

Lighting The Road To Freedom

New Orleans

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News Weekly

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Page 10

July 15, 2006

40th Year

Volume 36

www.ladatanews.com

The Soul of New Orleans



What's in it for Us?
N.O.'s Black Middle Class

Page 2



Newsmaker | Cosby Keynotes at Dillard

Page 8



Trailblazer | Dr. Aaron Harold

Page 4

COVER STORY

New Orleans' Black Middle Class: What's in It for Us?

By: Eddie Francis

The opinions about where New Orleans' black middle class fits into the city's future vary. There are those who firmly believe that forces are at work to keep as many black New Orleanians out as possible, no matter what class they are. There are those who believe the same but are returning to New Orleans to rebuild with a fiery resolve. Others simply do not see what the big deal is and they just want to rebuild and continue with business as usual.

While the rest of the American mainstream media reports on the future of low-income residents of the Ninth Ward and public housing, those black folks who often get left out of the conversation are the black middle class. Little is said about the educated professional black citizens and business owners who were a big part of the economic engine that made New Orleans go. The black middle class seasoned the landscape in the areas of New Orleans East, Gentilly and the historic Pontchartrain Park with others in areas such as Broadmoor, Tremé, Algiers and other parts of the Westbank into Jefferson Parish.

Are all bets off for the black middle class to successfully take its place back in New Orleans? Creig Brown, 38, is a consultant and an Uptown resident who owns several properties throughout the



City Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis, left, prays with New Orleans East residents who have come home for the first time since Hurricane Katrina.

metropolitan area. He has not given much thought to the theory that black folks are not welcomed back into their home city. "The land is valuable either way," he says.

Brown is one of those residents who feels that it is important for black middle class New Orleanians to put their best foot forward, rebuild and get back to business as usual. "We have to take a macro approach to rebuilding," he comments, "I understand people's skepticism because they want to see what their neighbors are going to do." Brown maintains that it is up to citizens to look at the long-term opportunities

through property re-investment and communication among each other.

Others are not so patient. Harold Foley, 36, and his family have relocated to Atlanta and plan to stay there. Foley whose Broadmoor home was partially destroyed made the decision to take advantage of better opportunities in the Atlanta area with his wife and business partner and their two children.

"It would have to take a lot (to move back)," he says. "Even before the storm, we were considering the prospect of moving, especially since 90% of our development projects are outside of N.O. The hurricane and the lack of

planning that has followed pushed us over the edge." The way Foley sees it the overall infrastructure would have to be revamped, including the school system, the city administration, diversification of the economy and overall better living conditions. What also takes away the incentive for him to return with his family is the fact that his immediate family is displaced in other areas of the country.

New Orleans East has historically been the biggest symbol of black citizens' upward mobility. At one time it had amenities which included good schools and the biggest shopping mall in the South. It became a hot spot for those black New Orleanians who wanted the feel of suburban life without the cold stares and treatment that has traditionally come from white American suburbanites. What made the East even more attractive, were the affordable housing opportunities for black families.

An April 20th op-ed column in The New York Times reveals this to the rest of America. Susan Howell, a political science professor at the University of New Orleans, and John Vinturella, a business consultant, stated the importance of recognizing what the black middle class lost in the flood waters caused by Hurricane

Continued next page.

INSIDE

**Cover
Story**
page 2

Newsmaker
page 4

State & Local News
page 6

National News
page 5

Data Zone
page 8

Trailblazer
page 7

Opinion
page 10

Commentary
page 11

Health News
page 12

DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Please call (404) 223-5958 for subscription information.
Dated material two weeks in advance. Not responsible for publishing
or return of unsolicited manuscripts or photos.

COVER STORY



"Broadmoor Lives", states the sign at a recent Broadmoor neighborhood Association rally. Residents of Broadmoor and surrounding neighborhoods, are determined to hold on to and rebuild their homes and businesses.

Katrina. Both, who are white, wrote, "The two of us can feel comfortable resettling anywhere in the metropolitan area. But for black families, the decision is not so simple. Many would rather not deal with racism in the white suburbs, some of which are also unaffordable for these displaced families."

Their installment continues, "These are people who overcame the odds, played by the rules, broke out of the infamous 'cycle of poverty,' bought homes, built families and enjoyed a taste of what Americans define as success." Howell and Vinturella conclude, "Unlike many other black brothers and sisters, they had a piece of the American pie."

Reuben Detiege, 47, was one of those New Orleans East residents. Now living on the Westbank, he wants to return to his home in the East. His concerns go beyond the racial and housing components, however. Detiege, like others, is interested in the future of the "MR. GO," the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. "If they close it then I'm committing myself to moving back to the East. If not, I'm not so sure."

At the same time, he recognizes the opportunities that lie before black citizens across the metropolitan area regardless of their class. A systems engineer and member of the local chapter of the National Black MBA Association, Detiege sees the rebuilding process providing major opportunities for the black middle class to reinvent itself. He sees opportunities, in particular, for business owners and even more for those who want to start

their own businesses.

"There's never enough competition," he says with a chuckle. He encourages black folks to take advantage of business opportunities to re-invigorate their quality of life. "If you want to catering, where do you go? If you need a seamstress, where do you go?" he asks. Continuing the list with businesses like landscaping, sno-ball stands and more, Detiege feels strongly that there is no need to give up, no matter where people live.

Creig Brown recognizes that the black middle class will have to swallow its collective pride in the process as well as maintain a resolve. Brown insists that black citizens will have to be especially fiscally responsible in order to recover. The black middle class, in particular, has enjoyed the trappings of the mainstream middle and upper classes in having the finer things in life. When asked if this comes down to a case of people separating personal feelings and business decisions, Brown says, "It's not personal versus business. It's prestige versus business. If you can't afford the payment on that Lexus or BMW anymore, then it's time to give it up for something that you can afford." That, he says, will probably play one of the biggest roles in a black middle class comeback.

NOTE: Howell and Vinturella's article can be viewed at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/20/opinion/20howell.html?ex=1303185600&en=b9c0925c4516afa0&ei=5089&partner=rssyahoo&emc=rss>.

Data News Weekly

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Issue

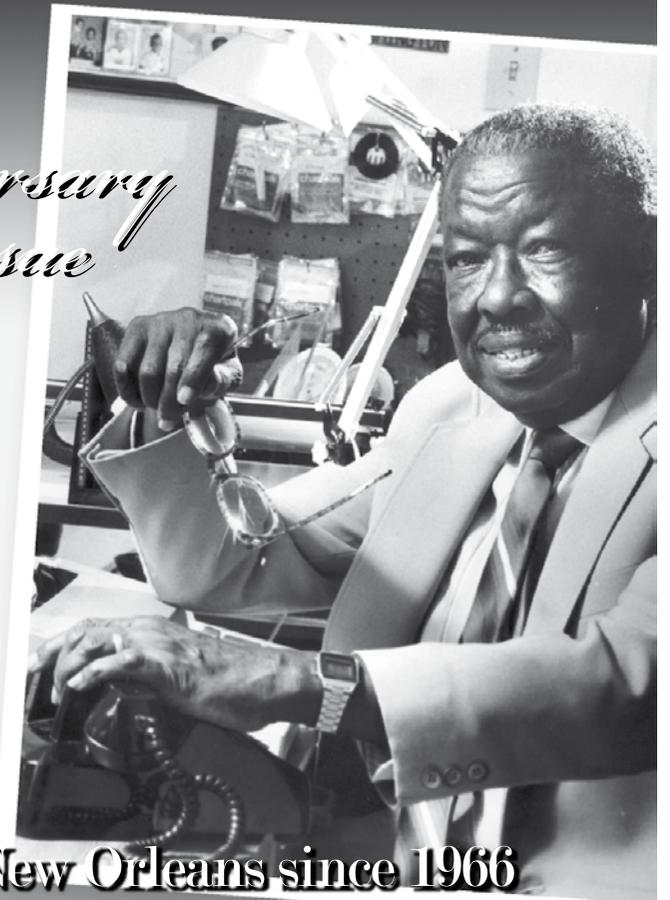
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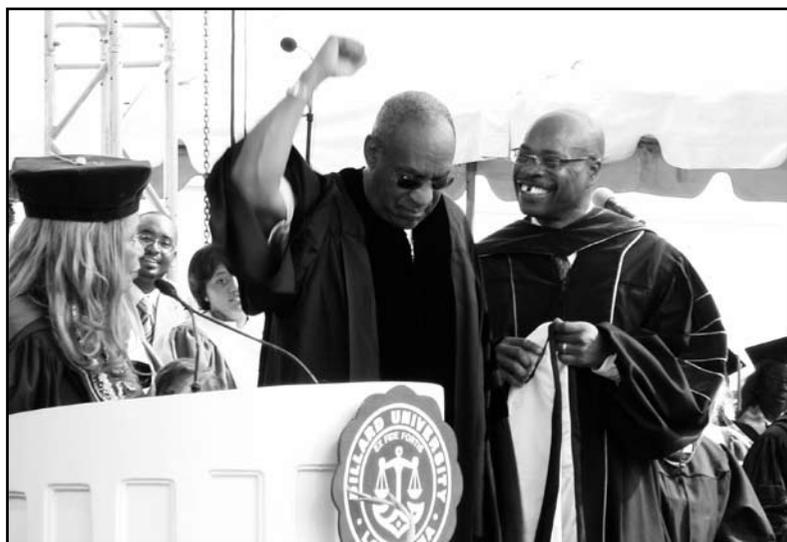


