

Lighting The Road To Freedom

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"



Data Zone
Red Hot ChiQ Diva
Page 8


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The Soul of New Orleans

Nagin

Through the Fire


Page 2



**Trailblazer
of the Month**
William Myles

Page 7

Newsmaker
Black Press
Presses Hillary



Page 4

Nagin Through the Fire



By Edwin Buggage
Photos by Julie Plonk and Glenn Summers

It has been nearly two years since the city of New Orleans found itself a racially polarized place in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. During these days where the fate of the direction of the city was headed an election was taking place where the embattled and much maligned incumbent Mayor C. Ray Nagin found himself on the receiving end of a barrage of criticism from an establishment that once saw him as an agent of change. Bu four years later this favorable light soon dimmed on Nagin as those who once lauded him turned their backs in support of him. This fall from establishment grace fueled the fire of a campaign in which race and class collided in a combustible way fanning the flames of a city under siege. And where today it is still a place where hope-

fulness and hopelessness dance a strange tango, entangled in a web where the signs of recovery and those of blight co-exist in a city where tomorrow looks bright and bleak simultaneously depending on your perspective.

On those hot humid days in the spring of 2006 Nagin pulled a political rope-a-dope shocking the world and winning re-election against a slew of formidable and well financed candidates including Audubon Institute's Ron Foreman and Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu who he eventually defeated in a heated run-off. Today Nagin is nearly at the midway point of his second term. What are the accomplishments of his administration the opinions are mixed. As one looks around New Orleans there are pockets of the city that have progressed, but for far too many areas of the city lies as a dilapidated places that are hollow shells of their former selves and where squa-

lor, crime and lack of infrastructure and bureaucracy have gotten in the way of expediting the city's recovery, rebuilding and subsequent renaissance.

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin stands today at a crossroads. He has endured in office where he is constantly battered and bruised from the battles but continue in the daily struggles as the captain of this ship attempting to navigate its way to a safe harbor where prosperity and safety will be abundant for the many citizens of the city who over the past two and one half years have lost so much. Many of Nagin's problems since Hurricane Katrina have been a rift that has left the city battling with the state over where and how funds should be used for the recovery. With the recent election of Governor Bobby Jindal, Nagin met with him and says that signs of progress may be on the horizon. "We talked about the special session that just ended covering ethics

Continued next page.

INSIDE DATA

Cover Story	2	In The Spirit	11
Newsmaker	4	Love Dr..	11
State & Local.	5	@Issue	12
Data Zone	8	National News	14
Health.	10		

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616 Barrone Street, Suite 584, New Orleans, LA 70113

Phone: (504) 821-7421 | Fax: (504) 821-7622

editorial: datanewseditor@bellsouth.net | advertising: datanewsad@bellsouth.net

Terry B. Jones
CEO/Publisher
Glenn Jones
VP Advertising & Marketing
Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief
Cheryl Mainor
Managing Editor
Glenn Jones
Distribution

Contributors
Edwin Buggage
James Clingman, Jr.
George Curry
Hazel Trice Edney
Dr. Aaron E. Harold
Cheryl Mainor
Julie Plonk
Rev. Barbara Reynolds
Glenn Summers
Thomas Warren, Jr.
Jennifer Wider, M.D.
NNPA Newswire
Art Direction & Production
MainorMedia.com

Contributing Photographers
Julie Plonk
Glenn Summers
Common Ground
AP Newswire
NNPA Newswire
Editorial Submissions
datanewseditor@bellsouth.net
Advertising Inquiries
datanewsad@bellsouth.net

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.

reform and now we have some of the toughest ethics laws in the country which I think is a good thing for the city and the state if it is going to help to attract business to the city." "We also talked about the state having a 1.3 billion dollar surplus and how we have several projects on the table that could use financing that could help the city: riverfront development, NASA, roads as well as other things like education, I would say our meeting was very productive and I hope we can work together to get some things done for the city."

As the city of New Orleans deals with the issues of re-population approaching 2010 where the census numbers will determine what happens with the city and state in regard to tax dollars and political representation will be essential moving forward. The number of residents is not what they were pre-Katrina but Nagin remains upbeat about where the city is headed. "We have two different demographers the New Orleans Data Center headed by the Brookings Institute and GCR

of what is happening debunks a lot of the myths that African-Americans are not part of the equation of those who have returned. "Based on some of the recent elections there is the perception that this is a demographically different city, but recently I spoke with Greg Rigamer, and he said the city is about sixty percent African-American, now some of those people may not participate in elections but they are back in the city."

Recently, an uproar centered on the lack of affordable housing, particularly public housing, this is an area where Nagin says a major transformation is taking place. "We are moving away from a model where we have poor people concentrated in one place, we want to go to a more mixed income model that other cities have been used where people of different class groups can interact with one and other and break down some of the barriers to communications that sometimes keeps people separated and divided and I think this can be a good thing for the city."

treatments of leadership in the media unfortunately in 2008 and a host of other serious issues that are racially charged that divides us in this country."

Nagin continues to have a up and down relationship with the mainstream media who recently placed his 2007 public record up as evidence that he has done a less than stellar job and has not been handling the business of being mayor in an efficient and effective way. Also one of the local newspapers showed a photo of Nagin seemingly pointing a gun at Police Superintendent Warren Riley something they would later apologize for. These incidents led to Nagin becoming visibly upset on a local morning show about how what he feels is less than fair and accurate treatment by the mainstream media. "I have had more than my fair share of run-ins with the media, and I don't mind if they take a shot at something I said, but I do have a problem when they take what I say or do and take it and spin it taking out of its context for a ratings effect."

