

EDITORIAL

Editorial Articles Do Not Necessarily
Reflect Or Represent The Views Of
The Portland Observer

BY REVEREND JESSE L. JACKSON
Monday, October 16, African American men gathered in large numbers in Washington, DC for the Million Man March.

They came from Baptist and Catholic churches, from AME congregations, from the Church of God in Christ, the Nation of Islam, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC).

Elected officials, ministers, business and union leaders, workers and the unemployed, they marched with the support of African American women, and with the hopes of African American children.

The march gained new momentum when a consensus was forged among Rev. Joseph Lowery of SCLC, Rep. Donald Payne (D-NJ), Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Rev. Clay Evans from Chicago, the Rev. Al Sharpton of New York and other community leaders with Minister Louis Farrakhan, who launched the initiative. All agreed that the march be ecumenical and broadly based, that it carry a moral tone of healing, and that it put forth a call for political, as well as, personal reform.

Why march? thirty-two years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called us to march because of the "Shameful condition of the Negro." Thirty-two years later, the names have changed but the shame remains. The civil rights movement opened doors for a new African American middle class, but those who were left behind are more isolated and more destitute than before.

In many cities, our babies die in infancy at Third World rates. Too many African Americans are born

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

One In A Million

into poverty and suffer malnutrition and environmental poisoning that can blunt their promise. Our children risk mean streets to attend schools in mean straits, often so rundown as to threaten their health rather than lift their minds. Those who do graduate face a world of unemployment and insecurity, of low-wage jobs and low-gauge hopes.

There are more African Americans in prison than in college. Young African American men suffer unemployment rates of up to 50 percent and higher in our inner cities. Those who succeed discover that discrimination still impedes their access to mortgages for homes, capital for small businesses, and insurance for safety and security.

Against these odds, many surrender. Young men sire babies that they do not raise. Families crack under the pressure of poverty and despair. Drugs and guns provide outlets for the pain. Black-on-black crime plagues our neighborhoods.

This surrender makes it easier for the larger society to justify its callous neglect. Racial scapegoating has fueled vicious attacks on working and poor people. Welfare mothers are termed lazy, so the national

commitment to protect mothers and children from destitution is ended. Unemployed young African American men are termed genetically limited, and a prison industrial complex grows to profit from their punishment. Cities are deemed hopeless and so abandoned.

Affirmative actions programs to open locked doors are termed discriminatory against those who already had a key, and so bridges to opportunity begin to fall. Budget deficits are addressed by cutting back programs for the poor, rather than poor programs.

And so we march. We march in a solemn commitment to one another of atonement and reconciliation. African American men must not surrender to despair. We may be born in the ghetto, but we cannot let the ghetto be born in us. We must rise above it. We must turn to each other, not on each other. As we atone for our wayward ways, we recommit ourselves to our families, our children and to one another.

We march in a purposeful demand for justice. The call for self-reliance and the demand for justice are not contradictory. They are complementary. As we rise above our

circumstance, we lay claim to the moral authority that makes the demand for equal justice compelling.

Thirty-two years ago, we came to redeem a check that had been returned, marked "insufficient funds." Today, we once again are told that justice must be deferred for lack of funds, but we know better. This Congress voted a billion dollars for a boat the Navy did not ask for, even as it cut a similar amount from the nation's poorest schools. This Administration found billions to bail out wealthy speculators in Mexican pesos, but can find no money to rebuild our cities.

Billions go to build prisons, and nothing for schools. Taxes are to be cut on the unearned income of the idle rich and raised on the hard wages of the working poor. In this rich nation, we suffer from a deficit not of dollars but of decency -- and so we march.

We can make a difference. In 1994, the Gingrich forces won by a cumulative total of about 19,000 votes in 39 critical races. In the negative campaign of 1994, six million fewer people voted than in the previous midterm election. Eight million African American are still unregistered. We will register African Americans to vote and vote in large numbers -- and so we march.

We came together on Oct. 16 at a critical and historic moment. New trails test us. Many fear that 1996 will be a repeat of 1896, with the advances of the last decades erased, as Congress builds jails for our hopes.

So African American men from all walks of life came together and stood up. When boats rise from the bottom, a powerful armada can be assembled. It is time to heal. It is time to challenge. It is time to march.

Vantage Point

Mayor Of Haiti's Capital City Appeals To Africans Americans For Support

On June 25, Joseph Emmanuel Charlemagne, popularly known to the Haitian masses as Manno, was elected Mayor of Port Au Prince, the Capital of Haiti.

A long time friend and ally of President Jean Bertrand Aristide, Manno confounded Haiti watchers by scoring a stunning upset over the candidate many believe to have been the choice of the U.S. By some accounts the U.S. funneled more than \$6 million into the campaign of the Evans Paul, the previous Mayor of the city, in an effort to influence the outcome of the election. It is widely believed that the U.S. was grooming Mr. Paul to be their hand picked successor to President Aristide.