NEWSMAKER

Dillard University's Triumph

Achieving Above Troubled Waters

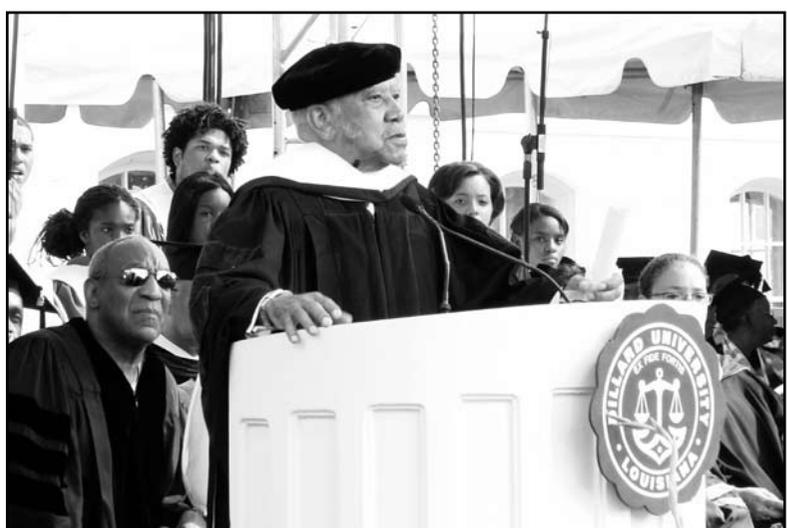
Story and Photos by: Glenn Summers



Commencement Speaker Bill Cosby concludes his keynote address with a salute to the audience.



2006 Dillard Valedictorian Nekeithia S. Wade



Awarded his Doctorate of Humane Letters, Judge Revius O. Ortique Jr. addresses the audience at ceremonies.

It was a blessed sunny and humid day for the graduates of Dillard University on Saturday July 1, 2006 as the proud 355 graduating students graciously awaited to receive their hard earned degrees at the Rosa Freeman Keller Avenue of the Oaks. A

sense of joy and relief filled the faces of the hundreds of students, staff, and proud family members who have endured so much in their lives in the recent past, and is a true testament of the power of perseverance in overcoming adversity. It was an emotional

and majestic commencement ceremony since it is the first since the waters of Hurricane Katrina savagely ravaged and damaged its stately ante-bellum style campus, but with this ceremony taking place the university as well as the students and their families gathered together in the spirit of triumph.

The ceremony honored two luminary figures in the areas of Civil Rights, the University issued Doctor of Humane Letters honorary degrees to Dillard Class of 1947 the Honorable Justice Revius O. Ortique Jr., and Former Chairwoman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Dr. Mary Frances Berry. Entertainment icon and educational advocate Dr. Bill Cosby delivered an inspirational and provocative commencement address to the Dillard graduates after being introduced by valedictorian Nekeithia S. Wade.

Dillard University has moved forward continuing its mission to educate although it was in the heart of one the breached levees located along side the London Street Canal that caused a significant amount of flooding that engulfed the entire campus leaving it under four to eight feet of flood water destroying the first levels of all the dormitories, the Dillard University International Center for Economic Freedom building and the theater housed in the Samuel DuBois Cook Fine Arts and Communications Center.

Dr. Cosby gave an insightful and comedic speech to the graduates about the responsibility and obligations they have for their university also to their communities, stating the importance of supporting their institution by illustrating that Dillard University is "God's garden" and that it's their responsibility that they take care of God's garden. While the effects of Hurricane Katrina has produced unprecedented challenges; it has also launched a new spirit for Dillard University in continuing its mission of educating promising students as it has for 137 years and they plans to forge ahead in its commitment to produce quality and excellent individuals.

Talk Back!

We Asked, You Answered!

New Orleans, we asked the question Do you feel the August 29 deadline to declare your intentions to return to New Orleans is enough time? You answered, and here are your responses:

"I think two year should be sufficient. One year is approaching us and we still have a shortage of affordable housing and it will take more time to get the city up and running to pre-Katrina status."

M. Roberts in Texas

"No, I don't believe the deadline of 1 year to be enough time. Many are still devastated and confused and given that many are still confused as to if and how they can rebuild, it seems unreasonable."

Mary in Atlanta

"It does not appear that the 3 levels of government have done enough to restore the levees to a level that will protect the city by the August 29, deadline. Because of this uncertainty, I am not sure that I can make a firm decision to return to the city of my birth, childhood, my life. I truly do want to return to New Orleans, but I am fearful of needing to flee the City, for even a Level 1 Hurricane. I still maintain that my home address is in Ponchartrain Park Subdivision and that I am living temporarily in Houston, Texas for 10 months. Bring levees up to and beyond Level 3 Hurricane and you will bring me home soon."

Brenda Bocage in Houston, Texas

Talk Back! It's your chance!

NATIONAL NEWS

Battle over Voting Rights now Shifts to Senate

By Hazel Trice Edney
NNPA Washington
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Civil rights leaders are pleased that the Voting Rights Act renewal bill has finally passed the House, but have vowed to place pressure on the

of Section 5. However, Cornyn's staff members said he has not yet decided whether to propose an amendment. Republican Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama is among those who claim the law unfairly targets the South and is said to also be considering whether to author an amendment.



NAACP President and CEO Bruce Gordon

Senate just in case unexpected opposition mounts.

"We're going to celebrate the House, but we're going to pressure the Senate. There's no question about that," NAACP President and Chief Executive Officer Bruce Gordon, told reporters at the organization's annual conference in Washington before leading a delegation to the Hill on Wednesday to lobby senators. "We have not crossed the finish line...The Senate has work to do. We're not going to just sit in the rooms, but we're going to be in the streets. We're going to be on the Hill."

It is probably wise that the NAACP doesn't rest on its victory in the House. The measure was held hostage by a group of Southern lawmakers who objected the extending key sections of the Voting Rights Act. In a compromise with House leadership, they were allowed to offer and vote on four amendments that would have weakened the legislation.

Hilary Shelton, executive director of the NAACP Washington Bureau, says he has received reports that senators may offer similar amendments. Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, has reportedly expressed concerns about the pre-clearance clause

of Section 5. However, Cornyn's staff members said he has not yet decided whether to propose an amendment. Republican Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama is among those who claim the law unfairly targets the South and is said to also be considering whether to author an amendment.

time, no amendments had been submitted.

Bush has pledged to sign the bill into law.

Shelton says he is comfortable that the bill will pass with no amendments. "I believe good judgment will win over narrow-minded problematic agendas," Shelton says.

Meanwhile, Gordon and NAACP delegates lobbied the Hill this week to make sure the battle that happened in the House does reoccur. The House passage came after some of the most intense lobbying seen by civil rights leaders since the act was last renewed 25 years ago.

"Today we have measured celebration, and not a victory," says Jesse Jackson Sr., who witnessed the passage from the House Gallery. For him the arguments had sounded like echoes of those made by segregationists during a time when he and others fought for the right to vote. "I watched from the House Gallery 41 years later as current Confederates made eerily similar arguments for jurisdictions covered by Section 5. We must not celebrate too early."

Ultimately, the vote of 390-33 last Thursday proved it to be a new day as some ultra conservative Republicans, who consistently make Fs on the NAACP Legislative Report Cards, fought for the measure along with members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

House Judiciary Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, normally on the opposite side of the CBC, consistently echoed remarks of the civil rights leaders as he led the bill to passage.

"By extending the VRA for an additional 25 years, H.R. 9 ensures that the gains made by minorities are not jeopardized. I am proud to stand here with my colleagues as I did in 1982, to ensure that voting rights remain protected for an additional 25 years. Congress again made our nation proud today by passing this historic and vital legislation," Sensenbrenner said in a statement.

CBC Chairman Mel Watt (D-N.C.) applauded the House action, but turned immediately to the Senate.

"Passage of the bill with such a resounding margin is especially gratifying because it now creates momentum for passage in the

Grandmothers Recruit Youth away from Military Recruiters

By Tiffany Jackson
Special to the NNPA from the Dallas Weekly

DALLAS (NNPA) – Women gray-haired, some in wheel chairs and some with canes but all moving to the same beat. These women are not your typical grannies. They march to a drum beat of women with a plan. Ranging from ages 60 to 90 and they travel all over the world, speaking out against the right to war. They are the Grandmothers Against the War.

"We are universal grandmothers who are concerned about all children including the Iraqi children who are being killed and we are standing up for what is most important because we are a humane group," said Pat Wiley of Grandmothers Against the War. "We started in January 14, 2004 with only two people but now we have 40 members and over 100 supporters who come out during our marches."

