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Big Freedia

New Orleans Queen of Bounce Music
Taking Over the World



"The best thing parents, friends and relatives can do when someone comes out is have their back and support them and be positive and let them know that they still love them."

By Edwin Buggage

Bounce Music: A Brief History

New Orleans is a City known as a place where many come to experience the arts. It is one of the most unique in the world with cultural traditions that are unseen anywhere else on the planet.

Throughout its rich history from the blaring sounds of brass bands, to the rhythmic chants of the Mardi Gras Indians with their elaborate costumes, to the great music that is funk and R&B, to the sounds of local hip-hop New Orleans is a place where in spite of its many problems it is a City with rich traditions.

In the early 1990's a style of music emerged sim-

ply called "Bounce" where a DJ cut between two tracks and the dancers moved their bodies to the music while MC's chant/sing and rap over the music. It was clubs like Ghost Town, Big Man's and others in addition to the Sunday Block Parties in the St. Thomas Project where the music became the party music of Black New Orleans. With its staples

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Big Freedia says the loss of his mother Vera Ross affected him in a major way, but says she continues to be a source of inspiration in his life.

being "Triggerman" (Showboys Drag Rap) and Derek B's "Brown-beat" "serving as the foundation of a new music form. Early pioneers such as DJ Jimi, T Tucker and DJ Irv, Lil Elt, Pimp Daddy, DJ Jubilee, Partners-n-Crime Ms. Tee, Cheeky Black, Magnolia Shorty, a young Juvenile (before he was with Cash Money Records) and many others were pioneers of this new musical form.

Today after many national artists have come to sample elements of the music with great success including Beyonce', whose biggest dance records include the New Orleans sound. Recently, "Bounce" has become a movement garnering fans around the globe because of The Queen Diva they call Big Freedia (Freddie Ross). In the last few years he has brought the music and the culture of New Orleans to the masses with his music, a hit TV Show "Big Freedia: Queen of Bounce" on the Fuse Network and now a book that has garnered all kinds of attention called "Big Freedia: God Save the Queen Diva" a memoir written with his publicist Nicole Ballin.

Big Freedia: God Save the Queen Diva

On this day Freedia is doing a book signing at Octavia Bookstore in uptown New Orleans. This store nestled off of a main

street in a quiet neighborhood is a far cry from the clubs where Big Freedia does his energetic shows with butts shaking and blaring bounce music. The place is filled to capacity with people of every stripe and type coming out to meet and hear the story of Freddie Ross, a young man growing up in New Orleans and how he became transformed into Big Freedia the Queen Diva.

"The book came about from the booking agent I am with and they have a book department within that. They have been following me for years and they decided that they wanted to try to get me a book deal through Simon and Shuster," he says excitedly as a first-time author landing a major book deal.

He speaks of the book being like a personal diary of his life and how the process was a therapeutic experience as he faced some of his personal demons and tragic events through writing the book. And he hopes that those who read it can be inspired by his story.

"Writing the book was an emotional roller-coaster ride looking back at the trying times; such as Katrina and my mother passing away, growing up as a kid with a violent and abusive stepdad and relationships with different people. My career and its ups and downs with different DJ's dancers; But most importantly I want

those who read this book to connect my story to their story. This book I hope inspires people that no matter where you're from that you can make something positive with your life."

A Story of Coming Out: From Freddie Ross to Big Freedia

Growing up in a home where resources sometimes may have been scant, Freddie Ross was a kid who was bullied at school and home by his stepfather for not being like other boys. He was overweight and effeminate something that affected his self-confidence. But with the support of his mother Mama V (Vera Ross) and a local Choir Director Georgia at the Press-

ing Onward Church (He sang in the choir and was Choir Director) they would give him the support and help him gain the self-confidence to be authentic to whom he was. He says that his mother and church were places of refuge for him during these years of self-discovery; and says that now bounce music is his way of spreading his love of God to others.

"Bounce music is my version of church right now, the church will always be a part of me regardless of the kind of music I do. I love God and God Loves me and that is why I have been blessed with so many opportunities to do so many things. I am helping people on different levels. Even though I am doing Bounce Music God has put me in a position to help a lot of people. Sometimes I still go back to church to sing and direct the choir."

He has become an inspiration for many in the LGBT community. Reflecting on his experience of coming out and what he suggest that parents and friends do even if they do not understand the gay lifestyle they should support the choice that individual makes and continue to see them as they did before. As their child, friend neighbor, etc.

"The best thing parents, friends and relatives can do when someone comes out is have their back and support them and be positive

and let them know that they still love them."

In light of the Supreme Court Decision that's made same sex marriages legal in all fifty states Freedia says this is a step in the right direction for the country.

"I am happy about this decision and feel it is great that people can love who they want and honor that by being married."

Bouncing in the 504: A City, its History and its Ties to a Long Tradition

Bounce is akin to many of the music's of New Orleans from Bamboula with its dancing in a circle during slavery in Congo

Square, to the second-line where the music and the people perform in a call and response style. Where the dissonant sounds create a harmony between the performers and those who spectate making them one; at a bounce shows as is at a second-line this is the case. It is something Big Freedia brings to people around the globe with her high energy show.

"When it comes to my show I say let's turn up have a good time and bring New Orleans wherever we are and if we are home we bring it even harder high energy because we want people to come out dance and enjoy themselves," Freedia says describing her show.

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Pop singer Miley Cyrus recently brought “twerking” to the masses and it became a global dance craze. Of course being the home of “twerking” those from New Orleans knew that there was nothing new about the dance and its connection to New Orleans and Africa. In fact the original dances of Africa, Mapouka and Sabar, the movements are similar to “twerking and bounce movements.” And New Orleans as the most African influenced City in the U.S. continues to have derivatives of the culture as it’s created its own unique one and that is “twerking.”

