solace in the warmth and comfort of one's own community. But in the long run we cannot do the segregationists' work for them by excluding ourselves from our fair portion of the society we helped build. Nor can we allow white institutions such as corporate America to abandon the struggle. We must work toward the "beloved" community, black and white together.

We must all partake in the action and the passion of our turbulent times, dedicated to service and to building an open, pluralistic, integrated society. ■

Mr. Jordan, a senior partner in the Washington, D.C.–based law firm of Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, is one of the founders of the Joint Center, and currently serves on its Board of Governors. This article is an address that Mr. Jordan presented at the seventh annual Executive Leadership Council recognition dinner on October 26, 1995 in Washington, D.C.

National Policy Institute Focuses on Change

1996 Forum to Focus on Devolution to States, the Changing Roles of Government, and Success Stories on Community Development

by Yvonne Scruggs

One of the most profound results of America's disastrous Great Depression of the 1930s was the dramatic expansion of the role the federal government played in the lives of ordinary citizens. Many of the programs to address human needs and powers to protect the rights of citizens, administered by the federal government over the last 60 years, are now being "devolved" and transferred to the states as part of the GOP's "Contract with America." Americans in general and black Americans in particular have no idea whether this massive shift of power to states will work, or how it will be implemented.

The major goal of the Seventh National Policy Institute (NPI VII), being held in Washington, D.C., next January 25 to 27, is to address these troubling uncertainties at the beginning of the 1996 presidential election year. Cosponsored by the Joint Center and seven national organizations of black elected and appointed officials, this quadrennial event is a national, nonpartisan conference that brings together black public officials from all levels of government to address high stakes issues. Under the theme, "The Changing Role of Government," NPI VII will open substantive discussions of key elements of the new conservatism in making public policy, paying special attention to what is in the best interest of African Americans, and examining how African Americans can assert their influence in the new political landscape.

Many questions remain as to who is going to benefit and who is going to suffer as a result of the shift in resources and authority to the states. In many respects the shift recalls a history in which poor, black, and other politically and economically marginal groups were neglected before the Great Depression, when state governments could not or would not meet their special needs.

When the federal government stepped in between 1930 and 1963, total federal payments to local governments jumped by more than 3,700 percent in a federal-local relationship that largely excluded states from significant decision making. The flow of dollars to cities increased with President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program. Today, annual federal spending for Medicaid, welfare, and employment training alone is more than $200 billion.

Whether all or any of these dollars will accompany the programs sent to the states will be among the chief concerns of the politicians, pundits, experts, and executives of public organizations and private corporations who will address their attention at NPI VII.

NPI VII will engage scholars, community and civil rights leaders, business executives, students, and journalists in an effort to develop strategies and build coalitions for the benefit of African Americans and society as a whole. It will open with a dinner on Thursday evening, January 25. Vice President Al Gore has been invited to be the keynote speaker on that occasion. Harvard University philosophy professor Cornel West has been invited to address the session on the responsibilities of African Americans themselves to deal with their critical issues in this period of change and uncertainty. Other themes in the conference will include the impact of federal devolution and the imposition of states rights on black communities. A constant thread through all sessions will be the quest for a balance between African American initiative and the government's legitimate responsibilities.

Concurrent workshops will explore topics on the federal devolution agenda that have special significance for the African American community: proposed changes in the health care system; urban economic development, including minority business, job creation, and workforce preparation; the politics of public education; and dismantling the safety net. Success Story Seminars will feature special presentations by persons from across the country who have successfully addressed these issues at the community level.

Institute cosponsors who will be included in the program are: Congressman Donald Payne, Congressional Black Caucus; Judge William Cousins, Judicial Council of the National Bar Association; Earline Parmon, National Association of Black County Officials; Mayor David Moore, National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials; State Representative Lois DeBerry, National Black Caucus of State Legislators; George E. Evans, National Caucus of Black School Board Members; and Dr. Robert B. Ingram, National Conference of Black Mayors.

Dr. Dolores Cross, president of Chicago State University, has agreed to be a luncheon speaker. Representatives of local Community Action Programs and community-based organizations and members of the Congress of National Black Churches also will be included in the program.

There has never been a more important time to assemble African American officeholders to discuss America's problems and possible remedies to them. ■

To register or obtain additional information, contact Dr. Yvonne Scruggs at the Joint Center at (202) 789-3500, or fax 789-6390. See registration form on the back page of this issue of *FOCUS*.

