

Lighting The Road To Freedom

New Orleans

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News Weekly

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**Dyson Speaks
on Cosby,
Katrina and
Criticism**

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June 6, 2006

39th Year

Volume 35

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COVER STORY

The Resurrection of Ray Nagin

Election 2006: A Retrospective

By: Edwin Buggage
Photos By: Glenn Summers



A formidable challenger, Mitch Landrieu gives his concession speech.

The atmosphere was reminiscent of David versus Goliath, as the tone was set for the final showdown for the race for who would lead New Orleans in its quest to renew itself as one of the world most fascinating cities. Before May 20th the question still remained who would captain what many saw as a great city sinking into the abyss, as this historic, yet fractured city attempts to lift itself up and move forward in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina's wrath?

In the role of David, the present mayor Ray Nagin found himself cast with a large dark shadow looming over him, facing a Goliath of an establishment who

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COVER STORY

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abandoned his campaign. During the early stages of the race he would soon discover many of his previous financial supporters and allies forsaking him, giving their campaign dollars and support to other candidates. He also found a mainstream media who once lauded him as a superhero like figure fighting the corruption and graft that's plagued the reputation of Louisiana Politics for centuries, suddenly relegating him to the role of the heavy for everything that's presently wrong with the city New Orleans. In a world post-Katrina he fell out of favor and he gave them additional fuel to add to the fire with several verbal gaffes most notably his 'Chocolate City' comments which gave them even more ammunition to tarnish his image. In this crucial time in the rebuilding of the city and with him involved a fight for his political life he would find himself on the wrong side of the pen, as many pundits predicted his days as mayor would soon be coming to an abrupt end. As their invective and contemptuous venomous tone were evident in many articles and broadcast; in their opinion Nagin became the symbol of why New Orleans was becoming a more divided and seemingly racially polarized city.

With much of his support in the white community eroding, whether purposely or by circumstance Nagin campaign was repositioned and became symbolic of something else; the hope for many displaced Black New Orleanians. And like the calvary coming to battle, African-Americans came to his aid supporting him at the ballot box, leading to a surprisingly large margin of victory in the mayoral primary. But for the embattled incumbent his journey back to city hall would not end there, the run-off election would promise to test his fortitude and

perseverance, where questions about his ability to lead were ubiquitous. In the run-off he would face a formidable opponent in Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu, who was a well financed scion of a legendary political family; armed with charisma, affability, charm, wit, and polish; although his words sometimes seemed too carefully measured; for some he was the antithesis of Ray Nagin. While the mayor was being continuously criticized even his adversaries admitted he can be charming and charismatic, but what some observers perceives as his lack of polish and his shoot from the hip style of speaking, could become a political liability and a possible impediment in expediting the recovery effort.

After Nagin's convincing nearly double digit victory in the primary, the endorsements came pouring in, but they were for his opponent, Mitch Landrieu. From every sector and interest group it seemed, the business community, the mainstream media, and many inside the African-American political, social and religious establishment rallied around the Lt. Governor. Even after his large margin of victory many pundits still felt the Nagin campaign was in trouble, as they predicted he would not be able to get enough of the white vote to win the election. This negative tone continued as he found himself attacked in a book that was released during the campaign that was very critical of him handling of the Katrina catastrophe.

But as the days grew closer to the election, the tide shifted and Nagin picked up several key endorsements from several of his former opponents and media organizations (One of which was Data News Weekly) including businessman Rob Couhig, lawyer Virginia Boulet, and the Rev. Tom Watson. In the final debate

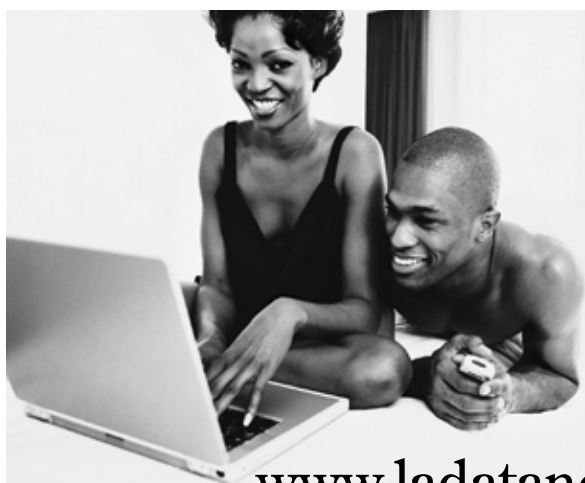
what many saw previously as an embattled mayor seemingly pulled a political rope-a-dope. A transformation took place, as the people witnessed a confident, competent, spirited man with renewed vigor. He was abreast of the issues, and seemed to be the one with a clear plan of what direction the city needs to be heading.

With that momentum heading into Election Day crowds of people enthusiastically cheered for Ray Nagin as he rolled down Chef Mentuer Highway greeting the people as they excitedly embraced the man whom they felt stood up for New Orleans when no one else would. That he was the man who articulated what was on the hearts and minds of many who have suffered through Katrina and its aftermath. Throughout the day citizens trekked in and out the polls. Some traveling by bus from cities across the country to have their voices heard. Florida Darenbourg, a grandmother and life long resident of New Orleans that's relocated in Houston Texas

traveled on one of the many buses chartered to get New Orleanians to the polls, she was wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with the words displaced voter; with tears in her eyes she responded to all the people she saw casting their ballots, "There are some people who think its not important to vote, but now its more important than ever because it's the future of our city that's at stake and the life of our children, and it's time for us to make a statement and I want my grandchildren to know and experience New Orleans."

As the long day of voting came to a close, the sunset brought a slight cool to the night air but temperatures rose at both competitors camps as nerves stood on edge as the counting of the votes began. It was a see-saw battle as both candidates took turns leading by a few percentage points throughout the night. Hearts raced as this tight knit contest went on, but soon Ray Nagin would pull away from his opponent pulling an upset similar to Muhammad Ali's

victory over Sonny Liston, and in similar fashion Nagin and the voters of New Orleans shook up the world and trumped the political establishment. As chants of four more years resonated, echoing inside the ballroom of the Marriot Hotel, and before a brass band played the joyous sound of the secondline and supporters reveled dancing in celebration of his victory. Nagin quoted Gandhi, the pacifist leader of struggle in India by saying, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." And like Gandhi, Nagin went through the fire, being scorned, castigated and ridiculed with many predicting his defeat, but through perseverance he endured, and was victorious. But while its too early to say what his legacy will be, and what the history books will say about Ray Nagin, today he stands elected and resurrected as the leader of New Orleans with many tough days ahead of him, as a city with a great past moves forward to an uncertain future.



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News Orleans Data News Weekly

TRAIL BLAZERS

by: Cheryl Mainor

You might say John Keller is a sort of accidental hero. Before Katrina, John Keller of New Orleans, was living his life, as a single man, a carpenter working on set designs for movies, and a fun loving man, with a myriad of rich life experiences.

When, Keller heard that the flood was coming being a retired Marine, he knew that he was prepared to weather the storm. Thinking that the building he lived in, the American Can Building was sturdy enough to make it through, he stayed, after all, the building was built in 1923 and had made it through Betsey and Camille, and he thought that if it did flood, the water would just go down. He would soon find out how much his military training would be of value, not only to manage his own life during the aftermath, but to save the lives of many others, many of them disabled people who lived in the building and the groups of stranded people from the public housing units who came to his building seeking refuge. The number of people in the building rose from 107 people to 244 people, all needing help.

John Keller was in the Special Forces, as a recon Marine, who served 9 months in Iraq during the Gulf War, and to him, this just seemed to be a case of water, but upon seeing people on top of the buildings, and the rising water, it quickly became clearly that he was going to need to get things organized and either find food and supplies for them, or get them out of there. The fact that many of them were in wheel



John Keller

chairs, and had other levels of disabilities, made the first option, locating food, water and keeping them sheltered and safe became the best option. So John, and his cousin Chris began to do just that. At that time, people began to come to the building from the housing projects, looking for a safe place, and food and water. In order to protect the residents of his building and to maintain order, he took charge. Keeping everyone comfortable and safe was the main priority. He and others went to the roof, and wrote huge signs for the rescue helicopters flying by, asking for Water and MRE's (meals ready to eat) to be dropped, but for 4 days, none was dropped. When it all began, they had supplies, ice, insulin for those who were diabetic, food, etc., but after 4 days, the ice melted, the insulin went bad, and the situation became dire.

Keller, was working hard to keep people calm, keep people from doing what human nature often dictates, which is to begin to turn on each other. It was no small task. John who stands at 6'7", began swimming in shoulder high water, and made his way to the grocery store. Snaking 8 coolers together, he filled them with water, and other supplies and brought them back to the building to feed the people. By doing that, he was able to keep the downstairs restaurant from being ransacked, and the food which was stored in the walk in freezer from being spoiled in case they would need it later. Keeping the people from rioting, and diffusing the situation, he used his military training "a best defense is a good offense", Keller, was able to put together a plan, keeping people busy, and avoiding conflict.

