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**The Struggle
for Freedom,
Justice and Equality**

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

Data News Weekly Commemorates MLK and JFK 50 Years Later



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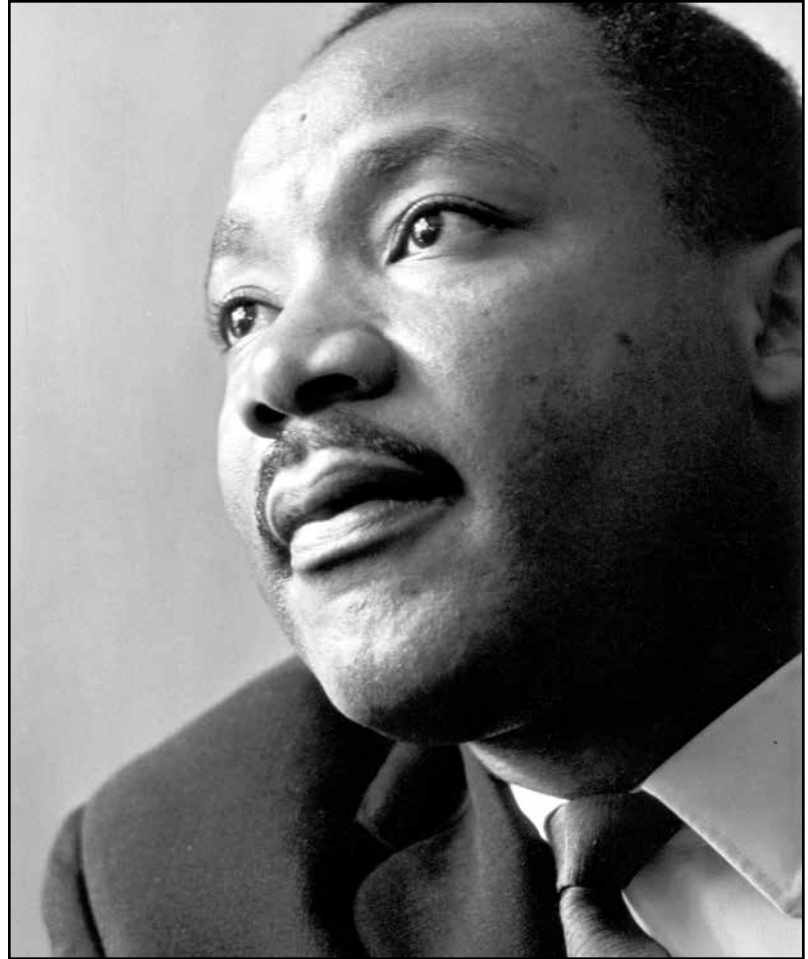
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MLK and JFK 50 Years Later



United States President John Fitzgerald Kennedy



Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

By Edwin Buggage

MLK and JFK 50 Years Later

Last year marked the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. dared to dream, making a speech that moved a

country into collective action to continue to right the wrongs of a society at a time where Lady Liberty's light did not shine on its darker brothers and sisters. It was also a time where the nation had a young President in John F. Kennedy who a few years earlier in his inaugural address said to the nation "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for

your country." These words had a dual meaning and irony attached to them. In a nation based on the ideals of liberty, freedom and justice for all citizens, African-Americans were trying to get the country to be true to its creed of all people being created equal. The message of Kennedy idealistic as it seems, was not a reality as fellow Americans were deemed them as outsiders

On the Cover: This photo shows John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson at the meeting held with Civil Rights leaders on the day of the March on Washington. Figures include A. Philip Randolph, long time union organizer and founder of the LCCR (standing next to JFK), Whitney Young, head of the National Urban League (far right) Martin Luther King (second left) John Lewis of SNCC (back left) and Loren Miller, an NAACP lawyer and housing rights activist from Los Angeles (fourth from left).

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Real Possibilities is a trademark of AARP.

Our most powerful stories aren't told in books.

Where some see cracks of pain, we see grooves of progress. Where some see a never-ending struggle, we see real possibilities ready to be enjoyed. The Civil Rights Movement started our journey toward equality for everyone. At AARP, we are proud to continue that journey and help create new stories of living life to the fullest.

As we celebrate Black History Month, the dreamers of yesterday and the leaders of tomorrow, we look forward to helping every community realize their **Real Possibilities**. We all have stories of success and triumph that deserve to be told. Share yours today. Visit **aarp.org/tellastory** and add your legacy to the history books.

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Hundreds Of Volunteers To Join City Year New Orleans For Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Of Service At Arthur Ashe

The City Year New Orleans corps will return to Arthur Ashe Charter School for the City Year Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service on Monday, Jan. 20.

