

Lighting The Road To Freedom

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

Data Zone

Black Comedy Boom

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40th Year

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COVER STORY

An Analysis: Does the punishment fit the crime?

By: Eddie Francis

Congressman William Jefferson and former Councilperson Rene Gill-Pratt have recently found themselves embroiled in dilemmas surrounding activities that many have deemed unethical and in the case of Jefferson possibly illegal. These past few months have been extremely hard on many political and business leaders in New Orleans, but with the harsh criticism of these two prominent and visible leaders may be the tipping point. In response some have questioned the motives of the U.S. Justice Department and its motivation in this unprecedented act. Some have even speculated that in these cases both have been unfairly scrutinized because they are black. While others feel that it is more about the crime than the reaction, the opinions are mixed as New Orleanians and the nation watches this saga that has both elements of tragedy and comedy unfold.

The probes into possible wrongdoing are vast and varied, but Congressman Jefferson's has found himself the central figure and common link in a series of cases that are presently the fodder of the mainstream media. Upon his recent removal from the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, the Congressional Black Caucus heavily criticized, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) for leading the charge. Throughout the investigation, Congressman Jefferson has maintained that he is innocent of charges that he participated in a scheme to pay bribes to Atiku



Abubakar, the vice president of Nigeria in a deal that includes a Louisville, Kentucky-based telecommunications firm, iGate, Inc.

While in the case of Gill-Pratt according to sources say her action is not uncommon and several members of the city council have also donated cars to civic and religious groups. To date Ms. Gill-Pratt has been silent about the accusations made against her maintaining possession of four trucks that were marked for use by the City of New Orleans. DaimlerChrysler AG has gone on record saying that the vehicles in question were earmarked to be used solely for the needs of the City of New Orleans.

Another black figure who has also seen a recent fall from grace has been Judge Alan Green. Green was investigated, indicted and convicted for

mail fraud as a part of the "Operation Wrinkled Robe" investigation. Although Green's case received quite a bit of attention, former judge Ronald Bodenheimer, who is white and was also part of the investigation, is serving a prison sentence. Which begs the question can these recent probes against corruption be reduced to racial profiling of black leaders, or is it part of trying to solve a larger problem that plagues our political landscape; corruption and graft?

With congressional elections coming up in November the debate about Jefferson and these probes into corruption and is their a racial link are sure to heat up, but it has shown moderate signs of life in local circles as opinions cover the full spectrum from deep concern to indifference. A local informal meeting place for

many well-known local city leaders is the jazz club, Sweet Lorraine's. Paul Sylvester, the club's owner, often sits as an observer in the midst of many fiery debates. He says that not many opinions have been shared about the Jefferson case. "Nobody's really said much about it," said the proprietor after some thought.

But strong opinions were shared about Jefferson's dilemma in the place where Blacks have historically used as the place to exchange ideas about life, love, politics and everything in between; the barbershop where barbs and banter are the modus operandi and language of the conversations are not always polite, their words are frank, from the heart and no holds are barred. Nate's Barber Shop in Kenner, who declined to be identified, barked, "In the freezer? How're you gonna hide that kind of money is the freezer and say that you did nothing wrong?" The patron was referring to the \$90,000 that FBI agents found in a raid of Jefferson's Washington, D.C. apartment. The other shop patrons roared in laughter when the speaker said, "I don't care what he did wrong. He was just not smart for not spendin' that money, his face showing disbelief as he exclaimed . . . the freezer!"

As opinions about these pressing issues vary in their tone and temperament, a more analytical interpretation is being taken by Tracie Washington, a local Civil Rights

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COVER STORY

Continued from previous page.

attorney. Washington maintains that it is hard to take an official position on this kind of case until there is solid proof presented to the public. Part of the FBI sting was their video taping Jefferson taking a bribe. "My question is, where's the proof? We keep hearing about this video tape but where is it? Until I see something, I couldn't place judgment on the congressman," she says.

It is well-known that Jefferson is not the only congressman is presently facing scrutiny. Many prominent white politicians' feet are also

person, Eddie Sapir, gave vehicles to Friends of NORD and Victims and Citizens Against Crime. Former council person, Jay Batt, gave vehicles to Lakeview Crime Prevention District and the Audubon Commission.

In all there were 16 vehicles involved in the distribution and they have been returned to the City of New Orleans. FBI special agent Jim Bernazzani announced earlier this month that his office would investigate the matter but labeled the act more as "incredibly selfish" than criminal.

But in this case as are



dangling close to the fire in this post Enron age. Bill Frist (R-TN), the Senate majority leader, is under a Securities and Exchange Commission investigation into his sale of stock in his family's company a month before its price fell. Frist is said to be a Republican candidate for President in 2008. Tom DeLay, former Republican Congressman from Texas and former House majority leader, was indicted by a Texas grand jury on charges that he conspired to violate campaign finance laws. DeLay's woes were complicated by the Jack Abramoff Indian casino scandal. Abramoff was involved in a scheme to charge lobbying fees of about \$85 million on behalf of the casinos. Connected to Abramoff, besides DeLay, was Congressman Bob Ney (R-OH) as well as other Republican Congressmen.

So in light of the many investigations that's taking place it seems that possible unethical behavior is widespread locally and national and race nor gender is a factor barring the entry into the trough of entitlement their positions gives them. For example, while Gill-Pratt is the focus of the city council truck dilemma, she is not the only one who did not honor DaimlerChrysler's wishes to use the vehicles for municipal purposes. Former council person, Jackie Clarkson gave two vehicles to churches. Former council

many why was Gill-Pratt singled out is this evidence of a pattern of racial profiling of Black leaders is there some conspiracy to remove blacks from positions of leadership? This question is one that remains on the minds of many; are black leaders treated more harshly than white who are accused of similar offences. One unnamed media source says the question is moot. The source, who is African-American, is adamant about fairness and those we entrust our leadership to do the right thing, "People need to just stop being greedy . . . corruption is corruption no matter how you look at it," he says in an agitated tone of voice.

He maintains that when black leaders are corrupt, black citizens pay for it more than anyone else. He continues, "We've always been told that as black men we've got to be ten times better because we're black. So I don't want to hear anything about how unfairly they're being treated because they're black." But as we have witnessed over the years of black leadership, the problem may be larger than race, but a system where power, privilege and access creates an environment that breeds greed and where the color of privilege transcends black and white and where the only important color is green.

Data News Weekly

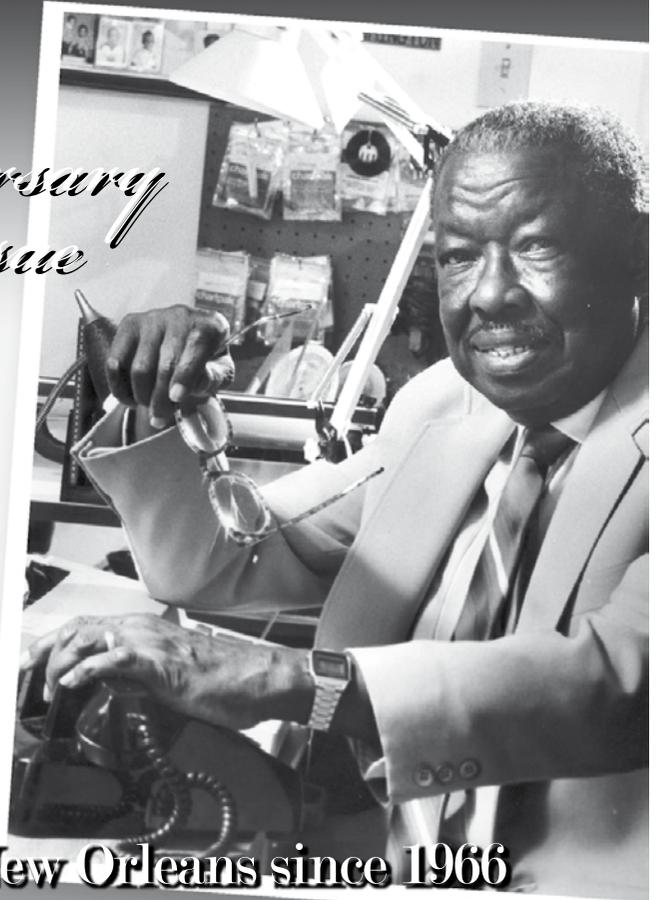
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NEWSMAKER

The Road Home Uncovering the Recovery:

An Interview with Juan LaFonta



LA State Rep Juan LaFonta (d) 96th District

By: Edwin Buggage

Juan LaFonta is a young political lion who represents District 96. He is courageous, fearless, and forthright and is one not known to mince words. To his supporters his honest down to earth style is a refreshing antidote from some of the canned words of many of his contemporaries that sit in seats of power. In a Data News Weekly Exclusive we had the unique opportunity to speak with State Representative LaFonta in what was a spirited and profound conversation about the city of New Orleans as it faces the challenges of recovery and rebuilding.