Daily, he would paddle around in his kayak, to find out information, he ran into some police who were leaving the city. He explained his situation, and was given a vest a uniform, and was instantly "deputized", but to him this was a clear signal, that the time to leave was imminent. Returning to the building, he, Chris and the other strong men, began to bring all of the people in wheelchairs (about 40) and all of the elderly (about 70) to the roof, knowing that this would bring the helicopters. They were right, but because of the angle of the building, the helicopters were not able to land. John, told the rescuers that he would bring the people out, by boat, to a location, for them to be airlifted to safety. Then, he and the other men, began carrying down all of the disabled and elderly first, and loading them on a boat he was able to commandeer, and riding them out, making return trips until all were evacuated. On one occasion, a man who was stranded with his family in his home, attempted to take the boat by gunpoint, but was met with the same, and though he was offered the chance to get his family out, he opted not to and remained in his home. After all were evacuated to safety, John, returned home, to wait it out and to protect his home and his building. Risking his own life, his care for his neighbors, and those who came looking for help and found it in him, makes him an unsung hero, and a real Trailblazer. Data News Weekly is proud to honor John Keller as Trailblazer of the Month.

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STATE & LOCAL NEWS

Angele Davis, Crt Secretary, Recognized For Influential Leadership



Angele Davis

Baton Rouge, LA - The Baton Rouge Business Report has announced Angèle Davis, Secretary, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, as one of the "2006 Influential Women In Business." Davis will be profiled in the June 6 edition of the Baton Rouge Business Report and honored at the Influential Women in Business Luncheon on June 13.

"Angèle Davis is an experienced leader who has a passionate commitment to public service and to the citizens of Louisiana. She is an effective leader and an asset to my administration. I am proud that she is being recognized for her accomplishments," said Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu.

As Secretary of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Davis serves as executive head and chief administrative officer for the Department under the direction of Lt. Governor Landrieu. In this role, Davis leads policy development and oversight of the offices in the Department, which include: Tourism, Cultural Development, State Parks, State Library, State Museum and Management and Finance. Davis is also responsible for advising the Lieutenant Governor

on administrative, policy and legislative issues that affect the department.

Before her time with the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Davis served as Deputy Commissioner of Administration for Governor Mike Foster. There, she aided the Commissioner of Administration with oversight of state government administration, including budget and planning, capital outlay, information technology, facility planning, purchasing and procurement, risk management, group health insurance, human resources and training.

Secretary Davis has a strong commitment to community service. She currently serves on the advisory board for the U.S. International Businesses Through Arts and Culture; on the Board of Directors of the Junior League of Baton Rouge; is a founding member of the Charles W. Lamar Jr. YMCA and Boys and Girls Club boards; and is also a dedicated volunteer at St. Joseph Cathedral.

During her career Davis has received many distinguished awards such as Baton Rouge Business Report's "Top 40 Under 40" Award, was named "Louisiana Outstanding Young Woman," and "Baton Rouge Outstanding Young Woman." In addition, executives from the state's tourism industry gathered at the 2006 Louisiana Tourism Summit to present Secretary Davis with the Louisiana Hospitality Leadership Award for her guidance with the Lieutenant Governor's Louisiana Rebirth Plan and for her leadership and dedication during and after the 2005 hurricane season.

Secretary Davis received her Bachelor's Degree in Communications from Spring Hill College and a Master's in Business Administration from Louisiana State University.

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STATE & LOCAL NEWS

AALP "policy summit" on minority concerns in rebuilding efforts

By Vincent Sylvain, THE
NEW ORLEANS AGENDA

New Orleans, La., - The New Orleans African American Leadership Project (AALP) has announced that it will host its first "policy summit" post election to examine specific areas of policy

concern to the African American community which should be address by the New Orleans City Council and the Mayor of the City of New Orleans. The policy summit will take place on Saturday, June 10, 2006 from 12:00 noon to at 5:00 PM at the

ASHE Cultural Arts Center, 1712 O. C. Haley Blvd. in New Orleans, Louisiana.

According to the group's spokesperson Mtangulizi Sanyika, "the preliminary design calls for organizations to share their rebuilding policy issues followed

by general discussion, and then subdividing into small groups for further discussion by policy area. We will then reconvene for summaries and dialogue with members of the city council. The objective is to develop a preliminary consensus on several policy initiatives that we might collectively work on for passage and implementation.

The issue areas shall include: 1) police and public safety, 2) housing (public, rental and homeownership), 3) health care (Big Charity and neighborhood clinics), 4) neighborhood planning/reconstruction plans and the Neighborhood Rebuilding Equity Ordinance, 5) infrastructure and disaster readiness (levees, utilities, citizen readiness, etc.), and 6)

government operations (city finances, government relations etc)."

While the group admits that there are other issues such as the schools, jobs, economic development, the Road Home program, FEMA, car removal, which are very important to the future of New Orleans, this initial effort will attempt to zero in on those areas that offer immediate opportunities for new city policy initiatives. Sanyika adds, "the election has resolved who the political managers are, now we must resolve what issues and priorities they should address and attempt to manage."

For more information or to register for the summit, please contact Mtangulizi Sanyika, AALP Project Manager at 713-376-3364.



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Landrieu, Kerry Urge Extended Deadline for Hurricane Economic Injury Assistance

WASHINGTON - With Monday's looming deadline for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan applications after Hurricane Katrina, Senators Mary Landrieu (D-La.) and John Kerry (D-Mass.) today called on the government to extend the deadline. On May 5th, Landrieu and Kerry met with business owners from some of the hardest hit parts of New Orleans who still have yet to get the financial assistance they need to rebuild and recover.

"Many businesses in Louisiana are still struggling to find the resources necessary to re-open and remain open," Sen. Landrieu said. "As our business owners continue to return and assess their damages from Katrina, it is important to give these businesses additional time to apply for these vital low-interest economic injury loans."

In Louisiana alone, over 18,000 businesses were catastrophically destroyed and more than 365,000 residents were displaced by the storms. Businesses located in the disaster declaration area that were adversely economically impacted can qualify for Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL). The physical disaster loan deadline for residents and businesses was May 10th, which was extended a number of times since the 2005 hurricanes devastated the Gulf Coast.

"After walking through New Orleans East and talking to Gulf Coast small business owners, it's obvious that Washington hasn't done enough," said Kerry, Ranking Democrat on the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. "It's been nine months. We need to cut through the bureaucratic red tape once and for all so these businesses can once again thrive and drive the economy."

Today, Landrieu and Kerry sent a letter to Small Business Administration (SBA) chief Hector Barreto asking him to extend the EIDL deadline for victims of Hurricane Katrina to June 29th. The EIDL deadline for victims of Hurricane Rita is June 26th. In addition, the Senators sent a letter to the commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) asking for a monthly report of business activity in the New Orleans area so they can track employment, business openings and closures, and other information important to the region's long-term economic recovery.

NATIONAL NEWS

Black Democrats and Republicans Seek More Statewide Offices

By. Hazel Trice Edney
NNPA Washington
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Competition between Democrats and Republicans to attract more Black support appears to be heating up as at least four Black Republicans are now running for statewide elections and Democratic leaders say they have triple that many.

"In the 1960s and 1970s, it was all about a place at the table. But now, I think we need to be talking about a place on the ticket," says Democratic National Committee

Hispanics and Asian-Americans, I want to see diversity on your statewide tickets."

Democratic activists, while remaining loyal to the party, have long criticized the party as having taken African-Americans for granted. For example, during the 2004 Democratic Primary debates, candidate Al Sharpton strongly rebuked party leaders, saying,

"We need to take the Democratic Party home to our daddies and discuss marriage or a break up."

He accused the DNC, then chaired by prolific fundraiser



Kweisi Mfume

Chairman Howard Dean. The former Vermont governor says he believes Whites will become increasingly willing to vote for Black candidates the more they relate to the issues that Black candidates espouse.

"I think, both White politicians and Black politicians have to understand that there's something new going on in the country, but we aren't there yet, we're far from it," says. Dean, once a front-runner in the 2004 Democratic Primary for president who was elected DNC chairman February 12, 2005.

Having had little time to recruit Blacks by deadlines for Democratic primaries his first year, after 15 months, he now boasts on what he perceives as a healthy list of African-American candidates. "I'm telling every chairman of every party that I want to see African-Americans and

Terry McAuliffe, of being more aggressive to win swing voters and Right-wingers than African-Americans.

Meanwhile, the Republican Party has lagged grossly behind Democrats when it comes to Black support. In the 2004 presidential election, only 11 percent of Black voters supported the GOP.

Republican Party Chairman Ken Mehlman couldn't be reached for comment, but, he acknowledged months ago that Republicans had begun running Black candidates with hopes to show African-Americans that the party is serious about the Black vote.