These "grannies" are on the move, with recent trips to Philadelphia and Baltimore. Next up they will be in Washington D.C. holding vigils. In fact, while they were in Philadelphia, a few were arrested in Times Square because 10 of them tried to enlist at the U.S. Army Recruiter Center. Even 92-year-old, Lillian Willoughby was arrested in a wheel chair. These powerful women do not let the threat of arrests or detainment hinder them from marching and protesting against war.

"We are that voice because there are not many voices out speaking and we feel for the future," said Jenny Heinz of Code Pink, another peace organization. "We plan to take risks and put our principles to action so that we can bring our troops home and stop the war."

Since World War I, organizations for peace have rallied and gathered together to construct peace coalitions. From Women In Black, Grandmothers Against the War, Code Pink, Camp Casey Dallas among many others, these organizations have held vigils, protests and tried to enlist. Their goal has always been to prevent youth from falling into the trap of joining the Army.

"So many youth are being lied to by army recruiters," said Lon Burnam director of the Dallas



Grandmothers Against the War Vigil in Front of Rockefeller Center

Peace Center. "We have to let them know that they do not have to join the army because the recruiters will tell them that they will be able to do whatever they want and get a better education and when they get there it is something totally different."

A memorable vigil for Dallas soldiers who lost their life was held recently for five hours at the main recruitment area at the Federal Building. This month a group of peace organizations plan to have demonstrations from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. to talk about the war. Burnam says that "we have a president who has started a war and he has said that another president is going to have to end the war."

According to the Iraq Casualty Counter 2,549 have died and out of that total, 2,042 of them were in combat since the war began. More than 18,490 have been officially wounded and about 2,000,048,100 have been estimated as wounded.

More recruiters have been sent out to high schools and they attend every important event where they know a number of people will be present. Many of them are looking for more brown and black faces.

According to the Associated Press, the number of Blacks in the Army's recruiting classes has dropped 41 percent over the past five years, from 23.9 percent in 2000 to 14 percent last year. The number of women has dropped 13 percent.

It seems like more African-Americans are choosing another path without the assistance of the U.S. Army. At this year's Essence Festival, the U.S. Army was one of the major sponsors and a number of Black recruiters were on hand, but many African-Americans passed the booth.

The Grandmothers Against the War hope that more youth. So as they continue to march and protest, they will continue to take to the streets with their voices of power, love and concern.

STATE & LOCAL NEWS

3 Arrested in New Orleans Hospital

New Orleans - A doctor and two nurses were arrested Monday in connection with the deaths of patients at a Memorial Medical Center in the days following Hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana attorney general's office said Tuesday. "We're not calling this euthanasia. We're not calling this mercy killings. This is second-degree murder," said Kris Wartelle, a spokeswoman for

Attorney General Charles C. Foti. The three were booked on four counts each after their arrests late Monday.

An affidavit said a doctor arrested in the post-Hurricane Katrina deaths of patients at Memorial Medical Center told a nurse executive that "lethal doses" would be administered to those who could not be evacuated. The affidavit said Dr. Anna Pou

said that morphine and Ativan would be used to kill patients.

The sworn statement was made by an agent for the Louisiana Justice Department in an affidavit for an arrest warrant. Pou and two nurses were booked overnight with being principals to second-degree murder in the hospital deaths. Pou's attorney said she is innocent. Soon after the hurricane, Attorney General

Foti subpoenaed more than 70 people, launching an investigation into rumors that medical personnel at Memorial had euthanized patients who were in pain as they waited in miserable conditions for rescue.

Memorial Medical Center had been cut off by flooding after the Aug. 29 hurricane swamped New Orleans. Power was out in the 317-bed hospital and the temperatures inside rose over 100 degrees as the staff

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Star Photos OF THE WEEK

Diet Pepsi Grabs Some Downtime Before the Big Night!

ONE POP STAR AT THE TOP OF THE GAME

Diet Pepsi stole some downtime on the exclusive island of St. Barts days before the ultimate megastar moment. Hollywood insiders say the velvet rope honor for the biggest pop star on the planet was long overdue. Rumor has it, the post-honor bash has PR people working overtime for every A-list celeb in Tinseltown!

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Angela McManus, 48, holds a photo of her mother Wilda Faye Sims-McManus. Her mother was 16 in the photo; she is holding a trophy for a singing contest. Wilda Faye was an acclaimed gospel singer.

tried to tend to patients who waited four days to be evacuated.

After the bodies were recovered, Orleans Parish coroner Frank Minyard said they were so decomposed the deaths could only be listed as "Katrina-related." He later said samples had been taken from dozens of patients who died at various hospitals and nursing homes to test for potentially lethal doses of drugs such as morphine.

Angela McManus' 70-year-old mother



A nurse from New Orleans' Memorial Medical Center fans a patient waiting in the hospital's parking garage to be evacuated via helicopter, Sept. 1, 2005.

was among the patients who died at Memorial. She had been recovering from a blood infection, but she seemed fine and was still able to speak when police demanded McManus and other relatives of the ill evacuate. She died later that day, McManus said. "At least now I'll be able to get some answers," McManus said. "For months, I haven't known what happened to my mom. I need some answers just to be able to function."

Foti said more arrests are possible.

News Orleans Data News Weekly

TRAIL BLAZERS



July 2006 Trailblazer
By: Pearla Mutombo

Dr. Aaron Harold

“The place where we know God is Love”

To measure the essence of a person's greatness is in their good deeds, and Dr. Aaron Harold, a pastor at the New Millennium Breakthrough Ministry and one of today's most influential ministers in the city of New Orleans definitely fits this description. His hard work and dedication, and a long history of giving of himself unselfishly in the community have earned him the esteemed title of being Data News Weekly July Trailblazer.

We dedicate this month's to Dr. Harold because of his influence and impact in the community. For the past 22 years his ministry has come to provide aid and comfort for both adults and youths. As a native of New Orleans Dr. Harold has been a participant in the lives of many and has helped many with his words of inspiration. His roots are planted deep in the soil of the word of God and his grace, as he is one of several generations of his family to heed the calling into shepherding the divinity of God's words which are much needed in these trying times as people are trying to recover from the catastrophic damage that's recently befallen New Orleans. Dr. Aaron advises that during this turmoil it is important to look towards God and

family. “God wants us to enjoy family... Family to me is very important. Focus first on God, family, and then ministry and that's how I balance my life.”

Being from a family of ministers, Dr. Harold has worked hard to influence his sons to follow along his foot-steps. One of his sons Rashad Harold, a graduate of Xavier University is presently serving as his co-pastor. And his second, Charles Dickerson, a graduate of Dillard University is following in their tradition of service as the coordinator of a program for public school youth in Houston Texas. In addition to raising two successful sons Dr. Harold has been mentoring and inspiring young people to strive for excellence, “I've been doing mentoring for about 20yrs. I love the young people and trying to teach them about life and achieving their goals.”

A dedicated family man who has been married for thirty-two years, Dr. Harold and his wife both share the same sentiments of helping the youth in public school system through their ministry. And they are also bonded by a tradition of religious leaders in their families with strong ties in the community. When's he's not tending to affairs of the church he is still on a quest to help young people, Dr. Harold enjoys spending time playing basketball with young men while mentoring them and teaching them the value of life and how they can make a difference in the community. And in these times fragile times post-Katrina that has altered and in some cases shattered some people's

lives forever Dr. Harold was determined to come back from the storm to preach the word of God to give them the strength to carry on. As many residents of New Orleans try to put the pieces of their lives back together he suggests that the finer things in life are free, and in these times we must persevere, “We must come together and enjoy the simple things in life, to me this is what makes life and trying to achieve the best that life has to offer no matter how hard the circumstances get”, said Dr. Harold.

He is an inspiration and over the years has given countless young people the power to dream, “My advice to young people as a mentor, you should always put God first. If you believe your dreams, follow your dreams.” He also adds, “Be consistent and persistent in what you believe in. It's going to take hard work and hard work pays off.”

Dr. Harold has been and continues to make a difference; his dedication can be seen through his work and his words. Furthermore, his action continues to shape the New Orleans youth in bettering themselves. Dr. Harold is man of greatness in his quest to spread God's love from his New millennium Breakthrough church on 802 Third Street and throughout the city of New Orleans, and that's why he is New Orleans Data News Weekly Trailblazer for July 2006.

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DATA ZONE

Wayans are Big Men in 'Little Man'

By **Kam Williams**
Special to the NNPA from the
St. Louis American

ST. LOUIS (NNPA) – Marlon, Shawn and Keenen Ivory Wayans hail from a family with 10 kids, seven who are in showbiz. Writer/director/actor Keenen, 48, is probably best known as the creator of In Fox-TV's In Living Color, the comedy series which launched the careers of Jim Carrey, J-Lo and Jamie Foxx, to name a few. The comedy team of Marlon, 33, and Shawn, 35, will always be associated with Scary Movie and their WB hit sitcom, The Wayans Bros.

But then there's brother Damon

(My Wife and Kids), sister Kim (In the House), brother Dwayne (a composer), sister Nadia (I'm Gonna Git You Sucka). The multi-talented clan also features cousin Craig (a scriptwriter), nephews Damon, Jr. (My Wife and Kids), Michael (My Wife and Kids) and Damien (Little Man), and niece Cara (My Wife and Kids).

