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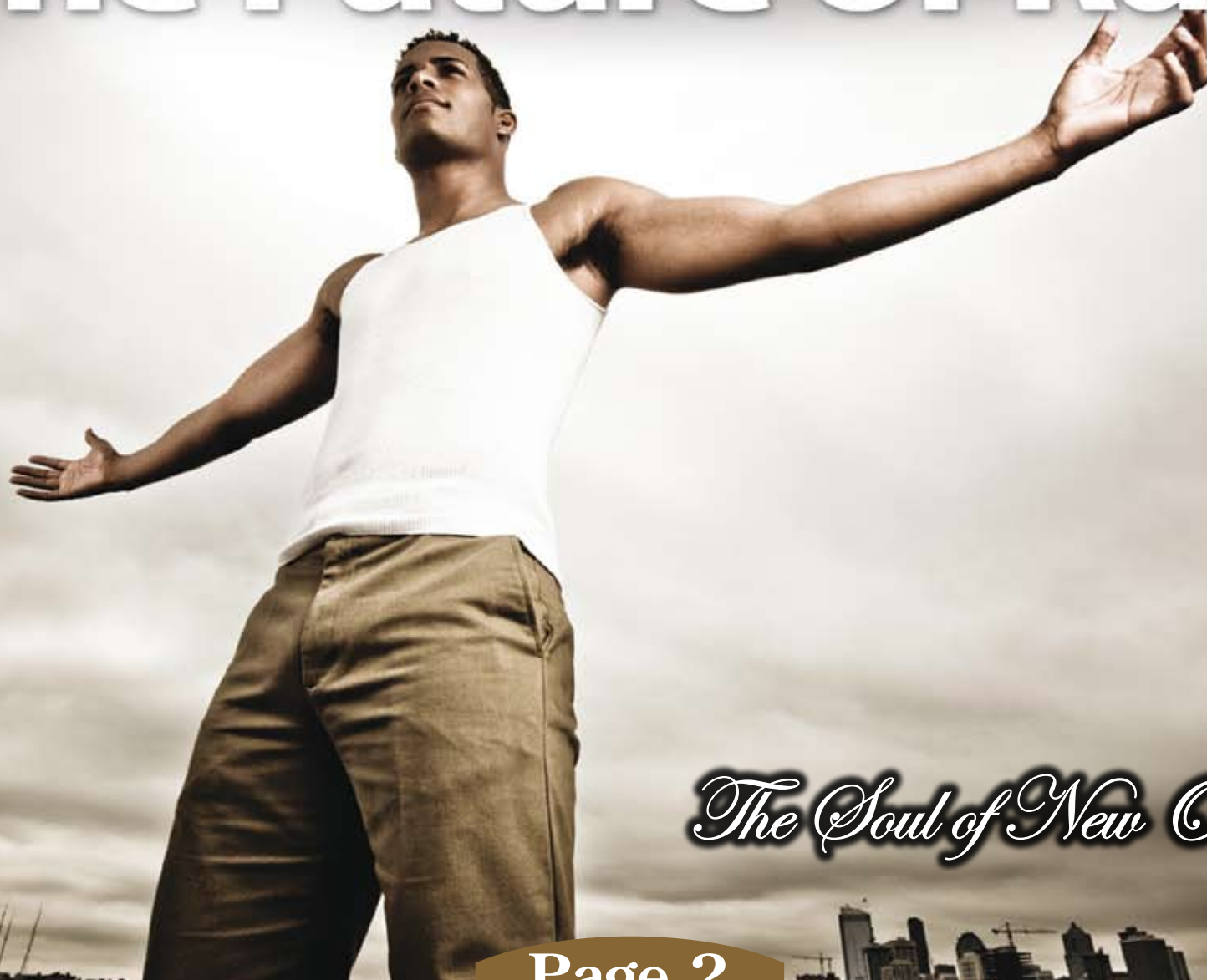
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# Black in the 21st Century The Future of Race



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# Black in the 21st Century The Future of Race

by Edwin Buggage  
Editor-in-Chief



## Black in America: Is race still relevant?

As Barack Obama has ascended to new heights capturing the highest office in the land, some pundits and academics have begun to equate Obama's victory at the polls in November as a sign that the U.S. has entered into a post racial age. Some have gone as far as saying there is no longer a need for Black History Month; a time where the country celebrates

the accomplishments of African-Americans. Today this has become the buzz word that this country has rid itself of the racial baggage of a shameful past in regards to racial matters.

This assessment may be half true as many African-Americans have burst through the glass ceilings accomplishing things that were unheard of in past generations. But this does not negate the fact that Black America

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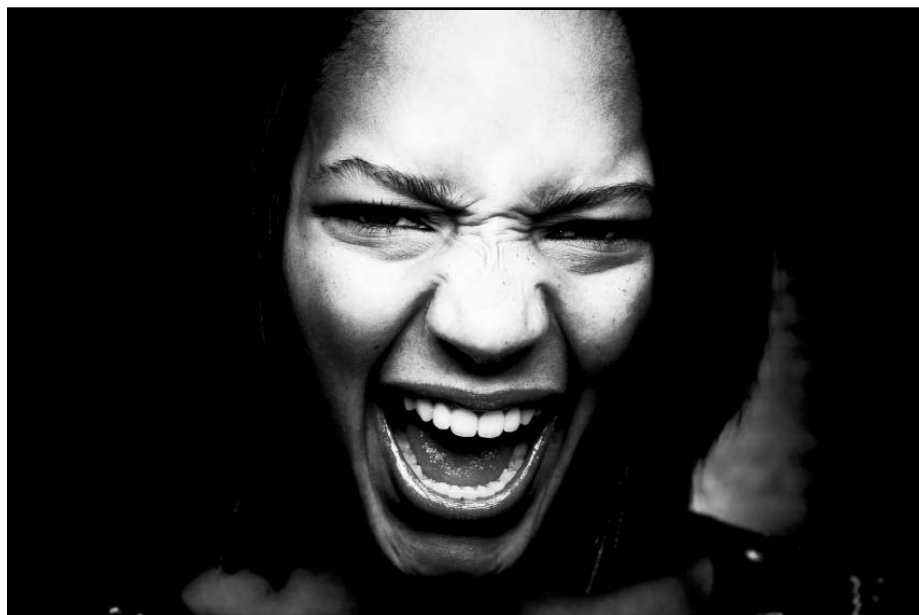
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is not monolithic for these are the best of times for some and the worst for others; that the dream of America has become a reality for some and for others it is still an illusive figment of their collective imaginations.

As race has defined much of the African-American experience being both a visible and invisible noose that has been a road block to recognition as full human beings recognizing their full potential, and with the ascendance of Barack Obama and countless African-Americans who have reached the upper echelons of American life it has complicated matters of race leading to the larger question of how should the issue of race be framed in the 21st century?

### Race and Reason

It is undoubtedly true the racial repression of the past has been eliminated from many facets of American life. But the reality is that this country still grapples with the residue of a past steeped in racial resentments. Where questions of Black competence and humanity are still an issue and double standards still apply throughout the social landscape of American life. Where for instance in a city like New Orleans where some white city council members with axes to grind come down with more vigor on African-American business persons and department heads in the name of sniffing out corruption. Or an overzealous mainstream media that devolve into the pit of racial charged scandal mongering and an education system in a city that has been reconfigured where not by coincidence many of the children that are left behind attend schools that are fraught with difficulties that inhibit learning are predominately poor and African-American. It is a city and a nation where black men can be harassed and shot by police officers who are often white who find themselves getting a slap on the wrist, because the life of a black man is not valued, or that in the court process the lives of victims have been demonized where majority white juries subscribe to their own racial

fears, ignorance, and resentments that the axiom that justice is blind does not apply.

It is with this backdrop that the advocates of this post racial age make these assessments and the question becomes a matter of perspective, who are you



looking at, Barack Obama who occupies the White House or right across the Anacostia River in the nation's capitol where the audacity of hope has not trickled down in any way affecting their lives and where economics as well as race plays a vital part in their everyday lives.

### A Few Questions about Post Racial America?

Post racial America, what does that mean in a nation where race has played such a vital part of its history? How does a country move away from a past where Europeans moved past ethnic differences to become Americans, and how do Blacks figure into this mix?

Why is it today that questions of post racial refer to African-Americans moving past race as an issue? It is interesting that the proponents of moving away from Black History Month seem to be naive enough to believe that the U.S. has matured because of the election of Barack Obama; the fact is that even the most intelligent white are in many ways completely unaware of the accomplishments of Blacks in this country. In their minds Blacks are a people who have problems and are to be pitied or a source of amusement in the fields of athletics and entertainment.

