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New Orleans

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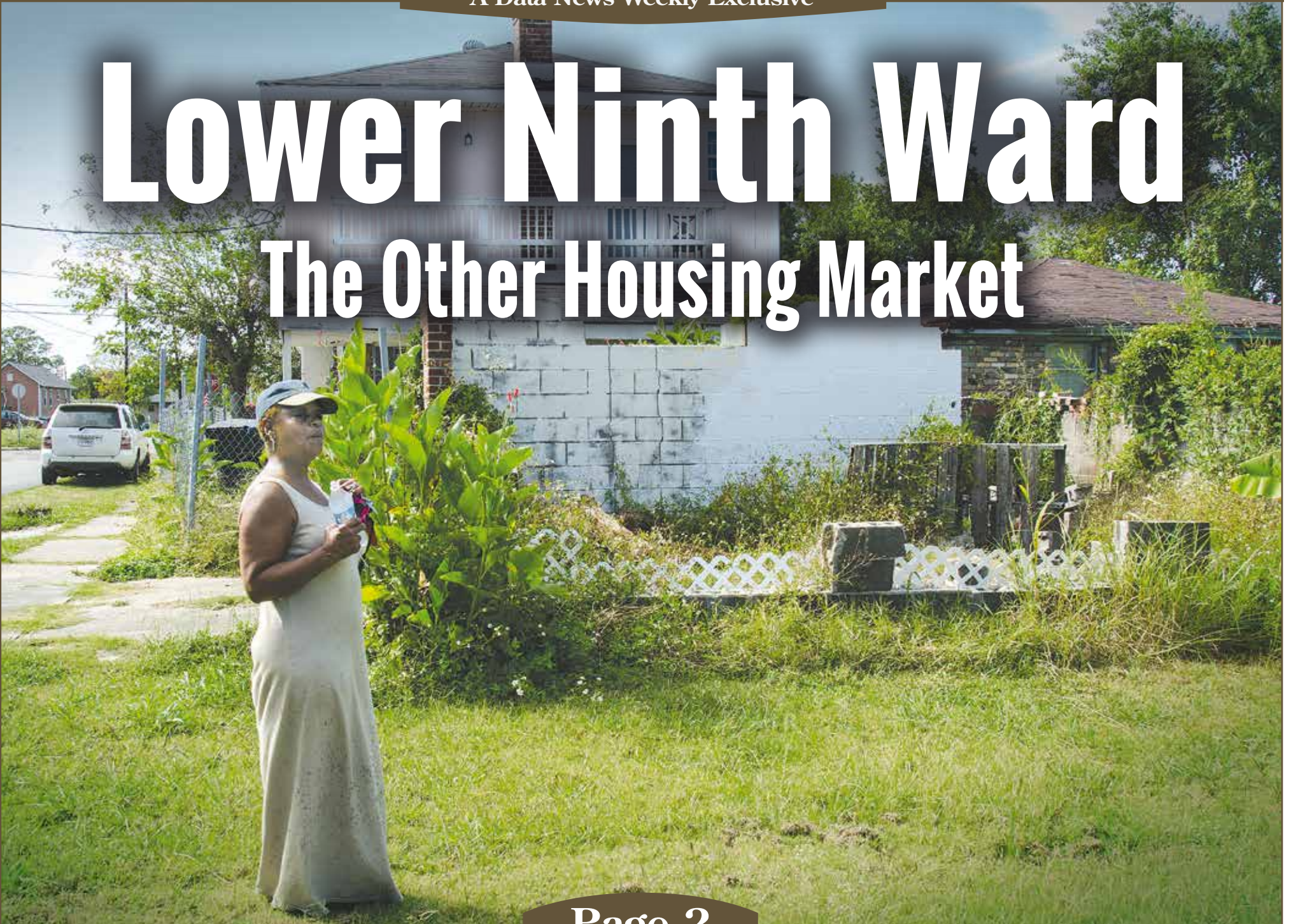
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Lower Ninth Ward

The Other Housing Market



Shannon Dupre (pictured above), stands next to blighted building next to his mother's home. He questions the logic used in pricing vacant properties. "We're not asking for \$100 a lot. But the price for properties should account how badly it affects others and how long neighbors have been fixing it up."

By Charlie Turner
Data Staff Writer

While most of New Orleans is dealing with surging real estate prices and a lack of affordable housing, the Lower Ninth Ward is struggling to repopulate what was once the largest concentration of African-American home ownership in the US. The neighbor-

hood landscape is filled with empty lots, once homes of those unable to return after Hurricane Katrina, are now under state control. Often filled with wild animals and trash, these abandoned lots of land have become a lingering problem that has continued to repress the value of neighboring properties. Since the storm, New Orleans has combatted blight like many US cities have, shift ownership away from the static control of

state government and towards those who are incentivized to care for the land the most: next door neighbors.

There has been a collage of programs to help homeowners claim the abandoned lots that they share a fence with, dozens of who live in the Lower 9th. However, the majority of residents of the Lower 9th (median income \$31,582) and other economically depressed areas have largely been unable to capitalize

On the cover: Brenda Dupre stands on a vacant lot. Dupree, life-long Lower 9th resident, is one of the many examples of those who has heard all about programs like LND (Lot Next Door) but has yet to see it in action.

