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Public Education in New Orleans: A Brief History

Part 1 of 4

by Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief



Prologue

New Orleans has been in a mode of rebuilding since the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina when the city was devastated. With remnants of the destruction still ever present, it is a constant reminder that the city's landscape has been forever changed by the deluge that happened nearly three and a half years ago.

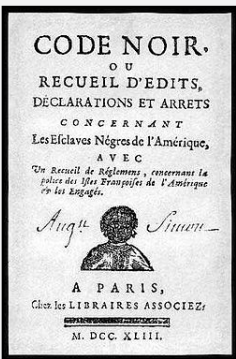
During what could be considered a holocaust, Hurricane Katrina left many of the citizens of the city disappointed, distraught and displaced, or as Roi Anthony's song states, 'A Long Way From Home.' Today, New Orleans still faces a host of challenges. Of those, one that may have a major impact on the city's future is the reconfiguration of the New Orleans Public Schools post-Hurricane Katrina. The city is now experimenting with Charter Schools and two additional schools systems within the system. Education leaders envision a transformation of what was previously—when

many ailing schools failed to serve their students.

While it is a noble cause to attempt to fix a broken system and have it better serve its students, the question becomes: Has this new construct caused a re-segregation of the schools based on class and race? Is this experiment unprecedented or has it happened sometime in the distant past in the storied history of the Crescent City?

'Race' to Education

The fight for racial equality in education in New Orleans has been an ongoing battle since as early as 1724 when the Code Noir or Black Codes strictly limited slaves from learning to read and write necessary to religious life. It was during this time that hurdles both legal and social customs were put in



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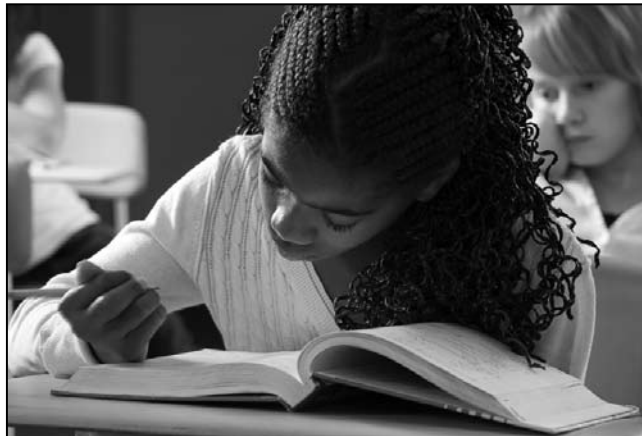
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616 Barrone Street, Suite 584, New Orleans, LA 70113
Phone: (504) 821-7421 | Fax: (504) 821-7622
editorial: datanewseditor@bellsouth.net | advertising: datanewsad@bellsouth.net

Terry B. Jones CEO/Publisher Glenn Jones VP Advertising & Marketing Edwin Buggage Editor-in-Chief Shaniece Bickham Managing Editor June Hazeur Accounting	Contributors Corey Anderson Dionne Character Thais Mills Brittany Odom Stacey Paul NNPA Art Direction & Production MainorMedia.com Editorial Submissions datanewseditor@bellsouth.net Advertising Inquiries datanewsad@bellsouth.net
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place to stifle Blacks' right to aspire and compete with whites in professional and academic pursuits.

To the whites in New Orleans at the time, it was thought that education could be dangerous and explosive combination. And that it had the potential to circumvent the fictitious idea of white intellectual superiority. This in turn would cause blacks to want to become competitive in the marketplace in addition to press with more vigor to change their status as second-class citizens



John McDonogh

or in some instances non-citizens that were not protected by any laws that whites were bound to respect.

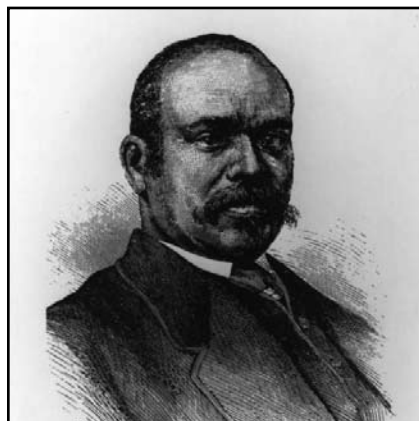
During the 19th century as the nation grappled with the institution of slavery, laws in regards to educating slaves became repressive. In 1830, anyone caught teaching a slave to read or write risked being imprisoned for up to 12 months. Also during the time of the formation of the New Orleans Public Schools in 1841, state statutes were put in place that kept even free Blacks from attending.

John Mc Donogh, a millionaire from Baltimore who made his fortune in New Orleans, bequeathed much of his money to be used for the education of poor children of all races and sexes, but the public schools were still off limits to blacks at the end of the Civil War when black illiteracy stood at 61.5 percent as opposed to 6.5 for whites.

For those blacks with resources,

they found ways to educate their children through private instruction or by sending them off to places as far away as Paris, France. While they were able to give their children a chance to aspire through other means, the public schools were still a bastion put in place by whites and for the benefits of whites.

It was not until after the Civil War that there was a brief period of hope during the years of Reconstruction when Blacks saw doors open in areas some would have never imagined as the 13th Amendment freed them from slavery. The 14th Amendment gave them equal protection under the law and full citizenship and the 15th Amendment gave them the right to vote. It was during this period from 1865-1877 there was a brief time where Blacks were elected to offices in addition to obtaining educational opportunities. But because this was a on paper did not mean it would be in reality, white resistance was vehement as many of their sentiments appeared the editorial pages the Daily Picayune and the New Orleans Times in one editorial stated that, "The Negro has a long stride to make before he reaches a degree of intelligence of even the most ignorant class of whites."



Oscar Dunn

Efforts by many white citizens were made to thwart the effort towards desegregation, but eventually in 1870 the three adopted daughters of Oscar Dunn, who had risen to become Louisiana's first Black Lt. Governor, enrolled at Madison Girls School. In response,

some white parents began to remove their students from the public schools. In the first year alone white enrollment dropped by 5,000 pupils. The number of private schools grew at a tremendous rate to educate white children, but due to financial constraints, many whites eventually sent their children back to public schools and for three years the black and whites were in desegregated schools peacefully coexisting. In 1872, a Black man, William G. Brown, was elected state education Superintendent as the New Orleans model was being talked about on the editorial pages of newspapers as a system to be copied across the states of the confederacy.

Reign of Terror: Segregation in Education

It was in 1874 that xenophobia and racial intolerance reared its ugly head turning back the hands of time in the area of racial progress in education. On the editorial pages of the Alexandria Caucasian it was stated that, "There will be no security, no peace and no prosperity to Louisiana until the government of the state is restored to the hands of honest, intelligent, and tax paying masses; until the superiority of the Caucasian over the African in all affairs pertaining to government is acknowledged and established."

As White Leagues sprang up throughout the state with its mission being to restore government exclusively to the hands of whites, and on September of 1874 the White League with the support of local business leaders seized an opportunity to take control of the government. A battle ensued between the insurgents and the police and it wasn't until President Ulysses Grant sent in reinforcements that the government was restored. But this was not the end of this reign of terror as more violence ensued three months later with a three-day riot incited by the White League where windows were broken, in desegregated schools teachers were threatened and blacks were evicted from building and threatened with further bodily harm. By the end of 1875 the experiment in

mixed schooling in New Orleans had come to an abrupt end.

In the coming years, blacks and creoles of color were lumped together and placed on the margins of social life in New Orleans. Fights in the courts and on the editorial pages debating the issue took place. And by the end of the 19th century the gains that blacks made during reconstruction had all but disappeared, when the 1896 Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which took place in New Orleans, had pushed blacks back in all areas of life including access to quality education.

