

Lighting The Road To Freedom

New Orleans

# Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

## Data Zone

### Brass Bands & Secondlines

#### What's it all about?

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## The Soul of New Orleans

# Freedom Marches On Through Finding Our Folk Tour



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COVER STORY



Members of the Finding Our Folk tour on their New Orleans stop.

# The March for Freedom Rides On

By: Edwin Buggage

Recently we lost a luminary figure in Coretta Scott King, wife of slain leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Martin Luther King Jr. a man who articulated the struggle for equality giving it a voice that's been heard throughout the world and today is honored with a holiday in his name.

Since his death some say the level of activism has decreased since the famed days of the Civil Rights Movement. Some would go further and say there is a vacuum in the area of leadership, particularly among

young people, but in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina a group of young people are setting out to change that perception.

Finding Our Folk is a group of young people traveling around the country by bus in the spirit of the freedom riders of the 1960's creating awareness about the plight of the survivors of the worst natural disaster in modern history. Albert Sykes is one of the chief organizers of the Finding Our Folk tour. He may seem like an unlikely candidate of what some would think an activist is supposed to look like. Sykes is

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*Continued from previous page.*

young, black, with a gold toothed smile, and hip hop swagger, but he is also armed with determination, intelligence and the charisma of many of his predecessors in the march towards freedom, fairness and equality.

As the tour stopped in New Orleans and as the sounds of the Hot 8 Brass band blared, and the Black Men of Labor and many others second lined down Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard he stood

we have Civil Rights elders who teach people how to organize in their communities, and onsite we have spiritual and mental health professionals that help people who need that as well."

They feel this multifaceted approach is necessary and in line with how the struggle for civil rights needs to be addressed in this our digital age so they have a website called findingourfolk.org. They believe many young people are using newer mediums to deal with and fight the age old problem of injustice; a fact sometimes overlooked by some says New Orleans resident and long time activist and Finding Our Folk supporter Fred Johnson. Who himself in the early 1970's was as a member of the Afro-American Society took part in a demonstration consisting of primarily students they marched on the School Board to make Martin Luther King Jr. birthday a holiday.

He feels that young people are doing things but it's generally overlooked by the media who often

by on the median observing and discussing the goals of the tour, and his road into activism. "I like many others sat and watched for several days as the city filled with water and by looking at the response I observed something wasn't right. Then myself and some others who I worked with in the Young People's Project got together to see how we as young people could get involved and give our perspective." With that the genesis of the Finding Our Folk tour was set in motion.

As the tour ensued their bus has made several stops in the Southern Region, among them Houston, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and his native state of Mississippi. Sykes says, "Initially we wanted to go throughout the South and document and bring attention to the stories of the survivors and what they went through." Their program is a multifaceted one that uses both traditional activism blended with more technologically sophisticated means of getting their message out via the internet.

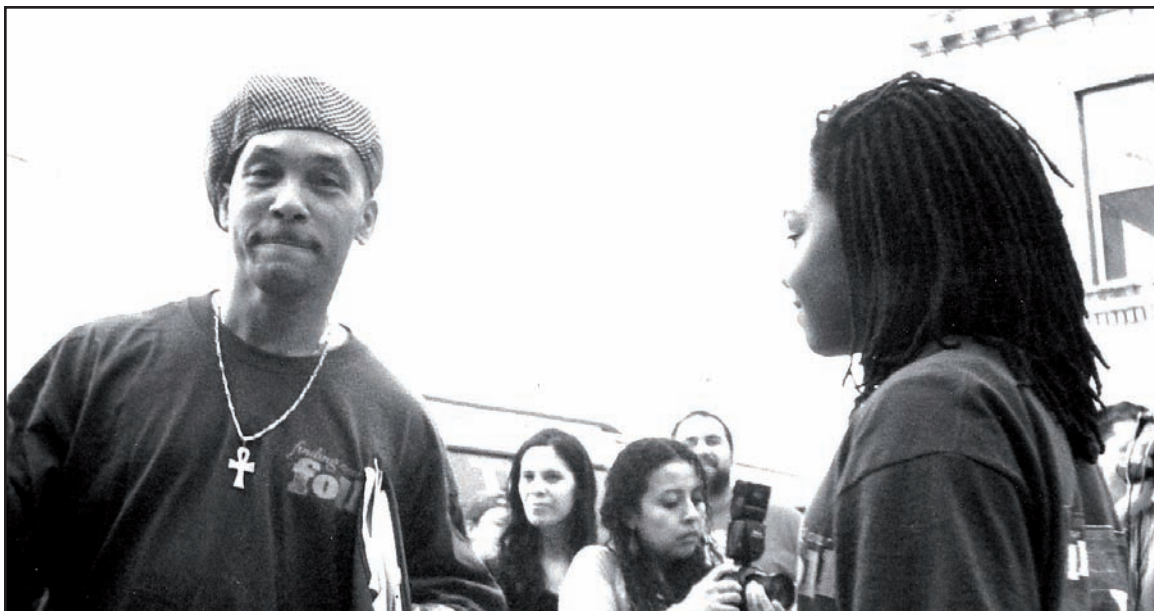
Sykes describes what their program consists of by saying "In our tour we start with breakfast, then we have story circle where people share what their feeling and going through, plus we have workshops." Sykes continues, "We have digital storytelling where survivors can record their stories,

portrays young people in a negative light. "We have young people who are doing things, but this is a new struggle, the times are different and how we deal with these problems are different." He continues, "But too often what happens is that there is not enough emphasis on what's going on that's positive in our community instead so much of what's negative is highlighted."

But that has not stopped the Finding Our Folk tour bus from rolling through towns informing and enlightening people that young people are on the move and on the rise and fighting for the people in the Gulf Region. That in fact there is an antidote to the misconception that all young people are apathetic and don't care about the community. Young organizers like Albert Sykes along with many others are a new breed of activists armed with the knowledge passed on by Fred Johnson and other veteran civil rights activist. In addition they are also armed with the technical savvy which is necessary for we are now living in global village. They have the passion and fortitude of those who came before them, recently the first part of their tour ended and these young people with Finding Our Folk have shown the march towards freedom, justice and equality will continue in the days to come.



Finding Our Folk Organizer Albert Sykes shows that young people have a major contribution to make to the community



Veteran New Orleans activist Fred Johnson supports Finding Our Folk

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STATE & LOCAL NEWS

Mitch Landrieu to take on  
Nagin for N.O. Top Spot



LA Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu



Rev. Tom Watson

In a field of candidates which now numbers more than 12, Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu announced on Wednesday, that he is officially throwing his hat into already the crowded ring, and poses a real threat to New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin for re-election.

Amidst the confusion and peculiar circumstances of this upcoming election, the entry of Landrieu into the race adds an element to the race which

hasn't been a factor in mayoral elections in the city since the departure of Landrieu's father Moon Landrieu in 1978. Landrieu's place in this race will potentially define the radically reshaped city that is now New Orleans post-Katrina. Also in Mayoral news, Rev. Tom Watson, announced on Friday, his candidacy for the coveted position as well. Watson's announcement was the first by a major African American candidate to challenge New Orleans' current mayor.

Watson is pastor of Watson Memorial Teaching Ministries in New Orleans. He also serves as President of the Greater New Orleans Coalition of Ministers, a group of 180 plus ministers representing more than 40,000 members

Return for New Orleans  
Poorest Not Clear Yet

by Cheryl Mainor

In a firestorm of controversy surrounding statements made by New Orleans City Council President and other members of the Council, which were interpreted by many as an unwelcoming back to the city by those in public housing on welfare, the status of plans to reintegrate the poorest New Orleans residents back into the city remains uncertain.