Dr. Scruggs is the director of the Joint Center's Urban Policy Institute.

October/November 1995

POLITICAL TRENDLETTER

Congress Votes for Unequal Justice for Blacks

While much recent attention has been given to the congressional debate over budget priorities and tax breaks, large bipartisan majorities on Capitol Hill have passed measures on criminal justice policy that will have lopsided and negative impacts on minorities. Under GOP leadership, Congress has adopted legislation that establishes two standards of justice in the enforcement of drug laws—a harsh one for blacks and a more lenient one for whites. Congress has also shown a disturbing willingness to undo the crime prevention provisions of the omnibus crime bill enacted last year, choosing instead to emphasize increased incarceration. In this issue of TrendLetter, we focus on three key roll-call votes in the U.S. House of Representatives, all from this session of Congress, which exemplify these unbalanced policies and would have a disproportionately negative impact on African Americans and Latinos. The chart that follows shows the voting record on these three issues for each of the 100 members of the House whose home district is at least 15 percent black.

Vote No.1—Racially Unbalanced Criminal Sentences

In October, Congress voted to overturn the U.S. Sentencing Commission's recommendation to eliminate the current disparity in prison sentences meted out to blacks and whites for the possession of crack and powder cocaine. Much of the growth in the imprisonment of black males has been driven by mandatory minimum sentencing statutes, mandated by Congress and the states, which require long terms of incarceration for the possession of crack cocaine. Currently, federal penalties related to crack, a drug commonly used by black inner-city substance abusers, are 100 times more severe than penalties for equal amounts of powder cocaine, which is disproportionately used by whites. If a first-time federal offender is found in possession of five grams of crack (the weight of two pennies), he is subject to an automatic felony sentence of five years without parole. It would take 500 grams of powder cocaine for a person to receive a mandatory five-year sentence.

The U.S. Sentencing Commission voted on April 10 to end the 100-to-1 disparity in sentencing between crack and powder cocaine in the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, and to recommend that Congress equalize the nation's mandatory-minimum cocaine laws. The bipartisan Sentencing Commission was created in 1984 to review federal sentencing guidelines and recommend any changes by May 1 of each year. These changes become law automatically unless Congress countermands them by November 1.

This fall, a majority in Congress voted to reverse the Commission's recommendation to equalize the sentencing laws between crack and powder cocaine. On October 18, the House rejected, by a margin of 98 to 316, a compromise measure introduced by Rep. **JOHN CONYERS** (D-Mich.) to adopt the Commission's recommendation as it applies to drug possession but not distribution. By a similar margin, the House passed H.R. 2259 to overturn the Commission's recommendation, preserving the law's disparate effect on racial groups. Later that same day, the House passed a Senate version of the bill (S. 1254) by voice vote. This marks the first time Congress has ever reversed any of the Commission's more than 500 recommendations. ***Vote No.1.*** *Roll call vote No. 723, October 18, 1995, to equalize the sentencing laws for possession of crack and powder cocaine, rejected 98-316. A vote* ***for*** *was consistent with action by the majority of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). The bill became law on October 30, 1995.*

Vote No. 2—Funding for Crime Prevention

The House rejected an amendment introduced by Rep. **CLEO FIELDS** (D-La.) to transfer $200 million from the Commerce, Justice, State appropriations bill (H.R. 2076) providing $2 billion for Local Law Enforcement Block Grants to fund local crime prevention programs that had been authorized by the 1994 omnibus crime bill. The 104th Congress has provided no funding for these programs. Among the preventive measures Fields' amendment would support is drug treatment. Many low-income and minority Americans who have drug

dependencies wind up in the criminal justice system for drug possession. Residential drug therapy is often more appropriate than imprisonment, it is many times cheaper, and it is far more effective at reducing crime. Unfortunately, the country is spending more on prison beds than beds in drug treatment centers.

Counseling, remedial education, and specialized job training are also key to preventing crime and reducing recidivism among offenders who, typically, have dropped out of school and have acquired few employable skills. ***Vote No. 2.*** *Roll call No. 575, July 26, 1995, to transfer $200 million to crime prevention programs, rejected 128-296. A vote* ***for*** *was consistent with action by the majority of the CBC.*

Vote No. 3—To Spend Less for Prisons

The House rejected a bid by Rep. **BOBBY SCOTT** (D-Va.) to divert $300 million from so-called "truth in sentencing" grants made to states to build more prisons. Scott's proposal would have shifted the funds to the Local Law Enforcement Block Grants under the Commerce, Justice, State appropriations bill. Under the "truth in sentencing" measures, prison construction grants are awarded to states that require offenders to serve at least 85 percent of their full sentences, essentially eliminating parole. The ostensible justification for these measures is to get dangerous offenders off the streets. But a large percentage of the offenders who have been convicted in recent years include first-time, nonviolent minority drug offenders.

