

## Black Gays, Lesbians on Rollercoaster of Inclusion

### Gays Embraced, Then Excluded From Millions More Event

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Contributing Writer

Leaders of the black GLBT community were shocked and dismayed at the rollercoaster of reconciliation and inclusion, then the last minute rejection of their participation in the Millions More Movement (MMM) event on the Mall in Washington, DC, on October 15.

The event served to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Million Man March and reinvigorate community empowerment. This time the Rev. Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam had the support of many other leaders of the African American community who had shunned the earlier gathering.

In February, Farrakhan publicly welcomed the participation of gays and lesbians in activities but a series of communications between the MMM and GLBT leaders resulted in little progress toward that end. There was a further setback in July when Rev. Willie



The National Black Justice Coalition holds a rally as part of the We Are Family Unity Weekend in Washington, DC on October 15.

Wilson, executive director of the event, made what many considered to be inflammatory remarks about the community while preaching at his church in DC.

The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC) took Farrakhan to task for con-

tinuing to exclude them from the event, at a news conference on October 11. That resulted an October 12 meeting with Farrakhan and Wilson.

"There were times when the discussion was very heated," said NBJC executive director H. Alexander Robinson.

Much of it focused on Wilson's feeling that he had been attacked by the gay community in Washington, and "he still did not understand the hurtfulness of what he had said about us."

"Rev. Wilson was a huge obstacle. He refused to shake our hands when we walked in, he yelled and screamed the whole time," said NBJC president Keith Boykin. "Minister Farrakhan was very understanding, polite and respectful."

According to Boykin, "Wilson said the gay community attacked him and he feels the same way about the gay community as he feels about white people—a few of them are alright but the rest of them, I don't want to have anything to do with them."

He said, at one point Wilson pulled out some sleeping pills and a thong with candy on it and said that lesbians are making women take the pills and wear the thong, and suck off the candy. "And we were just looking at him, stunned."

Robinson continued, "We had a very good conversation with Minister Farrakhan on a wide range of issues that we share. At the end of the meeting it was Rev. Wilson that suggested that Keith be the speaker, and Minister Farrakhan agreed. I left the [Wednesday] meeting thinking that we had some agreement on what would happen [on Saturday] and the potential for future conversations."

### Saturday Disappoints

"We showed up at 8:00 am [on Saturday] to get VIP credentials for me, Alexander, and Donna [Payne, NBJC vice president and a field organizer for the Human Rights Campaign], and they didn't have any for any of us. We were escorted to the stage area to talk with Sister Claudette Muhammad who was our liaison to Farrakhan," Boykin said.

Payne said, "Rev. Wilson came over and said to me, you will not be speaking. He had a smirk on his face." Wilson claimed the group had not responded in time and he walked off.

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NBJC Members gather in Washington (left) and NBJC President Keith Boykin addresses the crowd.