

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

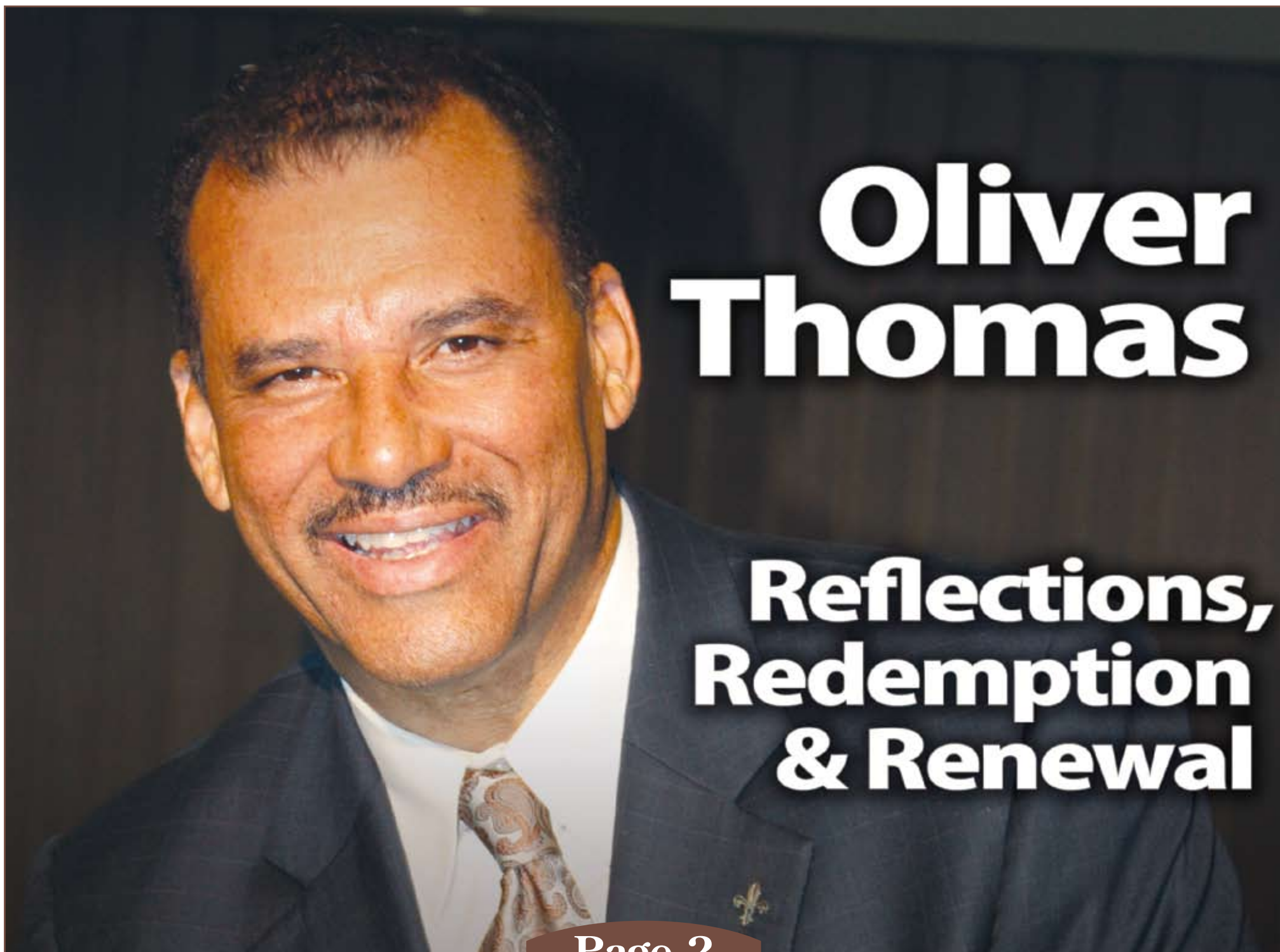
Freedom Riders Special

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May 14 - May 20, 2011 46th Year Volume 3 www.ladatanews.com



