

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

Data Zone

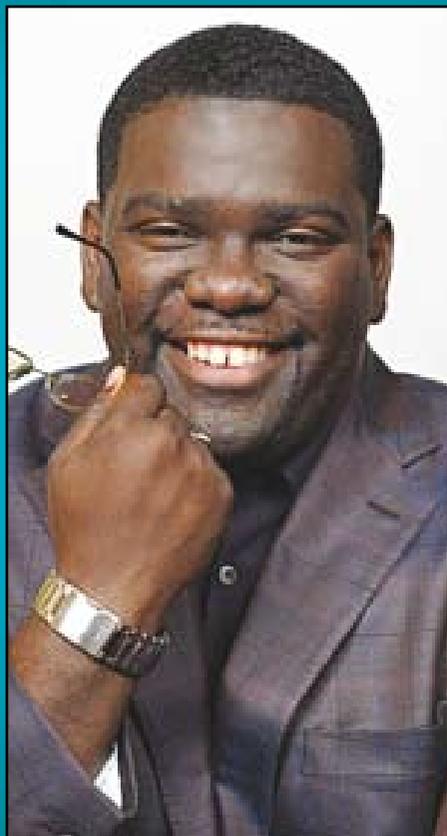
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History of Black Hair pt. 2

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Today's Young Leaders Make Tomorrow's History



Lolis Elie



Dr. Corey Hebert



Dr. Kyshun Webster



Wilbert "Chill" Wilson

By Edwin Buggage

The Struggle Continues

Throughout the history of this nation Blacks have struggled to gain a foothold on the American Dream. The scars of the stars and stripes have begun a slow healing process as the walls of oppression have come tumbling down. Today African-Americans are navigating cultural and social spaces as a new breed of leaders are emerging. Historically, they have come from the pulpit, the courts and the streets protesting for equal rights. Picket signs and pressure groups worked vigorously to secure that the nation's darker people could dine at the table of opportunity and access. Today, that day has come for a portion of the African-American population, at every corner of the nation's shores Blacks are leading the way forging ahead into the future. And as Blacks continue to be much maligned in the society, Data News Weekly would like to in an antidotal way remedy this state of affairs by spotlighting some of the new generation of African-American leaders who are emerging in the City of New Orleans.

Dedication to Education

Education is essential to the upliftment of the city, the culture and the race if we are to be competitive in the 21st century. Dr. Kyshun Webster CEO of Operation Reach is a young visionary who has come a long way since his early days of being a resident of the St. Bernard Housing Development and Lower Ninth Ward to become a nationally renowned wunderkind of sorts in the field of education. "I think

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education is important if we are to become the community we aspire to be," says Webster, continuing he says, "Many of the ills that our community experience is a direct result of problems in our educational system."

In education the scales are unbalanced and there is a disconnect between those who are prospering and those who are struggling, "We cannot settle for less from our kids, we must expect the best from all of them," says Webster. Speaking of self-improvement he says, "Education is the number one equalizer and with that knowledge is a pathway to power."

Webster is one who has had to overcome adversity and setbacks and says his story is one that should inspire, "I am today an educator and I failed the first grade and because of that I understand what some of our kids experience, and it has been through hard work to get where I am today," says Webster of going down the road from plight to an eagle in flight. He says of Operation Reach where the program has offices in Alabama and Georgia he hopes is a recipe for the larger community, "The fight to save our children is not about school alone, it is about all of us working together to ensure our children have what they need to succeed from the cradle to the grave this is what we have to do to make our community better and I have been dedicated since I was 12 years old to doing my part to not simply talk about the problems but offer solutions."

The Power of Words

As a writer, filmmaker, avid art collector and city advocate Lolis Eric Elie was born into the spirit of struggle as the son of noted Civil Rights Attorney Lolis Elie and mother who was an educator. Armed with an Ivy League education but a spirit rooted in the community he is an example of a new form of leader that is taking shape. For today it is not simply the courtroom battles or picket signs it is one of the lived revolution of Blacks picking up the baton of opportunity and running with it moving the race further along the run to freedom, justice and equality.