Big Freedia: Working and Twerking while Breaking Records

Freedia set a Guinness world record for most people twerking at the same time in a , his show on the Fuse Network where he twerked with 358 dancers, ranging in age from 8 to 80, twerking for two minutes straight.

“That was an amazing experience breaking the world record for twerking; we did it as a season 2 promo. Twerking is an expression dance and now it is all over the world and we would like people to feel a sense of self-empowerment on the dancefloor.”

He has gained legions of fans

bringing them into the fold introducing them to bounce music. Although he have been mining pieces of the music for quite some time the Queen Diva of pop music Beyonce’ is a fan of Freedia’s music and who Freedia now counts not as just one of his idols but a friend.

“I collaborate with different artist and there are a lot of larger artist who respect what I am doing and growing the Bounce Movement. They realize I am real and genuine. It was amazing meeting Beyonce’ and her and I have grown to become close and a lot of different artist that I never thought I would be able to connect with and it is an honor to be friends with a lot of them.”

Bounce Queen Diva and a Touch of Reality Tops TV Ratings

Not only breaking world records, but having his show the top rated show in the history of the Fuse Network, with viewers ranging from all walks of life; he says it is successful because the show is more real than other shows that call themselves “reality programming.” Freedia says when the cameras roll they are just following him around in his everyday grind and believes that



Big Freedia at Octavia Bookstore promoting his new book; “Big Freedia: God Save the Queen Diva”

the situations and things in the show are universal that anyone can relate to and that is part of its appeal.

“It is realer than any show out there it is very authentic to me and the City of New Orleans. We basically keep it real we don’t have scripts or plotting for the scenes so they follow my everyday life and that is what makes it different from other reality shows. We have fun with it and we work really hard and my team is just dedicated and loyal to what we do.”

except God. We had a very close mother and son relationship. As I got older we became closer and closer, she supported me and my career. She was my rock and continues to be. We had a strong bond and an unconditional love.”

Bouncing Back, Inspiring Others and Taking Over the World

As we enter the 10th Year Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina where people have many stories of a holocaust that for-

As a testament of the realness of the show, the viewers got a chance to witness Freedia go through the loss of his mother Vera Ross to cancer. As he talks about it you can see the hurt in his face and as his voice slightly changes, slightly cracking when speaking of her.

“She was the most important person in my life and there was no one before her

ever changed the face of a City; Freedia is no exception. During this tumultuous time, he and his siblings were trapped in the flood ravaged waters and had to brave several days of not knowing whether they would survive. It is in this time that many reflect today and see life through a different lens. It is one of those things that make people re-think what is important.

“Katrina, it taught me to appreciate life. Now When I see storms around the world it really now touches home. This tragedy really brought me closer to my family.”

He says today his life is about how to turn tragedy and turmoil into triumph. And he is today “Bouncing” through life to a beat that has many followers as evidenced by his success. He say he hopes that people continue to be inspired by him and see that if Freddie Ross can overcome a life of strife and become Big Freedia: The Queen Diva, living life on his own terms and being true to himself, anyone can.

“I feel people can be inspired by my strength and endurance through it all; I have had some very trying times and I never let it break me and I see in my future that I will do even greater things.”

Data News Weekly is Hiring

Data News Weekly Newspaper, The People’s Paper, is hiring for two positions in our New Orleans Office.

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Creating a Garden of Memories

Edited by LMG Calla Victoria

It was my pleasure to design the garden for a project that should be near and dear to the hearts of all New Orleanians. The project is called The Open-Air Levee Exhibition Hall and Rain Garden. This project is spearheaded by Sandy Rosenthal, Founder and CEO of Levees.org. The garden and exhibit is built at the site of the east breach of the London Avenue Canal that took place on August 29, 2005; in the Filmore Gardens neighborhood of Gentilly at 5000 Warrington Drive.

Upon hearing about the garden, I reached out to Sandy Rosenthal and offered my services as a Master Gardener. I worked closely with Sandy and her team providing plant consultations, the acquisition of plants and supplies donations, as well as the actual installation of plant material at the site.

There are three garden beds on the site. A small horizontal raised bed greets visitors at the entrance to the park. It is planted with Encore Azaleas, daylilies, and asters. The idea is to have color most of the year, and an amazing garden year around. Encore azaleas, Autumn Lilac and Autumn Sunset will provide blooms in the spring, summer, and fall; then after the last fall blooms they become lovely evergreen shrubs. The same is true with the daylilies, when they are not in bloom they provide texture and foliage in the garden and are not bothered by a freeze.

There are two native rain gardens on the site. A rain garden is a sunken garden bed that captures storm water runoff from hard surfaces like rooftops, sidewalks and driveways, and allows it to soak back into the ground naturally. Rain gardens are planted with bog plants (plants that like a soggy environment). The roof of the exhibit's hall structure is angled so that all of the rainwater runs off into the rain gardens.



LMG Calla Victoria (far left), Rain Garden designer; Councilman Jared Brossett, Jasmine Haralson, Director of Community Affairs for NORA; Sandy Rosenthal, C.E.O. of Levees.org; former District B Councilman Jim Singleton, Carmen Owens, resident of Gentilly neighborhood; H.J. Bosworth Jr., Display designer; Nick Harris, Vice-President of Dillard University; Gloria DeCuir-Robert, President of the Filmore Gardens Neighborhood Association; and Kenneth Evans, resident of Gentilly neighborhood.