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.



on these investment opportunities. Despite provisions to help low-income homeowners participate in this blight reduction strategy, the process in purchasing these lots is complex and costly. As a result, the Lower 9th streets most affected by blighted land are the least likely to see them developed on, further embedding these areas in a cycle of poverty.

The lack of upward mobility can be enormously frustrating for people who see minimal improvements in the City's historically Black community. Lower 9th homeowner Dianne Polk is an example of someone who has begun to lose faith in the City's plan, "No one care about this place. The Mayor, the City, the President come when they need to but no reason to think things will change". In that moment, surrounding neighbors also couldn't help notice how long-awaited repaving of streets coincided with President Obama's K-10 visit.

Other residents who still interested in possibly benefiting from the City's blight reduction are overwhelmed navigating through policies that seem to constantly change. The prices and procedure vary depending on the history and condition of the property make the process unaffordable to many New Orleanians, especially those in the Lower Ninth Ward.

The Costs in Owning a Vacant Lot

The 'Lot Next Door' (LND) is the original initiative in providing homeowners the chance to own adjacent vacant lots that is cred-

ited for elevating the City's housing market. When the program began in 2007, provisions were included to ensure that lower-income homeowners could still participate, but a degree of financial stability was still required.

The largest obstacle people in the Lower 9th faced when partaking in LND was the rates adjacent properties were priced at. Due to a Louisiana Law that prohibits the sale of any state-owned property for under 'fair-market value', the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) has little flexibility on pricing. The seemingly arbitrary process of property appraisal has left Lower 9th residents with price tags often exceeding \$10 thousand to claim even the most blighted land.

With the amount of capital required to participate in LND, it is not surprisingly that the majority of lots purchased come from areas like Lakeview (median income \$80,972) that were devastated by storm but with a comparatively more affluent demographic. Conversely, low-income residents of the Lower 9th were unable to take advantage of programs like LND before the program expired in 2014. In fact, a collection of 7 residents who participated in this story admitted to not knowing anyone who actually acquired vacant property through the Lot Next Door program.

Ten years of watching the Lower Ninth Ward get left behind has spurred lawmakers to get creative in tackling the lack of economic opportunity in their neighborhoods. State Rep. Wesley Bishop decided to address the issue head-on by pro-

posing a bill that would allow abandoned lots in the Lower Ninth Ward to be available for \$100. But because of the Louisiana Law, which restricted LND that mandates the sale of state assets at 'fair - market value', the \$100 a lot proposal had to be voted on as a ballot initiative in the 2014 elections. Unfortunately, the Louisiana electorate was unable to see the benefit of jolting the neighborhood's real estate market and rejected the proposal.

It is impossible to know exactly why Louisiana shot the idea down, but it would be a shame, in that it's inaccurate, if it stemmed from a belief that the proposal was a 'government handout.' If passed, the bill would have mandated participants of the program to not only maintain the property, but also build a house that must be inhabited for at least 5 years on-site- requirements that place a larger financial burden on buyers compared to LND.

While Rep. Bishop is disappointed that the measure failed, he sees the bill as a symbol for the City's appetite in aggressively meeting the social inequality that plagues the Lower 9th. With the emergence of Lot Next Door 3.0 there may very well be a renewed sense of urgency. The question is if the future policies are accessible by the homeowners who need the services the most.

Complexity of the System

The several iterations of Lot Next Door, along with the \$100 a lot proposal and other blight reduction objectives may all come together for the lawmakers who designed them. But for those on the ground it is a web of red tape

making it hard to tell between ineligibility of a program or a bureaucratic hold-up.

Brenda Dupree, life-long Lower 9th resident, is one of the many examples of those who has heard all about programs like LND but has yet to see it in action. Her main priority is to deal with the abandoned building next door, filled with the personal effects of her pre-Katrina neighbor as well as that of drifters, and no sign of the hazardous site ever being torn down.

While Dupree is happy to have survived the years of repairs and multiple robberies, the crumbling structure two-feet from her childhood home remains the "bane of her existence". In terms of public policy, it is a perplexing that vacant lots are dealt with before condemned buildings that are havens for illicit activities. With the building being in clear violation of coding enforcement, and not available on LND property lists, she has no idea which direction to take with the City.

Her son, Shannon Dupree, does not see the logic used in pricing vacant properties. "We're not asking for \$100 a lot. But the price for properties should account how badly it affects others and how long neighbors have been fixing it up. There needs to be a better formula that makes it fairer."

Unfortunately for residents suffering from blight, there is no one agency to direct all questions towards. Convolved property laws in Louisiana coupled with a more conservative state legislature make it hard for New Orleans to streamline revitalization efforts,

especially in areas like the Lower 9th that require subsidies. But despite little progress made, local lawmakers and community leaders are optimistic that increasing homeownership is the best way to provide the economic opportunities that residents have been deprived of for so long.

Preventing Prices Out

The rapid gentrification of the City has caused concern that native New Orleans may not be able to keep up with rising rental costs in the very neighborhoods that they help re-establish after Hurricane Katrina. Historically Black communities like the Seventh Ward or Central City are undergoing demographic shifts that could potentially reach the Lower 9th if the real estate market continues to spike. But if native Lower 9th folks are able to own their homes, or expand the footprint of their property they get the assurance that they will not be priced out of their home along with increased financial stability.

