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Collection 2
Trenton Million Man March Coalition
Collection, 1995-1997

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January 2017

History

The Million Man March to Trenton was held on May 6, 1996, in the spirit of the Million Man March on Washington held in September of the previous year. The Washington march was called by Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam and organized by the Million Man March Organizing Committee, which consisted of civil rights activists from many organizations, including local chapters of the NAACP (but not the national organization), the National African American Leadership Summit, and the Nation of Islam. The stated aim of the march, according to the Nation of Islam website, was for “Black men gathered in Washington, D.C. to declare their right to justice to atone for their failure as men and to accept responsibility as the family head.”

The New Jersey Million Man March Coalition formed as a result of the enthusiasm generated by the march on Washington. Over one thousand New Jersey men returned from the march inspired and determined to continue the mission of the Million Man March in their home state. They planned a march on the State House in Trenton, and formed local organizing committees and coalitions to develop and host this as well as other events. A February article in *The New York Times*, written before the May march on Trenton, describes the mission as such: “for black New Jerseyans to share the inspiration, the rapport, they had felt in Washington, to show the state's political leaders their unity and strength and, most concretely, to get New Jersey's blacks to register to vote in the Presidential election.”

The Trenton Million Man March Coalition was one of a number of coalitions formed within the New Jersey Coalition, others of which included Newark, Camden, Asbury Park, and New Brunswick. Underneath the umbrella of the TMMMC, also referred to as the Trenton Local Organizing Committee (TLOC), were the Youth Development Council and Trenton's branch of Women in Support of the Million Man March. The Newark WISOMMM organization, which was the parent branch of the one in Trenton, remained active as a nonprofit organization long after the activities of the other groups ended. Twenty other local organizing committees (LOCs) worked alongside the Trenton Coalition to host the March on Trenton on May 6, 1996.

March organizers had predicted a turnout of 5,000-10,000, but rainy, cold weather led to a lower turnout of around 2,500. Like its precursor, the March on Trenton featured a number of speakers who discussed topics “ranging from moral decay to the need to make the African-American presence felt in elections”, according to a United Press International article from May 6, 1996, the date of the march.

The activity of the TMMMC did not end with the May 6th march, but continued with various events and programs over the next couple of years. These included: “A Gift To Our Women” and a candlelight march to the State House on November 8, 1996, Community Awareness Seminars on the following day, and “A Day of Presence” at Trenton schools on the first day of the 1997-1998 school year to support local youth and advocate for a better education system, as well as other press conferences, youth activities, services, and meetings.

Scope and Content Notes

This collection consists of papers, signage, and memorabilia related to the Trenton Million Man March Coalition and the May 6th March to Trenton, from the years 1995 through 1997. This collection is contained in eleven folders in one manuscript box.

The collection is divided into three series: I. The Trenton Million Man March Coalition; II. March on Trenton; and III. News Articles.

The Trenton Million Man March Coalition collection is significant in documenting the actions of a local community activism group and the history of the March on Trenton itself. Subjects of interest to researchers include civil rights activism in the 1990s, the Million Man March, grassroots activism, recent Trenton history, activism in Trenton, African-American activism, and the role of women in organizing the above.

Series Description

Series I. The Trenton Million Man March Coalition

The first series consists of paperwork related to the Trenton Million Man March Coalition/Local Organizing Committee and the two organizations underneath its umbrella: the Youth Development Council and the Trenton Women in Support of the Million Man March. The paperwork comprises calendars of events for both the TMMMC and the NJMMMC, flyers for various events hosted by the coalition (including flyers advertising the March on Trenton), minutes and agendas from coalition meetings, notes and logistical paperwork, and a set of papers related to the Women in Support of the Million Man March. The logistical paperwork includes charts and lists that break down the organization of the NJMMMC and TMMMC, photocopies of handwritten notes and paperwork, and blank agendas and task lists.

Of particular note are names and addresses of coalition members and a register report for the first four months of 1996. In the section on Women in Support of the Million Man March, items of note include an introductory packet with an invitation to join the WISOMMM and a directory of members.

Series II. March on Trenton

Various handouts, signage, and other printed material relevant to the march on Trenton either distributed or utilized at the march itself, soon thereafter, or in the time leading up to the march are contained in the second series. These include flyers bearing poetry and the Million Man March Pledge; pamphlets describing the mission of the TMMMC and the march; various types of signage; badges identifying security, vendors, and other officials; and evaluation forms designed to gauge the public's perception of the speakers.

Of particular note is a stapled packet detailing the New Jersey Million Man March Coalition's "Blue Print for Progress" dated May 6, 1996. This packet outlines in ten pages the goals of the organization, including economic development, community building, and strengthening families. Each page is printed on the reverse side of the lyrics of a song called "Lift Every Voice and Sing". Copies of the Million Man March Pledge kept in their plastic presentation frames are also part of this series, found in the back of the manuscript box.

Series III. News Articles

Photocopied news articles and publicity on the march and the TMMMC as well as photocopies of articles relevant to the mission of the march are contained in the third series. Articles from *The Trentonian* and *The Times* from October of 1996 relating to coalition activities are included, as well as a May 1996 photo of the Trenton Million Man March crowd in front of the New Jersey State House. Included with the collection are photocopies of articles that were printed en masse, possibly distributed at the march or another TMMMC event, or circulated amongst members of the coalition. These include articles from 1995-1996 on CIA involvement in Contra cocaine trafficking and the Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.'s radio talk show.

Provenance: Acc. #2017.01; gift of Algernon Ward, Jr. and Arthur Tolbert

Restrictions: none

Container List

Box / Folder / Folder Title

Series I. The Trenton Million Man March Coalition
1 / 1 / Calendars and Events
1 / 2 / Minutes and Agendas
1 / 3 / Notes and Logistics
1 / 4 / Women in Support of the Million Man March
Series II. March on Trenton
1 / 5 / May 6, 1996 "Blue Print for Progress"
1 / 6 / Flyers
1 / 7 / Pamphlets
1 / 8 / Signage
1 / 9 / Evaluation Forms and Questionnaires
Series III. News Articles
1 / 10 / News Articles and Publicity
1 / 11 / Other Selected Articles

Bibliography

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"NJ 'Million-Man' March Draws 2,500." *UPI*. UPI.com, 06 May 1996. Web. 12 January 2017.

Stewart, Barbara. "Ready to Rally: Trenton, Here We Come!" *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 24 February 1996. Web. 12 January 2017.