

Lighting The Road To Freedom

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

Data Zone

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**New Orleans
to Honor Father LeDoux**

May 26, 2007 41st Year Volume 37 www.ladatanews.com

The Soul of New Orleans

The Learning Curve of Rebuilding New Orleans



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Remembering
Yolanda King

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY
41st Anniversary Issue
Coming June 9
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The Learning Curve of Rebuilding New Orleans



Part 1 in a 3-part series about the progress of rebuilding New Orleans' public schools

By Eddie Francis
Photos by Jamie Jones

How does a community rebuild a school system? Since New Orleans public schools started their staggered return in November of 2005 the eyes of the nation have focused on its development like scientists observing the culture of a petri dish. What seems to have become more of a concern to local citizens is public schools' potential return to mediocrity.

New Orleanians have had to sift through a cast of characters scattered among what many call three school systems. It has been easier said than done to identify all of the elements during one of the biggest educational experiments in American history. Pre-Katrina, all New

Orleans public school parents had to worry about was having their children in New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS). Post-Katrina parents have had their children in a NOPS school, a Recovery School District (RSD) school or a charter school.

School shuffle

RSD was created out of the need to assist New Orleans with the recovery of schools. The move was initiated by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) after the legislature voted to have

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"WE HAVE A BETTER SCHOOL AND WE HAVE BETTER THINGS GOING ON,

Schools are getting better in New Orleans. Just ask Doris Hicks, the principal and CEO of Martin Luther King Charter School.

"We don't have discipline problems that we used to have...We have teachers that are excited about teaching and learning. We have students that are very serious about their education."

The autonomy that public charter schools provide has changed her role as a principal for the better.

"I'm able now to sit with teachers and parents and talk about our school and talk about strategically where we want to be in the next five years."



Doris Hicks, Public Charter School Principal.

AND I NEED TO TELL YOU, WE ARE LOVING IT."

Public charter schools are just one way that schools are getting better in New Orleans.

"Through my entire career, I've never had the opportunity that I'm having now."

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DID YOU KNOW?

- Charter schools are public schools. They are publicly funded, cannot charge tuition, and participate in Leap testing and the Louisiana's School Accountability system.
- 26 out of 31 charter schools in New Orleans have open admissions. If more students wish to attend than space allows, these schools must hold a lottery where any student has an equal chance of attending.
- In a charter school, decisions are made by people at the school who understand our children's needs best.

Cover Story, Continued from page 2.

the state take over failing New Orleans public schools in November of 2005. Although charter schools are viewed as a separate system, they are not. Charter schools are independently operated public schools which have received their charters from one of three granting bodies—BESE, RSD or the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB).

Charter schools have gained quite a bit of attention in the post-Katrina world. Whereas charter schools are public schools that are designed to empower individual administrations and communities, a few watchful citizens have viewed them more as alternative private schools. The biggest question that still permeates throughout the community is that of who grants charters.

There are five types of charters, separated by the board that granted the charter or the circumstance under which the charter was granted. For example, a Type 1 charter is a new start-up school granted by a local board whereas a Type 2 charter is one granted by BESE for a new start-up or a school converted to a charter. The charters last for five years but schools can apply for up to ten years.

The charter school organization that has gained the lion's share of praise, both locally and nationally, is the Algiers Charter School Association (ACSA). ACSA has eight schools under its watchful eye with a ninth school coming in the fall of 2007. Carrying the most schools of any charter school organization, ACSA's charters were granted by both OPSB and RSD. Their performance has been praised by teachers, students and parents, alike.

Another school that has received a wealth of attention is the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School for Science and Technology. The school has personified those New Orleanians who have a dogged determination to create a better city. While the original Ninth Ward site has been under repair, the King community found itself working out of the old Colton Academy building then the building of Harney Elementary. Still the school has been lauded for its progress.

The University of New Orleans has also found itself in a favorable light with its management of three charter schools. Armed

with an aggressive public relations campaign and a corporate partnership, UNO has navigated the charter school waters with two elementary schools and a high school currently housed on the university's campus. Hopes are high as the UNO charter school network is run by UNO's College of Education and Human Development.

Despite the praise that these and other charter schools have received, a popular criticism is that charter school organizations are not sympathetic to low-performing and special needs students. Technically charter schools are held to the same standards as any other public school but some in the community feel that these schools are slyly side-stepping their responsibilities as

with the task of running RSD.

Amid the destruction of Katrina, Jarvis was charged with the task of reopening schools with a skeleton crew. She has resigned but she can boast that she had been able to open 39 schools to serve approximately 17,600 students since RSD was started in early 2006. Jarvis has paid the price in the court of public opinion; however, with many in the community dissatisfied with conditions of schools, the personnel and



public schools. Thus the public has been unwittingly introduced to one of the downsides running a charter school.

Whereas the average public school is funded federally, a charter school depends largely on funding from its granter, the community and anywhere else it can get the money. New Orleans charter schools have, therefore, relied on funding to come through the Louisiana Department of Education, RSD, OPSB and other educational grants. Otherwise these schools have to be creative about how they obtain funding.

The players

Ask anyone who has tried to pay attention to the local education who's who and that person can probably recall one name—Robin Jarvis. Although the weight of the New Orleans public school system has not fallen completely on her shoulders, Jarvis was charged



even the meals the students were served. On the other hand, Jarvis supporters argue that she did the best with what she had.

The newest kid on the block is Paul Vallas, the new superintendent of RSD. He brings experience, having served as a district leader in Philadelphia and Chicago. The jury is out on Vallas

as he made his first appearance in New Orleans only a few weeks ago. Still, some citizens question whether or not he will be able to connect with the local culture in order to effectively do his job.