City Year, a national organization that unites teams of young people for a year of service in high-need urban schools, mobilizes its 2,700 corps members and thousands more volunteers nationwide each Martin Luther King, Jr. Day for a day of service in the community. City Year considers the holiday "a day on" not "a day off" for its staff and corps members.

More than 250 volunteers will come together to build the second phase of the edible garden at Arthur Ashe Charter School, which is operated by the non-profit charter management organization, FirstLine Schools, and features the



In honor of The MLK Day of Service, more than 250 volunteers will come together to build the second phase of the edible garden at Arthur Ashe Charter School.

Edible Schoolyard New Orleans (ESYNOLA) organic gardening and kitchen program. This service day will support ESYNOLA and FirstLine in developing its one-acre teaching garden that serves more than 600 students in grades K-8th. Service projects include: planting fruit trees and other garden plants, building planter boxes, picnic tables and an outdoor reading nook, mulching, and other beautification projects in the Oak Park Neighborhood.

New Orleans First Lady Cheryl Landrieu and Delta Regional Authority (DRA) Federal Co-Chairman Christopher Masingill will kick off the service day during an opening ceremony. The rest of the

City Year, continued
on next page

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The LPCA is a membership organization representing Louisiana's FQHCs. Its purpose is to promote accessible, affordable, quality primary health care for the uninsured and medically underserved populations throughout the state.

Find your local FQHC for enrollment assistance at:
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www.lpca.net



Health Insurance Marketplace

Navigators for a Healthy Louisiana is supported by Funding Opportunity Number CA-NAV-13-001 from the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. The contents provided in this publication are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of HHS or any of its agencies.

Elect MICHAEL BAGNERIS #11 FOR MAYOR

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In honor of Martin Luther King's Birthday

In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends. Martin L. King

City Year, continued
from previous page

day will be dedicated to hands-on service projects.

Forty-two City Year New Orleans corps members serve at four public FirstLine schools across New Orleans, providing individual academic interventions to students who have fallen behind in school. Working side-by-side with teachers, our corps members serve full-time in the classroom and use research-based tools and techniques to help students who are struggling to stay in school and on track to succeed. City Year New Orleans teams are sponsored locally by CSX Transportation, Entergy, and the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation.

Appointed by President Obama and confirmed by the US Senate, Chairman Christopher Masingill performs a day of service each year on MLK Day. The DRA is a federal-state partnership working to stimulate economic development in eight states along the Mississippi River Delta by creating jobs, building communities, and improving lives.

The Day of Service will take place on Monday, January 20, 2014 with the Opening Ceremony beginning at 9:15 a.m. (Volunteer Registration at 8:30 a.m.), followed by service from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Arthur Ashe Charter School, 1456 Gardena Dr, New Orleans, LA 70122



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REMEMBER THE DREAM

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MLK and JFK 50 Years Later, continued from page 2



Flanked by National Guardsmen above are Freedom Riders Julia Aaron and Matt Suarez.



Educator Sandra Monroe



Two widows greet each other, Jaqueline Kennedy and Coretta Scott King.



(l to r) Dr. King, Loren Miller, A. Phillip Randolph and President Kennedy.

with few rights. So during this time of social upheaval these two men found their lives intertwined in ways that continue into today.

Remembering the 1960's and the Struggle for Freedom, Justice and Equality

"The lives of Kennedy and King were an important part of times we were living in during our struggle for justice, one was the leader of our country who promised better times and the other was the leader of our movement trying to make it a reality," says Julia Aaron Humbles, who was a freedom rider from New Orleans. Today she is still involved in helping people in need. Speaking of the relationship the President had with the African-American community she says,

"We received Kennedy warmly, we felt he had charisma and seemed committed to ensuring the rights of all people we thought he was honest and fair."

As she recounts these times she speaks of what was her first of several encounters with Dr. King that she says helped shape her life and mission to keep working to uplift and help those less fortunate. "I was 18 years old at the time and we wanted Dr. King to take part in the Freedom Rides that would start in Washington D.C. and end in New Orleans. We felt he could bring more attention to our struggle, he said he could not because he was out of jail on bond and I said to him not disrespectfully we are too, and we want you to ride with us. Although King did not ride, he supported us and before we got on the bus he came over to me and gave me a hug and a kiss and

said young lady never give up on your beliefs and this is something I've never forgotten."

Sandra Monroe, who during the early sixties was a young teacher beginning a career that spanned over three decades reminisces about these times speaking of Kennedy she says she and many others liked Kennedy for what he was proposing, but that they trusted and admired King in their fight to get results, "We lifted Dr. King on a pedestal for his courage to make things better for all people, and we also admired some of the people who were involved locally in the civil rights struggle such as Jerome Smith, Julia Aaron and Matt Suarez."

