

Unity Day '96



Big Sisters try to get volunteers.



Taking a serious turn, Unity Day promoted Voter Registration.



Carter C. Borden tries to get passersby to let their Black pride do the walking.

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Nearly half a million revelers converged on Benjamin Franklin Parkway Sunday for Unity Day, the culmination of the extravaganza of Days of Unity sponsored annually by WDAS.

Now in its 18th year, Unity Day is the largest radio station driven outdoor event in the country. Among the highlight of this year's special event was the live musical entertainment. Included in this year's line-up were The Whispers headlining the Main Stage for the Sunday evening concert.

Also performing Sunday were the Mighty Clouds of Joy, the Williams Brothers, Bishop Jeff Banks and the Revival Temple Mass Choir, the Braxtons — sisters of recording artist Toni Braxton, Men of Standard, Bobby Jones, Ann Nesby, and much more.

It was the live gospel entertainment which brought Yvette Odom and her family to Unity Day from their home in East Oak Lane for the past three years. "I love to listen to gospel music because that's my heart," said Odom, who was accompanied by her husband Leslie and nine-year old daughter Elizabeth.

"Whether you get to Unity Day early in the morning at 11 A.M. or this time in the middle of the afternoon, or late into the evening, it's always great. People get together, there's never any trouble, the crowd is nice and you have a great time. I think it's a wonderful idea," said Odom.

For Floyd Greenwood and Arlene Johnson this was their first Unity Day. They, too, were drawn to the special event when they heard about the live entertainment, especially the gospelrama stage.

"This is more than what I expected," admitted Greenwood. "We never thought it would be this many people coming together like this. You know why it's called Unity Day, because you can feel the unity out here."

Greenwood noted that having all the styles of African-American music was appropriate. The day's event also included the Nutramentment Fitness Entertainment Stage, a Children's Stage, the Cultural Stage, a Jazz/Reggae Stage and a Main Stage.

"Gospel music, in particular, inspires me. While Arlene has never been to any part of Unity Day before, this is my fourth time. So it's becoming like a tradition for me to

come out and hear the gospel music.

Debra Massey of South Philadelphia brought an entourage of nine children to Unity Day, including two of her own. After Sunday morning service she invited some of the children in her congregation to join her family for a day at the extravaganza. She, her husband and children were sprawled across the lawn enjoying live music when she talked to the *Philadelphia Tribune*.

"I like to do things as a family," said Massey. "You can enjoy a lot of Unity Day over on the grass just listening to the music. Since there are so many people and I have all these children with me we decided to relax more than walk around. This is the third year I've been come out and I just love it."

Others came out for the information and educational displays. There was the We Mean Business pavilion, where many picked up the latest copy of the *Philadelphia Tribune* or talked to representatives from the Philadelphia Opportunities Industrialization Center of Temple University's Small Business Development office.

The Black Inventors pavilion drew attention to the Africans and African-Americans who, from the 1800s, made positive contributions to the world, while the Heritage Tour pavilion gave those who dropped by a chance to explore and ask questions of those who went on the past Heritage tours, as well as enjoy cultural aesthetics of the presenters.

"This is our 10th year at Unity Day," said Veronica Joyner, founder and president of Parents United for Better Schools (PUBS). "It's becoming so much of a tradition that many of our members come by looking for our table to renew their membership. We also got a chance to have new parents sign up. For a \$10 donation they become part of the 20,000 memberships and have access to our tutorial program for 500 children."

With the message of education in contemporary rap idiom, Grand Hank attracted huge audiences as he encouraged them to shout, "I'm down with education!" Through his musical medley the crowd learned that he had a degree in chemistry and the importance of stopping violence among teens, not using drugs and staying in school.

Unity Day was born in 1978 as the need for family reunification. In its first year it drew some 50,000. Sundays event was able to draw crowds ten fold that original number.