The inmate population in state and federal prisons has increased by more than 120 percent over the last decade, with the number of Americans behind bars approaching one and a half million. In the last decade, state governments have spent $34.6 billion in tax dollars on the construction of nearly 1,000 penal facilities. The average annual cost of incarceration varies from state to state but reaches as high as $35,000 per prisoner. ***Vote No. 3.*** *Roll call No. 573, July 26, 1995, to spend $300 million less for prison construction, rejected 105-321. A vote* ***for*** *was consistent with action by the majority of the CBC.*

How to Read This Chart

In the chart below, a plus sign (+) indicates a vote consistent with the position taken by the majority of the Congressional Black Caucus; a minus sign (-) indicates the reverse; and a question mark (?) indicates that the legislator did not vote. CBC members' names appear in boldface. Of the two black Republican members of the House, **GARY FRANKS** of Connecticut voted "no" to racially balanced drug sentences, funding crime prevention, and spending less for prisons. **J.C. WATTS** of Oklahoma voted for the equalization of drug sentencing and against the other two measures. These two members are not included in the chart because their districts are just 5 and 7 percent black, respectively. The rules of the House bar **ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,** the Democratic delegate from the majority-black District of Columbia, from voting on the floor of the House.

State	District	Member	Party	Black Voting-age Population (Percent)	House Votes 1	2	3
Alabama	1	Callahan	(R)	26	-	-	-
	2	Everett	(R)	21	-	-	-
	3	Browder	(D)	24	+	-	-
	5	Cramer	(D)	14	-	-	-
	7	**Hilliard**	(D)	64	+	+	+
Arkansas	1	Lincoln	(D)	15	-	-	-
	2	Thornton	(D)	15	-	-	-
	4	Dickey	(R)	24	-	-	-
California	7	Miller	(D)	15	+	+	+
	9	**Dellums**	(D)	29	+	+	+
	32	**Dixon**	(D)	40	+	+	+
	35	**Waters**	(D)	44	+	+	+
	37	**Tucker**	(D)	34	?	+	+
Delaware	At-Large	Castle	(R)	15	-	-	-

State	District	Member	Party	Black Voting-age Population (Percent)	House Votes 1	2	3
Florida	2	Peterson	(D)	21	+	-	-
	3	**Brown**	(D)	51	+	+	+
	11	Gibbons	(D)	15	+	+	-
	17	**Meek**	(D)	54	+	+	+
	23	**Hastings**	(D)	46	+	+	+
Georgia	1	Kingston	(R)	20	-	-	-
	2	**Bishop**	(D)	52	+	+	+
	3	M. Collins	(R)	16	-	-	-
	5	**Lewis**	(D)	58	+	+	+
	8	Chambliss	(R)	18	-	-	-
	10	Norwood	(R)	17	-	-	-
	11	**McKinney**	(D)	60	+	+	?
Illinois	1	**Rush**	(D)	68	+	+	+
	7	**C. Collins**	(D)	60	+	+	+
	12	Costello	(D)	15	-	-	-
Indiana	1	Visclosky	(D)	19	-	+	-
	10	Jacobs	(D)	27	-	+	-
Kentucky	3	Ward	(D)	16	-	-	-
Louisiana	2	**Jefferson**	(D)	56	+	+	+
	3	Tauzin	(D)	20	-	-	-
	4	**Fields**	(D)	63	?	+	+
	5	McCrery	(R)	20	-	-	-
	7	Hayes	(D)	18	-	-	-
Maryland	3	Cardin	(D)	16	-	-	+
	4	**Wynn**	(D)	56	+	+	+
	5	Hoyer	(D)	18	-	+	-
	7	**Mfume**	(D)	68	+	+	+
Massachusetts	8	Kennedy	(D)	20	+	+	-
Michigan	9	Kildee	(D)	16	-	+	-
	14	**Conyers**	(D)	65	+	+	+
	15	**B. Collins**	(D)	68	+	?	?
Mississippi	1	Wicker	(R)	20	-	-	-
	2	**Thompson**	(D)	58	+	+	+
	3	Montgomery	(D)	28	-	-	-
	4	Parker	(D)	37	+	-	-
	5	Taylor	(D)	18	-	-	-
Missouri	1	**Clay**	(D)	48	+	+	+
	5	McCarthy	(D)	21	+	-	-
New Jersey	1	Andrews	(D)	15	+	-	-
	10	**Payne**	(D)	57	+	+	+
New York	4	Frisa	(R)	15	-	-	-
	6	**Flake**	(D)	55	+	+	+

