

Lighting The Road To Freedom

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

Data Zone



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**Local Heroes Honored
At Data 40th**

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40th Year

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Howard Dean

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COVER STORY

Katrina Remembered

On the weekend commemorating the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, the NAACP as well as other community members and leaders participated in ceremony held in New Orleans devastated Ninth Ward where a memorial service took place and the dedication of a monument. The civil rights organization also sponsored a town hall meeting where local and national leaders gathered at Xavier University in a show of unity, where they provided information and answers to key questions that are on the minds of many New Orleanians. Many events took place during this memorial weekend.

Photos by Jamie Jones



Soldier stand in front of monument.

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Mailing Address: PO Box 5033, Atlanta, GA 30302
(404) 223-5958 Fax (404) 223-5491 datanews@bellsouth.net
Editorial & Business Office: 170 Northside Drive, Suite 506, Atlanta, GA 30313

Terry B. Jones
CEO/Publisher

Glenn Jones
VP Advertising
& Marketing

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief

Cheryl Mainor
Managing Editor

Distribution
Allison Randolph, III

Contributors
Edwin Buggage
Lloyd Dennis

Hazel Trice Edney
Jamie Jones

Eric Paul

Art Direction
& Production
Paul Mainor for
MainorMedia

Contributing
Photographers
Jamie Jones
Noreen Bostick

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COVER STORY

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Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis speaks with passion about the lives and property lost during Hurricane Katrina.



Louisiana Governor Blanco shares a few words of comfort to audience with Police Superintendent Riley in the background surrounded by fellow police brass.



New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin addresses crowd at memorial dedication.



An impassioned speech being given by City Councilman-at-Large Oliver Thomas.



Spectators look on at dedication.



The future of New Orleans look on as young people listen intently during ceremony.

NEWSMAKER

Data News Exclusive: An Interview with Democratic National Committee Chair Howard Dean

By: Edwin Buggage

During the 2004 Presidential Election Howard Dean set the political world ablaze with his zest and vigor reigniting the public's interest in a political landscape that had become a bastion of power and privilege out of touch with many of its constituents. Dean revolutionized campaigning for the nation's highest office by being the first politician to be effective in using the internet for fund raising as well as appealing to the young who have come to regard the political process with skepticism, cynicism and apathy; and in our recent past felt left out of the power through politics equation. On the campaign trail Dean captured the public's imagination with his candor and effervescence; in essence he is a new breed of politician for the twenty-first century. And while he did not win the Presidential

Nomination he left an indelible mark on the public's imagination. Fast forward to 2006 and Howard Dean is the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee where he is recruiting and breathing new life into the Democratic Party. In a Data News Weekly Exclusive we spoke with Howard Dean about the city of New Orleans and President Bush's handling of the recovery on the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

EB: It's one year after Hurricane Katrina; do you think enough has been done at the federal level with regards the recovery

HD: I don't think so; this President has been a disaster for New Orleans. There were two disasters one was Hurricane Katrina and one was the response

of the federal government which was totally inadequate. I was down in New Orleans with the Democratic National Committee in April we did seven hundred hours of community service in the Lower Ninth Ward. I was shocked at the conditions nine months after the hurricane, I couldn't believe it, and frankly I think the way that President Bush responded to Katrina was really the beginning of the end of his presidency.

EB: Should something of this magnitude in terms of the negligence you speak about, been allowed to happen in America?

HD: Never, I think why Hurricane Katrina was the end of any effective Bush Presidency the sad truth is that people have lost all confidence in him, not just in America, but in the world



DNC Chairman Howard Dean with former Congressional Black Caucus Chair Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson, CBC Foundation Board Member Janice Griffin and present CBC Chair Congressman Mel Watt.

as a whole. I think everybody use to believe that if something bad really happened that the Americans were better organized and could out manage anybody, and you could send in Americans in a crisis, well they don't believe that anymore. And so I think this has been a terrible tragedy not just for the people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, but a terrible tragedy for the country as a whole, and the world as a whole may have lost confidence in the American leadership.

EB: It's interesting you talk about the Bush Administration and its negligence, if you had to grade them and the handling of this tragedy how would you grade them?

HD: Straight F, it would be zero, this would be a total flunking on their part if someone behaved like this in school out they go. And you know very well this wouldn't have happened if Bill Clinton was president and James Lee Witt was head of FEMA. When I was Governor of Vermont I presided over nine emergencies and FEMA was great when Clinton was President, not so good when George Bush's father was President and dreadful under this President.

EB: In your opinion how did race and class factor into the handling and federal response before, during and after this tragedy?