Brown v. Board of Education:

In a unanimous Supreme Court decision on May 17, 1954 the *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* overturned the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* stating that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." This was a cause for celebration that the courts had weighed in tipping the scales of justice in favor of all people being given access. It was a new day when men and women can aspire to whatever and wherever their talents can lead them to. But in terms of school desegregation in New Orleans it would be another six years before the city would make an attempt to try this experiment.

During the ensuing years after the Brown Decision, white lawmakers attempted to upgrade black schools instead of integrating them. Also, an attempt was made to use public funds to for private schools. Eventually, Ruby Bridges was the first black to enter William Frantz Elementary School. During the first year of her enrollment she spent the first year alone with her teacher because nearly all the white parents pulled their children out of the school to show their contempt for the change that was on the horizon in the area of racial equality.

During the same year, McDonogh 19 was being integrated as well when three little girls Tessie Prevost, Gail Etienne and Leona Tate faced similar scenes as white resistance to integration grew to a fever pitch as the little girls were accompanied by federal marshals. Although there was resistance the day had come in New Orleans when for better or worse the public schools were on their way to being desegregated.

New Orleans Public Schools: 1960-Hurricane Katrina

As the public schools began to desegregate, another problem began to occur in the city. With the advent of the interstate highway system and cheaper housing in surrounding parishes, suburbs began to emerge along the perimeter of the city. These bedroom com-

President's Economic Strategy Considers Needs of Struggling Blacks, Say Aides

Dorothy Rowley

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - President Barack Obama told supporters in the waning weeks of his election campaign that once he got to the White House he would hit the ground running in order to stabilize the economy and put the nation back on solid footing.

He also said he was all about bringing people together and engaging them in the process of restoring the country's reputation as a super power, while eradicating longtime partisan differences.

Not only has Obama kept his word, says Valerie Jarrett, a senior adviser and assistant to the president, but he is the only president in recent memory to accomplish as much as he did last week.

All totaled, the president tackled eight priorities, she said.

"It's been an exciting time . . .



President Barack Obama

it's been a busy week," Jarrett told reporters during a media teleconference March 6, before rattling off a list of activities in which the president was involved.

The list included a fiscal summit, followed by meetings with national security teams of Afghanistan and Pakistan governments and a highly successful health-care summit that engaged people from across the country and several walks of life.

However, since assuming the leadership helm six weeks ago, Obama, in addition to dealing with the mounting deficit, also inherited two wars as well as ongoing issues involving housing, health care, public education and energy - all of which have had a disparate impact on the African-American community. Many of the concerns were denied funding in previous administrations.

Jarrett noted, in particular, that while the unemployment rate has skyrocketed, African-Americans have been most affected.

"Today, we saw that the unemployment rate has generally gone up 8.1 percent," she said. "However, before today, the African-American unemployment rate was 12.6 percent. Further, over 95 percent of public school kids are African-American, so focusing on public education is [just as] critical."

An Ebony magazine reporter queried Jarrett on what policies the administration has in place to help African-Americans "come out of a hole."

Jarrett responded that since the bulk of the African-American population can be found in cities, a large portion of stimulus funding, such as the \$800 million earmarked for Washington, D.C. - which is more than 90 percent Black - would be directed for that purpose.

"If you look strategically at how the dollars are going to be allocated, a lot will be going to projects that are in cities, and most of

those are going to be construction projects," said Jarrett.

"We've had several meetings with unions that have not traditionally been as open and inclusive in their memberships, who now realize that if they're going to do projects in cities, they're going to have a mechanism for training and bringing in people."

White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel added that at this time, having passed the Economic Recovery Act within Obama's first 30 days in office, the administration remains primarily focused on the economy.

"It's the most essential effort that we have," Emanuel said, emphasizing that the recovery act also dealt with providing tax credits for the middle class, building roads and bridges, laying broadband and establishing medical technology information to control costs.

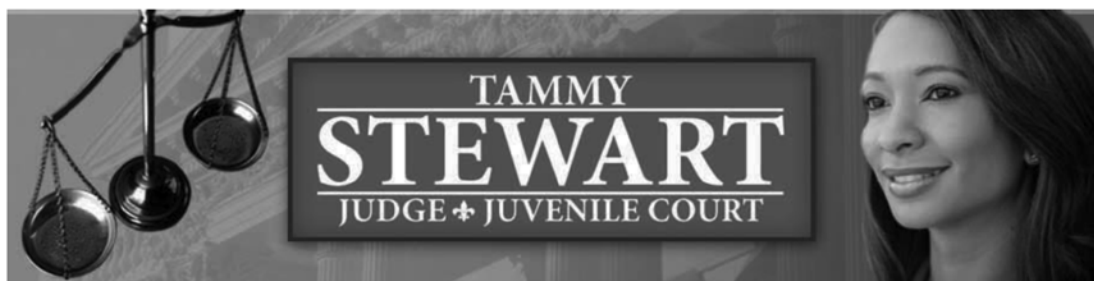
"It was the crux of the first leg of the president's economic strategy," said Emanuel, who went on to say that Obama administration is now in the economic agenda's second phase which leans toward the budget.

The third and final phase deals with comprehensive financial regulatory reform, of which the aim is to ensure that another bailout crisis doesn't occur.

But Emanuel said the main goal of the overall (economic) agenda is to see how passing the budget reflects Obama's five-year economic plan.

"The president has assembled a terrific cabinet...he has taken on more than any other president in our country," said Jarrett.

She said people are asking why Obama is taking on so much; his response has been, 'we have no choice,' said Jarrett, adding, because healthcare, public education, energy and unemployment are all tied to the economy, everything has to be tackled at once - rather than in sequence.



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Dale Atkins, Clerk of Civil Court
Arthur Morrell, Clerk of Criminal Court
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Cynthia Willard Lewis, Councilmember
James Carter, City Councilmember
Cynthia Hedge-Morrell, City Councilmember
Ann Duplessis, State Senator
David Heitmeier, State Senator



Leon Cannizzaro

J.P. Morrell, State Senator
Cedric Richmond, State Representative
Jeff Arnold, State Representative
Girod Jackson, State Representative
Juan LaFonta, State Representative
Lambert C. Boissiere, III, Public Service Commissioner
Brett A. Bonin, Orleans Parish School Board Member
Ira Thomas, Orleans Parish School Board Member
Cynthia Cade, Orleans Parish School Board Member
Seth J. Bloom, Orleans Parish School Board Member
Lourdes Moran, Orleans Parish School Board Member
Thomas A. Robichaux, Orleans Parish School Board Member

Woody Koppel, Orleans Parish School Board Member
Tom Arnold, Assessor
Claude Mauberret, Assessor
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**New Orleans
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New Orleans Hornets, NBA Teams, Major Corporations and Volunteers Bring Hope to New Orleans Youth

The New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD) is working to restore New Orleans communities by rebuilding facilities that house the athletic, recreational, educational and cultural programs which shut down following the effects of Hurricane Katrina. City operated playgrounds, stadiums, basketball courts, swimming pools and multi-purpose centers throughout the city suffered an estimated \$60 million in damages from the effects of the storms of 2005.

Today, operating with a staff of only 55 instead of the 264 it employed before the storms and with just 60 percent of its pre-Katrina budget, NORD has overcome intransigent federal red tape and funding challenges to become the beacon of recovery for the city. Under the leadership of NORD Director Larry Barabino Jr., with the guidance of Mayor C.



Photo Credit: www.cityofno.com

Ray Nagin, NORD has been able to reopen 80 of its 136 facilities, and reestablish successful youth sport seasons, afterschool tutorials, classes in dance, music and art, and summer camp programs for over 5,000 of the city's youth.

"We're working very hard to

return everything our communities lost after the storms including those centers that our youth became so accustomed to using for various reasons," said Barabino. "NORD was devastated, but thanks to the commitment of volunteer organizations and the generosity of corporations and foundations, we have been able to provide New Orleans youth with safe, wholesome, fun and educational activities."