Concerns over gentrification may seem misplaced as the Lower 9th currently sports a dismal real estate market, prompting calls for \$100 land sales. Lower 9th advocate Rep. Bishop even admits that the main objective is "to provide the community with goods and services". That said, many residents who stood by their homes, when neighbors left, plan on dying on their properties, not being price out. Brenda Dupree points to a sign on her fence with the word 'Dupree' along with a well-designed logo. "I had to fight for this sign. Along with everything else."

When Screaming Isn't Enough

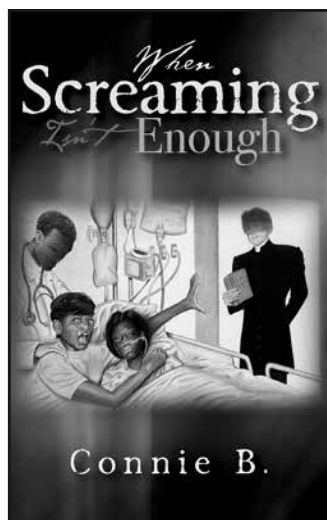
Touching Author to Appear at Seg-Way International's Ignite Empowerment Session

By Calla Victoria
Data Staff Writer

When Screaming Isn't Enough "... after being bit by a mosquito, my daughter went from being 14 to 2 years old in a week"

Native Houstonian, Connie B. believes that everything happens for a reason. The publishing of her first book has been a personal victory that speaks to the tenacity of her heart and passion to persevere through the hurdles of life, "When Screaming Isn't Enough".

Her journey began in the radio and television industry, first at WYLD-FM 98 Radio Station, as a radio announcer



and news reporter and then behind the camera at WGNO-TV Channel 26 in New Orleans, LA. Connie's on-air television personality opportunity came when she joined the COX Cable Television Station, from there

she worked in the news departments at both ABC and NBC affiliate broadcast networks. She was driven by her love of the industry and knew that radio and television is where she belonged.



Then came two pink bundled blessings into her life, which ignited a new direction, a formidable passion with a purpose; being a great mom. Everything that she had done since their birth was for the sheer unadul-

terated love of her girls.

Suddenly without warning, one of the most seemingly insurmountable crisis of her life happened to her youngest daughter, and eminent death was the prognosis.

Connie tells the horrific story of the shadow perpetrators whose actions almost placed her daughter in the file of collateral damage for the greater good. It is a true story of faith in God, victory through hardship, and the demand for truth.

Connie B. will be the guest speaker at the Seg-Way International's Ignite Empowerment Session on Saturday October 3, 2015, 10:00a.m. at the Holiday Inn Superdome at 330 Loyola Avenue in New Orleans. Admission is free and parking is \$5. Reserve your seat at www.meetup.com/TheSecretPlace-BookClub-NewOrleans.

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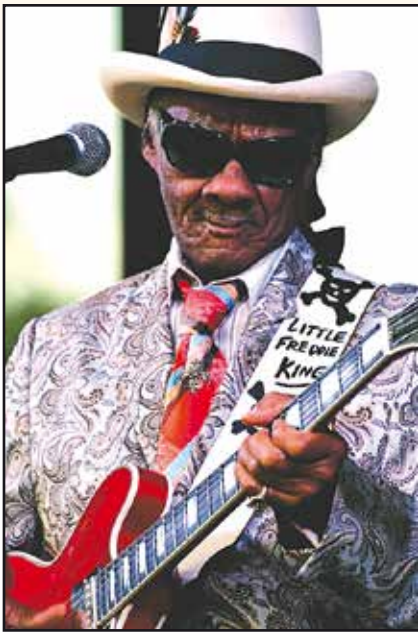
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Shoot Ya Best Shot!

The Bogalousa Blues & Heritage Festival

Photos by Kichea S. Burt

What the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Fest is to springtime, the Bogalousa Blues & Heritage Festival is to fall, this year was no disappointment. With it's second year in production, BBHF attracted people from throughout Louisiana, plus Florida, Texas and other states who, a la Woodstock, smiled, laughed and danced. The music was extraordinary, they said. The people were fantastic, and the venue was stunning and of course, Data was there!



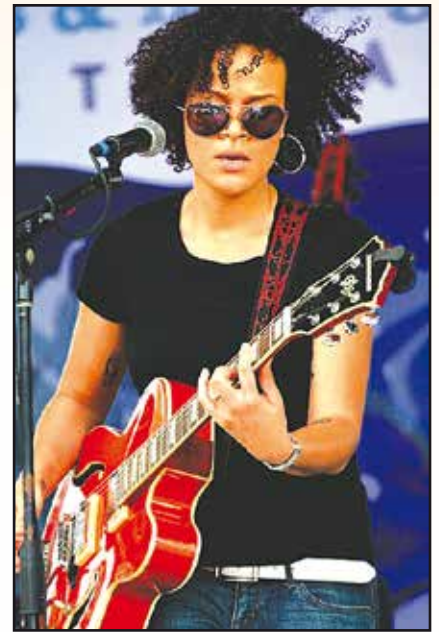
Freddie King



Cyril Neville



Terry Harmonica Beah



Mia Borders



Derwin "Bid D" Perkins



Bogalousa High School
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Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events