It is interesting to note that an African-American fourth grader in an inner city school knows about Dr. Daniel Hale Williams performing the first successful open heart surgery or Dr. Charles Drew with his innovations in the area blood plasma or Garrett A. Morgan invention of the traffic light or a host of other things Blacks have contributed to the American story in a positive way. Conversely, many whites in the U.S. are unaware that many of the things they use and have made their lives more comfortable African-Americans invented them.

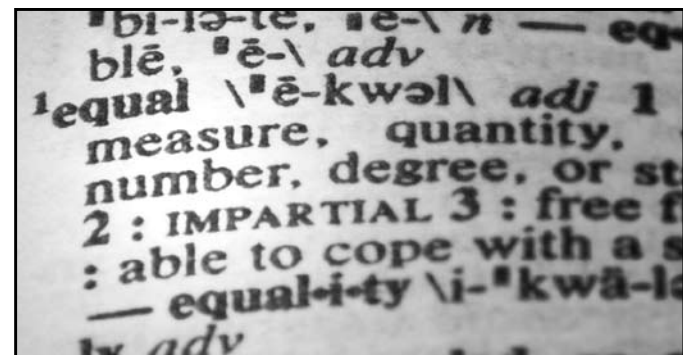
So when questions arise about a post racial America, we must be careful that it does not negate the accomplishments of African-Americans. And why must it be eliminated to be integrated into the American fold, why can't it be that the curriculums around the country can integrate it into their lessons and still have a special observance in February?

On another note just for the sake of comparison, the month of March is upon us and it will be Women's History

### The Future of Race

The preeminent scholar W.E.B. Du Bois talked about the problem of the 20th Century would be that of the color line. And today in the 21st Century we are discussing that the fight of those of a storied historical past of struggle has been won. That the U.S. has evolved into a place where it is true to its promise of freedom, justice, and equality for all its citizens. And to a place where the thorny issue of race can no longer inhibit individual initiative.

In some ways this is true, but in many ways America still has a way to go in this trek towards being true to its creed. Too many Americans of all colors are suffering in the face of an economic downturn, so those who have come in different ships now find themselves in the same boat trying to survive. The question is can this be the thing that bring people together to see all their fates are intertwined in a new world that is changing around them, and where old ideas and ideologies are obsolete?



Month, and as women have accomplished much in American life; more women are in college than men and women are part and parcel of the power structure of this nation. But you do not

Is this the day where the socially constructed idea of race can be buried in the graveyard as a nation moves into the future? Where Americans can move to a place where they can appreci-



see a movement talking about post gender America, and the abolition of Women's History Month. Why is that? Is it that the lens that we see race through is something this country has still not really looked at seriously or completely understands?

ate difference without it being deemed as deficient? Where you don't have to throw away what you are to become something else? And move to a day where we can appreciate and celebrate the great mosaic of people who call the U.S. home.



# Zulu Celebrates 100th Year Anniversary

**Tiyana Jordan**  
Data News Weekly Intern

For any parade goers—new or old—they know Mardi Gras is nothing without the floats, marching bands, beads and those good ol' Zulu coconuts.

Early Mardi Gras Day before the barbeque grills on the back of pick-up trucks filled the air with smoked treats and the dew dried on the early morning grass, families lined-up on the corner of Jackson and Claiborne Avenue to catch Zulu hit the streets. Zulu crew members were ready to roll with their faces painted black and clothed in their outlandish attire—grass skirts and head pieces. Awe-faced children peered on in amazement, as the members of the Krewe of Zulu marched with pride and distinction, to a beat of their own.

In unison, their melodious voices chanted tales of strength and brotherhood. But, this Mardi Gras, their chanting voices were shouting a little louder and prouder. This year Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club celebrated its 100th Year Anniversary as the city's most prominent African American carnival organization.



Zulu character float Mr. Big Stuff passes along parade route. Photo Credit: Tiyana Jordan



Zulu float riders gather throws for crowd. Photo Credit: Tiyana Jordan

Originating in 1909 as an organized club called "The Tramps", the men's club began as an aid to their communities, for many of the members were a part of a Benevolent Aid and Society. Shortly thereafter, out from the black neighborhoods of New Orleans, they emerged as the Zulu with members from all wards of the city gathered as the first African American Mardi Gras crew. One of the most famous members is the late Louis Armstrong who reigned as Zulu King in 1949.

The name may have changed, but the Zulu still have a distinguishable presence in the community as the men from all walks of life gather each year to add their flavor to the Mardi Gras scenery. The club is active not only during the carnival season, but year round. The Zulu Club's positive interaction with the community consists of toy drives during the Christmas holidays and assisting with burial and funeral arrangement assistance for club members.

"For fifteen years, I've been a member of Zulu", said club member Byron Mercier. "As a man, a part of the broad spectrum of unique men that make up the Zulu

club, I'm proud that our legacy has lived on for its 100th year." To mark the milestone, the Louisiana State Museum inside the Presbytere Jackson Square Mall, is hosting an exhibit named "From Tramps to Kings -100 years of Zulu". A 3,000 square foot, vibrant display of the history of the Zulu from its beginning until present can be enjoyed by museum visitors until December 2009. Visitors can expect to see costumes worn by characters such as the club's Witch Doctor, Mr. Big Stuff and of course The Kings. Films and exclusive footage from previous Mardi Gras celebrations will be there to enjoy as well.

Husband and wife, Tyrone and Sheila Mathieu, both native New Orleanians reigned as Zulu's 2009 King and Queen. As the tractors gassed up and the riders flocked their floats to get ready to roll, the crowds closed in and the sound of a whistle blows. A banana stalk scepter was raised to the sky and the second-line music began. Along with the glitz and glimmer, the influential Krewe of Zulu stepped out again with a hundred years and counting.

## Landrieu Calls for Resignation of FEMA Louisiana Recovery Office Chief of Staff

WASHINGTON – United States Senator Mary Landrieu, D-La., has called for the resignation of Doug Whitmer, chief of the staff of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Louisiana Transitional Recovery Office in New Orleans. Her comments follow the CBS Evening News report that detailed the ongoing investigation into alleged misconduct, including nepotism, sexual harassment and discrimination. CBS reported that Whitmer had more than 30 complaints filed against him by New Orleans office employees.

"It was very disturbing to see the CBS story about the dysfunction at the New Orleans FEMA recovery office," said Sen. Landrieu. The people in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama are shocked to hear that our recovery has been slowed by the toxic environment created by the office's management. Beyond any doubt, it would be appropriate for Doug Whitmer to step down, and I am calling for his resignation.

"It is the straw that broke the camel's back. There was not one, not a dozen, but 30 complaints against one employee. I believe Secretary Janet Napolitano will do a complete review of FEMA leadership from top to bottom to fire those employees that do not want to help – those that are incapable, incompetent and not doing their job.

"We have seen examples of extraordinary waste, fraud and abuse in contractors hired by the government. In this case, it is actually the management of our FEMA office in New Orleans. The clean-up process should begin with the resignation of Doug Whitmer."

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# City Council Tables Override Vote of Mayor Nagin's Veto

*Nagin vetoed a bill that called for open meetings for contract selections*

**Brittany Odom**  
Data News Weekly Intern

Contradictory to his promotion of government transparency last year, New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin vetoed a bill that required applicants for city contracts to meet publicly on Feb. 12. The City Council had an opportunity to override Nagin's veto on Feb. 26, but adjourned the meeting prior to doing so, with all four of the white Council members leaving the chambers for various reasons. Thereafter, a discussion on racial divide in New Orleans politics took place with comments from the meeting's attendees.

Earlier this month, the City Council voted unanimously to make meetings between companies and individuals who bid for legal, architectural, engineering and other professional service contracts open to the public.

Under a policy implemented by Nagin in 2005, contractors place bids and a committee reviews the bids privately before making a recommendation to the mayor. The committee consists of the



Mayor Ray Nagin

chief administrative officer, a director from the department the bid relates to and a citizen selected by Nagin.

The Council sought to make the meetings open to the public rather than "behind closed doors."

The Selection Review Panel was deemed "a waste of time" early on by the mayor, and he said that the panel was an attempt by the legislative branch to take power from the executive branch. On Feb. 16, his executive order vetoing the meetings and giving himself full authority over contract decisions was made public.

Nagin's decision hasn't been

met with positive reactions from the public and Council members alike, criticizing the mayor for the lack of transparency and openness he proposed in 2008 and a blatant violation of the state's law on open meetings.

"I am strongly opposed to this executive order, which will have the effect of further excluding the public from a process that is already in need of greater transparency and accountability," Council President Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson said in a statement on the city Council's website.