State	District	Member	Party	Black Voting-age Population (Percent)	House Votes 1	2	3
New York (cont'd)	10	**Towns**	(D)	59	+	+	+
	11	**Owens**	(D)	72	+	+	+
	15	**Rangel**	(D)	47	?	+	+
	16	Serrano	(D)	42	+	+	+
	17	Engel	(D)	40	+	+	+
	30	Quinn	(R)	15	-	-	-
N. Carolina	1	**Clayton**	(D)	53	+	+	+
	2	Funderburk	(R)	20	-	-	-
	3	Jones	(R)	20	-	-	-
	4	Heineman	(R)	19	-	-	-
	7	Rose	(D)	17	-	?	-
	8	Hefner	(D)	21	-	-	-
	12	**Watt**	(D)	53	+	+	+
Ohio	1	Chabot	(R)	27	-	-	-
	3	Hall	(D)	16	+	-	-
	11	**Stokes**	(D)	55	+	+	+
	12	Kasich	(R)	21	-	-	-
Pennsylvania	1	Foglietta	(D)	50	+	+	+
	2	**Fattah**	(D)	58	+	+	+
	14	Coyne	(D)	16	+	+	+
S. Carolina	1	Sanford	(R)	18	-	-	-
	2	Spence	(R)	23	?	-	-
	3	Graham	(R)	19	-	-	-
	4	Inglis	(R)	18	-	-	+
	5	Spratt	(D)	28	-	-	-
	6	**Clyburn**	(D)	58	+	+	+
Tennessee	5	Clement	(D)	21	-	-	+
	8	Tanner	(D)	17	-	-	-
	9	**Ford**	(D)	54	+	+	+
Texas	1	Chapman	(D)	16	?	-	-
	2	Wilson	(D)	15	?	-	-
	5	Bryant	(D)	15	-	+	-
	9	Stockman	(R)	20	-	?	-
	11	Edwards	(D)	15	-	-	-
	18	**Jackson-Lee**	(D)	49	+	+	+
	24	Frost	(D)	18	-	+	-
	25	Bentsen	(D)	25	-	-	-
	30	**Johnson**	(D)	47	+	+	+
Virginia	1	Bateman	(R)	17	?	?	?
	2	Pickett	(D)	16	-	-	+
	3	**Scott**	(D)	61	+	+	+
	4	Sisisky	(D)	31	+	-	+
	5	Payne	(D)	23	-	-	+
Wisconsin	5	Barrett	(D)	29	-	-	-

MUSIC, a Poor Man's Internet

A Public-School–Managed Computer Network Has Empowered the Residents of a Low-Income Newark Public Housing Development

by Ronald Roach

Before this year, Barbara Johnson, 49, barely knew anyone who lived in the apartments surrounding hers in Newark's New Community public housing project, where she has lived since 1991. Medically disabled because of a heart condition, Johnson felt isolated in her building, where drug dealers represent a special element of danger. She rarely ventured out of the apartment, which she shares with two young grandsons, Troy and Kasson. But at the urging of Kasson, who is just ten, Johnson has had a Macintosh computer installed in her home through a special computer networking project called Making Healthy MUSIC. This network has become a link between Johnson and her neighbors and has made health facilities and public institutions accessible in ways that were unimaginable a year ago.

Last year, the Newark School District obtained a $106,000 federal grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration for support of "Making Healthy MUSIC." Serving the low-income, mostly black and Latino residents of New Community, "Making Healthy MUSIC" is demonstrating the viability and value of computer networks in poor urban neighborhoods.

Developed by Dr. Alan Shaw, an African American computer scientist in Boston, MUSIC (Multi-User Sessions in Community) consists of Apple Macintosh computers loaded with original software to create a neighborhood-based network. MUSIC software contains programs and a database that can be tailored to the specific needs and interests of its users. As a doctoral student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Media Laboratory, Shaw came up with the idea of a community-based network as the basis of his dissertation.