Rev. Samson "Skip" Alexander is a Civil Rights Veteran, Labor Leader and Historian who felt that the times shaped JFK and his place in history. That

MLK and JFK 50 Years Later, continued on next page.

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

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MLK and JFK 50 Years Later, continued from previous page



(l to r) Dr King, Roy Wilkins, Exec. Secretary of the NAACP and President Kennedy.



Civil Rights Veteran, Labor Leader and Historian Rev . Samson "Skip" Alexander.

while he may have been a good hearted and benevolent person he was reluctant in his commitment to Civil Rights. "During those times there was the Freedom Rides going on, James Meredith trying to integrate Ole Miss, we were still trying to integrate the schools in New Orleans and also we were trying to ensure voting rights for all people and Kennedy because he was the President and his brother the Attorney General he was thrown into the fray and was forced into action."

Remembering I have a Dream and Civil Rights as a Moral Issue

The issues involving Civil Rights was more than simply a political issue but a moral one as well, as King and the movement were vigilant in dramatizing man's inhumane acts against his fellow man something that moved Kennedy into action. After seeing these continued acts of brutality and lack of respect for federal law in May of 1963 Kennedy began to frame Civil Rights as a moral issue. In a nationally televised address on June 6, 1963, President John F. Kennedy urged the nation to take action toward guaranteeing equal treatment of every American regardless of race. Soon after, Kennedy proposed that Congress consider Civil Rights Legislation that would address voting rights, public accommodations, school desegregation, non-discrimination in federally assisted programs, and more.

Months later on August 28, 1963 a quarter of a million people gathered in the

Nation's Capital where Dr. King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial giving his "I Have a Dream" speech. Rev. Alexander was there and remembers the day, "I was taking pictures that day and was traveling mostly with the people from New Orleans, it was a great day as we took one step forward in demanding that we would have a hand in shaping our destiny and living with dignity." Sandra Monroe remembers watching the march on television, "I remember watching it and all the great people in our community coming together in a spirit of unity offering ideas, saying that if we worked together we could accomplish great things and change the country for the better and we did move forward as a race."

Killing the Dreamers but not the Dream for a Better America

The 1960's while a time of great progress as people fought against the tides of injustice, tragedy lingered in the background as some who were on the frontlines of the struggle were gunned down in this climate of hate. During this decade the lives of both Kennedy and King were cut short by an assassin's bullet. A little over three months after the March on Washington, JFK would be shot in Dallas and in 1968 MLK's life would be taken in Memphis. But while these men died their legends live on as both have become martyrs forever linked to the changing sea tides in America, where a society forged ahead to become a more human and just

nation with both men becoming global icons in the struggle for peace equality and justice.

"When President Kennedy was assassinated it was like a family member had died," says Julia Aaron Humbles. "We felt for his family and the country had come to love his wife as much as they did him, it was a sad day for America." Also harkening back to those days of darkness Sandra Monroe says, "I was working at Carver Junior High and I had my classroom door decorated with Kennedy's photo, he'd become something special to our community and when this happened everyone was upset that we'd witnessed the killing of our president on television." Continuing speaking on Dr. King's death Monroe says, "We didn't know what was happening, it was times of so much uncertainty, we didn't know if we were safe, it was really scary times because so many great people were losing their lives fighting for justice."

Barack Obama, the American Dream and Continuing Strides Towards Freedom

But as we fast forward into the twenty-first century we see that the country has made great strides in the area of racial relations, but while racism and discrimination are still problems, it is undeniable that things have gotten better. Today we see African-Americans in all spheres of American life. We have seen history being made as this nation has elected its first

African-American President in Barack Obama. Something that many veterans of Civil Rights thought they would never live to see. "It is great to see that Blacks take a giant steps forward, because so many have fought for this opportunity to participate in democracy and be in places we could only dream about when we were marching," says Rev. Alexander.

Julia Aaron Humbles worked on both of Obama Campaigns and says she is proud of Obama, but she is even prouder of the voters who came out and showed that this country has evolved and that in the 2008 and 2012 Presidential Elections judged and voted for a person based on the content of their character and qualifications. And with electing Obama, there is electricity that reminded her of when Kennedy was elected president in 1960. "He has been able to achieve great things even in the face of opposition no other president ever had to face. And he is addressing many of the issues Dr. King was trying to address at the end of his life and they are poverty and inequality and that is an issue that is larger than race. Obama is doing the work I think King would be doing today if he were still alive. I think that both King and Kennedy's work to ensure the rights of all citizens is still a work in progress, we have come far, but we still have a long way to go, but I believe as I did when I got involved in the movement that any and everything is possible."