"It is our job to continue to grow our Party, by reaching out to new Republicans, independents and discerning Democrats," Mehlman declared in a speech to the annual conference of the Conservative Political Action

Continued on page 15

Spirit Of Democracy Awards Highlight 30th Anniversary Observance Of Black Civic Participation Group

National Coalition on Black Civic Participation awards diverse group for outstanding leadership

Washington, DC – May 30, 2006 - More than 400 guests representing business, labor, voting, civil and women's rights, the legal and political communities gathered at Washington, DC's Marriott Wardman Park Hotel to recognize the leadership achievements of 10 individuals honored during the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation's 9th Annual Spirit of Democracy Awards Gala. Hosted by nationally and internationally known entertainers, Sheryl Lee Ralph and Ben Vereen, guests also celebrated the 30 years since the black organization's founding to ensure and protect voting rights for Black Americans.

"History is in the room this evening," said Melanie Campbell, Executive Director and CEO of the 80-organization member National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP) as she set the stage for the evening's award presentations. "We celebrate tonight by restoring a sense of hope and restoration for the survivors of hurricanes Katrina and Rita...and by helping to ensure that Black communities are a major factor and voice in uplifting and engaging our democracy," Campbell went on to say in her remarks.

Several of the 2006 "Spirit of Democracy" awardees were selected for their extraordinary leadership to provide relief to Gulf Coast communities devastated by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Recipients of the awards include:

Community Empowerment Leadership Awards

- Honorable Bennie G. Thompson – Member, U. S. House of Representatives, Second Congressional District, Mississippi
- LaTosha Brown – Convener, Alabama Coalition on Black Civic Participation / Saving Ourselves Coalition
- Vincent Sylvain – Convener, Louisiana Unity Coalition

Corporate Leadership Award

- Fred J. Keeton – Vice President External Affairs & Chief Diversity Officer, Harrah's Entertainment, Inc.

Public Policy Award

- Dr. Kay Coles James – Senior Partner, J. C. Watts Companies and former Director, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) appointed by President George W. Bush



Ben Vereen and Cheryl Lee Ralph join New Orleans own Vincent Sylvain, as he receives the Community Empowerment Leadership Award at the 2006 Spirit of Democracy Awards in Washington, DC. Sylvain was honored for his work during the 2006 New Orleans Municipal elections Get Out the Vote and voter empowerment efforts through the Rebuild HOPE Campaign.

Labor Leadership Award

- Nat LaCour – International Secretary-Treasurer, American Federation of Teachers

Chairman's Circle Awards

- Honorable James Clyburn, Member, U.S. House of Representatives, Sixth Congressional District, South Carolina and Chair, House Democratic Caucus
- Margaret Bush Wilson, Esq. – Founding Board Member, NCBCP and former Chair of the Board, NAACP
- Richard G. Womack, Sr. – Special Assistant to the President, AFL-CIO, Immediate past Chair of the NCBCP Board of Directors

Outstanding Board Leadership Award

- Carlottia A. Scott – President, LaCause and Board Member, NCBCP.

A special previously unannounced award was presented to Dr. Dorothy L. Height, Chair, Board of Directors, National Council for Negro Women (NCNW) for still "being a trailblazer for justice, fairness and inclusion for all people," as she was honored by current NCBCP Board Chair, A. Shaunise Washington, Vice President, Government Affairs, Policy and Outreach, Altria Corporate Services, Inc.

The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP) is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of over 80 member organizations dedicated to enhancing the full participation of the Black community in all levels of civil society. Over its 30-year history, NCBCP has served as an effective convener and facilitator at the local, state and national levels of efforts to address the disenfranchisement of African Americans and other marginalized communities. For more information please visit our website at: www.ncbcp.org.

DATA ZONE

Election Victory Highlights

Photos by Glenn Summers and Malik Saoud



Former Mayoral Candidate Rev. Marie Galatas rejoicing Nagin's victory at campaign celebration.



New Orleans is a place where music and dance spans the generations, bringing people of different backgrounds together.

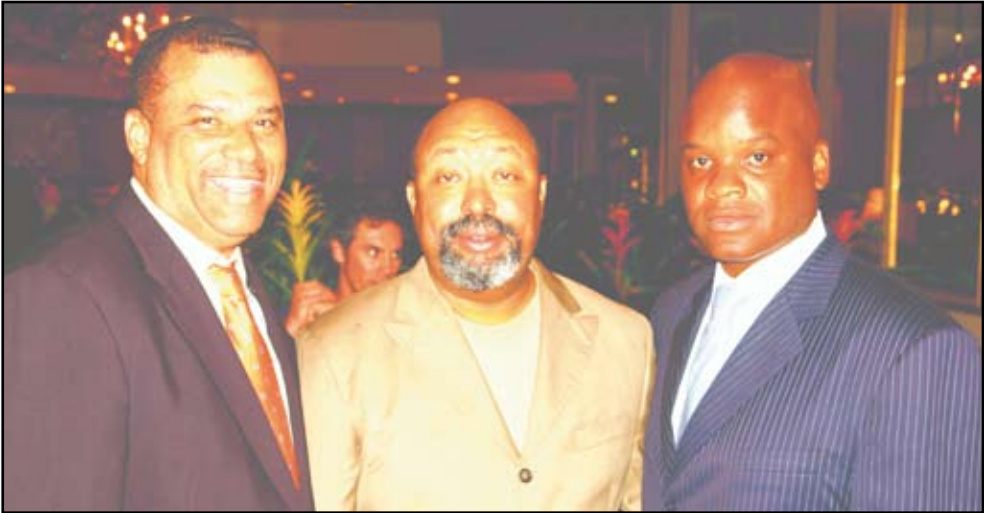


Voters outside the polls show their support for the city with shirts saying 504 Forever.

May 20, 2006 will be etched in the minds of New Orleanians forever, for it is the day many had been waiting for, finally the day had come in deciding who would lead the city of New Orleans in its rebuilding. It was a long day, but when the votes were counted the citizens of New Orleans choose to retain the incumbent Ray Nagin as Mayor of the City of New Orleans. Data News Weekly takes you there recapping this historic occasion.



2jpg. Mr. and Mrs. Tom Watson at inaugural reception



New Orleans City Council President Oliver Thomas, Entergy New Orleans President Dan Packer, and City Council Member-Elect James Carter at Ray Nagin's victory celebration.



Former Mayoral Candidates Virginia Boulet and Shedrick White



A New Orleans original, a brass band performs during the Mayor's reception as people dance celebrating his victory.



Supporters of Ray Nagin line the streets of New Orleans.



Mayor Ray Nagin, City Council Member-Elect James Carter, and Data News Weekly Publisher Terry Jones.

DATA ZONE

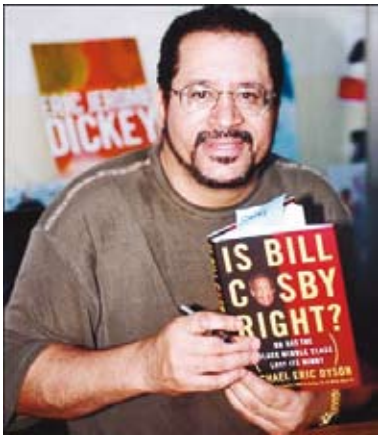
Michael Eric Dyson on Cosby, Katrina and Criticism

By. Charles Hallman, Special to the NNPA from the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder

(First of a two-part interview)

Michael Eric Dyson is the author of 12 best-selling books. An ordained Baptist minister, the Detroit-born Dyson recently spoke in Minneapolis and talked afterwards about his writings.

"When I wrote the Tupac book," Dyson says of *Holler If You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur* (Basic Civitas Books, 2001), "[People asked] why would you waste a Ph.D. from Princeton on a rapper?" His book on the late singer Marvin Gaye, *Mercy, Mercy, Me* (Basic Civitas, 2005), "was intensively rewarding but also painful because he was such a great man, but he suffered so much as well. The most challenging was the Martin Luther King book [I May Not Get There with You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr., published in 2001 by Free Press], and the most controversial because I was taking on a beloved icon. I was celebrating him, but I also had to deal with some of the flaws of a great man."



His 11th book, *Is Bill Cosby Right? Or Has the Black Middle Class Lost Its Mind?* (Basic Civitas, 2005), criticized the famed comedian based on Cosby's NAACP speech in May 2004 that chastised Black youth and poor Blacks.

"Perhaps of all my books," explains Dyson, "that book probably has been the most important I've written because it jump-started a conversation that Mr. Cosby himself had started. I wanted to bring a different perspective."

According to Dyson, the two men spoke by phone, and he asked Cosby for a transcript of his speech. "He said he thought I was dishonest and not to be trusted," the author continues. "I said, maybe I'm not dishonest, but too honest because I am telling you something that you might not

want to hear, and people wouldn't dare tell you because you are a powerful man."

After reading the transcript, the University of Pennsylvania humanities and African-American Studies professor said to himself, "I have to write a book." He adds that he invited Cosby to appear on his radio show, but the comedian refused.

After Cosby and other Black notables, including Dyson, earlier this year spoke in New Orleans, Dyson began work on a sequel to *Is Bill Cosby Right?* "He dismissed the vicious consequences of Katrina and instead indicted the people for what happened before Katrina," Dyson says of Cosby.