Vice-president of the Council Arnie Fielkow, who has been at the forefront of the campaign for transparency in the mayor's office, said that Nagin's actions were unsurprising and that the meetings would have allowed the public to "be informed and engaged as to how their dollars are being used."

"Meetings would have been publicly noticed, citizens would have been able to view and participate and minutes of all meetings would have been kept," Fielkow said. "Sadly, despite the Mayor's

stated intentions to achieve openness and transparency, his current actions contradict his words and negatively affect a citizen base which desperately seeks to have its city government operate in the sunshine."

Fielkow and Clarkson were confident that the bill would be overturned by the Council and on Feb. 19, the Council met to override Nagin's order. In order for an override to be successful, 5 votes would have been required, but the Council came up one short. Council members James Carter and Cynthia Willard-Lewis were not present at the meeting and the final vote was to be determined by District D councilwoman Cynthia Hedge-Morrell.

Morrell, however, recused herself from the meeting and said that many African-Americans consider transparency as a way to keep them out of public business, saying that she did not want to vote to fuel more tension between the mayor and the Council.

Council members Clarkson, Fielkow, Stacy Head and Shelley Midura denied that the call for

transparency was racially motivated. All 4 voted in favor of overriding the veto, and hope that Carter will vote with them at a later date. However, the vote didn't take place even though all members were present.

When Nagin first made his decision, he issued a press release justifying his stand.

"The people of the City of New Orleans decided which responsibilities and authority they wished their local government – public servants – to exercise. I do not believe that any level of government has the authority to silence or override what the people have said they want and the Charter is clear on the issue of competitive selection," Nagin said. "Since the source of contention for the City Council is the Selection Review Panel that I established to create a process that is more transparent than any this City or State has ever had, I am rescinding this portion of my executive order until this is matter resolved."

## Local Artist Wrongfully Accused of Aggravated Burglary Has Name Cleared

*Arlyn Square Was Receiving Medical Treatment During Time of Alleged Incident*

**Shaniece B. Bickham, Ph.D.**  
Managing Editor

A 30-year-old artist who was wrongfully arrested as a suspect in a home invasion that took place in Gentilly earlier this month was cleared of the allegations on Friday, Feb. 27. Orleans Parish Criminal Court Magistrate Judge Gerard Hansen found no probable cause in the case.

Arlyn Square had been receiving in-patient medical treatment at a local facility when he was arrested. Square was mistakenly identified as the suspect who posed as a Sewerage and Water Board employee in order to gain entrance into the Gentilly home. During a preliminary examination hearing, Square's doctors confirmed that he was in their facility's care undergoing treatment during the time of the alleged crime.

"We thank God that truth pre-

vailed. I remain outraged by the violations of basic human rights, and the increasing levels of violence in our community," said Brenda Billips Square, the victim's mother, who is also a community activist and minister. "The police department could move toward improving community trust by offering an apology. Let us continue to pray for the healing of our city."

The victim's mother also said in an official statement that her concern is not just for her son, but also for other innocent people who may become victims of mistaken identity. Square remained in police custody without medication for five days until he was released on bail.

"Justice has been partially served today," said Ralph Bickham, Square's attorney in the matter. "Arlyn Square has been vindicated, but the person who

actually committed the crime is still out there. Justice hasn't been served for the victims."

According to investigators, the residents of the home responded to a knock on their door from a man who identified himself as a Sewerage and Water Board employee. When one of the victims opened the door, the man drew a handgun and forced his way inside the home, according to NOPD spokesperson Garry Flot.

Bickham also said that he hopes the New Orleans Police Department and the Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office continues to work hard to capture the person who is responsible for the criminal act.

## Little Known Black History Facts

**George T. Sampson** invented a clothes dryer that used heat from a stove in 1892.

**Dr. Charles Drew** (1904-1950) discovered techniques to store blood and developed blood banks.

**David Crosthwait Jr.** (1898 - 1979) an expert on heating, ventilation and air-conditioning, holds 39 U.S. patents and 80 international patents pertaining to heating, refrigeration and temperature regulating systems. Crosthwait created the heating system for New York City's Radio City Music Hall.

**Wilma Rudolph** (1940-1994) a record breaking track star was born the 20th of 22 children, and stricken with polio as a child. She not only overcame polio but broke world records in three Olympic track events and was the first American woman to win three gold medals at the Olympics (1960).

**Matthew Henson** (1867-1955) was a part of the first successful U.S. expedition to the North Pole in 1909.



## Krewes of Zulu and Rex Celebrate Lundi Gras on the River



Mayor Ray Nagin and his wife Seletha, along with Queen and King Zulu, Sheila Mathieu and Tyrone Mathieu. Photo credit: www.cityofno.com

The Krewes of Zulu and Rex held their Lundi Gras Festivals on Feb. 23 along the Mississippi River. The 17th Annual Zulu Lundi Gras Fest entertained its enormous crowd at Woldenberg Park, with three music stages and over 17 food vendors. The festival came to a close when the Zulu King and Queen, along with Mayor C.



King Zulu holds up famous Zulu coconut. Photo Credit: www.cityofno.com

Ray Nagin and an entourage of brass bands and club members, arrived on the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter and paraded down the river to the main stage. Mayor Nagin gave a proclamation to the King and Queen and to the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club for their dedication to Carnival season and to the City of New Orleans during its recovery process.

Next to Woldenberg Park, at the Riverwalk Marketplace's Spanish Plaza, Rex, the King of

Carnival, arrived at the party by Coast Guard vessel to declare the official start of Mardi Gras. Mayor Nagin accepted the King's proposal to suspend City government, business, and schools for a day of fun and festivities. The announcement greeted a cheering crowd, as Mayor Nagin and King Rex flipped the switch for the grand fireworks display over the river. The Zulu King and entourage arrived to greet King Rex and wish him a safe and wonderful reign. Lundi Gras proved to be an entertaining and exhilarating precursor to Fat Tuesday.



Seletha Nagin, Queen Zulu Sheila Mathieu, King Zulu Tyrone Mathieu, and Mayor Ray Nagin. Photo Credit: www.cityofno.com

## Antoinette K-Doe Dies on Mardi Gras Day



Antoinette K-Doe. Photo: www.pbs.org

Antoinette K-Doe, the widow of R&B singer Ernie K-Doe and a staple at the Mother-in-Law Lounge, died on Mardi Gras Day as she made preparations to celebrate the New Orleans festivities. Mrs. K-Doe suffered a massive heart attack at the age of 66.

Mrs. K-Doe, born as Antoinette Dorsey, dedicated much of her time to the Mother-in-Law Lounge, which served as a place that kept her husband's legacy alive. Ernie K-Doe died in 2001, but he lived on through Mrs. K-Doe's life-sized mannequin named Ernie. She was even able to keep the mannequin safe from Hurricane Katrina, and rebuild and reopened the Mother-in-Law Lounge thanks to several volunteers and R&B singer Usher.

Mrs. K-Doe was also known for dressing up as a Baby Doll on Mardi Gras Day every year. The Mother-in-Law Lounge still opened on Mardi Gras Day in her honor, in spite of her passing at the lounge earlier that morning. Those close to her say that Mrs. K-Doe would have wanted it that way.

## Xavier Releases Official Statement Regarding Accreditation Status of Pharmacy School

The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) made public a decision reached by its Board in January 2009 to affirm the accreditation of Xavier University of Louisiana's College of Pharmacy. The ACPE, however, placed the College of Pharmacy in a probationary status. Under ACPE policies, a program in a probationary status retains "all the rights and privileges associated with an accredited program."

The university asserts that the probationary status is not appropriate because it was based on information that was not accurate. Therefore, Xavier has initiated legal proceedings to void the probationary decision in order to protect its procedural due process rights under federal laws and under ACPE's own policies, rules, and procedures.

The Xavier University College of Pharmacy has never, in its 82-year history, been placed on probation for any of its programs, and we fully expect that this action by the ACPE shall be satisfactorily resolved.

# Gov. Bobby Jindal's Response to President Obama's Speech Receives Mixed Reviews

Shaniece B. Bickham, Ph.D.  
Managing Editor

A few moments after Americans tuned in to watch President Barack Obama's address to both the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday, Feb. 24, they also had the opportunity to hear from the Republican party through Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal. Gov. Jindal's name has been floating around as a possible Presidential candidate for the Republican Party in 2012, but after his speech, some believe he has a long road ahead.

Before addressing the issues discussed in President Obama's speech, Gov. Jindal began his rebuttal with historical information about his upbringings. Next, he briefly reminisced about his experiences during Hurricane Katrina and the government's response.