King's True Legacy



Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
NNPA Columnist

This month will mark the 85th birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Across the nation and throughout the world community, millions of people will pay tribute and celebrate the birth of one of our greatest freedom fighters and most effective leaders. The legacy of Dr. King is more than a federal holiday although we should never forget the protracted but successful struggle that was required to get that holiday recognition signed into law.

The legacy of Dr. King is more than a tall magnificent statue that now stands on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. King's legacy is also more than a faint remembrance

of the past sacrifices and victories of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The living legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. should be a legacy of present-day continuing the good fight for freedom, justice, equality and economic empowerment in America, Africa and everywhere in the world. Yes, today that is a big order and a tremendous challenge.

As a young, statewide youth organizer from 1963 to 1968 for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in my home state of North Carolina, I witnessed first hand the incredible genius and courage of Dr. King. I also remember his militant band of preachers, community organizers and student leaders who had become impatient with the status quo of systematic racial injustice in the United States. Golden Frinks, the N.C. state field secretary of SCLC recruited and introduced me to Dr. King and SCLC. Working with Dr. King changed my life for the better.

Today, my purpose is simply to apply what I believe is the living legacy of Dr. King to some of the most pressing issues that oppressed

people face nationally and internationally. Remember when Dr. King spoke out against the atrocities of the Vietnam War in 1967, there were many in the African American community who could not readily make the connection that saw between the issues of racial and economic oppression in the United States and the issues of war and peace in southeast Asia. One of Dr. King's famous quotes was, "An injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." It was only after Dr. King's tragic assassination in 1968 that many shared his opposition to the Vietnam War.

Martin Luther King Jr. would not have supported the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, there should be much louder voices now concerning the post-colonial devastating wars and violence in the Sudan, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Somalia, and in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo where millions have died. There is just too much public silence about these and other global violent conflicts. Dr. King's commitment to nonviolence was non-negotiable.

Africans and African Americans as well as all people must strive to settle differences and disputes without engaging in self-destructive violence. This in part is what I mean when I use the phrase "living legacy" of Martin Luther King. Gun violence is down somewhat now in Chicago, but it is still too high. Gun violence is rising in Detroit, Washington, D.C. and in Philadelphia. SCLC, NAACP, National Urban League, National Rainbow Coalition, and the National Action Network should take on the National Rifle Association (NRA) and its policies to proliferate gun sales in America.

Support of universal health care and the Affordable Care Act should be viewed as a fundamental aspect of the living legacy of King. We are most affected by the absence of health care delivery to our families and communities. Yet, in too many of our communities there still appears to be a slow response to the Affordable Care Act.

Dr. King new the importance of education at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's).

King's legacy demands more financial support for all HBCUs. We must also meet the challenge of curbing drop-out rates and the failures of the secondary school systems of education with respect to our communities.

Lastly, Martin Luther King's concept of "the Beloved Community" involved economic equality and development as a means of eliminating poverty. We should be encouraging the rise and training of a new young generation of entrepreneurs. If we want more jobs, then we have to have more businesses and employers who emerge from the communities that live in and serve.

Yes, the National Holiday for Dr. King is about remembrance and celebration. But it should also be about living the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. everywhere people are crying out for a better life through freedom, justice and equality and economic empowerment.

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. is president of Education Online Services Corporation and the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network and can be reached at: <http://drbenjaminfchavisjr.wix.com/drbcf>

Freed Slaves in 1865 Were Better-Off Than Most Young Black Men Today

By Phillip Jackson

Many young Black men graduating from college today in the United States are less prepared to succeed in American society than their forefathers who were released from slavery in 1865. When Black men were released from slavery in 1865, they became blacksmiths, bricklayers, carpenters, merchants, teachers, doctors, lawyers, farmers, ranchers, cooks, soldiers and more. They built houses, towns, communities, businesses, families, schools, universities, institutions and futures. Most of these men had less than a third-grade education. Given today's astronomically high unemployment rates for Black men in some cities, even Black men with college degrees might not find suitable employment, ever.

One hundred forty-nine years after slavery has ended, sixty years after the Brown versus Topeka Board of Education Supreme Court ruling and twelve years after the No Child Left Behind legislation, only 10 percent of 8th-grade Black boys in public schools across America read at or above a proficient level according to the 2011 U.S. Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The failure of Black boys in American schools is an unaddressed, undeclared and uncared about national disaster in the United States!