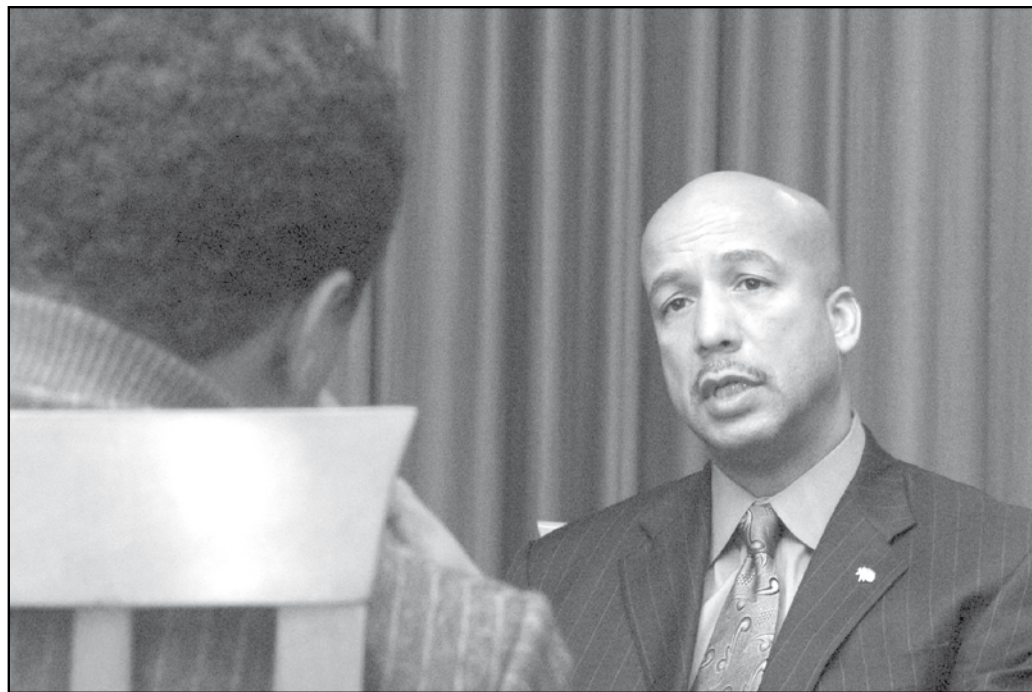
ing of fire and police stations. In the area of law enforcement New Orleans continues to be plagued with problems of crime and Nagin feels that with a new D.A. in place who has a better relationship with Police Superintendent Riley that the city is better equipped in fighting crime. "I am encouraged because last year at this time we had over five-hundred 701 releases this year there are zero so I think D.A. Landrum and Chief Riley are doing a great job working together to combat crime."

The city has hosted several major events which have been deemed successful, but how does one gauge success and progress when so many people in the city have yet to return and countless others are living in what has become a tent city under the bridges that connect us to the rest of the country. It is these places that have become a sad commentary for the country and for a city about what to do for the neediest citizens in New Orleans. "We are working to eradicate this problem,

we are working with the New Orleans Mission to modify the way they can serve citizens, and have a way where they can double their ability to house people who are homeless," says Nagin.

The road back to the city has been an extremely slow process and citizens are pointing fingers and looking for answers to the questions about why the process seems to be so arduous and drawn out. Nagin says, "I think people should blame the circumstances that created this problem." "Katrina was a devastating event where eighty percent of the city was underwater and had to be one hundred percent evacuated." Continuing he says, "The water did not discriminate with home been lost, my own home took eighteen months to repair before I could live in it again, and so many people still are not back in their homes and that is not a good thing." "Unfortunately things that were supposed to assist families

Continued on page 14.



which is a local company headed by Greg Rigamer and the figures they give us is between 300 and 320 thousand I think we are near the higher number because when we look at the numbers in terms of things like city services it correlates with the higher number." "But if the population stays around this number we may lose some seats in the state legislature and may have to redraw some of the city council districts, but I remain optimistic that people will continue to return to the city."

And there has been a debate continually brewing about who will and has the right to return, and what will the city look like in the future. Nagin says that some

While race continues to be an issue that keeps Americans sharply divided, African-American leaders from across the country recently came to the city of New Orleans for the State of the Black Union where Nagin took part in this forum. He feels that what happened in the city in regards to Hurricane Katrina showed the underside of a city and nation that racial and social equality are still relevant. "Hurricane Katrina and what has went on in the city of New Orleans exposed the soft underbelly of the United States as it relates to poverty." "So the state of Black America and New Orleans is very similar as far as issues of race and class, there are different

"But for the most part I think they have been fair, but there have been key times when they have taken something I've said out of context and it was blown up to a national or international affair."

The mayor says that this year the city will undergo several city projects to improve the streets as well as the Sewerage and Water Board, in addition to the build-

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At Forum: Black Press Questions Clinton About Racial Remarks

By: Thomas Warren Jr.

Photos by: Urban Marketing Group

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton sat with members of the Black Press of America March 12 for an hour-long forum, "A Conversation with Hillary."

Approximately 40 guests and a horde of media gathered in the meeting room of the Washington Hilton Hotel to hear Sen. Clinton field questions about concerns of the African-American community from correspondents associated with the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

Sitting center-stage in a hot-pink wool coat and Black slacks in a living-room like setting, Clinton opened by praising the Black Press saying, among other things, "Many of your publications have been at the forefront of civil rights



and women's rights, and so many historical movements."

NNPA Foundation Chair Dorothy Leavell and NNPA Chairman John B. Smith Sr. Co-hosted the event in which Clinton often said she was either sorry for or regretted the racial overtones of

the campaigns. That included remarks made by 1984 vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro, who resigned earlier March 12 as a member of Clinton's finance committee. Ferraro had said of Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama: "If Obama

was a White man, he would not be in this position."