HD: Well I said at the time if

you were old, if you were poor or black you were much more likely to suffer disproportionate losses. Of course people especially the Republicans got on my case about that but it's true. The victims of Katrina were disproportionately old, poor, and/or black. And I think there is a silver lining besides all the wonderful help that Americans have donated and volunteered as individuals; it is nobody can pretend that everything is well in America. President Bush went down to Mississippi or to Jackson Square in New Orleans and said that he was going to attack poverty and of course we see more poor people in America than when he said it, you know this has just been a presidential failure. But clearly race, class, and age had a lot to say with who survived and who didn't.

EB: Being originally from New York and then later on you moved to Vermont, you've witnessed the devastation of both September 11th and New Orleans how would you compare the two?

HD: I think they did a much better job with September 11th of course it was confined to a smaller area, but the national resources were marshaled to deal with September 11th and national resources were not marshaled to deal with Mississippi and Louisiana when Katrina hit and when they finally were it was a very poor job.

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STATE & LOCAL NEWS

Two Years Later, No Music Program



New Orleans, LA.—Much of the world is aware of the fact that Music is New Orleans and New Orleans is Music. In an effort to serve this long creative history and culture of “makin’ music,” Lenny Kravitz and VH1 donated \$20,000 worth of instruments to the Craig Elementary School in Treme. Most recently, Tamborine & Fan’s Old Notes/New Notes project was able to attract

the additional donation of over \$15,000 of musical instruments from the National Parks Service.

It is shocking to both musicians and the community to discover that these major tributes to Louis Armstrong and the music traditions of New Orleans and the contributions to Craig School have been neglected and have failed to be put to good use since the Recovery School

District assumed administrative responsibility for Craig School. Music education is the centerpiece of the musical tradition in the Treme neighborhood. Such a generous jump start for the music education program should be a beacon and a symbol of the rebirth of our schools. Instead, there is no music program and the culture and the inspiration that culture is to the children is absent from the education formula at Craig School. This is a blatant obstruction to the preservation of the music that gives New Orleans a universal appeal.

What must be recognized is the role that Craig School plays as anchor and torch passer for musical culture in Treme. Craig provides the opportunity for children to embrace the sounds on their streets, from the popular music of Louis Armstrong to Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews.

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BESE Rejects Board Member’s Request to Open Two Neighborhood Schools