The smaller rain garden is planted with Katrina Irises (Dietes x 'NolaAlba' P.P. #21,460) that bloom through the summer, and swamp hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*) also called Scarlet Rose Mallow, or Texas Star that is currently making a great display in the garden. The focal point of the garden is the Peggy Martin Rose Bush (*Rosa* 'Peggy Martin'). When we started considering plant material for the garden I insisted on having the Peggy Martin/Katrina Rose bush in the garden because the Peggy Martin Rose bush was the only rose bush in the New Orleans Botanical Garden's Rose Garden to survive the flood waters of August 2005.

The large rain garden is planted with Juncus grass, American crinum swamp lilies, swamp milkweed and other bog plant material. Flanking the site on the left is a bank of Japanese Maples inter-planted with Camellia sasanquas and Camellia japonicas to extend bloom season from fall to late spring. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was on Saturday, July 11, 2015; on almost the 10th Anniversary of the flood that devastated New Orleans.

The Exhibit Hall and Rain Garden are a memorial to the trauma of the Flood, a commemoration of a pivotal moment in American history, and a symbol of the residents' resilience and determination to return home. Detailed images along the Exhibit Hall wall document how and why the 2005 Flood happened. Visitors will also find out how the disaster has made the American people safer. A myth-busters section debunks five popular, but incorrect, assumptions about New Orleans and the people who live here.

The park is a partnership between Levees.org, the neighborhood residents, Growing Green, the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, Parkway Partners and many more. The park is free and open to everyone.

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Aretha Franklin

Maintaining Her Musical Roots

By Mary L. Datcher

The essence of Soul music cannot be mentioned without the names of iconic entertainers that have created a signature sound that is remixed, reworked and constantly remastered to this day. The preservation of music history, Black music history, has become relevant now more than ever. One cannot drop the name of Aretha Franklin without referencing her as the 'Queen of Soul' a description that was crowned by Chicago's legendary radio broadcaster, Pervis 'The Blues Man' Spann. During the 1960's, Spann, a radio disc jockey on WOPA-AM began to produce concerts at The Regal Theatre booking Blues and Soul acts including a young Aretha Franklin. He later purchased the station under WVON-AM which continues to operate today.

Chicago holds a special place in Franklin's heart as she remembers the constant trips as a young girl traveling with her father—the legendary Rev. C.L. Franklin. "I've been coming to Chicago for almost 60 odd years," Franklin said. "As a teenager, we stayed out South on 93rd and Stewart. My Dad had a friend here and that's where we stayed during the summer. I would come with him, when I got a little older and he would preach in town at different churches for Rev. Evans and others. So, I've had a love affair with Chicago for many years."

The 18-Grammy award winning singer has sung for several Presidents, foreign dignitaries, queens, princes and kings as well as shared the stage with nearly every known international rockstar from every corner of the world—all fighting for a the chance to share a piece of her. The first woman inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, she reminisce about why the "city of big shoulders" brings back so many wonderful memories – there isn't a hint of name dropping.

In town for yet another memorable concert; the Queen of Soul will perform at Ravinia this Saturday to a near sold out show. On the way in from Sioux City, Iowa, her tour bus suffered some transmission problems barely making it into the city limits.

"That was God's grace that we got here as close as we did. Fortunately, when the bus stopped – 5 minutes later, the Illinois Department of Transportation and Safety pulled up. I said, 'Whoa' as the old folks say, 'Watch God work.'"

Born in Memphis, her family relocated to Detroit where she's called home for

most of her life. Although firmly rooted in gospel, Franklin also drew from such blues and jazz legends as Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington and Sarah Vaughn as she developed her singing style. On the male side, she was inspired by Ray Charles, Nat King Cole, and Sam Cooke (both with and without the Soul Stirrers). From the emerging world of youthful doo-wop groups and early soul, Aretha enjoyed the likes of LaVern Baker, Ruth Brown, Little Willie John, the Falcons (featuring Wilson Pickett), and Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers.

Having musical roots in the church, she learned early by traveling on the road accompanying her father and singing with her siblings at various churches and gospel music revivals. Her father, a pastor at New Bethel Baptist Church also recorded albums. Aretha's best lessons were picked up by singing in her father's church. Influenced by great singers Clara Ward, Mahalia Jackson and James Cleveland – the secular side of music was never far from her repertoire.

"Back in the days of the Regal Theatre, I had great days performing with other artists like the Motown groups – the Temptations and the Marvelettes," Franklin remembers. "That was during the time when Dennis Edwards was a Contour. He wasn't a Temp then. McKinley Mitchell used to close the show with "A Little Bit of Soul". The last verse of it was, 'How am I doing? Am I doing alright.' He would answer himself. I love that. That's the way he

would close the show and kill it all the time. Great days – the best days. You would taste the best hamburgers from the back door of the Regal."

During that time, record labels such as Vee Jay, Chess and Motown Records were dominating the airwaves, especially on Black radio stations but gradually crossed over. Chicago and Detroit shared great similarities in musical styles and trends. Some artists recall there was some friendly competition among the male vocal groups.

She explained, "I never knew there was a rivalry between Detroit and Chicago. Chicago to me is very similar to the people in Detroit. Very sophisticated, very honest and very intellectual. Just down-to-earth and good people."

Growing up she loved hearing about her sister's escapades on one of her many trips to Chicago and each them soon had young suitors. "My sister, Erma used to date one of the Chi-Lites. Way back in the days – I mean way back when we were teenagers. I was 16 when The Flamingos had caught our attention. One of the members, Jimmy Carter stayed across the street from my father's friend so eventually she became friends with them. Later, I started to date one of the Flamingos as well," Franklin said.

