

FORUM

Beyond Million Man March II

Confessions of a Tired Marcher

I read somewhere — I think — or at least I know I have been told, that Mrs. Rosa Parks had some choice and prophetic

on — to new ways and means of doing things. When will we? After a million marches, maybe?



LIFT EVERY VOICE

By DR. WILLIAM H. TURNER

words to the bus driver who commanded her to the back of the bus — her rightful fix in that place and time, Montgomery, Ala., 1955: "My feet is tide, 'n I ain't moving." Frankly, that doesn't sound like the articulate and "most mannerly rebel," Mrs. Parks, but it played well dramatically.

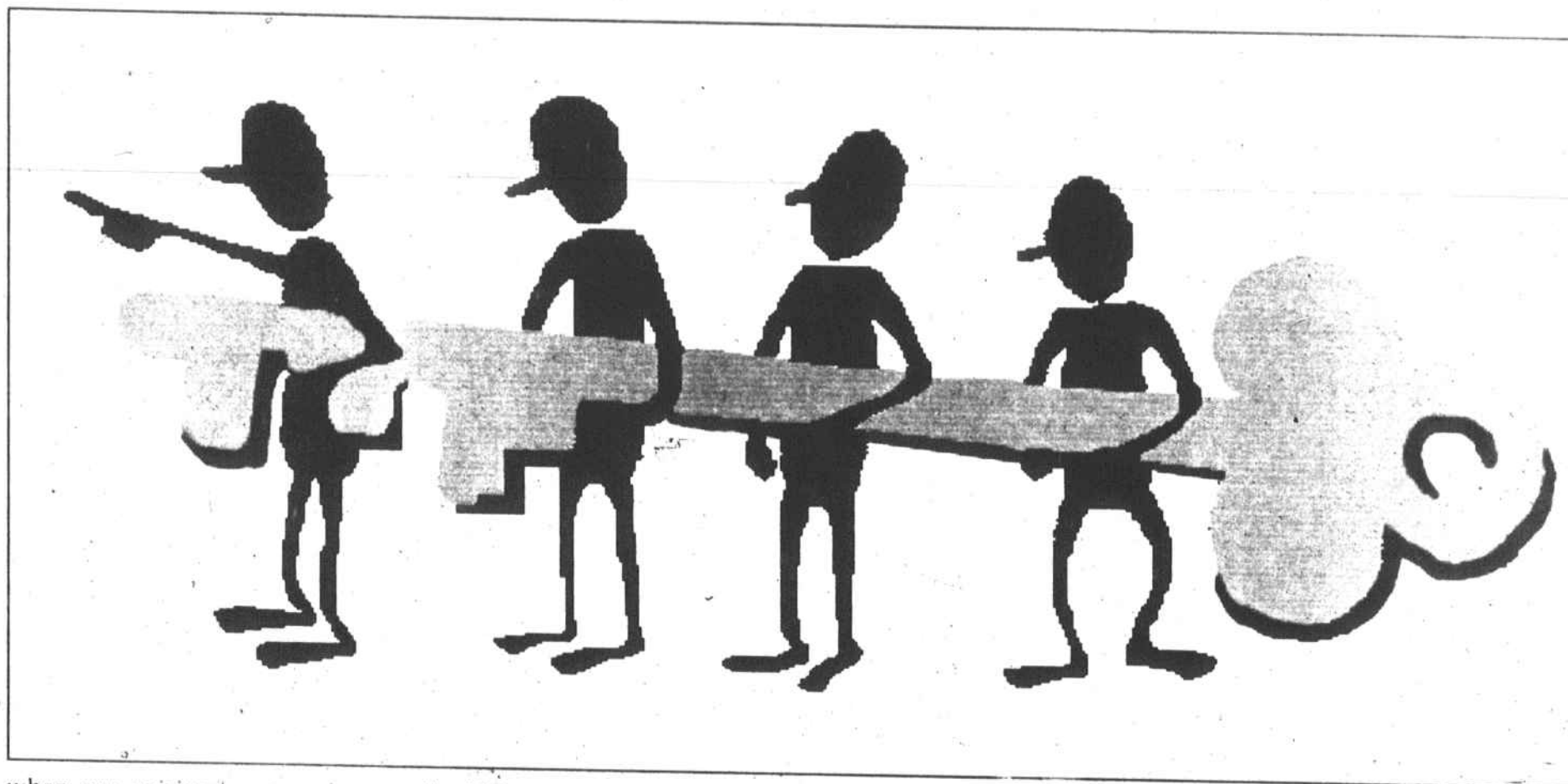
I was about 10 when Mrs. Parks became Mother of the Civil Rights Movement. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., then the 26-year-old pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, was, by her act, propelled into national leadership. Marching and walking through Montgomery became the soul and symbol of blacks' resistance to injustice.