Barabino has created a coalition of corporate, non-profit and community volunteer organizations including NIKE, Operation Kids, Wal-Mart and KaBOOM! to rebuild New Orleans' basketball courts and playgrounds. Last fall, over 2,300 kids, ages 5-14, ran, blocked and tackled in the Youth Bantam Football League with partnerships with NCAA Football and Allstate Sugar Bowl, and supported by New Orleans Saints su-

perstars Drew Brees and Duece McKallister.

Professional athletes such as New Orleans native Chris Duhon, point guard for the New York Knicks, have refurbished 16 basketball courts, and entertainers including hip hop artist Lil' Wayne have provided funds toward renovations of Harrell Playground. New Orleans Hornets owner George Shinn has committed to refurbishing 5 basketball courts and Hornet's guard Chris Paul has personally committed to refurbishing 3 courts.

"The entire Hornets family remains committed to providing local children and families with resources to help them succeed in life," said Hornets Owner George Shinn. "Whether it's donating education materials such as books and computers or building playgrounds and basketball courts to encourage teamwork and play, we

are determined to do our part to revitalize and strengthen the city of New Orleans. We are proud to partner with the New Orleans Recreation Department and look forward to continuing our work with them to renew the spirit of this great city."

It is easy to understand Barabino's commitment to NORD and its revitalization. A New Orleans native and alumnus of the NORD programs, he once played as a youngster in the parks and recreation centers that were flooded and then shut down to New Orleans youth. After spending years as a volunteer for NORD activities, Barabino was appointed by Mayor Nagin as NORD's interim director in June 2006 when it was most vulnerable. By February 2007, he was named director of the department.

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."ⁱ 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.ⁱⁱ

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 tobacconists 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 and learn more.

ⁱ 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>

ⁱⁱ 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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Obama Administration Visits New Orleans



Janet Napolitano and Shaun Donovan tour SUNO with the university's chancellor Victor Ukpolo. Photo Credit: www.cityofno.com

Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, and Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Shaun Donovan, visited New Orleans on March 5 for a tour of the city with Mayor Nagin and other local and state officials.

The visitors wanted to see firsthand where the City of New Orleans and the surrounding parishes are in their recovery process and to learn about the challenges of recovery. The tour brigade stopped at three locations: Southern University of New Orleans, where Chancellor Victor Ukpolo led a tour of the campus; a St. Bernard Project home in Chalmette, where veteran Larry Scurich showed visitors his home of fifty

years that is still in need of repair; and the new Desire Redevelopment

in the upper 9th Ward.

There, Secretaries Donovan and Napolitano held an official press conference to announce hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to Louisiana to stimulate the long-term recovery process. Donovan announced HUD's acceptance of the state's \$438 million plan to support the production of affordable rental housing, commercial and agricultural business, and coastal restoration. Napolitano announced that FEMA will provide Public Assistance Funding for several public safety facilities, including NOPD District Stations 5 and 7, and NOFD Station 36. Overall, it was a day of positive announcements for the City of New Orleans and of public support from the Obama Administration.



Several government officials at the state, local, and national levels gathered for the tour of the New Orleans area. Photo Credit: www.cityofno.com

New Orleanians Will Return to the Polls to Vote on April 4

Registered voters in Orleans Parish will have to cast their ballots for three judgeships and one state representative seat. The candidates for each position are listed below.

Judge, Juvenile Court, Section B

1 to be elected

Jason E. Cantrell, Democrat

Tammy Stewart, Democrat

Gary Wainwright, Democrat

Judge, Municipal Court

1 to be elected

Ranord J. Darensburg, No Party

Joseph "Joe" Landry, Democrat

Philip Montelepre, Republican

Kenneth Plaisance, No Party

Judge, Traffic Court, Division C

1 to be elected

Ray A. Bright, Democrat

Mark J. Shea, Democrat

State Representative,

97th Representative District

1 to be elected

Jared Brossett, Democrat

Oliver "Bishop OC" Coleman, Republican

Leroy Doucette, Democrat

Ambrose J. Pratt, Democrat

"Nik" Richard, Democrat

Dalton Savvoir, Democrat

Report on Status of Blacks in Louisiana To Be Released This Month

The Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus (LLBC), in partnership with the Nelson Mandela School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs at Southern University, has analyzed the status of Blacks throughout the state of Louisiana within the following areas: Economics and Wealth; Education; and Health and Wellness. From the compiled findings, the LLBC will release a statistical report on Saturday, March 21, 2009 at its inaugural State of Black Louisiana Conference.

The State of Black Louisiana Conference, inspired by the National Urban League's State of Black America, will be held at Southern University in Baton Rouge, LA and is sponsored by the LLBC, LLBC Foundation, Southern University, JP Morgan, Shaw, Inc., and Pfizer. The event will begin at 8:30a.m and end at 4:30p.m. The keynote speaker is Mr. Marc Morial, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Urban League and a former member of the LLBC. The report includes a Racial Disparity Index and articles focused on particular issues within each area authored by Dr. Rochelle Gilbert (Education), Dr. Frank Martin (Economics and Wealth), and Mrs. Danita Muse, M.S.W (Health and Wellness).

During the conference, panel discussions will provide in depth information about the report's findings. There is a special article on the state of Black Farmers in Louisiana authored by Dr. Rafash Brew. During the conference on Saturday, March 21 there will be panel discussions about the report's findings. Policy discussion sessions will also be held to determine the best practices for addressing the problems identified and develop a legislative policy to initiate positive outcomes.

Probation Rescinded for Xavier College of Pharmacy

Xavier University of Louisiana (Xavier) and the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) announced late last week that a resolution has been reached regarding recent litigation initiated by Xavier in Federal District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

After a recess of the Feb. 25, 2009 court proceedings during which the parties disagreed as to the interpretation of certain ACPE policies addressing notice to Xavier prior to an ACPE probation determination, the parties were able to amicably resolve the lawsuit. In the interest of fairness, ACPE has agreed to rescind its January 2009 probation decision, remove the probation notation from the ACPE website, and notify relevant federal, regional, and state agencies of this action.

The University has dismissed the lawsuit against ACPE. The Xavier University College of Pharmacy remains and has remained fully accredited throughout its 82-year history. To protect the confidentiality and integrity of the accreditation process, and to be respectful of Xavier and ACPE, the parties have agreed that no additional information regarding this matter will be publicly available.

City Council Takes Email Issue to Court

Brittany Odom
Data News Weekly Intern

Just weeks after New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin found himself in hot water after a slew of e-mails disappeared from his office's server, the City Council's e-mails were being handed off to an activist lawyer.

Unbeknownst to council members and the City Attorney's office and against standard procedure, attorney Tracie Washington filed a request for release of the e-mails of City Council members, but Washington didn't request e-mails for all Council members and she didn't follow proper protocol.

Instead, Washington filed a

request with the Management Information Systems office on Dec. 3. Sanitation Director Veronica White gave Washington a CD with the e-mails of the four white City Council members and a staff member for the Recovery Director, also white. Normally, requests are to be filed with the city's Law Department, which oversees and approves public records requests.

The Council was informed of the release of the e-mails, dating back from 2006, by City Attorney Penya Moses-Fields on March 3.

While Washington's request wasn't illegal, White's actions went against City Hall protocol and if Washington releases the

information to the public, legal repercussions could follow.

In a statement on their website, the Council expressed great concern over the release and said that the messages may contain privileged information that would be illegal if exposed for public viewing.

Members said that e-mails may contain attorney-client communications, personal information, communications between Council members and their family members, and information about pending litigation and federal investigations.

"The Council's special counsel notified Councilmembers that the release of these Council emails

may constitute a serious breach of legal rights and protections afforded the City Council, its constituents, and the City of New Orleans." The statement read.

The mayor said that the situation is being reviewed by his chief administrative officer Brenda Hatfield, but called White's actions "unusual" in an interview with WVUE-TV.