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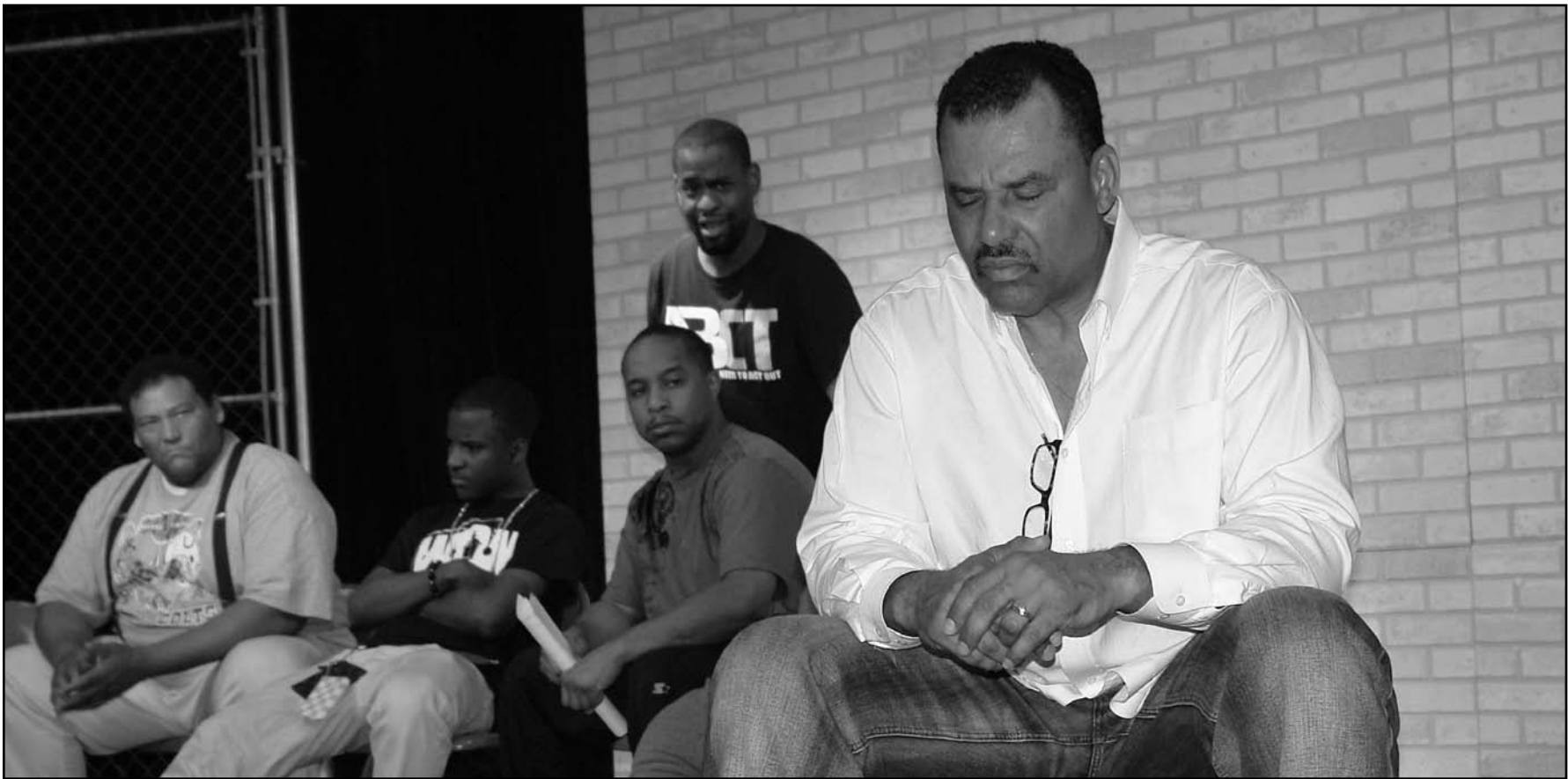
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Oliver Thomas: Reflections, Redemption and the Renewal of the Spirit of New Orleans



By Edwin Buggage,
Photos by Glenn Summers

Reflections

On this day I enter the Anthony Bean Theater, a place that is usually filled with people coming in to see one of his many wonderful plays. But on this day the theater is a sparse place with only the actors onstage rehearsing their lines for the return of the upcoming hit play Reflections: A Man and His Time. It is the story of Oliver Thomas, a man who once stood a stone throw away from the highest seat of elected office and suddenly his life was transformed and everything he worked for was lost as he found himself in a jail cell on charges

of taking a bribe. This play follows Thomas down the road of purgatory and his journey to redemption. Today Thomas is onstage with a pensive look as he, Bean and fellow cast mates' work to recapture the magic that made the play a runaway hit.

Thomas says he is humbled by the success of the play in its initial run, "So many people came and gave us an outpouring of support, and some did not get a chance to see it so we bought it back because we feel it is an important story that all people can relate to." Continuing he says, "In my story their lies all of our story rising, falling and traveling down the road back to redemption and I hope that this play can continue to be an inspiration to people."

In the new production Thomas and Bean added a few new scenes to an already impactful play that deals with an issue close to his heart; the survival of young urban Black boys and young men "I think it is important to

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give the young men more of a voice because oftentimes their voices are not heard, either they are misunderstood, neglected, or feared and I believe that through this play I wanted to humanize them and help people understand how investing in them and their future is important," says Thomas.

Of the importance of the Reflections and its impact he says, "We had over 4000 people come out and the community is still talking about it and it has started conversations about important issues facing our community and I think that is constructive and productive for our community moving forward."

Treme's Newest Star

The hit HBO television program Treme has put New Orleans in the spotlight and has highlighted aspects of the City and culture like no television show before. While it is a scripted show it is rooted in the reality of the life changing events surrounding Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. In its first season it became one of HBO's most talked about shows. This season the show continues with some new storylines and characters, one of them is Oliver Thomas.

Speaking of his role where he plays himself, he speaks of the show and its impact in portraying the rebuilding of the City, "There are great writers on Treme and it is great to be part of a story that tells our story to the world, but it is important to note for those who are watching to know our struggle continues to rebuild our lives and our City," remarks Thomas.

On playing himself and how he has evolved as an actor Thomas says, "It is interesting playing myself, but I am enjoying the show and acting." Continuing he says, "I've worked with Anthony Bean, Gwendolyn Foxworth, Harold Evans, and many others and have developed as an actor over the years." He says of his recent events, how it has added to his growth, "I feel my pain and struggle has made me a better actor and a better person."

While people outside of New Orleans have lauded the show and have become die-hard fans there is a contingent of people locally who feel the show portrays the City and its people in

a negative light. Thomas takes this on squarely stating that while the show takes on hard hitting topics that some are uncomfortable with, that it is a part of a real slice of life in New Orleans and can be used to make us reflect on ourselves, "We must keep in mind Treme is a television show, but even before the show came along every day some of the things on the show were happening in our City and while some people are crying foul you can watch the news and read the newspaper these things are a real part of what is happening in this City."

Thomas continues but suggests to citizens as opposed to watching the show and criticizing what it is not, they should begin the work of fixing what is wrong with the City, "I would hope that the realness of the show would help us begin to look at ourselves and why we are the way we are; and who do we want to become and attack those problems. We cannot blame a TV show nor look at it for a solution that lies within us to make New Orleans a better City."