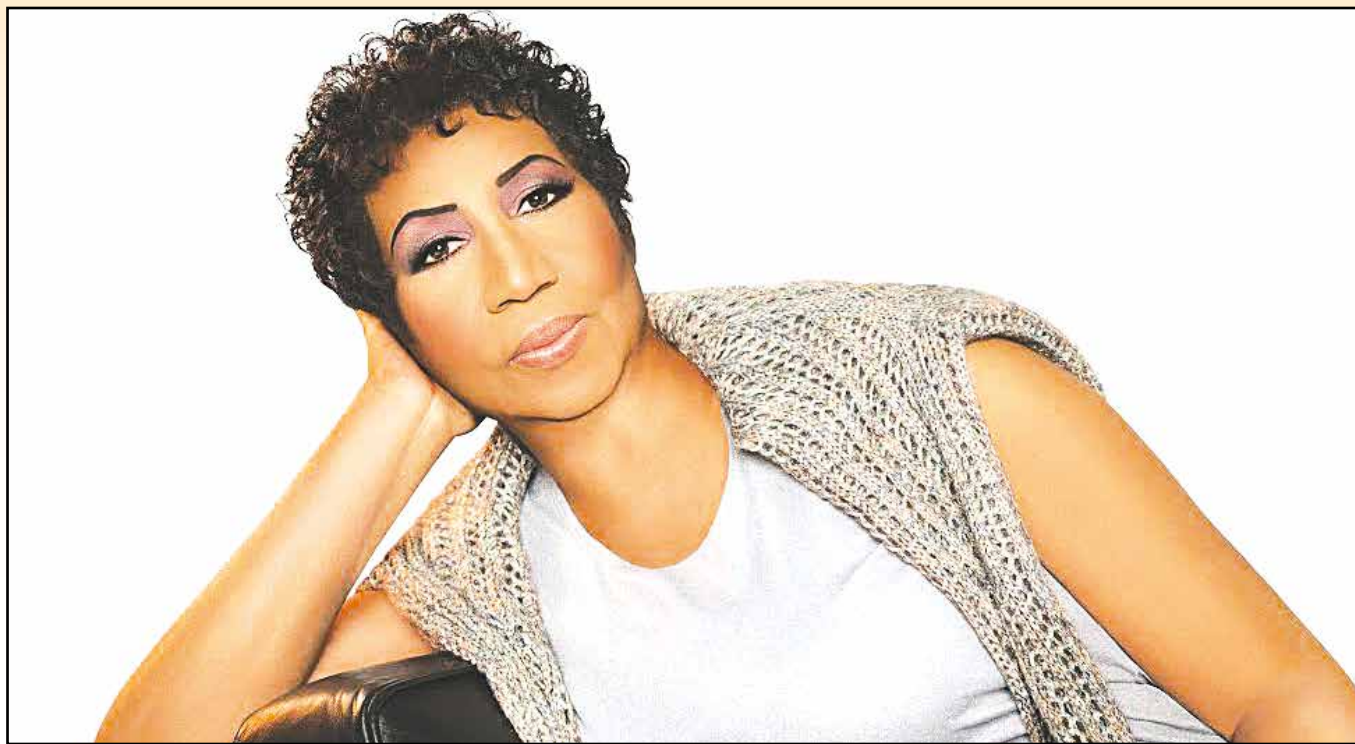
Hearing about Erma's adventures hitting popular nightlife attractions like the South Side's Club DeLisa, would often have her calling the airline to inquire about flights even though she wasn't quite ready to board a plane. Over the

years, it's been known that Franklin still prefers traveling via ground transportation and rarely travels overseas due to her misgivings of flying.

Throughout her recording career, she has helped build the R&B and Gospel brand of major record labels such Columbia Records for six years, releasing nine R&B hits (the most memorable being "Today I Sing the Blues" and "Runnin' Out of Fools"). She also scored some pop crossovers ("Rock-a-Bye Your Baby With a Dixie Melody" and "Won't Be Long") –

Eventually, she signed to Atlantic Records in 1966 under the guidance of legendary music executive and producer Jerry Wexler. It was during this time, her stardom rose to international heights. Her next three albums – Aretha Arrives (1967), Lady Soul (1968) and Aretha Now (1968) – included "Respect" "Chain of Fools," "Think," "Baby, I Love You," "Since You've Been Gone (Sweet Sweet Baby)," and a soulful rendering of Carole King's "A Natural Woman (You Make Me Feel Like)." Her fifth Atlantic album was Aretha in Paris (1968). In 12 years, Franklin made a total of 19 albums while signed to Atlantic Records.

In the early years of the 1970's, she released such critically acclaimed albums as Spirit in the Dark (1970), Aretha Live at Fillmore West (1971), Young, Gifted and Black (1972) and Amazing Grace (1972). Spirit in the Dark and Young, Gifted and Black found Franklin tapping into themes of resiliency and empower-



Shoot Ya Best Shot!

All Star Funk at the Howlin Wolf

Photos by Kichea S. Burt

On Sunday, July 12, at the Howlin Wolf, New Orleans, opening act was Claude Bryant and the Allstars, NOLA, followed by Morgan Heritage from Jamaica.