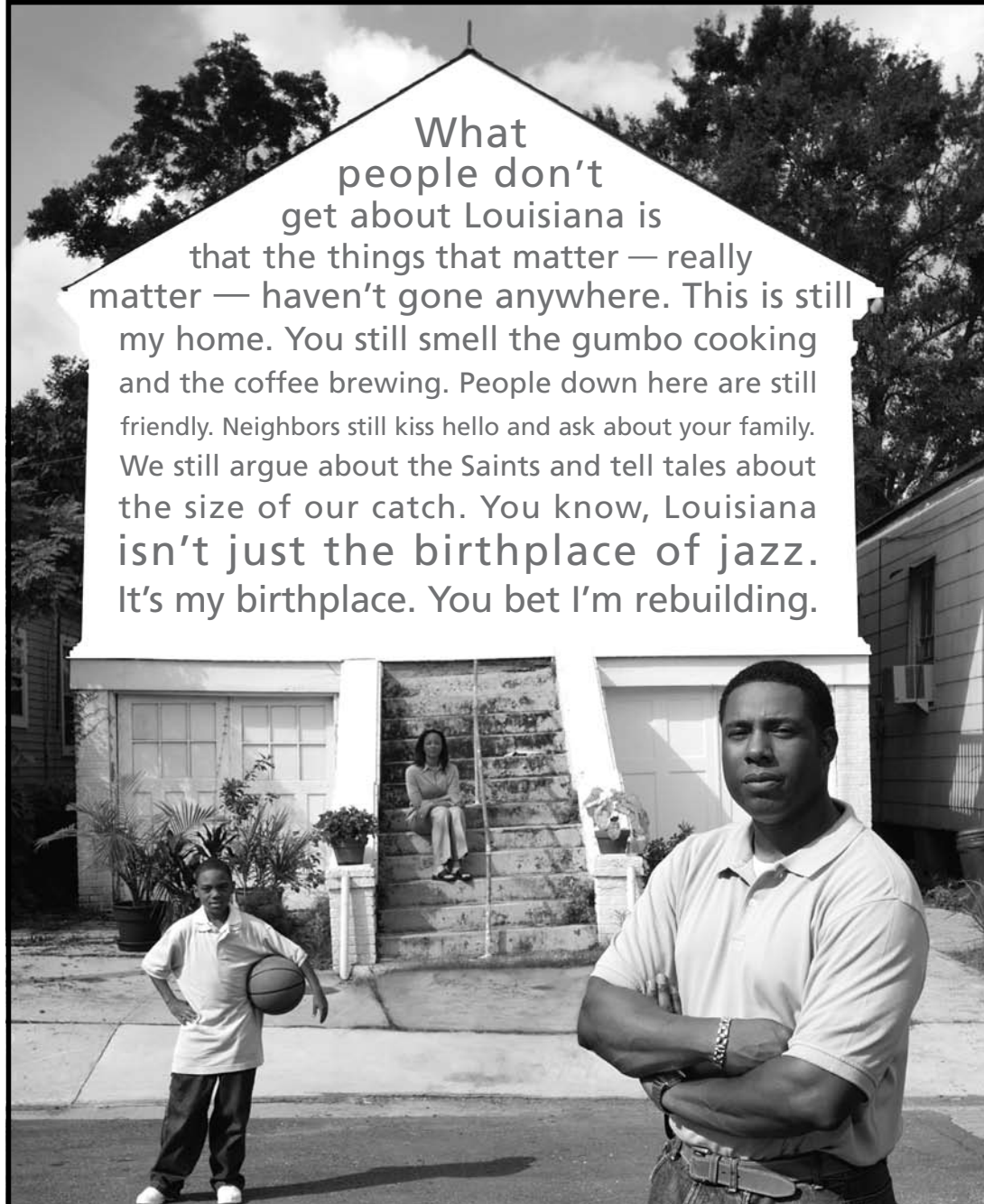
Board Member Louella Givens

NEW ORLEANS, LA / THE NEW ORLEANS AGENDA – A few weeks ago, the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education summarily thumbed its nose at the residents of Orleans Parish and refused to acknowledge or discuss Board Member Louella Givens’ request to take over operation of A.P. Tureaud Elementary and Albert Wicker Elementary schools. The Board instead agreed to open an elementary school in the Treme neighborhood. Against Givens’ objection that the Recovery

School District has a school in Treme, Craig Elementary, and that attention needed to be directed to the communities adjacent to Treme. “The two schools have registered more than 500 children and those parents should receive consideration,” said Givens.

The schools lost their charter for failure to adhere to technical regulations when their nationally known business partner, Ed-Futures, Inc. pulled out the schools two weeks ago. Givens asked Board President

Continued page 11.



What people don't get about Louisiana is that the things that matter — really matter — haven't gone anywhere. This is still my home. You still smell the gumbo cooking and the coffee brewing. People down here are still friendly. Neighbors still kiss hello and ask about your family. We still argue about the Saints and tell tales about the size of our catch. You know, Louisiana isn't just the birthplace of jazz. It's my birthplace. You bet I'm rebuilding.

Homeowners affected by Hurricane Rita or Katrina may be eligible to receive up to \$150,000 in compensation for their losses to get them back into their homes. *The Road Home* Housing Assistance Centers are open and applications are currently being processed. If you have already registered, you will receive an application packet in the mail. To start your application for Governor Blanco's *Road Home* program, visit www.road2LA.org or call 1-888-ROAD-2-LA (1-888-762-3252).



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DATA ZONE

Data News Weekly Celebrates 40th Anniversary

Honors Local Trailblazers at Gala Event



DNW VP Glenn Jones with the “Supemen” November ’05 Trailblazers as they are honored at the 40th Anniversary Gala. L to R, Glenn Jones, Roland Doucette, Raynard Thomas, Todd Higgins, Fred Johnson and Gralen Banks



Data VP Glenn Jones, Data Business Manager Cheryl Mainor and Publisher Terry Jones celebrate 40 years of publishing



Data Publisher Terry Jones and VP Glenn Jones congratulate John Keller as the Data News Weekly Trailblazer of the Year



EXTRA POINT POSTGAME

PARTY

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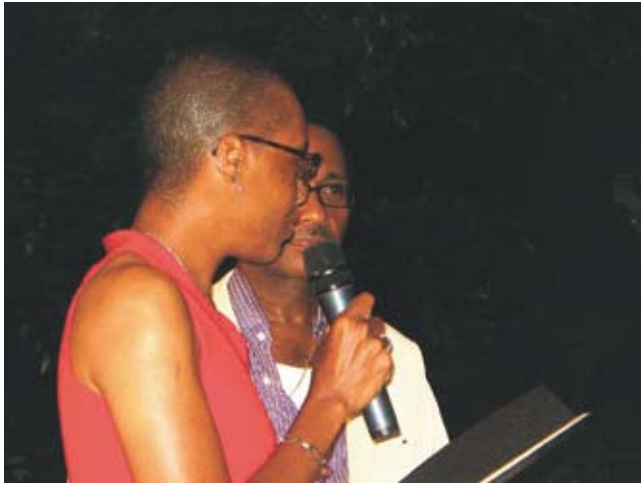
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DATA ZONE



Data Publisher Terry Jones accepts congratulations from the office of US Senator Mary Landrieu



WYLD Talk show Host Hal Clark emceed for the evening and Glenn Jones prepare to award the Trailblazers



Garrison Jackson, President & CEO of Circulation Expert, accepts SOAR award from Terry Jones for their support directly after the flood



Kermit Ruffins takes a break during the festivities, Kermit Ruffins and the Barbeque Swingers were the headliners for the evening

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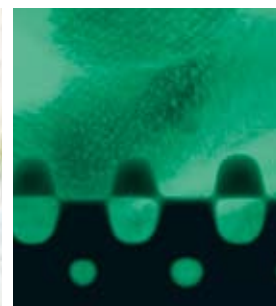
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NATIONAL NEWS

Blacks Looking to Represent White Districts Create Mixed Feelings

By. Hazel Trice Edney
NNPA Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Having gained control over most predominantly Black political districts, an increasing number of African-Americans campaigning

to represent majority Whites districts. While some view that trend as progress, others worry that the Black community may lose clout in the process.