It hasn't been decided if White will face punishment for releasing the e-mails, but on Mar. 5,

Civil District Court Judge Lloyd Medley Jr. barred Washington from releasing the e-mails to the public.

On March 12, Judge Medley ordered Washington to provide him with the compact discs containing the emails within 24 hours. The judge and his staff will review the emails to determine whether any of the messages are subject to legal privilege.

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A Perfect Blend

Mario Abney and the Avant Garde Quartet



Dionne Character
Data News Weekly Columnist

I took a stroll through Treme' down to the French Quarter and I couldn't help but notice the perfect fairytale weather, which enhanced the unique majestic atmosphere that only a city like New Orleans can produce.

I stopped off at Community Coffee Shop at Rue Royal and St. Philip Street and one could not help but to be taken aback to the days of American Renaissance, when New Orleans was in full splendor.

I guess New Orleans is somewhat like a time machine where you can go and travel back in time, while enjoying a

magnificent and colorful Creole history.

As I sat down and stirred my Café au Lait, I couldn't help but pay heed to the sounds of Mario Abney and the Avant Garde Quartet who came together at the café, unrehearsed to create a vibration of sound, timing, and melody with the perfect blend of saxophone, flute, upright bass and drums that set the jazzy neo-soul tone and impression all residence and visitors have come and expect to enjoy.

The music was perfect, as it soothe my soul and complimented the rich smooth taste of coffee that helped to

satisfy my thoughts and lifted my cares away. It was an eclectic evening of music and people that only New Orleans could bring.

New Orleans truly has the perfect blend of race and culture, just like the coffee and cream of its historic signature beverage.

If you have any comments, questions or upcoming events, please email me at dasolediva@yahoo.com.

PIPELINE TO THE PEOPLE

by Corey Anderson

It may seem like years have passed, but the effects of Hurricane Ike's landfall in September of 2008 are still evident in the city of Galveston, TX. Recently, Xavier University sent a group of student-volunteers to help the city regain its independence after the storm.

Desmetris Jones:



"I can relate to them and it made me want to help even more. We helped an older couple and I think

it helped them alot and they were very pleased. They were really appreciative of the work that we did."

Javier Davis:



"I really believed we helped out because of their remarks and the looks on their faces. It really

made me feel like I went there for a real cause. We did about a week's worth of work in just a few hours. I just wanted to do do what I could do to help out."

Christian Joiner:



I was affected first-hand by Hurricane Katrina and I know what it feels like to lose everything. I remember what it felt

like to have volunteers come and it made me feel comforted. I wanted to give the people in Galveston the same comfort."

Jerlicia Gooden:



"The experience in Galveston made me realize that it's not just people from New Orleans struggling to rebuild their lives. I saw an elderly couple throw away precious memories and it made me appreciate what I have."

Shoot Ya Best Shot!

This issue's Shoot Ya Best Shot! features photos from a recent talent show. The show featured several designers and models to showcase the elaborate clothing.



Naderah McCormick modeling a dress from Gwen's Bridal.



Tommy Knighton in Kano's Designs.



Bethany in Donnean's Designs



Alicia Howard in Donnean's Designs.



Patrice Elizabeth in Kano's Designs



Group photo of all the models and talent from the show.



Model and CEO of Chic Novelle Orleans Model and Talent Agency, Rowena McCormick-Robinson.

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



Kurt Pellerin with models from the show.



Naderah McCormick and Alicia Howard

Center Gives AIDS Patients New Hope

Leiloni De Gruy

WATTS/WILLOWBROOK, Calif. (NNPA) — The doors opened last week on the S. Mark Taper Foundation Center, a 2,500-square-foot one-stop shop of vital services for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Founded by the non-profit AIDS Project Los Angeles, the new facility, located on the campus of the former Martin Luther King Jr.-Harbor Hospital, includes a full-service dental clinic with three operatories, a waiting room, a one-on-one consultation room, a lab, a sterilization room, a kitchen for food demonstrations and a food pantry.

The new center will complement the nearby OASIS Clinic HIV/AIDS Program, which provides medical care such as hormone therapy and care management, and the Drew Center for AIDS Research, Education and Services (Drew CARES), an affiliate of the adjacent Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science created to

provide outreach services to the community.

"I always had a fear of dentists [because of] the health of my teeth," said Wanda, a client and 55-year-old Los Angeles Unified School District retiree who would not disclose her full name but says she sexually contracted the disease from her late partner, an intravenous drug user. "Then I had a phobia because at the time people didn't understand HIV and AIDS so I was afraid to tell the dentist not knowing that they know [just by] looking in your mouth," she said. "I was afraid that they might sue me or I might get in trouble because of the bleeding. I didn't know the complexity of the HIV [disease] itself. I was still learning. So, I just started letting my teeth go because I was scared to go to the dentist, not realizing the infection that I was causing myself."

As a result she suffered from complications with eating and upset stomach due to tooth abscesses.

After a long, painful wait, her physician at the OASIS Clinic, recommended AIDS Project L.A. Dental Services near downtown Los Angeles.

"I felt more cared about. They talked to me to calm my fears and walked me through every procedure," she added. "We talk about different things like where I'm at with the virus and how I feel. ... They make me feel good, like somebody loves me. You know, like I'm not out here by myself."

According to APLA, "more than 70 percent of HIV-positive people in L.A. County need dental care, but fewer than 10 percent receive it," due to financial hardship, lack of transportation, and the fear of letting their status being known.

But APLA Executive Director Craig Thompson, who has worked for the organization for almost 12 years, added that many who attempt to get dental services from normal dental clinics are turned away.

"In the early days the discrimination was against the fear of HIV. Now, we have universal precautions. So, no one should be worried about that but they still are," he said. "The bigger issue really for most [dentists] is that HIV dentistry takes longer because [the] HIV disease has oral manifestations and it actually complicates normal dental procedures."

For a patient without HIV, he said, a typical visit or procedure can take 30 minutes.

For someone with HIV, it may take 45 minutes or more. "So dentists don't [particularly] want to serve people with HIV because they don't get paid anymore and it takes twice the time. There has been a significant economic disincentive for them to do it."

Steven Vitero, a medical director at APLA Dental Services who previously owned his own private practice for 18 years, said that during his practice "There was so much that was unknown and private dentists didn't want to treat patients anymore. They were afraid of the unknown, there were even classes on how to legally get rid of patients."

Even today, Vitero said, he talks to new clients who say they have been turned away, sometimes from dentists they've gone to for several years.

Some oral conditions include fungal infections, chronic gum disease, shingles and intraoral herpes, but Kaposi's Sarcoma — dark lesions — remains the most frequent oral malignancy.

In rare cases, "we will see certain lesions that are rare in the general population with a person with a poor immune system. We'll see warts, we'll see fungal infections ... but they're rarely seen, usually those are indicators that the T-cells are down, that the immune system is not working as well as it should be," Vitero added.

This is why, he said, dental care is just as vital to those living with HIV/AIDS as is medical care and nutrition.

The new center's Necessities of Life Program food pantry will coincide with the work they do at the facility.

"Proper nutrition is a powerful tool for the successful management of HIV disease," said a statement from APLA. "People living with HIV often have deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals needed by the immune system to fight off infection."

Based on a 2,000-calorie diet, every Thursday from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., clients in the program will receive free pre-bagged groceries with dairy products, frozen meats, whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, canned and dry goods as well as personal hygiene products and cleaning products donated by vendors. Each person can access any of the organization's nine food pantries a maximum of four times a month — equivalent of up to 16 bags of groceries. The pantry is expected to service 400 people annually.

One of those clients will be a 65-year-old retired labor worker, who was diagnosed with HIV in 1997. She volunteers at many of the food pantry sites as does she make her own four monthly visits. Receiving a small check each month for disability, she says, she wouldn't be able to afford medication and food without the help of the program.