In the Spirit

For we all come short of the glory, as we are all on a journey to be better. Thomas quotes the bible when asked of what fuels his passion for helping all people but especially young people. "Matthew 25: 35 said, For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." Of the need to invest in young people he says, "We cannot have a sane society unless we train our young people to make tomorrow better and that begins today with us doing what we're supposed to, to secure and ensure the future will be in good hands."

Today Thomas is a man still committed to his community, but has been transformed where he is guided by a higher power and being used for a higher purpose, "The spiritual journey has been tough. It's tough trying to get your life back and redeem yourself in the eyes of the people you let down, your family and community, but my Pastor Fred Luter said to me, keep God as the foundation of your life and whatever happens that as long

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Councilman-at-Large Fielkow Announces 4th Annual Civil Rights History Tour

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute will welcome the New Orleans group

On June 1, 2011, New Orleans City Councilman-at-Large, Arnie Fielkow, will bring 240 New Orleans youth to Birmingham and Tuscaloosa, AL for a day of Civil Rights history, Minor League Baseball and college football. Part educational and part recreational, this is the fourth annual youth trip to Alabama organized by Fielkow.

In an effort to include youth from neighborhoods across New Orleans, all eight police districts, as well as Orleans Parish Juvenile Court Judge Tracey Flemings-Davillier, assisted in recruiting the participants. As in years past, New Orleans Civil Rights legend Reverend Skip Alexander will accompany the youth, among other community leaders.

The first stop will be the 16th Annual Rickwood Baseball Classic, a unique part of American history in which players and

umpires are dressed in traditional uniforms. Rickwood Field is America's oldest ballpark, and has played host to iconic baseball teams, including the Negro Baseball League.

Following the Minor League baseball game, the youth will visit the 16th Street Baptist Church. Birmingham Civil Rights leader and former professional baseball player Reverend William Greason will speak about his experiences during the Civil Rights Movement, including the horrendous events that took place in the church's basement.

Across the street, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute will welcome the New Orleans group for private, guided tours.

From there, the youth will travel to the University of Alabama's football complex to meet Assistant Head Coach, Burton Burns.

Last year, Burns, a New Orleans native, spoke to the group about the importance of education. In addition, two of his players, including Heisman Trophy winner and newly drafted New Orleans Saint, Mark Ingram, talked to the youth about making good choices in life.

"Many New Orleans kids have never left the city, much less the state. This trip by bus to Alabama extends their horizons in so many ways. Not only do they physically get out of town, but listening to Civil Rights leaders brings them to a significant place in the history of our country, especially the South. It is critical that these future leaders of our city are thoroughly familiar with the plight of those that came before them. The baseball and football components further engage the youth and teach them life and leadership skills that

will be invaluable to their overall education," said Councilmember Fielkow.

The trip is sponsored by New Orleans City Councilman-at-Large, Arnie Fielkow, Orleans Parish Sheriff, Marlin Gusman and the Zeta Beta Tau chapter of Tulane University. WBOK-AM radio and WVL-AM radio are the media sponsors.

"At the NOPD, we believe that there are many methods of keeping New Orleans safe. When we provide opportunities for our youth to widen their scope of knowledge, we simultaneously narrow their desire to make poor decisions. Our youth are the future of our city, and Councilman Fielkow's trip to Alabama is exactly the type of initiative that creates leaders. The NOPD is proud to partner with the Councilman to make the youth trip to Alabama a

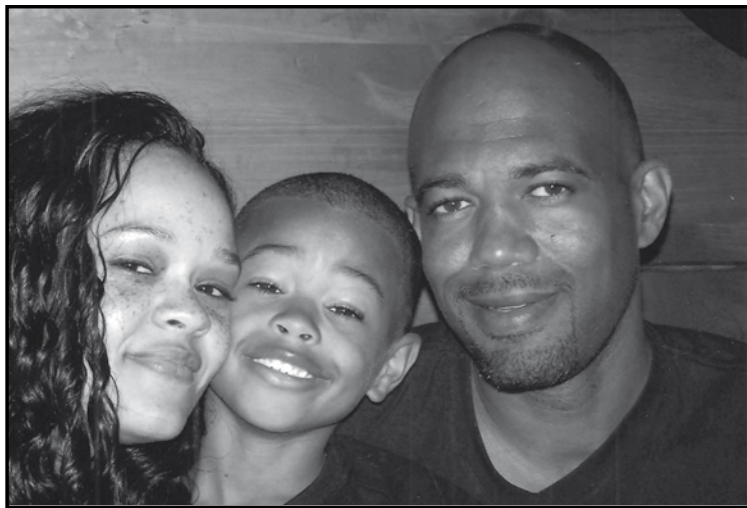
success," said New Orleans Police Department Superintendent, Ronal Serpas.

"I am proud to once again sponsor this wonderful experience that gives our youth a dynamic understanding of the Civil Rights Movement, of which New Orleans was heavily involved. Hearing stories from those who stood shoulder to shoulder with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is an invaluable lesson that will resonate with these youth and empower them to seek leadership roles in the community as well. Developing our youth into well-rounded adults that understand the history of their community is a priority for all city leaders, and this trip certainly contributes to that mission," said Orleans Parish Sheriff Marlin Gusman.

A Family of Service to their Country

Petty Officer 2nd Class (E-5) Tiffany Crusto, the daughter of Alvin R. Crusto, Jr. and Hope Franklin is a United State Marine Corp Veteran. She is also currently a member of the United States Navy Reserves. Petty Officer Crusto is serving a tour of duty in Kuwait. Tiffany, an employee of the VA Hospital in New Orleans and the mother of a six year old; returned home during the week of April 11, 2011 for two of weeks of R and R. During this well-deserved break, she received her Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Phoenix in Baton Rouge, LA on Saturday, April 16, 2011.

