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**NBA All Star Jam**

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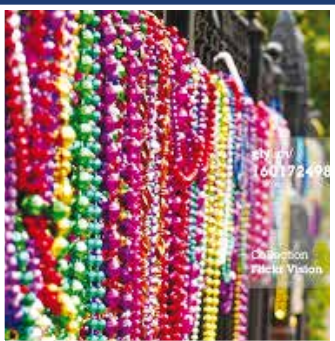
February 22 - February 28, 2014 48th Year Volume 43 [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com)

A Data News Weekly Exclusive

# Blacks Still Victims of Stand Your Ground

Florida and the  
Nation Reels Behind  
Injustice in Jordan Davis  
Murder Trial

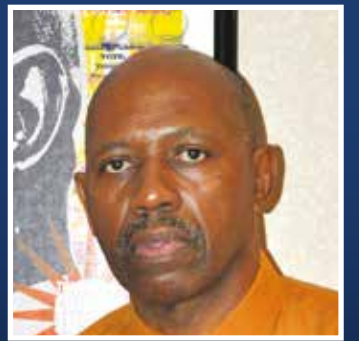
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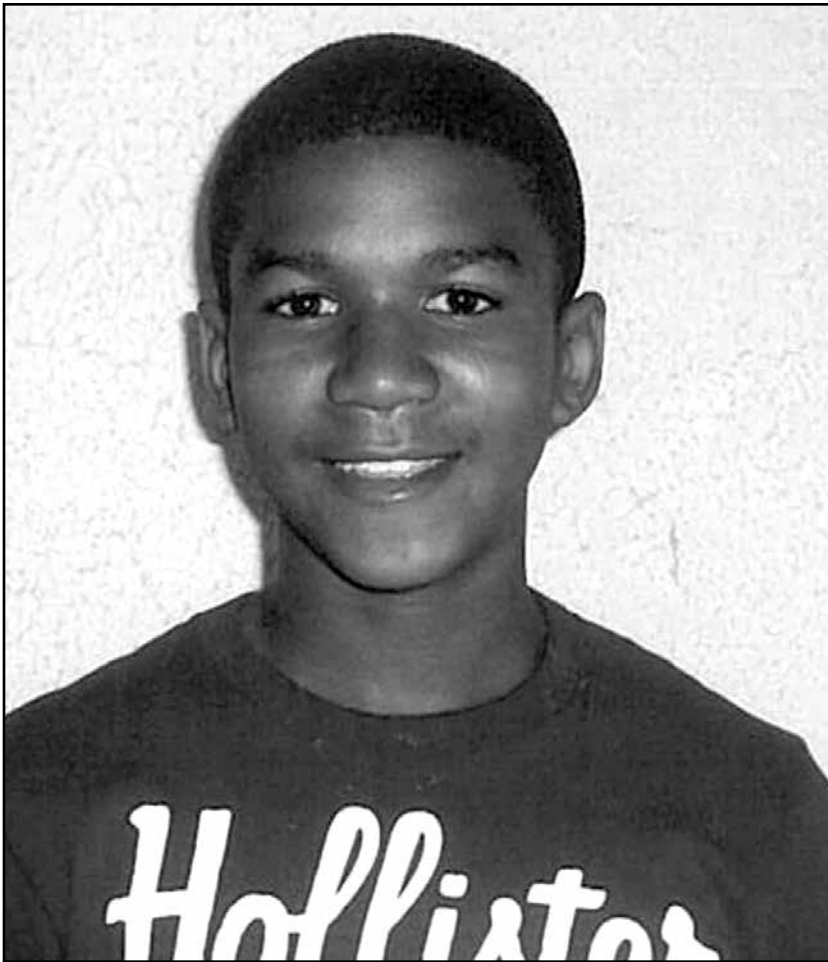
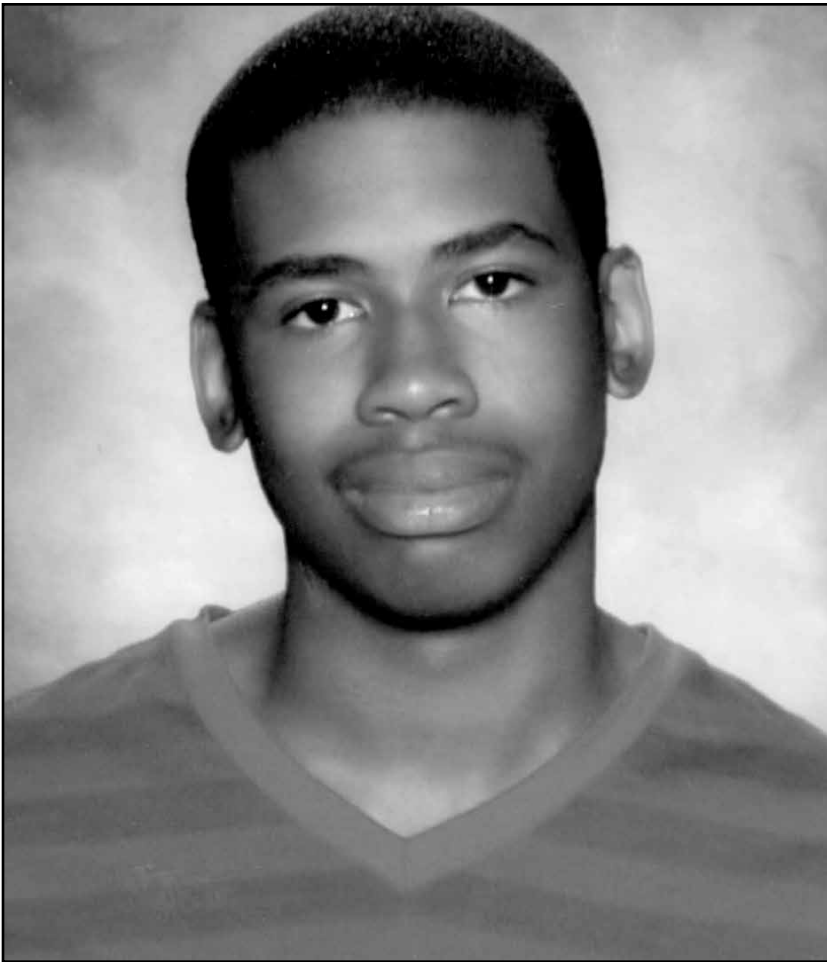