"They give you good nutritional food so you stay healthy," she said.

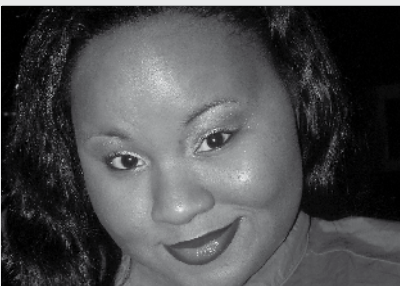
NOLP program manager Tonya Hendricks said people line up at some of their other sites three hours before opening. "For many of our clients, we are their primary source of food," she said. "In our program, we think of ourselves as trying to take away the struggle of 'Do I buy food for my family or do I get my medications this week?'"

In addition to an income screening, eligibility is contingent on each person seeing a dietitian or participate in a number of nutritional classes that focus on such things as diabetes, high blood pressure, food-water safety and how to understand food labels.

APLA Dental Services, established in 1985, was the nation's first community-based dental clinic exclusively for people with HIV/AIDS and serves an average of 2,500 clients between its two already-established facilities and expects to service up to an additional 500 people at its new Watts/Willowbrook facility.

Fees and co-pays are also based on income, but "the reality is that 95 percent of the people that will use the dental clinic will be poor enough that they have no co-pay or they will have dentic-al," said Thompson. Their income cannot exceed more than \$1,395 per month. "The other five percent typically have a small co-pay."

Pissed Off Weekly



Thais Mills
Data News Columnist

What pisses you off about ya hairdresser?

It's well into a month after Mardi Gras and I still have that classic Bourbon St. smell in my hair. Now before you laugh, smell your own hair!!!!!! lol... No matter the reason we pour into our salon of choice and from the neck up we get the workxxxx. They "shampoo," do the do and more to us and we wouldn't have it any other way...

That's what you love...but what pisses you off about going to the hair dresser? I'll confess first... I get my weave done in Houston, but get my healthy on in New Orleans... Now, I travel hundreds of miles just for the perfect lay out if I'm not lace fronting it!! lol... It pisses me off, but I created this for myself... TAG YOU'RE IT!!!! I walked around in hopes to find ladies (and Gents) who'd share a POW with me...

Enjoy what's below and thanks for not hitting me in the face when I walk up to you guys..... I love ya like crawfish!

"I hate when I call my barber and he says he has one more ahead of me, then I get there and there's 3+ peeps looking

at me like I'm &)*^#)@ crazy.. It happens on Saturdays so now I get shaved on Tuesdays cuz he's a good dayum cutsman !!!" — Dwayne K. of New Orleans East

Note to Dwayne: He just made MO' money don't hate it's the recession!!! lol..

"Telling my hairdresser to trim my ends and she CUTTS my hair off like I'm looking for the Halle Berry or something!!!! That's my girl though, and it was a cute style that I rocked for a while. " —Catherine L. Uptown New Orleans

"My hairdresser refuses to color my gray... She says it's beautiful and I'll grow to love it. She's been my hairdresser for over 20 years and it's like she's my Mom. My husband does love it, but for once I'd like her to stop being so bossy!" — Ms. Dot Uptown New Orleans.

Thanks to all the hairdressers and barber shops who let me crash their place for my quotes!!! You're awesome!

City of New Orleans
Office of Recovery and Development Administration
Disabled and Elderly Owner Occupied Rehabilitation Program

The Office of Recovery and Development Administration is soliciting interested homeowners who are sixty-two (62) years or older and/or disabled to **REGISTER** for the Disabled and Elderly Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation (DE-OOR) Program. The DE-OOR program is a deferred, forgivable loan program and will assist elderly and disabled homeowners in New Orleans to repair their properties to meet the City's Housing Standards Code, HUD's Housing Quality Standards Code and Lead-Based Paint regulations. Many New Orleans homeowners have been challenged in the rebuilding effort to get back into their homes since Hurricane Katrina. The DE-OOR program is designed to facilitate the efforts of homeowners in making their recovery more complete.

Currently there is a budget of \$10 million of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for the DE-OOR program. **The proposed amount for each DE-OOR project is up to \$35,000 per house.**

The DE-OOR program will be available to all eligible New Orleans homeowners (*sixty-two (62) years or older and/or disabled*).

DE-OOR Program Requirements:

1. The homeowner must live in their property (if habitable),
A current Homestead Exemption will be required for proof of residency
2. The property must be located in Orleans Parish,
3. The homeowner/ applicant must be 62 years or older or Disabled (SSI award letter required)
4. The household income cannot exceed 80% of the area median income when adjusted for family size.

Family Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Income	33,500	38,300	43,050	47,850	51,700	55,500	59,350	63,150

Eligible applicants will be selected by public lottery. The program is available Citywide, servicing approximately three hundred (300) applicants.

How to apply

Registration Cards will be available March 16 -20, 2009 from 9:00 am. to 3:00 pm at the following locations:

Homeowners can:

1. **Register on the City's website:** www.cityofno.com

2. **Register at the following Community Centers:**

Arthur Monday Center
111 Newton Street
New Orleans, LA 70114

St. Bernard Community Center
1500 Lafreniere St.
New Orleans, LA 70122

Central City Multi-Purpose
2020 Jackson Ave
New Orleans, LA 70113

3. **Complete a Registration card at ORDA, 1340 Poydras Street, 10th and 11th Floors**

4. **Clip the Registration card from below**

Join us at the Public Lottery Drawing!

March 30, 2009 at 10:30 a.m

Gallier Hall

545 Saint Charles Ave

New Orleans, LA 70130



City of New Orleans
Office of Recovery and Development Administration
Disabled and Elderly Owner Occupied Rehabilitation Program
Registration Card
One Card per Household
Please Print

OWNER NAME: _____

PROPERTY ADDRESS: _____ ZIP: _____

(Circle one): Disabled or Elderly

TELEPHONE: _____ ALT. NUMBER: _____

The completion of the registration card does not guarantee an interview. **One (1)** registration card per household will be accepted. Winners need not be present at the drawing.

Let's Fight for our Share of the Stimulus



Harry C. Alford
Data Columnist

Beyond the Rhetoric

The Stimulus Bill has just been passed and I have already heard people state "Let's hold them accountable" or "Let's see what they do this time".

That is the logic of a loser. Frederick Douglass said it in 1862 that "Power concedes nothing without a demand...you may not get all that you pay for but you will definitely pay for whatever you get".

Those words still hold true and it is us, African Americans, who must collectively organize and pursue our fair share of the act. This is a chance to level the playing field that has for too long been tilted against us due to our lack of organization and focus.

Elected officials will not and cannot do

this for us. They legislate and must please special interests not the general interest. Most of our politicians are democrats and the orders come directly from the Democratic National Committee (DNC). The interests of Blacks will not be settled there or at the RNC. It is big money that rules there and we don't have big money. We have votes but those can be manipulated by big money. In the end, it is big money that stirs our political landscape.

The National Black Chamber of Commerce will form at least three committees to pursue these opportunities. There will be a Transportation Committee that will monitor and be active in the funds coming from the US Department of Transportation – namely infrastructure projects.

There will be an Energy Committee that will do the same regarding the mammoth funding for energy related projects. The US Department of Energy will expand ten times within the next four years and the opportunities will be plenty.

Finally, we will form a Section 3 committee to monitor all monies coming from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). All new jobs coming from HUD funds must comply with Section 3 of the HUD Act.

That means that 30 percent of all new jobs are to go to people living in public housing or under the poverty level. Ten percent of all contracts are to be set aside for Section 3

businesses (businesses that hire Section 3 residents). In 1998, there were 5,000 recipients of HUD funding and only 3 were complying. The NBCC took this on and today there are 1,300 in compliance which means we have 3,700 more to convert.

