

D.C. MARCHERS CELEBRATE LIFE AT THE SCENE OF BRIDGE DEATH

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The specter of death may always linger at the Belle Isle bridge, where **Deletha Word** jumped in August, in a fatal attempt to escape an attack.

A black male attacker.

To counteract that sense of failure and foreboding, local organizers for one of the nation's largest celebrations of black manhood -- the Million Man March -- returned to the site of **Word's** death Wednesday.

"We are not on this bridge to commemorate a death but to celebrate the beauty of a new life," said the Rev. Wendell Anthony, president of the Detroit chapter of the NAACP.

The "new life" Anthony referred to is what march organizers hope will be inspired as a million black men converge on the nation's capital. The Monday march is being promoted as a "day of atonement" for past misdeeds.

A Detroit bus contingent will leave Sunday afternoon for the event Anthony's church, Fellowship Chapel, is sending at least 15 buses -- one of the largest contingents traveling from Michigan, organizers said.

"This march from Detroit has seen Muslims, Christians of all faiths, young, old, men, women, working together for the good of the community," said Anthony, flanked by supporters and march organizers, and speaking from a sidewalk on the island side of the bridge.

March organizers dropped maroon rose petals into the Detroit River in **Words** memory. Police say **Word** jumped into the river and drowned after she was severely beaten by Martell Welch Jr., now charged with murder. The case is scheduled to go to trial in March.

"We chose this location, as Rev. Anthony very beautifully put it, so that we may take on a new beginning," said Dawud Muhammad, minister of Nation of Islam Mosque Number One in Detroit. The mosque also is sending a bus contingent to the march.

Judge Greg Mathis of 36th District Court in Detroit said he has been warned by friends in law enforcement that police intend to harass caravans of black men as they travel to the march.

Mathis and Anthony advised people going to the march to bring proper identification, watch their behavior and leave liquor, drugs and weapons at home.

Earlier this week, Benjamin Chavis, former national executive director of the NAACP and one of the march's chief organizers, said he also had received warnings about police harassment. A Michigan State Police spokesman called the suggestion unthinkable and said he knew of no directives about march-goers.

Mathis said police agencies should be happy about an event designed to keep black men away from the sorts of vices that might put them in contact with law enforcement.

"This type of march inspires men to transform their lives," Mathis said.

MARCH INFO

Here's what organizers want you to know if you're traveling to the Million Man March from the Detroit area:

- * Bring proper identification, reading materials, comfortable shoes and clothing, and pen and paper to keep a journal.
- * Organizers will be available at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Michigan State Fairgrounds, Woodward Avenue south of 8 Mile Road. Look for them near Building 2 at the Bauman Street gate.

Travelers may prepare to leave with buses sponsored by Fellowship Chapel and the Nation of Islam, scheduled to depart at 4 p.m., or obtain information on where Michigan travelers will park in Washington, D.C.

- * Anyone wanting to park overnight at the fairgrounds will be charged \$4 per vehicle.
- * Michigan marchers should plan to arrive in Washington between midnight and 4 a.m. Monday.

For those who cannot attend the march, services will be held at 7 a.m. Monday at Fellowship Chapel, 19555 W. McNichols, and New Bethel Baptist Church, 8430 C.L. Franklin Blvd.

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