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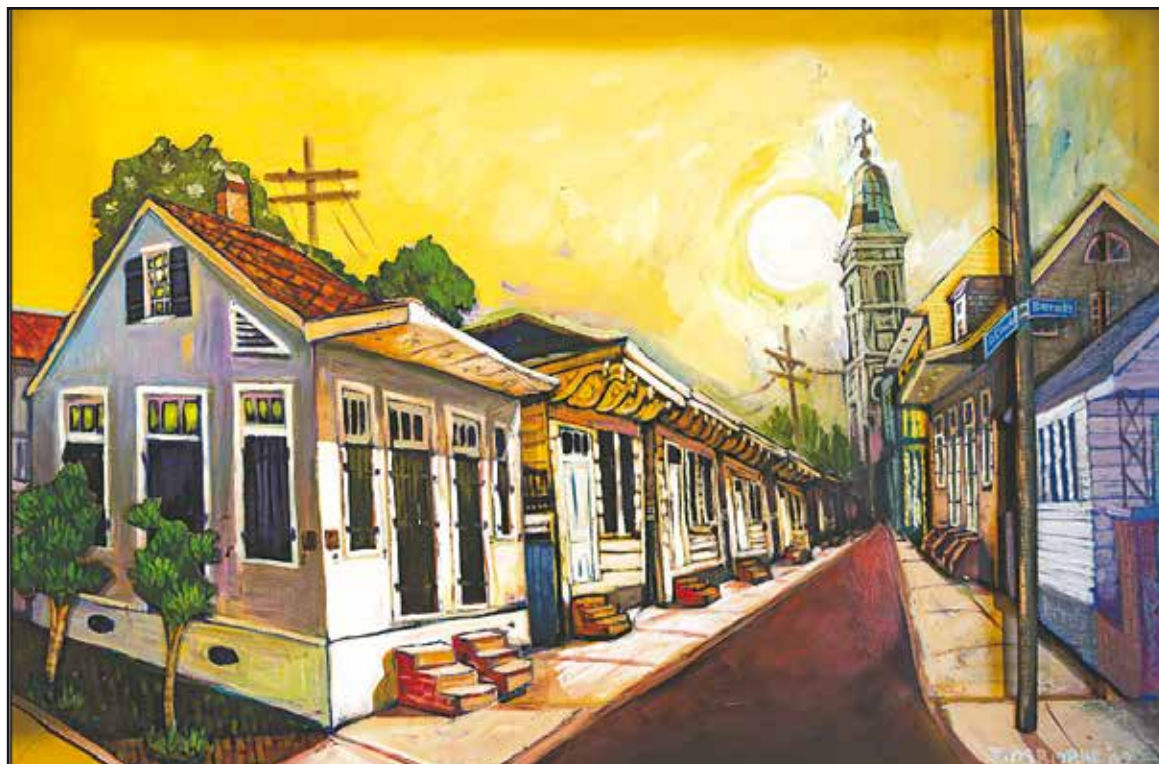
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Get Ready for the Tremé Festival

This Weekend, October 2nd - 4th



Crowd gathered outside of the St. Augustine Church in Tremé



Tremé Festival Official poster by Terrence Osborne



Naydja Bynum, Organizer of the Tremé Festival

By Kendall Lawson
Staff Writer, Data News Weekly

In 1842, the St. Augustine Church in Tremé opened its doors to slaves and whites, free people of color, and other ethnic groups. It was a racially integrated church, one of the first of its kinds in the United States, in one of the country's first African American neighborhoods. It was a place where the enslaved went to aspire for freedom, the sick went to be healed, the Congregation of Sisters of the Holy Family took care of orphans, and civil rights figures like Homer Plessy and Alexander P. Tureaud went to worship decades later.

From Oct. 2 to 4, the Tremé community will come together to preserve this symbolic monument that embodies the neighborhood's history by hosting the first ever annual Tremé

Festival. The festival, organized by the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association hopes to bring awareness to the repair needs of the 174-year-old church, which narrowly escaped closure by the archdiocese of New Orleans after Katrina, due to its renovation needs. "The mission is to support the architecture, culture, and history of Tremé while fighting crime, blight and unsanitary conditions," said Dr. Naydja Bynum, president of the association. "HFTA has organized many successful projects related to supporting the mission including cleaning up areas, planting trees."

The association also plans to use the festival as a launch for fundraising for the costs of preserving the church. "The church is in dire need of a new roof, painting, and other repairs. We could not see us not helping," Bynum said.

"Honestly, I'm proud to be involved

with the church and to celebrate the first day of many traditions," said Cameron Williams, a Tremé resident and St. Augustine church member, who said she looks forward to attending service at the church on Sunday as part of the festival. "This only strengthens the bond of our community."

The event is free and open to the public, and the association will accept donations to support repairs to the church. The association will also sell a poster created for the event, and donated by Tremé artist Terrance Osborne, a Xavier University alumnus, with proceeds going towards renovating the church. The festival takes place at Henriette Delille and Gov. Nicholls Streets, and features food, arts and craft. Families can enjoy musical guests John Boutte, James Andrews and the Crescent City Allstars, Shannon Powell, and the Tremé Bass Band,

among others. The neighborhood festival will also feature a second-line procession led by Roots of Music, the Zulu Connection, and the Stilt Walkers and Drummers.