"I regret that [the comments] were said," Clinton responded. "She doesn't speak for the campaign. She doesn't speak for any of my positions."

She also said she was "sorry if anyone was offended" by remarks made by her husband, President Bill Clinton following the South Carolina Primary. He compared Obama's winning the state to the 1984 and '88 wins of the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr.

Most questions from the panelists pertained to public policy issues that desperately affect African-Americans.

One that has become of considerable concern within the African-American community is the subject of HIV/AIDS. Clinton said that, if president, she would be forceful on confronting the issue.

Martin Jones, 55, said he hopes that if Clinton is elected she follows through with her proposal of assessing more accountability on law enforcement.

"This is an issue that, for a Black man, is a constant, everyday issue," Jones said. "I hope she does what she says if she does get in, and take it as seriously as we do."

In talking about the continuing efforts to rebuild the Gulf Coast region in the nearly three years since Hurricane Katrina hit, Clinton says that, if elected, she vows to make sure continued reconstruction is a "very high priority" for the federal government. "We owe it to the people along the Gulf Coast to continue that standard."

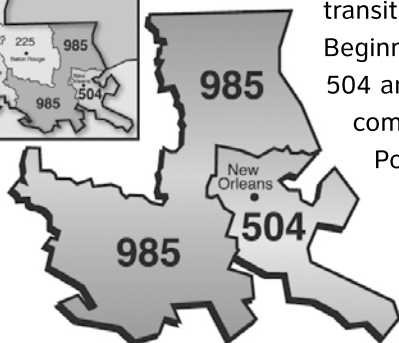
In addition to Ferraro's remarks, Clinton spoke about other controversies surrounding her campaign. Recently, she has been accused of insinuating that

Area Code Change for Lower Plaquemines Parish Becomes Mandatory May 1



Beginning May 1, 2008, communities in lower Plaquemines Parish will complete the change from area code 985 to area code 504, marking the end of the nine-month transition period begun July 29, 2007.

Beginning May 1, 2008, you must use the 504 area code when placing calls to the communities of Buras, Pointe-a-la-Hache, Port Sulphur and Venice.



Be Sure to Reprogram Your Equipment.

You may need to reprogram your speed dialing lists and customer-owned telephone equipment as a result of this change. If you live or work in lower Plaquemines Parish, you may need to reprint your checks, personal stationery and other printed materials that contain your area code. Note: Local calls to communities in a different area code must be dialed on a 10-digit basis (area code + seven-digit number). Please visit our Web site at www.bellsouth.com/areacode for more information.



"I would be very aggressive in going into communities and working, in partnership, with organizations such as this, with faith communities, and others, to revitalize our public education and outreach," she said, while propping up sternly in her chair.

On the topic of racial profiling, Clinton said more can and should be done to control the problem.

"It goes to the heart to ensure that our criminal justice system in particular our policing practices are held to a higher standard," she said.

The enthusiastic audience gathered to meet or ask more questions after the approximately 45-minute forum.

Obama may not be ready for the presidency, but would make a viable vice president.

While holding a front page headline in the Richmond Free Press that read "Clinton-Obama Ticket?" NNPA Editor-in-Chief Hazel Trice Edney asked Clinton the possibility of being the second in command if Obama, in fact, got the party nomination.

Clinton's response: "We'll finish some time in June, and we'll see where we stand. Only then will someone have the nomination, and only then will the nominee have the chance to pick a running mate."



The Road Home Hosts Information Session in New Orleans Metropolitan Area

New Orleans, La., March 12, 2008 - The Road Home program is hosting a series of Information Sessions in the New Orleans metropolitan area. Road Home team members will be on-site at the Information Sessions to offer homeowners one-on-one consultations to learn more about their Road Home application status and to answer any questions.

In preparation for one-on-one consultations, The Road Home encourages homeowners to bring their Application ID numbers and photo IDs. This session is free and open to the public. Space is limited. Homeowners who are unable to attend may call 1-888-762-3252 to schedule Advisory Service appointments at a Road Home Housing Assistance Center.

The Road Home also encourages eligible homeowners to attend these Information Sessions to learn more about the Elevation Program. The State of Louisiana through The Road Home program will provide up to \$30,000 to eligible homeowners as an incentive to elevate their homes to meet the local Base Flood Elevation and Advisory Base Flood Elevation.

For more information on The Road Home program, visit www.Road2LA.org or call 1-888-ROAD-2-LA (1-888-762-3252). TTY callers use 711 relay.

Thursday, March 20, 2008

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

St. Bernard Community Center
1107 Le Beau Street
Arabi, LA

Tuesday, March 25, 2008

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

St. Bernard Community Center
1107 Le Beau Street
Arabi, LA

Thursday, March 27, 2008

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

St. Bernard Community Center
1107 Le Beau Street
Arabi, LA

“Jazzing On The Esplanade”

A spectacular fundraiser ‘Jazzing on the Esplanade’

This mini jazz fest is to raise funds for the well overdue tribute to the Sisters of the Holy Family and their foundress Mere Henriette' Delille, a free woman of color. This tribute will exhibit many artifacts, writings, pictures and stories of the Sisters dating back to the birth of Mere Henriette' Delille, 1812, and the founding of the Sisters in 1842 to present.

The Sisters, since its founding, have worked in Louisiana, California, Texas, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, Belize in Central America, and Benin City in Nigeria, West Africa. Although their presence has been curtailed due to a lack of personnel, their service continues today through God's grace. You may be most familiar with them through their dedication and hard work here in New Orleans at St. Mary's Academy, House of the Holy Family and Henriette Delille middle schools (both free schools for the very poor); Delille Inn, St John Berchman Manor and Lafon Nursing Home (assisted living homes and special needs home for the elderly and handicapped). The Sisters also owned and operated two orphanages (one for boys and one for girls), and two Day Care facilities.