Paul Pastorek is the new state superintendent. He succeeds the late Cecil Picard and has made an immediate impact with his energy and optimism. Pastorek makes no secret of the fact that he has no professional background in education and that he looks forward to conquering the challenges of rebuilding New Orleans. Pastorek is definitely not short on creative ideas. He has already floated the idea of opening a transitional

school to serve as a staging location for students returning to New Orleans from their Katrina displacements.

Then there is Darryl Kilbert, the super-

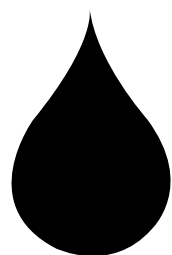
intendent of New Orleans Public Schools. Kilbert, a New Orleans native, is viewed by some as having the easiest job of local educational leaders. After the state takeover, NOPS was left with high-performing Benjamin Franklin High School, McMain Secondary, McDonogh #35 High School and Benjamin Franklin Math & Science Elementary. NOPS also

has the new Orleans Parish PM School, Bethune Elementary and ten charter schools.

What would any local educational story be without Leslie Jacobs, vice president of the BESE board? Architect of the state's accountability system, Jacobs is known as both a vocal supporter of the state takeover of schools and vocal critic of OPSB. After the takeover, which was took place in a special session in November of 2005, Jacobs beamed at the opportunity to fill New Orleans public schools with better administrators and teachers.

Finally, the United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO) plays a significant role. With teachers fired immediately after Katrina and leadership scattered, UTNO seemed to be on the ropes. The Orleans Parish School Board voted not to renew UTNO's collective bargaining agreement; however, an arbitrator ruled that OPSB violated provisions of the agreement. That has only given UTNO president, Dr. Brenda Mitchell, more ammunition to fight despite the union being diluted.

This series will look into how all of these elements have contributed to the progress, or lack thereof, of public schools in New Orleans. Is the state takeover working? Who will supply the energy and innovation needed to turn New Orleans' public schools around? Is the traditional New Orleans educator an endangered species?



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JMJ Foundation TRAILBLAZERS

Phill Batiste: Through the Fire

By Edwin Buggage

Life is filled with challenges and things that test our will, fortitude and faith. In these tough times for our city and our nation this is even more the case. This month's Trailblazer story is a true testament of someone who came through the depths of depravity and transformed himself into an example that one can overcome and become a positive force for change.

Phill Batiste is a native New Orleansian who walks through communities today talking young people about the dead end road that is crime and drugs. Unlike some who try to deter those from this life, Batiste knows this road all too well because for 35 years of his life he had been in and out of penal institutions and was involved in a life of crime and drug abuse. "I was involved in crime I've dealt drugs and was an abuser of heroin, and I was in and out of correctional facilities including three separate stints in Louisiana's Angola State Penitentiary."

But a life changing moment came about in 1997 when his younger brother Kerry was diagnosed with the H.I.V. Virus it was at this time he decided to dedicate his life to being a force for good, "When my brother was diagnosed with the illness my mother thought it would be me because of my lifestyle, and later my brother died in August of 1998 and it was then I decided to change my life."

He now throws caution to the wind for those who want to be involved in a life of crime saying, "Crime does not pay and usually what happens is that you will either

end up dead or in jail." He began his mission to help the youth through a program called 'Pen Pals, Prisoners Educating Neighbors,' "As part of this program I went to schools, colleges, youth study centers speaking on my substance abuse and warning people about drug abuse and trying to deter them from crime."

The importance of being spiritually grounded has become the foundation of his new life one that is sealed in his faith and love of Jesus Christ, "I am a member of Household of Faith led by Pastor Antoine Barriere and First Lady Dale Barriere, I became baptized and born-again and I worked inside the church counseling people with drug problems." He has also brought his message of uplift, spirituality, personal growth and development to inmates inside of New Orleans Parish Prison "I've also worked with Rev. Tom Watson going inside of Orleans Parish Prison where Criminal Sheriff Marlin Gusman allowed me to speak to the prisoners to uplift their spirit and let them know if someone like me can turn my life around then they can too, it is never too late."

Feeling his story could serve as inspiration as well as a cautionary tale he began to pen a book that eventually became his autobiography, 'What Do You Give A Man That Has Everything,' "It's a story about telling people where I've been and never let anybody tell you what you can't do because I was a seventh grade dropout and was able to write a book." Although he was involved in a life of crime he feels today young people involved in crime are different; it is something that trou-

bles him, "It seems like the children today don't have any remorse or compassion, but this comes from years of neglect by every segment of our community; in life there is cause and effect. For years we have turned our heads at the causes, now we're dealing with the effects."

He thinks that improving the conditions in the community are essential to turning people lives around and giving them hope. "In our community there is so much poverty, lack of adequate schools, and that is something that is drastically needed because that's what helped me; education it is the one thing that brought me from the cellar and gave me hope that I could do something with my life and contribute something positive to the community."

Given all he has been through in his life he gives God all the praise for bringing him through the fire, so that today his life can serve as a testimony that you can come through trials and tribulations, but he says having faith in God is the key, "When I was involved in the street life I was almost killed and I know I caused people a lot of pain, but I've turned my life around and I'm giving back and my relationship with God has been the key." "God has held me up, and given me my salvation, bringing me through the bowels of hell to a place of refuge so now that I can be an example and help people."