Gov. Bobby Jindal

"As I grew up, my mom and dad taught me the values that attracted them to this country - and they instilled in me an immigrant's wonder at the greatness of America," said Gov. Jindal during his speech. "As a child, I remember going to the grocery

store with my dad. Growing up in India, he had seen extreme poverty. And as we walked through the aisles, looking at the endless variety on the shelves, he would tell me: 'Bobby, Americans can do anything.' I still believe that to this day."

Some media pundits said that he did not have a strong enough approach to the issues the nation is currently dealing with.

"I was taken aback by that peculiar stagecraft, the walking from somewhere in the back of this narrow hall, the winding staircase looming there, the odd antibellum look of the scene," MSNBC's Chris Matthews said in a script for his "Hardball" show on Wednesday. "Was this some mimicking of a president walking along the state floor to the East Room?"

Even Fox News, a station that is known for favoring Republicans and conservatives, were highly critical of Gov. Jindal's speech.

"It came off as amateurish, and even the tempo in which he spoke was sing-songy," said Juan Williams, a Fox News commentator. "He was telling stories that seemed very simplistic and al-

most childish."

Toward the end of the speech, Gov. Jindal began tackling President Obama, the current issues, and the President's speech head on.

"The strength of America is not found in our government. It is found in the compassionate hearts and enterprising spirit of our citizens... To solve our current problems, Washington must lead. But the way to lead is not to raise taxes and put more money and power in hands of Washington politicians. The way to lead is by empowering you - the American people. Because we believe that Americans can do anything," said Gov. Jindal.

Gov. Jindal's national appearances will not stop with Tuesday's response. He already has scheduled appearances on several shows.

## CHILDREN SHOULD NOT SMOKE

### Maturity is Needed to Make an Informed Choice

We all agree that children should not smoke. Until a person has the maturity to understand and appreciate the consequences of smoking, they should be discouraged on all fronts. Parents, teachers, guardians and mentors should talk to young people about not smoking. Retail stores must be diligent in carding consumers to ensure that no one under the legal age purchases cigarettes. These and many other preventive measures - some funded by the tobacco industry - are being aggressively practiced.

### Youth Prevention Measures Are Working

The good news is that these measures are working. According to the 2008 Monitoring the Future study conducted by the National Institute of Drug Abuse and the University of Michigan, the teen smoking rates are "at or near record lows."<sup>i</sup> The study also reported that the smoking rate for 12th graders is at its lowest rate since the study started tracking smoking behavior 33 years ago.

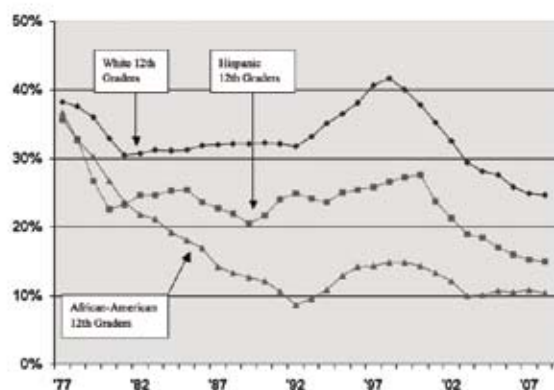
The results in the black community are the most encouraging. The Monitoring the Future study found that smoking rates among African American youth are dramatically lower than that of other race groups.

Specifically, the study of 12th graders showed the rate of white students who reported using cigarettes within the prior 30 days of the survey is more than twice the rate for

African American students; and that the rate for Hispanics is nearly one and one-half times that for African American students.<sup>ii</sup>

### Lorillard Markets to Adults

Some claim that there is a conspiracy by the tobacco industry to target African American youth. We believe that such a claim has no basis. The people who comprise Lorillard Tobacco Company have families too, and are concerned about the health and well-being of our children. We represent all races and walks of life. Further, we share a common set of beliefs: that farmers have a right to make a living by growing tobacco, as they have in this country since before it was the United States; that tobacco companies have a right to manufacture and market products to adults who choose to smoke; and that convenience stores and tobaccoists have a right to sell them to adults.



Adults who understand the risks of smoking should continue to have the right to choose to smoke and to smoke the brand of cigarettes that they prefer.

To help preserve and protect those rights, visit [www.mentholchoice.com](http://www.mentholchoice.com) and learn more.

<sup>i</sup> Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (December 11, 2008). "More good news on teen smoking: Rates at or near record lows." University of Michigan News Service: Ann Arbor, MI, <http://www.drugabuse.gov/Newsroom/08/MTF2008Tobacco.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (December 11, 2008). "Trends in 30-Day Prevalence of Use of Cigarettes by Subgroups in Grade 12." University of Michigan News Service: Ann Arbor, MI, <http://monitoringthefuture.org/data/08data/pr08cig8.pdf>

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# The Tradition of Zulu

*The Party at Orleans and Claiborne Avenue*



Dionne Character  
Data News Weekly Columnist

Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club celebrated its 100th Anniversary on Mardi Gras 2009. The tradition that families gather to watch this parade somehow has been passed along for generations. People were standing at Orleans and Claiborne Avenue as early at 5:30 a.m., to assure that they would be front and center behind the barricades placed by the City of New Orleans.

There were families seated in chairs, walking with chairs and lots of children scouting for the best parade location as



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they waited patiently in hopes of catching "Zulu Coconuts."

While I had the pleasure of hosting the show "live" on NOLA.com with The Best of Second Line Productions, I met families who were visiting New Orleans for the first time, natives who are still living abroad due to Hurricane Katrina and many who had something to be thankful for, as they welcomed the opportunity to second-line in the streets with Zulu.

The party started with 102.9 featuring New Orleans own radio personalities, Kelda Summer, Hurk, Captain Charles and LBJ, along with many other personalities who warmed up the crowds with



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some of the hottest hip-hop tunes. Live entertainment was provided by local hip-hop artists such as Blaze, Greezy, and Juvenile with a debut performance by hip-hop artist Bobby Valentino who was featured on Lil Wayne's Grammy nominated album.

This Mardi Gras was full of tradition, love, and the culture of New Orleans. People were smiling, elated, looking good, and full of joy as we once were when Claude Treme' bought and sold property in hopes of strengthening the community before the Claiborne bridge was built and all of the beautiful oak trees were uprooted.



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Claude Treme' knew that "true" wealth if found in owning your own land. His spirit will continue to represent "free people of color" who formerly jammed on neighborhood stoops around the City of New Orleans in the heart of Treme at Orleans and Claiborne Avenue.

## PIPELINE TO THE PEOPLE

by Corey Anderson

As Americans, we have our own opinion of whether racism continues to be relevant our present time. Last week, a highly-criticized editorial cartoon by the New York Post sparked the racial discussion once more. The Data News Weekly was there to find out how some interpreted the cartoon.

### Tasha Johnson

"I feel like they're not even giving him a chance. At least they gave Bush a chance to mess up before they started making fun of him. I know they're going to make fun of him but this isn't right."



### Ashley Conoway



"I think it's disrespectful that they even made fun of him in that way. They didn't even give him a chance."

### Ashley Miles

"I don't like that they made him a monkey. And he's only been in office for about a month. Change doesn't come that quickly."





# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Mardi Gras 2009 proved to be one of the most successful since prior to Hurricane Katrina. Family and friends alike gathered to enjoy parades, second-lines, and carnival balls.

The Shoot Ya Best Shot! special section is dedicated to Data News readers and supporters who want to share their candid shots. Here are some of the pictures shared to highlight good times during Mardi Gras.

To have photos featured in the Shoot Ya Best Shot! special section, email them along with the photographer's name to [datanewsphotos@gmail.com](mailto:datanewsphotos@gmail.com).



Photo Credit: Tiyana Jordan



Photo Credit: Shona McKinney



Photo Credit: Shona McKinney



Photo Credit: Tiyana Jordan



Photo Credit: Shona McKinney



Photo Credit: Shona McKinney



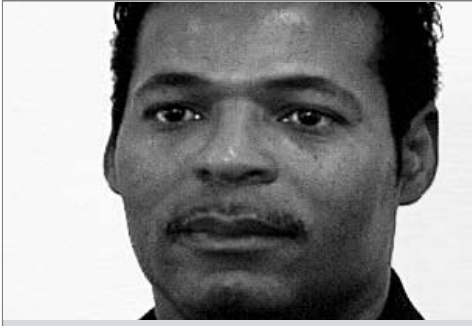
Photo Credit: Shaniece Bickham



Photo Credit: Shaniece Bickham



# A great man who cared about all people: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Dr. Aaron E. Harold  
Data Columnist

Hi family, we all just celebrated a great man's life and birthday last month and should remember his legacy during Black History Month. We all should have learned and heard about this great American who served his fellow man to the end of his life's journey. He was a man that all Americans, regardless of race should be proud of. Dr. King was a man that stood up for justice for all of us. Dr. King was a father, a husband,

a minister of the gospel, and a good humanitarian.