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# 2 Years after Trayvon’s Death

*Blacks Still Victimized by ‘Stand Your Ground’*



Jordan Davis and Trayvon Martin

By Freddie Allen

(NNPA) – Two years ago, 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was returning from a trip from a nearby 7-Eleven store in Sanford, Fla. to purchase a bag of Skittles and a can of Arizona tea when he was confronted by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watchman.

Instead of making it back to the house to watch the tip-off of an NBA All-Star game, the unarmed Black teenager was fatally shot in the heart by Zimmerman, who was later acquitted of first-degree murder charges. The not guilty verdict triggered protests across the country and calls for a review of Florida’s controversial

Stand Your Ground law that justifies the use of deadly force by anyone who believes their action was necessary to prevent “imminent death or great bodily harm” to them. The killer gets a free pass even if the person on the receiving end of a deadly bullet is unarmed. Even if that person is not breaking any laws. Even if that person happens to be a frightened Black teenager.

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Pictured above are the parents of teen shooting victim Jordan Davis, Lucia McBath and Ron Davis. Ron Davis expressed his hope that by attaining justice for his son, he also is doing such for Trayvon. He revealed that he is "in constant contact" with Trayvon's mother and father and that he wants them to know that he is seeking justice both for Jordan and for Trayvon.



Michael Dunn, was convicted of 4 of 5 counts against him, which included the attempted murder of the friends of Jordan Davis who were in the vehicle with Davis. The 5th count of first degree was not able to be reached by the jury, which effectively means Dunn got away with murder.

Especially if that person is a frightened Black teenager.

Wednesday, Feb. 26, will mark the 2-year anniversary of Trayvon Martin's death. Two years after the fatal slaying, Florida and more than 20 other states still have Stand Your Ground statues in place, which have led to other incidents with racial overtones.

Standing on Florida's Stand Your Ground law, Zimmerman, who identified himself as Hispanic, was acquitted July 13, 2013 of first-degree murder.

Last Saturday, six months later, a jury failed to reach a first degree murder verdict against Michael Dunn, a White computer programmer, in connection with the death of Jordan Davis, a Black teenager, at a Jacksonville, Fla. convenience store. Upset over the loud music coming from of a vehicle occupied by 17-year-old Davis and his friends – whom Dunn instantly characterized as "gangsters" and "thugs" – an enraged Dunn fired 10 shots into their Dodge Durango SUV. He continued to shoot into the vehicle even after it sped away, according to witnesses.

A jury composed of four White

males, four White females, two Black females, a Hispanic male and an Asian female found Dunn guilty on three attempted second-degree murder charges, which could land him in jail for at least 60 years. However, a verdict could not be reached on first-degree murder charges, the most serious offense.

Al Sharpton called for the civil rights community to redouble its efforts in Florida, a state he described as "ground zero" for the battle against Stand Your Ground laws. Sharpton stated, "From Trayvon Martin to Jordan Davis enough is enough."

But the Stand Your Ground law in Florida is not enough when the assailant is Black.

For example, in 2010, a year before Trayvon Martin was killed by Zimmerman, Michael Giles, who was on active duty with the U.S. Air Force, and some friends were attending a party at a local nightclub in Tallahassee when a fight broke out between Florida A&M University fraternities.

Giles, who was licensed to carry a concealed weapon, went to his vehicle and retrieved a pistol and stuck it in his pants pocket. Giles

testified – and other witnesses confirmed – that he was punched in the face. Lying on the floor and fearing for his life, Giles drew his gun and shot his alleged assailant one time in the leg; two others were injured by stray bullet fragments. For that, Giles, who had no criminal record, received a 25-year sentence for attempted murder, which he is still serving.

And it's hard to forget the case of Marissa Alexander, the Florida

woman who was sentenced to a mandatory 20 years in prison after she fired a warning shot to hold off her abusive husband. No one was injured yet Alexander received a mandatory 20-year-sentence under Florida's 10-20-Life law. After serving three years, she was released shortly before Thanksgiving after an appeals judge vacated the verdict, ruling the jury had been improperly instructed. Her new trial has been set for March 31.

In 2005, Florida was the first state to adopt Stand Your Ground legislation, nicknamed "The Shoot First" law. It states, "A person who is not engaged in an unlawful activity and who is attacked in any other place where he or she has a right to be has no duty to retreat and has the right to stand his or her ground and meet force with force, including deadly force if he or she reasonably

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on page 5.



From left: Leanna Archer, Beverly Johnson, Roland Parrish, Gladys Knight, Dr. Steve Perry, Kenny Williams, and Charles Orgbon III.

## We applaud the few that inspire the many.

For this year's 365Black® Award recipients, each day is exceptional. They stand for greatness and bow with selflessness. Through their dedication and service, they inspire a world of change. We're proud to honor them all for staying Deeply Rooted in the Community®, 365 days a year. To learn more about this year's honorees, go to 365Black.com.