The benefit festival also expands the work of the association as it seeks to preserve Tremé's historical sites. "We have never taken on such a challenging project and just knew we could do it," said Bynum in an interview about the event. "In addition to giving focus to our musical culture here in Tremé, the purpose of the festival is to help St. Augustine Church, that has such a significant history of the lives and accomplishments of people of color and other mixed cultures who lived and worked together in our community," Bynum said.

Residents interested in donating or attending can visit the festival's website: www.tremefest.com

Jeb Bush is Wrong about Blacks Wanting 'Free Stuff'



George C. Curry
NNPA

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush thinks he can become president of the United States if Republicans can double their share of the Black vote in several key states. But he, like his GOP comrades, is demonstrating how not to accomplish that goal.

Bush's latest failure came last week when he continued a longtime Republican tradition of trying to portray African Americans as addicted to welfare and government handouts. He was speaking at the East Cooper Republican Women's Club annual Shrimp Dinner in Mount Pleasant, S.C.

According to the Washington Post, this is what happened:

"Look around this room," a man told Bush, who spoke to a mostly

white crowd. "How many black faces do you see? How are you going to include them and get them to vote for you?" asked the man, who was white.

"Bush pointed to his record on school choice and said that if Republicans could double their share of the black vote, they would win the swing states of Ohio and Virginia."

Then Bush uttered this clunker: "Our message is one of hope and aspiration. It isn't one of division and get in line and we'll take care of you with free stuff. Our message is one that is uplifting – that says you can achieve earned success."

To paraphrase GOP icon Ronald Reagan, "There you Republicans go again."

In the 2012 presidential election, Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee, made an eerily similar remark at a Montana fundraiser. He said, "I want people to know what I stand for and if I don't stand for what they want, go vote for someone else, that's just fine. But I hope people understand this, your friends who like Obamacare, you

remind them of this, if they want more stuff from government tell them to go vote for the other guy – more free stuff."

Ronald Reagan framed the "free stuff" in the form of welfare. He frequently lamented "welfare queens," which was a way to indirectly exploit racial anxieties. Yet his son, Michael Reagan, had the temerity to argue two years into the Obama administration "... The past two years have made one thing clear: Ronald Reagan was a far better friend to black Americans than Barack Obama has been."

In fact, as I wrote earlier in this space, Reagan was one of the nation's worst presidents on civil rights. Among other things, he moved to invalidate voluntary affirmative action programs and school desegregation plans, vetoed the Civil Rights Restoration Act and tried to undermine the independence of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights by firing three of its members.

Another Republican, Richard M. Nixon, railed against Blacks and Jews in a 1973 taped conver-

sation with his secretary, Rose Mary Woods.

Nixon said, "Bill Rogers has got — to his credit it's a decent feeling — but somewhat sort of a blind spot on the black thing because he's been in New York," Nixon said. "He says well, 'They are coming along, and that after all they are going to strengthen our country in the end because they are strong physically and some of them are smart.' So forth and so on.

"My own view is I think he's right if you're talking in terms of 500 years," he said. "I think it's wrong if you're talking in terms of 50 years. What has to happen is they have to be, frankly, inbred. And, you just, that's the only thing that's going to do it, Rose."

In a May 13, 1971 conversation with top aides John D. Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman, Nixon said:

"We're going to [put] more of these little Negro bastards on the welfare rolls at \$2,400 a family—let people like [New York Sen.] Pat Moynihan ... believe in all that crap. But I don't believe in it. Work, work—throw 'em off the rolls. That's

the key ... I have the greatest affection for [blacks], but I know they're not going to make it for 500 years. They aren't. You know it, too. The Mexicans are a different cup of tea. They have a heritage. At the present time they steal, they're dishonest, but they do have some concept of family life. They don't live like a bunch of dogs, which the Negroes do live like."

It's not just the anti-Black sentiments expressed in words that are troubling about Republicans – it's their actions as well.

According to the NAACP legislative report card, no Republican in the House or Senate earned a grade above an "F" when voting on issues deemed important to African Americans. That's far more damaging than the ignorant words that have been spouted for years. We'll take positive action over "free stuff" any day of the week.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emerge* magazine, is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA) and BlackPressUSA.com.

To Be Equal Pope Francis' Message of Compassion



Marc Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

"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, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." – Matthew 25:35-36,40

Like power, with compassion comes great responsibility. So much more than a feeling, the person with compassion is compelled to transform their compassion into intent, and most importantly, action. To be compassionate is to see, to feel and to do something.

The recent arrival of Pope Francis on our shores has rekindled our national conversation over how we will protect and care for our marginalized, provide access to our disenfranchised communities and promote justice for all.

Francis, the spiritual leader of more than a billion Catholics, the world over, has placed the poor and the treatment of the poor at the center of his papacy. But, his message of mercy, compassion and service as the engines of much-needed change is not solely

limited to the Catholic faithful. It is a message that can transcend boundaries of faith, gender, political cultures or borders. It is a message that can transform the entire world for the benefit of the common good.