The Phill Batiste of yesterday is a different person today and saving future generations from crime and vice is his focus, "When I talk to them I tell them there are always consequences for things you do, and sometimes things you may say, and I also tell them to get an education and if they don't want to do that get a trade or some skill, because if they don't then they become a liability and nobody wants to deal with them." "And I'm saying what I've been through as a black man and as so many others is the system already has one strike against you, and a black man that is not productive and don't have an education that's another strike against you, so get your education and of course have a relationship with God." Phill Batiste is a man whose life's journey has taken him down many roads some were filled with bumps and potholes, but today his life is a smoothly paved road where he is convicted to continue being a caring, compassionate, and committed soul helping people down the road to live a better life.

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A Different Kind Of Rally

By Christopher Williams
Photos by Darren Browder

At face value, it looks just like any other rally. Bus loads of people coming from across the region with picket signs and t-shirts with slogans and organizations' names,



and a podium with passionate community activists speaking with vigor. All indications of a run of the mill rally. But, today there is a decidedly big difference. "We decided to be proactive, rather than reactive", said Community leader, newspaper columnist and radio host Lloyd Dennis. "We come to fight for something to happen, as opposed to fighting against something that has already come to pass." A different kind of rally indeed, in ideology and perspective, was taking place on the steps of the La. State capital in Baton Rouge. Sponsored by the Louisiana Diaspora Advocacy Project, the rally was to lobby the Louisiana legislature to fight for the rights of renters who were displaced after hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and provide more funding for early education, and give displaced storm victims the right to vote in their home districts for up to five years.

20 months after the storms hit, many people are still being housed in trailer parks like Renaissance

Village in Baton Rouge. Many of those people were renters who resided in New Orleans. Therefore, they are not eligible for the ROAD HOME program, which is designed to help home owners affected by the two storms. And while some are eligible for renters'

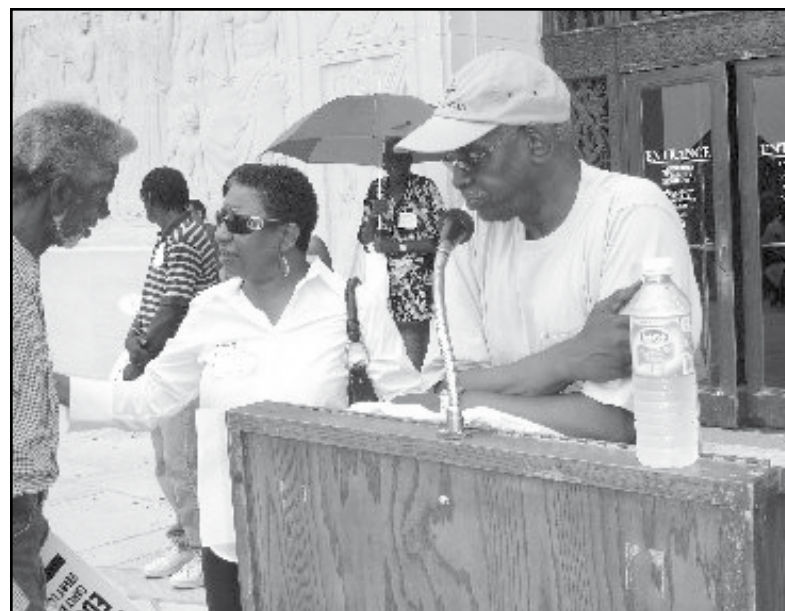
assistance, many renting agencies are not accepting the vouchers provided by FEMA. Add that to rising rental costs and extremely short supply of housing stock, and

many citizens are left without a way to get back home. The elderly are overwhelmingly high in that number. Many don't have the energy nor do they have the means to return home to New Orleans. Many of the rally participants expressed feelings of being disenfranchised and left out. One resident of Renaissance village said "give us back the American dream. Give us back our freedom! The people are not lost, just weary."

Barbara Major, of the People's Institute For Survival and Beyond said "the state has neglected and denied the people" pointing out that "our elderly are dying at a rate of 40% more since (hurricane) Katrina." It is no secret that even before the storm, the New Orleans public school system was in disarray. Nadra Harris, of EVERY CHILD MATTERS, stated that "La. Ranked 49th out of 50 states in reading for 4th grade students, and 47th out of 50 states in reading for 8th grade students." Of the approximate 126,000 3 and 4 year

olds in La., only about half are enrolled in an early education/development program, such as HEAD START. These programs are being threatened by proposed federal budget cuts. Lloyd Dennis said "I graduated from St. Augustine high school, but I know the future of New Orleans depends not on the Catholic and private schools, but on the state of the Orleans parish public schools. When I ran a restaurant and event hall, I knew my success depended on my having a clean bathroom and kitchen area. Many of our schools don't have clean bathrooms for the children to use. Some don't have doors on the stalls for privacy. What does that say to a child? Many of the schools don't provide hot meals for the children, that for some that may be the only meal they get that day. These things affect a child's self-esteem and self image. Someone has to speak for these children."

Indeed, this rally was designed to give the citizens a voice. All the scheduled speakers were leaders and activists in their communities, not elected officials. In fact, the only elected official to speak was Cynthia Willard-Lewis, councilperson for district E. Though only briefly, she spoke very passionately about the plight of the dispersed New Orleanians. "The rights of the people are not being respected" stated Willard-Lewis, speaking more as a citizen herself, than a politician. As a show of diversity, Van Nguyen of the Vietnamese community led a chant of "Unity now!" "I want to show that we all need each other", Nguyen said. The rally was held while state legislature was in session to give the participants a chance to possibly get a note to their representative for their particular district. After the



rally, people were encouraged to go into the capital building to try to meet their state representative. Bill Rouselle, of Bright Moments and a rally co-coordinator, said "this rally has been 4 months in the making and was designed to

give the people a direct line to the politicians that represent them." "Today the people spoke for themselves. Let's hope the right people heard them."