# Norris Henderson

## *Leading the Fight Towards Justice for All*

by: Edwin Buggage

Norris Henderson is a name that is synonymous with the fight for justice. After serving 27 years for a crime he did not commit he has become a soldier on the frontline fighting against injustice and empowering those formerly incarcerated. Speaking of how he's come to the work of serving others he says, "After serving 27 years for a crime I didn't commit and seeing first-hand the flaws in the Criminal Justice System and additionally there were not enough services available upon them being released. So when I got out it's been my goal to advocate for removing some of the barriers for people getting out of prison that inhibit them in trying to find jobs, access to healthcare and housing."

He is the Co-Director of Safe Streets/Strong Communities and Founder and Executive Director of V.O.T.E. (Voice of the Ex-Offender). After being unjustly incarcerated for nearly three decades some would assume he would be angry. Conversely, he is a compassionate caring man who says he made lemonade out of lemons, he is an eternal optimist when speaking of what has become his life's work. "I would describe my life as one where a bad experience netted great results; I turned a negative into a positive. I feel if I wouldn't

have gone through what I did I couldn't do the work of helping others and reform a system that in some regard is still unfair to people of color."

While he touts the success of some of the programs he's initiated, Henderson feels there are still challenges, "The upside of what we do is that we have been able to find people employment after being released, but in the area of housing it has been a challenge, and we are working on that." Continuing he says of the importance of a holistic approach to providing service for ex-offenders, "When people are transitioning and not able to be in a structured, stable environment they may go back to a life of crime to survive, so it is essential that we give them the support they need to recover and become productive citizens."

One of his most recent efforts paid off working in conjunction with organizations across the country on the "Ban the Box Project," where they sought to eliminate the box asking about convictions in initial applications for Civil Service jobs. Speaking of the success he says, "It is my hope that this will help some of those who have paid their debt to society from being further penalized by not being able to access opportunities."



Photo: Jamie Jones

As the City continues to deal with issues of how to reduce blight, Henderson feels he can be part of the solution using ex-offenders as a skilled labor pool; something he feels is an undervalued resource. "We have proposed to the city council to donate some of the blighted housing that the City owns and let us put it back into commerce. Little known to some is that many of the guys coming out of prison acquired skills while incarcerated including carpentry, plumbing, electricians, etc. These were some of the guys who were maintaining the prisons, they have the skills but nowhere to use them, and so we are in the works of starting a construction company to help them utilize these

skills to help create transitional and permanent housing for people in the community. We have gotten great responses to this idea from councilpersons, Hedge-Morell, James Gray and Latoya Cantrell and we remain optimistic about the future."

While it is a sad reality that many people do not get out and vote. Henderson through his V.O.T.E. Project is working to re-

form a system that does not extend voting privileges to those on parole or probation. Saying that many who were formerly incarcerated would like to exercise that right, "I know a lot of people who were formerly incarcerated who are very civically engaged, I feel let people vote who want to vote. I have voted ever since I have been released and many of the people I know who have been incarcerated do the same, so we are working to change the law surrounding giving the vote to people on probation and parole."

With the present mayor speaking of all the construction and building projects going on Henderson feels that with the high unemployment rate among African-American males in New Orleans there should be more opportunities for them to secure these jobs. "With all the construction going on I feel there should be more African-American men working. A lot of guys com-

ing out of jail have some of the skills needed and some of the jobs don't require a lot of training, so why isn't more African-Americans on these jobs? As I stated before many already have the skills to do these jobs because they are the ones that maintained the prisons with their labor and these skills are transferable and can benefit employers. This can be a win win situation for our community, no one is asking for a handout all they are asking for is a chance."

Norris Henderson has received many awards and speaks at universities across the country including Harvard. Henderson is humbled by the recognition and accolades, but he continues toiling daily in the fight against injustice. Reflecting on his life's journey he says, "I have been able to help a lot of people get justice and work to reform the Criminal Justice System and will continue until the Criminal Justice System is fair and just for all people."

**JMJ**  
Joseph M. Jones  
Continuing Education Fund



## Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

believes it is necessary to do so to prevent death or great bodily harm to himself or herself or another or to prevent the commission of a forcible felony.”

Blacks see a double-standard applied when Blacks who fire into the air or shoot an assailant in the leg receive serious prison time yet Whites and Hispanics who kill Black teenagers are not found guilty of first-degree murder.

Moreover, according to the Urban Institute, an independent nonpartisan think tank focused on economic and social problems affecting Americans, “White-on-Black homicides were most likely to be ruled justified (11.4 percent), and Black-on-White homicides were least likely to be ruled justified (1.2 percent).”

When the Urban Institute looked at justifiable homicides matching many of the common details found in the Martin-Zimmerman case, the institute found that rate of justifiable homicides is almost six times higher in case with attributes that match the Martin case.”

The Urban Institute report on Stand Your Ground laws stated: “With respect to race, controlling for all other case attributes, the odds a white-on-black homicide is found justified is 281 percent greater than the odds a white-on-white homicide is found justified.”

What should be done to hold Florida accountable the same way Arizona was punished with a national boycott in 1990 after it refused to recognize Dr. Martin Luther King’s birthday?

Following the not guilty verdict in the Zimmerman trial, Sharpton’s National Action Network and other civil rights groups called for peaceful protests in 100 cities.

Sharpton said, “We gave people a way to express themselves and not just explode. One of the things, going back to Dr. King, media never gives credit to people when there is organized protests it in many ways channels to make sure that justice can be achieved but also gives or-

der in society so that you don’t have mass bedlam.”