Once Shaw developed the software for MUSIC, he placed Apple Macintosh computers in the homes of his neighbors in Dorchester, a predominantly black, mixed-income borough of Boston that is plagued by crime, homelessness, and teenage gangs. He also founded a company this year to market MUSIC software to computer users belonging to neighborhood and community groups and associations.

Tweetie Bird Logs On

News of Shaw's successful network project in Dorchester inspired Newark school officials to hire him to direct the establishment of a similar program in their city. So far, 20 computers have been placed in the homes of New Community residents whose children are enrolled at the area's public Newton Street Elementary School, and 14 computers have been placed in public locations, including the city's Newton Street Elementary School, the New Jersey Medical School, a public library, Gethsemane Baptist Church, and the New Community Social Services agency. Pamela Morgan, the school district's computer project coordinator for the Newark School District, who wrote the proposal to obtain funding support for Making Healthy MUSIC, says those participating come largely from low-income families headed by single mothers and grandmothers.

"Few of the adults or children in the New Community housing development have ever used personal computers before," says Morgan. Barbara Johnson says the only previous contact she'd had with computers was the Newark public library's card catalogue. "I wasn't able to use it myself. The librarian had to help me find what I was looking for," says Johnson. "Now I go like crazy on my computer and the MUSIC network has opened a whole new world to me."

When users log on to MUSIC, graphic images of buildings and streets—depicting the New Community neighborhood—appear on the monitor. Using a mouse, users can click on a specific building, such as the Newton Street Elementary School, and post questions or comments in "rooms" specified in each building. For example, to use the "Asthma/Allergy" or "Family Medicine" room, users click onto an image of the New Jersey Medical School building. Each user logs onto the network with his or her own password and icon. ("Tweetie Bird," "Bugs Bunny," and "Porky Pig" are the passwords of a few enthusiastic users at the moment.)

Not only has MUSIC brought computer literacy to household members, but it has also enabled users to share news, link up with key institutions and agencies, and organize community activities through electronic mail, shared bulletin boards, and electronic "chat rooms"—essentially party-lines for conversations conducted between users. Each participating family with a Macintosh is required to allow four other families in the housing project to use its computer.

For Barbara Johnson's family, MUSIC has become a vital educational tool. Her grandsons now do their homework on the computer. The network also links them directly with the children's elementary school. By simply clicking on the

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Mr. Roach is a Washington-based writer who specializes in subjects pertaining to science and technology.

MUSIC

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principal's room, they can get schedules of school activities and arrange appointments with teachers.

Insulin Shock and Bee Stings

MUSIC is also helping to improve the health of computer users by giving them unique communication access to the New Jersey Medical School located nearby. A system for making appointments with physicians and medical and health inquiries was established with the cooperation of the medical school's Dr. Caryl J. Heaton, a family physician and associate professor of family medicine. Users can click onto "Ask the Doctor," "Asthma/Allergy," "Pharmacology," and "Family Medicine" rooms and type in questions about a range of health problems.

Some questions asked so far: "What's the difference between a kidney stone and a gall bladder stone?"; "What's the first thing I should do in the case of insulin shock, bee sting, poisoning, or an asthma attack?"; and "Which drug store has the lowest price for Tylenol?" Heaton or one of her colleagues tries to respond to the queries within a day or two with clear, simple answers at a basic reading level using a minimum of technical terms. The medical school has also provided a directory of clinics, listing their hours and telephone numbers.

"I think MUSIC is a wonderful idea because it's inspired many of the people in the New Community housing development to use computers to find ways to be more healthy," say Heaton. "In the past, people in the housing development have only used the clinic and emergency room of this medical facility. But they never got quality primary care." Heaton sees MUSIC tearing down walls of distrust between community residents and the medical facility, and she sees the program as promoting preventive medicine and health education.

Morgan says MUSIC users also conduct regular group discussions in chat rooms for real-time exchanges. Two such discussion groups, the "Circle of Sisters" and the "Circle of Brothers," are adult support groups whose members share concerns and information on relationships, depression, and parenting. Other designated chat rooms to date are a "Poetry" room, "Hip Hop" room and a "Kids Corner," the last being a place where young users compete to see who can give the right answers to math and history quizzes. Barbara Johnson moderates an "AIDS" room, a subject of special interest to her because she lost her son, daughter-in-law, and a 15-month-old grandchild to the disease. Her daughter-in-law, who had contracted the HIV virus through an incestuous sexual encounter, was too ashamed to come forward for treatment. Johnson believes this shortened her life and the lives of her husband and his child, and hopes more open discussion of these problems could help prevent future tragedies.