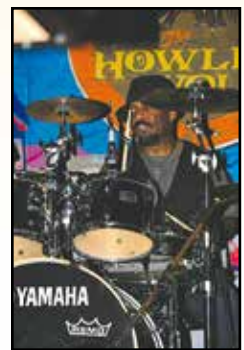
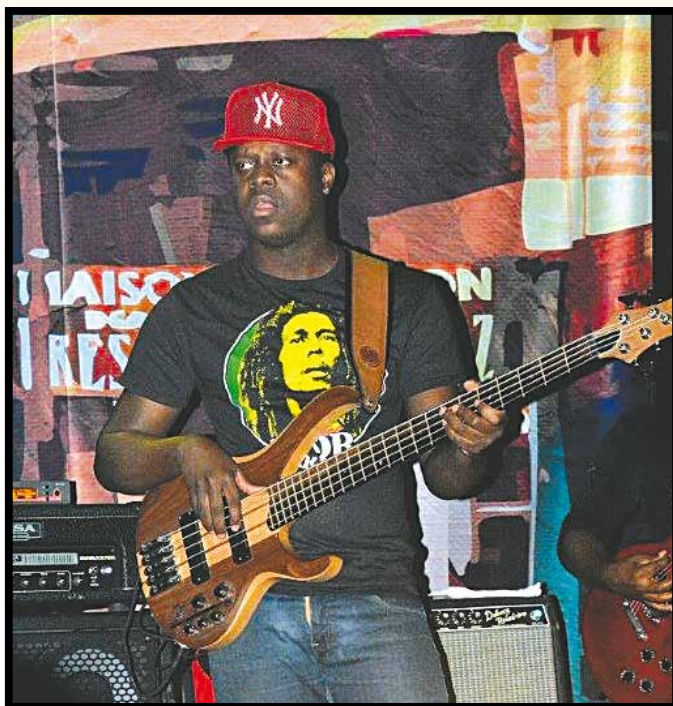
Claude Bryant and the AllStars

are a Four Piece Combo who came ready to Funk the place out with Reggae and New Orleans Funk. Morgan Heritage is a reggae band formed in 1994 by five children of reggae artist Denroy Morgan,

namely J Peetah Morgan, Una Morgan, Roy "Gramps" Morgan, Nakhamyah "Lukes" Morgan and Memmalatel "Mr. Mojo" Morgan. The Royal Family of Reggae, has taken the impressively significant

step forward by releasing their upcoming album, "Strictly Roots" in 2015 on CTBC Records.

The place was hot, hot hot, and of course, Data was there!!!



Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events

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How Will 2016's Presidential Candidates Save Our Cities?



Marc Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

"You must register. You must vote. You must learn, so your choice advances your interest and the interest of our beloved Nation. Your future, and your children's future, depend upon it, and I don't believe that you are going to let them down."

— President Lyndon B. Johnson on the Signing of the Voting Rights Act, August 1965

For four days beginning in July, political, business, and community leaders will convene in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. for the 2015 National Urban League Conference. Conference attendees should expect to engage in thought-provoking discussions with leaders

and experts in a variety of areas, including economics, entertainment, civil rights and politics.

This year, following a long-standing tradition of major-party presidential candidates addressing the conference, the National Urban League counts several 2016 presidential hopefuls — Republicans and Democrats alike — as invited guests. The candidates, including former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley and retired neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson, will share their respective vision and strategies to save our cities.

The candidates' plenary session, "Save Our Cities: Education, Jobs + Justice," falls under the umbrella of the National Urban League's "Save Our Cities" campaign, an unprecedented mobilization to influence public policy through grassroots political action.

As we know far too well, our country faces tremendous challenges. Rather than recite our

problems, rather than fall into the trap of recycling failed solutions for today's and tomorrow's challenges, we will reunite in Florida to deliberate on solutions and fresh ideas to the economic and social troubles plaguing our cities. These are discussions that are too important to take place in silos. The solutions to our challenges are stronger with buy-in, engagement and resources from all concerned stakeholders. So, it is vital that those contending for the highest office in the land be a part of that conversation.

The ravages of inequality on American families, particularly among those in African-American and Latino communities, continues to rip our nation apart. We must question and listen to any candidate's proposals to reverse this ever-widening trend of inequality.

An educated citizenry is best prepared to choose the candidate who will advance his or her interests, and ultimately, the interests of a stronger, healthier and more inclusive nation. During his re-

marks on the signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, President Lyndon Johnson said, "The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men." The stakes are too high for us, and for future generations, not to have these discussions together.

In this year's analysis of the "State of Black America," the National Urban League found that while strides have been made in Black and Brown communities, tremendous gaps continue to leave us with a crisis in education, jobs and justice. In the case of justice, a series of horrific acts — from the deaths of Black men and women at the hands of police, to the racially motivated murder of nine people in a South Carolina church, to the legislative efforts in some states to rob Americans of their constitutional right to vote — cries out for serious and immediate reform.

While our economy is improv-

ing after the recession, the bounce back has not been as evident in many Black and Brown communities. For too many Americans, the recession is alive and well. As Congress continues to debate reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we, along with a diverse coalition of policy-makers, families and community activists, are fighting to ensure that any new legislation adopted protects civil rights and promotes equity, equality and accountability in education.

These conversations are indispensable in this moment in which we as a nation find ourselves of perhaps the greatest social and economic upheaval in a generation. Choose to be a part of our discussion and conversation, or choose to get involved in the discussions and conversations that are happening, or will happen in your communities — every voice and vote matters.

Marc H. Morial, former mayor of New Orleans, is president and CEO of the National Urban League.

Education Reformers Must Unite Around 3 Goals



By Mashea Ashton

It's fair to say the ultimate goal of the education reform movement, and the education community in general, is to ensure that all students — no matter where they live or what their background is — have access to a high-quality education. This is a big and intimidating challenge, an addressing it requires across-the-board commitment to three foundational goals.