Longtime activist Ron Daniels, president of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century, said there should have been a national boycott of Florida similar to the one mounted against Arizona.

After Arizona voters blocked observance of Dr. King’s birthday with a ballot initiative, local businesses reported losing more than \$200 million as a result of the boycott. The National Football League refused to consider holding a Super Bowl in the state because of the vote. In 1992, voters reversed their decision and in 1996, Arizona hosted Super Bowl XXX.

At a panel discussion last summer at the National Urban League’s annual convention in Philadelphia, Jesse Jackson expressed support for a boycott of Florida, but failed to follow-up with a national movement. Sharpton said he could support a support of a boycott of Florida if it were limited. And Urban League President Marc H. Morial did not express an opinion. The National Urban League is holding its national convention next year in South Florida.

“We lack a spirit of resistance in Black America,” said Daniels. “Here was an opportunity for us to not only get justice for Trayvon Martin, but it was also an opportu-

nity to imbue a spirit of resistance in Black America that we could use to go state by state and roll back these laws.”

Sharpton said when he and other civil rights leaders raised the possibility of a boycott with Florida state legislators they found that a boycott would not help them get the votes that they need to repeal the law.

“The governor’s race in Florida ought to be around the ‘Stand Your Ground’ laws in the same way we made the mayor’s race in New York about ‘Stop and Frisk,’” said Sharpton. “That’s how you get laws. You have to be able to pinpoint and punish somebody or reward somebody based off of what you want.”

All sides agree that the only way to get a different verdict in high-profile cases is to have more Blacks participate as jurors, which requires them to be registered voters.

“For the justice system to work, people have to respect each other diversity and cultures. We also got to make sure that we educate our community and let them know that jury selection is an equal justice issue,” said Benjamin Crump, the attorney for Trayvon Martin’s parents. “If we don’t sit on these juries, then shame on us, because no one is going to understand Trayvon like someone from his community.”

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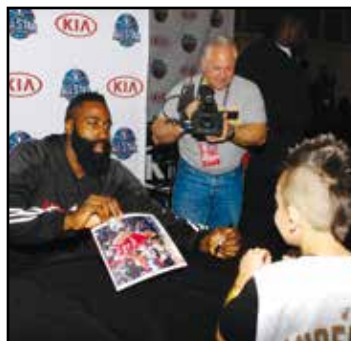


# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

## NBA All Star Jam Session

Photos by Glenn Summers

NBA All Star Weekend invaded New Orleans last week with all of the hype and hoopla included. Besides the All Star Game, events took place benefiting the community like the NBA All Star Jam Session and Fit Youth Celebration At The Ernest N. Morial Convention Center pictured below, and of course, Data was there for all the action.



NBA All Star Jam Session, Continued on page 11.

Visit [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com) for more photos from these events

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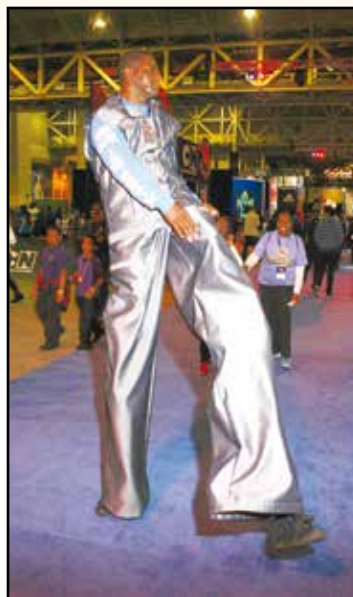
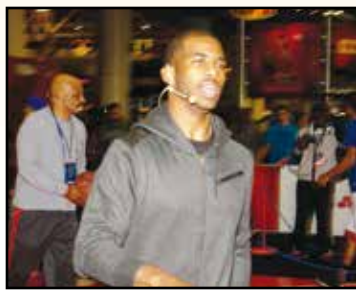
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# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

NBA All Star Jam Session, Continued from page 6



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# Black History Month

## *Needed Now More Than Ever*



**Marc Morial**  
President and CEO  
National Urban League

"There is no more powerful force than a people steeped in their history. And there is no higher cause than honoring our struggle and ancestors by remembering."

— Lonnie Bunch, founding director, National Museum of African American History and Culture

Ever since the 2009 election of Barack Obama as America's first Black president and the 100th anniversary of the National Urban League in 2010, the perennial de-

bate about the need for Black History Month has intensified. Some have questioned the need for a special month to recognize the many unknown and unsung achievements of African Americans. With Obama as president, the logic goes, we have now achieved Dr. King's dream of a non-racial America where everyone is judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin. I wish it were so.

Last year, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and the passage of the Voting Rights Act. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the repeal of the poll tax. But unfortunately, the suppression of voting rights and other instances of racial discrimination remain. All one needs to do is look at the glaring disparities between Blacks and Whites in income, employment, incarceration rates, edu-

cational achievement and health status to see that race still matters in America. Income inequality and equal opportunity are still part of the unfinished business of American democracy.

In 1926, after centuries of Blacks being excluded, not only from the mainstream of American life, but also from the textbooks in our schools, African American historian Carter G. Woodson did a service to all Americans when he created Negro History Week, which was expanded to Black History Month in 1976. Woodson's vision was one of unity and inclusion. He said, "What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race, hate and religious prejudice." That is a goal that America is still struggling to achieve.