Here, Keenen, Marlon and Shawn talk about their new picture Little Man, and share what it was like collaborating again for the first time since White Chicks.

Q: Was it challenging playing such a short person?

Marlon: It was kind of hard, first of all, because I'm 6'2", not



Shawn and Marlon starring in the new Sony pictures comedy "Little Man". The movie is directed by brother Keenen Wayans.

2'6". Then, on top of that, I had to play a baby, too. That was asking a lot. All that, and I couldn't use my body, just my head. And when I'm acting, and supposed to be driving in a car, I'm really sitting on a box. I'm not in a car. And when I'm running, it's not really me running. It's somebody else running. I may as well have had my head chopped off and just had that come to the set so my body could be home sleeping.

Q: What was it like having to perform against a blank green screen?

Marlon: It was just me and, like, some green background. I felt like I was working with Shrek's skin all over the damn place. I had nobody to talk to, so I just thank God for developing my imagination when I was young, since none of my brothers would play with me because I was so damn annoying.

Q: How was it different directing your brothers this time around?

Keenen: The two of them are together in the movie when you see the film, but when we shot the movie, they never shot a scene together. Marlon had the most difficult job because he was isolated on the green screen. He had to physically match everything that Linden [body double Linden Porco] did with his head. He came up with a very clever way of using a swivel chair that enabled him to keep his head still and move his body in a fluid way.

Q: What did you think of Marlon's performance?

Keenen: He really did a brilliant job. Marlon, Damon and

Jim Carrey are the three people that I think could play a character like this, a human cartoon that you still connect to. You don't lose him in the cartoon. You still relate to him as a human being. Those are the only three guys I know who have that kind of talent.

Q: How about Shawn's?

Keenen: I think that Shawn actually had the most fun, because he got to work with Kerry [Washington], Spoon [John Witherspoon], Molly [Shannon] and David Alan Grier. So, he got to work with all the funny people, plus he got to work with Linden. Linden made it easy, because he's such a lovable kid. He made it easy for Shawn to want this little kid, because he really had a cute little baby in front of him. So, his performance is genuine.

Q: How would you describe your character?

Shawn: Darryl is a young man who has reached that point in life where he really wants to have kids. He really wants to have that responsibility and that camaraderie that you share with children. So, he's really excited about that next level in life. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm about having babies is not matched by his bank account which can't really accommodate kids at this particular time with his wife. But that doesn't stop him from trying. So, he wants to be a dad, and he will be one.

Q: Was it hard to generate chemistry not really having each other to work off of as you shot your scenes?

Shawn: The chemistry was still there, surprisingly, through Keenen, because he knew what

it was that I did, and then Marlon would match the scene with what it was that he was doing. So, I shot most of my stuff first with his body double, and then Marlon would watch what I did and then ad-lib what he would normally ad-lib if we were both doing the scene together. It was an interesting process. It was different. I missed having him on the set with me at the same time because we have a blast doing it. But this turned out really good.

Q: Do you two see yourselves as similar to a classic comedy team like Laurel and Hardy or Abbott and Costello?

Marlon: Me and Shawn are kinda like Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau, but we're not White. Or, older, yet. Who knows what we'll become when we get older. But we're going to be grumpy old Black men. I know it. We were born a comedy team. We're twins, but I just so happened to come out late. Of course, he came out prettier, because he came out on time, and I came out a little shriveled up and funny-looking, but it's all good.

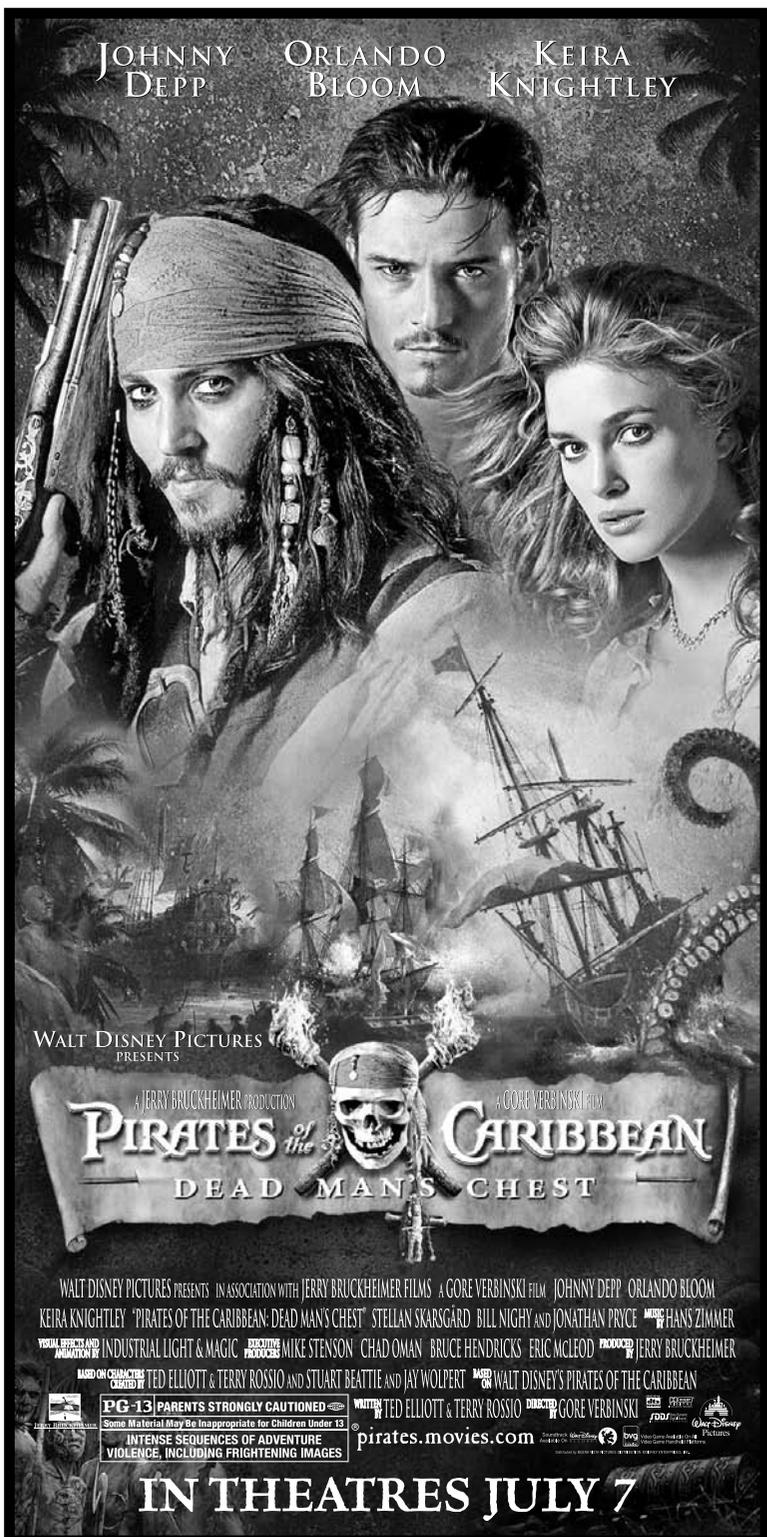
Q: What's it like being directed by your big brother?

Marlon: I didn't want to get in his way, because I didn't want to get a spanking. Sometimes Keenen would give me a look like, "You want to get the hell off the set?" And I'm like, "Okay."

Shawn: Keenen likes to do what is written first, or close to what's written. Most of the time, Keenen is cool, he'll let you play. You'll come up with something, and then he'll come up with something, and it just becomes this whole other thing. He's always trying to elevate the material, trying to take it up 10 notches from what it was when you read it. That's the blessing of working with Mr. Keenen Ivory Wayans. Although sometimes he's like, "That's my line. Keep it like that or you're going to change the story structure."

Keenen: I always shoot one to page, so that we have it as guide, and then it's improv on top of improv, and everybody gets to play. You never make people stick to the script.

Q: What makes it to the screen, more of the original script or the improv?



DATA ZONE



Marlon and Shawn Wayans talk about collaborating on their new picture Little Man, for the first time since White Chicks.

Keenen: I think the spontaneity is where you get the best stuff. What I do require of people is that they really understand their character, so that what they improvise is in context to make sure we don't just get a lot of random stuff. We do a lot of work on who their character is and what they're all about. And then once they understand that, then they're free to go.

Q: Is it fun for siblings to get to work together so often?

Marlon: Yeah, I'd go to work everyday and it's not like work, it's fun. I mean, it is work, but I like doing it. I'm happy, because I love working with my brothers. I do. It could be a challenge, but when you overcome that challenge and look at the filmography of the movies that we've done together, I'm damn proud. It's just amazing what we've been able to accomplish.

Q: How did you come to cast Kerry Washington opposite Shawn?

Keenen: This was her first lead comedic role. She kinda came in saying, "Okay, this isn't really what I do, but I want to do it." She was exactly what we needed. She brought integrity to the role, and just a wonderful charm, and an authority, because she sort of wears the pants in the house.