EB: You are a representative of District 96. What area of the city comprises your district?

JL: It's several different areas actually; which include five historic preservation areas. Some of the areas I represent are the part of the French Quarter that's residential, the Faubourg Marigny, St. Roch Marigny, the A.P. Tureaud area, Treme, the Dillard University area, and also around North Claiborne Avenue near Circle Food Store.

EB: How is the rebuilding effort shaping up in your district?

JL: Actually, our progress has been accelerated. I have a real drive to try to get the city back up and running because I feel my district it is the anchor of the city with all its diversity. So I've

been pushing really hard with Council Member Cynthia Morrell and Mayor Nagin in trying to get the seventh and eighth wards up and running. Also we're working on parts of the district that were hard hit, particularly the areas near Dillard University, as well as some of the areas where strip malls were located. I'm hoping we can get things up to code, and in addition improve many of the areas including those that were pretty bad off prior to the storm.

EB: As you've been traveling throughout the country, and as people are coming into the city what type of questions are they asking you, and in turn what are you telling them about the city and its recovery effort?

JL: The first thing most people ask is have we rebuilt. It's interesting what's going on because many people who are not from here are either under the impression that the city is rebuilt and we're back to business as usual or they think it's so bad and ask why are people moving back? And my response is the majority of the tourist areas are up and intact, but the places where a lot of the people actually live have not been rebuilt. Also that we still need a lot of assistance and to their credit many of the national churches have given us a great deal of support. People ask about the culture and ask me if I think New Orleans will ever be the same. And my answer to them is the storm destroyed the physical infrastructure, but not the heart and soul of the people and the communities that comprise New Orleans.

EB: Recently you played host to a tour with recording artist/actor Usher, how did you arrange that and what was his response as he witnessed all the wreckage and destruction?

JL: Usher was in town because a friend of mine Gavin McGuire who by the way is from the ninth

ward is one of the directors of all of Usher's non-profit organizations. So he and I were talking and I asked him if he would be able to get Usher to come down to the city. So he arranged it and he came down and visited with college students, the mayor and also the governor. He was initially impressed with the overall charm that the city still maintained, but at the end of the day we took him down to the ninth ward, and when he witnessed all the destruction that had taken place he was flabbergasted. At first he stood speechless, and then he asked did people live here because so many houses were knocked off their foundation. And as you know that particular part of the ninth ward presently looks like it could be a landfill because so many houses have been demolished or moved because of the flood. I think Common Ground has a tent set up over there as a reminder that people still live there. It's really devastating even today, and when he got out he stopped for a second and said I can't believe it, this is not right. And that's what we need, more people who feel the same way, so we can continue to have attention kept on the city, because some folks think everything is o.k. but the truth is we still need more help.

EB: In the aftermath of Fourth of July and America celebrating its independence; what are some of your feelings about the tragedy of New Orleans, and should this have been allowed to happen in an American city?

JL: I have spoken on a lot of panels nationally, and I think that people particularly minorities need to take notice, because if it could happen in New Orleans and we could be neglected here, who is to say that it couldn't happen in another city? I think also what happened is reflective of a larger problem and that is of poverty in large U.S. cities. It's been ignored for a long time and this hurricane has pulled back the curtain and has exposed what our government hasn't been doing to address issues regarding inequality. It also showed that our leadership should be more responsive to all the people and not just a select few.

EB: It's interesting that you mention poverty. What are your

thoughts about class, in addition to the problem of race as it relates to New Orleans before and after the storm?

JL: I think before and after the storm we've had the same problem it's been the question of people and access to capital. Those who have access to money have not had as many problems, and this creates a unique situation; because in Florida people have been victimized by hurricanes but they have the resources. But now you have people in New Orleans with a need for the government to support them to a certain degree, and in my opinion the reason the response time was so slow during the aftermath of the storm was because people were poor and minorities. If this was a group of millionaires in West Palm Beach

many in the business community and mainstream media predicted. Are there still battle scars between all these various factions, or is it that they have moved on and are working together trying to move the city forward?

JL: I actually worked in helping the mayor during his campaign developing strategies and working in various other capacities, so I was very instrumental in helping Mayor Nagin get re-elected. Part of the reason I did support him is because I thought it was important to have someone that represents our culture and our community in leadership. I don't know how that would be taken or understood, but that's personally my own take on it. And I feel if the city would have went another way it would have been hard for our



State Rep. Juan LaFonta speaking with Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco

this would level of neglect would have never occurred. But even those who were middle class and not of the upper echelon were thrown together to suffer, and to me it was a slap in the face to the citizens of New Orleans.

EB: As an elected official you are privy to certain types of information. My question is in regards to the recent Mayoral election, one in which was very racially polarized, and unfortunately it the end result was not what many of the political pundits, prognosticators, and

community to come back under a different type of leadership. I've worked with Mitch Landrieu and I felt it was an entitlement situation and I didn't want to give my city to a person who is a spin doctor and works with spin doctors. And as to the question of the mayor's relationship with the business community, I think because he went through the trials and tribulations of this election he has become more representative of the people of New Orleans, and that is not to say he wasn't before, but I think he had a lot of

Continued page 15.

NATIONAL NEWS

Navy QB Not Guilty of Rape Civil Rights icon Rev. Joseph Boone Dies

By Whitney James
Special to the NNPA from
Afro Newspapers

BALTIMORE (NNPA) – After almost two weeks of testimonies from more than a dozen witnesses, a five-member military jury recently 20 found Navy quarterback star Lamar Owens not guilty of raping of a female midshipman earlier this year.

He was, however, found guilty of entering the room uninvited, which was termed unbecoming behavior for an officer and a gentleman.

The verdict came after dramatic last days of testimony and closing statements from the accused and lawyers. Owen testified earlier in the week that the victim invited him over five minutes prior to his entrance and that she never told him to leave. Once the victim was in the bed, she motioned for him to come over and tugged on his sweater.

"I took that as an invite to her bed," he said.

The court also heard from Owens' wide receiver coach at the U.S. Naval Academy and his Bible study pastor, who vouched for Owens good character. Both men claimed to know Owens personally and said that he displayed a great deal of leadership and character. The coach, responsible for recruiting Owens to play football for the U.S. Naval Academy explained the importance of being the captain of the Academy's football team and said that although it was a big responsibility, Owens had the courage, work ethic and character to do the job.

"There has never an instance where he has not been 100 percent honest," he said.

The pastor said that Owens "was extremely gifted and charismatic" and made it a point to tell the court that he attended Bible study almost every week. This seemed to paint a picture of Owens as a wholesome young man.

None of that seemed to matter when prosecuting attorney Commander David Wilson presented his closing argument, however. Although he did admit that the level of alcohol the victim consumed played a factor, she still "never consented to having sex with the accused," he said and painted a heart wrenching scenario of what the victim might have gone through.

Refuting earlier testimony that

Painted the victim as a drunk who often blacked out, Wilson reminded the jury of expert testimony that the blackouts do not change one's behavior. He also went on to say that when the victim's boyfriend

came in "he heard loud crying."

Wilson slipped up, however, when he quoted the victim as saying she was raped when it was established by earlier testimony that she had said, "I think I was raped." This "erroneous mistake," called by the judge, sparked immediate

objection from the defense. Because this quote was untrue as well as misleading, the judge made it a point to call the prosecutor out on the mistake.

Careful not to repeat the prosecutor's error, the defense's closing argument

seemed to be one of concise facts and some emotion.