While calls for societal change precede the pope, his papacy and his status as a respected global leader, gives added voice to the voiceless and the oppressed, and encourages the men and women who have decided they would no longer observe (or suffer) injustice from the sidelines – instead they would advocate, and when necessary, agitate for a more just society for the excluded and marginalized among us.

From Moses to the man registering students to vote, or the woman fighting for environmental justice in an impoverished

community today, for as long as inequality has plagued society, people have always appeared in the pages of history to carry the heavy and unavoidable banner of change. For Francis, this call to action is motivated by God's presence, which he said in his final homily in Cuba, "never leaves us tranquil: it always pushes to do something. When God comes, He always calls us out of our house. We are visited so that we can visit others; we are encountered so as to encounter others; we receive love in order to give love."

For more than 100 years, the National Urban League has dedicated itself to loving, visiting and encountering people and communities in their times of need. Our mission—like the mission of so many people of faith dedicated to changing lives and reforming the

structures that compromise the quality of life of the most vulnerable – is to establish mechanisms and policies aimed at economic empowerment in order to elevate the standard of living in historically underserved urban communities. This cross-section of compassion and social justice has been, and continues to be, a defining element of our existence and struggle across a range of social justice movements.

The pope is visiting the United States at a pivotal time in our history, when justice and equality is facing challenges on many fronts. We face challenges in the constitutional right of citizens to vote; we are experiencing a rash of deaths of Black men at the hands of police officers who are rarely held account-

Morial, Continued on page 10.

Move. It's God's Turn, Not Yours



James Washington
Guest Columnist

Is it really possible to put your life in the hands of the Lord? To some modest extent I have experienced the effect of trying to do just that. I can't say how successful I've been but, I ask the question of you because I feel obligated to share the exhilaration. Exhilaration may be a poor choice of words, but it comes close to describing the emotion associated with an honest effort. And, honest effort is again why I ask the question. Is it possible for you to really get inside of what putting your life in the hands of God really

means? I can only share with you what I think.

The obstacles in the way of making an honest effort to embrace and step to God are at times huge and obvious. At other times they are so subtle they're practically indiscernible. For example, pride can get in the way because pride has no place in the relationship between you and God. Then the truth be told, pride has no place in your relationships with your fellow man either. To pride, you can always add envy, vanity, greed, lust, selfishness and bitterness just to name a few more impediments to an honest attempt to let God order your steps in His Word. In sports they say it's not whether you fall or fail, it's what you do after you fall and fail, because you're definitely going to do both. Time and again we fall. Time and again we fail. It's part of the reality of life; also necessary parts of the Christian experience.

The question always has been, what do you do next? Is it possible in the context of your reality to get up dust yourself off and try again to put your life in God's hands? Many of us, including me, especially me, want to hold on to our own abilities to solve our own problems, cure our own ills (sinful natures) and figure our way out of impossible circumstances by ourselves. We routinely pass judgment, think and act as if we're better than others and give God no credit for the many blessings we do have.

The positives (of life) are due to our own ingenuity and the negatives are blamed on anybody else but us. Now the question is can you make the effort? Can you let go and let God. Submit first and then see what God has to say about your situation. Without this submission, I don't think any of us is in a position to first hear and then listen to the Word of God. Y'all know I believe

Satan shouts and God whispers. If you've ever been whispered to when you think the person speaking is saying something important, then you know your capacity to shut the world up and out. You can be anywhere and hear a whisper, just like a parent who can hear their child's voice in a sea of young faces on a crowded playground. I believe if we put forth the effort, we can hear God tell us how to give our lives to Him. There is a singularity to hearing God's Word. He is specific in what He says to you as opposed to what He says to me. That singularity becomes a plurality as we begin to understand His message, if not His words. They are intended to have the same effect on each of us. It's like an optical illusion. Once you finally see it, you can't from that point on, not see it. Once you get someone else to see it, he or she can't-not recognize it from that point on either. It is, well,

exhilarating. Failure is then only a byproduct of lack of effort. But the saved make the sincere effort. It's not always successful. But it's always there. The key is to build upon the successes of putting things in the hands of God is take it one success at a time. Do not, I repeat do not dwell on the failures one failure at a time. Therein lies the answer to my original question. You can do it and God expects it to be done one step, one day and one situation at a time. "So then dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation...." 2 Peter 3:14-15.

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

James,
jaws@dallasweekly.com

State & Local News

Local HBCU Students Learn Perils of Hazing in Greek Organizations

By Kendall Lawson,
Staff Writer, Data News
Weekly

Michael Morton looked out at a group of Dillard and Xavier university students and cautioned them: "There is no brotherhood in brutality. Stay focused on your future." The 32-year-old shared the story of how he moved from student body leader to convicted felon to redeem his career and life at the Brain Food Lecture series held at Dillard's Lawless Chapel on Thursday, Sept. 20, 2015. Morton spoke on the topic of "A Conversation about Hazing: The Trials and Truth."

"Hazing is illegal and hazing is dangerous. I went to prison and lost everything for it," Morton told the New Orleans students. "There are number accounts of people that have lost their lives for it. So, if it's not worth it, don't do it. Just focus on your future. We come to school to get an edu-



Pentorship Board Member, Michael J. Morton

cation and be successful," he said.