The network bulletin board enables residents to schedule community activities, solicit volunteers, make assignments, and facilitate planning. Using the bulletin board has made possible a splash party for children, pot luck dinners, bake sales, flea markets, a trip to Atlantic City, an ongoing waste recycling project, and even a collective birthday party for neighbors born in the months of June, July, and August. Network users have learned through the bulletin board about high school GED classes, where to register to vote, and the formation of a walking club. The network was also used to organize a meeting with the police to discuss the unsolved murder of Frankie Williams, 22, a resident of the housing project.

A Model to Replicate

Willie Thomas, principal of Newton Street Elementary, is committed to seeing Making Healthy MUSIC become a permanent part of the New Community neighborhood and school. Thomas, who has been principal at Newton Street Elementary for 20 years, showed his support early when he confronted drug dealers over the computer project last March. Thomas says dealers working out of the housing complex tried to intimidate parents, who were helping to set up the computer system, and were threatening parents because they had assumed the network would be used to report on their drug activities. "I told them that this project was for the education of the children and had nothing to do with them, and they backed off," says Thomas.

The MUSIC network has motivated parents participating in the program to take a more active role in their children's education. "Four parents elected to offices on the PTA this year have MUSIC computers in the home. Before the program, I had never seen any of these people. I didn't know who they were. We've become like a big family because of Making Healthy MUSIC," says Thomas. Johnson adds, "The network has made the neighborhood more like a village." Pamela Morgan says it is "uniting a fragmented community and providing hope for children and adults."

Federal support for the program has made it possible to continue the project so the network can be evaluated as a model for helping to bridge the information technology gap between rich and poor. The program was recently refunded for a second year, allowing three more computers to be placed in organizations and seven more in homes. The goal of the community network, as Pamela Morgan sees it, is to become a self-supporting system.

Practical networking models and relevant computer software for disadvantaged communities are scarce. Indeed, community activists and public officials have questioned whether new information technology can make a difference in the lives of low-income and minority Americans. Making Healthy MUSIC shows what poor, inner-city computer users can do when they are connected to local networks and have the means to produce information to benefit their communities.

Shaw believes MUSIC is a networking model that need not be limited to inner-city residents, that it can provide virtually any residential community with the means to create its own internal network. "Newark is a critical dissemination model," says Shaw. "It has shown us how MUSIC can move into other communities. If MUSIC can work in Newark, then it can work anywhere in America." ■

Inside the Million Man March

Personal Observation and a Howard University Survey Reveal That the Participants in the October Event Were Among Black America's Finest

by David C. Ruffin

For months before the Million Man March, I'd been getting hints that something big was building. From time to time, I'd hear expressions of enthusiasm about joining the event from younger men with blue-collar jobs who tended to be disconnected from politics. On the other hand, many of the middle-class, college-educated men over forty I know had strong reservations about the march, because of a discomfort with its principal organizers or with the fact that women weren't invited.

I predicted, therefore, that most of the men who would show up in Washington on October 16 would be nonprofessional men in their late teens and early twenties who had never been politically active. I was wrong.

By the time I reached the west steps of the Capitol that day at 10:00 a.m., the grounds beneath them swelled with a sea of manhood that extended down the Mall to the other side of the Washington monument a mile away.

Among those I met: a mechanical engineer who drove down from Rochester with a vanload of his Kappa fraternity brothers. A group of high school students neatly clad in black suits, who drove up from Mobile, Alabama, with their teachers. A political consultant to the California Republican Party. A teacher who arrived in an eight-bus caravan from Gary, Indiana. Two businessmen who flew in from Seattle. A subway conductor from Manhattan. A manager of a cosmetics line from Chicago.

They Marched Not as Followers

Few marchers came as followers of any individual. For many, attending the march was an expression of black unity and a way to affirm what is best among African American men. Kevin Parson, a teacher at St. Catherine's Middle School in Baltimore, brought 35 boys from the school's Mentorship-to-Manhood program. "This time and place will be marked in the history books," he told me, " and five or ten years from now these young men will look back, reflect, and be able to say, 'I was there.' " Many men brought their own sons, some lofted on their shoulders. A father and mother walked hand in hand with their young son and daughter.