"This young man's life is on the line," defense attorney Reid Weingarten said.

Calling the victim's blackouts "blackouts of convenience," the defense claimed the victim did not want to remember anything bad that had happened. He also pointed out that the victim's night and day behavior was obviously triggered by alcohol and although she denied she had a drinking problem, there were several instances where this proved to be untrue. Calling the victim out on three counts

of aggressive behavior while intoxicated, Weingarten showed the court that the victim indeed did have an alter-ego and may have been in character during the night of the alleged rape.

"She was afraid of her own decisions when she realized what she had done," he said.

The defense's points also included the lack of care the victim's friends showed towards her when they found out she had been allegedly raped, the fact that the instant messages sent to Owens were erased once her boyfriend came into the room, and why nobody, not even the case agent asked the victim how Owens got into her room in the first place. "It would have messed up their big case," Weingarten argued, adding, "They used the star quarterback as bait."

Although Owens was acquitted for raping the victim, the defense still has to wait for sentencing and decision to either drop or keep the second charge, misconduct of

an officer and a gentleman.

"Lamar Owens is a man of dignity, strength and character and we're very relieved that this young man has been acquitted of the first charge. He has a bright future ahead of him," he said.

The defense team seems sure they will beat the second charge however.

"We are confident that we will beat the second charge because there is no

By Stan Washington
Special to the NNPA from the
Atlanta Voice

ATLANTA (NNPA) – Funeral services for civil rights icon Rev. Joseph Boone were held here Saturday at Jackson Memorial Baptist Church. He died a week earlier after a brief illness. He was 83.

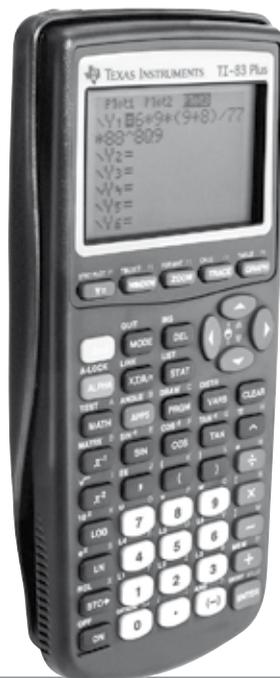
Boone had a long list of accomplishments in the Civil Rights Movement and for advocating for the poor and disadvantage.

Boone was instrumental along with late civil rights leaders Rev. Hosea Williams and Jondelle Johnson of the NAACP and many others in helping desegregate Atlanta.

Continued page 15.

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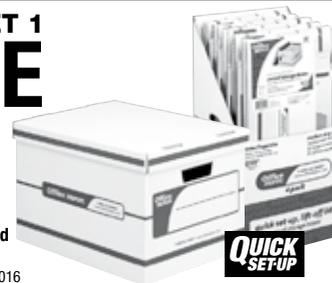
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STATE & LOCAL NEWS

City Awards 2,500 Adjudicated Properties to Non-Profits and For-Profits

4,000 More to Become Available by November

(New Orleans, LA) On Tuesday, August 1, 2006 at 10:30 a.m., Mayor C. Ray Nagin and The City of New Orleans will announce the first of two awards to redevelop adjudicated properties for future re-development in the City.

The City issued an Invitation for Applications (IFA) seeking non-profit and for-profit developers interested in developing mixed income communities with a proven track record. The City received a total of sixty-three applications in response to the IFA. The IFA was divided into two initiatives, the first of which was the Targeted Neighborhood Development of 100+ properties. This was intended for developers with capacity to achieve large scale redevelopment projects. Twenty-seven entities responded to this initiative. Today's award is

for 2,000 of the 2,500 adjudicated properties to twenty-two (22) non-profit and for profit developers.

"Our Citizens want to continue to push to eliminate blight in our City, and because Katrina reduced the available housing inventory the City has to provide mechanisms to jump start housing redevelopment by utilizing this adjudicated property initiative," said Mayor Nagin.

The awards will allow selected developers to utilize land made available by the City to speed up the redevelopment of neighborhoods with homeownership, lease-purchase and rental housing opportunities for low-to-moderate income families. The awards are based on the capacity, experience, track record, and financial wherewithal of each non-profit and for-profit developer.

"We now have the opportunity to begin a process that has been in the making for many months," said Mayor Nagin. "This is a first step in this plan and we believe that the process will jump-start redevelopment in our neighborhoods."

Mayor Nagin also said that The City of New Orleans will continue to work closely with these organizations to ensure that they provide affordable housing opportunities and we will monitor their progress to achieve a win-win for our community

The City of New Orleans will also make an announcement regarding the additional 4,000 adjudicated / abandoned properties that will be put up for sale mid-November.

On May 24, 2006, The City of New Orleans re-opened its Sale of the Adjudicated/Abandoned Property (SOAP) program by inviting applications from non-profit and for-profit developers to return approximately 2,500 adjudicated residential properties back into commerce.

The City accepted numerous applications for the purchase and redevelopment of properties that have been identified as adjudicated/abandoned for five or more years as part of the Targeted Neighborhood Development on Adjudicated Properties program. Many of these properties have past due taxes of between eight to ten years.

Weekend shootings claim six in New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS (Reuters) - New Orleans police reported on Saturday the hurricane-ravaged city had seen six murders in less than 24 hours, including a quadruple killing not far from the historic French Quarter.

Determined to temper fears that New Orleans is not safe following six deadly shootings over the weekend, tourism industry representatives, city officials and police personnel are pushing a defensive message: The city's crime problem is not spiraling out of control, and the violence in recent weeks is contained to certain neighborhoods, and certain types of people.

The quadruple murder, which took place Friday evening, claimed the lives of three New Orleans brothers - two 16-year-olds and a 21-year-old - along with a 39-year-old local man. New Orleans Police Department superintendent Warren Riley said the older man was the apparent target of the attack by two gunmen, who were still at large Sunday morning.

A pair of unrelated shootings claimed two more victims Saturday, bringing the city's murder count for the year to 78.

Riley said drug and gang culture were to blame for much of the city's violence.

"It's unfortunate for anyone to be killed," he said. "But it is clearly, clearly, people who live the life, that are involved in drugs and violence, who are killing each other, and who are dying."

Police have made no arrests and have named no suspects



This is the store where a man was found shot late Friday night in New Orleans. The victim was taken to a hospital where he died. (AP Photo/Bill Haber)

in any of the six murders, said department spokesperson Garry Flot.

Mayor Ray Nagin said Saturday that recent crime fighting efforts, such as having the National Guard patrol largely deserted neighborhoods so city police can concentrate on high-crime districts, were helping curb violence. But he said little could be done to prevent gang and drug-related revenge killings.

"If citizens are still going to, you know, retaliate against each other ... I don't know what more we can do to stop this," Nagin told WWL-TV.

"This is going on among the criminal element," said Bambi Hall, a spokeswoman for the New Orleans Police Department. "They're having these street wars among themselves and they're spilling over into other areas, because they've also spilt over into other areas since Katrina."



Iowa, La., Mayor Margo Racca, left, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, and Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco accept a check from Department of Housing and Urban Development deputy secretary Roy Bernardi Tuesday. The check is to help fund the state's "Road Home" program.

New Orleans Mayor and Wynton Marsalis Outline Katrina Anniversary Schedule

Anniversary Expected To Attract Thousands

Mayor C. Ray Nagin and U.N. Messenger of Peace and Multi-Grammy Award Winner, Wynton Marsalis today outlined the three-day commemorative days of reflection surrounding the one year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and the Rebirth of New Orleans. These three days will be one of rebirth, remembrance, and renewal.

Sunday, August 27, 2006

Noon - Midnight
Kazanjian Jewels for Charity Silent Auction (bid and view)
Harrah's Casino
8 Canal Street

3 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Gospel Concert
Convention Center Auditorium
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
900 Convention Center Blvd.

9 p.m. - 11 p.m.

Ambassadors of Swing Talent Search
Harrah's Casino Theatre
8 Canal Street

Monday, Aug 28, 2006

Noon - Midnight
Kazanjian Jewels for Charity Silent Auction (bid and view)
Harrah's Casino
8 Canal Street

1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

Cooking With Music featuring Emeril Lagasse and Wynton Marsalis -An educational program for children
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
900 Convention Center Blvd.