With Greek organizations across the country coming under increasing scrutiny for hazing and sexual assault allegations, New Orleans' historically black universities and colleges brought Morton to the city during National Hazing Prevention Week to challenge black Greek organizations to re-examine the decades old tradition of hazing and understand the dangers. In April 2006, weeks before graduating with a degree in industrial engineering

at Florida A&M University, Morton and another colleague Jason D. Harris were among the first to be charged under Florida's relatively new 2005 hazing law after an initiation left a student severely wounded. Morton and Harris allegedly beat the FAMU student to the point where surgery was needed for a damaged eardrum. Morton was president of his university's Student Body Senate and served two consecutive terms as the president Alpha Xi Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated when the incident occurred.

After serving a 2-year sentence at a state correctional facility, Morton returned to Florida A&M University to complete his bachelor's degree and earn a master's degree in Industrial Engineering from Rutgers University. "I wanted to prove to myself I could do

it and be a greater student," Morton said of his desire to accomplish his goal after serving time in prison. "Going through this at that age can have a huge impact on perspective. I believe I am more grateful," he said of being given a second chance."

Nearly a decade after the incident, Morton said he is now sharing his experience and story to college students with the goal of preventing hazing. "I hope I reach the silent bystanders, the people who don't believe in pledging and hazing, and have them question if the things we do to get in are worth the price to pay," Morton said. When he addresses college students nationwide, he said his goal is to remind students that their education and academics should come first.

"Michael Morton is an inspiration not only to those who are a part of Greek organizations, but anyone," said Mara Scott, a Xavier student, and member of the Alpha

Kappa Alpha sorority. Currently, Morton is a part of the Board of Directors for Pentorship, an educational program based in Georgia that offers skill-based instruction and training for incarcerated inmates. He also volunteers with Junior Achievement, the world's largest non-profit organization, which works to educate young people on economic choices, success, and how to plan for their future. "Anyone of us could fall victim to bring in a situation that could hinder our future. Hearing a real life experience was amazing. It's a blessing to see how far he has come over the years."

Morton's words, said Dillard sophomore Madison Coleman, made her rethink her decisions in following traditions. "I feel more confident and conscious on hazing and how it can severely hurt people," Coleman said. "I'll always keep his story in mind whether I join a sorority or not," Coleman added.

Families, Students Most Vulnerable with Boil Water Advisories

By Kendall Lawson
Staff Writer, Data News
Weekly

On Wednesday, Sept. 23rd the City of New Orleans issued its second boil-water advisory for the East Bank in under three months. By Friday, the Sewerage and Water Board announced it resolved the issue. But the two-day panic raised concerns among long-time residents and newcomers alike about the safety of the City's water supply. More importantly, experts say that lower income families suffer the most as they are unable to meet the strict requirements set out by the board for safe water consumption.

Residents typically must wait for confirmation before consuming tap water again. With the advisory lifted, residents and businesses are encouraged to flush their internal and external plumbing systems by running the water through it for several minutes. "If clean water is not available then families have to take extra precaution to boil water as recommended for at least 15 minutes," said Dr. Faye Grimsley, the head of the Public Health Sciences Department at Xavier Uni-



A Xavier University student drinks tap water from a fountain on campus.

versity.

The water board issued the precautionary boil-water advisory last week, due to a sharp decline in water pressure levels below regulatory standards after a power outage at the facility.

"The boil water advisory was issued not to chemicals in the water. It had to do with pressure; that wa-

ter systems maintain 15 pounds per square inch," said John Williams, an Engineer with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals who is stationed at Benson Tower in the Central Business District. "A pressure drop inside of the Water Distribution System could allow an opportunity for contaminants to get into the water lines," the board said

in an official public notice. Two days later, the board said its bacteriological tests confirmed that the water in City was safe for personal use.

"We are pleased that the tests proved negative and that we can cancel the boil water advisory at this time," said Cedric Grant, the Executive Director for the board, in a public statement. "We issued the advisory in the best interest of our customers and with an abundance of caution to ensure their health and safety."

The second advisory in a row had residents questioning whether the boil-water advisories point to a more systemic problem. Gentilly resident, Christalynn Turner said two advisories in a row left her feeling anxious and boiling water was a strain to her daily household work by making it difficult to bathe her children and prepare timely meals.

"Hopefully this issue will be resolved in a timely fashion and this can be our second and last water advisory for the year," Turner said. "We're tired and would appreciate finding a long-term solution."

For the City's college students, meeting the rigorous boiling

regimen of the advisories in often dormitory settings is near to impossible. "It was a hassle," said Kevin Thomas, a Xavier University Junior from Chicago, IL. "New Orleans has to fix the system because there should not be a breakdown of your system within three months. It's unhealthy and unsanitary," Thomas said.

The board and Entergy New Orleans said they will continue to investigate the source of a power outage in the Carrollton area that may have caused the drop in pressure to the water system. In a water crisis, said Grimsley, it's important to have a plan and be prepared. "If families are in an area where power is out then these families may have to purchase bottled water because they are unable to boil water as advised," said Grimsley, who studies environmental hygiene and other post-Katrina public health issues in the City. "Drinking contaminated water can cause waterborne illnesses and there are surveillance systems for the State of Louisiana to report certain infectious diseases," Grimsley added.