In fact, legislatures in a number of states, including New York, Illi-

nois, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, have passed laws mandating or encouraging teachers to broaden their history courses to include more ethnic, racial and gender diversity. That is why we still recognize March as Women's History Month, May as Jewish American History Month, September 15 to October 15 as Hispanic Heritage Month and February as Black History Month. These celebrations serve a dual purpose: first to build self-esteem among historically oppressed people, and second to remind all Americans that in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, our diversity is our greatest strength.

Black history is American history. While the story and achievements of African Americans are especially celebrated this month, the contributions we have made and the struggles we still face deserve recognition every day of the year.

Next year, for the first time, Black History will enter the mainstream when the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture opens on the National Mall in Washington. The Museum describes itself as "a place of meaning, of memory, of reflection, of laughter, and of hope. It should be a beacon that reminds us of what we were; what challenges we still face; and point us towards what we can become."

As we honor those who have made history, we must also recognize that we are history in the making. Through our work, commitment to equality and civic engagement, we can and we must, in the words of President Obama, continue to "right the wrongs of history and make our world anew."

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

# Another Florida Man Gets Away with Murder



**George C. Curry**  
NNPA

As we approach the second anniversary of Trayvon Martin's murder on Sanford, Fla., justice again has been shortchanged in the Sunshine State. It was incredible that George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watchman and wannabe cop, was found not guilty of murder after killing the unarmed Black teenager who had visited a nearby convenience store to purchase a bag of Skittles and a can of Arizona Tea.

Last Saturday, a hung jury could not decide whether Michael Dunn, a 47-year-old White computer programmer, was guilty of murdering Jordan Davis by fatally shooting him in the

chest groin. According to court testimony, Dunn pulled into the parking lot of a Jacksonville convenience store and became involved in an argument after he accused 17-year-old Jordan Davis and three of his teenage friends of playing their music too loudly.

Apparently, an argument erupted. Dunn's lawyer claims that Davis used vulgarity-laden language to tell his client what to do to himself. Witnesses said Dunn shouted at Davis: "You can't talk to me that way!"

Taken by themselves, the words have no special meaning. However, when uttered by a White man to a Black teen in a region that prided itself as this nation's last bastion of White supremacy, they take on a separate life of their own. Remember, it wasn't all that long ago when Blacks were expected to stare at the ground when speaking to White folks. They were expected to say "Yes, sir" and "Yes, Ma'm," knowing that their parents, regardless of their age, would always be addressed by their first

names, even by White children. Refusing to show what was considered proper respect to Whites often had violent repercussions, even death.

I can almost hear the words: You can't talk to me that way!

And to prove his point, Dunn opened fire on the Black teenagers, striking Jordan Davis twice. Even as the teens peeled rubber trying to get away, Dunn, 6'4" and 280 pounds, continued to shoot into the vehicle, firing 10 times in all.

He would later say that he thought he saw the barrel of a shotgun protruding from a window of the Dodge Durango SUV. But no such weapon was ever found and for good reason — it did not exist. Even Dunn's girlfriend said he never told her about the teens having a shotgun.

And what did Dunn do after he killed the Black teenager? He returned to the hotel room where he was staying after attending his only son's wedding. He acted as if he had just finished a routine day at the office. He didn't bother

to notify police. Dunn acted as if nothing had happened.

But something did happen. Jordan Davis had his life cut short that day. The high school senior would never get the chance to make his parents proud by donning a cap and gown and walking across a stage to receive his high school diploma. He would not get a chance to attend college or pursue a career. He wouldn't even get a chance to breathe again because he wasn't supposed to talk to a White man that way.

According to Rolling Stone, Dunn told detectives, "They didn't follow my orders. What was I supposed to do if they wouldn't listen?"

For starters, he wasn't supposed to take the kid's life. But he did. His lawyer plans to argue that Dunn was Standing his Ground.

His lawyer, Corey Strolla, told Rolling Stone last year, "I don't have to prove the threat, just that Mike Dunn believed it."

Evidently, Strolla sold the jury on that belief. They couldn't agree

that his client murdered Jordan Davis, who was shot twice. But in their contorted reasoning, they found him guilty of three counts of attempted second degree murder. In other words, he was not guilty of murdering Davis, but was guilty of attempting to murder Davis' three friends, neither of whom were struck by a bullet.

Florida State Attorney Angela Corey said she will retry Dunn on first-degree murder charges. But this is the same State Attorney who unsuccessfully prosecuted George Zimmerman for first-degree murder. If she puts on a case as poorly as she did against Zimmerman, Dunn won't have anything additional to worry about.

Still, he'll probably die in prison. And if some of the true thugs catch up with him in the slammer, he might like how they are going to talk to him.

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



# Spiritually Speaking...



**James Washington**  
Guest Columnist

Our corporate chaplain is responsible for this one. It's all about praying in the morning. I remember him telling me that this was something he was trying to develop the habit of doing, and upon further review I've decided to try it too. As a concept, it's actually pretty easy to do. In the morning I am not usually in need of anything but I am understanding now that calling upon the Lord is an act of spiritual clarification. From evening prayer to dawn's affirma-

tion of God's power, I probably take this time as much for granted as anyone. After some Morning Prayer practice, it's becoming apparent that I need to thank God for seeing me through the night. At this point I ask Him to order my steps, guide my thoughts and allow me to do something during the course of the day to give indication of a deep appreciation for letting me wake up.