A bridge operator from New York City, who wouldn't give his name, risked getting fired by coming to the march. He said he took the day off because it was a good cause. Jennings McBride, one of three men in their fifties from a small town in, Pennsylvania, told me, "The economic agenda speaks to my way of thinking. If we develop our neighborhoods economically, then we'll have less concern for what the Republican Congress might do."

Some saw the march in religious terms. Abdul Karim Mohammed Bey from Reading, Pennsylvania, who described himself as a Moorish American, said, "This is a family gathering of God for black men to come together as a family. We are the most divided people in America. We must come together and love one another as a people. If we love ourselves, we can love others." Two paramedics from East Orange and Plainfield, New Jersey, came to support the march by volunteering to staff an emergency medical station. As an entrepreneur from the District of Columbia, dressed in colorful African attire and there with his two sons, 8 and 11, put it: "The majority of us here are positive men with good values whose families are foremost in their lives. We are not the drug dealers they show on TV. Throughout history, we have helped build and sustain this nation."

The march should not be defined, as some in the media insist, by the personality of Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam and all of his past speeches, or Jesse Jackson, or Congressman Kweisi Mfume (D-Md.), or any other leader or speaker, for that matter. The march was really about Kevin Parson, Jennings McBride, and the hundreds of thousands of other men who came to Washington, paying their own way.

Contrary to some characterizations, the Million Man March was not an expression of antisemitism, racial hatred, or separatism. Some critics of the march have asked how African Americans would feel if white supremacist David

(Continued on back page)

Mr. Ruffin is the editor of *FOCUS*.

Million Man March—A Statistical Profile*

Age:

18–29 years: 34% 30–44: 43% 45 and older: 23%

Education:

Less than High School 5%, High School Graduate 22%, Some College 34%, Graduate or Professional School 14%

Income:

Under $24,999: 17% $25,000–49,000: 37% $50,000–74,999: 23% Over $75,000: 18%

Political Party Preference:

Democrats 62%, Republicans 3%, Independents 20%, Other 15%

Ideology:

Liberal 31%, Moderate 21%, Conservative 13%, Nationalist 11%, Other 25%

Presidential Candidate Preference:

Colin Powell 37%, Jesse Jackson 23%, Bill Clinton, 14 %, Ross Perot 3%, Bob Dole 1%, None 22%

** Percentages may not add up to 100%*

Source: Howard University Political Science Department and The Wellington Group, a black-owned market research firm based in Oaklyn, New Jersey

Duke had called together a similar rally in Washington. This is a false comparison. David Duke would not have made atonement a major theme. David Duke would not have shared his platform with the white equivalents of Rosa Parks, Dorothy Height, or Stevie Wonder. Gang leaders at the Million Man March publicly asked forgiveness for the harm they had done to black communities and vowed to offend no more. Would David Duke have encouraged racist skinheads to do the same?

While many attending the event expressed concern about the GOP's legislative agenda, they did not come to Washington with clenched fists. Indeed, there was nothing but civility and good feeling among those gathered there. Women and white people who came to the march, though not expressly invited, were made to feel welcome. Members of the Nation of Islam stood as marshalls along the gravel walkways that ribbon the Mall, but their services were quite unnecessary. On October 16, The Mall was one of the safest places in America. I will never forget the sense of collective trust we all felt as we held up one, five, ten, and twenty dollar bills to drop in large plastic bags to support march expenses. The people who make their livings cataloging the "pathologies" of black males would find no pathologies in evidence at the March.

Most of the marchers are politically active. Over 86 percent of the marchers arrived in Washington already registered to vote. Nearly half said that they had contacted a public official, contributed money to a political candidate, served in an election campaign, or attended a public policy hearing. Thirty-eight percent had visited their members of Congress, or state legislators, and 22 percent had attended state or national political conventions.

I came away from the march impressed by the fact that so many strong, intelligent black men from all over the country and with such diverse backgrounds could be mobilized for such an event. These were men who came for their own reasons and, unlike many earlier black marchers on Washington, they paid for the march themselves. Add to their numbers the millions of sympathetic men who stayed home. Then add the women of similar political bent who also fit the socioeconomic profile of the men on the Mall. The sum represents a formidable political force that neither major political party has worked very hard to attract. As we approach the 1996 presidential campaign season, Democratic and Republican leaders would do well to look inside the Million Man March when considering who they should reach out to during next year's elections. ■

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