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On August 28, 2013 citizens from across the United States will converge upon our nation’s capital to commemorate and celebrate the historic March on Washington, which



occurred 50 years ago on August 28, 1963. In 1963, the march was billed as the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*. The march was considered one of the largest political rallies for human rights in United States history and called for civil and economic rights for African Americans. On this date, Martin Luther King, Jr. stood in front of the Lincoln Memorial and delivered his historic “I Have a Dream” speech that also advocated for racial harmony. The march was organized by a group of civil rights, labor, and religious organizations; estimates of the number of participants varied

from 200,000 to 300,000. Observers estimated that 75-80% of the marchers were black. The march is credited with helping to pass landmark legislation securing voting, housing, and employment rights for all Americans regardless of race—the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965).

The 2013 commemoration’s theme is “*Marching Forward by Looking Back.*” With that theme in mind, let me share with you some changes in the nation’s African-American population since the original March on Washington.

Characteristics	1964	2012
Percentage voting in U.S.		
All Voters	69.3%	56.5%
African Americans	58.5%	62%
Percentage Graduating High School	25.7%	85%
Percentage Graduating College	3.9%	21.2%
Number of Black elected officials	1,469	10,500
Number of members serving in the Congress		
Member of U.S. House of Representatives	5	43
Member of the U.S. Senate	0	2
Percentage Owning Homes	41.6%	43.4%
Median Household Income	\$22,266	\$40,495
Poverty Rate	41.8%	27.6%

Source of Data: U.S. Census Bureau

As Afro-Cubans continue their march forward for Justice and Freedom, there may be some similarities between the two civil rights movements. There may also be some lessons that could be learned from this historic march and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, such as the value of national protest, similar to the Ladies in White; the adoption of nonviolent protest strategies, like boycotts, picketing, and hunger strikes (similar to Guillermo Farinas’ hunger strike); and the publication of inspiring examples and effective leadership. *ISLAS* shared some of these examples in past issues--Martin Luther King’s Letter from a Birmingham Jail (*Islas* issue #1); The Right to Vote--Voting Rights Act of 1965 (#2); and Quiet Storm: The Defining Moment—Rosa Park, the mother of the modern-day civil rights movement (#3).

There is so much that we can learn from each other. *ISLAS* will continue to share the inspirational stories and achievements of African descendant struggles wherever they occur.