

Million Man March may widen racial gap

■ **OUR OPINION:** The event could strengthen black communities but weaken America in the end

Today thousands of African-American men will join together in the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. The demonstration promises to be a symbol of black male solidarity and empowerment designed to alter the course of the nation's African-American communities.

In a time when America's black inner cities have become drug-dealing war zones, unemployment among black men is high and black men are eight times more likely to be murdered than white men, the march would seem to be a powerful step toward positive change.

But the march could create more problems than it solves.

March organizer and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has been criticized for being racially divisive, sexist, anti-Semitic and homophobic. His presence at the helm of the event has raised more than a few eyebrows, not the least of which have come from African-American women.

The Nation of Islam has come under attack for its misogynistic stance on women's issues and for repeatedly seeking to establish dominance over black women.

Former Black Panther Professor Angela Davis, Ms. magazine Editor-in-Chief Marcia Gillespie and other women have formed a group opposing the march named African-American Agenda 2000. The group contends

that Farrakhan's agenda to reestablish black men as family breadwinners and community leaders will be achieved at the expense of black women, pushing women back into domestic servitude and financial dependence on men.

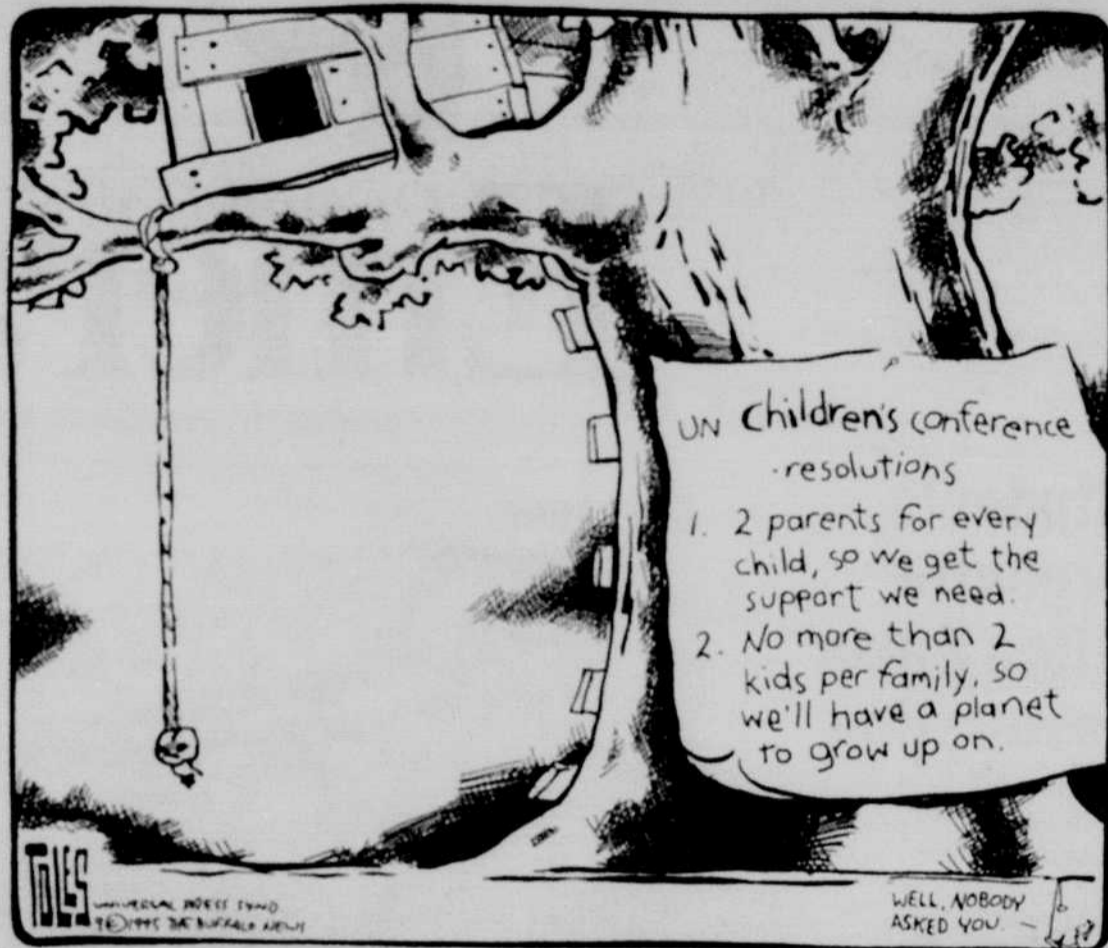
In addition, while Farrakhan has said part of his mission is to stop domestic violence in African-American communities and lift the burden of family and community leadership from the shoulders of black women, he absolves black men of the culpability for those problems.