With a sense of duty born of lifelong dedication to the cause of eradicating injustice, I will march this coming weekend as part of the almost sacred memory of the Million Man March of last year. But, like Mrs. Parks, who was tired of sitting in the back of the bus, I am growing weary and quite bored of civil rights marches. Time and circumstances march

The year I became a senior in high school, I went on the The Big March. There Martin articulated The Dream. Between then and 1993, when I went to the 30th anniversary of the March on Washington, I attended countless numbers of civil and human rights processions, including the 10th and 20th observation of that glorious day: August 28, 1963. In 1995, of course, I felt especially blessed to be present at the Million Man March — the largest gathering of its kind in the history of the United States.

But, at the risk of somebody getting me wrong, I think that the search for general social empowerment, community control, and economic justice must move beyond marching. Frankly, I am afraid that marching has become a highly ritualized form of convincing ourselves that we are "doing something."

Let us not fool ourselves or think that we are defrauding or uncovering others simply by putting on a massive public display of self-affirmation. What good is a symbol of resistance



when our spiritual processions are mocked by those — both on ours and the other side — who proceed with profane business-as-usual personal agendas, politics and policies?

The complex actions taken to organize for educational attainment require no less energy and genius than do marches. Maybe some of that vigor and application of expertise should be reserved to focus on ways to link some of the millions of dispossessed people to the technologies that have erased their jobs.

The speeches, orations, and discussions at the marches this weekend will have temporary, if any effect. It would be better yet, and have more lasting ben-

efits if the millions of words to be articulated this weekend were spent in the quiet of prayer meetings and tutorial sessions where unorganized individuals are brought together methodically.

Men and women downsized from corporations need highly planned and efficient initiatives to pool their resources much more than they do another round of fists thrust into the air. We need thousands of signs directing us to where people are doing business — producing some goods and services and recycling and saving some of their resources. Will marchers volunteer more, please?

Platitudes and clichés need to be replaced by institutional-

ized service and educational settings (in churches and lodges, sororities and fraternities). People need small discussion groups where they can understand clearly what it means — and what they should do — when America has become even more conservative than it was when their marches were met by fire hoses and mean-spirited officials with billy clubs.

The marches also used to have other allies from across the spectrum of racial, ethnic, and religious groups. Why aren't the new immigrant groups — those of color — marching among the millions. Do they have a thing against marching?

Surely the beats of racism, exclusion, deception, discrimination, miseducation and intolerance go on. But, just as the traditional forms of these no longer exist, the customary and historic ways and means to counter and overcome them must also change. I know not what course others may take, but after this week's Millionth March, I want to march to a different drummer. America is tired of us "just marching," too. She has always depended on African Americans to move her to new heights. Let's march past marching!

(Dr. William Turner is a regular freelance columnist for the Chronicle.)

Brothers' Keepers, Sisters' Keepers

The attention the national media has paid to the incidence of the burning of churches with completely or predominantly African-American congregations has dropped sharply since mid summer. But that doesn't mean that we should pretend the apparent cause of many of these crimes — white animosity towards blacks — never existed or has disappeared.

Nor, more importantly, should we ignore the positive response the church burnings provoked from many public officials and private organizations and individuals alike.

Their offers of help — of cash donations and of offers to aid the churches' rebuilding — along with their efforts to break down the racial, ethnic, and religious barriers that fracture American society, have answered affirmatively the question that is always before humankind: Am I my brothers keeper; am I my sister's keeper?

Both of these points stand at the center of the preliminary study the U.S. Civil Rights Commission released last week following a three-month investigation of the church burnings. As part of its study, the commission, a multiracial and bipartisan body, whose members are appointed by the president and Congress, also held public meetings in six southern states: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

The commission's action followed the creation last spring of the federal National Church Arson

Task Force, which has focused on the 59 suspicious fires at churches in the South with congregations which are predominantly or completely African-American since January 1, 1995.