Tiffany is the third generation to serve her country. Her grandfathers, Clarence Green, Sr. and Alvin R. Crusto, Sr. served in the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy respectively. Alvin R. Crusto, Jr., Tiffany's father served in Vietnam as a member of the United States Army. She has a brother, Alvin R.

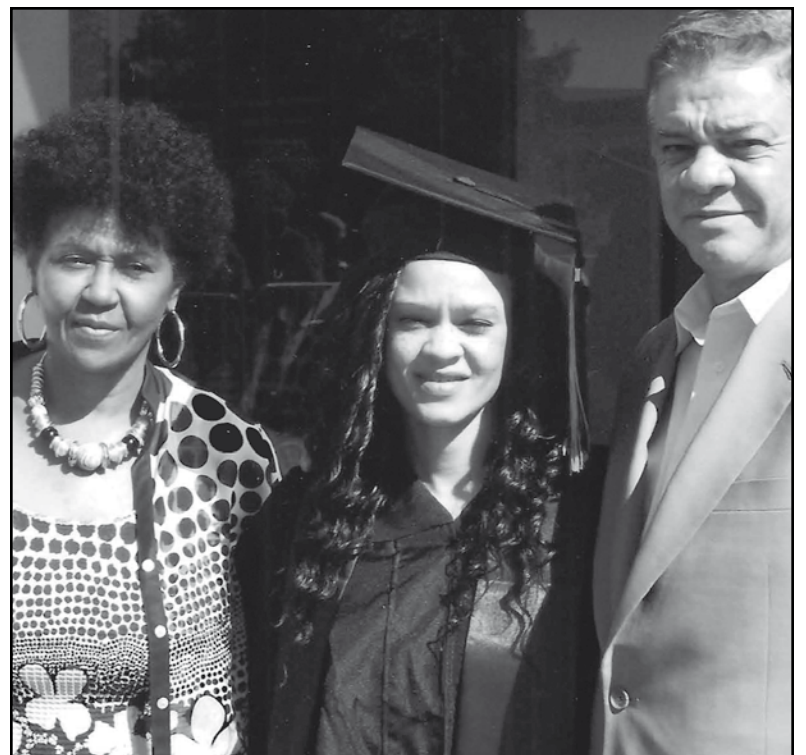


Pictured left to right are Tiffany Crusto, her son, Bryson Osborne, II, and his father, Bryson Osborne I

Crusto, III, who is a U.S. Marine Corp Veteran and a sister, SFC Kiamonia Franklin who is on active duty in South Korea as a member of the United States Army.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Crusto returned to Kuwait to complete

her tour of duty. Upon completion, she plans to attend Tulane University in New Orleans to obtain a MBA degree. Tiffany's long-term goal is to become a Human Resource Director for the VA Hospital in New Orleans.



Standing left to right are: Hope Franklin, Petty Officer Tiffany Crusto and Al Crusto, Jr. after she received her BS Degree from the University of Phoenix

Freedom Riders PBS Documentary is Must See Television

By George E. Curry

Whatever you plan to do next Monday night (May 16, 2011), make sure you are home in front of the television or have set your recorder to tape Freedom Riders, the excellent PBS documentary by filmmaker Stanley Nelson. And make sure children, related or unrelated, watch the documentary with you.

For nearly two dramatic and informative hours, Nelson recaptures the 1961 Freedom Riders that desegregated interstate transportation in the South. I was in the 8th grade when the Freedom Rides took place, too young to have been on the buses headed South, but old enough to understand the courage African-Americans and Whites displayed in forcing America to live up to its professed ideals.

In 1955, the Interstate Commerce Commission issued a ruling in *Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company* rejecting separate but equal accommodations in interstate travel. Five years later, in *Boynton v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation in the waiting rooms and buses that were part of interstate travel.

Although the law was on the books, it was not enforced by the federal government and certainly not by local law enforcement officers in the Deep South, many of whom were members of the Ku Klux Klan. Led by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a movement was created to change that situation.

Freedom Riders, many of them college students, say over and over in the documentary that not only were they prepared to die, if necessary, but they expected to be killed on those daring rides through the South. They were attacked by mobs wielding baseball bats, iron chains, and other dangerous objects.

In contrast to today, when even some self-described liberals question the value of affirmative action or falsely assert that we live in a post-racial society, many Whites joined the Freedom Rides, knowing KKK members would single them out for extra punishment.

There is a famous photograph

of James Peck, a White man, beaten in Birmingham, Alabama. He suffered a broken nose, his forehead was bandaged and he looked like a mummy beaten to a pulp. It took more than 50 stitches to close wounds to his head. There is also a photo of Jim Zwerg, also White. Dressed in a suit and tie, blood splattered all over his pummeled body.

No one stood out more than Diane Nash, a young Fisk University student organizer. She was joined by John Lewis, a young seminary student and future Congressman. He was badly beaten by a White mob in Birmingham and again several years later in the Selma to Montgomery March. "I was like a soldier in a non-violent army," John Lewis recalled in the documentary. "I was ready."