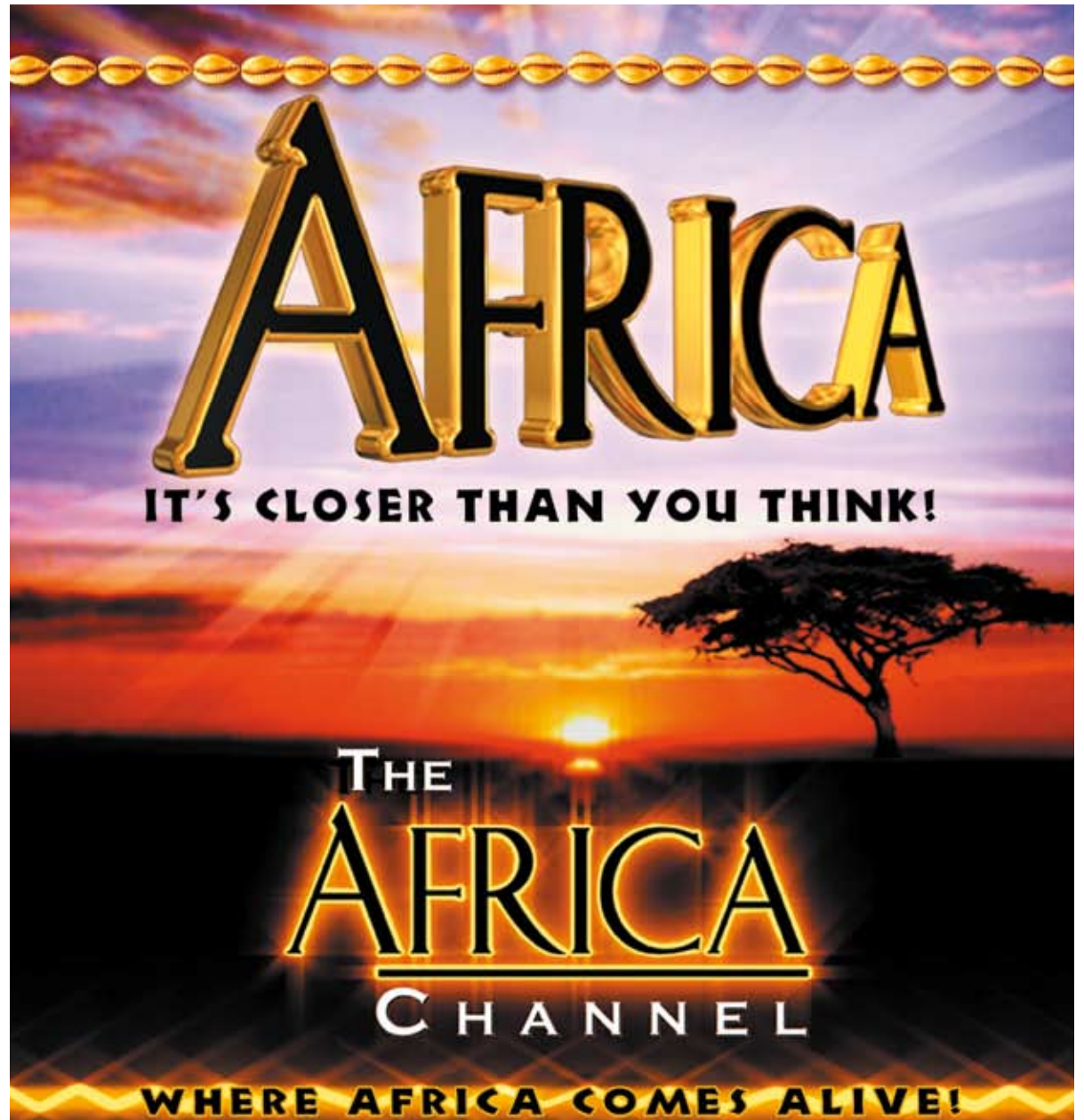
On Cosby's philanthropic efforts, "I don't think we have to question his meaning to our community. If he never gives another dime, he's done enough in five lifetimes. But that doesn't mean he has the right to be wrong in criticizing poor Black people and dogging them. You can't get a pass just because you're famous."

Dyson has begun hosting a radio talk show on Radio One's Syndication One news/talk network, launched in six cities on January 30. "We are on the Internet," Dyson points out. "You can hit me on www.dysontalk.net from 10 am to 1 pm [Eastern time]." On being among the few Black voices heard nationally today, "You tap into a vein of conversation," Dyson says proudly. "You get the best of us [Blacks] and the worst. We're thinking, reacting, sharply engaging, yet we don't get a chance to often talk. There's some smart Black people out there that nobody gives credit for."

Once named among the 50 most inspiring African-Americans by *Essence* magazine, where he also writes a monthly advice column, Dyson says, "I do whatever it takes to reach people. That's why I write books, preach in churches and do radio."

"I got a Ph.D. in the first place not just to write to intellectuals alone but to the masses of people," concludes Dyson. "I have the privilege to work hard, and the leisure to be able to spend my time doing what is necessary for the people."

Next week: Dyson talks about his most recent book on the social and political fallout as a result of Hurricane Katrina.



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OPINION



Dr. Joe M. Ricks Jr.
Data Columnist

An Appointed School Board Just Makes Sense

that said, I believe we must have a viable public school system. The logical first step in that direction is a mayoral appointed school board. An appointed school board makes sense for three reasons. First, it is the only way that we can realistically have a chance at getting the variety of skills needed on the board. Second, contrary to the popular argument, a mayoral appointed board would actually have greater accountability. Finally, look at the results of the elected system which has continuously failed to deliver results.

The Orleans Parish School Board oversees the largest operation and budget in the city of New Orleans. Caring about kids and an educational background are necessary attributes but insufficient for oversight of such a large operation. If I were appointing the board there are at least three additional skills I think would be necessary for guiding the school system. With approximately a half of a billion dollar budget we need board members with some level of expertise in high level

governmental and non-profit finance. I really don't think that a majority of our board members over the past twenty years have either mismanaged or allowed the mismanagement of so many dollars because they didn't care about children. Managing a half a billion dollar governmental operational budget is not like managing your household budget. I know a few people in finance, and none of them conduct financial ratio analysis, or consider time value of money calculations when dealing with their home operating budgets. It is highly unlikely that a person without some financial background could effectively oversee a budget of this magnitude. As an MBA, and a Ph.D. in marketing, even I would not be comfortable analyzing that type of budget without council from an expert in finance.

The second skill I would make sure is present is expertise in labor relations and negotiation. One of the key objectives of the board is, or should be, having an effective working relationship with our teachers. Operationally, this means having a good working relationship with the teacher's unions. Members with this type

of expertise are critical to an effective board. The final skill is facility planning and management. Just look at the condition of the buildings where our kids attend school and the need for this skill should be obvious.

It is unfortunate, but one of the major problems with the elected system is that these are not the type of attributes that will inspire voters to go out and vote for a candidate, yet they are essential for a successful board. Let's be honest, how many school board members with these attributes can you name? More importantly, what school board members that you have voted for, can you honestly say had any of these attributes? An appointed board would at least make it possible for a board with the diversity of skills necessary for success.

In addition to getting the right mix of skills on the board, an appointed school board would have a greater level of accountability. Legislative bodies cannot be held accountable as a body, only as individuals. Yet, they make decisions that affect our lives as a body. We as a community can not hold each individual district representative

accountable. This is supported by the fact that as poorly as our schools have preformed over the past twenty five years, (as long as I have been a resident of New Orleans) we have not had one election where we have turned over the entire board. This allows the political interest in one district to have a negative impact on the entire system. Also, for those who make the accountability argument, one only has to look at the level of voter turnout for school board elections in a non-mayoral election years to see that argument is empirically non existent. It seems to only make sense that the highest ranking elected official in the city of New Orleans be held directly accountable for our most important asset during normal times and be given the authority necessary to be effective.

The final argument needs no explanation. Look at the performance of our schools under the current system. Isn't it time to try something different?

Joe M. Ricks, Jr., Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Business at Xavier University of Louisiana. For comments he can be contacted at jmricks@xula.edu



Eddie Francis
Data Columnist

"THAT NEXT, CAREFUL STEP"

in my opinion, pulled off a major upset in reclaiming the office of mayor. The question, though, is what kind of chemistry will he develop with the "new" city council?

There are only three familiar faces in the mix but there are also some new, ambitious personalities on the city council. Oliver Thomas kept his at-large seat while Cynthia Hedge-Morrell held on to her district D seat and Cynthia Willard-Lewis stayed at her district E post. Former Saints executive, Arnie Fielkow, will join Thomas at the at-large post while Shelley Midura will take the district A seat as a result of her upsetting Jay Batt. Districts B and C will see two of the more interesting representatives in Stacy Head and James Carter, respectively. What this offers is a mixture of pre-Katrina leadership versus the post-Katrina new attitude.

Where conventional wisdom tells us that the pressure is on the elected officials, I would caution New Orleanians about leaving the pressure on the politicians. In one of my earlier commentaries ("Leaving Race Out of the Race", April 8, 2006), I alluded to the fact that a constituency can flex its political muscle. Therefore, leaving the pressure on our elected officials is the same as leaving the power in their hands. If I'm not mistaken, that has been the pitfall of being a New Orleanian.