The march, he has said, will be an "atonement" for black men who continue the "abuse of women that our slave masters put in motion."

Domestic abuse is not race-specific however, and if black men learned wife-beating from slave owners, so did the white sons and grandsons of those owners. As such, Farrakhan's message of "atonement" is based on a transference of blame.

Black men continue to battle racism that is reinforced by media images that portray them as drug dealers and criminals. However, black male empowerment cannot be achieved at the expense of subjugating women or blaming whites. Atonement requires men to accept responsibility for their actions and then change them.

The Million Man March event holds a golden opportunity to strengthen black communities, but it will fail if Farrakhan and his supporters achieve their goal by strengthening the walls of gender and race that divide our country.



University's top priority is not teaching

Why do some University officials feel compelled to lie about or gloss over the real causes behind many of the problems students face? Assertions made by Rand Stamm, parking program coordinator, about campus parking (ODE, Oct. 9) is one example.

Stamm claimed that there were more spaces reserved for faculty and staff than for students because more faculty and staff live too far from the University to walk, ride a bike or the bus. Bull!

There are 17,121 students and approximately 3,000 faculty, administration and staff at the University. If only 20 percent of the students live away from campus, then there are at least 3,400 students who need parking versus fewer than 3,000 combined faculty and staff.

The 20 percent figure is conservative if you consider that more than 5,300 students are at least 25 years old and are less likely to live on campus than younger students.

The number of lots where students can park and the number reserved for only faculty and staff are about even. However, faculty and staff are allowed full access to all student lots; parking along 13th Ave. is limited to faculty, staff and visitors, and the few metered spaces available to students near the EMU and Mac Court are frequently "hooded" to provide parking for "special" visitors.

Those yellow bags covering the meters are infuriating and insulting, especially when the spaces go unused for most of the day. Those bags speak far more eloquently than Stamm ever could.

They proclaim to the world that students are at the bottom of the University's food chain and that the few crumbs grudgingly thrown to them can be withdrawn at any time for any reason.

It took a while to recognize this oligarchic pecking order, but as soon as I understood the condition it was easy to see the cause.

Students are transients, or migrant workers if you prefer. They provide the permanent residents (faculty, administration and staff) with income, an excuse to solicit more funding, free labor and a gene pool of applicants who want to become permanent residents.

Don't take my word for this. Look around. Start by reading the University's "Statement of Purpose" inside the cover of the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin*.

I came here with the foolish idea that the primary role of the faculty was to teach. I failed to read the fine print. It says, "The University of Oregon is a comprehensive research institute and the only Oregon member of the Association of American Universities." I didn't understand this distinction until I had several long talks with some of my teachers.

COMMENTARY

Larry Haftl

The first priority of a "teaching" university, after survival of course, is to transfer information from the collective-knowledge database to the students.

The first priority of a "research" university is to expand and improve the quality of data in the database. At a "research" university, faculty career advancement depends primarily on the quality of the faculty members' research and the amount of money, usually in the form of grants, they can generate.

As soon as I understood that professors are primarily paid to do research and not to teach, I appreciated even more the effort many of them make to provide a high quality learning experience.

I can sympathize with professors who are forced to teach even though they have no interest in or ability to do so, but that doesn't excuse the University from selling such sub-standard classes to students, nor does it excuse the deliberately deceptive practices the University uses to cover up its shortcomings.

Why doesn't the *Bulletin* explain the significance of being a research institute versus a teaching institute? Could it be that enrollment would drop if more people understood the difference?

Why are the course descriptions for 100-level, foreign-language classes deliberately misleading? The descriptions say the courses are "introductory level" with no prerequisites, but a student without prior experience with the language will find it almost impossible to keep up.

Don't take my word for it; check the number of students who drop these classes during the first few weeks.

Three people I know dropped Spanish 101. How many more were misled into taking these "introductory" courses, were forced to drop and now have to pay \$10 and live with a "W" on their transcripts?

It makes sense for the University to put forth a pleasing package to its customers, but when life-altering and career decisions are being made, an unpleasant truth beats a sugar-wrapped lie.

When a member of the faculty or staff consciously hides the University's ugly warts beneath a veil of misinformation or outright lies, it diminishes the integrity of the entire University. It also makes it harder to remove those warts and to provide students with a fair level of customer service.

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