He was a friend to many that needed him in the time when this country was troubled by racism and injustice. He was a great organizer and a people person who knew how to interact with anyone. Dr. King was very sensitive to the needs of others to be successful in life and in this country that we call America. This man was a man who truly cared about people and their future in this country. He was born on January 15, 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Dr. King's public career began in the famous Montgomery Bus Boycott. He led this particular fight to desegregate the public buses. It ended on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. King joined the fight to secure better wages and working conditions for the garbage collectors there. When awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, he kept the medallion but presented the \$54,000.00 prize money to the SCLC. Also, his earnings from lectures and writings generally went to organizations sup-

porting the Civil Rights Movements.

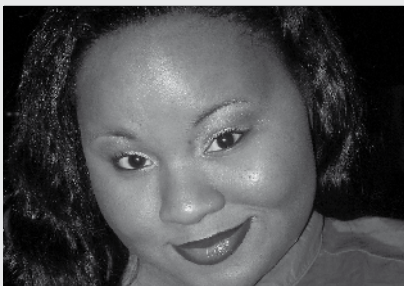
When James Earl Ray, who was the convicted assassin of Dr. King pulled the trigger of his rifle, he set off an explosion that rocked the world. Scores of citizens erupted in flames and violence followed as thousands of people went into rage. Family, America suddenly saw Dr. King as the real keeper of the dream of what the nation could become. Folks, two months before his death, Dr. King referring to his own funeral said, "I would like somebody to mention that day, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Tried to give his life serving others." "I also want you to say that I tried to love and service humanity.

He died April 4, 1968. Dr. King left so many writings to encourage us all. He made it known to African Americans that we are somebody, and we should never forget it. One of his famous writings was on Black Heritage. He wrote in this writing that we as African Americans should always guard against the danger of becoming ashamed of his or her past. He said that "the oppres-

sion that we have faced partly because of the color of our skin, must not cause us to feel that everything non-white is objectionable." He also said that "the content of one's character is the important thing, not the color of the skin."

Dr. King also said in his writing that "we must teach every black child that rejection of our heritage means loss of cultural roots." He also said that "people that have no past, have no future." Family, that was true when he wrote that in 1958, and its true even today. Family, Dr. King was a man who demonstrated his love to his fellow man even to the point of death. He was his brother's keeper, because he was willing to sacrifice his life. God wants us to be the same way with one another. This is why Jesus said in John chap.13v15, "Greater love than this, when a man will give his life for friends. Family, we all are our brother's keeper. God Bless.

## Pissed Off Weekly



Thais Mills  
Pissed Off Data Contributor

The streets are clearing up and the tourists are flying out... No more beads hitting you in the head for no reason.. Even the poles on Bourbon are not as greasy to prevent us from climbing up to get a better view.... As we're all coming down from the infamous Mardi Gras high you have to wonder...

How to get over what was so much dayummmm fun ?!?!?

- Endless parties
- Friends coming to sleep on your couch
- Tourists overloading Bourbon St.
- Everyone wearing beads like diamonds

All that before the parades even starts!!! It's impossible to ignore guys, Mardi Gras goes with New Orleans like red beans and rice. So how to detox after all the floats are parked? I took to the streets of New Orleans and asked the same question to the coolest people I saw...

## "What pisses you off about get'n over Mardi Gras?"

Not being able to blame getting to work late on the parade routes being blocked off!

- Louise Doley / New Orleans East

All the free fun!! You don't have to pay to see such beautiful costumes and floats. I will be back next year!

- Chico J. / Atlanta, GA

Acting like a tourist flashing for beads that you can pay for on Veterans!

- Mariko B / New Orleans, La

I'll miss the women being so carefree! Beads are better than steak dinners during Mardi Gras!

- Lakintre L. Gentily, New Orleans

Mardi Gras is the only time you can walk up to people standing on the street and ask for food and beer and people are happy to share.. I'll miss that.

- Robert Lionel / Gretna, La

With new reasons to love my city I headed home to my warm bed.. Another Mardi Gras and another reason to look forward to doing the same thing next year !!! I love you New Orleans!!!

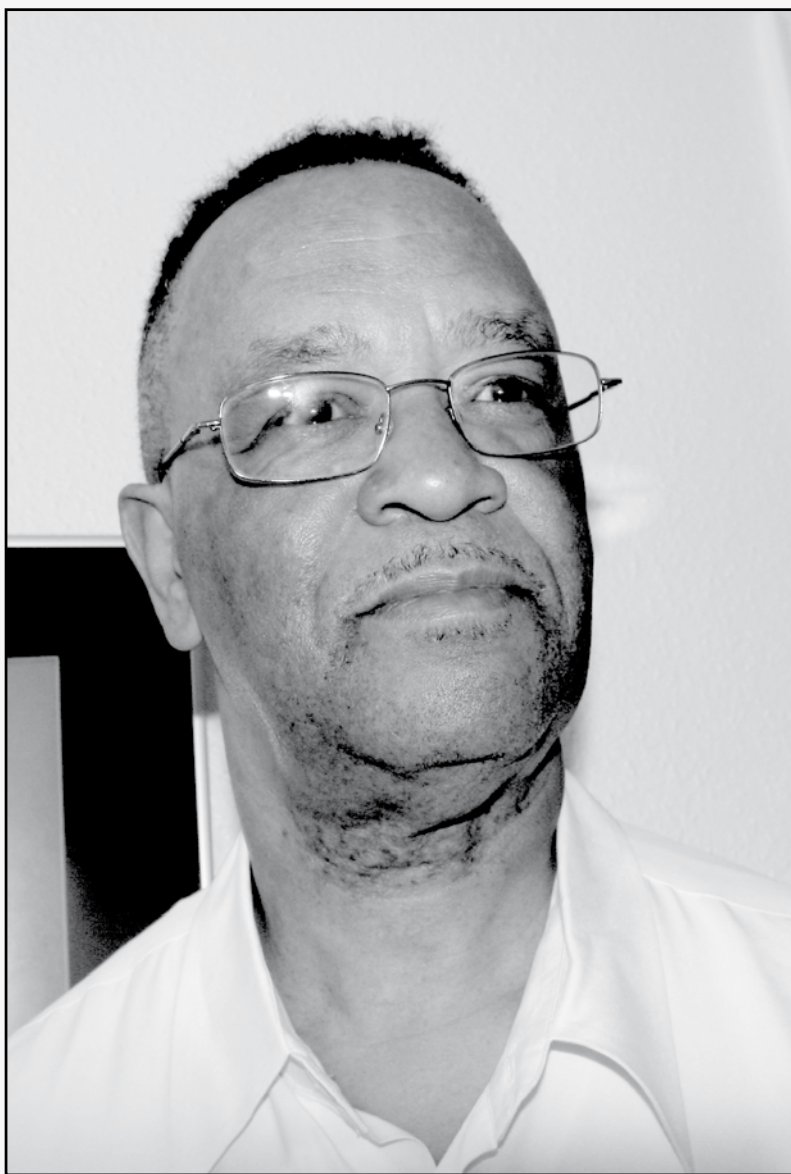


# trailblazer

## Larry Calvin

### *Walking by Faith*

by: Edwin Buggage  
Editor-in-Chief



Larry Calvin

He is a man who has a humble and peaceful calm about himself and possesses a spirit where he lives to give. Larry Calvin has used his position as a deacon at the All Saints Catholic Church to spread a message of hope.

"I feel it is important for people to know that there is hope to choose a different path for your life, and that's what my life has been about, helping people overcome obstacles to live a better and more fulfilling life," said Calvin.

Through the church he has ministered to the sick and the youth, and has been part of a prison ministry. Calvin said that his experiences inside of the prison walls allowed him to find something very surprising.

"Many times we think of people who are in prison and just think of them as criminals, but there are many talented and extremely intelligent people there who could be a valuable asset to society if their energy and spirits could be redirected into more positive pursuits," said Calvin. "And that was my goal when we worked with people who were incarcerated."

Calvin said his quest to be a force for change is guided by his spirituality.

"It is God who I have put first in all my pursuits, and it has been at the center of my life and have delivered me from many of the problems that have confronted me. It is the foundation of my life, and it is through him that I feel many of our people can come through many of the things they struggle with in their daily lives," said Calvin.

Calvin is a solid family man who is near-

ing the 40th year of marriage to his wife Phyllis Calvin.

"I could have not accomplished many of the things I have without her love and support; she has been there not just as a wife, but a partner, a friend and confidant," said Calvin. "I have looked to her many of times to help guide the decisions I have made in my life, and I am eternally thankful that I have been blessed to have a life with her by my side."