“As districts begin to reflect a broader, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic orientation, the leadership, in order to get elected, begins to reflect both political realities. And

there are consequences,” says U. S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.). “The consequences include less emphasis on programs that directly or proportionately affect African-Americans. We start talking about programs that affect all Americans. I’m not saying that’s necessarily a bad idea because it requires leadership to talk about issues that reflect all Americans. But Black folk have got some real needs out here that need to be addressed.”

Among those needs that need addressing: 58 percent of African-American children living in poverty, Black unemployment almost hovering around double digits and crime still dogging Black communities, all issues discussed during last week’s Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference.

“I do believe that when you’ve got African-Americans running, they bring a certain level of sensitivity, not only to African-American issues, but as a whole,” says Congressman Elijah Cummings (D-Md.). “When you look at the Congressional Black Caucus, when the Caucus has spoken out on C-SPAN, 95 percent of the people who call us are White. They weren’t Black people. The reason why I think that is because African-Americans basically tell it like it is, give the basics, think practical, act practical and speak practical. And because African-Americans have been through so much struggle in their lives, it gives them more or less a passport to help other people and I think that’s what happens. And I think it’s a wonderful thing.”

Cummings credits U. S. Sen. Barack Obama, currently the only Black Senator and only one of five Blacks who have served in the Senate, for inspiring an increasing number of African-American Republicans and Democrats running statewide or in districts dominated by Whites. He credits Obama for people saying, “If he can do it, I can do it.”

Congressman Harold Ford (D-Tenn.) was among the first to congratulate Obama after he rendered his powerful speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004. It apparently rubbed off. Ford, a self-proclaimed moderate “Blue Dog” Democrat, who earned a C on the last NAACP Legislative



Congressman Harold Ford, Jr. TN(d)

Report Card, has left his safe 9th House District previously held by his father to run for a Senate seat. In Massachusetts, Black Democrat Deval Patrick battled in a three-way neck-in-neck primary race for governor. Election results for Patrick was not in at NNPA deadline, but in recent polls, Ford, who won the Democratic Primary was only slightly trailing his Republican opponent Bob Corker by less than 5 percentage points.

In Ohio, Republican J. Kenneth Blackwell and in Pennsylvania, Republican Lynn Swann are running for governor in the general election Nov. 7.

Both are trying to duplicate the state-wide success of L. Douglas Wilder, the nation’s first and only elected African-American governor in 1989. Wilder won Virginia’s stop spot with less than 2 percent of the vote. Virginia is 18 percent Black.

Many Black ministers and Black General Assembly members roundly criticized Wilder for his perceived insensitivity to such key issues as the death penalty.

Just like Whites, Black politicians are diverse in their thinking, says CBC Chairman Mel Watt (D-N.C.).

“It will vary from candidate to candidate and from situation to situation. It is clear that representative government is about representing people. And the broader and more diverse the people are that you are seeking to represent, the more you have to cater to a different constituency. That’s what representative government is all about. We’ve had Black representatives that represented majority White constituencies for a long time. My congressional district, for example, is only 35-40 percent African-American.”

continued on page 11.



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OPINION

Living In The Moment, Dangerous Drama As It Moves

Eric Paul
Data Columnist

Not long ago, I was talking to a coworker, and she described a situation between her husband and she that gave me chills. They were fortunate in that their home sustained no flood damage, but the roof was not so lucky. Her home was a wreck for several weeks as construction workers plied their trade. She saw them in the morning as she left for work, and they were there when she returned. Each day brought some new problem, delaying repairs, prolonging the ordeal of rebuilding. This brought sustained stress, and the question of what could come this summer. When she posed this to her husband his reaction was swift, "I can't think about that."

Yes, he can't think about "that", nor can I, nor can thousands of others both here and away, but the truth is this, that thought is never far from the mind of any native of this city. We're still limping back, still getting our bearings, still finding bodies, still trying to make peace with the ever changing face of what New Orleans may become. Overseeing all is a future that may not be, and in our minds, "what if", haunts us. This stifling, "what if", robs us of living in the present, in the now.

We are a haunted people. I don't mean this in any derogatory sense, but in the pure truth that Katrina left her mark on us all, and the experience has tainted our reality ever since. We measure our lives by its aftermath, standing in the long great shadow she cast upon us.