Today Lolis attributes his accomplishments to his parents, "The most important element of my success has been the influence, assistance and example of my parents. My mother is a teacher by training and tempera-

ment. So she was about instilling a certain discipline in me. My father is more of a free thinker. So the combination of her discipline and his out of the box thinking helped me imagine great things and work toward accomplishing them." Although many walls have come down in the areas of racial relations, they're perceptions of Black men as ogre like figures of society and much of these misperceptions are a direct result of media images. Elie addresses this issue saying, "There are two things that we can do to improve the image of Black men in the media. First, we can stop patronizing films, television shows and performances that portray images we don't like. Second we can support those artistic endeavors that reflect our better selves. But it's really not clear that the average Black American is offended by these images. So perhaps we get what we want."

In the period after Hurricane Katrina Elie has become a staunch advocate for his city using the arts first collaborating with Lucie Faulknor, and Dawn Logsdon on the award-winning documentary, "Treme: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans and becoming one of the writers for the critically acclaimed HBO Series "Treme." "The single greatest challenge facing this city is the intrusion of American culture - be it from Baton Rouge or Washington, D.C.," he says of the problems facing the city and the rebuilding effort. "Certainly no person who understands our city would support destroying Mid-City to build this new suburban style parking arena with a little hospital in the middle. Who would be foolish enough to tear down public housing at a point when our most acute need was for affordable housing? But these moves both reflected national trends instead of local insight. Instead of approaches that reflect the uniqueness and richness of New Orleans culture, we are burdened with a gaggle of politicians who really think progress is in being more like Dallas."

The New Face of Politics and Justice

In droves women have been grabbing the mantle of power and are now major players in politics, business, education and many fields of endeavor. Today women in the U.S. both Black and White outnumber men that are enrolled in colleges and universities. The



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National Urban League Ceo Urges Louisiana State Officials To Halt University Merger Plans

Louisiana's proposal to merge the University of New Orleans and Southern University of New Orleans is a step backward that would diminish both schools, according to Marc H. Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League.

"They are distinctly unique institutions with distinctly unique missions," Morial said. "Students at both schools would be ill-served by the state's plan." He said the plan was based on politics rather than Louisiana's educational needs.

Morial said he agreed with former U.N. Ambassador and fellow New Orleans native Andrew

Young, who said Saturday that in order for a city to develop economically, it must grow jobs by growing minds."

"Southern University at New Orleans is specifically targeted to first-generation, non-traditional students from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds," Morial said. "University of New Orleans serves the traditional, college-ready student. The schools have different admissions criteria and student profiles.

"Education is not a one-size-fits-all proposition," Morial said. "Different students have different needs, and they need a variety of options to meet those needs."



National Urban League CEO and Former Mayor of New Orleans, Marc H. Morial addresses reporters at press conference to urge halt to SUNO/UNO proposed merger

Morial further noted that the average ACT score of a SUNO student is 20; at UNO, 23. SUNO's smaller classes and high student to faculty ratio offers a nurturing environment for students who need extra attention, while UNO's environment allows more freedom for higher achievers.

"An alliance plan should be created between UNO, SUNO and Delgado," Morial said. "All universities should have the opportunity to fully recover and service their mission with an engaging and spirited faculty." He suggested a plan could be developed that offers shared services between the schools.



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Rethink Possible



Art, Beats and Lyrics Spotlight National and Local Artists

By Eric Connerly

Art and music goes hand in hand and the Gentleman Jack Art, Beats and Lyrics tour has taken the country by storm bringing independent artists together to showcase their talent. Its next stop is New Orleans on Feb. 18 from 7 P.M. to Midnight at Club Metropolitan and admission is free. Over 25 cutting edge visual artists from around the country are headed to New Orleans, including Mad Clout, Flux, Michi, Shannon McCollum, Gilbert Young, City of Ink, Occasional Superstar, Wak, and Co-Producer Dubelyoo. New Orleans visual artist will include Charlie V, Humidity Skate Shop, Traffic Boutique Gallery Selection, and Lionel Milton.

The most recent high profile addition to the tour is, famed hip-hop pioneer, Photographer, and Author Ernie Paniccioli. The author of the hip-hop classic, "Who Shot Ya," will display iconic photos from his unmatched comprehensive collection of classic hip-hop works. His photographs have been displayed at The Brooklyn Museum of Art and The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

This is a homecoming for two of the artists participating. Charlie V is a visual artist, hip-hop archivist and connoisseur of New Orleans urban culture. Since Hurricane Katrina he has been living in Atlanta and is excited about coming home to present his work. "This is where my inspiration comes from, the people and places of New Orleans, so I am glad to be coming home to show my work and I look forward to returning to the city and eventually as a full-time resident to contribute to the artistic legacy of my city," says Charlie V.