Throughout his life, Calvin has been concerned about the problems affecting the African-American community. He said these afflictions are primarily caused by a family structure that has been fractured.

"I think about when I grew up the whole community and extended family was involved in the raising of children. Today I don't see so much of that, but I am optimistic that this is something that can be fixed if we turn back to our faith and the spirit of giving back," he said.

Young African-American males are something Calvin has a special interest in, "I have worked with other men in mentoring young men, and I feel it is vital for the next generation to see men who are doing things that are positive—men who are responsible, and respectful of themselves, their families and God," said Calvin.

Larry Calvin is a man who has a life that has been blessed, and he continues walking by faith to bless others with the example that is his life. And for his committed service, he is Data News Weekly's Trailblazer for the month of February.

# JMJ

Joseph M. Jones  
Continuing Education Fund



# at&t

# Black History Month - Needed Now More Than Ever

*The perennial debate about the need for Black History Month has intensified this year as the shock and awe of America electing its first Black president still reverberates across this land.*



Marc Morial  
NNPA Columnist

Even before Barack Obama achieved that extraordinary breakthrough, there were some who questioned the necessity of a special month to recognize the many unknown and unsung achievements of African Americans.

With Obama as President, the logic goes, we have now achieved Dr. King's

dream of a non-racial America where everyone is judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin. I wish it were so.

All one needs to do is look at the glaring disparities between Blacks and Whites in income, employment, incarceration rates, educational achievement and health status to see that race still matters in America. Equal opportunity is still part of the unfinished business of American democracy.

In 1926, after centuries of Blacks being excluded, not only from the mainstream of American life, but also from the textbooks in our schools, the African American historian, Carter G. Woodson did a service to all Americans when he created Negro History Week, which was expanded to Black History Month in 1976. Woodson's vision was one of unity and inclusion.

He said, "What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race, hate and religious prejudice."

That is a goal that America is still struggling to achieve.

In fact, legislatures in a number of states, including New York and New Jersey, have recently passed laws mandating or encouraging teachers to broaden their history courses to include more ethnic, racial and gender diversity. That is why we still recognize March as Women's History Month, May as Jewish American History Month, September 15 to October 15 as Hispanic Heritage Month and February as Black History Month.

These celebrations serve a dual purpose: first to build self-esteem among historically oppressed people; and second to remind all Americans that in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, our diversity is our greatest strength.

It is fitting that the first Presidential Proclamation issued by Barack Obama is one that recognizes National African American History Month.

He writes, "The belief that...the dreams

and the promise of our nation... might one day be realized by all of our citizens gave African American men and women the same sense of duty and love of country that led them to shed blood in every war we have ever fought, invest hard-earned resources in their communities with the hope of self-empowerment, and to pass the ideals of this great land down to their children and grandchildren."

Eight years after the horrific events of 9-11, the American spirit is again being put to the test with an economic crisis that is being compared to the Great Depression. We need to look no further than the lives of great men and women like Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, W.E.B. Dubois, Thurgood Marshall, Whitney Young, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King and Barack Obama for a sense of certainty that this too, "we shall overcome."

## A Solution to the Roland Burris Mess



George C. Curry  
NNPA

Roland Burris should borrow a page from Republican Senator Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, President Obama's short-lived pick to become Commerce Secretary, and agree to resign his Senate seat immediately on the condition that he be replaced by another African-American.

The embattled Illinois senator has been in office shortly more than a month, but is facing increasing calls for his resignation in the wake of disclosures that he has been less than forthcoming about his attempts to raise campaign contributions for impeached Gov. Rod Blagojevich in exchange for being appointed to the U.S. Senate.

Burris was selected to fill the remaining term of President Barack Obama, which is set to expire in two years. The Senate Ethics Committee has been asked to investigate Burris and perjury charges have been referred to Illinois prosecutors for possible action.

It's time to pull the plug on this soap opera and the quickest way to turn the lights out is by getting Burris to do something many have already accused him of doing – cut a deal.

I know there are some who will say that Burris should resign with no strings attached. I agree in principle, but doubt that he'll leave voluntarily without some preconditions. Hence, my proposal that he leave, be replaced by another African-American, and in 2010, let the voters of Illinois decide who should succeed the man who succeeded Barack Obama.

Invariably, conservatives will call my proposal to end the standoff racist because it seeks to keep at least one African-American seated in the otherwise all-White Senate. In the larger scheme of things, this is no different than Senator Gregg agreeing to give up his Senate seat with the stipulation that a Republican replace him to avoid giving Democrats a critical 60-vote edge. Of course, the circumstances are different but in the end, it's about the same thing – retaining political power.

New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch, a Democrat, agreed to play the game, naming Bonnie Newman, Gregg's former chief of staff, to replace him. But Gregg had second thoughts and decided to stay in the Senate.

I'm glad Gregg decided to stay put rather than head a department he once voted to abolish. With the 2010 census fast approaching, he is not one who could be trusted to oversee the official enumeration

of Americans. With a record of supporting NAACP-backed positions only 24 percent of the time – earning him a grade of F – in the 110th Congress (2007-2008), Gregg's appointment raises question about Obama's judgment.

The same three Republicans who backed the administration's stimulus program – Olympia J. Snowe and Susan Collins of Maine and Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania – were the only members of the GOP to receive a passing grade on the NAACP Report Card. The two Maine senators earned Bs and Specter received a C. Every other Republican in the Senate earned a D or F. Instead of picking a moderate Republican, Obama went for someone who votes against African-American interests more than 75 percent of the time.

The issue with Burris is not his voting record, but his veracity.

The Black community rallied around Burris because they believed that he was untainted and had steered clear of any pay-to-play deals with Blagojevich before the governor was booted from office. We were obviously misled. Burris keeps changing his story and each time he does, he sinks deeper and deeper into a hole.

In a Jan. 5 affidavit, Burris declared "there was not any contact between myself or any of my representatives with Gov. Blagojevich or any of his representatives regarding my appointment." He was pressed on this point several days later by the Illinois House impeachment committee. Rep. Jim Durkin asked Burris about six people

close to the governor and whether he had any contact with them. After consulting with his lawyer, Burris replied, "I talked to some friends about my desire to be appointed, yes."

The only "friend" he identified was Lon Monk, the governor's chief of staff. Following up, Rep. Jill Tracy asked: "So you don't recall that there was anybody else besides Lon Monk that you expressed an interest to at that point?"

Burris: "No, I can't recall..."

In an amended affidavit that some contend was submitted after Burris learned that some of his conversations may have been taped by federal prosecutors investigating the governor, Burris acknowledged that he had been in contact with six Blagojevich associates, including his brother, Rob, who asked Burris on three different occasions to raise money for the governor.

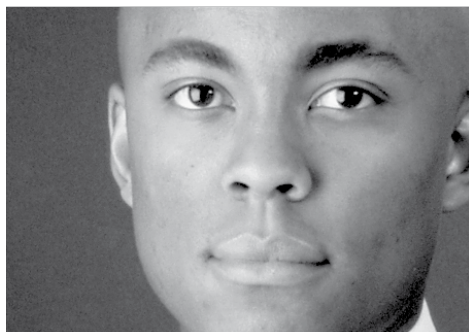
Speaking to reporters On Feb. 16, Burris acknowledged that he attempted to raise money for Blagojevich, but the people he approached were not interested in giving.

This embarrassing saga has gone on much too long. Enough is too much. Burris needs to resign and if it takes appointing an African-American successor to make him go away sooner, let's make a deal.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emerge* magazine and the NNPA News Service, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. He can be reached through his Web site, [www.georgecurry.com](http://www.georgecurry.com).



# Making It Simple - Surviving Financial Depression



Farrah Gray  
NNPA Columnist

We live in a fast paced world. Computers. Cell phones. Satellite TV. Multiple cars. Multiple televisions. Big houses. We've grown accustomed to all of these things, but are they really necessary?

The economic news in the United States is not good. Bank failures. Bailouts. Rising unemployment. Stagnant housing market. Economic stimulus packages. It seems that every day headlines contain stories about each of these subjects of our depressed economy.

I'm not going to speculate on how long the bad economy will last, whether an eco-

nomie stimulus plan will help, or if we're in a recession at all. None of that matters when it's your family facing cutbacks and job losses. What matters is what we can do in the here and now.

And instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, some of the best ways to survive a recession can be found from the lessons of our ancestors during past depressed economic times.

A defining awareness of our ancestors was the ability to adapt and learn self-reliance. They took the time to learn survival skills. If they needed vegetables, they grew them. Meat? They butchered and preserved it themselves. Is your grocery budget too high? Learn to cook from scratch. Walk to the local store instead of driving. Get active!