Nationally, more than 230 bombings or suspicious fires occurred at houses of worship since early 1990; nearly 70 percent of them since January 1995. Officials say that 51 percent of those struck have congregations which are not African-American or inter-racial, and that there is no evidence that racial or religious bigotry had anything to do with these crimes. Thus far, there have been arrests in 83 of the total cases, and convictions in 41.

Because arson is an extremely difficult crime to solve, it's likely that many of the suspected or confirmed incidents of arson at African-American churches will remain unsolved, leaving the question of exactly how many have occurred open.

Further, the federal task force has determined, and the Civil Rights Commission agreed, that some fires at black churches in which arrests have been made were not set for racial reasons, and that even where racism is likely involved, no evidence of a

national or even a regional racist conspiracy against black churches exists.

Nonetheless, Mary Frances Berry, the Commission chairwoman, said emphatically that the finding isn't a cause for celebration. "In fact," she stated, "the absence of a conspiracy makes the fires even more frightening. The perpetrators could be anyone, anywhere."

The reason for her concerns stems from what the Commission discovered from its tour of the South: a region where the evidence of racial bias in many small towns and rural counties remain almost as stark as they were before the

Civil Rights victories of the 1960s. "Out of national sight and mind," Prof. Berry said, "racial segregation exists in schools and other public facilities in forms reminiscent of Jim Crow days before segregation in public accommodations was outlawed."

This is a social environment which induces some to think they have "permission" to translate their despicable attitudes into violent actions. The fires, Prof. Berry said in a trenchant comment, were

simply "an indicator of the problems in the community."

Of course, the North and West cannot pretend, as they once did, that these problems are confined to the South. They are national problems, and they demand a national effort if they are to be solved.

That is why we at the National Urban League last spring joined with the Anti-Defamation League, the National Conference (formerly known as the National Conference of Christians and Jews) and the National Council of La Raza to form the National Voices for an Inclusive 21st Century. Our purpose is to wage war against bigotry and racism by fighting for tolerance and social harmony.

And that is why we are glad to learn that the National Council of Churches, which has been stalwart in its support of those churches struck by arson, has organized a series of town hall meetings to discuss how we all can work to reduce racial and ethnic tensions. The first is to be held in Columbia, S.C. on Oct. 24.

Thankfully, our efforts are just a tiny piece of the mosaic of work being done to advance the boundaries of tolerance and inclusiveness by people and organizations who have answered in the affirmative that eternal question: Am I my brother's keeper; am my sister's keeper?

(by Hugh B. Price, President National Urban League)



TO BE EQUAL

BY HUGH B. PRICE



Winston-Salem Chronicle

THE CHOICE FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN NEWS
USPS 067910

617 N. Liberty Street
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102

The Winston-Salem Chronicle is published every Thursday by the Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co., Inc.

The Winston-Salem Chronicle was established by Ernest Pitt and Ndubis Egemonye in 1974.

The Chronicle is a proud member of:
• Audit Bureau of Circulation • National Newspaper Publishers Association • North Carolina Press Association • North Carolina Black Publishers Association, Inland Press Association National Advertising Representative
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc. •
45 West 45th St • New York, NY 10036
(212) 869-5220

How to Reach us...

910-722-8624 • Fax 910-723-9173

NEWS STAFF

MAURICE CROCKER
SAM DAVIS
723-8428

CIRCULATION

DON NAYLOR
722-8624

(Call to start or stop delivery or to report a delivery problem)

SALES STAFF

LEXIE JOHNSON • CYNTHIA BYRON
722-8628

BUSINESS OFFICE

ERICKA ASBURY • LESLEY WHITE
VICKIE WARREN
722-8624

PRODUCTION

MICHAEL LYLES
RICHARD MARTIN

To subscribe...

722-8624

Call for new subscription information or any questions about your current subscription.

Subscription Rates
Single Copy 75 cents
In County

2 years\$40.95
1 year30.72
6 mos.20.48
3 mos.10.24

Out of County/State

2 years\$45.95
1 year35.72
6 mos.25.48
3 mos.15.24

Winston-Salem Chronicle

HOME DELIVERY SUBSCRIPTION ORDER

☐ YES, Please send me the **Winston-Salem Chronicle**

☐ 2 Year-\$40.95 • ☐ 1 Year - \$30.72 • ☐ 6 mos. - \$20.48

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

☐ check enclosed • ☐ please bill me

Mail to: Subscription Department
Winston-Salem Chronicle
P.O. Box 1636
Winston-Salem, NC 27102