First, we have to ensure that low-income families have access

to high-quality educational opportunities at local private schools. Too often, those at the lower end of the income spectrum are limited to sub-par or failing public schools simply by virtue of what neighborhood they live in. This is an unacceptable outcome for those of us committed to educational equality, and that's why we should focus time and resources on ensuring that workable solutions like vouchers and tax credits are an option for our nation's most disadvantaged students.

Second, we have to be committed to providing access to high-quality public charter schools. As public schools operated independently of their district, charter schools are in a unique position to lead in educational innovation, setting an example for both private and traditional district schools. But too often they lack

the funding and access to facilities that other public schools enjoy. All students deserve equal access to educational funding, facilities, and opportunities in areas where charter schools are available, and we have to work even harder to make sure charter schools are available as an option in those places that don't currently provide educational opportunity.

Third, we have to work to improve the quality of the traditional public schools we already have. There's a temptation for education reformers to focus on progress we can make outside district school systems. In many ways it's easier to enact change through private and public charter schools than it is in district schools. But committing to high-quality education for all students means making sure that every school is providing the best possible education

to its students.

It's easy to embrace an "us versus them" mentality, especially between reformers and the establishment, but even among reformers. Each sector of the reform movement has its own priorities, and when we focus only on our goals we risk losing sight of our purpose. Ultimately, we'll only realize our shared vision if we learn to work together, both as reformers with different priorities and in collaboration with the establishment.

That's what we're trying to do in Newark, New Jersey, where parents, educators, administrators, students, clergy, community leaders and other local stakeholders are coming together for educational opportunity. Despite significant budgetary and community challenges, we have been able to establish significant changes in

the educational landscape. Nearly one-third of Newark's public school students are now served in charter schools, and the entire community is talking about ways to continue expanding access to high-quality options.

I've said before, and it bears repeating, that we have to take a kids-first approach to the issue. If charter, private, and district schools can all acknowledge that we have the same universal goal, if we can acknowledge together that our children are more important than politics, ego, or legacy, we can increase access to high-quality options across the board.

Mashea Ashton serves on the board of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, and is the CEO of the Newark Charter School Fund.

God's Got Your Back



James Washington
Guest Columnist

A while back, I heard Bishop T.D. Jakes of the Potter's House preach a sermon that really caught my attention and resonates with me all the time. He reminded those in the audience that most of the bible was written from a jail cell. I think his overall message had something to do with his

prison outreach ministry, which I understand to be significant. I was so struck, however, by the reality of God's Word and direction coming from the deep faith of those imprisoned. That concept has never left me. What is it about being a believer, a walking talking believer that somehow frightens those in power so much, that a jail cell is an inevitable and practical answer? History suggests that professing one's belief in Jesus Christ as Lord can literally be a death sentence. The bible teaches us that eventually our belief will be put to the ultimate test. Have you ever wondered why God's teachings are so feared by those who believe in other religions?

I used to say Jesus' message

made so much sense that even if He didn't exist, we should invent Him. Now that I'm saved, I guess you could say I know I'm a candidate for assassination. My point, as I was intrigued by Bishop Jakes' reference, is that I don't view myself as a threat to anyone based upon my belief in one God, the Holy Trinity and the truth of Jesus Christ. But the world in which I live does view me in this manner. I suppose a larger issue ought to be, have I done anything or said anything that should land me in jail; if jail is defined as that spiritual place that present day Sadducees and Pharisees want to send people like me?

If I haven't said or done anything, then maybe I better get go-

ing, stir some things up. In their day, the apostles, Paul and others were indeed looked upon as threats to the establishment. That meant governments and principalities, as well as the church hierarchy of that day. If nothing else, I don't think anyone would argue that on His worst day, Jesus was the quintessential revolutionary. It still amazes me how such principles of unconditional universal love for humankind got Him killed. And then it always hits me that this kind of philosophy will ultimately attack and undermine entrenched institutionalized power of all kinds. That's when I realize that if you are a believer in Christ, you are most certainly a threat to man. Man craves power and

Christianity abdicates all power to Jehovah. We stand as representatives of that truth and stand trial everyday with the world as our judge and jury. That explains that target on the backs of believers throughout history and should remind us all that there is indeed a target on all of our backs. All I can encourage you to do in the face of all this is to stay the course and know our defense attorney is on His way. The prosecuting attorney loses this case. So when you're alone in your cell remember, you have already won. The battle is over. The verdict is in. We win.

**May God bless and
keep you always,**

James, jaws@dallasweekly.com

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Serena The Great!!!

By: Jermal Greenberry

Lisa Leslie, Laila Ali, Serena Williams; all women, all athletes, all great. They reach a level of greatness that one can only dream of, let alone accomplish. If you were watching Wimbledon, you witnessed something special; a historical moment. Serena Williams captured her 6th Wimbledon title and 21st Grand Slam title overall, defeating Garbine Muguruza of Spain. This is not the first time Serena has won a major title and this won't be her last. Getting here wasn't easy, but I'm pretty sure she sees that every struggle to get here was worth it.

Williams is now 33 years old and has the chance to win all four major tennis titles. She is the best Female Athlete of our generation, or arguably the best athlete of all time. We cannot deny her amazing accomplishments and her place as one of the greatest

athletes in tennis, male or female. Although Williams may make many of her accomplishments seem easy to obtain, she admits that couldn't be an assumption so wrong. "I've been trying to win four in a row for 12 years, and it hasn't happened. I've had a couple of injuries. It's been an up-and-down process," Williams said to ESPN's Melissa Isaacson, when asked about her "Serena Slam."