Dave Soul is a master of the one's and two's and as a DJ and Music Producer has been putting out mix-tapes on various genres from soul, house and hip-hop. He as is Charlie V is living in Atlanta and has been making a mark for himself coming back and forth to New Orleans for gigs as diverse as private events, to being one of the Essence Fest Super Lounge



Artwork by local, national and internationally renown artist Lionel Milton

DJ's. "This is another great opportunity for me to do something I love in the city that I love and I really want people to come out and see the diversity of artists that are

for New Orleans includes live music performances by, The Stooges Brass Band (Jumpshive), live soul band YVPG, independent hip-hop

phenom Nesby Phips, hot new drum sensation, ALIEN (www.alienanimal.com) and international Soul Singer, Joi. Other tunes

will be provided by a line-up of turntable scientist, including DJ Chicken, DJ Wop and DJ Dave Soul on the one's and two's, and more. Past guests of GJAB+L have included DMC of Run DMC, Killa Mike, Pastor Troy, Actor Jamal Woodard, (NOTORIOUS), BET Host Terrence J, and DJ Lord of Public Enemy. As the reputation of the Gentleman Jack Art Beats + Lyrics tour continues to grow, so have the attendance numbers; crowds have reached upwards of 3,500 in some markets.

"Some people didn't understand how we were fusing together culture, art and music, but Gentleman Jack got it from the start," said Founder and Producer Jabari Graham, of Atlanta. "We want people to get excited about the arts again — to get exposed and excited," added Graham. "Gentleman Jack Art, Beats + Lyrics is the perfect experience for that."



DJ and Producer Dave Soul inside the Soul Lab

participating," says Soul.

"Art, Beats + Lyrics opens with a look that reflects the image of the Gentleman Jack consumer — classically smooth and refined. Those are characteristics that Gentleman Jack has always represented," said Tracey Johnson, Gentleman Jack Brand Manager. "Gentleman Jack knows this generation expresses themselves through art, dance, and music. Gentleman Jack Arts, Beats + Lyrics gives them the opportunity to do just that in a one-of-a-kind interactive environment.

Hosted by Hustle, the line-up

In Honor of Black History Month

I celebrate Our Progress



HON. DALE N. ATKINS

Clerk, Civil District Court

"And so we shall have to do more than register and more than vote; we shall have to create leaders who embody virtues we can respect, who have moral and ethical principles we can applaud with enthusiasm." ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Data Around Town

Beauty & Beyond

The History of Black Hair.....Part 2

By Janice Meredith

1880: Metal hot combs, invented in 1845 by the French, are readily available in the United States. The comb is heated and used to press and temporarily straighten course hair.

1900s: Madame C.J. Walker develops a range of hair-care products for Black hair. She popularizes the press-and-curl style. Some criticize her for encouraging Black women to look White.

1910: Walker is featured in the Guinness Book of Records as the first American female self-made millionaire.

1920s: Marcus Garvey, a Black Nationalist, urges followers to embrace their natural hair and reclaim an African aesthetic.

1954: George E. Johnson launches the Johnson Products Empire with Ultra Wave Hair Culture, a "permanent" hair straightener for men that can be

applied at home. A women's chemical straightener follows.

1962: Actress Cicely Tyson wears cornrows on the television drama "East Side/West Side."

1966: Model Pat Evans defies both Black and White standards of beauty and shaves her head.

1968: Actress Diahann Carroll is the first Black woman to star in a television network series, "Julia." She is a darker version of the all-American girl with straightened, curled hair.

1970: Angela Davis becomes an icon of Black Power with her large afro.

1971: Melba Tolliver is fired from the ABC affiliate in New York for wearing an afro while covering Tricia Nixon's wedding.

1977: The Jheri curl explodes on the Black hair scene. Billed as a curly perm for Blacks, the ultra-moist hairstyle lasts through the 1980s.



1979: Braids and beads cross the color line when Bo Derek appears with cornrows in the movie "10."

1980: Model-Actress Grace Jones sports her trademark flat-top fade.

1988: Spike Lee exposes the good hair/bad hair light-skinned/dark-skinned schism in Black American in his movie "School Daze."

1990: "Sisters love the weave," "Essence" magazine declares. A variety of natural styles and locks also become more accepted.