We will measure our progress by the number of contracts awarded and the number of jobs produced. We commit to doing whatever we can and encourage other organizations and community leaders to join in. It is the only way it is going to get done.

Traditionally, there are four major obstacles to deal with. One will be labor unions, particularly construction unions, who have made a science out of "cherry picking" jobs in our urban areas and assigning them to people who live in suburban areas. Look at your freeways in the morning and evening and see all those people coming into our communities to work and to flee with the money at the end of the day.

That's why our unemployment is more than double that of whites. We need to deal with this. Secondly, the Drug Trafficking Industry will oppose our efforts. Our intent is to employ people who will live productive lives. Their intent is to addict and poison those same people and provide them with "hell" on earth. We will be going after their market share in our communities.

The third opponent is the Poverty Industrial Complex. This group prospers from receiving government funding to nurse

and baby sit the unemployed or those living in poverty. They, too, do not want to see success with the Stimulus Bill as it will cut into their base for poverty pimping. Finally, there is the Prison Industrial Complex which feeds off the previous three.

They want these young adults in jail and then going back to jail once they are released. They make money from criminal behavior and lopsided justice. A productive, working Black population is their worst nightmare.

We will structure strategic plans for each committee and report monthly. Our progress will be posted on our website. It is our prayer to change the culture of African Americans. This will only happen when we decide to take charge and do it for ourselves.

No one else is going to do it and no one being paid by others has the ability to make change. It won't be easy and those four obstacles will fight back very hard. But we have God on our side and this time we won't wait on others to do something they cannot possibly do or have never done.

It's on us to seize the moment. Look in the mirror and you will find part of the solution. Yes we can!

Harry Alford is the co-founder, President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce, Inc. Website: www.nationalbcc.org.

Students, Not Sharecroppers



George C. Curry
NNPA

Prior to the American Civil War African-Americans were enslaved and opportunity for education was limited to wealthy White Americans. Following the Civil War, the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution was enacted, granting legal freedom to Black people.

Yet, the unGodly institution of enslavement was replaced by one of perpetual economic exploitation known as sharecropping.

Sharecropping was structured to offer land to newly-freed African-Americans and poor Whites in consideration for "sharing" the profits derived from the harvesting of crops between landed (former planta-

tion owners) and those who worked the land. What resulted was a "stacked deck" against common people. No matter how hard the poor worked, at year's end money was nearly always "owed" to land owners, causing a perpetual cycle of debt.

Meanwhile, the United States government backed away from its moral obligation to protect all citizens, regardless of race or resources, and only a pittance of the poor was permitted to pursue higher education in colleges and universities.

Today, not much has changed. The poor still pay more for social and educational opportunity.

For example, the National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education recently reported that the cost of a college education has risen nearly three times the cost of living, and outpaced the cost of food, housing, and health care. In fact, the report cited a 439% increase in college tuition from 1982 to 2009, compared to a 147 percent increase in median family income.

At least two factors account for such a precipitous rise in money for college: A shift from financial grants to loans, and a further abandonment of educational opportunity by the federal government. Time was, when poor students could qualify for a Pell Grant (enacted by U.S. Senator Clai-

borne Pell in 1964) and pay 75 percent of colleges costs.

Thirty years later, what is left of Pell Grants and similar ones only provide 20 percent of a student's scholarship needs.

Equally devastating has been a fall in funding by the federal government to institutions of higher education, particularly the 122 Historically Black Colleges and Universities that serve over 500,000 Black college students. While most global governments who call themselves democracies fund public education, the United States government only contributes 9 percent of public educational dollars.

In America, children left behind are mostly Black and Brown. Annually, 1.2 million students do not graduate from high school. Of those, nearly 70 percent are African-American and Latino.

Consequently, financial lending institutions prey upon all students. However, poor students of color fare worst.

The report issued by National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education also found, "...on average, students from working and poor families must pay 40% of family income to enroll in public four-year colleges."

Middle-income and upper-income families pay 25 percent and 13 percent, respec-

tively.

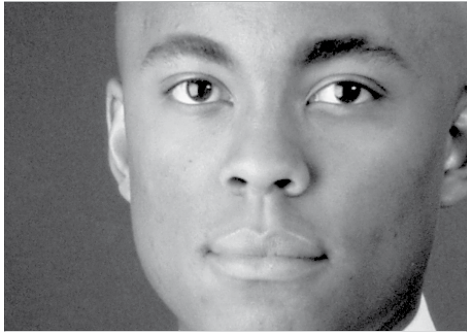
As it was nearly 150 years ago, the burden of debt for the ordinary folk is disproportionately felt. At the center of shame are financial lending institutions such as Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, and Citigroup who borrow money from the federal government at 1 percent and sell the same money to students between 4 percent and 8 percent. In the worst cases, students and their families have no option but the use of credit cards to finance education, at the rate of 20 percent or higher. If banks can borrow money at 1 percent, the same should apply to students. One set of rules.

I agree with the Rainbow PUSH Coalition as they recommend:

- Reduce interest rates on all student loans to 1 percent
 - Extend grace period for loan repayment from 6 months to 18 months for students who graduate
 - Eliminate penalties assessed to colleges/universities for student loan defaults
 - Restore Pell Grant allocation to provide funding for average yearly cost of private education
- Students should not be forced to be sharecroppers in scholarship.

Creating Our Community Leaders of America

Great men and women don't always start out to be great. Many times, the truly great in our society achieve greatness in the pursuit of individual goals and ideals.



Farrah Gray
NNPA Columnist

Last week while in Chicago, I went for a quiet walk to clear my head. Immediately, I noticed the scent of stale dank night air interrupted by the jolting sound of police sirens racing recklessly by on the chaotic inner city streets clearly giving a sense of the economic devastation the recession has caused in many communities.

As I walked the littered neighborhoods notorious for gang violence, I wondered if the economic stimulus promises would make any real difference and even if the money does trickle down to the grassroots people, will it be managed wisely on critical issues such as child care, health care and education that have reached a breaking point within most communities across

America.

The reality, a battle is under way but not in some distant land rather within our own communities. It is a battle for the heart and soul of our kids. It is tough for a kid growing up today to find hope, guidance, and reason as our community social structures rapidly deteriorate.

Already schools across America (for example, Chicago, Florida, and Oregon) talk of shortened four day school weeks to save money. This all comes at a time when America must develop better educated working individuals able to compete. If the traditional school and community religious support systems continue to fail, where will our kids turn to develop the character needed to keep America great?

Leaders, Entrepreneurs, Fathers and Mothers are created, and by giving America's at-risk youth a head start to proudly develop as our future CEO'S, entrepreneurs, and civic and corporate leaders.

They have to come in contact with a range of "opportunity factors" and skills. These skills can be gained through education, as well as the expertise and experience of others.

The burden has now more than any time since the Great Depression, fallen upon the grassroots people in our "community villages" to mobilize collective efforts particularly focused on educating all kids.

The parents of our communities must recognize the importance of mentoring all kids to develop the character necessary to become the leaders, entrepreneurs, fathers and mothers that can successfully navigate the competitive economic landscape of the future.

Until we begin to recognize that all young people can make a positive contribution to life, the public-at-large will constantly fail in our efforts to reach the most marginalized leading to dreadful scenarios. Recognizing the new direction will require sacrifice, resources, and a clear understanding by all that "no man is an island unto himself".

We are now truly in this journey together in an economic and environmental health sense.

How can we achieve such grand dreams many cynics jest? Often we answer this question by achieving collaborative community steps on a grassroots level over time.

The concept of "Baby Steps", each individual contribution adding to the collective sum of the whole.

In 2007, the average fee for full-time, center-based child care ranged from over \$3,800 to \$14,600 annually, depending on where the family lived and the age of the child.

Imagine the cost savings parents in your local neighborhoods could realize by or-

ganizing shared child care, or baby-sitting groups for working parents on a rotating schedule basis.