I know of a woman who had an older couple ("returnees") staying with her, along with her grand daughter. According to her, when she returns from work, the major topic of discussion is Katrina. "It's always Katrina we talk about. It's like nothing else matters. Just Katrina." she says. True, post Katrina life is our burden to carry, and only God knows what may await us this summer, but Katrina need not be the constant unwanted guest in our lives. If we allow this, we cripple ourselves to enjoying the lives we have now.

In spite of crime, the murders, our distrust of the Army Corps of Engineers, Congressional indifference and general pile-a-tricks, and let us not forget the ongoing stress, WE, are still living our lives. We can experience joy. Though many magnolia trees are dead, the crepe myrtles are blooming in waterfalls of color. The cry of cicadas is as of old, a vocal reminder of what was. A snowball remains a libation the Gods would covet.

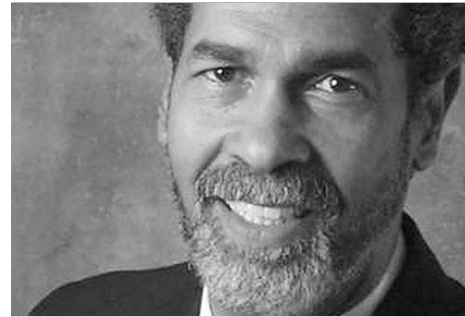
The simplest of pleasures is wealth to us now.

We live in the moment, as it moves. In that moment, "she" cannot touch us; weddings, birthdays, Mardi Gras, crawfish boils. Katrina couldn't spoil seeing my daughter, home from college, shakin her booty to India Arie at the House of Blues in the Quarter. Katrina couldn't taint seeing my coworkers at the Xavier University Library for the first time since August 29th., 2005. No parent on graduation day at Xavier or Southern or Tulane or Loyola or Delgado or LSU had "her" in mind. They were beaming, hearts full to bursting, content in the knowledge that their children had gone the distance, making the grade in spite of the greatest disaster to befall the nation in its history.

We live in the moment, as it moves.

We may need to flee in a week or a month, or not. Come what may, we'll have the small treasures of before, as brief and simple as that may be.

Eric Paul is a librarian at Xavier University of Louisiana. He was an original member of the Congo Square Writer's Workshop, which was affiliated with Free Southern Theater of New Orleans; he can be emailed at bola4@aol.com



The Love Dr.
Data Columnist

Hanging out with single people, or perhaps I should rephrase that. Hanging out around people who hop from bed to bed can be dangerous to your heath. Yesterday one of the ten shootings in New Orleans you may have read about came very close to home. A man came on the job and started shooting at his former woman and her new man. The only person he hit was one of her co-workers who's only involvement was being too close and therefore in the way of a stray.

Other than in the drug game, generally, if you hear that one man shot another, it was either over money or a woman. The same is generally true of women as well. Both men and women have been known to do harm to an unfaithful partner.

Over the years, I have continued to point out that almost all of the drama people have in their lives is because people sleep with one another without lifelong commitments. "Baby-momma-daddy" drama, "my daddy don't care about me drama", stalking drama, domestic violence drama, even murder and disability drama happen when folk go from one bed to another, and destroy one another's self esteem in the process.

There is an arrogance in modern living. A mind set that morality doesn't matter and that we are above the laws of God and nature. There is also a player's mentality among men that treats sex as a conquest, as if abusing a relationship with a woman can prove anything about a man's character, strength or worth. Real men understand and derive their self esteem from creating and building things that matter, rather than destroying women's self esteem.

I stopped fooling myself about who I was and how I could be happiest a long time ago, so I have very little drama in my life and in today's world that means I am safer, because drama between people who have access to guns makes life dangerous to them and everyone around them.

Yes, I realize that most folk don't go that deep, preferring to keep their heads in the sand rather than reading the writing on the

wall. When a man has to go outside of one relationship, it is a sign of failure, his failure to get what he needs and wants from his woman. He either failed to choose well, going for style instead of substance, or is failing to be enough of a man to get all that his woman has the potential to give.

In today's world being a one woman man is extremely challenging. The women's rights movement was important for getting women treated correctly by law and in the workplace, but it screwed up some folk's thinking about marriage and family. Today people behave as though "needing" someone in our lives is a weakness and because they do, people who need one another's cooperation and support to make a family situation work are trying to act like they don't, and that's where a lot of men get screwed up in the head.

We men feel most "manly" when we feel needed, a feeling modern women are afraid to let us have. In their zeal and quest to be our equals some women discourage their men simply by making us feel unnecessary and unimportant in our role as a husband or father.