Some may say that other tennis players of Williams' era don't have the same level of competition as her; bottom line is they just simply can't keep up with her strength and agility. Some may also say that other legends such as Billie Jean King, Chris Evert, and Martina Navratilova would have given Williams more of a competition on the tennis court. There is no doubt that these phenomenal women played a huge role in tennis. Seeing Williams' name being mentioned alongside



theses giants—now that's something special. What makes Serena special is not just her drive and passion to win, but her imposing will to dominate her opponent. She refuses to lose; she refuses to be defeated. When she's down in a match and needs to come up with a big serve or aces she finds the strength to raise her level of play. She wants to be and is the best at what she does. "She wants

to keep this journey at the top as much as she can," Patrick Mouratoglou, Williams' coach told ESPN. "That's definitely the goal. And then if she breaks records, that's great."

This win makes it her sixth Wimbledon title. In her journey to the title, she defeated four women, three of which were number one ranked players: Venus, her 35-year-old sister, in the

fourth round; Victoria Azarenka, of Belarus, in a close quarterfinal; Russian Maria Sharapova in the semifinals; then of course, Garbine Muguruza of Spain in the finals. Not even the great Billy Jean King and Martina Navratilova, who I believe set the standards for women in tennis, can say they've won a total of 21 Grand Slam titles. Williams only trails Steffi Graf who has 22 Grand Slam titles and the woman who went into history as the best Australian tennis player of all time, Margaret "The Aussie Amazon" Court, with 24. I have a feeling those records will change soon with the way she has dominated opponents in singles matches. But one thing has not changed, even after all these years. Williams is still No. 1. Williams has a chance to win four majors in a calendar year alone. That is just remarkable. I call it walking history. Williams sets the standard for many to dare to follow.

Health News

Lupus Disproportionately Affects Black Women \$32 Billion in Funding Could Raise Awareness

by Shantella Y. Sherman
NNPA Newswire
Special to the NNPA from the
Afro-American Newspaper

Lupus, or systemic lupus erythematosus, is a chronic and often debilitating autoimmune disease that impacts more than 1.5 million Americans. Characterized by intense fatigue, exhaustion, joint pain, and memory problems, lupus is three times more common among the Black female populations than any other group. And, while lupus affects women in their childbearing years, the onset of lupus in Black women is earlier and more likely to develop into severe organ problems.

Among health officials lupus has been termed everything from "unpredictable," to "misunderstood," and is difficult to diagnose. Additionally, lupus remains a challenge to treat, according to the Lupus Foundation of America, existing outside of the

national health dialogue with few awareness efforts in place. The exact cause of lupus is not known, though researchers believe that there are hereditary genetic markers that keep the immune system from functioning properly. Additionally, a number of factors can trigger lupus attacks, including viral infections, such as mononucleosis.

No two cases of lupus are alike. Some people develop kidney problems, for example, while others get premature heart disease, and others suffer from strokes or develop lung inflammation.

In recent weeks, lupus activists from around the country visited Capitol Hill, where they successfully lobbied for more than \$32 billion in research funding for the National Institutes of Health and to elevate lupus on the nation's health care agenda. The funding would not only aid researchers in studying the disease, but also sup-

ply a collective guideline for diagnosis, treatment, and outreach that could be utilized by professionals and patients alike.

"Our research has shown that, on average, individuals with lupus suffer symptoms for four or more years and visit three or more doctors before they receive a diagnosis of lupus," said Sandra C. Raymond, president and CEO of the Lupus Foundation of America. "I'm pleased to see a collaborative effort among advocacy groups, researchers, physicians and leaders in public health and government to provide critical tools that will help reduce the time to diagnosis and improve medical care for people with lupus."

Dr. S. Sam Lim, associate professor in the Division of Rheumatology at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, Ga., found, in a study of Black women diagnosed with lupus, that those impacted ranged in age

from 15-44 and exhibited a range of symptoms from a skin rash to kidney (renal) failure.

"These are young women in the prime of their careers, family, and fertility. This means a severely compromised future, with a disease that waxes and wanes, affecting every aspect of daily living for the rest of their lives," Lim said. "These data directly reflect the burden of lupus in our community. These are mostly young, minority women who are going to dialysis instead of working and caring for their families."

And despite the widespread prevalence of lupus, medical research has remained underfunded relative to its scope and devastation making the one in every 250 Black women diagnosed particularly vulnerable to misdiagnoses. Scientists are baffled as to why. Even with the famous 10-year Lupus in Minorities: Nature Versus Nurture (LUMINA)

study, which tracked a sizeable multi-ethnic, multi-regional, and multi-institutional group of lupus sufferers, no consistent cause for the racial disparity was found. Genetic and ethnic factors were noted, however, to be more important than socioeconomic ones in influencing the disease's growth.

Lim said several organizations, including the National Lupus Patient Registry, provide tremendous resources to those impacted by the disease. He said that 20 years ago, only 40 percent of people with lupus lived more than three years following diagnosis, with current therapies, most now live a normal lifespan.

"We have to build the next line of research projects to determine the additional 'whys' of the disproportionate rates in minorities and poorer outcomes as well as other important questions involving the role of the immune system and genetics," Lim said.

Leaders Urge Patience In Achieving Change After Emanuel Nine

By Barney Blakeney
Special to the NNPA from
The Charleston Chronicle

It's been some three weeks since nine worshippers at Emanuel AME Church were gunned down at a Bible study session in the church. After the shootings the community and nation displayed an unprecedented outpouring of compassion for the victims and survivors as well as outrage at the racism that prompted the atrocity.