Imagine the tremendous neighborhood benefit, if seven parents volunteered for a few hours after school; each with a specific educational talent taking turns one afternoon per week mentoring a group of kids in math, reading, writing, history, music, sports, and art.

It is through high quality, cost effective grassroots efforts that we will all achieve success resulting in truly creating the community leaders of America.

The answers we seek to complex challenges in life are often not found by throwing money at the issues but rather turning to the powerful tangible possibilities contained within the individual communities. The greatest strengths of our society will always be found in our 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 or his web site at <http://www.drfarrahgray.com/>.

Data News Weekly

Shoot Ya Rest Shot!

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GREAT PARTY? **Your Picture Here**

TOUCHING FAMILY MOMENT? **Your Picture Here**

NEW LOVE? **Your Picture Here**

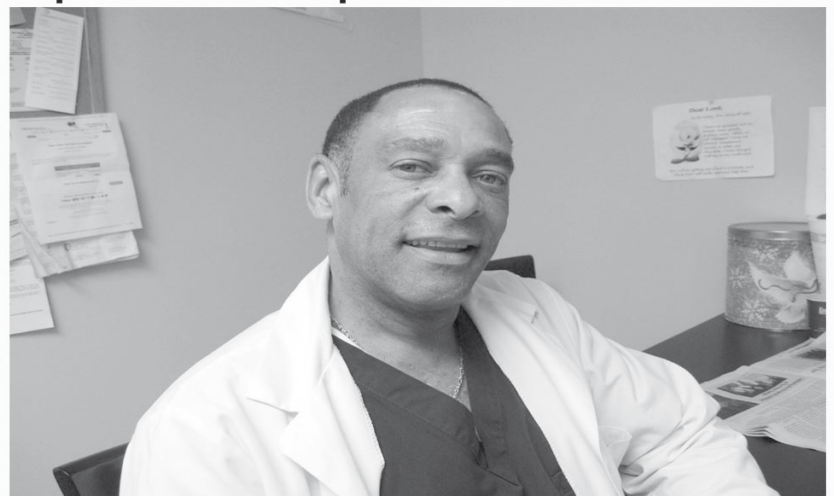
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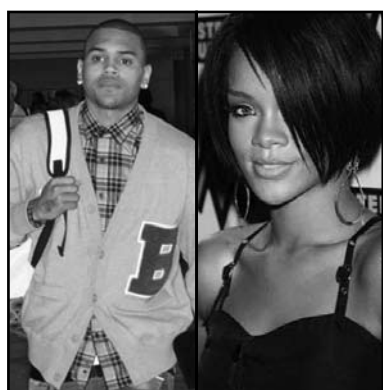
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504-241-8214

Chris Brown Hit With Two Felonies, Rihanna Intends to Testify

Special to the NNPA from the St. Louis American



Chris Brown

Rihanna

(NNPA) - Allhiphop.com is reporting that Rihanna intends to testify in court if the Los Angeles district attorney calls her as a witness in her assault case involving Chris Brown, according to her lawyer. He is set for arraignment April 6.

Donald Etra, counsel to Rihanna, said that she would comply with the legal requirements of her with authorities.

Brown, 19, was formally charged March 5 with two felonies for assault and making criminal threats in an alleged violent argument that resulted in a brutal beating of his girlfriend.

A shocking image of the 21-year-old's wounds was leaked to the internet, but Rihanna hasn't commented at the urging of police.

Rihanna didn't attempt to enforce a "no contact" in court proceedings, but Etra stated that she could report any additional infractions to authorities against her.

Brown faces more than four years in prison if given the full penalty for all charges against him.

His arraignment will take place April 6. Information from Allhiphop.com and eurweb.com contributed to this report.

Study: Children of Imprisoned Parents Suffer Adverse, Long-lasting Impact

James Wright

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - When Lawrence Miller was in jail in Prince George's County for receiving stolen property in June 2007 and in the District's jail for violating probation in September, he missed his friends and close family members with whom he interacted on a daily basis. But the one person he missed the most was his 9-year-old son.

"I had no contact with my son while I was locked up and that really hurt," the 31-year-old D.C. resident said. "His mother, who I say is a friend, would not bring him to the jail in Maryland [Upper Marlboro] or D.C. jail to see me. Because of that, I missed out on some things.

"I did have a chance to write him a letter but that was the extent of the contact. I wish I could have seen him."

Miller is an example of what some social scientists and professionals in public policy say is an increasingly disturbing trend: parents who are incarcerated.

According to a report released Feb. 9 by the D.C.-based Sentencing Project, mass incarceration has had significant and long-lasting impacts on American society and particularly on communities of color.

"There is a growing awareness that parents who go to prison do not suffer the consequences alone; the children of incarcerated parents often lose contact with their parent and visits are sometimes rare," said Marc Mauer, executive director of The Sentencing Project and co-author of the report, "Incarcerated Parents and their Children: Trends 1991-2007...Children of incarcerated parents are more likely to drop out of school, engage in delinquency and subsequently be incarcerated themselves."

The report was based on statistics released by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Statistics citing data from 1997, 2004 and 2007.

"There is a growing awareness that parents who go to prison do not suffer the consequences alone..."

The report states that in 2007, there were 1.7 million children in the United States with a parent



For Lawrence Miller, the most painful part of being in jail in the District and Maryland was not being able to interact with his 9-year-old son whose mother, Credit: James Wright/Afro-American Newspapers

in prison, more than 70 percent of them children of color. The report presents other disturbing statistics such as:

*One in 43 American children has a parent in prison. In terms of race, it is one in 15 Black children, one in 42 Latinos compared to Whites, which is one in 111.

*In 2007, there were 809,800 parents incarcerated in state and federal prisons, an increase of 79 percent since 1991.

*In 2007, 52 percent of all incarcerated men and women were parents.

*Two-thirds of the incarcerated parent population is non-White.

Studies from government and non-governmental organizations, such as the Children's Defense Fund, have confirmed that 70 percent of Black children are raised by a single parent, overwhelmingly the mother. And the number of mothers who are incarcerated has gone up considerably.

"Children of incarcerated parents are more likely to drop out of school, engage in delinquency and subsequently be incarcerated themselves."

The report says that from 1991 to 2007, the number of incarcerated mothers increased by 122 percent compared to a rise of 76 percent for incarcerated fathers.

While the vast majority of children of male prisoners are living with their mothers, only 37 percent of the children of incarcerated women are living with their fathers, the report said.

The Rev. Donald Isaac is executive director of the East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership based in Southeast Washington. The mission of the organization is to help formerly incarcerated District ex-offenders get back into society.

Isaac said the report's statistics are not good but if you add the mother's absence, the problem is even more tragic.

"It's devastating to have the father in jail but when the mother is incarcerated, it's really bad," Isaac said. "Then the child is raised by grandparents or the foster care system. That creates an imbalance in the child who's conditioned to believe that he should have a mother and a father in their life.

"Plus, it's the mother that generally nurtures the child and when she is missing, a natural support system is non-existent."

In 2004, the report says that more than half of parents housed in a state correctional facility had never had a personal visit from their children and almost half of parents in a federal facility had experienced the same. The report said that a key factor in the limited contact was that the incarcerated parent was generally housed far from home.

In 2004, 62 percent of parents in a state facility and 84 percent of parents in a federal facility were housed more than 100 miles from their place of residence.

While the situation did not apply to Lawrence Miller, it is a

problem that has been raised by ex-offender advocates, D.C. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D) and D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty (D). They argue that since the closing of the Lorton, Va., facility, District offenders are sent to prisons in some cases thousands of miles away from their families.

These families cannot visit their incarcerated kin when they want because of the cost of travel and lodging involved.

Isaac said he's often observed ex-offenders who have served their time in facilities miles away become personally distant from what were once close family members.