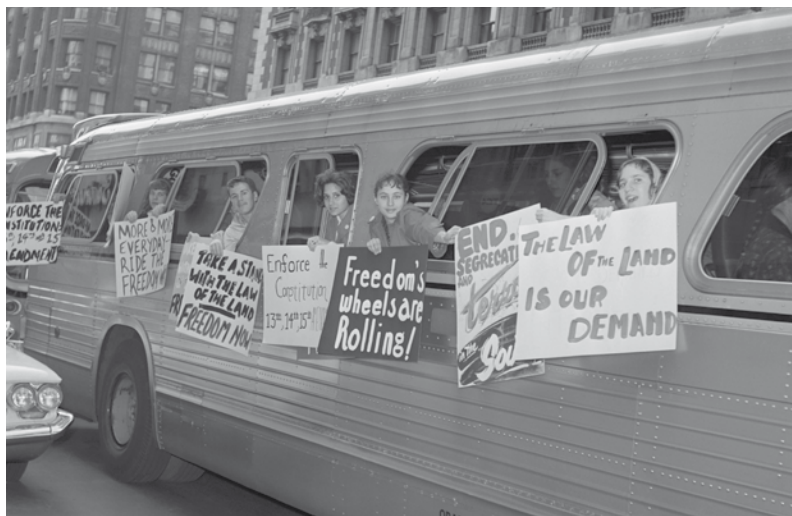
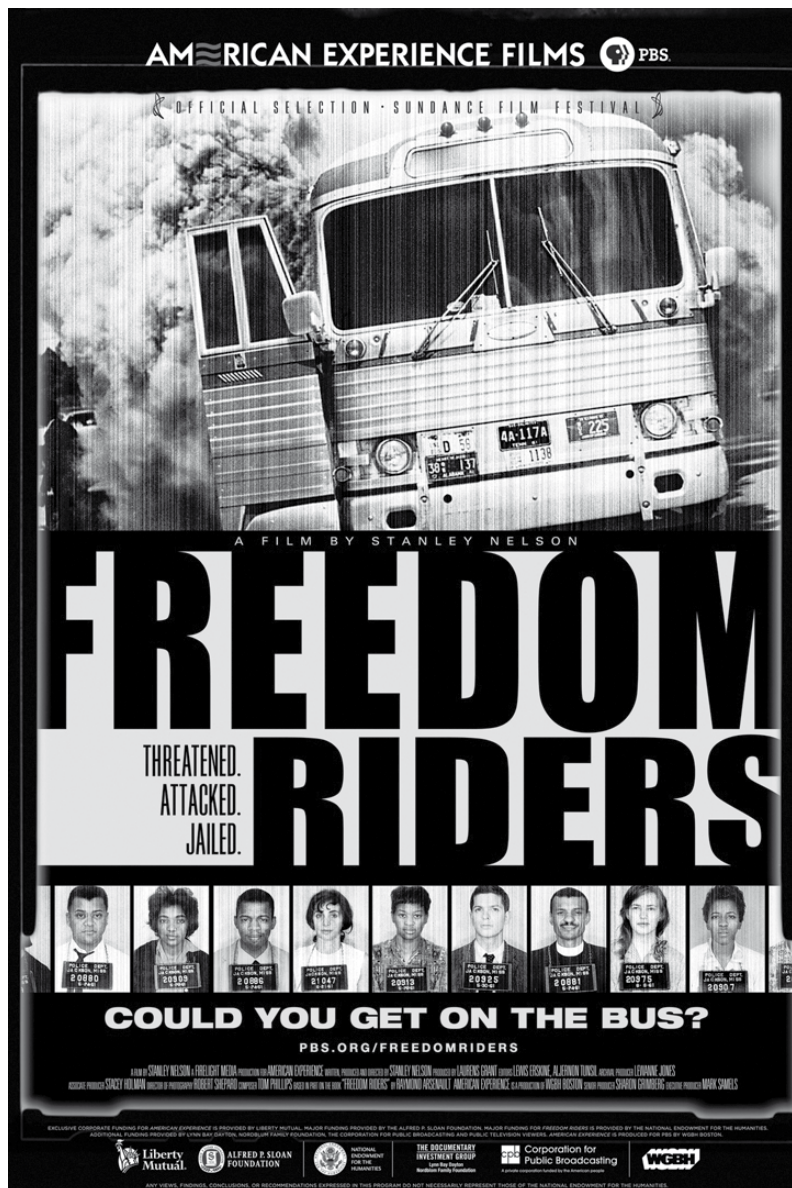
When John Seigenthaler, an aide to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, tried to brow-beat Nash into calling off Freedom Riders that originated in Nashville, she politely told him: "Sir, you should know that we all signed our last will and testament last night."

There was no turning around.

When the Greyhound and Trailways buses departed Washington, D.C. on May 4, 1961, the goal was to challenge segregated seating on interstate buses as well as the "White Only" waiting areas in bus stations throughout South. The rides were to culminate with a rally in New Orleans on May 17, the anniversary of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision.

One of the most remarkable things about the movement was that every time Freedom Riders were viciously attacked and it appeared that violent mobs had gained the upper hand, another wave of buses would hit the road. In all, more than 400 Americans took part in the Freedom Rides, converging on Alabama and Mississippi to make their point.

The photograph of a burning Greyhound bus near Anniston, Alabama, 120 miles from my hometown of Tuscaloosa, is an image that I will carry to my grave. Nelson takes us back to May 14, 1961 – Mother's Day – when Ku Klux Klansmen slashed the tires of the bus, forcing it to stop just outside



of the city. The mob had followed the bus in their cars. When the bus was forced to stop, they fire-bombed it and blocked the door in hopes of forcing the Freedom Riders to die in the inferno. It was only after highway patrolmen determined the Klansmen had had enough "fun" and fired into the air

that the mob was dispersed and Freedom Riders allowed to disembark.

Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, the fearless Civil Rights Leader from Birmingham, organized several carloads of Blacks to rescue the stranded Freedom Riders.

Where were law enforcement

officials?

In most cases, they were part of the mobs or, as was the case in Birmingham, entered into an agreement with local Klansmen to give them 15 minutes of free reign before police would move in and arrest the Freedom Riders on an assortment of charges, including disorderly conduct and violating Jim Crow laws.

President John F. Kennedy and his brother, Robert, behaved in a despicable manner. Instead of upholding the Supreme Court decision that ordered desegregation in interstate travel or an ICC mandate that did likewise, the Kennedy brothers were strongly urging Freedom Riders to end their protests.

Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy said at the time, "I don't question their legal right to travel, but I question their wisdom. Some people can get hurt." He neglected to point out that as the nation's highest law enforcement official, it was his duty to protect their right to travel anywhere in the U.S.

As Stanley Nelson shows in the documentary, the Kennedy brothers made a secret deal with segregationist Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett that if he would keep the mobs away, the federal government would not interfere with his arresting Freedom Riders when they arrived in the state. Barnett told Whites to stay home and they complied. When the Freedom Riders arrived in Mississippi, they were sent to the notorious Parchman Prison Farm.

Again, the Freedom Riders refused to be outsmarted. They sent out the call for busloads of riders to head to Jackson, Mississippi as part of a successful plan to fill up the jails and prisons. Because of their persistence, the Kennedys were forced to begin protecting the rights of interstate travelers.

The story of the Freedom Riders is one of courage and a commitment to equality. Through his documentary, Stanley Nelson reminds us of a period when many Americans were willing to risk their lives to fight injustice. The documentary is also a challenge for us to rekindle that lost fervor.

Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Data Around Town Mother's Day Celebration

BRW performs at LeRoux's Banquet & Supper Club for a Mother's Dinner and show. It was a great performance and Chef Leon cooked up two great entrees and Data was there!

Photos by Data Staff





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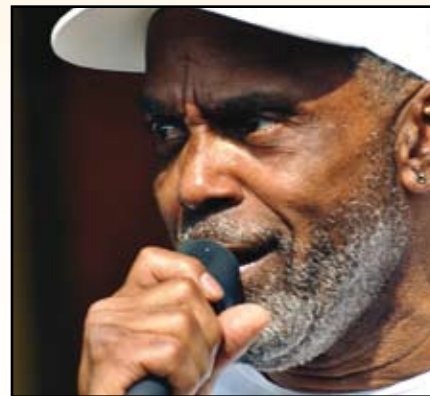


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Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Data Around Town Jazz Fest Jazzfest Highlights

Photos: (c) 2011 Kichea S Burt



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Reintroducing Rosa

Mrs. Park's Fight to Prosecute Rape of Black Women



Gary L. Flowers
NNPA Columnist

Traditionally Black History is presented with accounts of luminaries such as Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Gabriel Prosser, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks. In nearly every instance the narrative is narrowly offered, and skewed to heroics of Black men.

Mrs. Rosa Parks is no exception. To read most history textbooks students have been fed fiction as to who Mrs. Parks was and how she came to be the Mother of the Modern Civil Rights Movement. I vividly remember learning the limited lesson that Mrs. Parks was a "poor seamstress who was simply too tired to move to the back of the bus", as racially segregated laws required in most American cities, from 1896

(Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court case) to 1954 (Brown v. Board of Education court case).

In reality, Mrs. Parks was no "shrinking violet" in response to racial segregation. First, Rosa Parks sought to attend, and completed college at the Philander School, which was a training ground for activists who wanted to challenge "Jim Crow" laws. Secondly, after finishing her studies, Mrs. Parks returned to her home of Montgomery, Alabama and immediately challenged the racist voting laws of Alabama by applying for the right to vote. In 1943 and 1944, Rosa Parks was told she failed the voting examination. In 1945, Mrs. Parks not only memorized the questions, but the answers to the exam repeated them to voting officials. As a result, she passed and was granted her right to vote in Alabama—20 years before African-Americans could vote via the 1965 Voting Rights Act; and 10 years prior to the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Moreover, Mrs. Parks intentionally chose to be a part of history. Rosa Parks was elected to serve as the Secretary of the Montgomery Chapter of the NAACP. As such, she regularly met with Attorney Fred Gray (lawyer to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) to strategize on challenging racist laws. In fact, James Blake, the bus driver on whose bus Mrs. Parks refused to move was well known within the Black community of

Montgomery as a virulent racist, who regularly verbally insulted African-Americans, particularly Black women. Rosa Parks deliberately chose the exact bus and the date (December 1, 1955) to enter the annals of world history.

However, one major role Mrs. Parks played in history has not been sufficiently revealed until recently in the form of the book, *The Dark End of the Street*, (2010) by Danielle McGuire. Due, in part, to male dominated Civil Rights historians the role of Black women has usually been relegated to secondary status. In her book, Ms. McGuire exposes wide-spread cases of rape by White men of Black women, few of which went to trial, and despicably even less resulted in conviction. All-White juries from 1896 to well into the 1960's simply refused to honor justice and convict Whites of crimes against Blacks (Let me not mention the "legal" rape of Black women by White "Founding Fathers" such as Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, and others).

In one particular case in 1944 a young, married African-American woman named Mrs. Recy Taylor was walking home from church with family members on a dark road when a car full of White men slowly passed and returned. At gunpoint, Mrs. Taylor was taken and gang raped by 6 of the 7 men. Like countless Black women raped by White men prior to the 1960's Mrs. Taylor

was let go by her captors and threatened by death if she told. Unlike most, she immediately and courageously told her family and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Mrs. Parks was assigned by the NAACP to investigate the rape case and organized a portion of the Black community to call for the rapists to stand trial. She won the battle of bringing the men to court twice, but all-White juries never convicted the rapists. Nonetheless, Mrs. Parks' organizing skills and activism led to a network of community organizers upon which the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott was successful. Who knew?

Actually, many historians knew of Mrs. Parks' work on the Recy Taylor case but declined to write about such due to the violence of rape, and the need to first dismantle racial segregation via federal legislation such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act; the 1965 Voting Rights Act; and the 1968 Fair Housing Act.

America cannot move "beyond race" until our nation moves into a frank discussion of the lasting effects of the false notion of White Supremacy.

Gary L. Flowers is the Executive Director & CEO of the Black Leadership Forum, Inc.