The 'Jazzing on the Esplanade' will generate the funds needed to celebrate these great African American women, and their contributions to the community and the world for over 165 years.

The event is Sunday, April 6, 2008, noon - 6:00 p.m., at 2623 Esplanade Avenue. Some of the committed entertainers are Germaine Bazzle, Leah Chase, Wanda Rouzan, Phillip Manuel, Sharon Martin, Charmaine Neville, Carl Leblanc, Dr. Frank Minyard, Gregory Thompson, and Dwight and Connie Fitch. There is also a host of restaurants and businesses donating food and auction items.

The Friends of the Sisters of the Holy Family are a group of people from the community whose lives have been touched by the sisters in some way through out the years. Whether in their Day Cares, grammar or high schools, or have had a love one cared for by the Sisters, all are unpaid volunteers trying to give back.

For tickets, to make a donation or for more information, please contact Kathy Felton at 504-669-1667

Food Co-op Store to Help Revitalize St. Claude Avenue

New Orleans Food Cooperative Receives \$25K Development Grant from Entergy

New Orleans, La. – The New Orleans Food Cooperative (NOFC) Board of Directors received a grant check for \$25,000 Wednesday from Entergy New Orleans to assist with preliminary planning in establishing New Orleans' only cooperative food store.

Rod West, president and chief executive officer of Entergy New Orleans, presented the check to Anne Sobol, NOFC treasurer, at a ceremony held at the co-op's future site – the old Universal Furniture Building at St. Claude and St. Roch Avenues in District 7.

The co-op store will provide healthy, affordable foods in the St. Claude Ave. corridor, an area that still does not have a single large grocery store following Katrina. Locally produced, affordable food and

accessibility to all members of the community are among the core values of the project. This market model of a member-owned grocery store will be empowering to the community. The store is slated to open in 2009 and will occupy a 5,500 square foot section of the old Universal Furniture building. The 1922 structure will undergo a complete renovation to house the Healing Center, a project spearheaded by Pres Kabacoff with vital support from many talented professionals, artists, and healers, which will also include an organic restaurant, yoga studios, gallery space, and a street university.

The grant will pay for development of internal capacity, including a market study and other feasibility studies, the financial pro forma, and Board training. Entergy's Open Grants Program awards organizations that focus on

improving communities as a whole, and looks for giving opportunities in the areas of arts and culture, community improvement/enrichment, and healthy families.

“Entergy's support for this project is indicative of its benefit to the community. Entergy strategically deploys its grants to a wide range of high-impact programs,” said Phyllis Cassidy, executive director of Good Work Network, a local organization that provides resources to low-income and disadvantaged micro entrepreneurs.

Rainbow PUSH: New Orleans & the Gulf Coast

2nd Annual Gulf Coast Economic Summit

The 2nd Annual Rainbow PUSH/Citizenship Education Fund Gulf Coast Economic Summit is scheduled for May 15-16, 2008 at the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel and Gallier Hall in New Orleans for an opportunity to learn how to participate in the rebuilding efforts in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast area.

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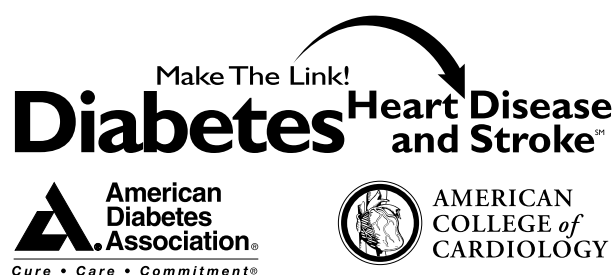
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To learn more about reducing your risk of stroke, call 1-800-DIABETES for your free "Diabetes Survival Guide".



www.diabetes.org

William Myles:

Desire for change

By Edwin Buggage

He is a man who has dedicated his life to helping others. In the fields of business as well as activism he has been an advocate for increasing minority participation in commerce and providing a voice for the disenfranchised all over the U.S.

William Myles is a native of Memphis, Tennessee who has owned a radio station, a hotel, a car dealership and published children's books. He has developed strategic partnerships with the ultimate goal providing opportunities for those less fortunate. For Myles understands first hand the sometimes debilitating effects of poverty and lack of opportunity. "I grew up poor, and saw a lot of people lose hope and while they had dreams they didn't have a plan to make it a reality."

Myles has taken the skills he has acquired over the years and have brought them to the Crescent City in an effort help the people of the city of New Orleans regain a sense of normalcy and hope about what lies in their future. He is the Owner's Representative and Developer of the Florida/Desire Neighborhood. "This is a very important project, as the city comes back and it is essential that the residents of these communities have a voice in the rebuilding process and where these communities can become viable again and that is my goal as the owner's representative," says Myles.

While he is helping in the rebuilding of a community he working on another project that is about training the next generation of youth to aspire to fulfill all their dreams and ambitions and be future leaders in the community. 'Dream City' is something Myles is working on in conjunction with Betty Washington the goal is to create a place that will serve as an incubator and training ground for young people to work in a nurturing environment with mentors in various fields of endeavor. Myles has also taken on the role of Developer of this project as well saying this is a labor of love for him helping young people. "I feel like this is a dream come true to be afforded a chance to give the kids a chance to be the best possible persons they can be." "I feel like it is necessary for us who have had some success to be there for our young people to give them a hand up to inspire them."