But this effort to select the next President of Haiti failed when the Haitian masses rejected this scheme and elected Manno Charlemagne by a landslide margin of nearly 4-1. Manno achieved this remarkable victory on a budget of less than \$7,000. The election of Manno Charlemagne to the office of Mayor of Port Au Prince is a clear expression of the determination of the Haitian masses to control their own destiny and build authentic democracy in the first Black Republic in this hemisphere. Often called the Bob Marley of Haiti, Manno Charlemagne is a folk singer who gained enormous popularity

among the Haitian masses, particularly the youth, for his songs of protest and opposition to the dread Duvalier dictatorship and the illicit regime of the coup leaders who overthrew the government of President Aristide in 1991. Time and time again he faced death in daring to speak truth to power as a part of the popular movement for democracy in Haiti. It was this fearless and unflinching advocacy for democracy which led the Haitian masses to draft a reluctant Manno Charlemagne to run for Mayor of Port Au Prince to defeat the machinations of the U.S.

Needless to say, neither his opponent nor the U.S. was pleased with the outcome of the June election. When Manno entered city hall to assume his duties as Mayor he found a building stripped of everything including the light fixtures. All of the typewriters, fax machines, desks, chairs, supplies and files were gone. And, while the U.S. was apparently willing to provide substantial aid to his predecessor, there has been no offer of assistance to the man who has emerged from the grassroots to become Mayor of Haiti's capital city.

It is against that backdrop that Mayor Charlemagne recently undertook a goodwill mission to the U.S. under the auspices of the Haiti Support Project of Campaign for a New Tomorrow (CNT). In a whirlwind

tour timed to coincide with the Annual Congressional Black Caucus Weekend, Mayor Charlemagne outlined an ambitious Four Year Plan, "dedicated to ensuring the rights of the impoverished masses of Port Au Prince." Appearing at events in New York, Washington D.C., Baltimore and Boston, the Mayor declared his intent to: Clean up the garbage, debris, and raw sewage that poses a serious health threat to the city; raise the level of education by creating county schools that will be available to the poor; create public shelters for the elderly, sick and homeless; create public clinics to provide health care for the poor, and food banks and soup kitchens to feed the homeless; and, implement a public works program that will provide jobs to the unemployed. Mayor Charlemagne plans to finance this community based programs by levying taxes on alcohol, tobacco and luxury goods and compelling Haiti's wealthy property owners, who have customarily refused to pay taxes, to comply with the law.

Mayor Charlemagne thanked African Americans for their solidarity with the drive to restore President Aristide to power and made a passionate appeal for ongoing support of the struggle for democracy and development in Haiti: "...We need you to serve as a voice for us in Haiti.

We need you to lobby on our behalf... We need your financial support, your technical assistance, your manpower. But most of all, we need your steadfast promise that we will not be forgotten."

It is to ensure that the struggle for democracy and development in Haiti is not forgotten that CNT has created the Haiti Support Project (HSP). Our goal is to assist the popular movement for democracy to succeed in spite of the effort of the U.S. government to impose its will on the Haitian people. Accordingly, in the coming weeks the HSP will be collecting school supplies, food and clothing and raising funds to support the community schools in Port Au Prince. In addition the HSP would like to collect medical supplies to support the public clinics which are being set up to service the poor. We would also like to identify fax machines, computers and other office equipment and furnishings to assist the Mayor to restore the physical infrastructure of city hall. Finally, an effort is underway to establish Sister City relations between Washington D.C., Boston and Port Au Prince with the goal of increasing the flow of technical assistance, socially responsible business investment and tourism to Haiti.

To contact the Haiti Support Project call: 410-521-9265

Civil Rights Journal: O.J. And Me

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON
For sixteen months not a public word from me about O.J. Not in writing, not in speaking.

I was determined that I would not be caught up in this country's obsession with fame, money, race and sex all rolled up in one case. I never watched the case on CNN. I was disgusted by the non-news reports every single day, even on Mondays when there had been no trial for two days.

And then there was that Tuesday. That Tuesday of the verdict. Then there was the pain. And a sense of bitterness. A sense of irony. A sense of sadness. A sense of joy.

It's been hard -- very hard -- to talk about the O.J. trial with white friends and colleagues. How do you explain to them the cries of elation from my brothers and sisters? If they have been blind to the history of the relationship between African Americans and the U.S. legal system, the response of my people makes little sense.

If they have not thought about the legal system and slaves and the passes our ancestors were required to carry and how, even if they escaped slavery and made it to freedom, they could be taken back again by the law or by bounty hunters, then it makes little sense. If they have not thought about the legal system and blacks during Jim Crow, when thousands of black men hung on branches of trees for not stepping off a sidewalk when passing a white person or just looking at a white woman, then it makes little sense. If they have not thought about the legal system and black men like Johnson Whitakers, the West Point cadet who a century ago was attacked by his white classmates, who nearly slashed off his ear and left him tied to his bed and then was accused of doing this to himself, who was court-martialed and disgraced for a hundred years, then it makes little sense. 400 years of the legal system not being on our side.