"It seems that when the offender comes home, if that person has not had close contact with family, they become estranged and isolated," he said. "The children may know of them, but not know them personally and they do not bond. The estrangement might lead the offender back into criminal activity."

In its conclusion, the study recommended more family-friendly correctional systems in support of the offender and urged reconsideration of lengthy sentencing policies. Mauer of The Sentencing Project said public policy should face the ongoing realities of incarceration and how it can be used to keep families together.

"The problems talked about in this report are likely to worsen as maternal incarceration continues to rise," he said. "Awareness of the issue and its implications, along with action to reduce the impact of incarceration on children, is necessary in order to protect and support children when their parents are incarcerated."

Miller said he hated missing the little things, like his son receiving an award for a project at his school's science fair. He also admitted being upset that his mother's boyfriend spent more time with Miller's son than he did when he was in jail.

Nevertheless, Miller said he has a good relationship with his son.

"When I come around he shouts, 'Daddy, Daddy,' and he tells me about his PlayStation games, his little girlfriend, things like that," said Miller. "When I see his face, it is unconditional love."

Job Losses Continue to Soar, Blacks at 13.4 Percent

Dorothy Rowley
Special to the NNPA from the
Afro-American Newspapers

"Astounding" is how President Obama, speaking March 6 in Columbus, Ohio, characterized the nation's new Unemployment figures - a staggering 8.1 percent, the highest since 1983 as employers pick up the pace of layoffs.

Just as disconcerting is the sharp rise in unemployment among African-Americans - a whopping 13.4 percent in February. The last time the Black monthly unemployment rate was so high was in February 1994, as the nation was digging out of a recession, according to the Labor Department.

The latest figures continue to show job losses are large and widespread across nearly all major industry sectors. In January, the overall national unemployment rate was 7.6 percent. For Blacks, it was 12.6 percent.

Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate the Black unemployment rate has traditionally far exceeded that of other ethnic groups, especially Whites whose joblessness is normally half that of African-Americans.

Reasons for the disparity cited by experts include a gap in education between Blacks and Whites, marginal ties by African-American households to the labor market and a failure by policy-makers to equate Black unemployment to a crisis needing urgent attention.

The BLS Web site, which maintains Black unemployment data dating back to 1972, also states that the Black jobless rate reached its lowest level on record in April 2000, when it dropped to 7.0 percent.

While the agency's latest figures highlight a growing gender gap between Black men and women in the workforce, it also shows that the unemployment rate for Black men in February was 16.3

percent compared to 10.8 percent for Black women.

The Washington, D.C.-based Economic Policy Institute's Race, Ethnicity and Economy Program reported recently that Blacks are typically impacted by recessions and that it comes as no surprise that there is a significant increase in Black unemployment during such times.

Program Director Algernon Austin offered in a recent Chicago Sun article that lack of job opportunities for Blacks ultimately trickles down to teens, making it doubly hard for them to find work, particularly with summer on the horizon.

"We really want teens to work," Austin said. "Getting job experience now really helps people in their employment." The jobless rate for teens in general is just over 21 percent. However, Austin noted that the rate among Black teens has already surpassed 38 percent and that the figure could

be as high as 44 percent for teens still looking for work.

"The really sad and troubling part of this is most likely these aren't the peak numbers," Austin says in the article, suggesting that the peak will come in a year's time, "unless the stimulus comes in and works."

The latest figures continue to show job losses are widespread across nearly all major industry sectors. Construction and manufacturing jobs have been among the hardest hit, a continuing concern for such groups as the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists.

The organization periodically blasted the Bush era, saying unemployment among African-Americans had become so dismal during his administration that it was well on its way to becoming a socially explosive issue, mainly because a growing segment of the Black community, including its youth, had begun to feel permanently disconnected from the

economy.

Now, with President Obama at the helm, his administration maintains he has made a considerable thrust at providing job training programs in inner cities where the largest populations of African-Americans tend to reside, as well an increase in government jobs through the recently enacted \$787 billion economic recovery plan.

"The president is going to do his job but needs to get the word out [to city and state agency heads about] how high the stakes are," Obama senior adviser Valerie Jarrett said last week during a teleconference with Black journalists.

Meanwhile, even as Obama's recovery strategy was created to save more than 3 million jobs, the country continues to lose jobs quickly, with 651,000 lost in February, and keeping the administration racing to keep up.

Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

munities soon became home for many whites who continued to work in the city, but lived outside of New Orleans.

This white flight caused many of the schools that were entirely white to transform into schools that were now entirely black. And for the whites who continued to live in the city of New Orleans, they sent their children to private schools or a few of the elite public schools in the city.

The shift left the bulk of the city's schools at the end of the 20th century as New Orleans had evolved into a city that was over 2/3 African-American with a school system that was as segregated not only by race, but class as well. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the state began a takeover of schools where a disproportionate number of students could not pass the state accountability tests. These schools were schools with high concentrations of economically challenged African-American students.

While the fight against legal desegregation was won, New Orleans had once again become a city that was segregated along the lines of education between

whites and blacks and those who had resources and those who did not. In a way, the trend mirrored what education was like in New Orleans during the period of slavery and reconstruction.

Epilogue

The city faces challenges in many areas as it rebuilds. Education is at the forefront for it is what will shape the future of the city. Today, leaders are experimenting with a new model of educating the children of the Crescent City. But the question becomes, is this something that is so new?

Or is it like the axiom that says there is nothing new under the sun? Or to take it a step further to quote New Orleans artist the late John Scott, "You cannot reinvent the wheel, but you can put your own spin on it." Is this in fact what is happening right now? Is the leadership of the city putting a new spin trying to sell an old idea? Are we seeing a new form of segregation with these three separate educational bodies where disadvantaged African-American students are being pushed to the margins of schools that are inferior?

Once Homeless, He Now Assists the Homeless

Christian K. Finkbeiner

RICHMOND, Va. (NNPA) For Theo Woodson, providing food and other services for Richmond's homeless is much more than a job. It's a personal mission. For five years, Woodson was on the other side of the equation, sleeping under the Robert E. Lee Bridge, his mind and body ravaged by crack cocaine. Now drug-free for 11 years, he is program director of The Conrad Center, a facility run by the Freedom House that provides meals for more than 200 people, seven days a week.

Last week's snowfall led the city to ask Woodson to open the center as a warming area. By early afternoon, about 85 people had shown up to stay warm and eat. Normally, the center provides only breakfast and dinner, but lunch was served as well. The warming area was available from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

A Richmond man who regularly uses the Conrad Center's services commented on its reliability.

"I got going Monday at 5:30 a.m.," said Kelvin White, 49,

who has been homeless "off and on" for 15 years. "The weather was terrible, and I was wondering if The Conrad Center was going to be open. Then I realized, of course they'll be



Woodson

open.

"It's a safe haven for us." Woodson reiterated White's point. "We're going to be open, no matter what," Woodson said. "We're going to feed the people."

Woodson said all of The Conrad Center's funding comes from private sources. He gets food for the meals from the Central Virginia Foodbank and restaurant-supply businesses. The main course of each meal is donated, usually by churches. In addition to meals, the center's central intake person-

nel help get clients into a database and refer them to various social services, and nurses from the Daily Planet conduct health screenings each

Tuesday. Along with its regular cold-weather shelter at Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, the city opened Marshall Street Plaza, 900 E. Marshall St., as a shelter from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday. Fewer than 40 people showed up at that facility, while 102 were sheltered at Sixth Mount Zion on Monday night.

As for The Conrad Center, it keeps going, and it keeps feeding.

Woodson said the center will be available as a warming area again, if the city requests it. White keeps going too. He works odd jobs, and said the brutal economy has not made things tougher for him, as its effects have yet to "trickle down" to his level.

"My short-term goal is to get a home of my own," he said. "I didn't finish high school, but I'm smart, and it's never too late to go back to school."

"I'll keep working, keep surviving."



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