Myles says he is dedicated and committed to making a contribution to the rebuilding of New Orleans, "What happened to this city during the storm touched me and made me want to be part of the solution." Continuing his thought, "Because a lot of times people can talk about what's wrong, but in these crucial times for New Orleans it is about action and people being serious about helping the city recover and that's why I am here and I don't have any plans on going anywhere I am here for the long haul to be part of the solution."

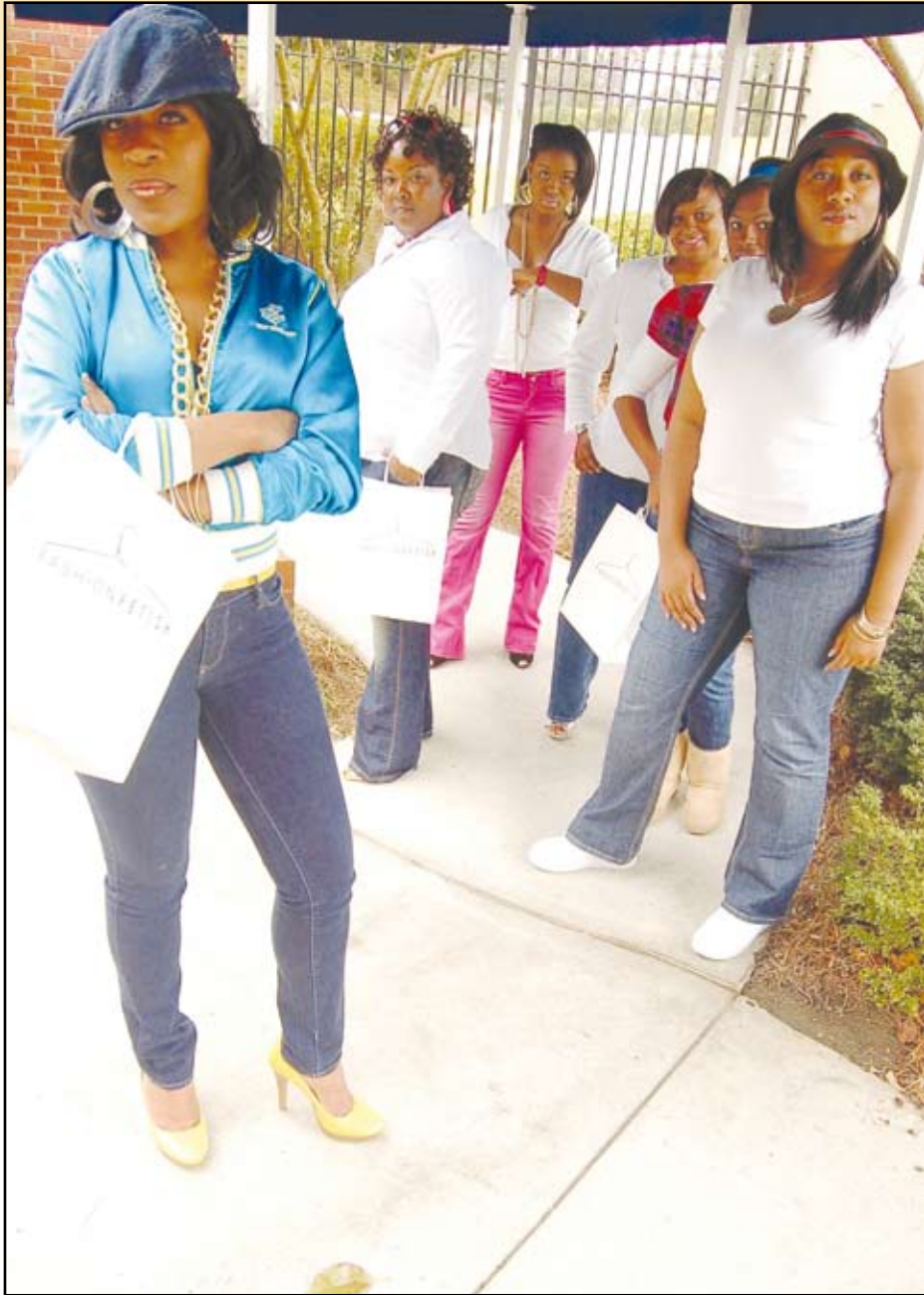
Throughout his time in the city he has fell in love with the camaraderie and the unique culture that is New Orleans and hope that during this rebuilding process that much of that is not lost. "When I walk around the city and meet people I am always amazed that even after what happened to the people of this city people are still upbeat and positive." "And they have not let what happened kill the spirit that is so unique to the people of New Orleans, and that says a lot about the people and their will to survive, cope and prosper and I want to do whatever I can to help give them hope, opportunities and a chance because I have been blessed and now this is my chance to bless others."

JMJ
 Joseph M. Jones
 Continuing Education Fund



at&t

"ChiQ DIVA" Simms: Superwoman of PR and New Orleans Survivor



she was not attending an event, she was the planner and/or publicist to many political fundraisers, church revivals, concerts and parties, fashion shows, even Sunday afternoon second lines.

Simms who has and continues to love the city of New Orleans made a tough decision and opted against returning to New Orleans at this time for both personal and professional reasons. This single mother of a teenage son, DJ, Simms finds the current housing options in New Orleans to be uncomfortable and unaffordable. She also believes that raising her teenage son in New Orleans, in its current violent state, is not an option. For Simms, opportunities to grow her company were limited and became even more so after Hurricane Katrina. Simms has since then been putting the pieces of her life back together where she and her son have been residing in the Buckhead community of Atlanta, Georgia since September 1, 2005.