If they have not thought about the fact that today all African Amer-

ican mothers -- no matter how much money or education their family has or how good their child is -- must teach their male children what to do when they are stopped by a police officer because almost all of our male children will be at some time, then it makes little sense. If they have not thought about the thousands of cases of police brutality against people of color all across this nation, then it makes little sense. If they have not thought about the fact that there are few -- very few -- black families which haven't been touched by the criminal justice system, then it makes little sense. If they haven't been in an urban or suburban court room lately and seen almost all black and Hispanic people as defendants and almost all the whites as judges or court officers or recorders or guards, then it makes little sense. If whites are not aware of the historical and present-day context, then the response of my brother and sisters makes little sense.

But the pain for me comes from my being black and a woman. It's

hard to be black and a woman in America every day. Last Tuesday it was nearly unbearable.

The only other time in my life when I felt these two very essences of my identity were in dissonance was during the Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill hearings. The pain comes when I realize that half of the women murdered in the U.S. are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends. The pain comes when I think about the many African American women I have worked with, incarcerated for 15 years to life, mostly because they killed their husbands after years of being victims of domestic violence, often when they found their husbands abusing their children. Many of these women had never even had a speeding or a jaywalking ticket before. But the violence and the abuse became too great to bear. My pain is their pain.

It's not the O.J. Simpson case which has divided the nation. It's the criminal justice system and its history as oppressor which has caused the divide.

perspectives

Ode To A White Bronco, Or O.J. Rides Again

The ingenuous pretense of surprise at the Simpson verdict on the part of a manipulative establishment media comes as 'no surprise' -- not to those of us who early on recognized the awful truth of Dr. Marshall McLuhan's historic announcement, "The medium is the message."

When we review this sordid soap opera-of-a-trial, we must keep in mind several other penetrating observations by Dr. McLuhan

who was Director of the Center for Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto. He pointed out, first, that when Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in the 15th century, he created the "Reading Public" -- a vast news, knowledge and gossip-hungry group of human beings poised to devour this new printed word whether it was true, false or indifferent. For better or worse, we had media.

Secondly, he observed, that was only the beginning; "what we have called 'nations' in recent centuries did not, and could not precede Gutenberg's invention of the printing press any more than they can survive the advent of electronic circuitry (television) with its power of totally involving all people in all other cultures". This cogent perception led to an equally famous concept, "The Global Village" (Books by Marshall McLuhan are, "The Gutenberg Galaxy, Understanding Media and The Mechanical Bride").

With this background, we may better evaluate the corporate media's mercenary and merciless year-long campaign to boost ratings and advertising revenues. In some quarters this divisive exercise was known as the "People of Los Angeles County vs O.J. Simpson". To those of us long-familiar with a quaint American institution that not only can be quite punitive in demeanor at times, but which can have the temerity to ignore its own failing while lecturing the rest of us, none of this has been surprising.

There is a certain reassurance and renewed faith in an American people who firmly rejected a ratings-happy television industry's prediction of violence and bloodshed in the streets, whichever way the verdict went. Some stations rushed hordes of

reporters to do man-in-the-street interviews clearly designed to raise tempers and provoke outbursts. Others sent cameramen to cover police reserve units and the national Guard; there was still hope that the ratings and revenue game would not be completely lost. But, thankfully, Marshall McLuhan's "reading public" didn't buy.

And we all saw it, didn't we? When a "Not Guilty" verdict was returned in record time, the media went to pieces;

that classic American journalistic play, a new "Crime of the Century" had gone all wrong. Within minutes the masks had dropped all over the tube; even on the "Business Channel". Red-faced, bug-eyed commentators stumbled over news for which their culture and upbringing had not prepared them.

The media tribunal had appointed itself judge, jury and prosecutor but, now, the script had been altered and the quarry had escaped. The resentment was palpable; "O.J." was supposed to hang! Was he guilty? Who knows (beyond a shadow of a doubt)?

For a while the media will be busy exploiting and questioning a "divisiveness" of their own making -- if it indeed exists as portrayed. What the media will not be doing is confessing to this past year of dangerous neglect of vital concerns to the American people in the areas of health care, job loss and a could-care-less Congress.

Next week, Mounting media sins: As if the gratuitous violence were not enough, along with the program manager's demands that female newscasters show at least 14 inches of gleaming white thighs, many African Americans are protesting the "Evening Public Hair Follies". Following the evening news, there is an epidemic of low-budget crime specials filmed by television cameramen who accompany police on raids in low-income neighborhoods. They specialize in crashing into African American bedrooms along with the cops, catching black women in various states of undress. Of course, this is never done in white neighborhoods. Law suits!

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