Q: How was it working with Saturday Night Live alums like Tracy Morgan and Molly Shannon?

Shawn: Tracy Morgan was a blast. Not only is he a blast, but he's great in the movie. This is the funniest I've ever seen him, not just because it's my movie, but because he got to do what it is that he actually does, and we really helped to support that. We just let him feel free. He's a really talented dude, and he kept us laughing the whole

shoot. So, we were glad to have him and were happy that he came aboard. And this was the first time I ever met Molly. I had always been a fan of hers since SNL. She did one of my favorite sketches, where she was playing the cliché female comic who was bombing, doing "Don't get me started!" Me and my brothers always loved her. We've been trying to work with her for awhile. Finally, one of our wishes has come true. She does great work in the scene. It's a funny scene.

Q: Are you happy with the final cut?

Keenen: For me as a director, this was probably the most unique film. It really called upon all of my experience, because I'd never done a full effects film before. But I've used some effects in all the films that I've done, so all of that stuff felt like preparation for this film, which made it one of the most gratifying experiences for me.

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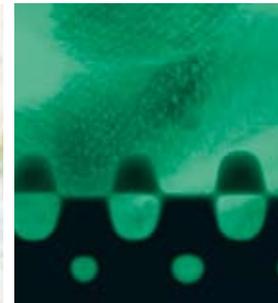
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OPINION

Conservative nor Liberal be!



The Love Dr.
Data Columnist

To conservatives I am too liberal and to liberals I am too conservative.

On one hand I believe that "family values", marriage and raising children with men in their lives is the only real long term solution for stability, peace and prosperity in our community. On the other hand I also believe that the service of our ancestors has earned us the right to demand the resources we need to correct the government errors (some say plan) that saw aid only for men-less homes create incentives that destroyed the family structure of some poor black people. The earning power of Jim Crow suppressed black men couldn't compete with the comfort and security that a state check, medical care, food stamps and free housing did for women and children.

So because I am less and less willing to see the single mother lifestyle subsidized, I get cheers from conservatives, hisses and boos from liberals and radicals. But then when I point out the success of and demand resources for Head Start, Job Corps, adult literacy, and readily available vouchers for craft training and higher education, conservatives turn and run, and now I'm a hero in the leftist camp.

I think that's the problem, coalition activism... on the left and on the right. With both sides deciding what truth to acknowledge and what truth to ignore, who you agree with seems to be more important than seeking real world solutions that actually empower people. Then the whole mess gets entangled with party politics which seems to steer our hard earned resources to supporting supporters (disguised as programs among

liberals and contractors among conservatives) instead of maximizing and leveraging our money to motivate people to enjoy fuller lives and provide training when they choose to accept the opportunity.

Actually the difference I find between conservatives and liberals is mostly how they squander and enrich supporters with our resources. Liberals tend to spend our money, which we intend to help people uplift themselves, to fund programs run by supporters on bloated salaries (for what they bring to the table). Conservatives spend the money with contractors, mostly military contractors with huge profits and little or no risk.

They are running this game on us all the time. There probably is not a bill in Congress or the state capital that has money attached for which the major, contractor, office rental or program director has not already been picked. Sometimes legislators will go as far as to swap bills, "I introduce yours and vice versa" to keep the connection fuzzy, when the chosen recipient of our resources is kith or kin.

My point is that while we may be spending a lot of money, it ain't getting to things that work, and my argument is that once we understand this, we cannot throw up our arms in exasperation and give up. We have learned the lesson and paid dearly for that knowledge, so now we must focus on investing our money in early childhood and parental intervention (Head Start), provide highly disciplined training and high school completion for young adults (Job Corps) provide literacy and high school education for anyone who seizes the opportunity at any point in life.

I agree with those who want to restrict the support of single women headed families, but I also know that that cannot happen until there are some enabled and empowered fathers. We have to raise parents before we can make the children dependent on them, otherwise it is just mean spirited "holier than thou" crap, but if we start in earnest, right now, in twenty five years we can have a different reality. If at the same

time we demand that there be a density limit to any low income housing, we can better insure against a poor child's exposure being limited to people no better off than he or she, or in the wrong way.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that we need a plan, not politics or ideologies. What happened to urban poor people was a combination of history and errors and there is no painless solution, but alas there is so much money to be made in the prison business (contractors) that the politics tends to steer our resources towards them as a solution for urban poverty even though the wasted lives of the men they house are lost to their women and children, and that is the problem.

So if you think things are screwed up, I hope I've explained why, and I also hope that you are deciding not to side with either liberals or conservatives, but to support those who are willing to invest in Head Start programs, Job Corps operations and training for anyone who desires to make themselves and this country greater by pursuing the opportunity.

Go To LOVELOGISTICS.COM for more information. Lloyd Dennis is also available as a speaker; email him at LD@LLOYDDENNIS.COM

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This week's question:

Do you feel safer because of the presence of the National Guard, or is it a waste of taxpayer dollars?

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COMMENTARY

Fighting Crime From Within



Edwin Buggage
Data Editor

By: Edwin Buggage

As the sweltering heat beat down the crescent city and the stench of garbage still lies on deserted streets, another type of refuse have returned to New Orleans. Crime, particularly murder has crept its way back into the city, and with a recent surge as their numbers increase daily this has prompted our leaders at the local and state level to request the National Guard return to our city. With this some concerned citizens are now breathing a collective sigh of relief, and I must say while the help is drastically needed to protect many areas where there are not many residents the larger question remains how will the police, National Guard, or any law enforcement agency truly deal with deterring violent crime?

It saddens me but I believe the unfortunate reality is that violent crime in our city is probably here to stay. Violence in our city before Hurricane Katrina was at epidemic proportions, and now even with less than half the population returning it is still with us. Also I believe the problem is not simply the police or anyone in law enforcement; it is a whole breakdown of a system that is in place that fosters failure; for crime by in large is a social problem. It is the by-product of social conditions in a given society and a community and individuals who make choices to break the law. It is more of a cultural sickness that runs across all our social institutions, and in New Orleans much more than a lot of cities; vice seems to be an integral part of this city's make-up and it trickles down from our elected leaders, business executives to the guys on the corner. And in the city of New Orleans post-Katrina this is something that needs to be addressed and corrected if we are to move forward.

Previously, we had a system in place that was an incubator for pathological

behavior. It was a culture of deprivation that had a public education system that the conditions of many of the schools were deplorable and were similar to those if not worse than some of our jails. As well as some communities where failure, ignorance, and apathy, have become acceptable, and resolving conflicts by any means necessary is alright. It is a sad state of affairs when we cavalierly talk about someone being fatally shot. Where is the outrage as we nonchalantly witness a whole generation of young black males lives and future lie in jeopardy, and many of us stand idly by?

The time for sitting on the sidelines is over, it is time for us as a community and as a people to truly begin a serious dialog, and better yet, mobilize and organize and make it a priority to save our young people from a life of crime and vice which often times leads to their premature deaths. We need to do a better job at nurturing our young people especially our males, so they can become responsible and respectable citizens. We all need to collectively be more proactive by using our resources to invest in our young boys before they go astray. This is what we need to do as opposed to continue to pump money into a criminal justice system that has not worked.

And as a sidebar, why should we continue to allow our children to be in the in the hands of persons who see them as nothing but a number and a problem, and even a potential source of revenue in these prison industrial complexes? Of course this does not mean let's not punish those who do wrong, but these young men who terrorize our communities are someone's sons, brothers, and fathers. By reaching out to help them become better citizens we in turn help ourselves. Our neighborhoods become safer, our communities become more stable, and our quality of life improves. So while it is good that we have those who serve and protect to help us fight crime, it is more important that we love, support, nurture, encourage, respect, and love one and other; this is the best tool for us to help combat crime and make our city a safer and better place for all its citizens.

Edwin Buggage is Editor-In-Chief of Data News Weekly for comments he can be contacted at ebmediagroup@yahoo.com

Author Tackles issues of Black Women and Weight

Special to the NNPA from the
Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder

MINNEAPOLIS (NNPA) – If you are an African-American woman, chances are you are considered to be fat. Statistics show 70 percent of African-American women are classified as overweight or obese.

Because of their genetic makeup, very few adult African-American women are able to wear a size 2, and because they are constantly compared to the skinny women society parades before us as supermodels, their self-image is always under attack. This constant barrage of being subliminally reminded they are not beautiful because they don't have the correct body dimensions is not only mentally and emotionally draining, but potentially life-threatening for Black women.

Robyn M. McGee, the director of Women's Resources at California State University, Dominguez Hills, faced this fatal reality first-hand.

"My sister Cathy always loved a good party. The last time I saw her, she was hosting a friend's wedding," McGee reveals. "With her head thrown back in laughter, Cathy held a champagne glass in hand and was surrounded by endless bottles of wine and enough food to feed 10 armies."