While Simms is making her mark in the world of PR she wishes she could transport some of the things that she left behind to pursue her dream, "The only thing I really hate about not being home is that my son, DJ won't receive a high school diploma from St. Augustine, shares Simms a graduate of Xavier Prep." DJ was a student at St. Augustine as an incoming freshman only six days before the storm hit. She as many others left with only the clothes on their backs expecting to return, but as the waters ripped through the city Simms realized it would take a long time for the city to be the place she once knew it to be, so she and her son agreed to restart their lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

While Simms longed for the flavor of New Orleans the fighter and a survivor in her looked around and saw a golden opportunity realizing that Atlanta was the Black Hollywood and the all things

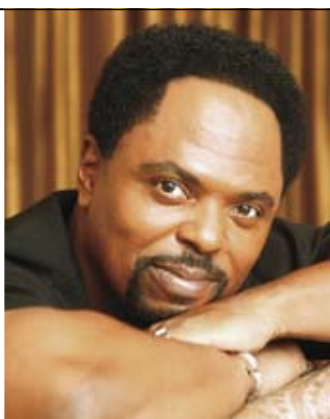
Continued on page XX.

By Edwin Buggage

The number eight is the symbol of new beginnings and one woman who embodies that and after losing everything during Hurricane Katrina and

now is fulfilling her dreams "ChiQ (pronounced sheek) DIVA" Simms is a 5-0-Forever New Orleans native who has become PR phenomenon in the Mecca of Black wealth Atlanta Georgia, but is and will always be a daughter of

the Crescent City. Over the years she has built her small firm from the ground up making it a major player and she is poised to be even greater in 08. Ever the socialite, ChiQ Simms is always either the host or the belle of any ball. If



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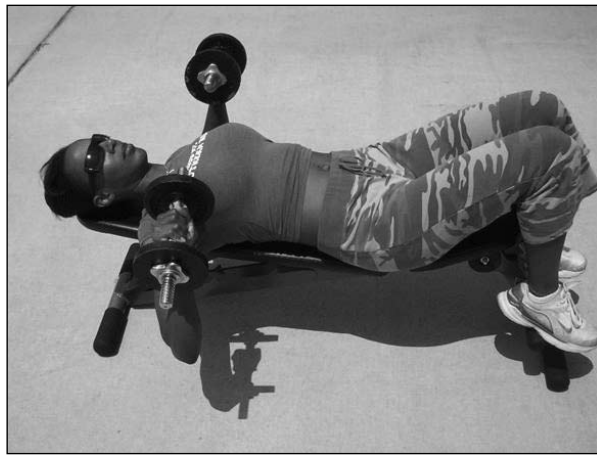
Diabetes Takes Toll on Sex Life of Many Women

By Jennifer Wider, M.D.

Diabetes can take a toll on a person's overall health, but amidst all of the possible problems that may arise sexual dysfunction is not often talked about and is more common than most people realize. According to the Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston, Mass., roughly 35 percent of women with diabetes may experience some form of sexual dysfunction related to their disease.

Most of the past research about diabetes' impact on sex has focused on men. But it has become quite clear that women suffering from diabetes may experience sexual difficulties as a result of complications from the disease. A recent study in the journal *Lancet* revealed that diabetes frequently impairs normal sexual functioning in both men and women.

According to the study's re-



search team from the Department of Endocrinology at the Boston University School of Medicine, "The effect of diabetes on women's sexual function is complex: the most consistent finding is a correlation between sexual dysfunction and depression."

In addition to the psychological effects of the disease, the study's authors were quick to point out

that more research in body physiology was needed to fully understand the toll diabetes can take on the female patient. "More research on the sexual effects of abnormal adrenal and thyroid function, hyperprolactinaemia, and metabolic syndrome should also be prioritized," the study authors wrote. Hyperprolactinaemia is the presence of abnormally-high levels of the hormone prolactin in the blood. Unusually high amounts of prolactin are suspected to be responsible for impotence and loss of libido.

Women with diabetes who suffer from sexual dysfunction often

have a wide variety of complaints. Nerve damage from the disease can result in a decrease of sexual arousal and lowered libido. Diabetic women are also more prone to problems with decreased vaginal lubrication. In addition, some women with diabetes may suffer from recurring vaginitis, or inflammation of the vagina, as a result of yeast infections, which can make sexual intercourse painful.

There are treatments available for sexual dysfunction, which vary based on the underlying cause. The key is to have an open, honest discussion with a health care provider who can assist patients in narrowing in on the cause and finding the proper therapy.

Diabetes results from the body's inability to produce or respond to insulin, a hormone necessary for the absorption of sugar. There are several types of diabetes—the main ones are type

1 and type 2. Type 2 is the most common and usually affects overweight people who are older than 45 with a history of the disease in their family.

"Increases in obesity and sedentary behavior are the major drivers of the diabetes surge," says Dr. K.M. Venkat Narayan, M.D., chief of the Diabetes Epidemiology Section at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Ga.

Although the number of people suffering from diabetes is at an all-time high, there are measures people can take to cut their risk. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle can lower the chance of getting diabetes for both men and women. "Exercising thirty minutes per day, five to seven times a week and keeping your weight under control with a healthy diet," explains Narayan.

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In The Spirit

The Recovery School District

"A Quiet Hero that's making a Difference"



Dr. Aaron E. Harold
Data Columnist

and the love that she has for what she does and believe in. She says, "I'm determined to turn this school around, as long as they give me the proper tools that I need ; this can be one of the best schools in the district."

About two weeks ago, my son and I went to talk to some of the classes about career development, and there she was comforting one of the young ladies who's mother had just passed with Cancer. Even though she has a Masters Degree in Education, she knows how to meet her students right where they are. It was close to testing time, and she was preparing her teacher's, students, and staff for that big event. She said to me that her main concern was that her students would do well at the end of the week of testing. Also, she said that "I'm going to make sure that my students get a balance breakfast for each day of the week of testing."

