

The Charlotte Post

Published weekly by the Charlotte Post Publishing Co.
1531 Camden Road Charlotte, N.C. 28203

Gerald O. Johnson
CEO/PUBLISHER

Robert Johnson
CO-PUBLISHER/
GENERAL MANAGER

Herbert L. White
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Million Man March didn't maintain focus

Manning Marable



The Million Man March of October, 1995, was the largest public demonstration of African Americans in U.S. history. Despite the controversies surrounding the event, including the exclusion of black women from the mobilization, most black Americans felt an incredible sense of empowerment from the March. Many hoped that this demonstration would mark a renaissance of black male activism and a commitment to black unity. But even at the March itself, there were signs that these goals would be difficult to achieve. Farrakhan's keynote address at the March was widely recognized, even by many of his supporters, as disappointing at best. More than two hours long, it was rambling and occasionally nearly incoherent. Unlike Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech at the 1963 March on Washington, which succinctly captured the political mood of the times, Farrakhan's address lacked a political strategy which could bring together the broadest democratic forces within our community. The emphasis on "atonement" and personal responsibility seemed to parallel the conservative, patriarchal rhetoric of the Christian Coalition and the Republicans' Contract With America. This is why Republican vice presidential candidate Jack Kemp, a white conservative, extends praise and support to Farrakhan, a black nationalist; both men essentially agree on self-help and private enterprise.

The principal political instrument which could have expanded the tremendous popular support sparked by the March was the National African American Leadership Summit. The Summit had been established by Benjamin Chavis when he was still executive director of the NAACP. In June, 1994, Chavis called together over 100 prominent African Americans to the NAACP headquarters in Baltimore, to establish a process which would build a national coalition of black organizations.

Two months later, Chavis was fired from his NAACP position under charges of financial and sexual impropriety. He quickly found a defender and patron in Farrakhan. With his support, Chavis was able to maintain the Summit, which evolved into a non-profit coalition of more than 200 black groups. Many of these organizations reflected the black nationalist orientation of a significant segment of the African-American middle class: black sororities and fraternities, black professional organizations in medicine, social work, law and engineering, and business associations such as the World Africa Chamber of Commerce. Largely missing, however, was representation from black trade unions, progressive groups, black feminist organizations, civil rights formations and black elected officials.

In the national mobilization for the March in 1995, more than 400 local organizing committees were formed. Thousands of black men who had never been actively involved in political organizing stepped forward. The historical stage was set for the construction of an authentic black united front, similar perhaps to the National Negro Congress, founded by A. Philip Randolph in the Great Depression during the 1930s.

But history did not repeat itself. Randolph was a democratic socialist, and the militant leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. His vision of politics was based in the activism of the black working class. Even as NAACP leader, Chavis had alienated many prominent black trade unionists by endorsing NAFTA. He displayed little interest in organizational details or management skill. Neither Farrakhan nor Chavis have had much experience in building broad coalitions with groups who hold widely divergent beliefs and philosophies. Moreover, because Chavis apparently believes that his own political destiny is tied to Farrakhan's, he has been unwilling or unable to define a truly independent role for himself. This contributes to the perception, unfairly or not, that Chavis has become merely a mouthpiece for Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam.

In a city like Detroit, for example, there were more than one dozen different local committees which were created by the March. As one local activist explained to me, these new leaders were "ideologically all over the map." Some have long histories of struggle and practical experience as community organizers, while others were inexperienced and virtually unknown. A similar situation existed all over the country. These organizational weaknesses in the structure and administration of the Leadership Summit contributed to a lack of direction and focus, driving away many young African Americans who had been inspired to activism by the Million Man March.

MANNING MARABLE is Professor of History and Director of the Institute for Research in African American Studies, Columbia University in New York City.

Looking back over Columbus Day

DG Martin



New York City, Columbus Day 1996:

Old friends from law school, 20 of us, have gathered around a single table in one of this city's finest clubs.

With understated elegance the waiters serve a creamy bean soup followed by the best rack of lamb I have ever eaten. Then, as is proper, the salad. Then dessert. Then coffee. Brandy and cigars.

Thirty years ago we ate together every few weeks. But not like this. We called ourselves the Ladies Lunch because members ate bagged lunches prepared by their wives.

But no women came to the Ladies Lunch, back then. And tonight, as well, there are no women. No wives or significant others. No questions about that. After dinner, the smoke of the

cigars, the brandy and the absence of guests helps bring back the memories of why we

have come together on this Columbus Day - 30 years afterwards.