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New Orleans Prepares to Honor Father LeDoux



Father Jerome LeDoux
Celebrating 50 Years of Priestly Ordination.

St. Augustine Parishioners invite the public to join in a celebration of former pastor Fr. Jerome LeDoux's 50th Anniversary of his Ordination to the Priesthood. A weekend of special events is planned to honor Fr. LeDoux, SVD starting with a celebration to be held at the Sheraton Hotel Saturday, June 2. A Gospel/Jazz Mass will be celebrated Sunday at 10:00 a.m. to be followed with a potluck picnic on the Church Grounds. Tickets for the Saturday evening event are \$20 and can be purchased at the St. Augustine rectory during the hours of 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

In keeping with the musical ministry nourished while Fr. LeDoux was assigned to St. Augustine, the acclaimed St. Augustine Soulful Voices Choir, led by Choir Director Carol LeBlanc with musicians Cynthia Dolliole and Esquizito, will be joined at the 10:00 a.m. Mass by musical guests, including the Tremé Brass Band, which will lead a grand recessional from the Church.

That recessional will continue after Mass as it becomes a second line that will bring celebrants back to the St. Augustine Church Grounds. The Tremé Brass Band will be joined by renowned trumpeter James Andrews and his brother Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews to entertain picnickers at a potluck, complete with good food & cold drink, canopied shade, and surprise guests.

Fr. LeDoux was the Pastor at St. Augustine Parish for 16 years (1990-2006), renewing St. Augustine's role as the spiritual and cultural center of the Tremé neighborhood. Built in 1841 by slaves and immigrants, St. Augustine Church was one of the first churches where slaves, free blacks, and whites worshiped together. LeDoux's energetic, multicultural Masses were an homage to post-Vatican II openness of spirit and indigenous cultural awakenings that accented traditional Roman Catholic Masses with references to Af-



rican spirituality and local culture - jazz, African drumming and dancing, Mardi Gras Indian chants, visual art, and second lines.

In recognition of the importance of this spiritual and cultural icon to area Catholics and the community at large, Mayor C. Ray Nagin will proclaim Sunday June 3 "Fr. LeDoux Day." Nagin will be joined by the New Orleans City Council, which recently acknowledged St. Augustine's "musical, cultural, historical, and spiritual significance, its diversity, and its vital role in our City's recovery" in saluting the Church's musical ministry during the recent 2007 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

In addition to the series of events, a commemorative poster by renowned New Orleans artist Richard Thomas is available for purchase, with a portion of the proceeds to benefit St. Augustine Parish. The limited edition silk-screen

print is available in three editions: an unsigned edition of 3,000 prints; an artist-signed edition of 1,200 prints; and a double-signed (Father LeDoux and Richard Thomas) edition of 800. For more information, please contact GMC+ Advertising at info@gmcadvertising.com or call 504.524.8117, ext. 103.

"I wanted to capture both the vitality of LeDoux's ministry and the history of this incredibly important and culturally significant parish, one of the oldest African American Roman Catholic parishes in the United States," artist Thomas stated in explaining the motivation behind his three-panel "totem" poster, painted in Thomas's signature "visual jazz" style. The print is based upon an portrait of Father LeDoux taken by internationally celebrated photographer Michael Grecco.

Fr. Jerome LeDoux, SVD Golden Jubilee Celebration

Saturday, June 2

Public Celebration at Sheraton Hotel (500 Canal St), 7:00 p.m. with Bruce "Sunpie" Barnes & the Louisiana Sunspots, James Andrews, and other Special Guests

Sunday, June 3

"Fr. LeDoux Day" as proclaimed by the New Orleans City Council and Mayor C. Ray Nagin

50th Anniversary Gospel/Jazz Mass at St. Augustine Parish (1210 Gov. Nicholls St.) with Soulful Voices Choir, 10:00 a.m.

Street Parade/Second Line with Tremé Brass Band after Mass, noon

Potluck Picnic on Church Grounds following second line with Tremé Brass Band, James and Troy Andrews

For program information, or tickets for Saturday evening Sheraton event, please contact St. Augustine rectory at 525-5934 and 566-1018.



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They say that women are like fine wine: they just get better with age.

"They" might be right – and then again, "they" might be wrong.

But in the case of the new book "You Only Get Better" by Connie Briscoe, Lolita Files, and Anita Bunkley, life as a well-past-thirty-something woman is truly something to savor. Sometimes, though, it just takes a new life-challenge to prove it.

Maxine wasn't in bed the night the phone call came. She was sleeping in the chair after another boring "session" with her husband. Curtis always fell instantly asleep, and Maxine couldn't spend another minute listening to him snore. But in the novelette "The Perfect Life" by Connie Briscoe, the phone call jolted Maxine wide awake.

Aunt Cassie died and the funeral would be the following week. Could Maxine drive her mother to Newport News, Virginia? That was more than Maxine could handle, because she knew Tonya would be at the wake.

Twenty-five years ago, Max's best friend and cousin, Tonya, stole Maxine's fiancé and Max hasn't forgiven her yet. But when the ex-fiancé shows up and shows his true colors, Maxine sees that the life she's been mourning isn't so perfect after all.

In "Three for the Road" by Lolita Files, Lilibelle's husband tells her that he's fallen in love with someone at work, and Lilibelle decides she needs to get away. Proving that she's not as high-maintenance as Adam claims she is, she jumps in her Mercedes and heads for Vegas.

But Lilibelle finds trouble that she can't handle, and when a truck runs her off the road in Ohio, a Good Samaritan helps her out. The two of them discover they're headed for the same place, and they decide to drive together. But is being someone's "road dog" such a howling good idea?