6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

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Comedy Night
Harrah's Casino Theatre
8 Canal Street

Tuesday, August 29, 2006

8:30 a.m.
Prayer Breakfast
Asia Baptist Church
1400 Sere Street

DATA ZONE

Boom time for Black Comedians?

By. Olu Alemoru
Special to NNPA

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) — Stand-up comics have long occupied an exalted station in the pantheon of African-American pop culture. In the latter half of the 20th century and beyond, wildly successful comedians — from Redd Foxx and Moms Mabley to Bill Cosby and Richard

comedian Alex Thomas hosts the weekly showcase “Trippin on Tuesday.”

“I don’t know if you would even define it as ‘black’ comedy, because I would call it ‘urban’ comedy,” says Pookey Wigington, who is behind the Laugh Factory’s Sunday night show. An Inglewood native, the 39-year-old former college basketball star found his niche as a comedy promoter after

set the stage for the modern-day verbal gunslinger with a mic.

Jackie ‘Moms’ Mabley, née Loretta Mary Aiken, was born in 1894 and became one of the most

successful entertainers of her time. At the height of her career, in the 1960s, the native North Carolinian was earning \$10,000 a week at Harlem’s Apollo Theater.

Billed as “The Funniest Woman in the World,” she tackled topics too edgy for many other comics of the time, including racism.

Continued next page.



Moms Mabley was a pioneering Black female comic. Modern black comedienne pay tribute to Mabley as a foremother

Pryor, Eddie Murphy and Martin Lawrence to Chris Rock and Dave Chappelle — have been perhaps the most beloved Black cultural figures, their renown among African-Americans arguably exceeding that which is enjoyed by A-list Hollywood names.

While Chappelle’s recent departure from television has in one sense deprived the Black comedy scene of a mainstay — that is, a singularly popular figure who drives interest in stand-up — in another sense, Black comics have perhaps never been in such high demand.

Along the holy triangle of the West Hollywood comedy circuit, showcases of almost exclusively black talent may be the hottest tickets in town.

The Laugh Factory hosts two weekly nights of black-oriented humor: one on Sundays called “Chocolate Sundaes,” and a Wednesday mix of stand-up and sketches that has drawn nationally recognized names like Lawrence and recent surprise participant Wayne Brady, who guest-starred during the show’s launch. At the famed Improv, engineer-turned-promoter Spike Thompson’s “Mo’ Betta Monday” has been going strong for the last decade. And at the Comedy Store, veteran

a potential NBA career was nixed by injuries.

“Black comedy has transcended the boundaries of ethnicity,” he said. “You have your urban Asian, Persian, Chinese, even white comics taking a piece of what we would call black comedy from Redd Foxx to Richard Pryor.”

He added: “I think it’s incredible that black comedy has grown from the comic who does tours and makes money on the road [with] just one or two guys making a living doing TV and films. Right now there are 20 guys out there making a million a year from TV and film because of their crossover appeal and don’t even have to do the clubs.”

Wigington’s showcase is hosted by comedian-actor Deray, who agrees that black comedians no longer appeal to just African-American audiences or performers. “Right now in the comedy scene, black dollars is where it’s at,” he said. “We start the show at 8 p.m., but we’re [usually] sold out by 7:45. It’s one of those funny things about black culture. Twenty five years ago no one supposedly wanted to listen to rap — but look at it now. Black comedy has crossed over the same way.”

Historically, A lack vaudeville



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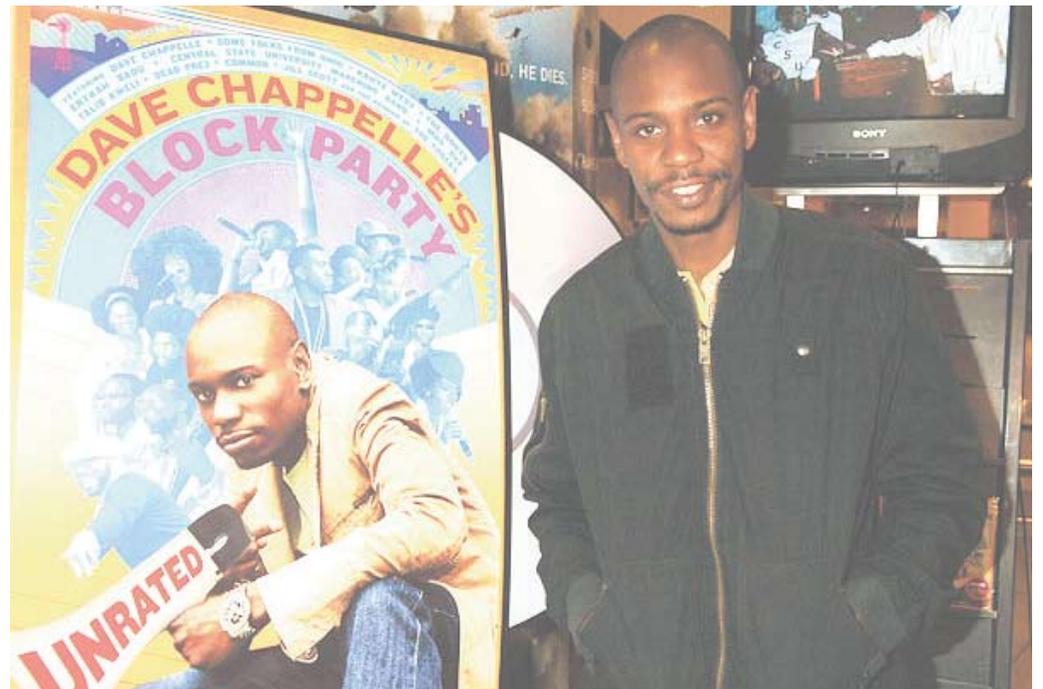
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DATA ZONE

Continued from page 7.

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Dave Chappelle is today's hottest comedian, black or white in the world. His recent decision to forego an offer for up to \$50 million for a third and fourth season of his hit comedy show "Chappelle's Show" rocked the news headlines last year.

Redd Foxx was perhaps the funniest and certainly the raunchiest comic of his era, and he influenced the likes of Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy. The "Sanford and Son" star, whose party albums adorn many of the young comics' record collections today, was one of the first Black comedians to play the Las Vegas Strip.

With the exception of Bill Cosby, whose sugar-coated delivery seemed at odds with the styles of other black comics, the fascination with adult-oriented themes continued, culminating in the celebrated HBO series "Russell Simmons' Def Comedy Jam." The show, which aired from 1992-97, launched the careers of a modern day comic dynasty that includes Chris Tucker, Lawrence, D.L. Hughley, Jamie Foxx, Steve Harvey and Cedric the Entertainer.

In 2000, Cedric, Hughley and Harvey would go on to star in the successful "The Kings of Comedy" tour, which reportedly took in over \$40 million in two years and spawned a hit concert film directed by Spike Lee.

While the story of black comedy might seem to be a male-dominated domain, just as Mabley got the ball rolling 40 years ago, some of today's hottest acts are the sisters with attitude.

"My definition of black comedy is just that — black comedy," BET Comic View regular Luenell, who is currently on tour in Texas, said in a telephone interview. "The urban tag is just where people live. It's defined by an aggressive attitude, but we're not bashing anybody's race because we want everyone's money."

he Arkansas native — who is soon to star in a film with notorious British comic Sacha Baron Cohen, aka "Ali G" — was no less forthright on the topic of sexism on the circuit. "Black women have a horribly difficult time on the circuit," she said. "We have to fight, fight, fight, to gain recognition. We constantly get that 'bitch' handle when we have to fight to get our money."

Tiffany Haddish is another emerging star on the L.A. comedy scene. A self-described "twentysomething" who could easily pass for a teenager, Haddish has been entertaining nightclub audiences since she was sixteen. The Laugh Factory regular also has a real-life, Pryor-esque story: She was born in South Central L.A. to an absent Ethiopian father and schizophrenic mother, which led to a childhood in foster care. With that background, she retreated into an imaginary life that she hopes will ultimately put her on the path to fame and fortune.