Here is leadership 101. No matter how much pressure there is on the person in charge, he or she will get the credit for the hard work of those who serve him or her. True, that leader gets all the blame when things go wrong but it is more of a crime to rob the masses of their dedication to building a strong community. So my question to New Orleanians,

near and far, is how do you make elected officials responsible?

Mayor Nagin, the city council and those around them have to know that their constituents are serious about rebuilding New Orleans in the best light possible. Therefore, leaving the chambers of City Hall empty during city council meetings will do the community no good. Letting problems fester without blowing up city council people's phones will do folks no good. Organizations' leaving elected officials off their invitation lists for important, enriching events would be a serious omission.

In the post-Katrina world, nothing is easy. In fact, post-Katrina New Orleans is no place for folks who want the easy way out of life. If we really want to reshape New Orleans into the success that it should have been years ago, it is going to take coordinated efforts of citizens

around the city to apply the proper pressure on the city's leadership. Upset individuals don't get results as effective as the results that organized groups get. And the "I'll just let somebody else do it" mentality won't add up to much, either.

New Orleans is begging for leadership and the rest of the United States is watching. As unfair as it is for the rest of the country to scrutinize New Orleans when there are hundreds of corrupt communities around the U.S., it still doesn't change the fact that the rest of the country is passing judgment. As long as we know the situation, we might as well maximize our opportunities. Use the media, use word of mouth or use the Internet. Just use the opportunity to build a greater New Orleans for everyone.

Remember when you were a kid playing "tightrope" with cracks on the ground? Do you remember how careful you were not to "fall off?" If you were anything like me, you concentrated oh so carefully as you negotiated that crack as if it were the high wire hundreds of feet above a circus floor. New Orleanians should consider the steps after our historical mayoral election to be those steps on the high wire.

Conventional wisdom tells that the ones who are under the real pressure are the individuals who just got voted into office in New Orleans. Certainly that is the truth. C. Ray Nagin,

COMMENTARY

Nagin Wins New Orleans Election: Now What?



Ron Walters
NNPA Columnist

Ray Nagin, incumbent mayor of New Orleans, defeated Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu 52 to 48 in a stunning upset in the runoff election for mayor that has pundits and politicians wondering how it happened and what happens next.

The wonder occurs because Nagin's base is related to his program. Nagin was widely expected to lose since he needed more than the 6 percent of the White vote that he won on April 22. Powerful Black ministers had drifted toward Landrieu and none other than Wynton Marsalis, the popular New Orleans jazz trumpeter, had endorsed him.

But Nagin's base reversed this time from his first election when he won 80 percent of the White vote and 20 percent of the Black vote to just the opposite. One reason is that for the Black voter, neither Nagin nor Landrieu gave them a sharp difference in their program to restore the city, which left them free to practice the Black politics that has been traditional since 1978. That also left just enough of the White vote to return to Nagin, who believed he would protect their interests against the more liberal Landrieu.

The substantial Black turnout of 40 percent increased above the 31 percent in the April 22 election, also giving some indication that Blacks were looking beyond Nagin, investing their faith in the restoration of the New Orleans to the city they knew and Nagin became the vehicle for such

aspirations. They drove and bused into the election in large numbers and even though some of the voting precincts were changed again since the April 22 election, they were able to make the difference in this election.

A veritable army of volunteers, under the leadership of the Louisiana Voter Rights Coalition, the National Urban League, the NAACP, the National Rainbow Coalition, the National Action Network, ReBuild Hope Now and many legal civil rights organizations, came together to assist Black turnout. They facilitated the movement of buses and cars into the proper polling precinct stations, provided technical assistance such as information to voters on their rights, protection of their ballot status, encouraged provisional voting and, in short, doing many of the things that together were critically important to the result.

When the history of this election is written, it should not be just about Nagin's attractiveness – also the attractiveness of Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rev. Al Sharpton, Marc Morial, and others – but about the political infrastructure that assisted in opening up the process. Their monumental efforts overcame the barriers in the voting process set up by the state and approved by the U. S. Justice Department, so that will be no legal challenge to this election is warranted.

Now that Nagin is the mayor so what? As I indicated previously, he will be in a position to spend more money than any major in America with the possible exception of New York City and Los Angeles. The city has been allotted a federal appropriation that contains such funds as: \$6.2 billion for housing and infrastructure repair, \$8 billion for incentives to businesses to return and repair, \$1.2 billion for hazard mitigation and other funding.

Nagin promised during the campaign to "hit the ground running" on rehabilitating the city, but after winning he has taken a more cautious approach to the neighborhood problem. The reason is that the proposals of the commission he established that called for a "smaller footprint" of the city and hinted that people would not be able to rebuild in the worst flooded areas (largely African-American) was resoundingly opposed by Blacks. Now that they are his main political base, he is moving more slowly, promising that he will take 100 days, see how the rebuilding process moves and after the end of the year, make proposals for land use.

A major question in my mind is whether the power centers in the state will allow Nagin to spend the money like the citizens want. One key is that although he endorsed Rep. Bobby Jindal, a conservative Republican, Jindal was nowhere to be seen in the election celebration. Will the Republican politicians who controlled the State House keep their hands out of the large pot of New Orleans money? Will the Governor attempt to control it, or the White House? The questions are posed by the State involvement in the election. And a recent example is that a local Black judge voided all prosecutions that involved public defenders, since not enough are functioning and poor defendants are exposed. But the Attorney General is examining a reversal of this act.

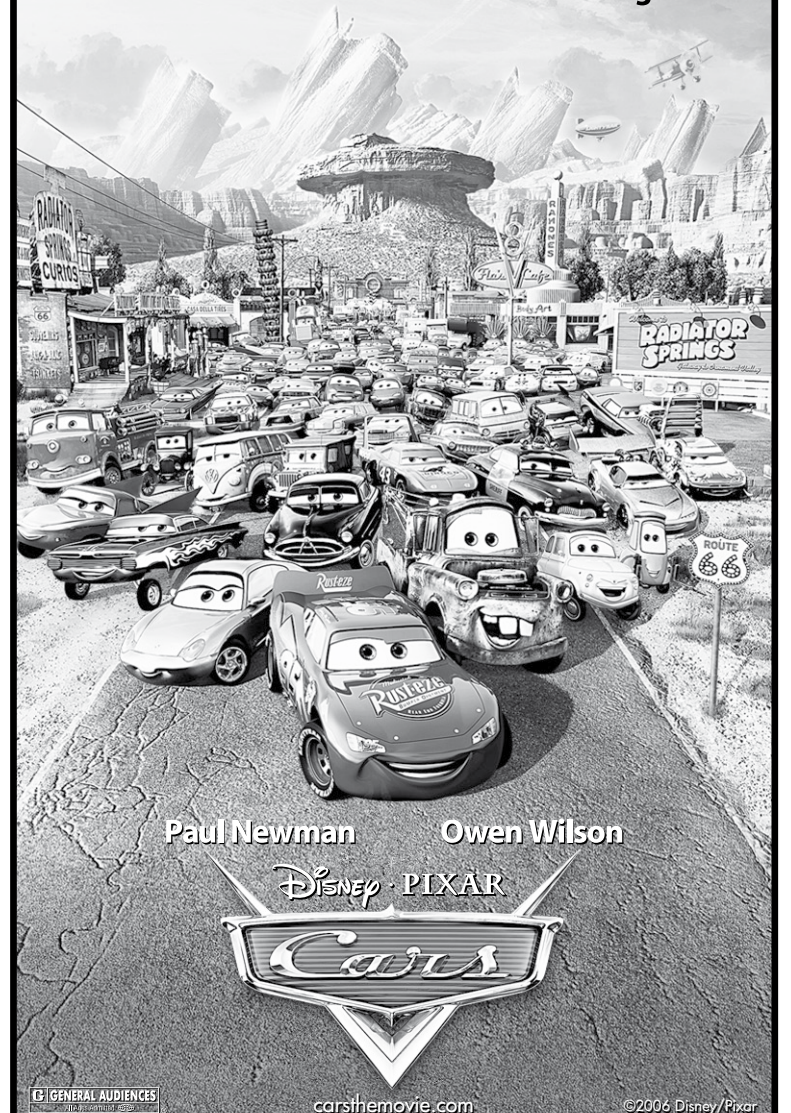
So, the election in New Orleans is over, now the battle for Black self determination begins all over again.

Ron Walters is the Distinguished Leadership Scholar, Director of the African American Leadership Institute and Professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland College Park. His latest books are: *White Nationalism, Black Interests* (Wayne State University Press); and *Freedom is Not Enough* (Rowman and Littlefield Press).

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IN THEATERS JUNE 9



HEALTH NEWS

More Blacks Fight Obesity with Surgery

By. Deborah Todd
Special to the NNPA from the New Pittsburgh Courier

PITTSBURGH (NNPA) – According to the Center for Disease Control, heart disease, various cancers, stroke and diabetes were the top four reasons Black Americans died in 2002. Each disease is more likely to affect Blacks than any other ethnic group in the country, and all the diseases’ have root causes that can be traced back to obesity.