For all of her forty-something years, Danika has had her eye on being Cranstar's first African American executive, and now it looks like the job could be hers. With a new look and a new position, life is good. But in the novelette "This Time Around" by Anita Bunkley, a friendly Texas takeover puts Danika in a tough spot. Will L-O-V-E be next on her resume?

Think you don't have time to read a whole book?

Think again. "You Only Get Better" is easy to finish because its three stories are easy to read and easy to enjoy. In just a few pages, authors Connie Briscoe, Lolita Files, and Anita Bunkley write for the older woman who's been around the relationship block a time or two, but younger women will still love reading these novelettes. My only complaint is that – at about 100 pages each – the stories were way too short.

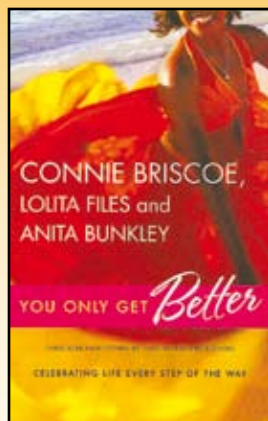
If you're looking for something breezy and fun and you don't have a whole lot of time, look for "You Only Get Better". When it comes to light romances, it doesn't get any better than this.

"You Only Get Better"

by Connie Briscoe, Lolita Files and Anita Bunkley

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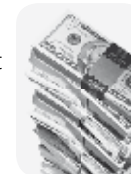


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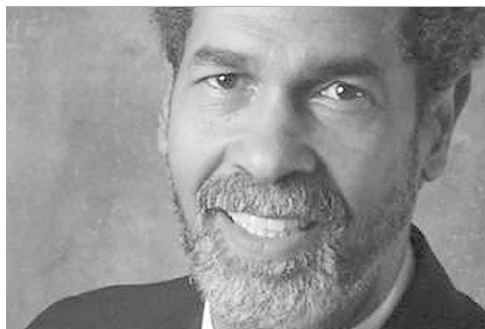
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Opinion

Being Ruthless



The Love Dr.
Data Columnist

I've been accused of being ruthless sometimes. Stand between me and something I need for some children and I will take you to the hoop every time. I'm adopting that attitude now, as summer approaches and a school year ends that was a disaster for poor children in New Orleans.

I'm a graduate of St. Augustine High School and while I believe that it is my duty to support that institution, I know deep in my heart that what happens to public education over the next year will have more to do with the future of this city than the recovery plans of all the private and parochial schools combined.

Many of us in the African American community are finding ourselves being challenged to go from watchdogs to workers, and its one hell of a decision, one that alters our role from criticizing failures to participating in the creation of success. Actually, the watchdog part doesn't go away, but it changes, from stopping injustices to preventing them. We must be ruthless in every meeting, drawing a line in the sand that says any compromise that compromises the needs of poor children is a deal breaker.

I completely disagreed with the state takeover of schools, but that is history and those who diluted the voting rights of New Orleans citizens by circumventing their elected officials will pay whatever ends up being the political cost of that usurpation of democracy. Now however, protesting that action is a ballot issue for the future, not something we need to do out of frustration by deterring efforts to rebuild and reestablish public education in New Orleans.

I complained vehemently at several meetings about the condition of bathrooms and how could we expect children to respect education if we didn't respect them enough to have the bathrooms working. Now when a team is being put together to make sure that clean functional bathrooms are a basic part of every school and you are asked to participate, you accept the challenge. In other words, it's "put up or shut

up" time in rebuilding education. So you roll up your sleeves, grit your teeth about some of the people you may have to work with and bring your tools and weapons to the table, and know that you can't miss a meeting.

For me being ruthless about the needs of children is biblical. The only real threat the Master made while among us was to people who denied children access to Him, and the failure to educate children, the failure to nurture their minds and character amounts to such a denial. Those who fail children fail God. Woe to all who are not rolling up their sleeves, and doing something constructive to make sure that, from now on, our children feel that adults care.

I've heard too many children verbalize that "nobody cares about us", and understand how great a danger it is to have emotionally starved and physically strong young people feeling like there is nothing to loose and nobody cares about me. We want young women to act like ladies but they have to bring their own paper to the stall, if they are lucky enough to have a stall walls in place for privacy. School need to be a very different environment, an uplifting and stimulating place, not an extension of the ghetto.

So, I'm going to work on helping ensure that toilets, stalls and toilet paper are in place so that in the fall, people will feel treated like people who matter. We'll also work to make sure that hot food is served to the children, accepting the reality that for many it may be the only hot meal of the day, especially since Katrina when so many are on their own.

Its really funny, but when I owned the New Garden Club, restaurant and reception hall, I learned that the one thing I often had to do personally was clean the bathrooms and inspect the kitchen, because if those weren't right, none of the fancy furniture, wallpaper decorations or shiny floors mattered. Any respectable joint has fully functional and clean bathrooms and kitchens.

I don't know if I can make anything happen, but what if we aren't willing to try? That keeps me awake sometimes, what if we refuse to work together to make schools work. What if we leave it up to others, because we don't like or distrust someone? Might I get my feelings hurt, again? Might I be disappointed and frustrated, again? Might I later discover that someone was trying to use me? Yes, to all three, but when you are ruthless about the needs of children, you can't let grown folks hurt feelings get in the way... even if they are your own. Life is tough, but that's just the way it is.

In The Spirit

New Orleans

Entering back into the Promised Land



Dr. Aaron E. Harold
Data Columnist

For those who are not sure about the future and what to do, look at those who are still migrating into the city to live. These are the same ones that are looking to take advantage of the opportunities that are here, in spite of all of the homes and businesses that are still down. Do they see something that some of us don't see? Do they know something that we don't know? Folks, we need to approach this rebuilding process with faith.