In a follow up statement, Council President Oliver Thomas defended his earlier statements which indicated that he favored welcoming back those public housing residents who are willing to work, and not "pampering" others with government programs which encourage unemployment. Thomas stated "You know what time it is in New Orleans right now? It's time to change the culture," as he stood by his original sentiments. Earlier,



City Council President Oliver Thomas says New Orelans will not pamper residents who return says his remarks are meant to motivate people

Thomas stated "We don't need soap opera watchers right now, We're going to target the people who are going to work. It's not that I'm fed up, but that at some point there has to be a whole new level of motivation, and people have got to stop blaming the government for something they ought to do."

Thomas, who was commenting on the new requirements suggested by HANO which would require those returning to the city to submit to a background check, said "it was not a bad idea." Backlash from his statements and those of N.O. Councilwoman Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson who agrees with Thomas, was swift. Among the critics, is civil rights attorney Tracie Washington, who said in an interview with WWLTV that Thomas' tough talk may have sent the wrong message. And although Washington does not disagree with the council's message, she finds issue with how it was delivered, stating that former residents of public housing are entitled to public housing again. Other backlash is coming from other cities who immediately after Katrina opened their cities and all of their resources to provide for the evacuees. No criteria was set for who would be welcomed, or helped. This scenario, leaves in question, the future of those cities, and whether or not the City of New Orleans is trying to force cities like Houston, Baton Rouge, Atlanta and others who took in large numbers to absorb them into their population permanently. And at issue, is the cost of that, and where the funding will come from to do so if New Orleans does not allow its citizens back in.

During that same HANO committee meeting where the controversial statements were delivered, officials with HANO shared their plans. It is clear that some residents who lived in public housing before the storm will be able to return. Future residents, however, will have to comply with new restrictions, including a series of questions which will include verification of employment history and or job prospects and will require returning residents to submit to a background check. It was not stated what the scope of the background investigation will be.

Councilwoman Brechtel Clarkson, made it clear that she and other elected officials aren't targeting the elderly or disabled who once lived in New Orleans public housing. "But it is an indictment of those who can work, but don't work," she said. Clarkson also said that the city eventually wants to bring everyone back, but needs to start with workers first, to create a tax base." Then, eventually, she said, New Orleans will have the resources to support everyone, including the unemployable.

However, it remains to be seen whether or not full funding from the federal government will assist with bringing back all of the residents of public housing in New Orleans.

Across the country, programs such as this are being mandated by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and are being rolled out in major urban areas. The City of Atlanta for example, is the first to implement the program, called the Catalyst Program, and has already begun to order those in public households where adults are not working to move out of public housing. Adults must be able to prove that they are either working, in a workforce development program, in school, or are disabled in order to remain eligible to live in Atlanta Housing Authority units. The program will be expanding soon to include requiring all able bodied adults over the age of 18 within a household to meet the criteria. The program is causing an outcry among the public housing population in Atlanta.

She took a stand

by taking a seat >>

Rosa Louise Parks  
(1913-2005)

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks boarded a bus in Montgomery, Alabama near the intersection of Commerce and Montgomery Streets after working for eighteen hours. Her courageous act in refusing to give up her seat on a bus she had paid to ride sparked the modern-day civil rights movement and led to the breakdown of segregation in the United States.

BellSouth salutes Rosa Parks and thanks her for sitting even in the face of danger.

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# NEWSMAKER

# Skater Triumphs over Icy Reception

By Rev. Jesse L. Jackson

On Saturday, Shani Davis, born on Chicago's South side, became the first black athlete to win an individual gold medal in Winter Olympic history, capturing the men's 1,000 meter speed skating race, the sport's premier event.

Davis won with the mixture of strength, grace, discipline and



New history maker Shani Davis of Chicago, became the first African American to win an individual medal at the Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy. He won gold in the men's 1000 meter speed-skating and silver in the men's 1,500 speed-skating event.

grit that has earned him admirers across Europe. He won with his hometown skating club in Evanston, Ill., gathered to cheer their hero to victory. And he won with his website plastered with racial epithets, with anonymous haters hoping that the "N" would break his leg and slink home without a medal.

Davis won against the odds. He was raised by a single mother. Her boss suggested that Shani, then 6 and a skilled roller skater, might try the ice. For 17 years, he pursued an impossible dream. He could not have done it without his mother. She drove him and supported him. She moved to Rogers Park to be closer to the skating club. She battled fiercely with the all-white U.S. Skating Association, fighting over endorsements and finances, using her will to remove barriers put in her son's way.

But he could not have done it without extraordinary discipline, desire and will. He had to master a sport traditionally dominated by Europeans. He had to break into an all-white world, where he was usually the only black person on the ice. He had to stay at it, a lonely pursuit, even with the dream seemed impossibly distant. He got little support from

U.S. officialdom. He ended up having to train in Canada and gain European sponsors. He channeled the slights, the rejections, the aggravations to hone his own will. And he made himself the best in the world.

Breaking down barriers is never easy. For Shani Davis, victory was the culmination of years of struggle. He celebrated by donning his Chicago White Sox hat, picking up his lucky teddy bear and circling the ice. It is remarkable that he could perform so well under such pressure.

Even before the race, Davis was getting blistered for declining to join the U.S. "Pursuit" team, in a race staged the day before the 1000, his signature event. But "pursuit" racing was only added to the Olympics this year. Speed skating is a taxing individual event, not a team event. Davis was focused on his race.

Criticism of Davis is led by another member of the U.S. team, bitter at losing the chance to win five gold medals (although to do that he would have had to beat Davis in the 5000, 1000 and the 1,500). And instead of a tribute for his accomplishment, Davis is not getting jibes for not acting right. He didn't smile in an NBC interview. He hasn't given his critics in the press enough face time. In fact, Davis has been remarkably measured in his response to the criticism. "On my website, there are a lot of derogatory remarks in the comments, wishing me to break my leg and fall down, using the n-word, a lot of ignorance out there. Before all this Olympic stuff, I've never had any problems."

Davis victory demonstrates once more that when the field is even, the rules the same, opportunity open, then champions of all races can emerge. Skating, like golf or tennis, is an expensive sport. African Americans on the South side of Chicago fill neighborhood basketball courts, but Davis was virtually unique in trying to step out on the ice. Now his victory insures that that will change.

It always takes pioneers to carve the trail. And for that, let us salute the extraordinary journey of Shani Davis, from Chicago's South Side to Olympic gold in Turin, Italy.

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# News Orleans Data News Weekly

## TRAIL BLAZERS



## Wilbert 'Chill' Wilson

### "A Cut Above The Rest"

By day Pre-Katrina Wilbert Wilson owned a barber shop and a beauty salon in the Broadmoor area of New Orleans called Chill's First Class Cuts. And as we all know our places of beauty are places where informal forums are held about everything under the sun; from politics, sports, to relationships. During his stint as owner Wilbert became a vital part of this community, and prospered as a small businessman.

