



“Challenging People to Shape
a Better Future Now”

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Theft at Nonprofit Organizations:
Come on People

Two non-profit organizations,
with which I am familiar, both
rooted among African Americans,
have experienced embezzlement
during the last six months. Neither
organization is wealthy by any
stretch of the imagination. Both
organizations had or have leaders
who possess immense integrity and
a commitment to the mission of
their respective organizations.

Yet both organizations face a
crisis in their future. They were
both victims of embezzlement
carried out by individuals who
were central to the financial opera-
tions of the organization. In both
cases the individuals were very
“nice” individuals, apparently caring
and capable. No one suspected
that either individual would be
capable of carrying out such an act.

I have found myself wondering
what goes through the head of
someone who works in a non-profit
organization that serves Black
people yet is prepared to steal from
that same organization? In the case
of one of these organizations, the
theft may kill the organization. The
amount in question is very substan-
tial and, even though the board of
directors has stepped up to the
plate, it is far from certain what
will happen next. So, this was not
just a theft: it was attempted murder.
Not only are these thieves taking
from their



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respective organizations but their
actions put these organizations—
and the people who work for them—
in utter jeopardy.

So, I ask again, what could these

the money would not be missed.

But this, apparently, proved very
easy. No one seemed to notice.
So, why not take a little more? Perhaps
that is what they were thinking.

By the time that the thefts were
discovered, both organizations
were out thousands of dollars. How
the stories end remains unclear. Hopefully,
the money will be recovered, but
most importantly, I hope that both
organizations survive.

No one suspected that either
individual would be capable of
carrying out such an act.

individuals be thinking? Did they
begin their employment planning
on theft? I rather doubt it. My
suspicion is that at a certain point
they concluded that they could
simply get away with it. They may
have taken a little—because in
both cases the thefts took place
over months—perhaps even with
the intention of paying it back. Or,
they may simply have thought that

Embezzlement regularly
destroys organizations. Even with
cameras watching employees, it is
possible to pull off such thefts. To
prevent them, it really must mean
that personal feelings, friendship,
etc., are irrelevant in the work-
place when it comes to fulfilling
one’s responsibilities. I know that
sounds cold, but if the money is
not yours and yours alone, then it

cannot be treated casually.

What can be done? Backup
mechanisms need to be put into
place. There needs to be regular
audits and a timely filing of all
Internal Revenue Service docu-
ments, such as 990s, in order to
demonstrate that the money is
being handled appropriately. There
also needs to be, on the part of
the board of directors, an atmos-
phere where people feel free to
ask questions. As someone who
has been on the board of numer-
ous non-profit organizations, I can
tell you that my eyes start to glaze
over when we get to finances. Un-
fortunately, that is a luxury we
cannot afford.

I do view this as attempted mur-
der and I feel that this is not a vic-
timless crime. It takes a great deal
to form and sustain any organiza-
tion that serves the public or
broader human needs. It takes
very little to tear one down or to
allow it to die slowly as its re-
sources are drained away by
greed.

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Scholar with the Institute for
Policy Studies, the immediate past
president of TransAfrica Forum,
and the co-author of “Solidarity
Divided.” He can be reached at
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Mobilizing the People Through the 2010 Elections

According to the news media
“tens of thousands” of people
attended the One Nation Working
Together Rally, or the 10.2.10
March, that was held at the
Lincoln Memorial on October 2,
2010. I would have liked to be
there, but Bennett College for
Women held our own mobiliza-
tion, a weekend that celebrated
new buildings, new energy, our
Friends and Family Weekend, a
phenomenal play, a magnificent
donation of art to our Steele Hall
Gallery, and so many other
moments of celebration. Still,
there were more than a dozen
Bennett students and faculty,
including Professor Karla
McLucas, and senior star Erica
Harris, on the bus from
Greensboro present at the march.

It seems that some folks are
drawing a line in the sand, saying
“no more”, being firm and focused
on issues of social and economic
justice. It’s important to affirm
the fact that we will never go
back. The day after people
gathered in Washington, Bennett
College celebrated its Founders’
Day with an address from former
U.S. Ambassador to South Africa,
Dr. James A. Joseph, who spoke
about activism and oscillation,
about the way rivers weave and
wind their way through our
consciousness. Dr. Joseph told
Bennett women that we have an
obligation to be activists, and he
put activism in perspective. (We
will be posting his talk on the
Bennett website this week).

There is an urgency in election
2010. This mid-term election’s
results will make a difference in



**BENNETT
COLLEGE**

**Julianne
Malveaux**

the many ways people engage in

Washington signaled a résistance
to the likes of Glen Beck and the
forces that would turn the clock
back. There was energy and
enthusiasm that was not fully
reflected in media reporting of
the day. The question that begs
to be answered revolves around
post-mobilization activity. What
happens after the March?

The purpose of the March was to

Lucy spoke to the many ways eco-
nomic empowerment occurs and
noted that President Obama has
altered the social contract as much
as President Roosevelt has be-
cause of health care legislation.
Lucy indicated that this phenom-
enal accomplishment is one that
deserves to be affirmed in the
mid-term election vote.

People will make a choice about
forward movement or backward
energy, and we will make that
choice a month from now. Some
will choose to stay home, avoid-
ing choice, but making the default
choice to allow others to deter-
mine their fate. Last Saturday’s
march was about momentum,
energy, excitement. It’s a spirit
that can be used to move us
forward.

In his address at Bennett College
for Women, Ambassador James
A. Joseph quoted Langston Huges,
our poet whose fealty to our na-
tion’s ideals is legendary. In 1938,
Esquire Magazine published
“Let America Be America Again,”
which included the line, “O, yes,
I say it plain, America never was
America to me, and yet I swear
this oath-- America will be!”
Langston Hughes embraced the
ideal of America, an ideal that we
have to opportunity to reclaim
with our voter participation on
November 2, 2010. What will we
do after the march? If we don’t
vote, we repudiate its energy and
ideals.

*Julianne Malveaux is President
of Bennett College for Women in
Greensboro, North Carolina.*

‘ It’s important to affirm the fact that
we will never go back’

political discourse. President
Obama has worked very hard to
move our nation forward. It hasn’t
been easy, nor perfect, but the
progress has been undeniable. At
the same time, there are these Tea
Party people who have been vocal
in their attempt to move our na-
tion backward. They say it is about
policy, but often it appears to be
related to race, and too many
African Americans have such
mixed feelings that we are silent
about the nonsense. Some African
Americans want to be post-racial
to conform to the tone of the
times. Others are clear that post-
racialism is an ineffective con-
struct when African Americans
and Whites experience such dif-
ferent economic realities – double
the unemployment rate, less than
a tenth of the wealth, and so on.

The 10/2/10 March on

engage folk in the outcome of the
November elections, which hinges
on turnout. Will the people who
were excited enough to vote for
change in 2008 return to the polls
to maintain a change agenda in
2010? Will the Tea Party enthusi-
asm overwhelm the momentum of
the Obama administration? Did
the March light anybody’s fire? Will
those fired up return to their
homes to speak to a change agenda?

The Shirley Chisholm
Presidential Accountability
Commission (a project of the
Institute for the Black World; full
disclosure – I’m a member) held
a meeting at the Congressional
Black Caucus Foundation
Legislative Forum, and honored
Coalition of Black Trade Unionist
leader Bill Lucy for his legislative
work. In accepting his award,