



Photo special to Sentinel-Voice photo by Lisa Margenum

Sisters from the local chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., were part of history as they came together in solidarity for the Million Woman March held in Philadelphia, Pa., last month.

## Million Woman March participants recognize and rejoice in their power

By Robin Leary  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
PHILADELPHIA

Hundreds of thousands of African-American women had their own field of dreams, where anything and everything seemed possible Oct. 25, as they came together on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia for the Million Woman March.

Women of all ages and backgrounds came from all parts of the country to unite in sisterhood and solidarity.

"They said this could not be done," march founder Phile Chionesu told the throngs of women gathered before the stage on Eakins Oval in front of the Philadelphia Art Museum. "They said we didn't have any names. They said we didn't have any PR (public relations). But what we do have is power."

Organizers estimated a crowd of two million. Police reports put the number somewhere between 300,000 and one million.

Chionesu asked the women to do just three things when they went home: To greet each other with the phrase, "respect and love;" to commit themselves to making changes in their lives and communities and to volunteer at least half an hour of their time a week in community service.

A vast array of local, national and international speakers delivered messages of empowerment and black pride.

U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), who chairs the Congressional Black Caucus, told the women to rejoice in their power and to use it to make America work for them instead of the other way around.

"We don't march for the sake of marching," Waters said. "We did not rally in the rain and cold because we have nothing else to do. We are

driven by our commitment to ourselves, our children, our families, to live in a fair and just society that respects us, our role in the nation and the world," she said.

Waters urged women to join together to make the government and big corporations help them in the fight against drugs. She again called on the government to investigate the CIA's alleged role in flooding Black communities with drugs and to institute job and education programs.

South African activist Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the former wife of South African President Nelson Mandela, praised Black women for their strength and told them to use their power.

When the 63-year-old Mandela, dressed in traditional African attire, took the stage, chants of "Winnie, Winnie, Winnie," filled the air.

"African women are the most powerful forces in the universe, because we carry all life into existence," she said. "We determine what type of men people this earth because we determine how we raise our men up to be."

Madikizela-Mandela urged the women to rededicate themselves to increasing Black empowerment and raising Black consciousness as they move to the 21st century.

A poor sound system and the lack of any TV screens made it difficult, if not impossible, for many women to hear, but that didn't dampen spirits, neither did the light rain and cold that persisted most of the day.

"This is just another challenge," Eloise Dix, a 70-year-old retiree from Bronx, N.Y., said of the weather. "The fact that so many of us showed up says a lot."

Dix, sitting on a lounge chair surrounded by thousands

of women, said she saw the drizzle as "a kind of cleansing to wash away the bad so women could start anew." She said it didn't matter whether people could see or hear, just that people were here.

Mother Nephthys Kefa, 70, of Harlem, N.Y., came with six and hundreds of other women from New York in one of the many bus caravans.

"A lot of us didn't know each other when we started out, but that changed quickly," she said. "When you're eating, sleeping and riding together you can't help from getting to know one another. And that's what it's like here; it's like we are all on one great big bus."

Both Dix and Kefa took part in the 1963 March On Washington, but said the Million Woman March was really special because it was organized by grassroots women.

"This is all the more special because the women who did this aren't known," Kefa said. "When I would hear about this on the radio, they were always asking, 'Who were these grassroots people?'"

Kefa said some people would like Black women to believe "you have to have a name to get things done in this country, but this march is proof that you don't."

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Photo special to Sentinel-Voice photo by Lisa Margenum  
October weather conditions at the Million Woman March held in Philadelphia did not affect the spirit of an unknown marcher.



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Major Riddick, Jr. president of the National Forum for Black Public Administrators (left), accepts a gift from Kirby Burgess, president NFBPA Las Vegas chapter, after Las Vegas was selected to host the 2001 conclave.

## Las Vegas awarded 2001 black public administrators convention

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Approximately 1200 African-American public administrators will convene in Las Vegas in April 2001, according to Kirby Burgess, president of the Las Vegas chapter of the National Forum of Black Public Administrators.

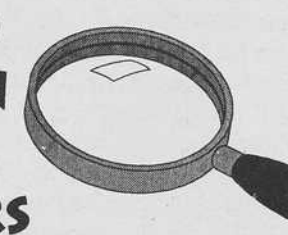
Burgess said the announcement was made at an NFBPA national board meeting in Chicago. He and Roosevelt Toston, sales executive of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, attended the meeting.

Key factors in the 14-year-old organization's decision to meet in Las Vegas, according to the group's site evaluation committee, were the opportunity to energize chapter membership and heighten community awareness of the black public sector.

Burgess said while local chapter membership is small, they eagerly accept the challenge of hosting a national convention. He said corporate sponsors who desire to underwrite some of the planned activities of the 2001 conclave are invited to contact the local group. Burgess said there are NFBPA chapters in 45 states.

For more information, contact Roosevelt Toston at 892-2843.

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