1997: Singer Erykah Badu poses on the cover of her debut album "Baduizm" with her head wrapped, ushering in an eclectic brand of Afro-centrism.

1998: Carson Inc., creator of Dark & Lovely and Magic Shave for Black men, acquires the Black-owned beauty company Johnson Products of Chicago in 1998. L'Oreal purchases Carson two years later and merges it with Soft Sheen.

1999: "People" magazine names lock-topped Grammy award-winning Artist Lauryn Hill one of its 50 Most Beautiful People.

2001: Rapper Lil' Kim wears a platinum blonde weave, while Singer Macy Gray sports a new-school afro. Some Black women perm, some press, and others go with natural twists, braids and locks.

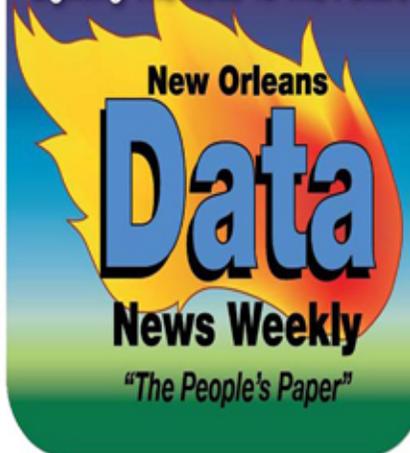
2006: New York City Police Department's new, more rigid professional appearance standards prohibit such hairstyles as cornrows, dreadlocks and twists. These natural hairstyles are deemed to be "extreme" and a "fad" by the department.

2008: African-American began to obsessively use hair weave, extensions causing traction alopecia to their hair.

2010: Stylebriety MAG featured and expose' on the Asian monopoly of the African-American beauty industry.

Sources: Wikipedia, Stylebriety MAG, Naturally Curly

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Valentine's Day

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Save Ex-Inmate Programs



Judge Greg Mathis

gets is in the penal system. As a result, ex-offender re-entry programs that help rehabilitate those who are at risk for returning to prison are on the chopping block. Sure, cutting funding to these programs may help balance budgets in the short term. But, as ex-offenders become repeat offenders and return to jail or prison, we end up shelling out more money in the long run to incarcerate them. Additionally, communities and individuals will continue to be victimized by crime and trapped in a seemingly never-ending cycle.

Recently, USA Today reported on these cutbacks and the impact they could have on states across the country. Florida, for example, saw a small decrease in the number of ex-offenders who committed a new felony while on probation. Instead of looking at the bigger picture and continuing

to invest in programs designed to reduce recidivism, Florida, in an attempt to get its fiscal house in order, plans to cut such programs. Other states are also weighing significant budget cuts to all parts of their criminal justice systems.

This is just bad business. In many states, the number of ex-offenders committing new crimes has increased, partly because of cuts to programs that help them transform their lives and stay out of prison.

Any state considering such cuts should look to Michigan for guidance. Budget gaps and increasingly high unemployment rates have lead lawmakers there to address both problems with a novel plan: help ex-offenders find and keep jobs that will keep them out of prison. According to a report by the Institute for Research on Poverty, Michigan has used job placement programs to cut the

prison population by about 15 percent during the last four years and has saved more than \$200 million each year.

Here's hoping other locales will follow Michigan's lead. With your help, maybe they can. Call or write your county, state, and federal legislators and demand they not be so short sighted; ask that they avoid making budget cuts to prison re-entry programs at all costs.

In these difficult economic times, it is only reasonable that lawmakers conserve resources where they can. The criminal justice system, particularly ex-offender re-entry programs, is not the place to make these cuts. Our lawmakers must think about the effect these budget reductions will have on our overall safety and the economic impact they will have on taxpayers down the road.

Mathis' Mind

One of the first places state and federal governments look to make cutbacks in an attempt to balance their ballooning bud-

Black America Has Pneumonia, And The Fact That It's Winter Has Nothing To Do With It

By Lee A. Daniels
NNPA Columnist

No, the virus that's gripped growing numbers of Black Americans is a long-standing economic ailment intensified to a devastating degree by the consequences of the Great Recession, America's worst economic crisis in 70 years.

It proves once again the old adage about the economic fortunes of Black America compared to White America when White America has a cold, Black America has pneumonia.