On Columbus Day in 1966 the men of the Ladies Lunch, acting under the name of "The Society for the Preservation of Christopher Columbus" took to the streets and gained one moment of attention and glory.

Yale University had acquired and put on display in its rare book library the Vinland Map. Supposedly, it showed "conclusively" that Vikings were the first Europeans to discover the American continents - not the Italian, Christopher Columbus.

On that Columbus Day, the Ladies Lunch marched around the library carrying pickets asserting that the map was a forgery and that its display was an insult to Americans of Italian descent. Then, with great ceremony, we burned a copy of the map.

It was for us a lark. But it

was a "slow news day" and we made the local TV evening news and the newspaper's front page. A report even made its way into the Congressional Record. For a few moments we were heroes to some Italian Americans who thought the Vinland map was part of a conspiracy to downgrade their hero and their heritage.

Earlier today, I remembered these events with a smile as I watched New York City's Columbus Day parade make its way up Fifth Avenue.

Parade? It is really a day long walking reunion of old friends and old memories of glorious struggles and victories over discrimination.

Hundreds of Italian American groups pass by. Veterans, Masons and Shriners, college and school heritage clubs, beauty queens, community organizations. Interspersed are a few military units and marching bands. But they only show by contrast the happy informality of every other group of marchers.

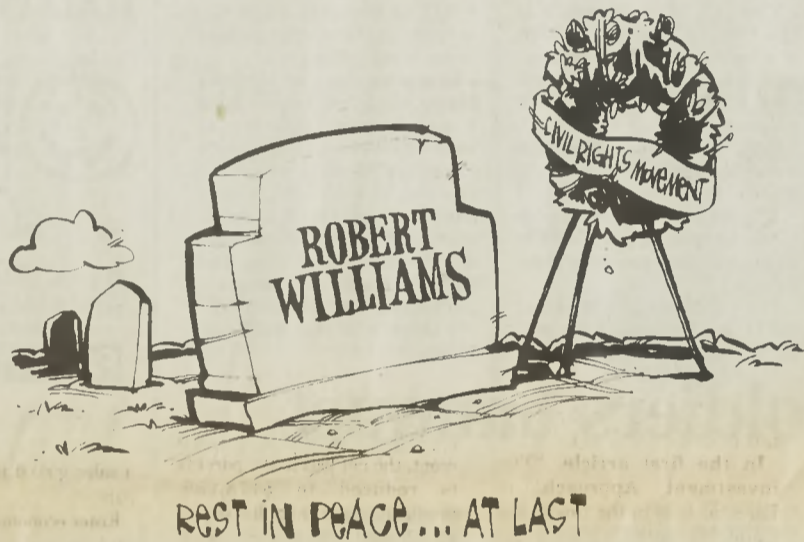
If, in earlier times, there was assertiveness or any degree of militancy in this parade, it is now gone. Italian Americans swim comfortably in the mainstream of American culture.

All is not happiness and good feelings. Only yesterday, another parade on the same route celebrated the Spanish Columbus. More numerous than the Italians, Hispanics are newer, less powerful, less confident and more assertive in holding on to their language and traditions.

I think there is hope for all of us in this Italian American walking celebration of Columbus Day.

It is a demonstration of America's great capacity to absorb, gain strength from and give power to the people of its diverse groups. The Italians are only one group of "outsiders" who have claimed and conquered and changed what Columbus discovered.

D.G. MARTIN is vice president for public affairs for the University of North Carolina system.



JIM HUNT
THE CHARLOTTE POST
COPYRIGHT 1996

Why a Republican supports Gantt

By Cynthia Robinson
SPECIAL TO THE POST

I am a 33-year-old black woman working in the medical field and a recent transplant to North Carolina. I am a Republican and I am not voting for Jesse Helms on November 5.

I became a Republican because I believe in conservative economic policy, state's rights and a very limited role of government in business, among other issues. This is a choice I made on my own; my family's political background is not a Republican one.

I moved to North Carolina in 1989. North Carolina is a beautiful state and a great place to live. The people I see everyday in the medical field are warm, friendly, intelligent and educated. Yet I still find myself defending North Carolina when speaking with out-of-state friends and family. When asked "Where are you living now?" as soon as I say North Carolina the negative

comments begin to fly. "Isn't that where President Clinton was told not to visit because he might get shot?" or "You're living down there with all those good ol' boys like Jesse. With all the historical, cultural and educational sites North Carolina has to offer - Jesse Helms is all they see."