“The African-American population is particularly vulnerable to severe obesity, so they’re a population in tremendous need,” said Dr. Anita Courcoulas, Chief of the Section of Minimally Invasive Bariatric and General Surgery at the University of Pittsburgh.

Fortunately, Blacks have begun to step up and make the changes necessary to improve their outlooks with . According to doctors in attendance at the National Obesity Help Convention at Magee Women’s Hospital May 13, Blacks are seeking help in greater numbers.

“I think it’s wonderful that, now with more education and awareness, more people are becoming aware of the surgical option and are coming for help,” said Courcoulas.

Yes. In the African-American community we have a lot of people interested in surgery, we have a lot not interested in surgery,” said Dr. Madelyn Fernstrom, founder and director of the UPMC Weight Management Center. “I think there’s a lot more interest, sort of more hope, in general.

Many Black people hear statistics saying more than 64 percent of our population is obese, but have no idea

whether they fall into that category or not. Fernstrom said learning a patient’s Body Mass Index is the first step in determining how to help them lose weight.

“When you’re in that in the 30’s, 30 to 35 is Class One Obesity; 35 to 39 is Class Two Obesity and 40 and above is Class Three, that’s what we call severe obesity-that’s the surgical people,” said Fernstrom.

Although some patients with Class Two Obesity can be candidates for surgery because of medical problems, Fernstrom emphasizes the fact that surgery isn’t a quick fix for obesity and may not be for everyone.

“Just because people think, ‘I’m big enough for surgery-sign me up,’ it doesn’t work like that.

“All the insurance companies have a mandatory six-month lifestyle plan that you must complete with your doctor that will say that this person is demonstrating the ability not to lose weight, but to stick with a long-term program. Because (patients’) lifestyles after surgery are way harder than before surgery.”

These challenges can be especially difficult for families who are used to eating less healthy foods because of cost, little access to healthy foods and cultural perceptions of how foods should be prepared.

Valerie Campbell, author of “Cooking With Soul” a bariatric cookbook,” said “hot and heavy,” used to be her mantra regarding food. But after losing 120 pounds following her gastric bypass surgery, she has found ways

to make her favorite foods healthy and has incorporated those recipes into her soul-food catering company.

“If you’re doing something like fried chicken, you can use low-fat breading mixes, low fat, low carb pancake mixes instead of flour,” she said. “Instead of using Crisco, you can use Canola or Olive Oil. Use something natural, so that your body can break it down.”

Another, more difficult challenge, can be that patients have unrealistic perceptions of how surgery will change their appearance. While surgery patients are warned about scarring and excess skin left behind after surgery, some patients are disappointed by the fact that, in spite of their weight loss, they may never be classified as “skinny.”

“If you look at someone that comes and has 100 pounds to lose, they can expect to lose 60 to 80 pounds with surgery-that’s realistic,” said Courcoulas. “Ideal weight is not a goal after surgery, but healthy weight is.”

Pam Jennings, who underwent gastric bypass surgery in 2003, agrees with Dr. Courcoulas that success for the bariatric surgery patient cannot be determined by their weight or BMI number, but by their improved health.

“I like to look at it more of what other metrics I can look at,” said Jennings. “Pre-surgery I could barely walk with the group I was with and now I can run on a treadmill for two miles without stopping.

I feel a lot more confident in putting myself where I want to be and think I need to be in my career.”

Mental Illness in the African American Community

By. Glenn Ellis
NNPA Columnist

One of the greatest, and most under-treated, threats affecting Americans today is Mental Illness. Four-Hundred-Fifty million people worldwide are affected by mental, neurological or behavioral problems at any time.

In keeping with the prevalence of health disparities in practically every other area of health, the African-American community suffers disproportionately from both mental health and mental health treatment.

One in four patients visiting a health service has at least one mental, neurological or behavioral disorder, but most of these disorders are neither diagnosed nor treated.

African-Americans account for only 2 percent of psychiatrists, 2 percent of psychologists, and 4 percent of social workers in the United States.

Mental illnesses affect, and are affected by, chronic conditions such as cancer, heart and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes

and HIV/AIDS. Untreated, they bring about unhealthy behavior, non-compliance with prescribed medical regimens, diminished immune functioning, and poor prognosis.

Compounding this disparity in mental health is the existence of a pervasive stigma that is held widely in the African-American community: They might think I’m crazy!

The stigma that engulfs African-Americans on the issue of mental illness has its origins deep in the annals of slave history in America.

One scientific report went so far as to deliberately falsify the Black insanity rates from the 1840 U.S. census to show that the further North blacks lived, the higher their rates of lunacy strong evidence, of course, that freedom drove blacks crazy.

One Hundred-Fifty years after the 1840 census, there are still important gaps and paradoxes in our knowledge of the mental health status of the African-American population.

African-Americans are

disproportionately exposed to social conditions considered to be important risk factors for physical and mental illness.

African-Americans frequently lack a usual source of health care as a focal point for treatment. For many African Americans, the emergency room is generally the source of primary care treatment. As a result, mental health care occurs frequently in emergency rooms and psychiatric hospitals. These settings and limited treatment available there, undermine the delivery of high-quality mental health care.

Adaptive traditions have sustained African Americans through long periods of hardship imposed by the larger society. There is a historical tendency to “scope” and “adapt” through a myriad of mechanisms. Among them are food, smoking; illicit drugs; violence; and sex, just to name a few. For some, it is a total withdrawal from social interactions.

I am reminded of a childhood friend, who had an “Uncle John”, who sat in the same chair,

by the window, day in, day out, for as long as I can remember. I can still hear my friend’s mother telling visitors to the house, Oh, don’t mind him, that’s just Uncle John. He won’t bother you, he harmless”.

Less than half of African American adults with mental illness seek treatment for mental health problems, and less than one third of their children receive treatment.

The lack in receiving treatment is due in part to the stigma that surrounds mental disorders in the African-American community.

On the surface, the deep threat this issue poses to African American health may not be apparent. However, mental illnesses affect, and are affected by, chronic conditions such as cancer, heart and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and HIV/AIDS. Untreated, they bring about unhealthy behavior, non-compliance with prescribed medical regimens, diminished immune functioning, and poor prognosis.

If this major public health issue

is to be addressed effectively in the African American community, several things have to take place:

- More aggressive efforts in addressing health disparities as a community
- Educate and involve Religious leaders in directing seekers of prayer to Mental Health Services
- Make mental health a part of dialogue in primary care settings
- Increase the availability of African American Mental Health Providers
- Encourage compliance and continuation of treatment by family and friends

Remember, I’m not a doctor, I just sound like one.

Take good care of yourself and live the best life possible!

Glenn Ellis is a health columnist/writer and media personality who lectures around the country on health issues relevant to the African-American community. For good health information, visit: www.glennellis.com.

COMMENTARY



Terry B. Jones
Publisher

A new chapter in the history of the City of New Orleans is beginning. Now that the election has past, and Mayor Nagin was reelected, we can all get back to the business of rebuilding our city. Mayor Nagin now can concentrate his efforts solely on putting the pieces of our broken

communities back together again, without the distraction of an election. Which by the way, we still feel never should have happened, because of the displacement of our residents. But even though nobody could stop this from happening on Capitol Hill, or in Baton Rouge, what did ultimately happen was an election that will be forever etched in the history of New Orleans, and in the History of America.

The Ray Nagin Mayoral victory could be considered a David and

Goliath type scenario with Mitch Landrieu having a war chest of over 1.5 million dollars, and Mayor Nagin having only somewhere around \$300,000. So, one would assume that Ray Nagin's strategy was something that should be written in the history books as a master plan.

But we to look at it a tad bit differently. After the horrific destruction of Hurricane Katrina, and New Orleanians displaced throughout the country, a tremendous job was done during

the first primary by several community organizations who provided transportation to get the people back in to town to vote. But in the runoff, without hardly any assistance, New Orleanians, primarily African Americans, found their own wherewithal to vote. In fact, it was an even higher turnout than the primary, which indicates to me, that the Democratic process is alive and well, with or without the government's help. Also, it indicates that New Orleanians will

not let anybody control or dictate who is going to be in control of their city.

So even though the victory was a great victory for Mayor Nagin, I feel it was an even greater victory for New Orleanians, and it sent an extremely loud message throughout the country.

So, Congratulations Mayor Nagin, but most importantly, Congratulations to "We The People of New Orleans!" We did a fantastic job! Now, Let's Rebuild Our City!

Legendary Sportscaster Peter "Champ" Clark

May 24, 1914 to May 28, 2006

"Wins and Losses"

By Ty Green

As a Sportswriter and broadcaster, my job is to report the news and scores by voicing my opinion, telling how the game was one by virtue of the outcome. No matter who won or lost, it is the opinion of the writer or broadcaster to express their personal opinion of the results.