Every one of us have some form of faith whether we know it or not. We need to learn how to exercise our faith more often. In the Bible, it speaks about having faith in God in Hebrews Chapter 11 Verse 1 and Verse 6-13. Many of you are looking at the promise in the word of God. God promises those that believe that he will not leave us in our difficult seasons (Matthew chap. 28 v 20). I believe with all of my heart that New Orleans is one of the modern day promise lands in this new millennium.

Friends we must possess this region with our whole heart, and with our faith in God. In the Bible, God promised Moses that he will deliver his people into a land flowing with "milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). This city will be better with new infrastructure, new and better schools for our children, a new Charity Hospital, new community parks for our older citizens to enjoy a walk in the park, and let us not forget the poor in the rebuilding process.

When the people of God continue to reach out and minister to the community, New Orleans and the rest of the region will be the promise land for generations to come. God have made many promises in his word; He's not like us. Sometimes we break promises to each other, but God never breaks his promises to us.

Dr. Aaron E. Harold is the pastor of New Millennium Breakthrough Ministries. To contact him with your comments or suggested topics he can be reached at rharold1@cox.net or (504) 813-5767

We know that there is still much work to be done in this city, and the rest of the surrounding parishes. There are many New Orleanians that are still not sure about whether they should stay or not to rebuild their homes and businesses. One year and a half after Katrina, many are still struggling to decide what to do. Many of us are facing difficult challenges and huge problems while trying to recover and live a normal life.

However, many homeowners have not started to repair their homes and business owners are still waiting on loans and grant money to restart their business. Even in these difficult times, there are still opportunities like never before but you have to be able to recognize them, and seize the chance for a new beginning and a new life for you and for your family. For instance, there are opportunities in real estate for those who are serious in investing in that area.

For those who have never owned a home, there are great deals out there for you. Many of our businesses have been destroyed by Katrina, but this is a great time for those who have wanted to go into their own business and become an entrepreneur. New Orleans and our Gulf Coast Region will be back and better than before. Many experts have come to a conclusion that this region is the land of "milk and honey."



Jerry Falwell's Racist Past



George C. Curry
NNPA

When people die, even the racist ones, there is an inexplicable rush to trumpet the good in that person, even where none exists from a public policy perspective. The most recent example is Jerry Falwell, one of the godfathers of the religious right.

Like many Southern White ministers, Falwell didn't sit on the sidelines at the outset of the modern civil rights movement, he joined the opposition.

"Decades before the forces that now make up the Christian right declared their culture war, Falwell was a rabid segregationist who railed against the civil rights movement from the pulpit of the abandoned backwater bottling plant he converted into Thomas Road Baptist Church," Max Blumenthal writes in an insightful article in *The Nation* magazine. "This opening episode of Falwell's life, studiously overlooked by his friends, naively unacknowledged by many of his chroniclers, and puzzlingly and glaringly omitted in the obituaries of the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, is essential to understanding his historical significance in galvanizing the Christian right. Indeed, it was race—not abortion or the attendant suite of so-called 'values' issues—that propelled Falwell and

his evangelical allies into political activism."

Four years after the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawing segregated public schools, Falwell gave a speech titled, "Segregation or Integration."

His message was unmistakably clear: "If Chief Justice Warren and his associates had known God's word and had desired to do the Lord's will, I am quite confident that the 1954 decision would never have been made. The facilities should be separate. When God has drawn the line of distinction, we should not attempt to cross that line."

The argument that God ordained segregation and White supremacy was advanced by many southern White ministers. We should not forget that Dr. Martin

Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" was written to his colleagues of the cloth. The letter, written April 16, 1963, said, in part: I have been disappointed with the church... When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church. I felt the white ministers, priests, and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies.

"Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows."

Jerry Falwell was not silent behind his stained-glass windows. He said, "The true Negro does not want integration... he realizes his potential is far better among his own race."

As usual, Falwell was wrong. Autherine Lucy, a "true Negro" applied to and was accepted as a student at the University of Alabama. Once the university discovered she was an African-American, however, officials said state law prevented her from enrolling. With the legendary Thurgood Marshall as her attorney, she sued and gained admission. When she arrived in February 1956, a mob threw eggs at her and issued death threats. The university expelled her, purportedly for her own safety.

Continued on page 14.

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Summer in the City for New Orleans Youth NORD 2007 Summer Camp Schedule

NEW ORLEANS, LA - Mayor C. Ray Nagin and Larry Barabino, Jr., Director of the New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD), today announced this year's schedule of NORD summer youth programs. The variety of programs is designed to keep the city's youth engaged and active, and to provide exposure to the arts and sports activities.

"Our children are a critical part of our city and will help to shape the New Orleans of tomorrow," said Mayor Nagin. "As we continue to accelerate our recovery, we must ensure that we provide programs that are fun, challenging and educational. This summer's range of programs will play an important role in ensuring healing and growth among our youngest of citizens."

Through programs provided by staff and partnerships with a range of local organizations, NORD will offer a wide range of educational, recreational and cultural opportunities, this summer. Youth may participate in programs as diverse as basketball, ballet, visual arts and aquatics. Programs are structured for children 6-17. In addition, internship and job training opportunities will be available to those ages 14-21 via the city's JOB1 Office. Programs this summer will also help to address community concerns,

such as the trend of low Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) and Graduate Exit Exam (GEE) test. Programs will be held in the following locations throughout the city.