It is true, of course, that the Great Recession itself, which officially ended two years ago, has wrecked the job prospects and careers of millions of all kinds of Americans, not just Blacks – as a substantial number of governmental and private-sector studies and reports have documented with both dry statistics and often-wrenching personal stories

At the high levels of the national economy, a slow-moving recovery appears underway — the stock market is back over 12,000 again, and a cautious confidence is more and more being expressed by those in the government and in the financial sector.

But, strikingly, the news last week that the unemployment rate for January fell to 9.0 percent — its lowest level in more than a year — provoked no cheering at all. Indeed, it was quickly dismissed as meaningless, because it was accompanied by an anemic job growth of about 36,000 new jobs.

However, January's 9.0-percent unem-

ployment rate does have meaning – a grim significance. It underscores the fact that the official number of out-of-work Americans hovers around 14 million, six million of whom have been jobless longer than the base unemployment measure of 26 weeks. Given that monthly job growth continues far below the hundreds of thousands of jobs needed to make a real dent in unemployment and that there are no jobs for more than three out of every four jobless workers, prospects that those numbers will decline appreciably are dim.

That reality has driven millions of discouraged jobless workers to stop, at least temporarily, looking for work.

"One can only take 'no' so many times," one erstwhile job-seeker told The Huffington Post recently after spending the last three years fruitlessly sending out hundreds of job applications. The holder of a master's degree in biology who had worked for a biotechnology firm before being laid off in 2008, the married father of two said, "I thought, 'I've got over 12 years of experience ... with excellent success. So I looked for a year and a half and got nowhere. All these years of experience and this fabulous degree, and no one cares.'"

Such stories prove that beyond the boundaries of those who can afford to view the crisis with a certain amount of detachment, the vast pool of pain persists – the more so because a cloak of invisibility seems to have been thrown over the millions of the jobless. The possibility that America may be building a huge class of the once-employed-but-now-permanently-

unemployed has all but disappeared from most media venues since President Obama and the Congressional Republicans forged a compromise tax bill that extended emergency unemployment benefits for another 13 months.

That extension has eased the pressure on those who've been out of work for more than 26 weeks; but a social and economic catastrophe looms in both the short- and the long-term. Both consequences spring from the same source: the combined dynamics of globalization and technological advances have made it possible for more and more businesses to "produce" profitably with fewer and fewer workers.

That means that more and more skilled and even highly skilled workers, like the worker mentioned above, have become surplus labor. To put it bluntly, some significant number may never again regain the income and status of their previous jobs – if they ever again work at a stable job at all.

What is now happening to millions of American workers has a bitter resonance in the recent history of Black America. In the 1960s and 1970s, the inexorable disappearance of industrial jobs that required only a high school diploma, and the movement of many other jobs out of the cities – out of "transportation reach" – to suburbia (today, for American workers as a whole it's the movement of jobs to foreign shores), along with the persistence of discrimination which made many jobs from the lowest to the highest rungs of the occupational ladder "off-limits" to Blacks, set seemingly in concrete the social structure

of Black American society today: a highly-credentialed "opportunity class" that is doing well co-exists with a sizeable, and now growing, segment who seem to be locked in poverty.

That dynamic is why the Black unemployment rate for every category of Black workers from those who are school dropout to those with advanced degrees has always been nearly double that of Whites at the comparable level. Today, for example, while the White unemployment rate is 8.0 percent, the Black unemployment rate remains in its usual place of being the highest of all the racial and ethnic groups at 15.7 percent.

In many communities, and for particular groups of African-American, the crisis of joblessness is even worse. For example, a new report from the Community Service Society, of New York City, found that in Gotham from 2009 to mid-2010, only one in four Black males aged 16 to 24 had a job and that the overall Black unemployment rate of 14.9 percent was more than twice that of Whites.

The racial disparity also showed itself in the predicament of those out of work more than 26 weeks. Among the long-term unemployed, 30 percent were out of work for more than a year; but 40 percent of all Black jobless New Yorkers had been out of work for more than a year.

The data about New York City are part of a welter of statistics showing, as a report from the Center for American Progress, a liberal-leaning think tank based in Washington, D.C., states, "All U.S. households

Pneumonia, Continued next page.

Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

results are being seen as women ascend to power. While there is a debate regarding the future of Black political leadership in the city the number of African-American females winning elected seats is growing at a steady rate. One of those people who have taken up the mantle of leadership is Candice Bates-Anderson, who was recently elected to a judge's seat in the New Orleans Juvenile Court.