Operation REACH Update on Birmingham Recovery

By Dr. Kyshaun Webster

As the entire State of Alabama continues to deal with its tornado recovery efforts, Operation REACH, Inc.'s (ORI) satellite office in Birmingham is providing assistance in helping to get that community back operational.

Operation REACH has dispatched its 15 AmeriCorps members to join with other non-profit agencies in the area and provide services as needed. Specifically, ORI is concentrating on how the devastation has affected children and youth in the community. The Birmingham staff has mobilized on the ground to conduct an assessment of the immediate needs of young people and their needs as the situation unfolds. With summertime rapidly approaching, an immediate need will be for recreational and out-of school activities for the youth in Alabama. ORI has experience in this area.



Birmingham GulfSouth Youth Action Corps (GYAC) members assist with tornado recovery efforts.

Also, as it has done in the immediate aftermath of both hurricanes Katrina and Gustav, ORI is poised to provide recovery intervention to children and youth, in-

cluding but not limited to counseling for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as well as leadership and advocacy to give youth the needed sense of continuity and normalcy.



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Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?

A Crisis In Confidence

**By: Danatus King, President, NAACP
New Orleans Chapter**

As evidenced by the continuing television, radio and print investigative reports relating to the NOPD traffic camera scandal, and by the community's growing demand for the resignation or termination of NOPD Superintendent Ronal Serpas, our City is experiencing a severe crisis in confidence in Chief Serpas and Mayor Mitch Landrieu.

The mayor's failure to demand that Chief Serpas immediately participate in a public forum where the press and public have an unrestricted opportunity to question the Mayor and Chief Serpas about the traffic camera scandal, and other apparent improprieties in the NOPD, has the community concerned that another cover-up, just like the Robair, Danziger, and Glover cover-ups, is occurring. The traffic camera scandal and cover-up make the public question whether there are any other "hook ups" being made, deals being cut, and rules and

laws being broken in other areas of city government to allow insiders to illegally profit. In response to the traffic camera scandal, the mayor has announced he is developing a plan to address the general problem with details. Although there is a general problem with details, the focus now is not on general problems with details. The focus now is the traffic camera scandal and the apparent cover-up.

The community is questioning how high up the administration ladder the traffic camera scandal cover-up goes. Chief Serpas, and Mayor Landrieu should immediately, in a public forum, answer questions such as:

1. Why is Chief Serpas avoiding the press and the public regarding the traffic camera scandal?
2. Why has Chief Serpas refused to answer questions relating to the scandal?
3. Why has the Mayor allowed Chief Serpas to avoid the press and public?
4. Why hasn't the Mayor demanded that

Chief Serpas stand before the press and public to answer questions?

5. What did Chief Serpas know about the detail operated by Commander Hosli and when did Chief Serpas obtain that information?
6. What did the Mayor know about the detail operated by Commander Hosli and when did the Mayor obtain that information?
7. How could Chief Serpas' son-in-law, personal driver and close family friend be involved in the traffic camera scandal detail and Chief Serpas not know about it?
8. Before he hired Serpas to be the Chief, didn't the Mayor know that Serpas had been suspended for improper details in 1994?
9. What did Chief Serpas know about the alleged payroll fraud relating to the Newman detail? When did he know it?
10. What did the Mayor know about the alleged payroll fraud relating to the Newman detail? When did he know it?

11. Who approved the Hosli detail?

12. Was the Hosli detail put out to bid?

13. How could invoices be submitted and approved for the Newman and Hosli details and no one notice that the officers involved could not work their NOPD shifts and work the number of hours at the times reflected in the detail invoices?

14. How can the Mayor find money to pay for carnival reviewing stands but not find money to hire 911 operators?

15. Why did the Chief place money that was provided for the 911 program into the general budget?

These questions, and others, must be answered immediately. The community will not allow the Mayor and Chief to avoid the press and public until so much time passes that the public forgets about this scandal. The public will not forget. The public will not let this scandal die.

Health

Tulane Cancer Center to Host a Complimentary Skin Cancer Screening on Wednesday, May 25

**May is National Skin
Cancer Awareness Month.**

**Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium (LCRC)
Encourages Routine Screenings for Early
Detection and Prevention**

WHAT:

May is National Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month and the LCRC is reminding everyone of the importance of routine screenings for this highly preventable cancer, such as the one taking place at the Tulane Cancer Center on Wednesday, May 25.

WHERE:

Tulane Cancer Center Comprehensive Clinic
150 S. Liberty Street
New Orleans, LA 70112

WHEN:

Wednesday, May 25
9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
(An appointment is required.)
To make your appointment, please call the Tulane
Call Center at 504-988-5800 or
1-800-588-5800 by May 24.)

WHY:

Through routine screenings, skin cancer can be prevented or detected early when it can be more easily treated.

FOR INFO:

For information on cancer resources in our community or to read about the amazing work LCRC researchers are doing right here in Louisiana to discover new cancer treatments, visit online at www.lcrc.info.

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Levees.org and Irvin Mayfield Jr to Dedicate Historic Plaque at Breach Site



Irvin Mayfield, Jr.

On Friday, May 20 at 6 p.m., the flood protection advocacy group Levees.org will host an Unveiling Ceremony for a Louisiana State Historic Plaque with Irvin Mayfield Jr., Grammy Award Winning Cultural Ambassador to the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana.

The 120-pound Plaque will be placed near the London Avenue Canal Breach Site (corner of Warrington Drive and Mirabeau Avenue) in the Gentilly neighborhood of New Orleans.