But then men lie to themselves, trying to believe and act like they can't be hurt by a woman, when the real truth is that a man can usually only be deeply hurt by the woman he claims as his own, hurt so bad that he'll go out and ruin his life and end someone else's when she finds someone to replace him in bed. Nothing disturbs a man more than being put down by a woman for another "better" man.

So, your "love doctor" avoids being in places where people who hop from one bed to another hang out. I just don't want to be around when somebody's "X" shows up with somebody new, or somebody's "main thing" finds them with their "other thing". Its risky business, almost as bad as hanging around drug dealers in a town where the turfs have not yet been established.

You know, its just about the same thing, turf, you and someone else claiming the same territory, be it a block or a mate, and being willing to kill to keep what you had, even if its only self esteem.

The way I figure, anytime you meet a new prospect, lets say over twenty five, your biggest concern would have to be that their history may catch up to you carrying an AK-47 ready to sacrifice your life for their wounded self esteem. So in today's world, its not only "cheaper to keep her", but probably a whole lot safer as well.

Go To LLOYDDENNIS.COM for more information. Lloyd Dennis is also available as a speaker; email him at LD@LLOYDDENNIS.COM, fax 504-368-1225

NATIONAL NEWS

Sen. Barack Obama: Out of Africa



US Senator Barack Obama during his recent trip to Kenya

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Wherever Sen. Barack Obama (D-III) goes, he's guaranteed to draw a crowd. His session, "Africa, the 21st Century," during the 36th Annual Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Conference was no exception.

Fresh from a recent trip to Kenya, Capital Hill's lone Black senator packed the conference room at the Washington Convention Center to the point a partition separating an adjoining room had to be opened to accommodate the overflow.

Obama kicked off the panel by answering the question, "Why a panel on Africa?"

"U.S. foreign policy continues to ignore Africa, it's not new. It's historically been the case... It's not just African-Americans who need to care about Africa, Americans should care about Africa and Americans should care about Africa because our fate is immanently tied to what Africa has."

Obama further explained the links between Africa and America

in areas of health, national security and terrorism.

"If you're concerned about national security and terrorism, you need to be concerned about Africa," said Obama, who described the 53-nation continent as having "the most ungoverned states in the world."

"When you have refugees crossing borders that are unpatrolled, when you have waters that are not being controlled in any sort of way, when you have great deprivation and millions of young people who basically have no opportunities, no hope, that ends up being fertile ground for the recruitment of terrorism."

Using Somalia as an example, he said, "Because of our lack of attention.... We ended up having a situation in which... you now have a Somali government with some of whom had direct connections to Al-Qaeda in power."

Joining him on the panel were Susan Rice, senior fellow foreign policy institute at the Brookings Institute, Ambassador Phil Lyman, and Helene Gayle, CARE USA president and CEO.

Rice also stressed the importance of helping unstable African governments get on their feet in areas of health and economics.

"We in the United States have not only an enormous humanitarian stake, we have a critical security stake as well... If we don't recognize that in a globalized world when terrorists or disease or anything else can get on a plane and be anywhere on the planet in 18-24 hours, then we need to be concerned about what happens in far away places," she said.

"We can't just be reactive. We can't just be short term. We have to be proactive."

In being proactive, Rice and the other panelists said the U.S. must help the UN offer more peace-keeping forces in Darfur and invest in Africa as other countries are doing.

With Nigeria coming into its own as one of the world's leading oil-producing nations, the Chinese and other countries have begun to court these nations, helping build roads, buildings and other forms of infrastructure. The U.S. needs to start doing the same, said the panelists.

Lyman said currently, 15 percent of imported oil comes from West Africa and in the next decade, that number will jump to nearly 25 percent.

Obama said the U.S. is missing a golden opportunity on the continent.

"We should care about Africa economically," Obama said. "One of the surprising things going through Africa was everybody we met said the United State's absence is as noticeable and prominent as the Chinese's presence. The Chinese are everywhere throughout Africa."

Newsmaker, continued from page 4.



Howard Dean and members of ACORN help clean up New Orleans devastated ninth ward.

EB: What is the Democratic National Committee doing working in conjunction with Congressional Democrats and Republicans for that matter in expediting the recovery?

HD: As you know the Democratic Party controls nothing, we don't control the White House or the U.S. Congress and we don't control the courts, so what we have done is personal, we closed down our fund raising operations right after Katrina and told our employees they could go to the gulf and we would pay their salaries when they went. We had one of our first conventions in New Orleans in April to re-open New Orleans convention business and put some money in that way, so we've done a lot of things as an organization, but in terms of politics we don't have a lot of say because the Republicans control everything something we hope to change in the next election.

EB: Let me ask you this, is it that at the national level the Democratic and the Republican Party are that polarized that they couldn't work in a bi-partisan way to deal with this level of human suffering to help expedite the recovery process?

HD: The biggest problem is not that we couldn't work in a bi-partisan way, there was a bill that was introduced by the Congressional Black Caucus and we all supported it, but the problem was the Republicans basically weren't interested until we pushed them. Our main role here is to embarrass the Republicans into actually doing something.