Mrs. Kennedy said that she needed some volunteers to help her with preparing the breakfast, but she said , "I don't mine cooking if I have to." Mrs. Kennedy said that the problem we had for so long happened over a period of time, and its going to take time and hard work, with committed teachers, staff workers, students, parents, and a school district with a passion of not quitting. Principal Kennedy is a person that is making a difference at Walter L. Cohen Sr. High School. She gives a lot of credit to her staff, and just to name some of the hard working staff, her Assistant Principal, Alfred Jones, and teachers Mr. Decell, Coach Dorsey, Coach Chestnut, and others that support her.

Principal Kennedy is one of the quiet heroes in The Recovery School District, but she is getting the job done in a big way by rearranging, organizing, building up, encouraging and giving a lot of love to her students and those who are around her. Principal Arlene Kennedy is making a difference in the lives of her students, and community.

Hi Family, we should all agree that our children are very important to all of us. They are an asset, and the key to the future. There's an old saying that goes like this, "It takes a village to rear a child." There are special people that God placed on the earth to do extraordinary things that others will not even think about doing. Family, there is three kinds of people; those who don't really know what is going on, those who watch things happen around them, and those who make things happen around them.

There's a quiet hero at one of our recovery schools. Her name is Principal Arlene Kennedy. She is the principal of one of the most difficult schools before Katrina. The school that I'm referring to is Walter L. Cohen Senior High. Before Katrina, we faced problems with our schools in Orleans Parish. Problems such as high drop-outs, low test scores, low teacher's salaries, and not enough of an effective support system from the home and the communities for our young people.

In order for our young people to be successful in life, they need a good school system that care about the future for them, and will go to the extreme to bring about changes and be committed to making a difference in the lives of our children. Principal Arlene Kennedy is an Educator from Charleston, South Carolina, who answered the call to come to New Orleans to help the Recovery School District to go to the next level that it lost a long time ago. Talking to Principal Kennedy, I can see the passion

Opinion

Ain't We American?

By: Cheryl Mainor
Data Columnist

Over the past few weeks, the phrases "Anti-American" and "Un-American" have been bantered feverishly about by pundits on the television and radio until it has reached a frenzied pitch. Speculation is running rampant surrounding Senator Barack Obama and Rev. Jeremiah Wright, with a few others thrown in, and the charges that keep coming to the forefront besides "hate filled" and "racist" are anti-American, and un-American. What does that mean, exactly?

America, this great melting pot of cultures, ethnicities, creeds, orientations, experiences and religions, is in itself, uniquely American, and the description of those who make up the citizenry, and the freedom they inherently possess defines what it means to be American. If this is so, then how does having one view instead of another, make one un-American. If one's views of America are generally shaped by one's own personal experiences in America, how then can one be un-American simply by having differences in perspectives? It has been forty years since the death of Dr. King, and prior to this last year, this question may have been laughed at by some, but now we as Black folk in America need to ask it anyway; Ain't we American?

Last week, former Senator Joe Lieberman was a guest of the Sean Hannity Show where he listened to the now infamous and severely edited for effect clips of Rev. Jeremiah Wright. The Senator was asked his opinion. I cringed at his response, which was to say, he feels that the Reverend's remarks were "Un-American." He then continued to speculate that Sen. Obama had not had this "Black experience", after all he went to Harvard Law, he was president of the Law Review, and he is running for President. His is not "this Black experience" that Rev. Wright is speaking of. How audacious an assumption? Lieberman is sure that Sen. Obama did not live the life of a Black American, because he graduated from Harvard. He is ignorant of the parts about the incredibly hard work and having to be better than everyone else. That his admittance was not a measure of family wealth, or by birthright, like so most of his privileged counterparts. Left out was the part about racial profiling and all the other things that he may go through on a regular basis, that his education, salary, bank account, how many languages he speaks, his fraternity, church or profession cannot shield him from enduring. The mere fact that Obama went to Harvard, suddenly erased any unfair treatment or discrimination that he may have been subjected to. It's like when the police run my background check and a credit report before they pull me over for

driving a new car in my own neighborhood. That happens, right? My college professor Dr. Ben Wilson told me to learn this; "it bees dat way sometime!" He said it would make sense later. He was right.

Senator Lieberman is not alone; countless numbers of right leaning television and radio personalities and bloggers are chiming in to tell Black folk, what it means to be a Black American. They are the experts. They know what our experience is, what is acceptable for us to discuss, how we should fellowship, what we should hear in our sermons, topics we should discuss, and what is and isn't appropriate to think or feel unless they say it's okay. To do otherwise is as one Republican strategist stated "twisted and bizarre". I didn't realize Limbaugh, Hannity and O'Riley are the authors of "Americanism".

It just floors me, and I know it should not, but it does. My mother said to me, "you shouldn't be upset by it, it's what they do," and although I know she was only trying to comfort me, none came. I was deeply and personally offended. For the first time in my life, I felt as if someone was marginalizing my existence. My experiences as a Black woman are what they are, and they are profoundly American. Their feigned offense at Rev. Wright's use of the word Nigger, is laughable. What word is more American than Nigger? It's as American as apple pie. I wanted to write a letter to anybody who would listen (except for Keith Olberman he already is outraged); anyone who would stand up and ask "when did we (Blacks) lose our citizenship again? Ain't we American too?"

Then yesterday, I got the news that Sen. Obama would be making a speech, to address these issues. They were calling for his head, yet we would not have asked him to put himself up there on the block, to risk it all, the stakes were too great, and we would fight this battle for him. He didn't have to face the firestorm alone. But he did it anyway. On stage, he stood alone, an American man saying the right thing at precisely the right time. It was a moment in time I will never forget.