Morial, Continued from page 8.

able; equity in funding and resources for public school education remains a distant reality; and the economic gap that exist between the rich and the poor only continues to widen.

The National Urban League continues to tackle these ever-present issues with programs and policy recommendations that not only benefit communities of color, but our nation as a whole. Our education programs, like Project Ready, support academic achievement, civic involvement and the physical and emotional development of our young people. But it doesn't end there, we also challenge our states and federal government to develop formulas to distribute resources to schools in a fair manner that does not discriminate based on what community you live in. Our workforce development programs deliver jobs and valuable employment services to the people who need it the most and encourage economic self-sufficiency. We have, and continue to fight on the frontline of the battles to rid our nation of pervasive criminal justice abuses.

The gospel of compassion has guided many into service beyond their own lives and self-interests. The gospel of compassion: to see, to feel and to do something, is a driver of change that pays no regard to differences in gender, color, community or faith. It is a call to minister and serve those who find themselves on the margins of any given society. We may all come from different traditions and cultures, but we should all be able to agree on our broader duty to provide access to a decent standard of living, protect the poor and promote justice. It is the message of the Francis and his Church, and I hope that it is a message that will continue to reach many more ears – and hearts.

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



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Biden Tries to Calm HBCU Leaders' Fears

By Jazelle Hunt
NNPA National Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — In a speech at the 2015 National Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Week Conference here last week, Vice President Joe Biden praised the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities and announced an additional \$10 billion in HBCU funding.

Despite enthusiastic applause and shouts of "Run, Joe, Run," Biden did not allude to whether he has made up his mind about whether to challenge Hillary Clinton for the Democratic nomination for president in 2016. Instead, he took the opportunity to address a sore spot between the Obama administration and the HBCU community: the America's College Promise proposal, which, if enacted, will offer two free years of community college for responsible students.

HBCU administrators and leaders, whose institutions are already underfunded, are concerned they'll be unable to compete if funding is limited to community colleges. Many had suggested that two year assistance be extended to 4-year colleges as well as 2-year community colleges.

"I'll be straight with you, I know a lot of you were a little bit upset when we called for two years of free community college," Biden said. "Some of you are my friends, heads of universities, and you called me and said, 'Joe, is that going to undercut us? We're

having financial difficulties now.' The answer is it will not."

But not everyone is convinced. Of course, it all might be academic because it appears unlikely that a Republican-majority in the House and Senate is likely to fund Obama's proposal.

Biden also highlighted the conference's theme — STEM innovation, partnerships, and entrepreneurship — and thanked the HBCU



Vice President Joe Biden speaks at the 2015 National HBCU Week Conference, in Washington D.C., September 22, 2015. (Elyse Jones/ Department of Education/Flickr CC BY 2.0.)

administrators, partners, and students present for their strides in this area.

In January, Biden visited Norfolk State University in Virginia to unveil a \$25 million grant over five years for a cybersecurity consortium consisting of 13 HBCUs, two national labs, and a K-12 school district. Norfolk State, which already offers an online cybersecurity master's degree program, will lead the initiative.

"It's an economic imperative... that the number of African Americans in STEM increase," said Biden. "HBCUs are only 3 percent of the nation's schools. And you produce 27 percent of African American graduates with STEM degrees. The human capital that you husband is critically important to our country and how competitive we'll be in another five, 10, 20 years."

In this way, HBCUs have contributed to both building the Black middle class and in turn, the nation's global competitiveness. This kind of contribution and success should translate to personal and communal prosperity, the vice president said, but persistent socioeconomic inequality was undermining this

dynamic.

"My daughter insists that I should say more, and I don't. She talks about, 'Dad, don't pretend that there's not still institutional bigotry in this country.' Health care, criminal justice, access to jobs and good wages — that used to be a basic requirement," he said.

"That used to be the promise of America, that if you contributed to the enterprise, you got to share in the benefits. If you worked hard and played by the rules, you got to share in the basic prosperity. That prosperity wasn't available to everyone, particularly many African Americans. Now it's not available to a significant number of all Americans."

Most of Biden's time onstage, however, was spent praising HBCUs or invoking the Black experience. He shared how much of the grassroots support and volunteer help he received during his Senate campaign came from Delaware

State University. He talked about returning from law school in Syracuse, N.Y. during the 1968 riots and seeing his state on fire. And he lauded the audience for their role in uplifting Black youth.

"It's more than just academics and leaderships. What's built into HBCUs...is this sense that you educate, but you mentor the whole time. You constantly embrace these young women and men. You let them know, you can do this, too," he stated.

In addition to Vice President Biden and HBCU All-Star Leah Williams, a Delaware State alumna, William Harvey, president of Hampton University and chair of the President's Board of Advisors on HBCUs, addressed the crowd. He called for a "5 percent funding aspirational goal" akin to the ones the federal government uses to direct its spending and subcontracting to women or veteran-owned enterprises.

Harvey also offered condolences to friends of the late George Cooper, who served as a professor and administrator at several HBCUs, as well as the executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The Initiative sponsors the National HBCU Week Conference each year as a forum for HBCU stakeholders to exchange information and share innovations.

"This conference is about STEM education," said Harvey. "There was a December report which mentioned that STEM education for HBCUs was at its lowest point since the year 2000. We need to broaden our participation in STEM and we need help from the government."



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