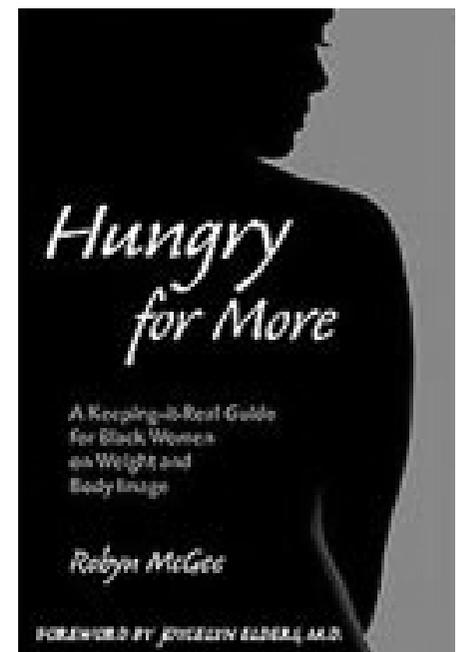
Cathy was married, had four children, and owned her own business. Still, Cathy was dissatisfied with her looks. She was always conscious of the full bosom, wide hips and thick legs with which most Black women are born. Her lifelong obsession with her weight compelled her to indulge in the wrong foods at the wrong times, all for the wrong reasons, according to McGee. Once she was considered 100 pounds overweight, Cathy qualified for gastric bypass surgery.

Cathy's desperate quest to be thin proved to be deadly, as she died from complications of the surgery.

"As I look back, I realize that Cathy's struggle was not with her weight, but with feelings of inadequacy," declares McGee.

"If she'd understood that her perceptions were obscured by the societal norms and popular culture, she would have appreciated the dimensions that God gave Black women and celebrated what she was rather than chasing something she wasn't."

In *Hungry for More: A Keeping-it-Real Guide for Black Women on Weight and Body Image* (Seal Press), author Robyn



McGee offers a holistic approach to weight and health by addressing their social and cultural implications. With a foreword by former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, M.D., *Hungry for More* encourages readers to take control of their health and utilize practical ways they can combat obesity and an unhealthy lifestyle. McGee believes that without first addressing the deficiencies in our perception, no diet or surgery can be successful.

"Unless you change what's in your heart and mind, no amount of surgery will make you feel whole. Without psychological change to go with your physical change, you could risk gaining all of the weight back."



www.ladatanews.com

HEALTH NEWS

Managing Asthma



Larry Lucas
Data Columnist

according to the EPA. Some of the most common indoor asthma triggers include secondhand smoke, dust mites, mold, cockroaches and other pests, household pets, and combustion byproducts like cooking gas – all factors that can easily be controlled once you are aware of them.

The young are particularly hit hard by asthma. The EPA cites asthma as the most common chronic childhood disease, affecting 6.3 million children, and accounting for more than 14 million missed school days in 2000. There are special circumstances you should be aware of if your child has asthma; for example, did you know that dust mites living in stuffed animals may trigger asthmatic symptoms?

Even if your child never has a serious asthma attack, the condition can account for many nights of interrupted sleep, limitations on activities, and disruptions to the family routine.

You can help prevent or respond to an asthma attack by working with your child's doctor to create an "Asthma Action Plan" for you and anyone else who may supervise your child, like a teacher or babysitter. The EPA says the plan should include:

- Your child's asthma triggers
- Instructions for asthma medicines
- What to do if your child has an asthma attack
- When to call your doctor
- Emergency telephone numbers

In addition to controlling your child's environmental triggers, medicine may also help. A recent study sponsored by the Colorado Department of HealthCare Policy and Financing found that children with asthma who were enrolled in a comprehensive disease management program, which

included appropriate medications, experienced significant quality of life improvements. As their symptoms decreased and their capacity for activity rose, they reported greater emotional well-being.

With a little extra awareness about their surroundings and activities, plus proper diagnosis and treatment, those with asthma can lead full, active lives. And remember: If you need help paying for your prescription asthma treatments, or other prescription medicines, help may be available through the Partnership for Prescription Assistance (www.pparx.org or **1-888-4PPA-NOW**). So far, more than 2.4 million people have been matched to programs that provide discounted or free prescription medicines.

Larry Lucas is the deputy vice president for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA).

The lazy days of summer are upon us, and that means heat and humidity for most – especially here in the Washington, D.C. area! For the 20 million people suffering with asthma, the increasing temperatures can be particularly dangerous.

Asthma is a serious, sometimes life-threatening respiratory disease that leads to 2 million emergency room visits and 5,000 deaths per year in the U.S., according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). And, unfortunately, African-Americans have higher rates of asthma emergency room visits, hospitalizations and death than others.

But it's not all gloom and doom. With proper medication and management of environmental triggers for asthmatic symptoms, most with the condition can lead full, active lives. Controlling factors in the environment is particularly critical for those with asthma during these summer months when warm temperatures can aid the formation of ground-level ozone, considered unhealthy when it reaches certain levels. On days when ozone air pollution is highest, ozone has been associated with 10 to 20 percent of all respiratory hospital visits and admissions, according to the EPA.

This summer, if your state or local air pollution control agency calls an "Ozone Action Day" – meaning the ground-level ozone is high – the EPA recommends people with asthma limit prolonged physical activity outdoors. Consider adjusting outdoor activities to early in the morning or later in the evening. Many local weathercasts and weather Web sites alert people when ozone conditions get high or dangerous.

Being outdoors is not the only danger however. If you, or a loved one, are diagnosed with asthma, it's important that you pay equal attention to what indoor pollutants might trigger symptoms or an attack. Consider this: Americans spend up to 90 percent of their time indoors,

Phony Leaders Exploit Phony Issues



Phill Wilson
NNPA Columnist

I didn't notice the insult at first. During the week that President Bush and his congressional colleagues declared my family to be the nation's most pressing problem, I was too busy trying to end the AIDS epidemic to pay much attention.

Their timing was classic. It was the first week of June, a week in which we marked the 25th anniversary of the first AIDS diagnosis. So I had joined an unprecedented coalition of national Black leaders – from politicians to celebrities – in calling the community to action against AIDS. That was my priority: Saving lives.

As the late Coretta Scott King once said, "Anyone who sincerely cares about the future of Black America had better be speaking out about AIDS." Washington, alas, had other priorities.

The White House and its congressional emissaries paid no attention to the June 5 call to action. What preoccupied them? Healthcare for all, you ask? Rebuilding New Orleans? Trying to figure out how to reduce the price of gas or bring our soldiers home from Iraq? It was none of those things.

Instead, they wanted to link into the Constitution a ban on gay marriage – a triple redundancy, given that a 1996 federal law already does just that and only one state in the nation issues same-sex marriage licenses. The Senate nevertheless leapt into action and, voting largely along party-lines, the august body chose to leave the Constitution as it is, for now.

Now, I'm trying to figure this out. American soldiers are dying every day in Iraq. Interest rates are going up; property values are going down. Students in California and other states can't pass their exit exams. "No Child Left Behind" has become "no child left." Nearly a year after Hurricane Katrina, most of the residents of New Orleans still can't go home. Half a million Americans are dead from AIDS. And the most pressing issue for the "leader of the free world" is denying gay and lesbian families equal protection under the law? How can that be?

As the Bush administration and Senate Republicans pandered to their political base last month, the Ryan White CARE Act lingered untouched on the congressional workbench. The CARE Act funds treatment

and care for low-income people with HIV/AIDS around the country. Congress was required to reauthorize the Act last year, but hasn't gotten around to it yet. Too busy with other priorities, it seems.

Of course, even if Congress reauthorizes the CARE Act, the White House has for years urged lawmakers not to give the program any real new funds. Today, with an estimated 40,000 new infections every year and more Americans living with HIV/AIDS than ever, the CARE Act remains at largely the same funding level it had in 2001 – five years and 200,000 new infections ago.

For the AIDS epidemic's first eight years, America's leaders similarly chose other priorities over AIDS; President Reagan didn't bother to even discuss the subject publicly until 1987.

Our politicians' willingness to dismiss the carnage back then, because it appeared to largely plague gay men, gave HIV the space it needed to take root. Those roots now stretch into every part of our society, particularly Black society. Nearly 70 percent of the new HIV/AIDS cases among women are Black and nearly half of Black gay and bisexual men in some of our urban cities might already be infected.

Maybe it's just a question of priorities. Perhaps the 54 percent of annual new infections that are Black register no greater import to today's leaders than the infections among gay and bisexual men did to those of the Reagan era.

Those infections are, however, a priority to me. As are all of the estimated 1 million Americans living with HIV—a quarter to a third of whom don't know they are infected—and roughly half of whom are Black.

And now, having decided on my own priorities and taken note of how out of step they are with those of my political leaders, I'm finally insulted by the spectacle Washington created in the first week of June. The question for me and for those who share my desire to end this plague is: What will we do about the jarring misalignment of values?

If we learned nothing from Hurricane Katrina, we should have learned this: They are not going to send the boats or the buses for us in time. AIDS in America today is a Black disease. There is no getting around it. It's also painfully obvious that we can't wait for our political leaders to save us from that fact.