Jesse Helms became famous in the 1950s and 60s as an outspoken radio commentator representing the Old South. Racist remarks, religion and segregation were all a part of his nightly radio show. He made it no secret that he did not support equal rights and that he supported segregation then; "Unless our negro citizens submit more easily than we predict they will, North Carolina does not have the simple choice between segregated schools and integrated schools. Our only choice is integrated public schools and free choice private schools...the decision will have to be made by a very small minority

of people who are hell-bent on forced integration." (1955 about public school desegregation, Raleigh News & Observer, Oct. 31, 1990; and now: "I think busing is the worst tyranny ever perpetrated on America." (News & Observer 6-17-81). Everybody going to school together is not a partisan issue.

Jesse Helms knows how to get people excited over "moral" issues. He spends much of his campaigns talking about issues that do not regularly come up on the Senate floor. He uses homosexuality, abortion and other issues that do not really govern the state as an election wedge instead of saying how he is going to lead us. This is the New South. Are we going to allow Jesse Helms to lead us into the 21st century with a 1950s mentality?

North Carolina houses some of the leading educational institutions in this country. It would be a shame to deny any citizen of this state the opportunity to

attend one of these institutions. Jesse Helms has voted to cut federal financial aid for college students, denying many students equal educational opportunities. Education is not a partisan issue.

Harvey Gantt is a possible solution for North Carolina. He is a self-made man, the first black to attend Clemson and he went to graduate school at MIT. He is a successful architect and was elected as the first black mayor of Charlotte.

Just because I am a Republican doesn't mean I have to vote for Jesse Helms. He does not support equal educational opportunities for all regardless of economical background. He is an embarrassment to the state of North Carolina. We need someone to stand up and represent North Carolina in the New South. That is not Jesse Helms.

Cynthia Robinson is a medical technician in Raleigh and a volunteer with Republicans against Helms.

Attention Deficit Disorder unfairly labeled as a disease

By Fred Baughman MD
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Few understand the power of research funding. In an editorial appropriately titled "The silencer: Gun lobby kills research funding" (San Diego Union-Tribune July 22), we are told how House Republicans joined by a third of the chamber's Democrats, voted to strip \$2.6 million from the Center For Disease Control's budget-the amount spent in 1995 for research on firearm injuries and deaths.

Blocked at the behest of the

National Rifle Association, the grim statistics of gun-related injuries and deaths would no longer reach the public; guns would no longer appear so dangerous and death-dealing. The CDC, a federal agency, tax-supported by you and me, would no longer be able to share the statistics of this - one of the worst epidemics that afflicts us. Stop the funding, stop the research and presto! The epidemic of maiming and deaths due to guns disappears from the radio, TV and newspapers, where the realities of our everyday life are portrayed. No funding for the

CDC research on gun death and dismemberment, no such CDC research statistics at scientific conferences, in epidemiology journals, no news releases on gun and death and dismemberment and ipso facto, the reality of gun death and dismemberment has disappeared from the media and thus from our minds. What we have is a public perception of one more epidemic of gun death and dismemberment, or, at least of an epidemic that must be near solution, and no longer worthy of comparison to other epidemics.

The public can hardly imagine

the politicization and for-profit perversion of medical research that goes on.

The most common "disease" and most rampant of "epidemics" of the moment in the U.S. is that so-called attention deficit disorder - ADD (aka attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity -ADHD). It was unheard of prior to 1980, affected 500,000 by 1988, 900,000 by 1990 and is said to affect 2.5 to 4.4 million today - 90 percent children. And yet there are strange things about ADD and the ADD epidemic. Ninety to 95 percent of cases,

and of Ritalin usage to treat it, are in the U.S. and Canada, some states having a 3-5 times greater case rate than others. (Michigan, Ohio, Idaho and Maryland being among those with the highest per capita rates). Some schools and classrooms have a 50 percent affliction rate, while others, usually private and parochial schools, are untouched, having no ADD and having no learning disabilities of any sort.

Billions of dollars are spent on ADD research, 70 percent of it, benevolently, from the pharmaceutical industry. Dr. Peter

Jensen of the National Institute of Mental Health has declined to tell me how much exactly, the NIMH, supposedly tax-supported by the people and for the people, gets in research funding from Ciba-Geigy.

This is the message tens of thousands U.S. parents and their children this very day. And all of it for ADD, never even proven to be a disease, a syndrome or anything biologic, neurologic, pathologic or organic, as is regularly claimed by the multi-billion dollar industry.

FRED BAUGHMAN M.D. is a clinical physician.