EB: With the support for the War in Iraq eroding do you think that will help in the effort to rebuild the Gulf Region in terms of transferring those resources in that direction?

HD: Well for the price of about three months in Iraq we could have entirely rebuilt all of New Orleans and Mississippi that was affected by Hurricane Katrina. So I do think that getting our troops home will result in some savings that certainly will help the gulf, but the trouble is I think frankly President Bush hasn't been all that helpful. He's done a lot of photo ops, but you see what the condition of the ninth ward yourself and how much has been rebuilt and how much has not been rebuilt. And no amount of photo ops are going to make up for that, what we need is money and management, and they say they've have allocated a lot of money but the truth is it hasn't gotten to the people on the ground.

EB: And finally, with people from New Orleans scattered all over the country if Howard Dean could tell them one thing in these tragic times that so many of our residents are living in presently what would you tell them?

HD: I would say that they ought to plan on going back to New Orleans because it will be rebuilt and if it gets rebuilt under a Democratic Administration it will get done right. Actually during the Mayoral Election we set up toll free lines for people that have been displaced to get information about voting. And we're going to have a bunch of protections for people in every southern state and in other parts of the country as well to help people to exercise their right to vote because that's really what's going to make a difference is to change the direction of America. We need a new direction in America and we're going to have one if everybody votes.



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Linda Johnson to present a motion that would allow the schools to open under RSD supervision keeping not only the students in place, but the principals and their faculties as well. "The members of those school faculties went door to door to ask parents to register their children. They were not involved in the mass registration conducted by the RSD because they expected to open as Charter Schools," Givens explains. Their registration numbers are solid. The schools remain in disrepair as of today and workmen have only just begun to clear out mildewed and moldy building contents. The Board seemed satisfied that RSD assurances that Treme would have a school left Givens bewildered. "I am at a loss to understand why the board would not accept my request to open these schools. They are not in Treme and the Board resolution may not cover them. It would be a disaster to find out that the parents have been misled because the schools are being opened by people who do not know New Orleans neighborhoods and who have decided that they know best not matter what the community and it representative request."

Givens says that the Board's refusal to even "humor" her in this regard has left her with a sense of dread as to the intent of the RSD

to be a willing and cooperative partner in the rebuilding of New Orleans and its education system. "I feel as though the Department of Education has implicitly decided that black people in this community will not have a voice in this process. No matter what the point is, it is not accepted when I bring a matter before the Board. It feels like the most insipid form of racism. If we are not smart enough to know where schools are needed in our community, the implication is that we are not fit to serve."

"I am reading in daily reports of the efforts to open other schools in New Orleans but I have not seen one minority group who is succeeding in this process. If the community is and was predominantly African-American, why are we not at the table putting our schools back together? The RSD has ten employees trying to solve the problems associated with opening schools to serve ten thousand. Two of those people are Black. We are asked to be patient because the task is monumental. I began last September, after Katrina, asking the Board to study the repopulation patterns before taking over the schools. I know then it was a daunting task. But, arrogance is hard to overcome. This was the same group that has spent most of the last few years

belittling the system it is now replacing. So, of course, ten state superstars are all you need to get the job done. The thought was that outside contractors would step up to run charter schools. But, the education community is split on charter effectiveness and state takeover of schools as well. One thing the education community agrees on is that the schools must serve the needs of the people. I have offered to help in any way possible, but, this is the last straw. I am at wits end" adds Givens.

Givens initial concerns about the ability of the Recovery School District to meet the needs of the returning population seems to have merit. The New Orleans Times-Picayune reports, "facing construction delays less than a week before schools open, students enrolled at three New Orleans campuses in the state-run Recovery School District will attend classes miles away at other schools for at least two weeks, officials said. And the district is scrambling to fill a third of its teaching slots."

Officials with the Recovery District have announced that district needs an additional 177 teachers. They have also admitted that they will have to adjust from the original start date to a staggered opening, ninth-graders start on Friday, 10th-graders on

Sept. 11, 11th-graders on Sept. 12 and 12th-graders on Sept. 13. The first day for all grades is Sept. 14.

As result of a shortage of teachers, the district may be forced to hire non-certified teachers to fill the void. This will likely be of grave concerns to parents who were expecting improvements under the new system. One parent, unwilling to be identified said, "Is this just another experiment with our children. Is this what they call making things better . . . they may as well had left us with the regular district (Orleans Parish Public Schools), at least they had real teachers."

"I'm feeling better than I did a couple of weeks ago because I think some of our strategies are going to work, but it is a challenge," said Deputy Louisiana Superintendent of Education Carole Wallin, who is working closely with Recovery District administrators. "They (parents) need to bring their child, and we're going to do our very best for them."