"I was sent to a comedy camp at the Laugh Factory when I was 13 because a social worker thought I was acting up at school trying to get attention. So she thought, 'I'll get you some attention,'" said Haddish, laughing. After a guest-starring stint on the Disney Channel's "That's So Raven," she recently completed her first lead film role in "The Urban Demographic," a comedy set for release early next year.

"I want to be a Lucille Ball, George Burns, Halle Berry, Jim Carrey mix," she said. "I want to smoke cigars, get into trouble and be cute and funny."

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DATA ZONE

The 2006 Jazzfest Heritage Music Weekend Connects with Families

by Delmarie Cobb

Chicago is the African American family reunion capital of the world. So, it is no surprise that one of the most popular events to have a family reunion is at the annual JazzFest Heritage Music Weekend, which takes place August 4-6 at the South Shore Cultural Center, 7059 South Shore Drive.

This year's 25th Anniversary theme is "Connecting Family Ties." And what better way to emphasize family than to bring some of Chicago's and New Orleans' jazz families together to perform at this free, two-day annual



event. Throughout the weekend, almost every performer has either a musical family or New Orleans connection—starting with Darius de Haas, who will kick-off the weekend when Friday starts the festivities with the 2nd Annual "We Love You Madly" Awards Gala honoring the venerable trumpeter Clark Terry. The inaugural gala last year was a big success and the South Shore Cultural Center provides the perfect setting for the weekend. On Saturday, the son of bassist Eddie de Haas and Jazz Unites' founder, Geraldine de Haas, will join his Grammy nominated uncle Andy Bey on stage to perform.

On Sunday, another talented family, the Jordans, will grace the stage. The extraordinary New Orleans siblings are helping to keep the tradition of great musical families from the Crescent City alive. Led by Marlon Jordan on trumpet, Rachel Jordan on violin, and Kent Jordan on flute, the group is rounded out by the vocals of Stephanie Jordan—who critics are calling one of the next great jazz singers.

"So many families were separated from their homes and each other during the aftermath of Katrina. Chicago welcomed many of them with open arms," said de Haas of her decision to focus the JazzFest's 25th Anniversary on celebrating families. "This is another way to show them they are not forgotten. It also gives everyone a chance to share this great cultural contribution called jazz."

The love of the music is what keeps the Jordan family together. Like so many others, they are rebounding from Katrina's destruction.

"In our immediate family alone, seven dwellings were lost," explained Stephanie Jordan, whose lyrical styling is being compared to Nancy Wilson and Shirley Horn. "I had eight feet of water in my house, and lost everything—pianos, sheet music, my entire wardrobe, a singer's wardrobe."

"Everybody is trying to get back to what we were doing before—our livelihood," said trumpeter Marlon Jordan, the youngest New Orleans bandleader to ever sign with a major record label. He and his girlfriend camped out on the roof of his New Orleans home for five days before their rescue by helicopter. He discovered he suffered two fractured ankles earlier from kicking mailboxes while swimming through floodwaters.

Violinist Rachel Jordan injured her shoulder and an arm in an accident on her way to view the damage done to her home. "I'm in a certain amount of pain, and it's still not 100 percent," said Rachel, a professor of violin/viola at Jackson State University in Mississippi. "I played my first chamber music concert recently, and it felt better. They taped me up like a football player." A violinist since age 7, Rachel regrets that Katrina claimed two prized violins, several bows and "a lifetime of music."

Rachel, Marlon, Stephanie and their brother, flutist Kent Jordan, are all children of saxophonist Edward "Kidd" Jordan, whom the French government recognized with a knighthood for his contribution to the European performing arts. "My father lost 50 or 60 saxophones," Marlon said. "He's been playing since he was 20 years old."

Soon after the hurricane, Stephanie and her siblings performed during Jazz at Lincoln Center's Higher Ground

Hurricane Relief benefit broadcast. This fall (last fall), she and Marlon are touring (toured) Europe as part of the U.S. State Department's Higher Ground relief effort.

Last October, Jazz Unites began deducting \$5 from each new membership to donate to the Higher Ground Hurricane Relief Fund. The relief-fund drive will end next month following the jazz festival.

The Saturday, August 5, line-up for the 2006 JazzFest includes the Henry Johnson Quartet, Andy Bey Quartet,

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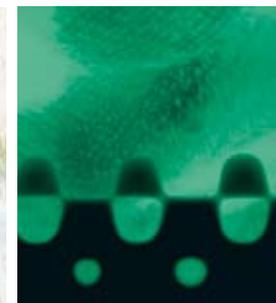
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OPINION

Katrina,

Confusing Times - Confused People



The Love Dr.
Data Columnist

Once I had a garden, two beehives, and the tools and abilities to make use of them. Right before I opened my first studio on Barracks Street back in 1986 or so, there had been two choices. Of Course, one was the photography studio but another would have been building a partially underground home in the rolling hills of Mississippi, living partially off the land, alternative energy and earnings from photography as could be done in, around and from that spot. That was at a time when I had few capital resources, and lots of the alternative energy technology was untried, so now things actually make such a lifestyle even more attractive.

Why these stirrings in my heart? Katrina, of course.

I have never had so many choices and lived with such uncertainty. It is mind boggling. I would like to continue my life as a writer / photographer, but are there enough of my customers around to support my businesses, and if not, where can I get more clients... I am one of those getting ahead by enjoying one of the temporary opportunities, but all that will end, but when? How many permanent opportunities can you afford to pass up?

Actually that earth sheltered home in Mississippi is becoming even more attractive, especially when you consider that since I have more capital and I'm a bit older and not so stuck on rural isolation, we can acquire land closer to conveniences, but big enough for fruit trees, a garden and maybe even a pond for some catfish, and of course, the bee hives.

Having cashed in on insurance (marginal property), like many others who may or may not reinvest in this area, stuff like this

pops up in your mind. Its not just questions about real estate either, careers are up in the air! I mean, that wood working idea, I had, if ever there was a time... That's the kind of stuff that's driving me nuts.

Hell, before Katrina I had a pretty good idea what life was going to be like, had clients I could count on for the long haul, and predictable income (not great, but predictable). I was pleased with the outlook. Now, however, there's this new menu, selections... and I yearn for a sense of normal, something predictable that we can count on.

Perhaps that is why we flock together. St. Augustine High School had its most successful crawfish boil this year, as did the Urban League with its Golden Gala. It seems that Mardi Gras was just an early demonstration of our need for something we can count on, predictable. And to tell the truth, the conversations are more interesting, because everyone is doing something either different, or differently because of Katrina.

If I'm going to continue to tell the truth, I would also have to admit that as confusing as life may be right now, it is just as exciting. Hell, even as I entertain the rural option again, I'm eyeing a few jewels in Gentilly that would be perfect to downsize into later, and rent in the mean time. Might just get a few doubles and retire on rent. So many possibilities.

But I was lucky (blessed), because I owned some property and because it was insured and because the place where I live didn't get flooded, and I got one of those great paying, albeit short term money making situations. So many others, particularly renters, lost everything and without a relative with extra room in the house or space on the lawn for a FEMA trailer, have no place to live, and without someplace to live there's no way to take advantage of the opportunities that are all over the place for people who want to work.

Since there is so much money being made in the city, people working on contracts can afford

the two bedroom on Tchopitoulas that now cost 1200 instead of 500 a month and can come up with the two months rent and deposit (together almost \$3000) it takes to move into a rental unit these days. Poor folk are on their own and I don't see that changing anytime soon.

Part of the reality of being poor is a lack of knowledge about what money really is and how wealth and opportunity work, and it is really unfortunate that poverty has been made too comfortable. The reality is that many residents are only now returning home, after the best recovery jobs have been taken and only because rental assistance is ending. When I drove down during hurricane Rita to make some of this recovery money I spent part of the time calling friends and relatives who told me I was out of my mind. They were going to "chill out" on their FEMA checks and couldn't understand my urgency about getting back and finding a way to earn money, when the government was picking up the tab.