For Peter "Champ" Clark, it was his opinion listeners, subscribers and armchair sports fanatics would await daily and weekly to tune in to, or read about, what he had to say regarding the latest in the world of Sports. His smooth and silky voice, and a sports column, was carried across the State of Louisiana, and as far as his voice could be heard for decades.

When God called him home, he left us with a legacy that will carry on past the many Championship Sports he covered as a journalist, as well as a host of other major accomplishments he was first to embark upon as an African American. It was his desire, to one day, break the color barriers becoming the first of his race in the State to host a major radio talk show. He did it.

He led the way, becoming the first person of color to win the prestigious Fleur Delis Award

that allowing him to be enshrined into the Saints Hall of Fame. The "Champ" also went on to become the first African American to head up the Louisiana Athletic Association of Boxing as its Commissioner, and Championed his way into the ring to become the first person of color as Announcer for consecutive Championship bouts (Ali vs. Spinks and Leonard vs. Durand).

Yes, "PCC" never thought the color of his skin or the content of his character would prevent him from moving forward, because he was a Winner. Winning hearts of Youths he taught in schools. Winning the beliefs of Athletes he coached and covered. Winning the ear of the fans, who read what he had to say and listeners who tuned into his broadcast. He authored five books and was a columnist for three different publications, including sitting behind the typewriter for this same company I write for today.

Peter "Champ" Clark never bit his tongue on any subject, whether it was Sports or a conversation in general. In fact, when he spoke, he articulated his words very well. Many thought he would lose his job or the respect for others because of the way he told it like it was. While his place

in the hearts of some people were questionable, it was never questioned what his alternatives were. Giving the People what they want to hear, the truth, and nothing but the truth without sugar coating it is what they got.

He was steadfast and unmoveable in his work. As tall as he stood, he always stood on his word. With a silky smooth voice to match his smooth skin, Mr. Clark never let it go to his head. He once asked me not to call him Mr. Clark, just call him "Champ".

His strong opinions never wavered even at the Championship or Pro levels, challenging players when they were out of line, or questioning coaches or owners when they tried to avoid the tough questions. They called him "Champ" for many reasons, but those who really knew him, saw him as a "Champ" because of his character.

Peter "Champ" Clark was fearless in his work, whether he was on or off the mike, writing a story on socializing at a club. No Shame in his Game. He was a true Winner with Championship style. His work as vice-president at a bank proved his versatility.

I was honored when he shared his mike with me as a rookie coming up in this business nearly

27 years ago, broadcasting a football game at Ted Gormley Stadium. He Honored, Acknowledged, paid Tribute to, and Crowned Athletes across this nation. His contributions to countless organizations including the Zulu and Autocrat Clubs were exceptional to say the least.

As his memorial Celebration takes place on June 17th, I take time out to Honor you "Champ", and pay homage. For the work you've

done in this business has truly spoken for you. I acknowledge your work and pay Tribute for all of your accomplishments. Now, the Almighty God will give you the Golden Crown you've earned and worked for, all of your 92 years of your illustrious life.

Time has expired, you fought a good fight and we all have lost a great soldier. You Won our hearts, but now we've Lost a Good Man!

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NEWS

“Bounce Back New Orleans,” Warren Easton 10-Year Reunion Celebration

New Orleans, LA-Warren Easton Fundamental Senior High School (WEFSHS) Class of 1996 alumni host “Bounce Back New Orleans,” a 10-Year Reunion Celebration designed to jumpstart economic development in the city of New Orleans, and instill a renewed sense of pride in members of the high school’s Class of 1996. The three-day event takes place June 9-11, 2006 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Reunion activities include a meet-and-greet, Friday, June 9, 7:30 p.m. at AMF All Star Lanes; a banquet, Saturday, June 10, 8 p.m. at the W Hotel New Orleans; a Sunday morning worship service sit-in (location to be announced); and a class picnic and send-off, Sunday, June 11, 2 p.m. at Lafreniere Park.

, visit www.warreneastonclassof1996.com.

According to Shantania Loving-Leggins, the WEFSHS Class of 1996 Reunion Committee Chairperson, getting alumni involved in the planning of the big 10- Year Reunion Celebration pre-Katrina did not require much effort. Following the devastation, however, members of her graduating class found

it challenging to not only participate in planning the event, but a financial strain to attend the three-day festivities because of more pressing priorities, such as food, clothing and shelter.

“Immediately following Hurricane Katrina the Reunion Committee disseminated e-mails to members of the Class of 1996 to make certain they had escaped without harm,” said Loving-Leggins. “Once we located a large number of our alumni, we began developing polls to determine whether or not we should continue with plans to host the Reunion, and whether or not we should do so in New Orleans due to the city’s condition.”

Loving-Leggins and the six-member Reunion Committee, including her husband Kendrick Leggins- Loving-Leggins’ high-school sweetheart and fellow member of the WEFSHS Class of 1996-began receiving e-mails from classmates declaring that the Reunion must go on; and it must go on in New Orleans.

“We received messages from classmates in several different states asking that we host the event in New Orleans because it was where we attended school

and graduated,” said Leggins. “Of course a few people suggested that we should hold-off until next year to give everyone a chance to regroup, but the majority of our alumni were determined not to let the Hurricane disrupt any other areas of their lives.” The Reunion Committee had received its marching orders-forge ahead with plans for a Reunion weekend in New Orleans.

The Reunion Committee encountered yet another challenge-financing the Reunion Celebration and the scholarship fund they had initially proposed to assist future alumni with college expenses.

To generate funds to supplement the cost of travel and/or budgetary expenses for alumni who were challenged in meeting such expenses-specifically those affected by Hurricane Katrina-the WEFSHS Class of 1996 Reunion Committee created the “Bounce Back New Orleans” campaign. Vehicle, refrigerator and file cabinet magnets featuring the campaign slogan-“Bounce Back New Orleans”-are marketed to individuals who support the rebuilding of New Orleans, and others who simply support

the Class’s charitable efforts. In addition, a portion of the campaign funds is earmarked for select students who would have graduated in Warren Easton’s Class of 2006.

“While these efforts benefit Warren Easton Class of 1996 alumni and future alumni, they also support the city we call ‘home,’” said Entertainment Committee Chairperson Jehielk Burke. “Attendees of our 10-Year Reunion Celebration will fill hotel rooms, rent cars and patronize venues and vendors in the city of New Orleans and surrounding areas during this three-day event, boldly proclaiming that we support the rebuilding of this fine city, not just in words but in deeds as well.”

Scholarships will be awarded to future alumni during a reception preceding the Reunion banquet, Saturday, June 10, 7:30 p.m. at the W Hotel New Orleans, 333 Poydras Street.

“Though the devastation claimed much of our memorabilia, and caused some damage to the Canal Street landmark, it has left our pride unscathed,” said Loving-Leggins. “We will create new memories!”

Warren Easton Fundamental Senior High School, New Orleans’ oldest public high school, began as a boy’s high school in 1913. The Canal Street landmark was declared a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the United States Department of Education in 1996.

Renowned alumni of the New Orleans high school include legendary jazz clarinetist Pete Fountain, Class of 1949; Arthur Hardy, a premiere Mardi Gras authority and author, Class of 1965; Louisiana Attorney General Charles C. Foti, Class of 1953; and Anthony Mackie, famous actor and Class of 1997 alumnus. Mackie, who matriculated from WEFSHS and the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA), has been featured in Spike Lee’s “She Hate Me,” “Million Dollar Baby,” “The Manchurian Candidate,” “8 Mile,” and more.

For contribution information, a complete schedule of events, or to purchase a “Bounce Back New Orleans” decal, visit www.warreneastonclassof1996.com.

Official Says Gulf Evacuation Plans Need Work

The five Gulf Coast states have good evacuations in place for tropical storms, but more work is needed to prepare for another major hurricane, U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta said Friday.

“I feel the region has more work to do to ensure that all groups would know where to go, when they should leave and whether they should go by plane, train or bus if they cannot drive,” Mineta said.

Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida all have counter-flow plans to turn inbound highway lanes into outbound lanes during storm evacuations, Mineta said.

But he said there needs to be better coordination between local governments and between the states to avoid the kind of traffic jams seen in Texas as Hurricane Rita approached last September. Drivers spent hours amid traffic that was stopped or barely moving on the highway, some running out of gas as cars crept along.

Mineta stopped at New Orleans’ International Airport to announce his evaluation of the region’s evacuation plans. He said Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., had asked for the evaluation before Hurricane Katrina hit on Aug. 29.

The 2006 Atlantic hurricane season started Thursday.

Katrina Meetings

Lower Ninth Ward Homeowners Association – TBA, Holy Angeles Academy, 3500 St. Claude Avenue. For more information email Percy Marchand at Marchandprinting@aol.com. This week’s topic: TBA

Lake Bullard Homeowners Association - For questions please contact LBHA Preseident Darryll Ingram @281.633.2257.

Broadmoor Improvement Association – My name is Eusi Phillips, I can be reached via email at ep32@aol.com, or via phone at 504-452-4809.