She says a strong and nurturing family environment where excellence was expected is what contributes to her success. "My grandmother Dorothy Sturken Randolph was the first African-American professor of the School of Social Work at Tulane University. My grandfather Alison Randolph Jr. owned many businesses." In her capacity as a judge it is about being stern but compassionate. For she understands that there are many factors that leads to a young person's decision to break the law and feels more preventive measures are need to divert kids before they become career criminals, "Crime, lack of diversionary programs for at risk youth, lack of programs for kids in our city, lack of parental involvement and concern for our youth, poverty, and unconcern for education, poor graduation rates and father figures not present in the homes." As a parent she says what young people need are, "Guidance, love, mentors and persons to look up to."

Health, Wealth and Healing

Dr. Corey Hebert is a young man on a mission to help the young and disenfranchised in his multiple roles as a pediatrician, educator, and media personality. He says of his choice to become a pediatrician came out of a love for young people, "Children's problems are not self-inflicted. They are very pure so if a child gets cancer then it's just an unavoidable set of events, if an adult smokes for 30 years and I have told them to stop for 30 years then they get



Judge Candice Bates Anderson

cancer...that's a whole different story. Don't get me wrong I take care of adults I am just harder on them because they choose to have the behaviors that eventually cost them precious years on this earth."

Hebert is one who sees a lot of young people and feels that it is important that parents devise new strategies to help their children lead more productive lives. Providing this prescription he says, "You are not your child's friend. Just because it was hard for you growing up, doesn't mean you should not have the same expectations of your child that your parents had of you. You succeeded because of those things, not in spite of those things. Quit giving your child everything without requiring him to work for it. Nobody in the world gets anything without working for it. Teach that to your children at an early age and it will benefit you both in the long run," says Hebert.

Being a public person can be an arduous task for some with demands for one's time and accountability are at higher levels particularly for African-American media figures that have the dual responsibility of being a role model. Eschewing it all together

some make claims that it is not their responsibility to be role models just because they are in the public space. This is something Hebert speaks out against, considering himself a role model for future generations he says, "I am sick and tired of people in the spotlight not wanting to take this responsibility. You might as well accept the position and do something great with it. You owe it to our forefathers who fought and died so

we could have the opportunities and luxuries that we sometimes take for granted. If everyone that was doing well took someone else under their wing and mentored them we wouldn't have all the problems that we have in our communities now."

The Little Business that Could

New Orleans is not a city known for its Fortune 500 companies. It is one of small family-owned businesses. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina many of the businesses suffered so much damage that many were unable to reopen. While many folded up the tent, another businessman used a tent and generator to rebuild his life and his business. Wilbert "Chill" Wilson is a man who came to embody the resilience and

spirit of the people of the city and their will to rebuild. "I came back to the city when a lot of people had given up and I simply wanted to be a beacon of light and hope and inspire the people of my city," says Wilson.

On leadership he feels people of the city should take a broader look at how they view what is a leader. "A leader is not always someone who is openly political or an elected official, it can be an entrepreneur such as myself, or a coach, a teacher or parent or caregiver," says Wilson. "In essence a true leader is just someone who cares and through their actions makes the sacrifices to make the world a better place and does not seek accolades or recognition."

In addition to running a successful business Wilson has penned a book entitled, "When the Walls Came Down" that has been well received and led many community initiatives aimed at helping young people. "I created "Walk A Mile For A Child" to give parents, children and the community a template to be better

parents and citizens, I think many of the leaders in education get it wrong." I feel it is the simple things that matter most when raising a child such as spending time with your child, nurturing and guiding them and letting them know that they are loved, these are the things that gives the child the confidence to go out in the world to be a success," says Wilson.

During the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Wilson's business, Chill's First Class cuts has not simply survived but thrives now reaching new heights of success. "I have been able to seek out new opportunities and have grown my business to service the entire community irrespective of race." Speaking of its larger social meaning of the barbershop, "In my shop people come together from all walks of life and in my estimation leave out more informed and enlightened, I would hope that what I have been able to do could be an inspiration to the people of the city to begin to build bridges of understanding."

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Pneumonia, Continued from previous page.

were severely hurt by the recession but communities of color experienced larger losses than Whites. This also means that, as the economic recovery deepens and the labor market recovers, communities of color will have to climb out of a deeper hole to regain the same level of economic security as they had before the crisis."