It took sleeping without utilities for a while, eating MRE's or whatever I could find, and beginning the twelve hour a day seven day a week grind (spell it opportunity) that has me now with more money in the bank than ever. Some men slept in tents, some in their trucks, some on the ground in parks because they understood that getting ahead was better than getting over. I remember how they hired whoever showed up. Even if you murdered someone you could go to work (no one checked) If you had a driver's license and a social security card you were hired.

But its different now, there are a lot of people to choose from for these recovery jobs, so folk now can pick and choose. Once it becomes convenient and comfortable the best pay goes away. Early birds really do get the worm... even after a storm.

For more from the "Love Doctor" of New Orleans, visit LLOYDDENNIS.COM

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Talk Back! It's your chance!

COMMENTARY

Hennessy Honors Alan Newton – Freed Via DNA Test



Alan Newton (center) with (l-r) Bruce Gordon, NAACP President, Julian Bond, NAACP Chairman, Noel Hankin, Sr. VP Hennessy and Judge Greg Mathis who is a long-time supporter of the NAACP.

Hennessy honored Alan Newton at a private dinner for the leadership of the NAACP in Washington, DC during their national convention. Mr. Newton was exonerated by a DNA test that proved his innocence after spending 21 years in prison after falsely being accused of rape. As it turned out the DNA sample was in his file the entire 21 years, but no one conducted the test until the Innocence Project, a legal service committed to freeing convicts through DNA testing, forced it to happen.

Julian Bond, NAACP Chairman, and Bruce Gordon, NAACP President, told Alan Newton how impressed they were with the way he handled his ordeal. Mr. Newton showed no bitterness or anger – just a strong desire to help insure that it doesn't happen to anyone else.

Barry C. Scheck, Co-Director of the Innocence Project said: "New Yorkers and people all across the country have connected with Alan Newton's strength, compassion and spirit. He stayed strong in prison for years, all the while fighting to get access to the evidence that could prove his innocence. While Alan Newton is a truly unique man, his experience is not uncommon – many of the Innocence Project's clients spend years and even decades in prison before scientific evidence finally exonerates them. Alan Newton's case is a powerful lesson in why we must reform the criminal justice system to prevent wrongful convictions." To date, 182 people nationwide have been exonerated through DNA testing, according to the Innocence Project.

Noel Hankin, Sr. VP of Hennessy invited Alan Newton to be the guest of honor at the dinner his company sponsored. Mr. Hankin said: "As the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization this NAACP dinner seemed the perfect setting to introduce Alan Newton. Alan demonstrated enormous strength, courage and bravery. He said he knew he would be exonerated – and he was. At Hennessy, we are inspired by his story and his remarkable strength. Not many of us would have been able to handle this situation so gracefully and we admire him greatly for it."

Mr. Newton was given a lifetime membership to the NAACP, received requests for speaking engagements and opportunities for job interviews.

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African-American Professional Life in Black and White

By: Joe M. Ricks, Jr., Ph.D.

Over the years I have heard and read about a number of African-American professionals articulate about how they have made it in the "white" world when they were referring to their places of employment. It always bothered me that the professional world was always described as white. During my adult life I have worked in a number of professional environments, the U.S. Army, Dillard's Department Stores, Office of Family Support, and Xavier University. During my time at Xavier, I have been a visiting professor at Young and Rubicam Advertising Agency in New York, a faculty intern at 3M Company in Minnesota (3 times), and over the past five years I have worked with McIlhenny Company (Tabasco). Never have I thought of any of these environments as white, I have simply viewed all of them as professional environments.

What seems lost to some of my contemporaries is that professional environments, regardless of the racial makeup, do require different types of behavior than nonprofessional environments, speech is more formal, dress is more conservative, and if music is allowed, for example, what I listen to at my desk will not be same things I listen to in the privacy of my car or my home. This is merely a function of being in a professional environment, and in this case for me race is factored out of the equation. In my many years of work I have acted in the same manner whether I was in a predominately Caucasian environment like 3M, or a predominately African-American environment like OFS, because

they both require one to act in a professional manner.

When African-American professionals describe their professional world as the "white" world to young people it begs the question; what is the "black" world? This constant reference to the professional world as white by black professionals has two unintended I'm sure, but significantly negative consequences. First, it reinforces the view that the black world is nonprofessional, and second, it reinforces an attitude of disrespect for black professionals in environments where the majority of the workforce is African-American.

Furthermore, this reinforcing of the view that the black world is nonprofessional creates an escape for us to not strive for excellence; also it serves as either an excuse or reason for African-Americans not to become professionals. It supports the myth that we can not be ourselves or that we must act white to be a professional. The truth is that even professional environments vary depending on the culture of the organization, and adjusting to an organization's culture is no different than the adjustments we make in our behavior when we are having dinner with our family versus when we are having dinner with our friends. The dinner conversation and uses of language that is appropriate in the former would clearly not be appropriate in the latter. In this scenario many of us would not consider making this adjustment acting white, so why is it when we make adjustments in our professional lives construed as acting white?

Surely, some readers are saying that when I am at dinner with my family or with my friends I am not in a white environment in either case, so it's not the same. That's a fair statement, but it leads directly to the second problem of reinforcing an attitude of disrespect for black professional environments. When we make the case that we have to make behavioral adjustments in the white world that happens to be professional, what does that say to young African Americans about the black professional world? It says that if we have to make adjustments around whites, or for whites, we shouldn't have to make similar adjustments around other blacks, and that's just wrong. Places of work owned or managed by African Americans deserve the same respect for its professional environment as any other, and we should be about the business of making it very clear to our young people and some of our older brother and sisters that professional behavior is not does not carry any racial connotations, it's simply what's appropriate for that particular work environment. We must move past old modes of thinking and discontinue the belief that efficiency, competency and intelligence are attributes that others have a monopoly on and are inaccessible to us. Finally, being unprofessional does not make you black, it simply makes you unprofessional, but in the end the choice is yours.

Joe Ricks Ph.D is an Assistant Professor of Business at Xavier University. For comments he can be reached at jmricks@xula.edu



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HEALTH NEWS

Fighting Childhood Obesity

**By. Marian Wright Edelman
NNPA Columnist**

Former President Bill Clinton and Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee are from different political parties, but they've teamed up on a new campaign: battling childhood obesity. The American Heart Association and the Clinton Foundation have partnered to create the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, and together with Governor Huckabee, the Alliance is dedicated to stopping the rise in childhood obesity by 2010 and teaching all children about the importance of good nutrition and physical activity. Black parents and all parents need to join this fight to protect our children's health.

What's the issue? Experts estimate 16 percent of American children are currently overweight—more than 11 million. They're especially alarmed because just like for American adults, these numbers are rising rapidly: The rate has doubled for children over the 25 years, and tripled for teenagers.

Some adults may see a heavy child as a sign of a healthy eater, or might think of weight as mostly connected to looks. But we need to be reminded that there are serious risks for some overweight children that go far beyond teasing on the playground.

Diseases once associated only with adults, such as Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure, are on the rise at younger and younger ages. Overweight children are also estimated to have a 70 percent chance of being overweight adults. So for many children, this may be more than just a "chubby" phase they'll someday outgrow. Instead, they may be getting set up for a lifetime of the increased health risks that come with being overweight. The most pressing one, cardiovascular disease, remains the leading killer in America, and if the trends in childhood obesity continue experts predict they could cut two to five years off the average American lifespan.

There are many reasons childhood obesity is on the rise. For one, American children are

immersed in the same "supersize me" culture that snares adults, surrounded by high-calorie, high-fat food that's plentiful, cheap, and often served in unrealistically big portions. Today's children and teenagers are also less likely than past generations to spend free time running around outdoors and more likely to spend it on the couch watching television or playing video games, often with snacks and sodas right next to them. Even schools have been blamed as part of the problem. Many districts have cut back on gym time and even recess. The quality of school meals and easy availability of snacks and soft drinks in many school vending machines have been some of the first targets in the new war on child obesity, and one of the places there's already been progress.

A number of school districts and state legislatures are pushing to improve the health content of school breakfasts and lunches and ban or limit the unhealthy products children are able to buy instead of meals, cutting down on the number of children who right

now grab a candy bar and soda from the machine in the hallway and call that "lunch." In response to growing pressure around the issue, the three largest soft drink companies recently agreed to new voluntary limits on the types of drinks they'll distribute in schools. They'll now focus on providing milk, 100 percent juice, and bottled water to elementary and middle school students, with a few other low-calorie choices like diet sodas or sports drinks added for older students. This may be just one piece of the puzzle, but advocates are hoping as more people become aware of the current risks to children's health, more and more industries, schools, restaurants, and communities will make positive changes like this one that will add up to make a big difference for America's children.