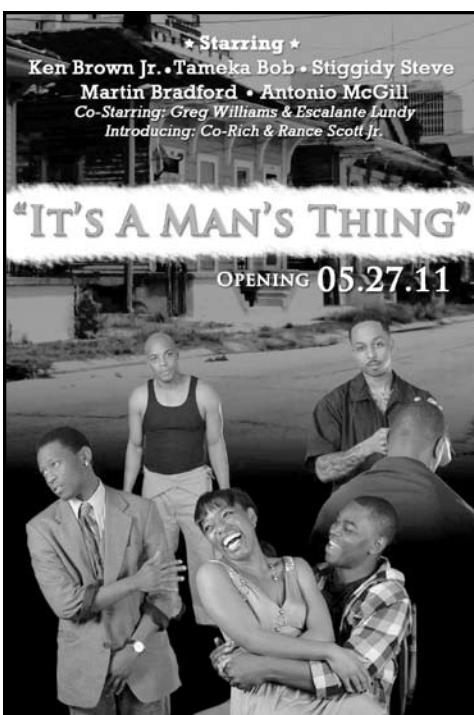
Mr. Mayfield's participation will include playing the Elysian Trumpet, hand-built by David Monette, the modern master of trumpet design, and dedicated to the memory of Irvin Mayfield, Sr. and all of the victims of the flooding on August 29, 2005.

While the Historic Plaque is Levees.org's gift to the residents of Gentilly, the text was crafted and the location was chosen in collaboration with the neighborhood association leaders and affected residents. Levees.org's supporters raised the \$1,740 to pay for the Plaque.

The Unveiling Ceremony will take place rain or shine, and is open to the public.

Founded in 2005, with chapters in five states, Levees.org's mission is educating the nation about the true cause of the 2005 metro New Orleans flooding. The group has nearly 25,000 supporters nationwide.

"It's a MAN'S Thing," To premiere at Dillard University Theater



GIFTED Productions presents "It's a MAN'S Thing," written & directed by Dr. Tameka Bob

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Friday & Saturday at 7:00 p.m. Sunday at 3:00 p.m.

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First Family Easter Service Attendance at Washington D.C.'s Shiloh Baptist Church Draws Racist Reaction

By Valencia Mohammed
AFRO-American Newspapers

"We received over 100 calls, from across the U.S., that were extremely nasty..."

(NNPA Newswire) Racial threats were hurled at one of the District's most prestigious Black churches after a visit from President Barack Obama and The First Family on Easter Sunday. Shiloh Baptist Church, in northwest Washington, became the target of criticism after a member of the FOX Nation, a national organization of White conservatives linked statements made by the church's pastor on another occasion to Obama's visit.

"We received over 100 calls, from across the U.S., that were

extremely nasty, disrespectful and challenging," said Shiloh Pastor Wallace Charles Smith. "Some were so outrageous and vulgar until we had to hang up."

Shiloh also received faxes from a group called [Defecating on Obama] that depicted the President as an ape. The faxes labeled the church congregation as the "Obama Ass Sniffing Chimps of Shiloh Baptist."

One fax kept referring to Obama and the congregation using the "N" word and called for their deaths.

"The calls seemingly came from people who were opposed to Obama's policies and presidency, in general," said Smith. "They questioned whether our church



President and Mrs. Michelle Obama attending Easter Services at Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, DC

was really Christian and claimed that I was racist."

The matter has been turned

over to the U.S. Secret Service, which provides protection for the President and his family. Under

federal law a threat against the President is a felony.

In January 2010, Pastor Smith gave a speech at Eastern University, in Pennsylvania. In the sermon he said that people with the mentality of the Ku Klux Klan wear pinstriped suits and might be talk show hosts on FOX-TV. This angered members of the FOX Nation when it was brought to their attention by talk show host Sean Hannity, well known for his outspoken remarks against Obama.

Hannity had several heated shows following the Obama Shiloh visit that stirred the controversy, which apparently led to the onslaught of backlash against the Shiloh minister. Several calls and emails were sent to FOX-TV.

Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

as I don't let myself down God won't let me down."

Thomas is traveling down his road to redemption and appreciates how he is still being embraced by many sectors of the community who are often at odds with one and other. But he hopes to continue to be a bridge builder bringing different people together to the table of understanding. "I feel that God is protecting me. It has been amazing that people both Black and White has embraced me and my message. They really believe in me and what I want to do in trying to make a difference with young people and the community as a whole, it has been very humbling."

One New Orleans

As many plea for a unified city, it seems in many instances it is more rhetoric than reality. That the gulf that divides New Orleans is one that keeps the City from moving forward into the realm of possibilities of being a great City where more of its citizens can dine at the table of prosperity.

Thomas feels one of the major impediments to this is the divide between the rich and poor and how a proper investment in eradicating poverty and the City dealing with its most needy citizens will strengthen the City. "The City needs to invest in its weakest link, we need to strengthen our commitment to uplifting a portion of the African-American community, women and children; you cannot have a large portion of the

population living in poverty and expect the City to prosper by giving people a handout, what is needed is a hand up. We need to ask ourselves moving forward if anything we do or bring to the City how does it reduce poverty?"

While Thomas is no longer an elected official he is still very politically and civically active and with his breadth and depth of experience he gives his prescription for building a better city moving forward, "The future is in all our hands, we are all a piece of the New Orleans puzzle, but some have taken themselves out of that puzzle, but they are still a piece." Continuing he says, "Today I believe leaders need to stop telling people what they want to hear and that is not just at the local level. We need to have an honest dialog about how good we are, how bad we are and how fair we are and how we fix what's broken in this City and where everybody can participate and contribute to the betterment of the City and it's up to us."

The play is called "Reflections" and Thomas says over the last few years he has done quite a bit of that, "I reflect on how I can be better for my family and my community, I reflect on how an educational system can be made better where all kids can have an equal shot at success, I reflect on how in spite of all that's happened to the people of New Orleans that we are all still here trying to rebuild our City and our lives."

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