Unbeknownst to him and many others that August 29, 2005 would change his life forever. Prior to the storm Mayor Ray Nagin warned residents of the potential wrath of Hurricane Katrina and Chill along with many other citizens of New Orleans took heed to his warning and attempted to leave the city. He traveled slowly along gridlocked highways in search of a place of refuge. With his family in tow he was in route to Mississippi and stopped at a gas station where he encountered a family in dire need of assistance. "They told me their car was out of gas, they ran out of money, and normally I would have thought they weren't telling the truth, but I knew this time was different." He continues, fortunately I had enough money, and a large enough vehicle and I bought them some food and gave them a ride as well, I realized during this time we were all in this thing together."

Like many residents of New Orleans he thought he would return to the city after the flood and continue doing business when tragedy struck. The levees that protect the city breached in several

places, and the city became engulfed in water, widespread floods decimated much of the city and Chill's shop was among many of the casualties. "I floated down on a mattress to see what was going on with my shop and there was eight feet of water; my shop was completely destroyed." As the water subsided weeks later the landlord removed all his equipment and personal keepsakes out of the building. This unfortunate occurrence left him distressed, but he was determined to keep his business going.

This incident led him to place a tent and a generator at a local Shell gas station located on South Claiborne and Napoleon Avenue and resumed with business as usual. As people came back into the city to inspect damage they noticed someone was outside cutting hair. Neighbors gathered as well as passers by, while some received haircuts many were discussing the tragedy of the hurricane and how it changed everyone's lives. Wilbert recounts some of these moments and how varied these conversations were as complaints and concerns were widespread and varied. "People were talking about all kinds of things like the government taking too long to provide financial assistance, how they need to provide more counseling for the survivors, and who will step up and lead and be our modern day savior like Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X." As this became a local gathering place for some Wilbert came to the attention of CNN and was asked if they could profile him for their Barbershop Politics segment. In the segment he along with several displaced residents voiced their views about the problems facing many New Orleanians after the hurricane. "I'm glad I got the opportunity to say some things and especially as a person who owns small businesses because our voices are not being heard."

In response to the tragedy he has extended himself in a spirit of benevolence, "I understand people are going through things, so I have given about one hundred free haircuts, I know it's a small thing but it's my way of helping people feel good about themselves." No stranger to consoling those in their time of need his mother and stepfather are the owners of Dennis Mortuary located in uptown New Orleans.

During this time many stories are strange, unusual and unbelievable and Wilbert story is that then some. After the storm and the flooding of the city Wilbert came back to check on three deceased bodies left at his family's mortuary that were submerged underwater. He recovered the bodies and attempted to bring them to the New Orleans Convention Center to a makeshift morgue where a company hired by FEMA told him they were not taking any more dead bodies. So he called the Coroner Dr. Frank Minyard to explain his dilemma, and Minyard told him to tell FEMA it's his way not their way and eventually the accepted the body. He then contacted the families and prepared burial services for the deceased, giving them a sense of closure and comfort.

Since coming back to New Orleans Chill has dedicated himself to the effort of getting people back to the city through his website CHILLSOS@Yahoo.com Wilbert has persevered through the storm and has helped those both alive and deceased. He has provided aid for those in their desperate time of need. He is a small business owner, a native New Orleanian, a barber who is a cut above the rest, and most of all a hero; Wilbert 'Chill' Wilson is this month's Data News Weekly Trailblazer.

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# *To Our Readers:*

*It is extremely important during these unprecedented times for New Orleanians, for you to receive information that is pertinent to the growth and reconstruction of our city. The Data News Weekly has taken on the charge to reach out to our readership which is now dispersed throughout the country. It is the responsibility of the Black Press, as historically, it has been the Black Press which has been the trusted source of information for our people, dating back over 60 years. The Black Press was credited with being the number one source of information during The Great Migration, when thousands of Blacks were leaving the South for work opportunities in the North. The Black Press kept them connected, and in its own way, helped in changing the face of America.*

*Continuing in this great tradition, Data News Weekly in its 39th year of publishing, understands that another “great migration” has occurred, and though the circumstances for our moving are different, the result is the same. We still have a need to be connected, but the large majority of our readership is not currently connected to the internet, and so we have redistributed our newspaper throughout Baton Rouge, Houston, TX and Jackson, MS, in addition to New Orleans, to be a better communication source for our displaced readers.*

*Understanding our responsibility, we also realize that we could not undertake this tremendous effort without the support of the corporate community. Moët Hennesy USA has, prior to this disaster, been a major supporter of the Black Press of America and of the Data News Weekly, and now, as we go through these trying times, we sincerely appreciate their continuing support of our overall responsibility to the New Orleanian African American community.*

*Data News Weekly, will continue to bring you the news from home, keeping you informed, wherever you may be, and helping you to find your way home. Once again, The Data News Weekly wishes to express it's gratitude to Moët Hennesy USA, for its ongoing support of our publication and our mission.*

## *Thank You Moët Hennesy USA*



## DATA ZONE

# Make A Soulful Sound Unto Thee



## *The Origins and Tradition of Brass Bands and Secondline Parades*

Story and Photo's by Glenn Summers

As the sacred ground of Jazz and American culture; New Orleans helped shape the sound of music both nationally and abroad. Jazz pioneers from New Orleans like King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, and Louis Armstrong received rave reviews all over the world with a sound that was heavily influenced by early Mardi Gras Indian chants and rhythms, second line music and jazz funerals hosted by early social aide and pleasure clubs. The music blaring from the brass bands of New Orleans is affectionately known by the natives as secondline music. The origin of the word Secondline derives from the jazz funeral or neighborhood parade procession, the band or the grand marshal is the first line or main line. With relatives and revelers in the back which is the central part of the secondline.

The organized procession or neighborhood parade aka secondlines are not just frivolous entertainment. Its origin stem from early 19th century social aide and pleasure clubs; whose soul purpose was to provide loans, counsel, and aiding in educating newly freed slaves. They also provided funds for the burial of the dead, as the cultural and



racial customs of the times denied many African-American the privilege of gaining loans and life insurance.

Second line jazz set the standard for distinctive syncopated rhythms and drum beats that are well preserved in the New Orleans community to the present day. Many young musicians from the crescent city draw inspiration from this wellspring of genius, incorporating old and new styles of music creating unique melodious sounds. The Soul Rebels Brass Band is one of the bands carrying on this storied tradition, soulfully gracing the stage every Thursday night at the Le Bon Temps night club. Their sound is a projection of melodic conventions, fusing rap, r&b, poetic chants and traditional Jazz. In a recent outing to see them I watched as they mesmerized and cultivated the crowd with their remarkable performance. It was a great feeling seeing people of all hues dancing and congregating together in harmony. The Soul Rebel Brass Band possesses the energy and spirit of the old traditions of New Orleans Brass Bands of the past with a modern spin.

But New Orleans music has always had a mystical way of intertwining people of all races. It is what holds the city together, in spite of its reputation of being a violent and corrupt city. And in defense of my city it can be easily said that in any metropolis all

have there share of crime and political corruption. Also there may be so-called economic thriving, but they lack the culture, hospitality and je na sais quoi that makes the city unique. The people, the music, the food is the nucleus of this great city, and are key ingredients that governs it. These are key components and if they were non-existent the city of New Orleans would have fallen into the cultural and musical abyss becoming any city U.S.A.

And despite all the negative press about crime and corruption which truthfully just happens on a minimal scale there is mostly a positive infrastructure where people coexist in the districts and wards of New Orleans fostering a breeding ground essential to the evolution of the pleasingly pleasant dissonant sounds of the bands. Cultural diversity has been an essential part of our history and is part and parcel of the feelings one is overcome with, both tourist and locals alike. It is in this the anointing of kindred spirits co-existing through music and song, and is a vital part of our history and survival as America's most interesting city. And preserving our spiritual mode that lingers in its ever present omnipotence, New Orleans is like a shadowy apparition embodying starving souls, New Orleans, this great city that gave Brass Bands and the Secondline to the world and continues to mystify, entice and excite anyone who experiences it.

