

## Gathering of black antisemites to precede 'Million Man March'

DANIEL KURTZMAN Jewish Telegraphic Agency  
-- Washington

Confirming many of the Jewish community's worst fears, several of the most notorious black antisemites in the country are planning a two-day conference prior to the Nation of Islam's upcoming Million Man March.

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has called on African-American men to join him for a "day of atonement" in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 16 to demonstrate that they will take more responsibility for their communities and commit themselves to a restoration of values.

But during the weekend before the march, a "Black Holocaust Nationhood Conference" here is scheduled to feature speakers known for their claims that white racists and Jews are responsible for the problems plaguing the black community.

The conference's speakers include some of the most virulent and outspoken antisemites and conspiracy theorists in the African-American community, including former Farrakhan spokesman Khalid Abdul Muhammad and City College of New York Professor Leonard Jeffries.

Jewish groups say the conference confirms the concerns they have had all along -- that the march and events surrounding it will create a dangerous environment that promotes the antisemitic views of Farrakhan and moves him toward mainstream acceptance.

The conference "underscores the danger and concerns we have about aspects of the march, particularly as it relates to who's organizing it and who's behind it," said Jess Hordes, director of the Anti-Defamation League's Washington office.

Hordes said the conference appears particularly inappropriate in light of the march's stated goals of "atonement" and declaration of responsibility.

The conference's organizer, Malik Zulu Shabazz, chairman of the Washington-based Unity Nation, has been quoted as saying that Farrakhan has given the conference his blessing and embraced its speakers.

Shabazz gained notoriety in the pro-Farrakhan community for leading antisemitic

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chants at Howard University student rallies last year. Shabazz established the Unity Nation while a student at Howard.

March organizers reportedly have denied that the conference has any connection to the march.

The pre-march conference is scheduled to be held at two public high schools in Washington, D.C. The 14 scheduled speakers include teachers, preachers and writers.

Muhammad has called Jews "blood-suckers," and Jeffries has accused Jews of financing the slave trade and plotting with the Mafia to oppress blacks through racist images in the media.

According to a Washington Post-ABC News survey, half of black Americans have heard about the march, and of those, 84% said it was a good idea.

## LETTERS

### Journey of Conscience touched my heart

Several area high-school students, educators, Holocaust survivors and Second-Generation participants took the lessons of the past on a very special Journey of Conscience. For three weeks last summer, we traveled throughout Eastern Europe balancing the beauty of the countryside and architectural wonders with atrocities of the past and the desecration of a once heavily populated Jewish area. Each country had a different flavor but shared a common thread which wove its way to Israel.

As I walked through the towns, I tried to imagine how life once was -- the sounds of the Yiddish language, the smell of fresh-baked challah, and the illumination of Shabbat candles through the window. Today we witness only a few remnants of a community that was once rich in Jewish culture -- a synagogue is almost deserted, with the majority of visitors coming from organized foreign groups who also pay their respects at Jewish cemeteries.

In the cemeteries, fallen and worn headstones are surrounded by weeds as tall as a young child. Has the present-day government once again turned its back on the Jewish people? Do these unattended graves truly have no existing family members to help with perpetual care? Perhaps those who do pay their respects can volunteer an hour or two to help maintain the grounds. By doing so, they would be honoring the past while doing a mitzva. It would be a way of showing that Hitler was not successful in destroying the

Jewish people.

When we speak of the organized extermination of six million Jews, we cannot even fathom how many lives that really is. It was in an exhibit at Maidanek concentration camp that I first felt that number. There are 800,000 pairs of shoes in bins as tall as the ceiling. They were worn and tattered -- brown boots, white sandals, tiny red shoes. Each had a story to tell: the separation of families, a lost childhood, lies and death. These barracks were filled with shoes, and in the third, you were also able to touch the worn leather shoes as the smell permeated the room.

This particular exhibit had a great impact on our group as did the monument at Treblinka. Surrounding a large stone sculpture, there are 17,000 rocks of a 11 sizes, each one representing a town or community destroyed by the Nazi regime. Once again, we can visualize a number among this sea of stones. And each stone represents hundreds or thousands of people.

This trip touched my heart. It was filled with many emotions and I was happy to share this experience with a wonderful group of diverse people. Hopefully, we can make a difference in the lives of others by sharing what we heard from survivors and saw throughout Eastern Europe. We do have the power to make change and to not sit idle.

**SHERRI KOPPEL, teacher**  
Streetsboro, Ohio, schools

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