The report identified three policy directives that are needed to pave a road to recovery: the enactment of policies that ensure those at the lower rungs of the

socio-economic ladder are able to regain solid economic footing; specific proposals to help communities of color, because they are most in need of aid; and, finally, the pursuit of policies that reduce the extraordinary degree of income inequality in the society.

Lee A. Daniels is Director of Communications for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., and Editor-in-Chief of TheDefendersOnline.

Hip Hop Hooray

Legends of Rap Perform in the N.O.

Story and Photos Edwin Buggage

A few years ago the Rapper Nas made the bold claim that hip-hop was dead. In a sense he was right that at much of the mass marketed commercial level it has lost its bite and intensity that made the music cutting edge during its ascendance into the public's consciousness. Today the musical landscape of an art form that shaped a generation is littered with auto-tune, tattoo laded, cartoon artist who are caricatures and sometimes even worse, characterize some of the worst stereotypes of African-Americans. They are more hip-pop than hip-hop.

Recently, the Lakefront Arena hosted a show where some of the originators who blazed the trail showed how it is supposed to be done. The stage rocked with funky beats and lyrics that kept the crowd on their feet moving to the infectious sounds of hip-hop's hypnotic beats.

The show featured a host of acts beginning the show with a short set by Rob Base who got the party started with his dance floor anthem the classic "It Takes Two." Then the show really began as one the original Kings of Rap Kurtis Blow hit the stage. He was the first hip-hop artist to have a major recording deal (Mercury Records) and the first certified gold selling record "The Breaks" in 1980. Blow's show was a showcase of the true essence of hip-hop, great showmanship, lyrical ability and engaging the audience. He went through his array of hits including: "The Breaks," "If I Ruled the World" and "Basketball." Blow showed that even at the age of 50+ he was still the ultimate b-boy as he and several members of the audience relived the days of cardboard boxes and linoleum by breakdancing with the audience going wild.

Next to flex was the clown prince of hip-hop Biz Markie who in recent years has reincarnated himself into a party DJ du jour, rocking parties on the ones and twos, but on this night as simply an MC he gave an uneven show that was full of peaks and valleys. But he soon recovered driving the crowd wild with his monster hit "Just A Friend" as the crowd sang along with Biz. Next to hit the set



Hip-Hop First Ladies Salt-N-Pepa giving stellar performance.



Local Rap Legend Tim Smooth, Data News Editor Edwin Buggage and legendary producer/artist Mannie

was the bad boys from Jersey. Naughty By Nature's with original lineup Vinnie and Kay Gee. Torching the stage setting it on

fire from the onset with their seminal hit "OPP" blasting through the speakers and lead man Treach with his rapid fire rhymes and

what women saw as sexy thug swagger moved the crowd. Their 30 minute set was a medley of hits including "Everything's Gonna

Be Alright" "Uptown Anthem." Treach gave a rousing and emotional tribute to the fallen soldier and friend Tupac Shakur, before ending their show with their ode to hip-hop "Hip-Hop Hooray" with the crowd hands to the sky, moving from side to side, waving like they just don't care, screaming OH Yeah.

Finally, the act all came to see hit the stage. The original first ladies of Hip-Hop, Salt-N-Pepa looking grown and sexy came out to represent. With a catalogue of hits they started their set with the club banger "I'll Take Your Man" as the mature crowd of hip-hop lovers relived the days of Club Discovery, Whispers, The Bottom Line, Flirts and The Big Easy just to name a few. Their set was reminiscent of the days of Bally's, Kangols, Girbaud, Polo and Sundays during the summer chilling on the Lakefront. Salt-N-Pepa effortlessly traded off verses accompanied by background dancers. They ran through their songs that during their heyday were a blend of dance floor gems with gold nuggets of feminism sprinkled in for good measure. While their set kept the people on their feet, Salt-N-Pepa also took this opportunity to address real issues between songs affecting the community including relationships and spirituality. Their amazing set concluded with the song that is still played in clubs around the world some 20 years after its release, "Push It." Wearing more updated versions of the iconic leather jackets that were worn in the video the ladies sashayed across the stage performing with sass, class and pizzazz.

After seeing this show I thought "wow" it has been over 25 years since I attended my first rap concert and it was amazing to see how it has matured and grown. Now it is everywhere and spans the globe, and it was great to see artist from the music's heyday, as well as, the crowd enjoying the music that changed the world. And as I walked out of the building I thought to myself that hip-hop is not dead it is still alive, and taking a page from Naughty By Nature I said to myself "I give props to Hip-Hop, Hip-Hop Hooray."