Since the shootings the state and nation has bonded to remove the Confederate Flag as a political and social symbol of the racist hatred made evident by the atrocity. And now after Emanuel's dead has been buried, local civil rights leaders say the substance of the racism and hatred the flag represents will take more time and patience.

As the nation learned of the July 17 atrocity at Emanuel immediate calls to stop the racism led to the action on the Confederate

Flag, an action that began in 1999. Charleston NAACP President Dot Scott said her organization already has started to hold discussions with local businesses and institutions to address discrimination.

But she cautions that the community shouldn't think that racial discrimination that's existed centuries will change in three weeks.

"We need to change some things like what happens in employment and public education and we need concrete change. But we must remember it hasn't even been a month since those nine people were killed at Emanuel. That was a game changer and things are changing as evidenced by the removal of the flag. Two weeks before July 17 we wouldn't even have had that discussion."

"Now we're beginning to see people like Gov. Nikki Haley and others working to make a difference. But we shouldn't delude ourselves to think things will be fixed overnight," Scott said.

Rev. Nelson B. Rivers, pastor

of Charity Missionary Baptist Church in North Charleston and vice president of Operations and Religious Affairs for the National Action Network said economic empowerment is a change that must become a reality for African Americans after the sacrifice of the Emanuel Nine. While Blacks today have more money and education than ever before in American history, as a group they still don't possess economic opportunity.

Citing the outpouring of compassion from whites after the atrocity at Emanuel, Rivers said, "We have to ask is this just a guilt trip or an opportunity to change the dynamics of racism in America." He pointed to Charleston County School Board's decision to name a candidate overwhelmingly opposed by Blacks and others as its new superintendent as an example of some people's refusal to change.

"The deaths of the nine people at Emanuel didn't mean jack to the school board. If they didn't

respect us in a time of our worst crisis, can we expect them to change in good times?" However he optimistically added, "We fought for the removal of the flag for 15 years and in just two weeks after Emanuel it's coming down."

But like Scott, Rivers said issues such as expanding Medicare, ceasing attacks on voting rights, employment discrimination and discrimination in criminal justice and incarceration will require patience. And renegotiating the relationship between Blacks and whites, he said.

"Renegotiating means if they don't do business with us, we won't do business with them. Collectively, as a community, we have to renegotiate a relationship that requires making structural changes in how things operate. First we must have that conversation within the Black community and ask ourselves if we are ready to renegotiate. Then we can go to others and let them know we don't want more conversation. We want renegotiating."

Data Zone

Data Zone, Continued on page 6.

ment. Spirit in the Dark was her most autobiographical album, featuring five songs penned by Franklin.

Former Columbia Records president, Clive Davis signed Franklin to his new label, Arista Records in the 1980's bringing her soulful sound into the dance world with hits such as "Jump to It" and "Get It Right". Her collaborations on duets from George Michael, Keith Richards and later down the road with hip hop songstress, Lauryn Hill sealed her versatility as cross-generational to many fans.

Clive Davis is known as the man with the 'golden' touch and is famously tied to the late singer Whitney Houston, God daughter of Franklin. Having a niche for working with the best female vocalists, Clive approached her on the latest album project, "Aretha Franklin Sings the Diva Classics", an album showcasing the singer's signature style covering popular songs by chart topping female singers, many of whom have been influenced by Franklin growing up.

"That was Clive's idea and it was his concept," Franklin said. "He asked me what I thought about it and he gave me a list of singers along with a list of recordings. I looked at the list and most of these songs, I had bought as a consumer so they have no idea how much money they owe me," she laughed. "I thought these songs are great, I loved them as a consumer as well."

From her first major record label in 1967 to her current deal on RCA Records, the music business had changed. She believes the generation following hers have made smarter moves based on the doors that were opened by her peers.

"They came into the industry doing their own thing. They're still doing their own thing. Like Sean 'Puffy' Combs (not Diddy), he organized and brought all of his artists to Clive under his production company. Once that contract played out, Puffy took his artists and left," Franklin said. "We didn't do that when we were coming along. We were either asked to sign the contract and we would either re-sign or not. But, now they

are operating at a completely different way and a smarter way than when we came up."

As she settles into Chicago for a few days prior to her show this weekend, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee has already laid out plans to revisit some of her favorite restaurant hot spots. She is a fan of Josephine's gumbo at Captain Hard Times and Lem's BBQ. It's no secret that she can 'burn' in the kitchen with some of the best cooks, but she mentions, "it was a gradual progression."

"When I first started, I used to make breakfast for my Dad - it used to take so long. He would give me a look. He didn't say anything but he gave me a look that read, 'What on earth, took you so long?' I was doing my best, so there it is."

Being a great cook is just another feather in Ms. Franklin's cap as she looks forward to slowing down her hectic schedule from six shows a month to three shows. This is a strategy that she acknowledges to creating a level of balance and rest. There aren't any plans in the near future for another album release

but she prefers to keep her options open.

"I'm just thinking about what I want to record. I'm not really sure at this point. Just waiting to see if I'm going to re-sign with RCA Records or release music on my own with Aretha's Records," she said.

With a sweeping view of Chicago's Navy Pier and Lake Michigan from her hotel room, Aretha Franklin is taking everything in stride with God's grace. The view from the top is not foreign to her and she understands all too well that without the loyalty of her fans that view would play out much differently. She feels it's important to give the people what they want. Franklin's deep musical roots range from gospel, soul, blues, rock and opera. She is a beautiful anomaly of what is missing from music today.

She adds, "I love where my concert is now. I'm entering new things, doing the hits and I try to evolve with them. Whatever I sang the last time, I try to keep with the things people like along with new things."

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