

Briefly noted

News in the [May 31, 2005](#) issue

Plans were announced this month for African-American men, women and children to travel to Washington for a massive October 15 rally on the National Mall. Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the “Million Man March”—which brought nearly 2 million black men to Washington in 1995, according to organizers—the “Millions More Movement” rally in October will have the theme “A Declaration for a Covenant with God.” Jesse Jackson of the Rainbow PUSH coalition, Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women and other religious leaders voiced support for the rally and for Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, convener of both the “Million Man March” and the new movement. Al Sharpton, a 2004 presidential candidate, said the U.S. needs strong black leaders rather than “leading blacks” chosen by powerful institutions.

A federal judge has ordered a Maryland school district to revise its sex education curriculum after he said it seemed to favor religions that take a positive view of homosexuality. Montgomery County Public Schools superintendent Jerry Weast said he would shelve the program after some parents convinced U.S. District Court judge Alexander Williams that it unfairly singled out fundamentalists and Baptists. The judge said the program, which was scheduled for eighth- and tenth-graders, “presents only one view of the subject—that homosexuality is a natural and morally correct lifestyle—to the exclusion of other perspectives.” The judge said the program “paints certain Christian sects, notably Baptists, which are opposed to homosexuality, as unenlightened and biblically misguided,” according to the *Washington Post*.

Christians in Pakistan declared on April 11 that they oppose a recent government decision to restore the placement of data about the religious identity of citizens in passports—less than a year after the practice was halted. “This is a retrograde step. We have always opposed it,” said Victor Azariah, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Pakistan, which includes four major Protestant denominations. Speaking to ENI from Lahore, Azariah said, “The government is acting under pressure from fundamentalist forces.” The government in October issued machine-readable passports without a column for the holder’s religion. But

the decision drew strong protests from some Muslims, who asserted that it was a threat to Pakistan's identity as an Islamic state. About 97 percent of the country's people are Muslims.