St. Bernard Center

1500 Lafreniere St.
June 4th to July 20th
Police Foundation "Cops for Kids"
• Enrichment programs
• Ages 6 to 12

Behrman Center

2529 General Meyer Ave.
June 4th to July 20th
Catholic Charities
• Enrichment programs
• Ages 6 to 12

MORE— 2-NORD SUMMER SCHEDULE-2

Cut-Off Center

6600 Belgrade St.
June 11th to July 20th
Operation Reach
• Enrichment programs
• Rising 5th Grade to 8th Grade

Treme Center

1400 St. Phillip St.
June 4th to July 20th
Tamborine & Fan, Inc.
• Enrichment programs
• Ages 6 to 12

Ty Tracy Theatre

545 St. Charles Ave.
Began May 14 and continues until August 5
Crescent City Lights Youth Theatre
• Theatrical performances
• Ages 8 to 17

"We will offer our kids a host of summer programs to stimulate them and enhance their positive personal development," said Barabino.

With an estimated damage of \$68 million to the department as a result of Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flooding, NORD has exercised creativity and skill in building financial partnerships with organizations and corporations throughout the region and nation. NORD has developed partnerships with the New Orleans Saints, Wilson Sporting Goods Company, Fox Sports Regional Network, KaBOOM!, Playworld Systems and the Coca-Cola Company. The most recent corporate sponsors include the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Football, Inc., Sports Authority and Nike.

American Express CEO Says Xavier Graduates Well-Prepared

New Orleans, La. - The chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the American Express Company, Kenneth Chenault, told more than 500 graduates at Xavier University of Louisiana's 80th annual commencement that their experiences during their college years have instilled in them a defining sense of purpose that should inspire them to "aim high" as professionals.

Drawing a parallel between Hurricane Katrina and the 9/11 World Trade Center disaster, where his company lost eleven employees, Chenault said that those Xavier students who returned to campus following the storm demonstrated the same desire to come back and build that he saw in New York following that tragedy.

"You came back because you had so much to offer," he said. "You came back, so you start giving back."

He said that XU students, having displayed personal perseverance and resilience in earning their degrees and having acquired a sense of service ethic and leadership from Xavier, are uniquely prepared for future.

"Adversity and change are not the test; they are the only constant," said Chenault. "The test is how you handle adversity; it's how you react and respond to new realities."

"You've been studying for this test since the very first day you arrived on campus, and so far, you've aced it," he said. "I'm confident it's a test you will continue to pass, with honors, as you leave here today."

It was second visit to a Xavier

commencement for Chenault, who was awarded a honorary degree in 1997.

Some 521 graduates received degrees from the College of Arts & Sciences, the College of Pharmacy, and the Graduate School during the ceremony, which was held at the New Orleans Arena. Twenty-eight students graduated with summa cum laude honors, while another 51 earned magna cum laude honors and 62 others earned cum laude distinction. An additional seven students earned Graduate School honors.

This year's ceremony also saw the University bestow an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree upon longtime art professor and Xavier alumnus John T. Scott ('62) whose art has garnered him a national reputation as one of America's most highly-acclaimed contemporary artists and whose teaching continued to inspire Xavier art students until his retirement.

Scott's wife Anna accepted the award on behalf her husband, who is recuperating from double lung surgery in Texas, where his family relocated after Hurricane Katrina.

caption 1. Commencement speaker American Express Chairman Kenneth Chenault.

caption 2. Graduate Adrienne Roberts receives degree from Xavier University President Dr. Norman C. Francis.

photos by Jamie Jones

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Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) speaks to graduates at Dillard University's 138th annual Commencement exercises on the Gentilly campus on May 19. Dillard's Class of 2007 had 182 graduates and also honored 36 Golden Graduates (Class of 1957). [Photo by Reico Robichaux]

Yolanda King Remembered as Woman of "Unusual Strength"



Photo: Horace Henry

Yolanda King, escorted by her brother, Martin, during a ceremony at the Georgia State Capitol.

By Hazel Trice Edney
NNPA Washington
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Yolanda Denise King was remembered this week as the matronly daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the one who, as the oldest child, likely suffered more than her three siblings because she saw and remembered the most.

"She always had a maturity beyond her years," says the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who watched her grow up. "That's often what happens to an older child when there's trauma in the house. She was in the house when the home was bombed in Montgomery. She remembers when her father was stabbed. She remembered the anxiety of his leaving, the fear that he might not come back home. She remembers when he was jailed. She remembered the Birmingham bombing as a child. She even remembered when her father was killed, so she'd been through lots of trauma."

Yet, through all of that, Jackson

says she was a woman of "unusual strength." Her life was productive. Most people didn't know she had this heart condition.

Rev. Joseph Lowery, who co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with her father, nicknamed her "Princess." He said, "She was a beautiful person. I always called her princess because she was a daughter of Kings."

The 51-year-old first born of Martin and Coretta Scott King, Yolanda died May 15, in Santa Monica, Calif. The news shocked the civil rights and artistic communities. She was scheduled to be memorialized on Thursday this week at 12 noon at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where her father pastored until he was assassinated in 1968. Family members have confirmed that she will be cremated by her own request.

Many remember her fondly as an artist and speaker.

"Yolanda created her own professional identity. Even in these roles, she was always mindful of her role as the 'daughter of

the Movement' and incorporated into her work the message of peace and non-violence that she inherited from her mother and father," says Barbara A. McKinzie, AKA Sorority international president.

But, most remember her in the context of her siblings, Martin King III, Dexter Scott King and the Rev. Bernice King.

"What I remember about her most was her calmness in the midst of so much confusion and pain," says the Rev. Walter Fauntroy, who was one of Dr. King's closest advisors during the civil rights movement.