If you allow yourself to concentrate on what God has done for you on any given day, then it becomes obvious that He is indeed here and working wonders on your behalf. If you do not believe, try this. At the end of today, take a moment and reflect on those things that you can think of that prove God was walking with you all day. Now start with this morning because you really didn't have to wake up. If you hadn't noticed, some people didn't. If you

drove, flew, took a cab somewhere and arrived safely, you might want to give God a little credit for being accident free. You might have even passed one on your way. Can you remember seeing anyone in need of food, clothing, a few dollars, maybe a bath? But it wasn't you? All "natural disasters" missed your house. No floods? No tornadoes? No hurricanes? No earthquakes? While I'm at it, how's your family? Are your kids healthy? Are they simply alive and still breathing today? Someone you know under intense pressure, emotionally, financially, physically? Can you begin to see where I'm coming from? God's Hand is everywhere in your life today, if you just stop being busy and take a good look. I promise you if you just slow down a bit, you'll see God's presence time and again in your life and not always the person's next to you.

Once you begin to realize that

God is present all the time, then, prayer easily and rapidly becomes praise. I mean once you recognize the real possibility that God held "my" hand today, then it stands to reason to me that a genuine thank you is in order. So now out of any sleep I'm awakening from comes a hand palms open with a praise that goes something like this; 'Thank you Father God for seeing me through the night. Stay with me and remind me during the course of this day of your infinite blessings bestowed upon me. Let me do something. Let me say something today to make you proud and show you my appreciation of your giving me the time and opportunity to demonstrate who I am and who I am to the world.' The words might change from time to time, but the intent is the same. I hope to no longer take my consciousness for granted. There's a reason

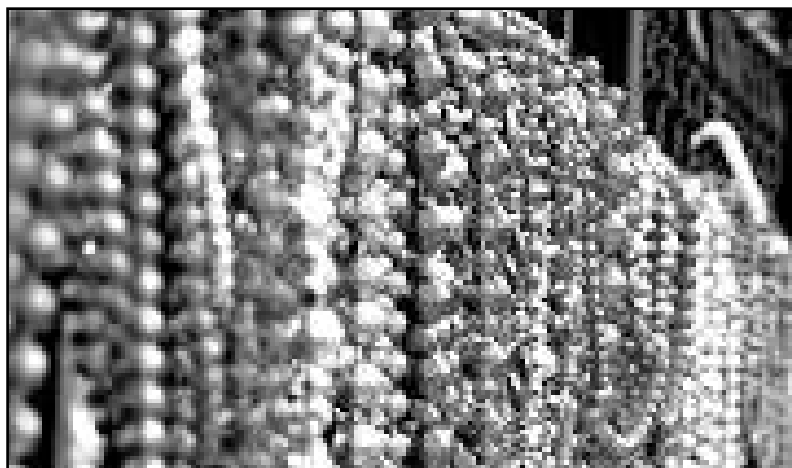
my eyes were opened and I must acknowledge I had nothing to do with it. As such, I think it prudent to acknowledge the One responsible and look for His purpose after that. The next step for me then is to try and maintain a consistent spiritual posture. I know it's not easy. The world will test you. But since God was gracious enough to give me the day, the least I can do is act like I know who the day belongs to. From goodnight in the evening to hello in the morning gives all of us a real opportunity to understand the simple gift of life. That time between sleep and wake up is worth praising God for. Kind of gives new meaning to that "joy comes in the morning" thing. May God bless and keep you always.

James A. Washington is Publisher of the Dallas Weekly and President & General Manager of The Atlanta Voice Newspaper.

## New Orleans Native Tree

By MG Calla Victoria

There are trees in New Orleans that bloom once each year. Sometimes it happens between January and February, or between February and March. This year the big event will take place between February and March. Now these trees are of no particular genus (plant family) oh no they can be oak trees, palm trees, crepe myrtles, pine, or almost any other tree that you can think of. The major proliferations of these mysterious trees are along the parade routes like down St. Charles Avenue, up Canal Street, along Carrollton Avenue, Orleans Avenue, Napoleon Avenue, and Magazine Street. But some are finding their way into other areas of the City. These trees, commonly named the Mardi Gras bead trees botanical Name (Le Bon Temp Rouler) start to show color as the parade season gets underway. And continue to reveal more treasures and the season persists.



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# Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Joins with Omada Health to Offer Cutting-edge Diabetes Prevention Program

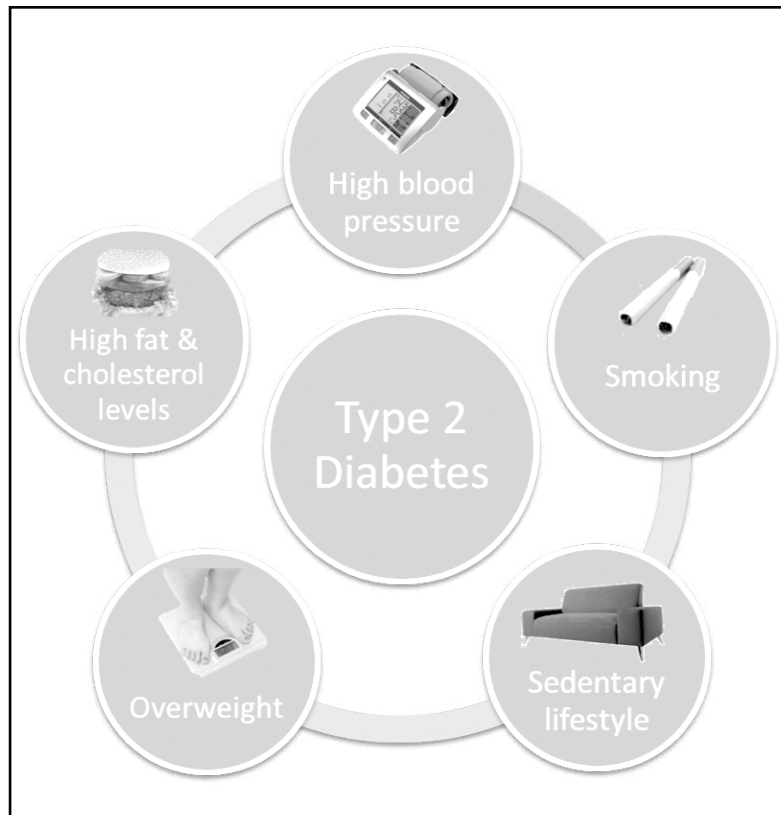
**Blue Cross employees will benefit from "Prevent" through online, interactive tools to raise awareness of risk and provide support**