Not being able to read at an 8th-grade level means that young Black males in America have fewer options than their forefathers who were freed slaves. They do not have the option to attend college, or enlist in the military, or even to earn

a living wage! Their lack of school success directly contributes to their super-high unemployment rate, their hyper-incarceration rate in the prison system, the vicious breakdown of the family unit, the social and economic decay of the Black community, and the crippling, senseless violence that has overtaken many Black communities. In fact, as many of these young Black men cycle into the criminal justice system, they find that they have virtually re-entered a slavery system similar to the one their forefathers left—modern prisons.

There is no positive future in America for young Black men who cannot read at an 8th-grade level. They will have trouble working, living and surviving legally in America, and in most of the developed world. Truth be told, they are not

better-off than their forefathers who were released from slavery. Appallingly low percentages of 8th-grade Black males read at or above a functionally proficient level according to data from the U.S. Department of Education:

2011 Reading Levels of 8th-Grade Black Males from 15 Low-Performing American School Districts*

City Reading
Milwaukee 3%
Cleveland 3%
Detroit 5%
Washington (D.C.) 6%
San Diego 7%
Dallas 7%
Baltimore City 7%
Chicago 9%
Jefferson County, (KY) 9%
Atlanta 9%

Los Angeles 9%
Philadelphia 9%
Austin 9%
Houston 9%
Hillsborough County (FL) 9%

There is nothing more important to the future of Black American communities than to ensure that Black boys can read proficiently. The education of Black boys is too important to leave solely to schools and government. For young Black men to continue to exist and to begin to thrive as viable human beings, parents, families and communities must take control of their learning. Black communities are responsible for teaching young Black men to read, to think, to build, to father and to love!

**Jackson, continued
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The Wise Decision

5 Reasons to Motivate You, Even in January

By Sterling Wise
Special to NNPA

Look, I get it. It's cold, you're busy and you don't feel like exercising.

Not today. Not on a Monday in January.

So I'm here to remind you of just how important exercise is and how great it makes you feel. Even on a Monday in January. Especially on a Monday in January!

These 5 Reasons to Motivate You will help you to stick with your exercise routine so that you'll begin the New Year feeling energized and excited.

There isn't a one-size-fits-all answer for motivation, since different things motivate different people, so explore all 5 motivators below...

Motivator #1: Health

Have you looked at the long list of health benefits that exercise delivers? Pretty impressive. Not only does exercise help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight, it also helps lower bad cholesterol, triglycerides, and blood pressure, while improving the amount of good cholesterol in your body.

Additionally, exercise strengthens your bones and muscles, lowers your risk of cancer, decreases stress, helps you battle depression, and even improves your sex life.

Motivator #2: Enjoyment

If exercise hasn't been enjoyable for you, it's time to find a way to make it fun. Everyone likes doing things they enjoy. You might hate running but enjoy swimming or riding a bike. Perhaps you don't like being alone and would rather be social. So join a team! Or maybe you don't like the idea of driving all the way to the gym, changing out, and exercising with a crowd. Find out when your local gym is least populated, and hit the weights then. Do what's most fun for you and you'll be less likely to stop.



Motivator #3: Increased Confidence

If you're out of shape or overweight, it can take a lot of courage to start an exercise routine. Remember to be confident in who you are, no matter what size or shape. Don't compare yourself to the skinny, toned figure strutting her stuff through the gym. Keep your eyes on your goal and don't expect perfection after just a week of exercise. Strive to have your best body—not someone else's.

Motivator #4: Goal Achievement

If you're just getting started in the world of exercise, or if you've simply gotten stale, a good place to start is by setting goals. How much weight would you like to lose? How far would you like to run? Working towards a goal is a great motivator. However, don't set up for failure by striving after unrealistic goals. Do this and you'll soon feel overwhelmed and give up altogether. To avoid this, set realistic milestones. When you reach them, enjoy your accomplishment and then set new

goals to take your good health even further.

Motivator #5: Rewards

Rewards are a great motivator. In fact, much of what you do in life is motivated by a reward of some kind, whether intrinsic or extrinsic. When it comes to exercise, a good reward probably shouldn't be an ice cream sundae, but it may be that new pair of jeans you've been eyeing, or perhaps a night out with friends. Maybe for you, weight loss and lowered blood pressure are reward enough. Just know that your hard work is paying off and deserves to be rewarded.

I would love to help you find the motivation to create a healthier life for yourself and your family. Call or email today and I'll let you know how simple it is to get started.

Together we will figure out exactly what motivates you!

Only The Back Label Counts

Never, ever trust the claims on the front of a food package.