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## DATA ZONE

# What Will the Demise of UPN, WB Mean to TV

By. Andre Herndon and Marisela Santana  
Special to the NNPA from WAVE Newspapers

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) — When the upstart UPN and WB networks were launched, within eight months of one another in 1995, they quickly became go-to avenues for African-Americans in the television industry long desirous of a friendly outlet for prime-time shows prominently featuring Black talent on both sides of the camera. While critics both entertainment and social were divided over the quality and redeeming value of the broad comedies — such as WB's "The Steve Harvey Show" and UPN's "The Secret Life of Desmond Pfeiffer" — regularly broadcast on the networks, there was no questioning the speed with which the so-called "netlets" made names for themselves by openly courting Black viewership in an era when predominantly White, highly-rated shows like "Seinfeld" and "Friends" ruled the airwaves. As the WB eased away from a reliance on Black-themed shows in the late '90s, UPN continued appealing to young Black audiences with a slate of programming that included departed favorites like "Moesha" and "The Parkers," and continues with long-running shows like the popular "Girl friends" and, most recently, "Everybody Hates Chris," one of the current season's new favorites among both fans and critics. Now, with the surprise announcement this week that CBS and Warner Bros. will merge the competing networks in the fall under the banner "the CW," concerns are being raised that the end of competition between the financially struggling networks could mean fewer opportunities for those in the Black creative community still struggling to take projects on the long, circuitous journey from good idea on paper to network schedule time-slot. "I think it's unfortunate," Willis Edwards, vice president of the Beverly Hills/Hollywood branch of the NAACP, said of the merger. His organization closely monitors the progress of African-Americans working in the often insular world of show business. "We have to look at this merger with a cautious eye, and see where they go with this, because some of the programming that they did have and that we thought should have stayed, didn't. I know that ... African-Americans have been losing left and right in this industry. The question is, how will the programming be affected? Will the programming be saved that are quality programs on the WB and UPN? I think somebody is going to get lost in the process.

"Everybody loses," Edwards continued. "The writers, producers, the people behind the scenes, in front of the camera — everybody. Because if they have a body of work, it only takes only one executive to decide if the show is going to [stay on the air]." He added that his organization has begun encouraging its members to begin purchasing stock in media companies, so that Blacks can have a greater voice in decisions like network consolidation. As far as Blacks in the television industry, "we still don't have enough," said Geraldine Washington, who heads the Los Angeles chapter of the NAACP, which has long been involved in a movement to convince Hollywood to embrace a greater degree of diversity. "The thing that I would be concerned about is what we would lose to this merger, and how many programs would be lost. For me, the question would be, where do we go from here?" UPN now airs a number of shows with majority Black casts, most in a two-hour block broadcast regularly on Monday nights. That slate consists of the programs "One on One," "All of Us," "Girlfriends" and "Half and Half." Each has been on the air at least three seasons, with "Girlfriends" the longest-running of the four. Now in its sixth year, that show and "Everybody Hates Chris" are expected to be on the CW's fall schedule — but the fate of the other African-American-based UPN programs appears undetermined. UPN spokeswoman Joanna Massey refused to make any of the network's African-American talent available for comment, saying the merger "was not something that they were involved in." But Michael Ajakwe, a producer on the network's sitcom "Eve," said that he and others on his set were "sort of stunned" by news of the merger. "Of course, we don't know what's going to happen. I mean, we all just found out this morning," said Ajakwe, an industry veteran who over the last 11 years has worked on a number of sitcoms, including Fox's "Martin" and "Sister Sister," a modestly successful WB comedy that aired in the 1990s. "But I'm optimistic ... that even though they're going to close both networks and make one, when you have shows that are working like 'Eve,' like 'Girlfriends,' I expect they're all going to stick around. The merger could very well be something positive. To me the glass is half full, not half empty."



The future of programs like Girlfriends is in question.

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## OPINION

# Rev. Joseph Lowery: Speaking Truth to Power



Ron Walters  
NNPA Columnist

As the funeral of Coretta Scott King wore on, there was a sense in which I thought that she might rise up from the casket and ask where was the legacy to which she and her husband had devoted their lives being memorialized, because it sure wasn't being projected in that house. Then, as if to answer the question, Rev. Joseph Lowery stepped forth to do so. He read a poem that was mostly celebratory of Coretta, but near the end he said: "We know now there were no weapons of mass destruction over there, but there are weapons of misdirection right down here. Millions are without health insurance, poverty abounds, for war billions more, but no more for the poor." The furor over the statement reached heights resembling what might occur if Bin Laden is captured. Both CNN and Fox news ran the Lowery statement, but edited out the 18 seconds of standing applause that followed them. National newspaper headlines all over the country questioned whether Coretta's funeral was the place for "political statements," similar to Chicago Tribune's header that read, "when a pulpit turns to politics."

There never has been a separation between politics and the Black church. Rev. Lowery noted in a subsequent interview with Chris Wallace on Fox News, the statement by George H. W. Bush who said he had "never had such an experience like this before" and Bill Clinton called him one of the "frozen chosen" for that remark. But the remark was also profound in defining the difference that existed for a long time between the Black religious experience and White churches. Black churches tended to enjoy the Black experience because they were the major institution allowed by the slave institution for so long. So, they ran social services such as schools, health clinics and mutual aid societies, but were also the base of the civil rights movements and represented the community to the dominant political structure. Whites having control of political, economic and social institutions and their resources, tended to relegate religious services to theological matters that touched on the spiritual impact on individual or family behavior. More recently, some conservative White churches have come fully into politics, giving their pulpit to candidates, funding campaigns and serving virtually as an arm of the local Republican Party. So, politics is not divorced from either the Black or White churches. The point seems to be over whether a funeral was the place to make political observations. First, I would observe that the entire context was political

inasmuch as George Bush showed up not only to represent the nation in laying to rest a national icon of American history, but he also did so, no doubt, because it was a soft environment amenable for him to attempt to salve his relationship with the Black community – a political motive. On the other hand, the Black community had been most opposed to his policies of war, racism and dealing with poverty of any group in America. It was, therefore, logical that the values of Bush and the values of the Black community – contained in the civil rights legacy – would clash. Those who planned the funeral, sought to prevent this inevitability by scheduling speakers closest to the civil rights movement to speak at a memorial ceremony the night before. So, Rev. Al Sharpton, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rev. C. T. Vivian, (Harry Belafonte was dis-invited) were all excluded from the funeral itself and Rev. Lowery was the token representative of that tradition. It would not have been inevitable that the values would clash if Rev. Lowery had, like so many others who spoke at the funeral, been divorced from Coretta Scott King's legacy, previously hostile to it, or more concerned about putting on a nice, non-controversial show. It took considerable integrity and courage on Rev. Lowery's part to look in the face of the monstrous theft of King's dream on the stage before him and challenge it frontally before the American people.