So perhaps we should remind Washington of Thomas Payne's famous plea: Lead, follow or get out of the way. Right now, too many of our elected officials of all political stripes are just plain in the way. It's up to us to move them.

Phill Wilson is CEO and founder of the Black AIDS Institute in Los Angeles. He has participated in numerous international conferences on AIDS and was selected by the Ford Foundation in 2001 as one of "Twenty Leaders for a Changing World." Wilson has been living with HIV for more than 25 years and with AIDS for 15 years. He can be reached at Phillw@BlackAIDS.org.



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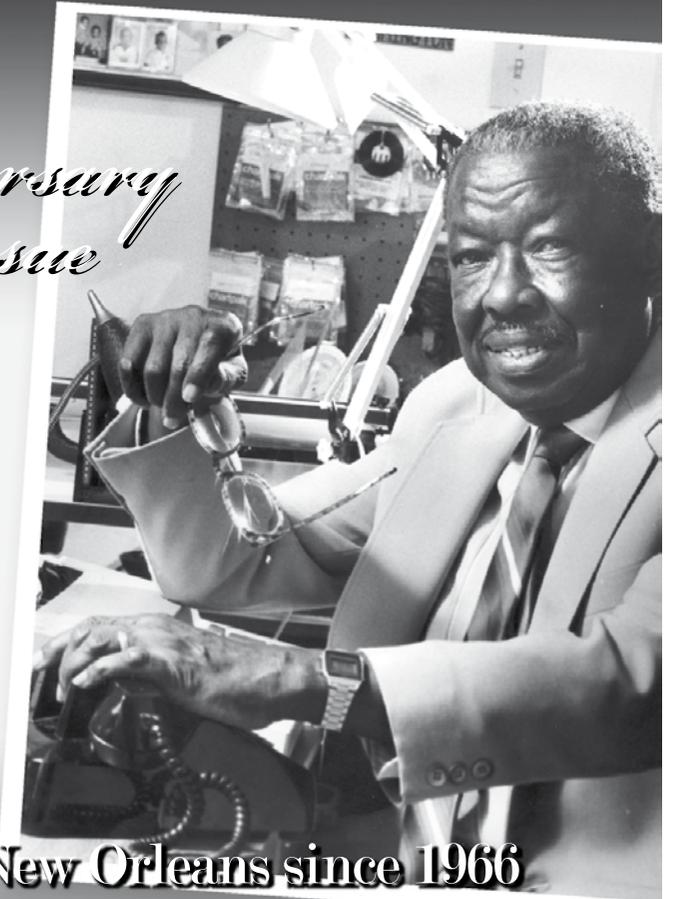
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NEWS

WJSU & the Mississippi Jazz Foundation Presents

The "Battle of the Saxes," featuring renowned saxophonists, Andre Delano (LA), Reggie Hines (Atlanta) and Jessie Primer, III (Canton), Friday, July 21, 2006, 7 p.m., at the Jackson State University Rose E. McCoy Auditorium (Formerly University Park Auditorium).

Tickets are on sale NOW. Reserved seats are \$20 and \$35 each. Reserved seating tickets are ONLY available with no surcharge through WJSU at 601.979.8672 or through the Mississippi Jazz Foundation, 601.594.2314. The \$35 tickets include access to the after party at the Mississippi Museum of Art in downtown Jackson. General Admission tickets are also available for \$10. Call 601.979.8672 to order your tickets, or visit www.ticketmaster.com.

Photo caption
Sax Stylist Andre Delano is one of the featured artists at the Battle of the Saxes



Recovery School District Registration Begins July 10th

NEW ORLEANS, La.- Registration for schools in the Recovery School District (RSD) of New Orleans will begin on Monday, July 10, 2006. Parents wishing to register their children in RSD schools for the 2006- 2007 school year will have three ways to do so: in person at one of three registration centers, online or by telephone.

Registration centers will open July 10th at the following sites:

1. Benjamin Banneker Elementary, 421 Burdette St.
2. Henderson Elementary, 1912 L.B. Landry Ave.
3. Joseph S. Clark Senior High School, 1301 N. Derbigny St.

On the first day of registration, operating hours will be 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Otherwise, registration centers will be open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The centers will be open until 7 p.m. on Tuesdays.

Enrollment in RSD schools is on a FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED basis. Parents will have the opportunity to enroll their children in the Recovery School District of their choice, as long as space is available.

Parents should bring proof of address (such as a telephone or utility bill), their child's Social Security card, birth certificate, immunization record and Individualized Education Program, if applicable. Staff will be on hand to help parents to complete Social Security replacement forms, replacement birth certificate forms, free and reduced lunch forms and Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program and Medicaid forms.

Parents may also register online at www.nolapublicschools.net or by

calling the RSD's toll-free hotline at 1-877-453-2721. However, to complete the enrollment, parents must visit one of the three registration centers in New Orleans before 5 p.m. on August 12 to provide the required signatures and supporting documents.

"We hope that by providing parents three different ways to register their children, we are providing the necessary flexibility to those residents who are still displaced, but planning on returning for school," said RSD Superintendent Robin Jarvis. "We are excited about families and students returning to the city, and we look forward to a school year filled with lots of learning and excitement."

The first day for students at RSD schools is Sept. 7. All RSD schools will be open-access to students across the city, and none will have admissions criteria. The RSD will provide transportation for all students living more than one mile from their campus.

Jointly, the Recovery School District (RSD) and the Orleans Parish School Board plan to open 56 schools in August and September to accommodate 34,000 students. School locations are based upon demographic projections on New Orleans' returning population and the ability to repair buildings during the summer. Work is continuing on 9 additional school sites that could be available later this fall.

Information about all available public schools that will be operating in New Orleans in 2006-2007, including charter schools, is available at www.nolapublicschools.net or by calling 1-877-453-2721

Federal and State tax filing deadline Katrina victims extended

Federal and State tax filing deadlines for Katrina-related victims has been extended to October 1, 2006. If you need assistance in filing your taxes, Total Community Action Inc. is operating five volunteer income tax assistance sites. They are: Dianna Head Start Center, 2144 Pace Blvd., weekdays 4 - 6:30 p.m. and Saturday 9:00 a.m. - noon (504) 366-4626; Berean Head Start Center, 1629 Simon Bolivar, weekdays 4 - 6:30 p.m. and Saturday 9:00 a.m. - noon (504) 524-1281; Irish Channel Action Foundation, 1813 Magazine St., weekdays 10:00 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Saturday 9:00 a.m. - noon (504) 525-1940; Total Community Action Inc., 1420 S. Jefferson Davis Parkway, Room 206, weekdays 10:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. and Saturday 9:00 a.m. - noon (504) 872-0330 or (504) 872-0358; and Central City Neighborhood Center, 2020 Jackson Ave., weekdays 10:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m. (504) 524-3484.

Talk Back!

Data News Weekly wants to know what you think!

Each week, Data News Weekly brings you the information we think you want to know. In an effort to better reflect the thoughts of the community, we are offering you Talk Back. Take this opportunity to let your community, government officials and our editor know what your opinions are on the subject. Selected submissions will be published in the Data News Weekly Talk Back section and a compilation version will be sent to the candidates for Mayor for the City of New Orleans.

This week's question:

Do you feel safer because of the presence of the National Guard, or is it a waste of taxpayer dollars?

Send your comments to:

Talk Back, Data News Weekly,
PO Box 5033, Atlanta, GA 30302

Or send us an email at

dnweditor@bellsouth.net

Or visit our website www.ladatanews.com

Talk Back! It's your chance!

NEWS

Voting Rights,

continued from page 5.

Senate," Watt said in a statement. "We will now turn our efforts to getting the bill passed in the Senate and feel confident that it will be signed by the president."

The House passage, cheered by civil rights leaders who had announced daily vigils outside the Capitol, came after a bitter and unexpected feud launched by a handful of Southern Republicans who, just as the bill hit the House floor for a vote two weeks ago - proposed four amendments that could have gutted the act's intent, which is to assure and protect the equal right to vote for all U. S. Citizens.

The arguments were tense, especially when Lynn Westmoreland (R-Ga.) quoted civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis to oppose the extension:

"Under oath in Federal court 5 years ago, Congressman Lewis testified: 'There has been a transformation. It's a different State, it's a different political climate, it's a different political environment. It's altogether a different world we live in. We've come a great distance. It's not just in Georgia, but in the American South, I think people are preparing to lay down the burden of race.'

"If he said that under oath, sworn to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, why is he telling the House something different today?" Westmoreland asked, rhetorically. "The reason he was under oath was because he was testifying in front of the Department of Justice that it was okay for the majority-minority districts in Georgia to be diluted, in direct violation of the Voter Rights Act."

Lewis, who had tried to interrupt Westmoreland several times to no avail, shot back angrily when he was finished.

"Let me say to my friend and to my colleague from the State of Georgia, it is true that years ago I said that we are in the process of laying down the burden of race. But it is not down yet and we are not asleep yet," he shouted. "The Voting Rights Act was good and necessary in 1965 and it is still good and necessary today. So don't misquote me. Don't take my words out of context!"