"She was the leader of a group of four children who went through four traumatic experiences, of which I'm aware."

Fauntroy listed those tragedies. First, the assassination of their father on April 4, 1968, then, the loss of their uncle, Dr. King's brother, A. D. King, who drowned in his own swimming pool the year after the assassination. He was 38. Then, there was the murder of their grandmother, Alberta Williams King, as she sat at the Ebenezer church piano on a Sunday morning in 1974. And just last year, they suffered the death of their mother, Coretta Scott King. She died of ovarian cancer.

"It always amazed me that they were able to handle these things with such calmness and resolution," says Fauntroy. "I only know that it must be terribly difficult for the remaining three children to have lost their older sibling so suddenly."

She was someone they looked up to.

"She kind of exercised a little matronly attitude toward the siblings," recalled Lowery. And they let her do it because they respected her and loved her," recalled Lowery. "She wore her royalty with dignity and grace."

Lowery remembers her as a great speaker like her parents, but she really loved the performing arts more. "She was very talented and she expressed her commitment to justice and human dignity through her art."

Word of Yolanda King's death was especially shocking because those who knew her well saw no sign of the irregular heartbeat said to have led to her death. Asked if he knew of her condition, Lowery responded, "No, and hardly anybody else."

Lowery says she may have known the severity of her condition because she worked diligently with the American Heart Association. Lowery said she invited him to Los Angeles a few months ago "to do a media event with the American Heart Association to council people to watch their diets and avoid strokes. She was very active with

them, very active. So, it may have been that she knew that there was something."

Dr. Dorothy Height says her death was shocking, not just because she was only 51, but because "She was so vibrant and so creative. She was one of the best interpreters of Dr. King's work of anyone that I've ever known."

Height recently led a campaign against obesity. She says King had lost weight and was encouraging people to relax and take care of themselves.

"I enjoyed talking with her because she sort of exemplified so much of what her mother stood for," says Height. "She was a very good example for young women to learn how to take care of themselves and to be responsible for themselves."

The mourning is great for the surviving siblings, but not likely unbearable, if they take comfort in the words of their grandfather.

Recalls Fauntroy, "Martin King Sr. said, after each death, to me, 'Walter, it's a real loss. But I thank God for what I've got left.'"

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Looming Hurricane Season Forces Katrina Recovery to Go Extreme

Special to the NNPA from the Afro-American Newspapers

PASCAGOULA, Ms. (NNPA) - A coalition of disaster agencies in a Hurricane Katrina ravaged community are racing against mother nature's clock to move displaced storm survivors out of FEMA trailers and back into permanent homes. The 100 Homes in 100 Days initiative is an aggressive rebuilding project for responsible recovery. It focuses on speed, innovation and efficiency.

The Hope Has A Face Foundation, Mississippi Home Again, the Jackson County Community Services Coalition, American Red Cross hurricane recovery program and the Salvation Army are working together to get 100 Pascagoula, Miss. families into permanent homes before the hurricane season moves into its most active

time. Additional support has been received from Northrop Grumman Ship Systems, Greenleaf Consulting, Wal-Mart and many local businesses. This historic effort started its first homes with one hundred and thirty volunteers on March 26. Almost 600 volunteers from 17 states and three countries later, it celebrated its mid-point on May 15.

There are still about 6,000 occupied FEMA trailers on the ground in Jackson County, where Pascagoula is the county seat, and over to 21,000 trailers along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

"At an average of three people per trailer, we're talking about nearly 63,000 individuals still in temporary housing," says 100 Homes spokesperson Tammy Agard. "The housing situation is still in crisis here with the hurricane season fast

approaching, these people are not safe."

"We are looking to double our volunteer base and add a 'night shift' to the 100 Homes effort for the month of June", said 100 Homes project leader Keith Canfield. "We hope the two shift operation can help speed the transition home for these families who have been through enough already."

The 100 Homes in 100 Days coalition intends to make its recovery template public after it proves successful, so that other groups can use the rapid rebuilding model in their areas.

The 100 Homes in 100 Days project will be complete by the 4th of July, which will give a whole new meaning to the Independence Day celebration in this Gulf Coast neighborhood.

Commentary, Continued from page 11.

The following year, nine Black students attempted to desegregate the all-White Central High School. Segregationist Gov. Orval Faubus deployed the Arkansas National Guard to prevent the Little Rock Nine from attending the school. A federal judge overruled Faubus and ordered the students admitted. When the Black students reported to class, a mob formed and president Dwight Eisenhower dispatched the Army's elite 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock. The nine students were allowed to attend classes, though they were subject to abuse from White students.

Does that should like the "true Negro" did not want integration?

But Falwell didn't stop there.

Claiming that integration "will destroy our race eventually," Falwell said, "A pastor friend of mine tells me that a couple of opposite race live next door to his church as man and wife."

Not as an unmarried couple, not as gays or lesbians, but "man and wife." That was too much for Falwell to stomach.

As late as 1964, Falwell was at-

tacking the 1964 Civil Rights Act as "civil wrongs" legislation. He questioned "the sincerity and intentions of some civil rights leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mr. James Farmer, and others, who are known to have left-wing associations." Falwell charged, "It is very obvious that the Communists, as they do in all parts of the world, are taking advantage of a tense situation in our land, and are exploiting every incident to bring about violence and bloodshed."

No, it was the Bull Connors of the world that were violently beating civil rights marchers. It's too bad that Falwell, who later claimed that he had changed his views, was on the wrong side of history.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emergence* magazine and the NNPA News Service, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. He can be reached at george@georgecurry.com or through his Web site, www.georgecurry.com.



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