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- Sports
- Entertainment
- Music reviews
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- RSS feeds

March on Washington vs King, Inc.

In five months, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington. In 1963, the March was jointly called by the Civil Rights Movement’s “Big Six” – A. Philip Randolph, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, James Farmer and John Lewis.

At this point, it is unclear whether today’s leaders will come together and rally around the theme of jobs and justice as leaders did on Aug. 28, 1963.

Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King, III are planning a march in Washington. Bernice King has announced a commemoration of the “I Have a Dream” speech at the King Center in Atlanta to observe the 50th anniversary. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Dr. King’s old organization, will be holding its annual convention in the nation’s capital the week of the anniversary and is considering holding an activity.

The foundation that raised more than \$100 million to erect the MLK monument on the National Mall – and was forced by King’s children to drop the reference to Dr. King in its name – is still hoping it can participate in a joint celebration by all of the civil rights groups.

Interestingly, the Big Six managed to come together when the Black unemployment rate was 6.7 percent, compared to 3.2 percent for Whites. The unemployment rate for Blacks 20 and older in February was 12.7 percent – nearly double what it was at the time of

THE CURRY REPORT

George E. Curry



the March on Washington. Of course, any discussion about the preservation of Dr. King’s legacy invariably involves his three remaining children – Martin III, Bernice and Dexter. While

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appreciating the King family’s desire to protect intellectual property left to them by their father, including his “I Have a Dream” speech, I have been critical of their decision to charge what had been known as the Martin Luther King National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc. a licensing fee of nearly \$3 million to use his name, likeness and quotes in conjunction with a monument erected to him on the National Mall. I also upbraided them for, after making the decision to charge a licensing fee, refusing to extend the agreement, forcing the foundation to

change its name (it is now The Memorial Foundation) and limit the scope of the monument-connected activities it had planned to advance Dr. King’s legacy.

Roland Martin and Joe Williams have an interesting article on rolandmartinreports.com about the controversy.

We had a heated discussion Sunday on “Washington Watch with Roland Martin” about the King children’s interaction with Harry Johnson and the group that raised the money for King monument on the Mall, the first to honor an

in my column. He waited four months to reply and still didn’t get it right. To his credit, Armstrong acknowledged his error on-air and apologized.

During the program Sunday, Roland said he had spoken with Tricia Harris, a King representative, who said the money paid to the Kings was for corporations that exploited Dr. King’s image and they had not received money from the foundation for using quotes and the likeness of Dr. King.

I said, “She’s lying.” Harris sent me a note taking exception to my comment and said, “It’s a great American tragedy when influential African Americans attack the King family for protecting and benefiting from Dr. King’s work when he set it up that way.”

Actually, King, Inc. was created after Dr. King’s assassination. Therefore, he did not “set it up that way.” Second, the licensing agreement does in fact extract a fee from the mall foundation in exchange for using his likeness on materials and quotes at the memorial.

Let’s be clear: No one is objecting to the King siblings profiting from their father’s intellectual properties. The issue is, unlike the descendants of Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, they are trying to personally profit from a national monument that honors their father and the struggle he led.

Read the rest online at www.theskanner.com



Stopped and Frisked – and Innocent

Every year for the past decade, under the agency’s “stop-and-frisk” program, New York City police officers have stopped 500,000 to nearly 700,000 citizens on the city’s streets. Nearly 90 percent of those stopped are Black and Hispanic men, women and children.

The department’s own data show that at most only 12 to 14 percent of these stops result in an actual arrest – and only about half of those arrested are ultimately convicted of some transgression.

Is that the definition, as the city administration and police department claim, of an effective crime-fighting program?

Or is the program a cynical cover for police “make-work:” harassing innocent civilians in order to churn statistics of an operation that has virtually no effect on reducing crime – and burnish the department’s reputation and that of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg as effective crime-fighters?

Those are the questions behind the central constitutional issue at the heart of a class-action lawsuit challenging New York’s controversial stop-and-frisk program now being heard in a federal district court in Manhattan.

The suit, brought by the New York City-based Center for Constitutional Rights, reaches the court after years of complaints from the city’s Black and Hispanic communities, and civil rights

NNPA COLUMNIST

Lee A. Daniels

and civil liberties advocates against both the Bloomberg stop-and-frisk program and earlier, similar police department programs.

That long record has produced legislation from the New York City Council that would establish an office of inspector general for the police department, which

similar police department program in which landlords of thousands of private buildings in The Bronx gave the department permission to patrol their buildings and arrest trespassers. The judge in that case found that the police searches of individuals routinely violated citizens’ 4th Amendment rights and said it needed to be modified if it is to continue.

The Supreme Court has long upheld the right of police officers to stop and question civilians on the street; but they must have rea-

— the ostensible reason behind the stop-and-frisk regime — was found in 0.1 percent of stops,” she added. “That is an unbelievably poor yield rate for such an intrusive, wasteful and humiliating police action.”

The street-stops trial opened last week with the wrenching testimony of three Black men who told of being stopped and frisked, and in one instance, momentarily handcuffed. “To be treated like that, by someone who works for New York City, I felt degraded and helpless,” said Nicholas K. Peart, 24, who is the legal guardian of his two young brothers and 20-year-old disabled sister. In December 2011, Peart, a college student, wrote a widely-discussed op-ed article in the New York Times about the five times police have stopped and frisked him in the last decade.

Witnesses for the plaintiffs also included two police officers who testified that patrol officers in their precincts were told they must meet a departmental monthly quota of 20 summonses and at least one arrest, or else they would be punished. Such a police practice is illegal, and the two officers’ claims were vigorously denied by the city’s lawyers in court and the police department’s chief spokesman. But both officers supplied tape-recordings they secretly made of precinct-station conversations that seem to support their claims.

Is the program a cynical cover for police ‘make-work’?

would have subpoena power to investigate police actions. The legislation, bitterly opposed by Mayor Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly, is inextricably enmeshed in this year’s mayoral campaign. Bloomberg cannot run again; and does not want Christine Quinn, the Council’s Speaker, to be his successor. She is a chief sponsor of the legislation, and also said there’s enough support for it on the Council to override Bloomberg’s promised veto.

The street-stops case is also being heard in the wake of a January federal court decision on a

sonable cause – not just a hunch – to search individual’s belongings or person.

Bloomberg and Kelly have repeatedly declared the stop-and-frisk program integral to the police department’s success in reducing crime.

But critics assert that the city has never presented any statistics or other data establishing a direct connection between the program and the fact that the city’s crime rate has declined during the past decade. Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, told the New York Times last month that “A gun