Even with these kinds of changes in children's environments, the biggest influence in their habits will come from the same place it always has: Home. Parents have always been the ones to tell their children to eat more

green vegetables or get some fresh air. We know our beautiful children come in all shapes and sizes, but by being aware of the serious health risks some overweight children do face and the long-term value of a balanced diet and regular exercise for all children, we can help make sure all our children grow up to be the healthiest they can be. Making healthy food and exercise part of family life is the right place to start—and will be good for many adults too! Teaching good habits to children early can have lifelong consequences, and someday our children—and grandchildren—will thank us.

Marian Wright Edelman is president and Founder of the Children's Defense Fund and its Action Council whose Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

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NEWS

President Bush's Rhetoric does not Match Reality

By: Hazel Trice Edney
NNPA Washington
Correspondent



Marian Wright Edelman

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – When talking about the pain of slavery before Black audiences, surprisingly George W. Bush is excellent at conveying deep understanding and sensitivity. But according to his critics, the problem is that compassionate speeches, such as the one he gave before the NAACP last week, do not square with his record in office.

“There’s a disconnect between what he says and what he does,” says Frank Messiah, president of the Buffalo, N.Y. Branch of the NAACP. Messiah remained seated during Bush’s address while many delegates around him gave polite applause, some jumping to their feet.

“What he said is the right thing. People are grinning and smiling because he said the right thing,” Messiah said. “But he appoints judges to the federal bench who have histories of doing the opposite of what he said. Nobody can argue about ‘No Child Left Behind.’ But do they know that it was not properly funded?”

Messiah’s sentiments were the same as those voiced by a string of civil rights leaders.

“We not only need the right to vote, but the right to health care, the right to education, and the right to increased minimum wage,” Jesse Jackson observes. “He also needs to engage, in a meaningful way, with civil rights leaders. He can meet with [Russian President] Putin and they disagree. He can meet with us and disagree.”

Jackson, who has sought meetings with Bush, since his first term in office, has encountered what he describes as a “lock out of leadership.”

Al Sharpton did not attend the speech because, he says, “George Bush has not demonstrated in such a way that I wanted to sit and act as if his words match his deeds and his policies.”

While Jackson and Al Sharpton have been excluded from some recent White House meetings with Bush, NAACP President and CEO Bruce Gordon, the leader with the least civil rights experience, has been embraced by Bush and essentially serves as the point person when Bush wishes to meet with a select number of civil rights leaders. In fact, without Gordon’s overtures to Bush, it is unlikely that the president would have spoken to the NAACP national convention for the first time since taking office.

“The moment I stepped into this role, I’ve been working to cultivate that relationship and we’ve had candid conversations,” Gordon said in an interview following the speech. “We don’t always agree, but we understand each other and that’s what’s important. I think that the openness of our communication of our personal relationship as well as my relationship with other members of his staff can at least provide us comfort that we’re looking for ways to dialogue and we’re hoping to find ways where our principles and priorities intersect and where they do, we will work on it.”

As Jesse Jackson sat glumly in the audience and Al Sharpton was 544 miles away in Atlanta, Bush was effusive in his praise of Gordon.

“I’ve gotten to know him. See, shortly after he was elected, he came by the Oval Office. He doesn’t mince words,” Bush says. “It’s clear what’s on his mind. He’s also a results-oriented person. I’m pleased – I’m pleased to say that I have – I’m an admirer of Bruce Gordon, and we’ve got a good working relationship. I don’t know if that helps you or hurts you. But it’s the truth. I admire the man.”

And some African-Americans admire at least some of the things Bush has done as president.

“We constantly maintain an open dialogue about U. S. policies in Africa. I give them very high marks for that,” says Mel Foote, executive director of Constituency for Africa. “By far, they’ve done more than anything that Bill Clinton ever did.”

Bush received a standing ovation after expressing strong support for renewing key sections of the Voting Rights Act.

“I thank the members of the House of Representatives for re-authorizing the Voting Rights Act. Soon the Senate will take up the legislation. I look forward to the Senate passing this bill promptly - without amendment - so I can sign it into law,” he said.

There are some who question whether the NAACP’s determination – some say obsession – to have Bush address convention delegates for the first time in more than five years has come at too high a price.

In years past, former NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume said Bush treated Blacks like “a prostitute” and Chairman Julian Bond compared Bush’s policies to “snake oil” and described his administration as “the Taliban wing of the Republican Party.”

This year, Bond was critical of Bush in his opening speech, but not with the same caustic language that delegates have come to expect.

“The war has as much to do with terrorism as the administration has to do with compassion,” Bond said in his speech. “This war isn’t just about torture; it’s tortured lies. The problem isn’t that we cannot prosecute a war in the Persian Gulf and protect our citizens on the Gulf Coast here at home. The problem is that we cannot do either one. They know all about ‘cut and run’. That’s what they do – cut taxes for the rich and run the country into the ground.”

On the following day, Gordon said that while Bush should be held accountable for his actions, he shouldn’t be blamed for everything that’s wrong in Black America.

“In Georgia, the Georgia Voter ID Law was not passed by the president. It was passed by the state legislators in the state of Georgia. They are the problem,” Gordon said. “And by the way, it was a Republican-driven move, okay, but I would tell you this: In the state of Louisiana, we could not persuade the state of Louisiana, the governor or the secretary of state, to set up satellite voting locations in

Texas and Georgia and other places, and that was driven by the Democratic power machine. The president had nothing to do with that.

“Keith Brannan was killed by his landlord in Stillwood, Oklahoma, and acquitted by an all-White jury. The president wasn’t involved in that. He wasn’t on the jury. Martin Lee Anderson was killed in Panama City in a boot camp by

guards. The president wasn’t in the yard killing Mark

Lee Anderson. He had nothing to do with that. It’s Ken Blackwell who’s running for governor. Right? Is Bush running in Ohio or is Blackwell running? Let’s pay attention to who’s running.

“It is Arnold Schwarzenegger who killed Stan Tookie Williams. It was the governor. It’s the governor of Pennsylvania who has the opportunity to give clemency to Mamia Abu Jamal. Let’s pay attention to the fact that the people governing our lives are operating across this country, at the state level, at the local level, and we need to deal at all of those levels and effect what they are doing. Our issues are in national, state, and local. This conversation is about us. It is not about the president. And if we want to be relevant and powerful, it’s up to us to make it so. He can’t do that for us.”

What Bush has done is to demonstrate that he has the capability to express sensitivity – at least, in words.

“For nearly 200 years, our nation failed the test of extending the blessings of liberty to African-Americans,” the president said to applause. “Slavery was legal for nearly a hundred years, and discrimination legal in many places for nearly a hundred years more. Taken together, the record placed a stain on America’s founding, a stain that we have not yet wiped clean.”

A new report by People for the American Way, titled, “Bush Administration’s Abysmal Civil Rights Record,” questions the administration seriousness about wanting to remove the stain of racism in the U.S.

“While advocating publicly for reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, this administration and its agents at the Justice Department have been actively working to undermine the Act through weak enforcement and partisan manipulations,” the report charges.

The report outlines a string of actions by the Bush administration that appeared to undermine civil rights. They include:

- When the Justice Department investigated the disparate treatment of Black and White voters in Ohio in 2004, the administration took the side of those who would impede poor, elderly and minority voters.

- Though the Section 5 pre-clearance clause of the Voting Rights Act requires covered jurisdictions to prove that voting changes will not harm minority voters the administration has endorsed redistricting plans in places like Texas, Mississippi, and elsewhere, despite major concerns about discrimination against people of color in those plans.

- In the last five years, the Justice Department has filed only two disparate impact cases under Title VII, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Over this same period, the administration has filed multiple cases alleging discrimination against Whites.