According to published reports, 8,234 students have registered to attend 17 schools in the Recovery District. Several schools are already closed to new enrollees, including Craig Elementary School, Banneker Elementary and Clark High School.

Music, continued from page 5.

Longtime community resident, Jerome Smith, suggests that "this is an injustice and a effort to willfully diminish and destruct the influence of our rich cultural heritage with our children. It is important that we speak out against the fact that the instruments have been locked away and that there is no music program to show for the donation. These are the kinds of stories that give our city and our school systems such a bad name."

"Those of us who are anchored to the music of this city and who recognize the inspiration that music can be to our children must raise their voice and question the motives and the actions of the Recovery School District. We demand an accounting for the lack of progress in implementing a music program at Craig School. We want to know, when will the music program start?"

We are requesting that those who love the music and culture of New Orleans, please contact the governor to convey your dissatisfaction with this situation. This cannot and will not be tolerated. Especially, given that prior to the Recovery School Take-over there were serious steps being taken by the Orleans Parish School Board to implement a music program at the school that would offer such enrichment and inspiration to our children.

Whites, continued from page 8.

But a predominately White constituency should not absolve any politician from doing what is just, says Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas).

"I don't think that the fact that your constituency is diverse should limit you from pressing the issues that really should be corrected based upon America's history," says Lee, who represents the 40 percent Black, 35-40 percent Hispanic and approximately 20 percent White 18th District. "What it really does say is that African-Americans are broad-based, they are multi-tasked and they can look at many issues. But, they are special because they bring to the table people that have never been brought to the table whether or not they represent a state or a small district."

Some political observers don't believe the Black community will automatically lose as a result of more Blacks seeking seats formerly held by Whites.

"We have a commonality of interest in many issues with people who are not African-Americans. And coalition politics is a very important part of our growth and transformation. Now, having said that, it's very important that as people seek to move up and beyond, that we remember that our base of our support are always going to be on those places that have been overwhelmingly African-American," says Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League and former mayor of predominately Black New Orleans. "The essence of our growth in politics is that we transcend just being limited

to the majority African-American districts...If we don't go beyond just majority African-American, our political influence will never grow. And I think that our political transformation ought to be that we have African-Americans who can represent all people."

And some have done just that. "You've got to run as who you are," says U.S. Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), who represented overwhelmingly White districts in Virginia's House and Senate. "I don't think that I compromised any of my principles based on who I was serving. You've got to run as who you are and say what you believe." Besides, he says, "There are very few Black issues. There's education, everybody's for education. Crime prevention, everybody's for crime prevention. Even civil rights, everybody can be for civil rights."

Harvard law professor and civil rights and political activist Charles Ogletree predicts such campaigns will only increase.

"We are hoping that in the 21st Century, we are going to have a significant number of African-Americans; not one or two – that will be elected when the people who voted for them were majority-minority," he says. "We see that with Barack Obama. We hope to see it with Harold Ford. We've seen it with Barbara Lee. It is a rarity. But if we're ever going to have a real democracy, people have to be elected based on their talents and merits and race should not be a prohibitive factor."

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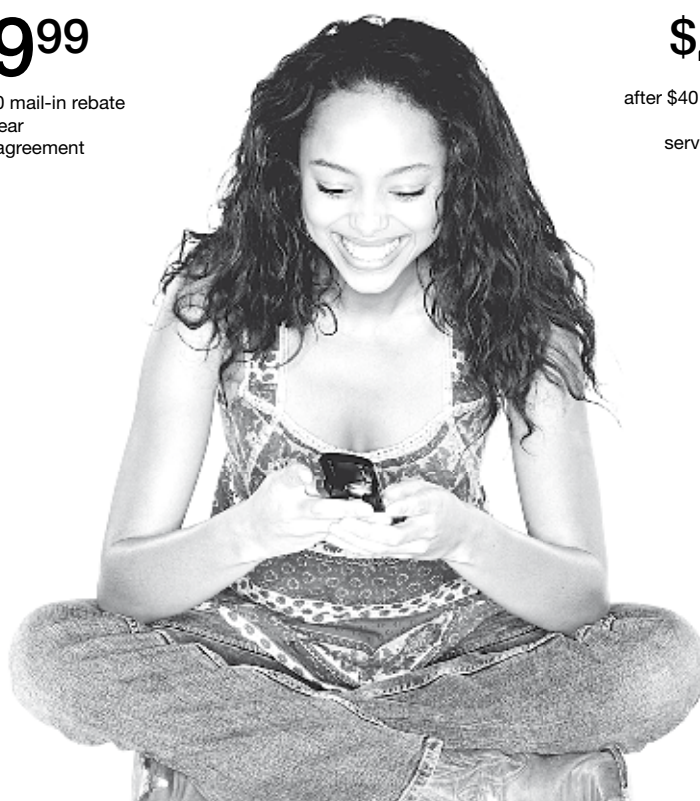
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