## Mardi Gras 2006

### *Medicine for Melancholy*



By: Eric Joseph

If ever there was a time when the city of New Orleans needed Mardi Gras, it is now. Consider the following: We live in a city in limbo. Blocks of houses remain empty, their occupants – those alive – are scattered across the nation. Many businesses have yet to return, if they ever will. Almost six months after Katrina's onslaught, piles of debris still litter the streets. The stress levels of many of the citizenry have reached its peak requiring antidepressant medication for some. Our suicide rate, in less than five months, has exceeded the national average. Greedy and disreputable contractors have bilked, lied, and scammed many returning evacuees who can ill afford it. Numerous families were shattered in the hurricane evacuation, and there are still as many as 3,000 people missing. Though the city is slowly on the mend, there is the anxiety of the storm season to come, which promises to be as active as last year if not worse. That could result in all the rebuilding being wiped away in the blink of an eye. In short, the city of New Orleans is wounded, like a loved one shivering under the covers ravaged from some strange ailment.

For reasons of politics, capitalism, and fate, a good-sized portion of the African – American population may never return to the city of their birth. Sobbing black parents across the country are having to tell children too young to fathom the impact that they may have to settle where they've landed. Given this scenario, many African – American residents are opposed to Mardi Gras taking place in the Crescent City. They feel the event would be a slap in the face of black evacuees living in exile; a party for the few while the masses suffer.

But in truth the city desperately needs the revenue that Fat Tuesday can generate, and though the money involved is of great importance, equally imperative is the need for the city's residents to party, to shake off the burdens of life in this post Katrina reality. There's been so much pain, so much loss, and uncertainty still rules the day. Without Shrovetide, a unique aspect of the city dies. It would be easier to separate yourself from your shadow, than to imagine New Orleans without the day of days.

As the Chinese proverb says, May you live in interesting times, and that we are. New Orleans was reduced to chaos and ruin in a matter of days. What we took for granted the day before August 29, 2005, is like a blessing to us now, and that day in August haunts us still. For post Katrina New Orleans, Mardi Gras is a medicine for melancholy, a balm for the souls of the people; a pause in purgatory to laugh and enjoy life and revel in what it means to both miss New Orleans and be a part of its fertile culture.

Eric Joseph is presently a Research Associate at Xavier University and was previously a Research Archivist at XU. He is also a musician and poet. For Comments he can be contacted at Bola4@aol.com



The Superdome is scheduled to re-open on September 24, 2006. Where our New Orleans Saints will play their arch rivals the Atlanta Falcons. This is the first event that will be there since it housed evacuees during Hurricane Katrina.

Chris Mercadal



## NATIONAL NEWS

# Suspicious Church Fires Started Beneath the Pulpit

EUTAW, ALA. (NNPA) – In the early morning hours of Tuesday, February 7, 2006, four rural churches were set afire. All were Baptist, all were off main roads, and all were predominately African-American.

The churches were in Greene, Sumter and Pickens counties.

In Greene County, fire destroyed Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church, a more than 60-year-old structure that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Rev. James Posey, who pastors the church, finds it hard to believe that anyone would deliberately

burn a church, despite the fact that this same thing happened in 1996 when four Greene County churches were torched.

Ironically, it was Rev. Arthur Coleman, whose church, Mt. Zoar, was burned in 1996, who first saw the flames at Morning Star.

Coleman drives a public

transportation van and is often out on his route in the early morning hours. According to Greene County Sheriff Johnny Isaac, Coleman immediately reported the fire to Posey some time between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m.

Morning Star member Johnny Achibald was first on the scene.

He said the fire was burning on the floor beneath the pulpit - something all the fires had in common, including the five fires in Bibb County weeks earlier.

Following the Bibb County fires, Isaac had told his deputies to check churches off the main

*Continued on page 12*

## Moët Hennessy USA Donates \$25,000 to Aid Katrina Students



Dwayne Ashley, President of the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund receiving \$25,000 check from John Esposito, President of Moët Hennessy USA and Noel Hankin, Sr. Vice President of Moët Hennessy USA. Both Messrs. Esposito and Hankin serve as board members of the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund.

Moët Hennessy USA presented a check for \$25,000 to the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund to aid their efforts in helping students affected by hurricane Katrina. Thousands of displaced students from Southern University New Orleans and other colleges are scattered throughout the region. Some have lost family members and many have lost homes.

TMSF will use the money to help students get back on their feet by paying for clothes, housing, books, school supplies and transportation. Southern University New Orleans was particularly hard hit because the campus is adjacent to where the levee ruptured. SUNO is now open again for business and they are reaching out to all students who were enrolled there.

John Esposito, President of Moët Hennessy USA and Noel Hankin, Sr. Vice President Moët Hennessy USA are both directors of the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund. Moët Hennessy USA has a long history of supporting educational causes. As far back as 1896, William Jay Schieffelin, President of the MH USA, served on the Board of Tuskegee Institute until his death in 1954.

Moët Hennessy is the world's leading wine and spirits company of French luxury group LVMH. Moët Hennessy USA is the only sales and marketing organization in the United States representing the group's internationally renowned portfolio of brands, including: Hennessy cognac, Moët & Chandon Champagnes, Dom Perignon, Krug, Veuve Clicquot and Ruinart champagnes; Belvedere and Chopin vodkas; Glenmorangie Single Malt Scotch; Green Point, Terrazas de los Andes, Cape Mentelle, Cloudy Bay and Newton Vineyard, Domaine Chandon California, sparkling and still wines. Moët Hennessy USA also markets agency brands including Grand Marnier/Navan, and Casa Lapostolle.



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## NEWS

# Congressional Black Caucus Blasts Bush's Budget

By. James Wright

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – The Congressional Black Caucus has come out against the 2007 Bush administration budget proposal, saying that it cuts needed

social programs and it gives too many benefits to the rich and wealthy.

Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) said: "Never before have Americans paid so much for a budget that does so little to keep them safe,

secure and prosperous in a 21st century economy. After years of shelling out billions in taxpayer dollars to well-connected and well-financed special interests, the President is facing a debt so large that he cannot afford the promises he's made to the American people."

Obama, the lone senator in the CBC, pointed out that the Bush budget would:

- Assess higher health and medical fees for veterans
- Cut funding for police officers by 80 percent
- Eliminate funding to fight crimes caused by the use of methamphetamines
- Cut funding for firefighters and
- Freeze need-based funding for college students.

Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.) mocked the Bush budget in explicit detail.

"This self-proclaimed 'compassionate conservative' has proposed a record \$2.77 trillion budget which increases money for war and defense, makes tax cuts for the wealthy permanent (takes \$1.8 trillion out

of the budget over 10 years), and continues undermining programs which take care of 'the least of these,' like Medicare and Medicaid," he said. "The 'No Child Left Behind' president proposes cutting education funds 28 percent, from \$88.6 to \$63.4 billion, including eliminating 42 programs. Bush's budget proposes to limit food stamp eligibility by cutting funds by \$706 billion over five years."

"The President's budget also proposes a reduction in payments to hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and other institutions of about \$2.5 billion in 2007 and \$35.9 billion through 2011. On the energy front, the budget would cut spending on energy efficiency, hazardous waste cleanup and grants to subsidize heating costs for low-income households (LIHEAP funds) - even as spending on nuclear weapons programs are increased by 2 percent."

"So we now know President Bush's moral values, budget priorities and political philosophy rely on the states, faith-based institutions and voluntary efforts to meet the peoples' needs, undercut federal programs for low-and-middle income families, cut taxes on the rich and increase funds for the military-industrial-complex," Jackson said.





## Displaced by Hurricane Katrina or Rita? Housing Help is Available.

You may be eligible for temporary housing assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to cover the cost of renting an apartment or home for your family.

