

Galvanize

(Continued from Page 1) strengthening; education; economic development; housing; political power; reparations; criminal justice; health care and healthy living; artistic and cultural development; anti-war and peace in Black neighborhoods, Edelin says.

"No one has prioritized them individually. Among all the issues that we have prioritized, we have prioritized these," says Edelin. "These are, in our view, the critical levers for the advancement of our group in the 21st century."

While the 1995 "Day of Atonement" march was mainly for Black men, the anniversary march is designed to draw a racially diverse and ecumenical crowd of men, women and children, said Vernon Hawkins, director of field operations and logistics for the march that will be held on the west side of the U. S. Capitol.

"We are planning to accommodate the same number that we had in 1995," says Hawkins. "We're talking about getting rid of the apathy that's been in our communities and recognizing the power that's within."

Pre-march activities in D.C. will be held all day on Friday, some with overlapping times. They will include a dialogue on spiritual unity at the Metropolitan Baptist Church, 225 R Street, NW from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; a summit on family strengthening at the Howard University College of Medicine, 520 W. Street NW from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; a community dialogue on unity at New Bethel Baptist Church at 739 9th Street NW from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; a conference on Black unity at the Scripture Cathedral Church, 9th & O Streets NW from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.; and a forum on achievement gaps at the Kellogg Center at Galludet University from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

March activities will begin in the wee hours of Saturday morning, starting with a 5:30 a.m. opening prayer and gospel music and a libation to honor the contribution of the ancestors.

The 9 a.m. opening of the unity program will begin with Melba Moore singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing." National Urban League president and CEO Marc Morial will lead the unity portion of the program, the

first major part of the march. Other noted speakers will include union leader William Lucy, NAACP President and CEO Bruce Gordon, National Action Network President and CEO Al Sharpton and Rainbow/PUSH President and CEO Jesse Jackson.

Minister Farrakhan called the Oct. 16, 1995 march a "Day of Atonement" for Black men to make commitments to help heal themselves.

This time, the march will focus on the broader community, says Hawkins.

"We're not talking about something that we can get from the government. We're talking about what we have to do in our own communities."

An "Anniversary Statement" posted on the informational website, www.Millionsmoremovement.org, concedes that social conditions for Black males have not improved over the past 10 years.

"Although many wonderful things have happened as a result of the march, 10 years later, the masses of our people are slipping further behind," says the statement.

"We have a larger middle class, many more millionaires and a few billionaires, however, the overall condition of our people is worse. We have more entrepreneurs, more college graduates, more persons holding political office, more Black mayors, city councilors, aldermen, state representatives, city managers, more corporate executives, yet the masses have not been empowered or improved."

This year's program will also be gender-balanced, Hawkins says. Among women speakers are poet Maya Angelou, and civil rights veteran Dorothy Height, president emerita of the National Council of Negro Women. Each issue will be addressed by a male and a female speaker, said Hawkins. The first half of the program will be moderated by TV and radio talk personality Tavis Smiley. Susan Taylor, editorial director for Essence magazine, will moderate the second half, he said.

Organizers hope for strong youth participation as hip-hop leaders are helping to galvanize the movement. They include Reverend Run, formerly of Run DMC; Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, Kanye

West, Ludacris, LL Cool J, Queen Latifah, Common, Missy Elliott, Snoop Dogg, Ice T, Jim Jones, Juelz Santana, Jha Jha of the Diplomats, Masta P, Juvenile, Erykah Badu, Kid Capri, Cassidy, the Wu Tang Clan, Xzibit, Tony Austin, Humpty Hump, the Ruff Ryders, Dead Prez and Russell Simmons, Chairman of the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network.

The program will also include a pledge of remembrance for victims of Hurricane Katrina and it will honor the contributions of African-Americans to one another

during that crisis and the continued efforts to help, Hawkins says. He says many of Katrina victims are expected to attend.

The march is set to end by 6 p.m. after a speech by Nation of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan, the convener of the march.

"The Millions More Movement is challenging all of us to rise above the things that have kept us divided in the past by focusing us on the agenda of the Millions More Movement to see how all of us, with all of our varied differences can come together and direct our energy, not at

each other, but at the condition of the reality of the suffering of our people," says Farrakhan in a statement. "Unity, love of self and love for one another have always been my desire. We stand on the threshold of the realization of our potential unity and the potential power that our unity can unleash to bring about a positive change today because of the Millions More Movement."

At the end of the day, it will be left up to communities, organizations and leaders to make a plan to take the unity agenda and run with it, organizers say.

"There is not at this time, a centralized structure for doing that," says Edelin. "No one organization can or should be responsible for this. But all of the co-conveners, all of the representatives of the national organizations and the national bodies should take responsibility for what they do best... There will be solutions proffered and action steps to be taken and then we would like to develop a critical mass of our people throughout the country, acting on an agenda together, moving toward some agreed upon goal together in all of these areas."

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