Instead of assuming you need to pay for something, ask yourself if you could learn to "do the job" yourself. Sometimes the answer might be no. But sometimes the answer just might be yes. And if you learn, you'll not only save money, but you'll feel a sense of accomplishment for learning something new.

Education and training is important; it's the second component to our "doing the knowledge." And you should seek out root

knowledge, not branch knowledge. This means you can't just skim the surface of a subject matter and suddenly become the master of it. We must be patient, learning on a personal level.

In our fast paced, Internet driven society today, we often lose sight of the fact that personal relationships with others in our community are important. But they are. When push comes to shove, and you need financial help, having a local support system can be a lifesaver!

For instance, if you need a car repair, but don't have the money for the repair, you might barter with a friend that knows how to fix your car. Bartering is a great way to get things you need, if you don't have the cash.

Teaming up can also help in other ways. If you're a busy family who is used to eating out when life gets chaotic, you can cut costs by teaming up with another family or families to cook. If each of you makes one meal, but triples the recipe, you can give portions to your friends and rotating meal schedule so everyone can save money. With a few good friends and a little creativity, you can make your resources stretch a long way.

So often we convince ourselves we have needs, when those "needs" are really de-

sires. The next time you say you have nothing in your house for dinner, ask if you really have nothing, or if you just don't have anything that sounds good to you at the moment. See what I mean?

I know none of this sounds easy or fun. And you're right. Sometimes it's not either. But when you're trying to survive tough economic times, when your income has been cut drastically, sometimes you have to do what's not easy or fun. You're in survival mode.

None of this is permanent. Once the recession passes (and it will pass), we can lighten up again, reveling in the fact that you survived tough economic times without going further into debt. You'll appreciate your accomplishment and surviving the learning experience, which will make us stronger more appreciative people.

Farrah Gray is the author of *The Truth Shall Make You Rich: The New Road Map to Radical Prosperity*, *Get Real, Get Rich: Conquer the 7 Lies Blocking You from Success* and the international best-seller *Reallionaire: Nine Steps to Becoming Rich from the Inside Out*. He is chairman of the Farrah Gray Foundation. Dr. Gray can be reached via email at [fg@drfarrahgray.com](mailto:fg@drfarrahgray.com) or his web site at [www.drfarrahgray.com](http://www.drfarrahgray.com).

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# Sen. Roland Burris Says He 'Did Not Tell a Lie', Ethics Investigation Underway

J. Coyden Palmer

CHICAGO (NNPA) - As an ethics investigation began in D.C., Illinois House Speaker Michael J. Madigan has referred several documents associated with U.S. Senator Roland Burris and his testimony last month before the Illinois House Special Investigative Committee to Sangamon County States Attorney John Schmidt.

The concurrent investigations began after it was discovered that Burris gave incomplete statements about his communication with former Gov. Rod Blagojevich and his staff regarding the then vacant U.S. Senate seat.

It's been determined that Burris, 71, had conversations with Blagojevich's brother Rob and other staff members about the possibility of fundraising. During his testimony, Burris said he hadn't been in contact with anyone from the Blagojevich camp about the Senate seat. But on Feb. 4th he submitted an affidavit to lawmakers saying this wasn't exactly the case. In October and November, he had three

phone conversations with Robert Blagojevich, who was the head of his brother's campaign fund. "Some time shortly after Obama was elected, the brother called," Burris began on Feb. 17th when talking with reporters. "I'd talked to some people about trying to see if we could put a fundraiser on. Nobody was—they said we aren't giving money to the governor. And I said, 'OK, you know, I can't tell them what to do with their money.'"

"So when the [governor's] brother called me back, I said, 'Well, look Rob ... I can't raise any money from my friends. I said, maybe my partner and I, you can talk this over and see, could we go to some other people that we might be able to talk to that would help us out if we give—because we give a fundraiser in the law office, nobody going to show up. We'll probably have a thousand dollars for you or something to that effect.'"

State Democrats see the Burris controversy as a liability and Republicans see it as an opportunity, thus creating a major problem



Illinois Senator Roland Burris

for Burris. Already people from both parties have called for his resignation in addition to an editorial published by the Chicago Tribune. His colleague in the Senate Dick Durbin said the Senate investigation is the right thing to do given the new information that has come forward.

"I find Mr. Burris' testimony to be unsatisfactory and it is now raising serious questions about his appointment, which many of my colleagues were questioning from the start," the senior senator said.

State Rep. Mary Flowers (D-Chicago) had asked Burris during his testimony specifically

about his contact with people from Blagojevich's camp. Flowers asked Burris if he did any political or personal favors.

"There was no conversation, none to that effect...no quick pro quo?" Flowers asked. "Absolutely, positively not," was Burris' response.

Jim Durkin (R-Western Springs) asked Burris during his testimony if he bundled any money, by giving fundraisers or directed anyone to make contributions to the former Governor at any time during the last six months. Burris responded by saying "no."

Even Burris' neighbors are upset by the recent revelations. Burris portrayed himself as an honest person and now people in his Chatham community are questioning the veracity of his statements.

"I'd always seen him as an honorable man; in fact one of the more honorable politicians if there is such a thing," said Joyce Allen, a lifelong Chatham resident. "Now it seems as if he has selective memory. I mean you can't testify that you never had any contact

with anyone of Blagojevich's people and then a month later miraculously remember having several phone conversations. It makes him look like either he is senile or lying."

Another Chatham resident, Darryl Sykes, said he never believed Burris to begin with. He said from the start he figured Burris was only trying to get the Senate seat because he had some sort of axe to grind with Illinois voters who never voted him governor or mayor.

"I had a problem with Burris from the start because when Blagojevich was arrested he was one of the first people calling for him to resign," Sykes said. "Then a few weeks later he was standing next to the same man grinning in his face and trying to rationalize why it was ok to accept an appointment from the same person a few weeks earlier he was calling a disgrace. I think Burris is full of ambition and just wanted to put one more feather in his cap, but now he is at risk of tarnishing his legacy forever."

## The James Waller Story: When Being Black Was a Crime

Tuala Williams

DALLAS (NNPA) - Life can change in the blink of an eye. Just ask James Waller. At just 24-years-old, Waller had his whole life ahead of him with no reason to expect his dreams would not come true.

His dream: to become a fireman or a police officer. But through no fault of his own, all of that changed as Waller found himself caught up in a downward spiral he didn't create.

Waller says he wanted to make a difference.

"I grew up in Louisiana where a lot of racism was goin' on and I seen how the police was down there and just said, 'Well I'll be a police officer or a fireman. At least I'm helping in some kind of way,' he said. "I always wanted to be a help. You're always helping when you're a fireman. Whether you can save a life or not, you're at least being a help trying to save one and if you're a police officer you should be trying to do the

same thing instead of locking people up just because of their race or the color of their skin."

But Waller believes that the color of his skin had everything to do with the events that would soon change the course of his life forever.

"I was living in East Dallas. I was living at 4717 Virginia Ave. Apt. 119 (now torn down). All I did was got up that morning and walked to the store and walked back home and next thing I knew I was in the back of a police car," Waller said.

"I was the only Black living in the apartment and the crime happened three blocks down the street and they just said, 'Well, pick up the first Black man you see.' And that's just what they did. It took me 25 years to show them they was wrong," Waller said.

According to reports, the Dallas Police Department received a complaint from an East Dallas apartment complex on Nov. 2, 1982. An African-American man allegedly broke into an apartment

within the complex where two boys (12-years-old and 8-years-old) remained alone after their mother had gone to work. According to the complaint the boys awakened to find the man inside their home. The older boy was instructed to put his head on his pillow. Then, after tying his hands, the man forced the youth to perform oral sex and then he sodomized the boy.

Although the attack occurred at 6 a.m., while it was still dark outside, the boy offered a brief description of him. The attacker, he said, wore a cowboy hat with a bandanna over the lower part of his face.

The following evening, the victim was at a nearby convenience store when he heard an African-American voice, which he thought was the voice of his attacker. As he turned to see whom the voice belonged to, he saw Waller and was convinced he was the attacker. The boy ran home and told the apartment manager. Around that time, Waller, who also lived

in the apartment building, walked through he door.

Although the manager had earlier told the police that she had seen the man with the bandana and the cowboy hat, but did not recognize him, she was now convinced Waller was the attacker and told the police he was the man she had seen. The boy also positively identified Waller. The police went to Waller's apartment, asked him to step out and arrested him.