**Call FEMA to register or go online**  
 1-800-621-FEMA (open 24 hours daily)  
 TTY: 1-800-462-7585  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)  
 Multilingual operators are available

An application for a U.S. Small Business Administration Loan is not required to determine eligibility for FEMA's Temporary Housing assistance.

**FEMA's Housing Locator Service**  
 1-800-762-8740 (open daily from 8 am – 9 pm EST)  
 TTY: 1-800-462-7585  
[www.dhronline.org](http://www.dhronline.org)

If you need help locating available apartments or homes, FEMA's Housing Locator Service can help.

**HUD Disaster Housing Assistance**  
 1-866-373-9509  
 TTY: 1-800-877-8339

If you were displaced from a low-income or subsidized housing unit funded by the government or homeless before the storm, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) can help you find housing options.

There are grants and resources available to eligible applicants to help with long term housing needs. Join the hundreds of thousands who have already been assisted and have moved on to a better long term housing solution.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should call FEMA at 800-621-3362 or contact your State Office of Equal Rights.



Dancy Baptist Church was saved from total destruction by a fire alarm, but was still damaged from arsonists who have been burning churches in Alabama.

roads each night. A deputy had reported in from Morning Star at 2:30 a.m. on Tuesday morning that all was calm there.

According to Isaac, a black and gray SUV containing two White men was seen speeding away from Morning Star Tuesday morning in the direction of Gainesville. Spring Valley Baptist Church in Gainesville was set afire, as well as Dancy First Baptist Church on the Sumter/Pickens County line and Galilee Baptist Church in Panola.

Spring Valley was lightly damaged due to a concrete floor; Dancy was saved by a fire alarm going off; Galilee burned to the ground.

Rev. Glenn Harris, pastor of Spring Valley, said, "My prayers go out to the perpetrators. They need to seek help.

We as church members - we will be able to make it - we will be able to get our church back, but I am worried that people who do this sort of thing need help."

All four of these churches are along a stretch of state and county roads that extend for about 35 miles.

Isaac said that a vehicle similar to the one described in Greene County is already being sought in connection with the five church fires in Bibb County.

Jim Cavanaugh, special agent in charge for the AFT (Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms), said that it is likely the two suspects are familiar with the back roads where the churches are located. The agent says people should be vigilant and report anyone they might know who stays out all night and drives a dark-colored SUV. It is believed that the perpetrators may have burns on their hands from setting the fires.

In another touch of irony, Isaac had told reporters at a regular Monday morning press conference that he had a good lead on the 1996 fires in Greene County and hoped to have a release for them soon.

He still hopes to have a release soon, but is hoping it is on the current crimes as well as those that happened almost 10 years ago.



## PUBLISHER'S PAGE

# Time Is Running Out!



Terry B. Jones  
Publisher

The state of the nation's people over the last few years can only be described as apathetic. We allowed the government after 9/11 to not go after the person who attacked us but instead attacked Sadaam Hussein, who actually did no harm to the American people. Then after destroying their country looking for weapons of mass destruction which did not exist, we dropped billions of dollars and manpower into the same country, with Haliburton controlling the rebuilding of that nation. Taking available troops and resources out of our country, which I feel is a major contributor to why we were short-handed when Katrina hit.

We also allowed without the thought of impeachment, the President to stay on vacation during the most tragic disaster in the history of America. And now, we are allowing the Vice President and Haliburton to rebuild our city on their terms. Sometimes I wonder what the people of America are thinking!

Regretfully, for New Orleanians prior to Katrina, apathy was a way of life. Being known around the nation as "The Big Easy," we allowed for crooked politicians, organized crime affiliates, etc. to be the alluring mystery of our town. We were known as the "decadent capitol" of the country.

So let's evaluate this, the country is apathetic, New Orleans is known for it's apathy, and we wonder why there are rumors of "outsiders" taking control of our town. If you think about it, seems like easy pickings. Doesn't that make you angry? I certainly hope so, because it wasn't always that way.

I know there has to be some of the baby boomers left from the sixties. We used to stand up for our rights, question the government, because it's our country, not theirs. You have to still be out there. And if not, to refresh your memory, read our cover story this week. Young African Americans, came together

and started a movement, Finding Our Folk. Leadership, remember?

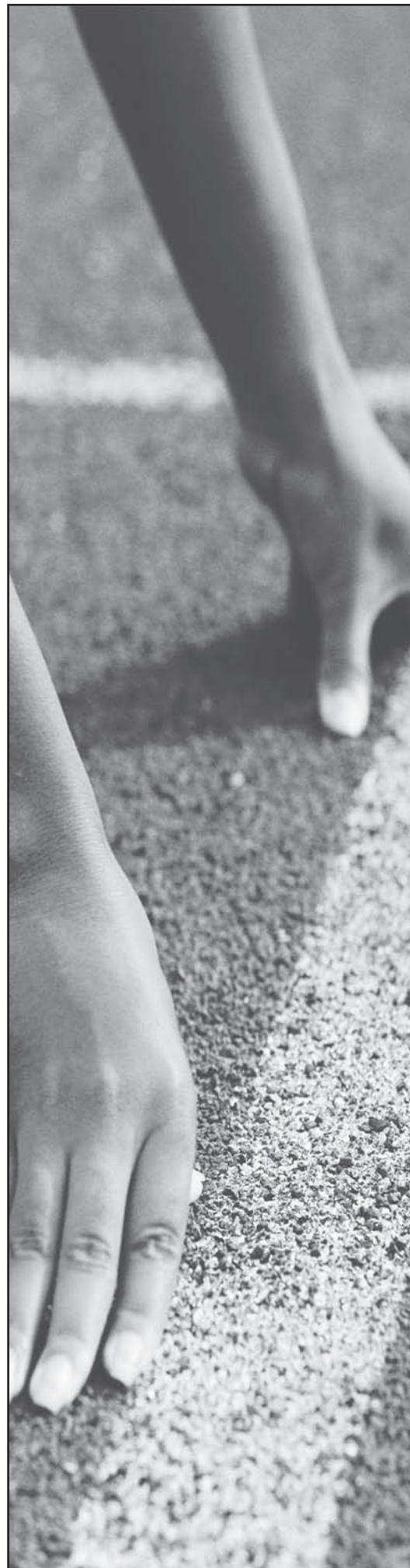
There is a Mayoral election coming up this April, if it isn't moved back. This is going to be a difficult task, especially if we are still so displaced and scattered as we are now, but it's not impossible. In Data News Weekly's view, this could be our last hurrah. The last opportunity to take back control of our city government. But it has to be evaluated differently than it ever has before in "The Big Easy." This isn't a popularity contest. This isn't the guy who can grease your pockets and tell you about the secret deals he will do for you when he gets in. Or how if nobody else is going to be okay when he gets in, you will. You know the story. In fact this isn't even about an individual. It should be about principles, leadership and direction.

We should be clear about what we want the Mayor to do to rebuild our city, and establishing good city government benefiting all New Orleanians. And most of all, the government must compassionate towards the entire diverse population which existed in the city prior to Katrina. In the next issue of Data News Weekly, as we try to reach out to as many New Orleanians as we can, in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Jackson MS, and Atlanta, we will provide a column called "Our Mayor" asking for your input on what characteristics your mayor should have. We will publish your opinions in each issue. We will also publish your opinions on our website [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com). This is your chance to let your voice be heard. Closer to the election, we will compile these ideas, publish it and send it out to all of the candidates, including the incumbent as a directive from the citizens of New Orleans. Send your thoughts to: Data News Weekly, PO Box 5033, Atlanta GA 30302.

