

March signals revolt against the Conservative Revolution

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The largest peaceful demonstration in American history, the "Million Man March" which gathered at the foot of the U.S. Capitol on Monday, Aug. 16, has changed politics in the United States and effectively reflected the growing disgust of the American public with the Conservative Revolution of House Speaker Newt Gingrich and his allies. The rally was built around a call for a national "Day of Atonement" issued by Minister Louis Farrakhan, the head of the Nation of Islam, who called last year for 1 million black men to come to Washington, D.C. Leading veterans of the 1960s civil rights movement of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., including Rev. James Bevel and Rev. Benjamin Chavis, played an active role in building the event's overwhelming success.

Despite U.S. Park Police claims that the march drew 400,000 people, eyewitness accounts and more accurate estimates released by Washington, D.C. city officials, show that well over 1 million people from across the United States attended the day's events, traveling by chartered bus, plane, car, and rail to participate in the day-long march. Police acknowledged that there was not one single disruption, and not one arrest.

On the same day that the Million Man March occurred, President Clinton delivered an address in Austin, Texas, taking up some of the identical themes of the problem of economic inequality and racism in America that were addressed by the march's speakers.

All told, over 60 speakers addressed the march, including an impressive list of leading African-American women. As part of the scurrilous media coverage leading up to the event, a number of Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL) stooges had denounced Minister Farrakhan as a "sexist" for focusing the demonstration on African-American men. Among those who had publicly denounced the march as "sex-

ist" were Communist Party USA "queen bee" Angela Davis.

The women who addressed the march included: Cora Masters Barry, the wife of D.C. Mayor Marion Barry; Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X; Tyneta Muhammad, the widow of Nation of Islam founder Elijah Muhammad; civil rights movement heroine Rosa Parks (who received a lengthy ovation from the crowd); former poet laureate Maya Angelou; and Dorothy Height, the president of the National Council of Negro Women.

In addition to other civil rights movement figures, including Rev. Joseph Lowery and Rev. Jesse Jackson, speakers included gang leaders from Los Angeles and Chicago, who pledged an end to the urban violence and gang warfare that plague the nation's inner cities.

The most critical moment of the rally came when Minister Farrakhan delivered a lengthy message that ended with a pledge that was repeated by the marchers, to rebuild the moral foundations of the African-American community by putting an end to drug abuse, the destruction of the nuclear family, and street violence.

But the driving theme of Minister Farrakhan's remarks was the need to forge, in the words of the Declaration of Independence, "a more perfect Union." His speech put to rest once and for all the ADL-instigated slander that Farrakhan was a prophet of racial separatism.

"When Jefferson said, 'toward a more perfect Union,' he was admitting that the Union was not perfect, that it was not finished, that work had to be done," Farrakhan told the marchers. "And so we are gathered here today not to bash somebody else. We're not gathered here to say all of the evils of this nation. But we are gathered here to collect ourselves for a responsibility that God is placing on our shoulders to move this nation toward a more perfect Union."

LaRouche comments on the march

In his weekly radio interview on "EIR Talks" on Oct. 18, Lyndon LaRouche commented on the significance of the Million Man March: "I think the most important part about the march, as distinct from anything that happened within it, is the fact that it occurred. The best estimate we have, is that about a million and a half people actually participated, which tells us a number of things.

"First of all, it indicates that the potential for that existed, that people were waiting, or some people were waiting for that to be called, and called in an efficient way. And they turned up; lots of them turned up. And national politics, and, to some degree, international politics can never be quite the same, once this has occurred. It's changed the world significantly, as the press reactions around the world the day after the march tend to show.

"I can say this in a qualified way, because I was involved in discussions leading into the march, back deep into 1994. My associate, the Rev. James Bevel, was working closely with Minister Farrakhan and people around him, to that end, and I became involved in those discussions. And my associates and I agreed to give support, suitable for our role in things, to that effort, as we did. For example, we had a concert which we timed and situated in order to feed into strengthening the march process.

"I have a number of reservations about some of the things that were said during the march. I think the issue of atonement was presented very well by Minister Farrakhan, and also he brought in, as the President of the United States brought in the morning before those remarks, the question of one nation out of many: *E Pluribus Unum*. It should be noted also, that the President chose to situate his remarks, at the University of Texas in Austin, on the theme of race relations, which would not have happened the way it did, *but for the fact of the march*.

"I think, in the main, except for one unfortunate sound bite that got in there, the President's speech was excellent. I think the reference to the 'messenger,' the deference to the ADL on the attacks on Minister Farrakhan, even though they were not by name, merely indirect, were rather ill-chosen. But the President was ill-advised, I think, by somebody at the White House on that. And I think that Farrakhan missed a lot of the opportunities that he could have had, by not bringing up some other things that he could have brought up, instead of the things that he did.

"Of course, the crowd, one could see very clearly, was not paying much attention to the speeches. It was impossible. You have a million and a half people scattered all over the place, in that fashion. They've come there for one reason: first of all, to be there under the auspices provided, and to gather around Minister Farrakhan as a rallying point for this event. But more or less, they just wanted a clear direction: Okay, we've come together, this is a crystallization of something; what do we do now? I think that was *not* clearly situated

effectively, and that omission is going to have to be corrected over the coming period.

"But all the possible downsides hither and yon around the affair considered, the fact is, that Minister Farrakhan, in response to several indications to him that this was the thing to do, did it. It came off, largely to the credit of Ben Chavis, who took over the coordination of it. It was a success; that is, the event happened; it was a success probably which exceeded even Minister Farrakhan's expectations, in terms of the turnout. It's momentous. It changes politics in the United States at a time that change is very much needed, as the President's remarks in the morning at the televised address from Austin indicate.

"So I'm rather pleased overall, but it does present to me and others, the kinds of problems that go with a new challenge cast upon our doorstep. We now have to respond to that million and a half people and what they represent, a little more forcefully and a little more directly and effectively than we might have felt ourselves compelled to do, the day before the march came off."

LaRouche noted that one of the most direct assaults against the policies of the present congressional Republican leadership to be delivered at the march came from Rev. Jesse Jackson: "I think that the curious thing is, that Jesse Jackson was the one who most effectively, I think, addressed the issue of the Conservative Revolution as such, directly, on the platform. I don't want to endorse Jesse Jackson, but sometimes he does say things which he's picked up and reflects, and they're appropriate.

"Of course, the march reflected the growing antagonism to Newt Gingrich's Conservative Revolution. And there's going to be more of that. You're going to find that the unity of this march of a million and a half people, predominantly African-Americans, turning out for this thing, is going to tend to crystallize some other social forces in the United States which also have good cause to rally, to demonstrate that there are large forces in this country which are not going to bend over for Newt Gingrich."

A fresh challenge

In his speech, Minister Farrakhan set forward a number of ambitious initiatives, including the registering of 8 million new voters. At a press conference on Oct. 17, he and Reverend Chavis announced that they would call for a meeting of the National Afro-American Leadership Council, the organization that Chavis founded after he was driven out of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People leadership last year. A number of civil rights organizations already reported within days of the march that they had received inquiries from hundreds of people seeking to join. Minister Farrakhan had called upon all the marchers to go back to their communities and become involved in organizations promoting the betterment of life for African-Americans.