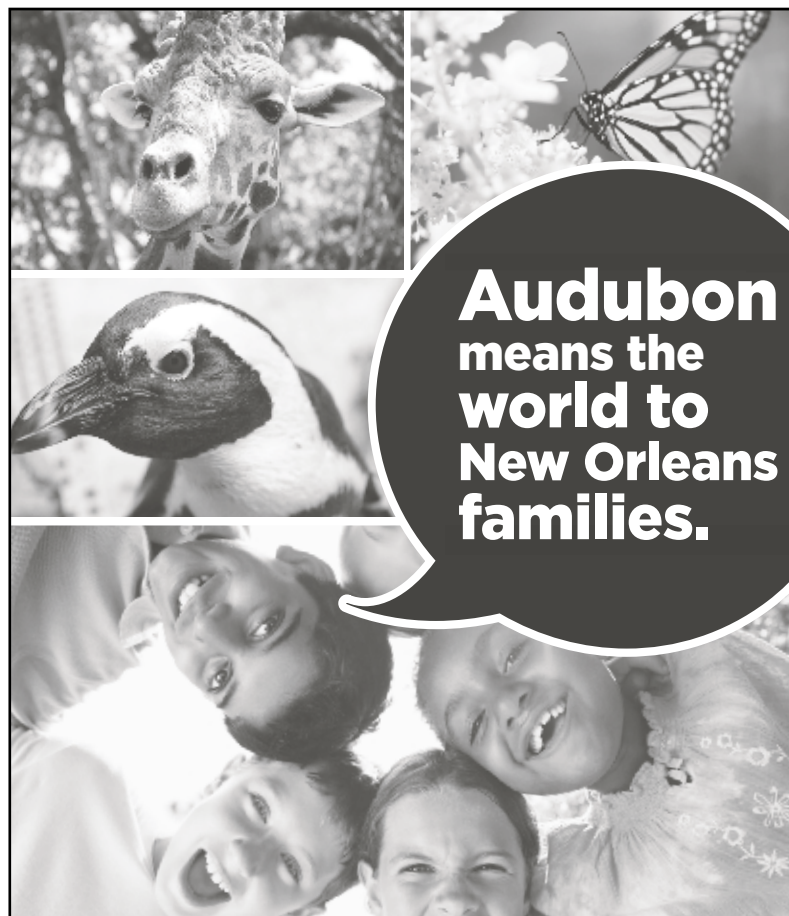
Claims like: heart healthy, whole grains, or fiber-filled are often smoke and mirrors to prevent you from reading the actual ingredient list.

The real truth about a packaged food item is hidden in the ingredient list on the BACK label, not in the bold claims on the front.

Scan that ingredient list for high fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, sugar, hydrogenated or partially-hydrogenated oils – if the food contains these items then put it back and choose something healthier.

Nutritional Analysis: One serving equals: 168 calories, 14 fat, 78mg sodium, 6g carbohydrate, 3g fiber, and 5g protein.

Wouldn't you like all of the healthy rewards of being fit?



Monkey Hill at Audubon Zoo. Bike riding in Audubon Park. Penguins at the Aquarium. Audubon is about making memories — and we're making a huge impact on the community. This year, more than 300,000 kids went on Audubon field trips. Nearly 400,000 students, seniors, low-income citizens and persons with disabilities experienced Audubon attractions for free or at a reduced cost. And more than 150,000 Taylor Scholars and their families received free admission.

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LAHC Extends Payment Deadline



Louisiana Health Cooperative, Inc. (LAHC), a non-profit, member-governed health insurance company for individuals and small employers, is extending the payment deadline until January 31st for new members to pay their first month's premium.

Individuals who signed up for coverage through the Federal Health Insurance Marketplace (HealthCare.gov) by Dec. 24, 2013 were eligible for health coverage as of Jan. 1, 2014. Prior to this an-

nouncement, customers had until today, Jan. 10, but this 22-day extension will allow more customers to receive medical care and have prescriptions filled as an LAHC member. As long as members pay their premium by the last day of January, LAHC will retroactively cover their care.

"We want our members to have full access to their benefits right now," said Greg Cromer, CEO. "Currently, we are the only health insurance company offering cover-

age statewide on the Marketplace to extend this payment deadline for January's premium."

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) selected LAHC on September 28, 2012 to create and operate a Consumer Oriented and Operated Plan, or "CO-OP" statewide. LAHC is Louisiana's first non-profit, member-governed health insurance CO-OP and provides a variety of coverage options throughout the state. "We have worked diligently to develop a comprehensive network of providers that includes more than 12,000 health care providers in Louisiana," said Tommy Teague, Vice-President of Network Development & Provider Relations.