Later, in his concluding remarks, Lewis recalled his own leadership role in the struggle for voting rights. "I have a concussion. I almost died. I gave blood; some

of my colleagues gave their very lives."

Westmoreland said that is no longer necessary.

"As a Georgian who is proud of our tremendous progress and proud of our current record of equality, I am here to report to my colleagues in the House that the Voting Rights Act has worked in my state, and now it is time to modernize the law to deal with the problems of today, not yesteryear," said Westmoreland (R-Ga.).

Westmoreland's amendment would have required the Justice Department to annually review each state or jurisdiction under Section 5, which requires areas with histories of voting rights violations to pre-clear all voting changes through the Justice Department.

Currently, the burden of proof under Section 5 is on the jurisdiction to show that the proposed change does not have a regressive purpose. Under Westmoreland's amendment, the U. S. attorney general and the Justice Department would have had to make the determination of fairness and would have been mandated to automatically release each area from the obligation after 10 years of no violations.

Others proposing amendments to the bill were Reps. Charlie Norwood (R-Ga.), Louie Gohmert (R-Texas), and Steve King (R-Iowa.)

Norwood's amendment would have made the pre-clearance requirement nearly a blanket law to apply to all states; the Gohmert amendment would have limited the reauthorization period to 10 years instead of 25; the King amendment would have ended the bi-lingual ballots and require them only where Census data shows them to be completely necessary.

Some threatened a Supreme Court challenge if their amendment was not approved.

"America's Section 5 voters cry out for justice. We should not - we cannot - allow the sins of the dead to imprison the living. Either we restore justice, or the Supreme Court will be forced to do this body's job," threatened Norwood.

Others softened their arguments to make their amendment seem to help justice.

"I understand your position

is you think this is a poison pill. You think we are trying to do something that may create problems for the Voting Rights Act vote," said Gohmert (R-Texas). "I can assure you that is not the intent here. It has done some good. I would like to continue to see it do good. But I am telling you, you are raising issues by not addressing it more often."

Some CBC members appeared painfully dismayed to have to fight after such bi-partisan support had been publicly announced.

"Unfortunately, Congressman Norwood is dead wrong in his amendment and his approach. When he talks about Georgia's record, he is dead wrong with that record," said David Scott (D-Ga.). "While, yes, we have made some progress in Georgia, I am a living testimony to that, the fundamental question of the Voting Rights Act is not if there has been progress made. The question is will that progress be in risk of being undone if we do not have the Voting Rights Act?"

Georgia's Supreme Court just last week ruled unconstitutional the state's new requirement to show identification before voting, which civil rights leaders said was tantamount to intimidation.

"Georgia leads this Nation in the violations of the Voting Rights Act in the last 25 years," Scott said. "No more glaring example than what is currently now whistling through the newspapers and whistling through this Nation... My dear friend from Georgia, we have a much longer progress to go."

Senate leaders have declared they expect an easy process, but civil rights leaders watching.

"By defeating those who ignore the sole intent of these provisions -protecting minority voters from blatant and more subtle discriminatory techniques that deny or dilute minority participation in the political process—Congress has restored the legislation to its original strength," states Ted Shaw, president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. "Today, as in 1965, the House showed that actions speak louder than words. It is imperative that the Senate pass the bill before the August recess. The nation now awaits the Senate's action."



HUD approves \$4.2 billion for Louisiana housing programs

New Orleans, LA, July 11, 2006 – Federal housing officials agreed to pay \$4.2 billion into a program to help Louisiana residents rebuild or sell houses severely damaged by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, officials said Tuesday.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development also announced it would disburse \$1 billion for hurricane-related housing needs to Mississippi, Texas, Alabama and Florida, and called on those states to apply for that additional money.

Deputy secretary Roy A. Bernardi scheduled a Tuesday afternoon briefing with Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco in New Orleans to announce the grants.

"It was clear to me that Louisiana desperately needs this additional funding to implement its plans to bring its citizens back home," Bernardi said in a joint federal and state press release. "HUD will work very closely with Gov. Blanco and the Louisiana Recovery Authority to help pave the road home for thousands of residents desperate to rebuild their own lives."

The "Road Home" plan provides grants to cover repair costs above what was covered by insurance policies and FEMA grants.

State officials have said there are about 123- thousand home owners eligible for the program. Owners of about 80-thousand apartments also could be eligible for grants to help restore south Louisiana's decimated rental market.

Photo Caption
HUD Deputy Secretary Roy Bernardi

City Council President Oliver Thomas calls for GO Zone tax credits now

NEW ORLEANS – More Gulf Opportunity Zone tax credits should be coming to New Orleans businesses to spur the rebuilding process, and Councilman Oliver Thomas said he wants to see them now.

Developers apply for the federally funded tax credits in the GO zones, and the Louisiana Housing Finance Agency decides who gets them.

Thomas said the city has been under-compensated so far this year, and New Orleans can't afford the wait.

"There are enough good projects based on what we've seen that I would personally have no problem also giving out the 2008 credits in that round as well," said Mark Madderra with the Louisiana Housing Finance Agency.

"So while we may be thinking we are doing a good thing to move money forward to 2007 and 2008, Lord that's not really a good thing when we deserve it right now," said Thomas.

Members of the council's Housing and Human Needs Committee said they want more mixed-income housing projects started this year.

Data News Weekly

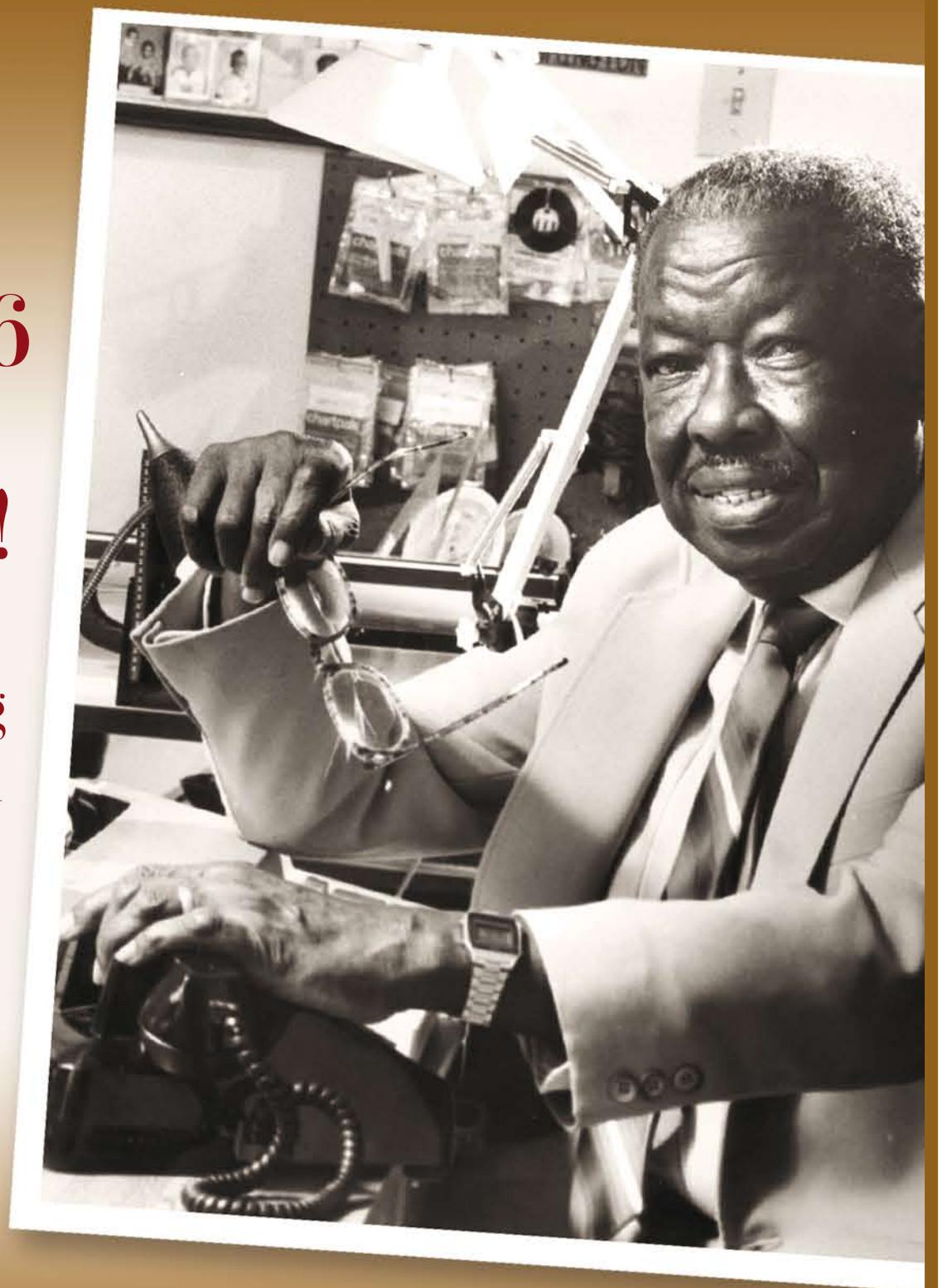
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