Many of us know a family member, friend or other loved one who is living with diabetes. There are 27 million Americans who have diabetes, and Louisiana has the second-highest diabetes mortality rate in the nation. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana is taking a leading role in addressing this condition, becoming the first health insurance company and employer in Louisiana to implement an online diabetes prevention pro-

gram, called Prevent, in partnership with Omada Health.

While the seriousness and potential effects of diabetes are widely reported, many people are unaware of an even more common problem: prediabetes.

Prediabetes, as the name implies, is considered the early warning stage for diabetes. People with prediabetes have higher-than-normal blood sugar levels, which can cause kidney, nerve or eye damage. And 70 percent of people who have prediabetes will eventually develop Type 2 diabetes. But, most people who have prediabetes—90 percent—do not even know they have it. This is unfortunate, as one in three Americans, or 87 million, are living with prediabetes, and they could reduce or eliminate their risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by



on this initiative," said Sean Duffy, CEO of Omada Health. "Prevent was designed to be as enjoyable, convenient and effective as possible. Every participant gets access to a health coach, a wireless scale and a host of innovative, interactive online tools to help them make the right changes in the right way. And, of course, everything you need comes to you, either directly to your doorstep or to your fingertips."

Blue Cross is offering Prevent to employees and their adult dependents who are covered through an employee's health plan, and the insurer will cover the full cost of the program and participation for eligible members. Blue Cross is starting with its own employee group, but plans to expand the Prevent program as a benefit to other employer groups later this year.

Using its claims and health screening data, Blue Cross will be able to identify employees who have or are at risk for prediabetes. For example, a doctor might have diagnosed someone with prediabetes, or the person could have indicators such as elevated blood sugar in routine health screenings, or a woman could have had gestational diabetes. Prevent, in partnership with Blue Cross, will then contact eligible employees or dependents to let them know about the program and how they can participate.

In the 16-week Prevent program, members will have access to a health coach, who will provide

making moderate lifestyle changes like exercising, eating a healthier diet and losing weight. Research shows people who participate in diabetes prevention programs can reduce their risk for Type 2 diabetes by 58 to 71 percent.

The Prevent program is designed to engage participants, helping them become aware of prediabetes and the associated risk for diabetes so they can begin taking steps to improve their health.

"Diabetes is a serious condition that is unfortunately very common in Louisiana. We saw a great opportunity to partner with Omada Health

to use an innovative approach to first help our employees find out if they have prediabetes, then work with them to make changes so they can become healthier," said David Carmouche, M.D., Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana executive vice president of external operations and chief medical officer. "By empowering our employees and providing the tools and encouragement they need to adopt good health habits, we believe the Prevent program can help them lower or eliminate their risk of developing diabetes."

"We're thrilled to be partnering

**Blue Cross/  
Continued on page 11.**

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## NORDC Black History Month — Free!

**New Orleans Recreation Development Commission is hosting two free Black History Month cultural and arts programs on Saturday February 22 at the Joe W. Brown Recreation Center, 5601 Read Blvd.**

The programs will open with The Post-Modernist Black Arts Movement: Reinventing a Cultural Economy

Performances and presentations from Anthony Bean, Tommye Myrick, Carol Bebel, Chad Kristian, Truth Universal, Mariama Curry, Casa Samba, N'Kafu Drum and Dance, NORDC/NOBA Center for Dance Senior Dance Program and a visual art

exhibition. This event takes place from 1-3pm.

Following, will be the Rent Party Cafe. This performance is an excerpt from Tennessee Williams' "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" by Anthony Bean, Tommye Myrick and the cast. The event takes place in the Lyricist Lounge (open mic)

Jam Session anchored by Africa Brass with Troi Bechet and other local musicians from 4-5pm.



# Holder Favors Voting Rights for Ex-Felons

By Freddie Allen  
NNPA Washington  
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – If America is ever to end the revolving door of prison recidivism, it needs to ease the re-entry of former offenders back into society by allowing them to vote, Attorney General Eric Holder believes.

Holder announced his position during a recent conference on criminal justice reform at Georgetown University Law Center at Washington, D.C. He called on state officials, state leaders and other elected officials to reform or repeal laws that block ex-felons from voting, more than two million of them Black.