Lake Willow Homeowners Association – Pontilly Neighborhood Association – Pontilly Neighborhood Association started its open nomination session for Committee Members. For more information contact Brian DeJan at 504-638-7999. /b> – TBA -

First Pilgrims Baptist Church – The First Pilgrims Baptist Church located at 1228 Arts & Franklin Ave., is sponsoring a “Community Outreach Housing Expo” on Saturday, June 3, 2006, from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Participants include representatives from Corps of Engineers, FEMA, SBA, La. Dept. of Insurance and Dept. of Labor, La. Recovery Authority (LRA), Consumer Credit Counseling, HANO, N.O. City Council, State Repts and Senators, Banks, Mortgage Companies, Title Agencies, Termite and Mold Companies, Insurance Agencies and Contractors. Don’t miss this opportunity to meet the experts and elected officials who are ready and willing to assist you with post Katrina problems. For more information, call (504) 944-0825 or (504) 884-0829. Rev. Eugene M. Mitchell is the Pastor of First Pilgrims Baptist Church.

NEWS

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Committee in Washington, D.C. in February. "And by continuing to bring new faces and voices into our party in the Hispanic and African American communities, by asking, 'Give us a chance, and we'll give you a choice.'"

Many Black voters see little reason to give the Republican Party a chance. On the most recent NAACP civil rights report card in February, 98 percent of Republicans in the House and Senate earned an F, compared to only 2 percent of Democrats. The Bush administration opposed two affirmative action programs at the University of Michigan, including the university's law school program, which was ultimately upheld by the U. S. Supreme Court on June 23, 2003. Also, Bush's appointment of two far right Supreme Court nominees, Chief Justice John Roberts to replace the late Chief Justice John Rehnquist and Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. to replace retiring Sandra Day O'Connor, ignored the pleas of civil rights leaders who wanted more moderate justices.

Republicans have attempted to reach African-Americans through pitches about homeownership programs and urging African-Americans to join the GOP as a second political option.

Some conservative Black ministers have been won over by Republicans pitching moral issues, such as anti-abortion and opposition to same sex marriages.

In recent years, both parties have increased attempts to appeal to African-Americans, with Democrats boasting about their support of affirmative action, opposing radical Right-wing judicial appointments and opposing the war in Iraq. Republicans have emphasized opposition to same sex marriages and support of homeland security and economic self-reliance.

Now, in a new attempt to reach Black voters, Black Republicans are running serious races on statewide tickets. On May 2, Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell was picked by Republicans as their gubernatorial candidate over Attorney General Jim Petro 56 percent to 44 percent. In November, Blackwell will challenge U.S. Rep. Ted Strickland, who defeated former state Rep. Bryan Flannery in the Democratic Primary the same day.

Blackwell played a major roll in Bush's controversial win in Ohio in the 2004 election. He was sued after an organization found that

Ohio election officials had, in violation of state law, informed former felons that they could not vote. As a result of the suit, 34,000 former felons were notified that they had the right to vote.

Voters also complained that Blackwell failed to provide enough voting machines, causing some in Black and Hispanic communities to stand in lines for as long as 10 hours. Also, 95,000 votes were invalidated after being wrongly placed in machines by Hispanics who received no assistance with their language difficulties.

Still, Bush's win in Ohio is - in part - attributed to a Blackwell-led referendum to prohibit same-sex marriage. According to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, approximately 16 percent of Ohio's Black population (90,000 voters) supported Bush.

In February, Lynn Swann, the former wide receiver for the Pittsburgh Steelers, was chosen by Republicans as the Party's nominee for Pennsylvania's governorship. Recent polls show Gov. Ed Rendell well ahead of Swann, including a Quinnipiac University poll, showing him leading Swann by as much as 22 percent, with a margin of error of only 3 percent.

Also, Maryland's Republican Lt. Gov. Michael Steele is a leading candidate for the U. S. Senate seat being vacated by retiring Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D).

Republican Kay Coles James, who has served in several high-level Republican appointments, including former director of the federal Office of Personnel Management in the Bush administration, says the fact that Blacks have already won state party primaries underscore the party's seriousness about Black candidates. Still, she acknowledges that Blacks are skeptical of voting Republican.

"You don't have to give up anything," she says. "I think that has to do with sort of the stereotype that people have of parties. It has to do with stereotypes that people have of conservatives or liberals because, quite frankly, the Republican Party is as diverse in its opinions on almost any issue that you raise as the Democratic Party is," James says. "There



Kay Coles James



Lt. Gov. Michael Steele

are Black Republicans who are in favor of affirmative action and who are against it. There are pro-choicers and Black pro-lifers who are Republican and Democrat. I mean, you can't just make those sort of broad, sweeping statements any more. I'm not sure you ever could."

Dean points to 13 Black Democrats running in statewide races, but stresses that the DNC does not involve itself with endorsing or helping candidates to win until after the primaries. Therefore, Blacks, often outspent by White Democrats, are on their own in the primary campaigns.

In Georgia, Angela Moore is running for secretary of state and Mike Thrumund for commissioner of labor; in Iowa, Sal Mohammad for governor; in Illinois, Jesse White for secretary of state; in Massachusetts, Deval Patrick for governor; in Maryland, Arthur Brown and Stu Stims for lieutenant governor and Kweisi Mfume for senate; in Michigan, Mary Waters for secretary of state and Amos Williams for attorney general; in Mississippi, Erik Fleming for Senate; in New York, David Paterson for lieutenant governor; in Ohio, Ben Espy for supreme court and Barbara Sykes for auditor; In South Carolina, Cheryl Footman for secretary of state and in Tennessee, U. S. Rep. Harold Ford for the Senate.

James predicts Black candidates running in both parties will empower Black voters.

"I hope that the impact will be an 'Oh, shucks' moment for Democrats so that they will not take African-Americans for granted," she says. "I hope it will be a wake up call for Republicans that say, 'Oh Dear Lord, these people are here. We're really going to have to contend with them.'"

Some doubt whether Black Republicans seeking statewide

office will translate into more Black votes for the GOP.

"It will not attract Black voters," says University of Maryland Political Scientist Ron Walters. "Blackwell is the only one who has proven that he can attract a sizable

share of the Black vote."

Walters predicts that Blacks may be divided if faced with a race between a Black Republican and Democrat. Currently, former NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume is trailing U. S. Rep. Benjamin Cardin for the Democratic nomination to succeed retiring Sen. Paul Sarbanes. But, if Mfume wins the Sept. 12 Democratic Primary, he and Steele would go head to head.

"Mfume has the lion's share of the Black vote. But I think if it came down to the two of them, I think that race might be eliminated as a factor and the election would then be fought out along the lines of issues," says Walters. "If that is the case, then I think that Steele, again, would be at a distinct disadvantage because Mfume has already talked about being opposed to the war. And that position plays very strongly for voters, Black and White."

Steele appears to be positioning himself for a showdown against any Democrat.

He has declared his support for affirmative action, and has distanced himself slightly from Bush by criticizing the administration of Bush's "Leave No Child Behind" and the president's proposed cuts to federal funding for low-income college students.

"He did conservative Bill Bennett's [radio] show and second, Al Sharpton," says Steele spokesman Doug Heye. "So, that shows how he campaigns, to reach out to all voters with his message of hope and empowerment and we found that has resonated within the African-American community just as it has in communities across Maryland."

Black Democrats challenging Black Republicans will add a new dynamic to American politics that could be to the advantage of

Black voters, Mfume predicts. He says a White Democrat running against a Black Republican could cause some Blacks to vote for the Black candidate because of racial allegiance. But when each candidate is Black, African-American voters will likely follow tradition or the issues and support the Democrat, he says.

"It doesn't mean that Democrats who are White cannot beat Black Republicans. It just means that the effort to try to go into the larger Black base of voters is neutralized by the fact that both candidates are Black," Mfume says.

In the long run, Republican conservatism could repel Black voters and open a chance for Black candidates to even win at least some conservatives, Mfume says.

"There's always an effect that in a head to head contest like that, the Republican who is an African-American may pull some votes," Mfume says. "But I also believe that just the reverse happens; that if you conduct the right kind of campaign with the right kind of message, that the nominee on the Democratic side might be an African-American who has a real opportunity to go in and to peel off moderate Republican votes. So it cuts both ways."

A staunch liberal and former chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus as a member of the U. S. House for 10 years, Mfume has proven his ability to win votes from Blacks and Whites from both parties.

"The reason that I would win general elections with 82 and 84 percent of the vote was not because just Democrats were voting for me. And I really don't want to labor under that elusion," Mfume says. "My sense is that people make determinations when they go into a voting booth. It's based on pocketbook issues. It's based on sense of security, based on values. I would just urge Democrats, particularly Black Democrats, not to assume that anybody has a lock on voters no matter what their persuasion is."

Regardless of whichever party that wins the races, Black voters are likely to benefit by enlightening White members of both parties and increasing Black political power, James predicts:

"It only serves, I think, to increase the stature, increase the visibility of and increase the seriousness of the issues that are important to all African-Americans and the country. It is a good thing. It's a positive."

RENEW ORLEANS

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