LAHC offers multiple federally-qualified health plans, all of which have been designed to meet standards set forth by the Affordable Care Act. Low- and moderate-income individuals eligible to receive subsidies can enroll before March 31, 2014, in order to receive financial assistance with premiums, deductibles and co-insurance costs. Subsidies are available through the Marketplace where individuals can shop for and purchase health insurance online at HealthCare.gov.

Additional information on Louisiana Health Cooperative, health insurance plans, provider network and subsidies can be found at www.myLAHC.org.

21 Louisiana Young Leaders Admitted to National Fellowship Program

2014 NLC Institute Fellows Announced

The Louisiana Chapter of New Leaders Council (NLC) is excited to announce the 2014 Institute class of outstanding, young leaders.

This year's Fellows are a characteristically diverse class, including successful attorneys, aspiring politicians, entrepreneurs and those in the non-profit sector. The 21 Louisiana Fellows are established leaders in their communities from parishes across the state. Profiles of this year's Fellows can be found at <http://newleaderscouncil.org/2014-nlc-fellows-louisiana/>.

"Since 2010, NLC Louisiana has built a strong base of talented leaders working for social change in their communities," says Racheal Hebert, NLC Louisiana Co-Director. "This year NLC received over 55 applicants for these coveted spots in our training Institute. Through our nationally-renown leadership institute, these Fellows will learn how to focus their strengths, sharpen their leadership skills, and develop their commitment to social and political entrepreneurship."

The New Leaders Council Institute is the premier leadership and professional development, training, mentoring, networking, and career

and political advancement program for young professionals. An intense, five-month progressive entrepreneurship training program, each NLC Institute is highly-selective, admitting only 15 to 22 Fellows to each chapter.

Held once per year, the NLC Institute engages local leaders to conduct sessions to create a uniquely-tailored experience where Fellows learn from guest speakers at the top of their field. NLC now boasts over 1,800 alumni throughout the country, which we engage through a robust alumni engagement program that includes networking events, educational webinars, and an active peer support network for professional development and entrepreneurial life plans.

"Once again, our chapters have set an exceptionally high bar on the quality and talent level of the Fellows they have recruited. We could not be more excited to welcome over 600 Fellows for the 2014 Class, being held in 31 chapters across the nation. I am extremely confident this class of leaders will emerge more prepared than ever to become incredibly influential and to make a positive difference in their respective communities." NLC Chairman Chris Kelly said.

ladatanews.com

Jackson, Continued from page 8.



ELECT DR. DWIGHT MCKENNA CORONER #8

Election Day
February 1, 2014

Dr. Dwight McKenna is a native New Orleanian with an extensive and exemplary record in public service.

A graduate of St. Augustine High School, Dr. McKenna studied at Xavier University, University of New Orleans and the historic Meharry Medical College where he received his medical degree.

Dr. McKenna served his country as a surgeon in the United States Army with the rank of Major. After his Honorable Discharge, he established a practice in New Orleans as a general surgeon and general practitioner for over forty years.

As Coroner, Dr. McKenna will bring competency, honesty, and transparency into the Office. He will work with local, state and federal agencies to secure the proper funding necessary to bring the Coroner's Office into the 21st Century.

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Black communities must open their own reading academies in churches, community centers, libraries and parks to ensure that young Black men will learn to read well before the 8th grade. Black communities must create their own mentoring, tutoring, employment, entrepreneurship, technology, and father development classes for young Black men and boys. We can no longer afford to wait for America's solution to this catastrophe. Constructive help is not coming! The destruction of Black males in the U.S. can no longer be considered an American problem. These horrific statistics are evidence that America does not care—or worse!

* Source: Minority Students and Public Education by Dr. Michael Holzman

Phillip Jackson is the Founder and Executive Director of the Black Star Project in Chicago, Illinois. He can be reached by email at blackstar1000@ameritech.net

The School Nobody Wanted – Except the Community

By Khalil Abdullah
New American Media

The recently announced closure of Sarah T. Reed Senior High School in New Orleans will usher in the first school district in the country with no publicly run schools – and some community advocates see Reed's demise as a sign that the local community's voices don't count.

"People in our community in New Orleans feel like the voices of parents, students, and teachers have been left out. It's a perception, especially during this education reform process after Hurricane Katrina. That is how folks have been feeling for years," says Chris Sang, the communications director of the Vietnamese American Young Leadership Association (VAYLA), a community-based organization that has fought to save the school.

Reed is located in the eastern part of the Big Easy. Its students are drawn from the surrounding neighborhoods, which are predominantly composed of African American, Latino, and Vietnamese families.