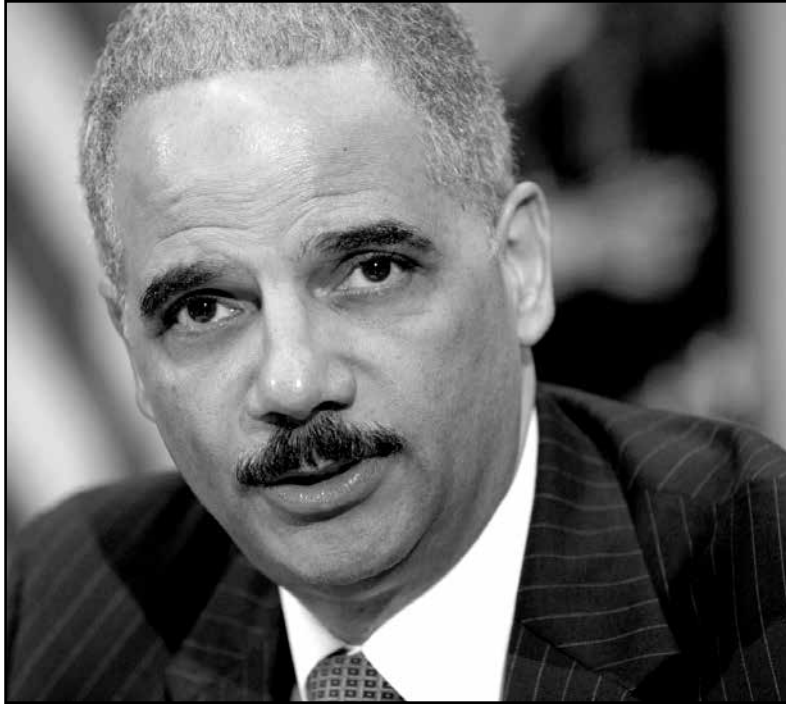
Holder said that some of the laws dating back to the Reconstruction Era were specifically crafted to target Blacks and weaken their voting power, especially in Southern states where most Blacks live.

According to The Sentencing Project, 1 of every 13 African Americans can't cast a ballot, due to felony disenfranchisement. In Florida, Kentucky and Virginia more than 20 percent of the Blacks are barred from voting.

Last summer Holder announced the Justice Department's "Smart on Crime" initiative that includes provisions to reform sentencing guidelines, eliminate unfair disparities and reduce overcrowding in prisons by seeking alternatives to prison time for low-level non-violent crimes.

Holder said that felony disenfranchisement laws often undermine the reentry process and defy the principles – of accountability and rehabilitation – that guide our criminal justice policies.

"And however well-intentioned current advocates of felony disenfranchisement may be – the reality is that these measures are, at best, profoundly outdated," said Holder. "At worst, these laws, with their disparate impact on minority communities, echo policies enacted during



US Attorney General, Eric Holder

a deeply troubled period in America's past – a time of post-Civil War repression. And they have their roots in centuries-old conceptions of justice that were too often based on exclusion, animus, and fear."

Civil rights leaders and criminal justice advocates applauded Holder's call to lift the ban on voting rights for ex-felons.

"The attorney general's strong leadership in calling for the repeal of felony disenfranchisement laws across the country is an extraordinary signal to states and the American people," said Barbara Arnwine, president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under the Law. "This is the latest in a series of instances in the past year in which the administration has taken great leadership on criminal justice issues. From the statements of Attorney General Holder to the American Bar Association in August, to the implementation of their policies, it shows that they have heard the cries for reforms within the nation's over-racialized criminal justice system."

Tanya Clay House, the public policy director at Arnwine's organization, said that passing the Democracy Restoration Act, a bill co-sponsored by Senator Russell Feingold (D-Wis.) and Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) in 2009, would restore the voting rights in federal elections to those disenfranchised because of criminal convictions.

"The Lawyers' Committee advocates for legislative efforts that restore equality to both the criminal justice system and voting rights," said House. "Congress can answer the attorney general's call to action, and lead the nation by example, by reintroducing the Democracy Restoration Act. This bill would restore the voting rights in federal elections to those disenfranchised because of criminal convictions."

During the same conference, Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) repeated his support for repealing felony voting restrictions in his state. Alabama Republican Gov. Robert Bentley also expressed support for restoring voting rights for felons who completed their sentences. In 2003, state officials in Alabama passed

legislation streamlining the process to restore voting rights for most ex-felons. Nearly 15 percent of Blacks are disenfranchised in the state.

Wade Henderson, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights said, there is undeniable bipartisan momentum for criminal justice reform that would update inhumane sentencing laws and return people to society with dignity.

"America is the world's greatest democracy, yet felon disenfranchisement laws deny almost six million Americans the right to vote," said Henderson. "These laws serve no purpose but to make it harder for returning citizens to reintegrate into their communities – to work, seek an education, and participate in our democracy. Successful reintegration and smarter sentencing are the keys to ensuring that our criminal justice system is more fair, more humane, and more fiscally responsible."

In prepared remarks, Holder also addressed states that continue to "restrict voting rights, to varying degrees, even after a person has served his or her prison sentence and is no longer on probation or parole."

In Florida, the state with the highest population of disenfranchised residents, almost 1 in 4 Blacks is disenfranchised and in Mississippi almost 14 percent of the Black population can't vote because of a prior felony conviction. Iowa's Republican governor reversed an automatic restoration order in 2011, placing an additional hurdle in the way of returning citizens. Two years later, Holder said less than 12 people out of 8,000 that have completed their sentences during the current governor's tenure can vote in the next election.

"That's moving backwards – not forward. It is unwise, it is unjust, and it is not in keeping with our democratic values," said Holder. "These laws deserve to be not only reconsidered, but repealed."

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Blue Cross/ Continued from page 10.

them with personal support and guidance. They also have a variety of online tools, which will help them track their progress, learn about how they can make positive behavior changes and stay motivated. And, members will have social

support through online interaction, similar to a chat room, with other Prevent participants, where they can exchange tips and encourage each other.

Participants will track their progress and goals throughout the pro-

gram, and Blue Cross will compile this data to determine how effective Prevent was in helping the participants lower their diabetes risk.

The first group of participants will begin the Prevent program in late February.

For more information about health and wellness programs available through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, visit [www.bcbsla.com/wellness](http://www.bcbsla.com/wellness).



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