I want to impress upon each and every one of our readers that We the People of New Orleans have been apathetic too long. It is time not to be led any longer, but to lead! Understanding that we may not be in New Orleans, but we Are New Orleans, and this is Our Town!

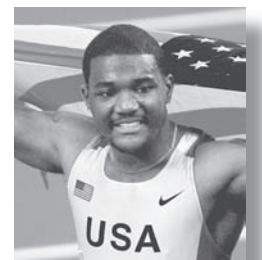
If not Us, Who, and if not Now, When?

Terry B. Jones  
Publisher



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# ADVERTISE



## BLACK HISTORY

# Was there a Conspiracy in New Orleans?

## KATRINA SERIES - PART 2

This is the second of an 8-part series of stories about the Gulf Coast and the road to recovery after Hurricane Katrina.

By. Zenitha Prince  
NNPA Special Correspondent



New Orleans' lower Ninth Ward suffered more destruction than other sections because of the closeness of the broken levee.

NEW ORLEANS (NNPA)—On Sept. 12, Nation of Islam leader Minister Louis Farrakhan was in Charlotte, N.C., as part of a 23-city tour to promote the Millions More Movement march in Washington, then mere weeks away, when he made an allegation that has stirred ripples of reaction in the public pool.

"I heard from a very reliable source, who saw a 25-foot-deep crater under the levee breach," Farrakhan said. "It may have been blown up to destroy the Black part of town and keep the White part dry."

Farrakhan is not alone in believing that the poor and Black of New Orleans were somehow targeted to sustain the worse of the Katrina.

"Mother Nature is one thing but this goes beyond Mother Nature," said Raynold Fenelon, a New Orleans cabdriver. "They blew that levee. I believe the Canal Street levee broke but they blew that one by the Ninth Ward. Then they talking about a barge hit the levee...These people are full of s-t."

There is no question that the 9th Ward was an unsightly scene.

Black bodies floated in the poisonous stew of gasoline and sewage; Black men, women and children were marooned on roofs and ignored by passing helicopters, Black people were crammed into a putrid Superdome by the thousands going for days without food or water and Black homes sustained the worst of the damage.

Many believe it was planned.

The rumor that officials purposefully breached the

levees to sluice water away from majority White, rich areas like the French Quarter has flooded the blogosphere.

Andrea Garland, a former resident now living in Texas, wrote in her blog at Getyouracton.com: "Also heard that part of the reason our house flooded is they dynamited part of the levee after the first section broke—they did this to prevent Uptown (the rich part of town) from being flooded. Apparently, they used too much dynamite, thus flooding part of the Bywater. So now I know who is responsible for flooding my house—not Katrina, but our government."

And the rumors have spread on a tide of discontent and anger to Capitol Hill.

In a Dec. 6 hearing conducted by the House Select Committee on Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans resident Dyan French testified that she actually heard the explosion.

"I was on my front porch. I have witnesses that they bombed the walls of the levee, boom, boom!" Dyan said, gesticulating with her hands. "I'll never forget it."

Mayor Ray Nagin in a Sept. 11 ABC News report rejected the rumors as untrue.

"That storm was so powerful and it pushed so much water, there's no way anyone could have calculated, would dynamite the levee to have the kind of impact to save the French Quarter."

The current levee system, a 16-foot high wall that covers about 350 miles, was built after Hurricane Betsy in 1965 to counter, maximally, a Category 3 storm. Katrina, at 125 miles per hour on landfall, was a Category 4.

"I don't think anybody anticipated the break of the levees," President Bush said soon after the storm. However, that's not true.

Scientists predicted in publications that the deterioration of natural barriers, a sinking delta and rising sea levels would eventually prove too much for the levees. So did a 2002 Times-Picayune prophetic series that warned that major flooding was "just a matter of time".

Engineers, scientists and state and city attorneys are now

investigating whether malfeasance in design, construction or maintenance caused the flooding.

"It became obvious to us pretty quickly that the flood walls along the 17th Street Canal had not failed through overtopping, they failed through some other mechanism," said G. Paul Kemp, associate professor of Louisiana State University's School of the Coast and the Environment and a member of a state sponsored forensics team investigating the flooding. "The preliminary report does show some questionable decisions about the depth that they drove the sheet pile that support the wall."

Another preliminary report by a team of engineers from the University of California at Berkeley and the American Society of Civil Engineers concluded: "Several major and costly breaches appear to have been the result of stability failures of the foundation soils and/or the earthen levee embankments themselves. In addition, it appears that many of the levees and floodwalls that failed due to overtopping might have performed better

if relatively inexpensive details had been added and/or altered during their original design and construction."

Still, locals hold on to the theory that the wall was deliberately blown, goaded on by memories of government complicity in the Tuskegee experiment and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's COINTELPRO program to undermine civil rights groups.

The Tuskegee experiment was a government-sanctioned program that began in 1932 and involved the use of 399 Black men as guinea pigs to discover the effects of syphilis. Though told they would receive free "special treatment" for their "bad blood," the men were left untreated and attempts to obtain treatment elsewhere were stopped. The story did not reach the public until 1972. Even then, neither the men nor their families received an apology. President Bill Clinton finally offered an apology in 1997 – 25 years later.

COINTELPRO, an acronym for Counterintelligence Program, was a covert operation initiated by the FBI in 1956 under the directorship of J. Edgar Hoover to "neutralize" domestic political groups like the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers' Party but was almost immediately extended to so-called dissident organizations including, the Nation of Islam, the Black Panthers and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Through surveillance, wiretaps, blackmail and other unsavory means, the FBI attempted to discredit and disrupt Black civil rights organizations.

Credit: Shon Sturdivant



## SPECIAL SECTION



Kenneth Muhammad/Final Call

Minister Louis Farrakhan

In one scheme, the FBI sent tape-recordings of Dr. King's extramarital sexual activity to King and urged him to commit suicide or risk being publicly exposed as immoral.

The covert program did not end until the early '70s when its details were exposed during a Congressional investigation.

Despite the backdrop of that history, Katrina theories have been mocked by conservative media pundits such as Sean

to possible reasons for deliberately flooding St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes where poor Whites and Blacks lived. Back then, a club of rich bankers ran the city and made the fatal decision to blow the levees in order to save their businesses.

"Daily, hundreds of thousands of dollars were being withdrawn from banks. If the fear grew great enough, if a run developed on the bank, it would hurt, and perhaps destroy, weaker banks. Short-term credit was disappearing, period. Long term, if the nation's businessmen lost confidence in the safety of New Orleans serious damage could result," Barry wrote on page 231. "...Pool's bank was the most vulnerable in the city; he had aggressively loaned money to sugar planters. A crevasse on the river's west bank could destroy them, and his bank. Dynamiting the levee on the east bank might

ship in Hawaii.

Others see the flood and the subsequent dispersal of poor Blacks to far-flung places across the nation as an ethnic cleansing of New Orleans.

Naomi Klein, in article titled "Purging the Poor," published in the Oct. 10 issue of the Nation magazine said New Orleans is already displaying a dramatic demographic shift since most of the people who can return are White. Additionally, she said, given high vacancy rates in many parts of the city—French Quarter, Garden District and Jefferson Parish—many evacuees could be housed in the city.

"Roughly 70,000 of New Orleans' poorest homeless evacuees could move back to the city alongside returning White homeowners, without a single structure being built," she stated.