The school's closure was announced by the Recovery School District (RSD), an agency established by the state in 2003 to address the problem of failing schools. The state legislature strengthened RSD's authority to expedite school closures in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when many New Orleans schools were physically devastated and student and teacher populations became dispersed.

While the RSD oversees failing schools, other public schools in New Orleans operate under the Orleans Parish School Board and the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. But the majority of the schools that receive public funding in New Orleans – over 60 of less than 90 schools – are under the RSD, which is now exclusively composed of charter schools. Charter schools receive public funding but are run by independent boards and are subject to different regulatory requirements than traditional public schools.

As of 2013, 85 percent of the city's nearly 43,000 public school students are enrolled in a charter school – by far the highest percentage in the country, according to the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools.

Sarah T. Reed and George Washington Carver Senior High School were the last public non-charter



Pictured is Sarah T. Reed Senior High School which will be closed by the RSD, while George Washington Carver will be transferring to become a Charter School. RSD will be the only all-charter school district in the country.

high schools under the RSD. Along with Reed's closure, it was simultaneously announced that George Washington Carver would transfer to charter control. Though some publicly run schools continue operating under the Orleans Parish School Board, the RSD will be the country's first all-charter school district.

Sang says VAYLA will continue to provide academic tutoring and counseling to support former Reed students, as it has for other students who have been reassigned to different schools.

"For students from our community, [it's meant] going to schools where there's this implicit sense that if you can't make it here, someone else will take your place," says Sang. "We see a lot of charters that have written off the local culture here – particularly the culture of African American students – and promoted more of a corporate message. The parents do not want their children to be looked at as just a number or a test score."

In addition to tutoring and ESL classes, VAYLA also offers cultural activities. Sang says that the VAYLA campaign at Reed was first centered on efforts to retain art, band, and leadership classes, among other offerings that had once made the school competitive.

"We were successful in getting a part-time nurse assigned to the school," he adds, in a battle that he thinks should not have needed to be fought, but one illustrative of the way Reed and other public schools

have become marginalized as the city embraces a charter school culture.

"The RSD never gave the same amount of time and attention to Reed that it gave to the charters," he says.

The shift from an effort to restore programs to a fight to save the school itself came in 2011, when VAYLA learned that the school was going to be phased out.

"The reasoning was that it is a failing school," Sang says. Once a school receives a failing score for a consecutive number of years, it can be taken over by the RSD, which is in turn run by the Louisiana Board of Education. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education makes the final assessment of failure.

But Sang contends that the closing became a rigged game. "When the decision was made to end a grade each year, given the subsequent student loss [and the resulting loss of resources], there was no way for Reed to ever recover," he says. The decrease in experienced teachers and staff was but one consequence of the diminished funding.

"For students and parents, it will be a huge hurdle to have to wake up so much earlier to travel to other schools," he says, anticipating that Reed's students will be dispersed as the RSD has not found a charter school operator to take it over. "Some of those schools do not even offer bus service, and taking public transportation early in the morning or late at night is not only time consuming,

but can even be dangerous."

"Sometimes the buses come, but sometimes they come late. Eleanor McMain Magnet Secondary School is in another district and there are a lot of bus stops on the way and a lot of traffic up there," he says. "It would have taken about two hours each way. Reed is in my neighborhood. I used to walk to school in 15 minutes."

Sang says he's seen the downward spiral of a school before. He got his start in the education field through AmeriCorps in 2007, serving as an after-school coordinator and teaching assistant at a school in Chicago. While he was there he saw the student population begin to dwindle.

"The community was gentrifying," Sang says. "The residents moving into the community weren't interested in sending their kids to the local public school. They were looking at other options."

The number of teachers began tapering off, though the predominantly African American and Latino parents – many of whom attended the school's ESL classes – remained enthusiastic. But as the number of students declined, says Sang, there were fewer available resources as well.

"It was a democratically-run school. The involvement of the community was tangible. You could see it," Sang says. The level of energy on the part of parents and activists in Chicago parallels what he has experienced in New Orleans in the losing battle to keep Sarah T. Reed open. Though gentrification was not the driver in Reed's closing, Sang attributes the schools' decline in both cities to similar root causes.

"Sarah T. Reed has never received the resources that it needed to be successful in serving its students," he says.

Sang is not dismissive of the efforts of local charter schools to be inclusive, but he points out that some of the education reform advocates who come to New Orleans will have a significant impact on the education system before moving on.

"Long-time community residents who dare to question or challenge are sometimes viewed as obstacles," Sang says. "We at VAYLA want to make sure that the people who are here are part of the process, that they're at the table and that they get a chance to weigh in on what their future is."

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