However, evidence contradicted the witness testimony. Waller had been in bed with his girlfriend at the time the rape occurred and his girlfriend testified to this at the trial. Additionally, sperm and hair was found on the sheets of the boy's bed. Forensic tests confirmed that the hair belonged to an African-American, but ruled Waller out. Although the State was aware of this, they ignored it.

"They wanted a conviction. I got convicted under the Henry Wade System. Up under the Henry Wade system, they pick a Black man up, nine times out of 10 if he

ain't got no whole lot of money, they gon' lock him up.

"That's why you got so many coming out of Dallas County. You know they got 19 in the last five years and you probably got 19 in the next five years or more, because they were just being locked up," Waller said.

Letters written by Wade, which had racist overtones, were discovered by District Attorney Craig Watkins over a year ago, confirming Waller's belief. Upon sharing this information with the media, Watkins said, "This is why we have to bring credibility to the criminal justice system — because there was a time when a person's color mattered more than his guilt or innocence."

But at the time of his arrests, Waller had no idea how unfair the system really was. "When I went to the county jail, I thought it was a dream. Like anybody, anytime something terrible happens, we all think it's a dream. If you go

*Continued on next page.*



# Obama Lifts America's Spirit in Speech of Hope

## *Budget Details Released This Week*

Hazel Trice Edney  
NNPA Editor-in-Chief

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – In his first speech before Congress, filled with the soaring inspiration reminiscent of his campaign, President Barack Obama Tuesday night promised the nation, “We will rebuild, we will recover, and the United States of America will emerge stronger than before.”

Surrounded by cheering and applauding Democrats and less optimistic Republicans, he said, “The weight of this crisis will not determine the destiny of this nation. The answers to our problems don’t lie beyond our reach. They exist in our laboratories and our universities; in our fields and our factories; in the imaginations of our entrepreneurs and the pride of the hardest-working people on Earth. Those qualities that have made America the greatest force of progress and prosperity in human history we still possess in ample measure.”

America has been devastated by the economic crisis with millions now unemployed and Black unemployment nearing 13 percent. Millions were glued to their television sets, looking for a word of hope as Obama prepares to unveil his first budget later this week.

The President was realistic:



Amidst crisis, President Obama spoke to his first joint session of Congress Tuesday night. He is flanked by Vice President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Credit: White House photo

“You don’t need to hear another list of statistics to know that our economy is in crisis, because you live it every day. It’s the worry you wake up with and the source of sleepless nights. It’s the job you thought you’d retire from but now have lost; the business you built your dreams upon that’s now hanging by a thread; the college acceptance letter your child had to put back in the envelope. The impact of this recession is real, and it is everywhere,” he said. “What is required now is for this country to pull together, confront boldly the challenges we face, and take responsibility for our future once more.”

Part of the exuberance among Democratic members of the House and Senate was no doubt

their recollection that it was the eight-year Republican Administration of President George Bush that has led to the crisis.

“The Bush Administration left our nation in fiscal shambles. The problems our country faces are significant and it will require a lot of hard work to put America back on the road toward economic recovery,” said Congressional Black Caucus Chair Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) in a statement. “President Obama laid out a plan to rebuild our fragile economy so that we can emerge stronger than before through job retention and creation, investing in our infrastructure and greater accountability and oversight of our financial institutions. Additionally, he understands that we must resist the

temptation to balance the budget on the backs of the most vulnerable Americans doing so would be particularly cruel in today’s economic climate.”

Among the specifics that Obama said would be reflected in his budget:

- Tax cuts for 95 percent of working families, beginning April 1.
  - Comprehensive health care reform.
  - Ending tax breaks for corporations that ship jobs overseas.
- He also promised to eliminate wasted money through:
- Reforms in the defense budget that would stop payments for “Cold War-era weapons systems we don’t use.”
  - Eliminating the “no-bid contracts that have wasted billions of dollars in Iraq.”

He also reiterated some of the hallmarks of his economic stimulus plan, including unemployment benefits, continued health care coverage to help the unemployed and job retention and creation.

“Over the next two years, this plan will save or create 3.5 million jobs,” he said. “More than 90 percent of these jobs will be in the private sector - jobs rebuilding our roads and bridges; constructing wind turbines and solar panels; laying broadband and expanding mass transit.”

Obama says his anticipated

budget will not be just “a laundry list” of items on paper. “I see it as a vision for America - as a blueprint for our future.”

He continued, “My budget does not attempt to solve every problem or address every issue. It reflects the stark reality of what we’ve inherited – a trillion-dollar deficit, a financial crisis, and a costly recession.”

Leading Black members of Congress, anticipating how the President’s first budget will deal with the poor and historically disadvantaged are optimistic: .

“I look forward to learning the details later this week,” said Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) in a statement. “Clearly, America cannot afford to spend and spend and spend given the recession and the record deficit run up by George W. Bush. However, we can also not afford to neglect essential programs that assist our most vulnerable populations and that offer opportunity for all people to share in the American dream. I am confident that the President’s budget will recognize these priorities, and I look forward to working with him to move our country in a new direction.”

House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.) concludes, “This is a bold and decisive start to the challenges we face...And it must include the least among us.”

*The James Waller Story, continued from previous page.*

through something real terrible and tragic in your life you gon’ think it’s a dream. If they was to lock you up today, and you fall asleep, you think you gon’ wake up and find it’s a dream. But then you have to face reality that it’s not a dream. I’m really locked up and I really can’t get out of here. I don’t know what to do. So when they took me to the county jail, I said, well it’s just a dream. They’ll figure it out. They’ll let me out. They’ll figure it’s not me.

“After three or four days passed by, I called my mother and told her that they had locked me up and they needed to try to set a bond to get me out of jail so I could see what’s going on.

“I couldn’t believe somebody would lock me up for a crime I didn’t do. I never thought it could happen. I always thought the people who went to prison were really guilty. I didn’t think they would lock a person up for something they didn’t do, because I had no one in my family that’d never

been locked up.

“My mother always told me as long as you ain’t doing no crime, you don’t have to worry about going to jail. As long as you doing the right thing, you won’t have to worry about people locking you up. Keep you a job and take care of your business and you not suppose to have to worry about going to jail. I believed in all of that. So that’s why it was a big shock to me when they picked me up for something I didn’t do. So that’s why when they said, ‘Do you want to go to a jury trial or do you want to cop out for three years? I couldn’t cop out for two years. I wouldn’t even cop out for six months because of what I’d been taught as a kid.’

Waller went to trial within 30 days.

He said even after hearing the guilty verdict, reality had not kicked in. “I couldn’t believe it. I couldn’t believe I was going to prison. But, once I got to prison, I had to adjust to the life that they

had chosen for me that I didn’t choose. I didn’t choose prison life. They chose it for me,” Waller said.

Adjusting to prison was hard for Waller. “The worst thing that can happen to an innocent man is to go to prison. You’re around murderers, rapists, killers. I’m talking real people, not TV. These guys really did rape women. These guys really did kill babies. I was right next door to a guy that put two babies in the oven and closed it. All that stuff. These people [are] real now.”

But Waller refused to surrender to his circumstances. Everyday, Waller went to the law library and worked on his case. He filed writs of habeas corpus and other writs. He sent letters to the NAACP, Civil Liberties Union, and to the media, Phil Donahue, A Current Affair hoping someone would hear him, but no one did. In fact, no one even replied, with the exception of one group, a ministry in New Jersey that only

helped death row inmates. They attempted to help him, but were unsuccessful.

Admitting guilt and showing remorse are conditions for being released for parole in Texas. But refusing to confess to a crime he didn’t commit left Waller without the hope of parole.

Waller was released after 11 years in prison, because according to the law, he had discharged his services. The discharge law stated that if an inmate did one-third of their sentence compared with the good time they did, the system would release them.

“So, I did 11 years of straight time in prison, and I had 19 or 20 years of good time in prison, which totaled up to 30 years and when that totaled up to 30 years, they released me on what they call discharge. But they don’t have that no more in Texas, because George Bush, he banned that law. So they can’t discharge no more so you have to do all your sentence now. If you didn’t do the

crime and you don’t admit that you did the crime and you didn’t do it, then you just sit in prison.”

When Waller was released, after having discharged his sentence in 1993, he was determined to pick up the pieces of his life and clear his name.

“Out of everything, all I ever wanted back was my name,” Waller said. “I wanted what they had took from me that my mother gave me. If she didn’t give me nothing else, she gave me the name. It ain’t nobody born that doesn’t have a name. Everybody has to have a name. If you ain’t got no name, you ain’t nobody. And they had destroyed the name that my mother gave me.

“Drug me through all the mud. Looked upon as the scum of the earth. A big ol’ Black man done raped this [12-year-old] White boy. And I had never seen the boy in my life.”



## Mom's dream, my achievement

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