Mayor Nagin and others have said the flood presented an opportunity to restructure and rebuild smaller, better neighborhoods for the city's



Credit: Reginald Mitchell Jr.

New Orleans cab driver Reynold Fenelon believes the levy in the lower Ninth Ward was blown up.

*“Mother Nature is one thing but this goes beyond Mother Nature”*

—Raynold Fenelon, a New Orleans cabdriver.

Hannity, Rush Limbaugh and Larry Elder. Elder said in a Sept. 22 column published in the Jewish World Review online: "For many people, past discrimination means present and future discrimination. End of discussion..."

Though the conspiracy theories may appear outlandish to some, there is proof that something like this happened in the past.

It happened when Hurricane Betsy deluged New Orleans in 1965 and in the Mississippi Flood of 1927, as John M. Barry discusses in his book *Rising Tide*.

The book discussed the social and political forces that precipitated the flood and pointed

also relieve them. Pool argued, "The people of New Orleans are in such a panic that all who can do so are leaving the city. Thousands are leaving daily. Only dynamite will restore confidence."

That flood was the final straw for thousands of Black laborers, who left the Delta in droves, forever changing the economic and social structure of the area.

Though for different reasons, some see the same forces at work now.

"Same thing—politicians, corruption, greed...they wanted this area to widen the canal for cruise ships," said Pamela Everage, 39, a Ninth Ward resident who works on a cruise

inhabitants.

To many, that's an indirect way of saying it will be a whiter New Orleans. In fact, the New York Times published a story recently under the headline, "In New Orleans, Smaller May Mean Whiter."

It noted, "...Race has become a subtext for just about every contentious decision the city faces: where to put FEMA trailers; which neighborhoods to rebuild; how the troubled school system should be reorganized; when elections should be held..."

Bringing back poor people is rarely discussed.

"All the talk about a smaller, better New Orleans is tantamount

to not rebuilding low-income public housing," said Robert Bullard, a professor at Clark Atlanta University and an environmental justice activist. And not rebuilding those houses is singularly unfair to Black people, whose lives are often invested in their homes.

"Ninety percent of Black wealth is tied into their homes so you're not only destroying Black neighborhoods, you're destroying Black wealth."

Fenelon, the New Orleans taxi driver, added, "The mayor talking about building houses that are better than the ones people lived in but will they be able to afford those houses? They don't talk about that."

He continued, "It won't be the same...they're trying to get rid of us, you know," he said. "You got White folks that come all the way from Baton Rouge every day to get to work. Think about how much easier it's going to be for them to have some property right down here that will take them just five minutes to get to work."

In fact, Alphonso Jackson, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development said he advised Mayor Nagin to not rebuild the Ninth Ward, according to a Sept.

29 Houston Chronicle article, and predicted that the city would lose a significant portion of its African-American citizenry. African Americans previously comprised 67 percent of the city's residents.

"Whether we like it or not, New Orleans is not going to be 500,000 people for a long time," he is quoted. "New Orleans is not going to be as black as it was for a long time, if ever again."

Mayor Ray Nagin created a controversy when he said in a Martin Luther King Day speech: "It's time for us to come together. It's time for us to rebuild New Orleans – the one that should be a chocolate New Orleans. This city will be a majority African-American city. It's the way God wants it to be. You can't have New Orleans no other way. It wouldn't be New Orleans."

Under a barrage of criticism, Nagin quickly retracted that statement.

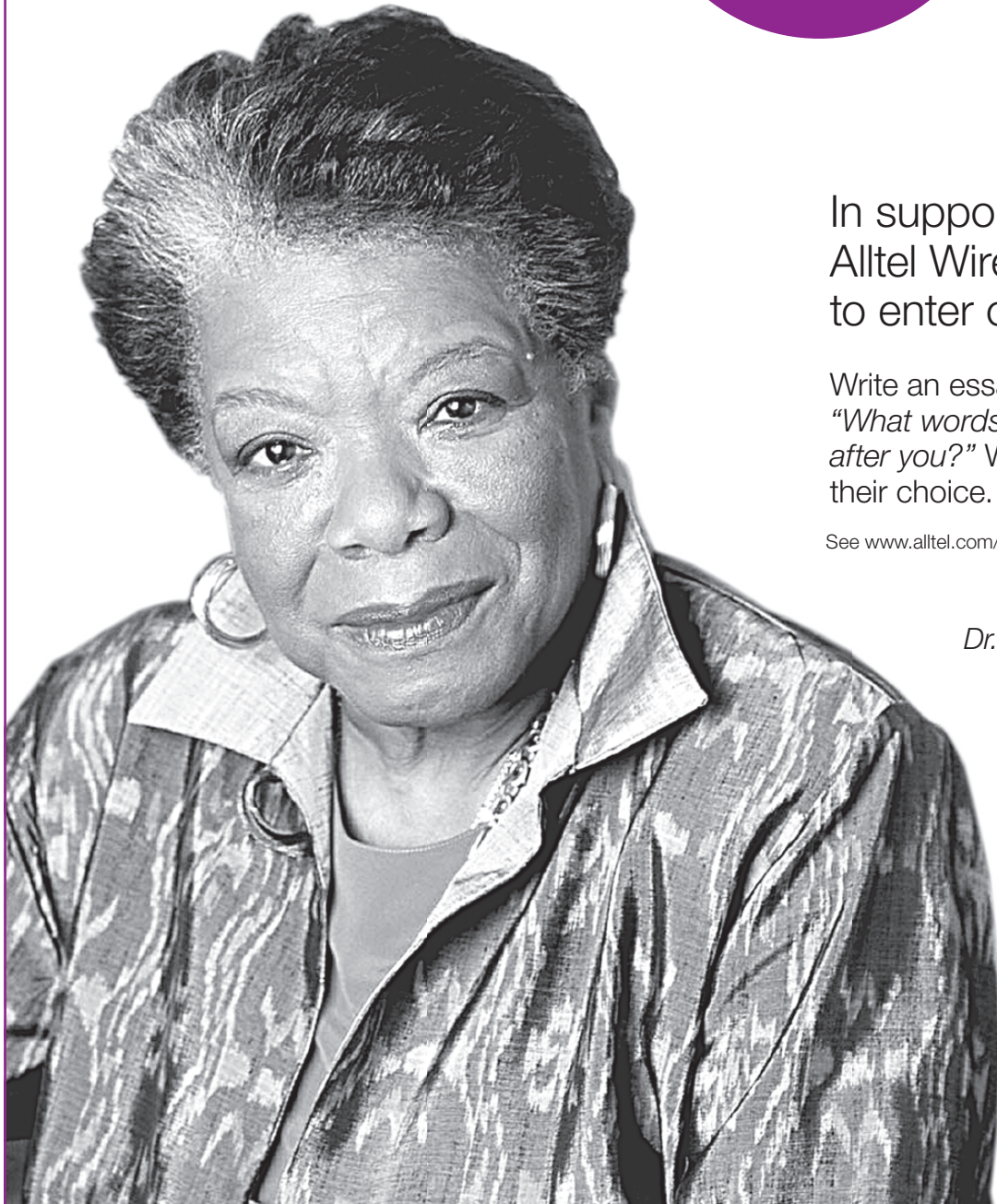
Fenelon, the taxi driver, says he understands the tension over rebuilding New Orleans.

"I tell you boy, a lot of politics have everything to do with it. It's all politics," he said and added, "There ain't no real love for us Black people, especially in the ghetto."



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