- The Bush Justice Department opposed the University of Michigan’s affirmative action programs for undergraduates and law students. The Supreme Court upheld the law school affirmative action program while rejecting a more numbers-driven undergraduate program at Michigan.

University of Maryland Political Scientist Ron Walters says the president’s message was deceptive.

“The first part of the speech, he seemed to know where he was when he talked about the history and made reference to slavery, the racism and discrimination and when he acknowledged that the relationship was not good between the Republican Party and the Black community,” Walters says. “But in the last parts he ran up a fairly stump speech using his usual homeowners and Leave No Child Behind. These are programs that are largely unfunded. Leave No Child Behind is a \$40 billion unfunded mandate.”

Sharpton says that if Bush is sincere, he won’t rest on a single speech before the NAACP.

“He has to meet with a cross section of Black leadership and answer hard questions about policy,” says Sharpton. “I’m pushing for that alongside Rev. Jackson. He’s the president and he’s got to deal with everybody.”

NEWS

*Rev. Joseph Boone, continued
from page 5.*

But the retired pastor's work extended beyond the borders of Atlanta and Georgia. During the 1960s, he was appointed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as chief negotiator of Operation Breadbasket, the economic development arm of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Boone coordinated the efforts of more than 200 ministers, in establishing the nation-wide network of SCLC branches in more than 30 cities.

Pastor Emeritus of Rush Memorial Congregational Church in Atlanta, Boone wasn't one of those preachers who urged his

congregation to wait on their reward of liberation in heaven. Many of his members participated in over 150 boycotts and protest marches that Boone either led or was involved in against companies like A&P Food Stores, Ford, Lockheed, The Avon Corp., Colonial Bread and Hilton Hotels.

Known as the "picketing preacher," Boone lived by the simple motto of, "Find something worth dying for as well as worth living for and die for it daily."

While pastor of Rush, the church served as an organizational base for the Committee on Appeal for Human Rights, mobilizing

students of the Atlanta University Center to conduct demonstrations and sit-ins which helped desegregate Atlanta's lunch counters, theaters, golf courses and other public facilities.

Children advocate and NNPA Columnist Marian Wright Edelman, NAACP Chairman Julian Bond and many others came out of that movement.

Atlanta's large number of Black journalists can be attributed to the efforts of Boone, along with the NAACP and Williams - then president of the Atlanta chapter of SCLC.

Boone served as co-chair of Atlanta Against Unfairness in Broadcasting. His work not only had a positive impact on a number of black broadcast journalists, he also persuaded the FCC to instruct the major broadcast companies into providing credible programming for the African-American community.

On January 23, Boone was inducted into the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame at the Martin Luther King National Historic site.

Despite fighting for civil rights from sun up to sun down, Boone

never forgot the importance of family.

"My father always made time for sister and me," recalled Andrea Boone. "He always took our phone calls no matter if he was on the phone with other civil rights activists or the chairman of the board of K-Mart."

Survivors include Alethea Williams Boone; two daughters: Andrea Boone, Jolaunda Boone Campbell; two grandchildren; one brother, John O. Boone and one sister, Lois Montgomery; all of Atlanta.

Newsmaker, continued from page 4.

next day they had a stay on it and some Republicans were able to clear out their offices.

EB: In your opinion what's the biggest obstacle facing this recovery?

JL: Politicians, I'm serious you have people who are trying to serve their own interest and not necessarily the people's interest their supposed to represent. Then you've got another group of people who are trying to do things for redevelopment because they have ties to redevelopment entities. In Mississippi who was also affected by the storm you don't have this problem, for example, they set up a commission to start paying people and I think that those persons affected started receiving checks so they could start redeveloping their properties. But in Louisiana why do we need to have a check cashing company make one billion dollars over three years to cut checks for people who need them, and also we have created another agency that isn't the legislature, and they don't fall under the same scrutiny as duly elected officials. The Louisiana Recovery Authority I'll admit there are some good people on it, but I don't want twelve millionaires telling me how I'm going to rebuild my house. I don't believe they have a grasp on how attempting to rebuild affects the lower class or someone from the middle class. This particular board is not representative of the people nor was it elected by the people, so it doesn't have any responsibility to them and there isn't any recourse for what their actions would be.

EB: Let's say hypothetically you had the power to disperse this money, what would you do differently?

JL: I would have taken all the money and divided it up among the people who had damage to their

homes; meaning every person who got flooded and I would disperse the money. It wouldn't have been this support program, and that support program or you need to go to this office or that office. I would simply say who is the person that owns this house, this is their percentage of the share because lets say we have 1 million houses devastated and received 3 billion dollars this how it divides up and I would have mailed out the checks.

EB: What are you most enthused about in this recovery effort?

JL: What am I most enthused about that is a great question. It has been the people of New Orleans, all my life I've been raised around community folk, people who are about community and its spirit. It's just given me the drive to keep going and keeps me positive; the fact that people have never given up. Like for me I haven't seen the people of New Orleans say we quit and we're not rebuilding or coming back. And despite negative reports in the press that discourage people from coming back I have never seen the spirit of the people who believe in New Orleans and their community higher. The citizens have not given up on being part of the rebuilding of the city. And that has been the thing that's really driven me to make sure that anything I can do I will do, so that's been the positive thing. Also I never the saw the spirit of the people of New Orleans falter, it might have been down for a little while, it may have been a bit depressing and strained, but it was not and could not be destroyed.

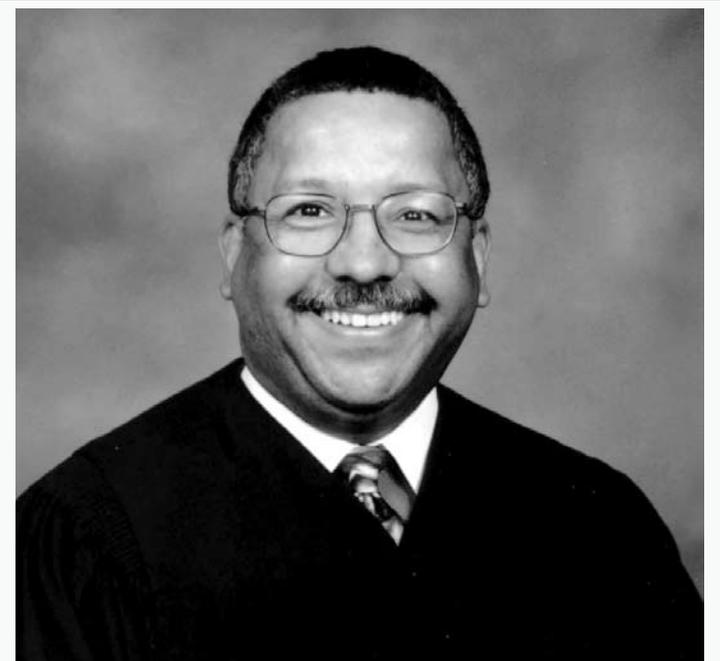
EB: On the flip side what are some of the things that distresses you about the recovery effort?

JL: The most negative thing have been the mad grab for

cash and cutting deals for some of those in leadership positions, that's been the most depressing thing. I've seen people trying to gain political capital and not for the favor of the people but for themselves and that's been the most disgusting part of this whole thing. And that's why I usually get into the issue of whose regulating things regarding the recovery and ask the questions are they from New Orleans and are they affected because how are they going to tell me how to spend money and redevelop this city if you're not from here? How are you going to step in and tell me these companies are going to handle this, and you're spending money that was allocated to the state by the federal government to make my community better? Even with the William Jefferson situation, I read in the paper they're eight or nine people who are considering running, and is that what our community is about, someone is down and you figure out a way to run over them? Look people were saying Mitch Landrieu was a shoo-in, so you saw a ton of political people, legislators, councilmember's jumped the ship and went over to his camp, and in the end the mayor prevailed. So the most disgusting thing I've ever seen is people jumping ship and scrambling for political capital. Those in politics need to remember you're not in politics so you can maintain yourself, you're there to help people, and when you fail to stop helping those people and identifying with their issues I feel you should resign.

EB: And finally, if you could say one thing to the people of New Orleans who are scattered all over the U.S. one thing, what would you tell them?

JL: We will rebuild better, it's not over, and the city will come back and be great again and it will be better than it was.



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