President Obama Presents Nation's Highest Civilian Honor to Three Blacks

Dr. Maya Angelou, Congressman John Lewis, and the NBA Great Bill Russell Receive 2010 Presidential Medal of Freedom in White House Ceremony

By Dorinda White
Photographs By: Fred Watkins

Washington, D.C.-President Barack Obama awarded the nation's highest civilian honor to a diverse group of recipients, including three African Americans prominently known for their civil rights activism. The president and First Lady Michelle Obama honored the winners at a White House ceremony this week.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is presented to individuals recognized for "especially meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, to world peace, or to cultural or other significant public or private endeavors."

Among the 15 recipients of the 2010 Presidential Medal of Freedom were Congressman John Lewis of Georgia, celebrated author and poet, Dr. Maya Angelou and former basketball great Bill Russell. These well-known African Americans received their medals along with former President George H.W. Bush, businessman Warren Buffett, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, amongst others. It was especially befitting that the African American Medal of Freedom recipients were honored for their achievements during Black History Month.



President Obama presents poet Maya Angelou with Medal of Freedom

One of the African American awardees, Civil Rights hero Congressman John Lewis (D-GA), served as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), helped to organize the first lunch counter sit-in in 1959 at the age of 19, and was the youngest speaker at the 1963 March on Washington.

"John Lewis is not only an American hero and a giant of the Civil Rights Movement but time and time again, John Lewis has faced down death and today is the conscience of the U.S. Congress," said President Obama. "He is an American who knew that change could not wait for another place or time. Since 1987, John Lewis

has continued his service to the nation as the U.S. Representative for Georgia's 5th District, which encompasses all of Atlanta. From his activism in the civil rights movement to serving 25 years in U.S. House of Representatives, he rose with fortitude and purpose to organize during the civil rights movement." Lewis received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in recognition of his pursuit of equality and justice for all.

Basketball great Bill Russell was voted the National Basketball Association Most Valuable Player five times. He was the first African-American coach in national sports. He is known to be a staunch advocate for civil rights. "When Bill Russell was in junior high school he got cut from his basketball team. He learned from that. He was the first African American to coach a major league sports team of any sort," said Obama. "More than any athlete of his time, he is defined as a winner. When asked if he was a basketball player, he'd reply, "That's what I do, not who I am. I am a man who plays basketball." He endured insults and vandalism as a professional Black basketball player and coach. However, through it all he focused on making his teammates better players." Bill Russell

marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and has been a consistent advocate of equality. Russell received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in recognition of his efforts which helped to change the culture of a sport and the course of a nation.

Dr. Angelou's words and actions continue to stir our souls, energize our bodies, liberate our minds, and heal our hearts. Angelou, a prominent and celebrated author, poet, educator, producer, actress, filmmaker, and civil rights activist, is currently the Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University in North Carolina. Dr. Angelou served on two presidential committees, and was awarded the Presidential Medal for the Arts in 2000 and the Lincoln Medal in 2008.

"Dr. Maya Angelou, out of youth marked by pain and injustice, rose to fight for civil rights. Through soaring poetry and prose she has spoken to the conscience of our nation," said President Obama. The President bent down to kiss Dr. Angelou on the cheek after putting the Medal of Freedom around her neck. During the President's speech, he said Dr. Angelou had such an impression on his mother, she named her daughter Maya. Dr. Angelou received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her poetry and activism.

The complete list of the 2010 Presidential Medal of Freedom award recipients is as follows: former President George H. W. Bush, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Congressman John Lewis, Natural Resources Defense Council co-founder John Adams, poet and activist Maya Angelou (Winston-Salem NC native), Industrialist and Philanthropist Warren Buffet, Artist Jasper Johns, Civil rights activist Sylvia Mendez, VSA founder and former Ambassador to Ireland Jean Kennedy Smith, Holocaust survivor and activist Gerda Weissmann Klein, Dr. Tom Little (posthumous) who was killed in Afghanistan, Musician/cellist Yo-Yo Ma, former Boston Celtic basketball player Bill Russell, Baseball Hall of Famer Stan Musial, and former AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

VP Biden Holds Black History Month Celebration at the United States Naval Observatory



Vice President Joseph Biden during Black History Month celebration at the VP's residence at Number One Observatory Circle, on the grounds of the United States Naval Observatory.



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