The talking heads today remained the same on the die-hard Right. There are those who want to put him in his place, more than to than simply defeat him. I saw "Christian" pundits, still casting stones, still questioning, they want their pound of flesh and relentless it will remain for a season. But it is his time now. Most of America now supports his view on race, and if not, they at least respect it. My spirit was calm for the moment, and to borrow the words of his beautiful wife Michelle, "for the first time (in a long couple of weeks) I was proud to be an American, because I got the answer to my question; Yes, We are American, too! Thank You Senator Obama.

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America Needs Jeremiah Wrights

By. Rev. Barbara Reynolds

Without the prophetic, bold voices and organizing ability of leaders like Pastor Jeremiah Wright of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago there would be no U.S. Senator Barack Obama with a decent chance at becoming the first Black president of the United States.

And it is a sad testimony that to protect his credentials as a unifier above the fray the Senator is fueling the media characterization that Rev. Dr. Wright is some retiring old uncle in the church basement instead of respecting Wright for the towering astute father of progressive social and global causes that he is.

For 20 years, Rev. Wright has been a "friend, mentor and pastor." This is how Sen. Obama described him in a letter dated February 5, 2007.

In that letter, the senator wrote "I constantly remember Rev. Wright as the shepherd who guided me to my commitment to Christ one Sunday morning at Trinity. I often consider, as I work in the Senate how he lives his life—a life of service to Trinity, Chicago and the nation; his activism on behalf of causes that few would champion and his dogged commitment to the first principles of love for God and fellow man. And in my personal walk, I seek daily to imitate his faith."

Pastor Jeremiah Wright is no weird, anti-American hater and separatist cult leader. He loved his country enough to serve in the U.S. Marines. His denomination, the United Church of Christ, is a



90 percent white denomination. As a pastor, Wright married the Obamas, baptized their children, and a Wright sermon provided the title of Obama's best-selling book "The Audacity of Hope."

The Jeremiah I know is a sought-after preacher in seminars across the country. I have traveled with him, introduced him at the National Press Club and use his tapes as teaching tools in my prophetic ministry classes at the Howard University School of Divinity, where he often preaches to adoring audiences.

I am inspired by Wright's leadership as the founding father of the Samuel D. Proctor confer-

ence, which is directed by Dr. Iva Carruthers, a Trinity member. The Conference is the progressive wing of the Black Church and represents some 50 million people through an ecumenical cross section of clergy and interfaith leaders across the nation.

When Black and poor people were devastated by the double tragedies of Katrina and governmental indifference, the Conference impaneled a commission of citizen activists to investigate. They authored a report, "The Breach," which documented the governmental abuses, and solutions. The Conference is still working with Katrina victims, while so

many others have deserted them. Both Senators Hillary Clinton and Obama worked with this effort.

Pastor Wright is being brutally trashed for his controversial sermons. The mainstream media are the guilty culprit in all of this partly because of ignorance of the historic role of the Black Church, which was born out of the crucible of slavery, lynching and Jim Crow. If those injustices had not been raised with passion, Blacks would still be on the plantation, a point that Trinity's new pastor Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, nicely raised in an interview on CNN.

Secondly, Pastor Wright seems so radical because so many churches aren't saying anything. Instead of preaching and organizing against the unjust war in Iraq that has claimed more than 4,000 U.S. lives and 30,000 Iranian lives, the cradle to grave prison industrial pipeline, inadequate education, and other social ills, so many mega-church leaders are hooping about prosperity and allowing politicians drive through photo ops in their churches without holding their feet to the fire.

Wright stands out because so many others are sitting down. There are not many churches where the social gospel of Dr. King is preached. The media have watered down the volumes of King's sermonic contributions to "I have a Dream," although King spoke out strongly against such issues as the Vietnam War just as Wright is campaigning against the horrors of the ill-fated war in Iraq today.

In his letter from a Birmingham jail, King excoriated the com-

fortable positions of white moderates. "Like a boil that can never be cured as long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its pus-flowing ugliness, injustice must likewise be exposed, with all of the tension its exposing creates before it can be cured." Wright exposes injustice in much the same way.

Wright is much more than a Sunday morning wonder. He had launched more than 70 active ministries that provide housing complexes for senior citizens, day care for children, ministries for people living with HIV and help for families of the incarcerated.

Whether you disagree or agree with Wright's controversial statements it is a terrible disservice to ignore his contributions as a theologian, pastor, and educator. It is ludicrous that a pastor who has preached more than 207,000 minutes for the past 36 years at Trinity on Sunday, not to mention his weekday worship services, revivals and global preaching, should be judged by a couple of 15 or 30 second sound bytes.

Furthermore, Pastor Rod Parsley of Columbus, Ohio, who is a spiritual adviser to Republican front-runner John McCain, has made ugly comments about destroying "the false religion of Islam" at a time when American-born Muslims are fighting for the United States in Iraq. Somehow this hate speech doesn't provoke outrage.

While Sen. Obama may have to distance himself from his pastor to play the game of politics, it is unwise for any of us to burn the bridges that brought us across.

Blackening Barack Obama



James Clingman Jr.
Data Columnist

By. Ron Walters

What I'm wondering right now is why none of the other candidates for president have been held to account for the sermons of their pastors. It's not like the other instances where John McCain's surrogate pastor was speaking for the campaign when he went off the deep end pronouncing Barack Obama's full name repeatedly, or Geraldine Ferraro, Chair of Hillary Clinton's campaign finance committee, who said that Obama would not be where he is were he not black. No, I could not find any instance where Trinity United Church of Christ or the Rev. Jeremiah Wright was connected

to the campaign. So, the media, especially Fox TV, where Hannity and Combs began this witch hunt last year, by calling Trinity a "Cult" has found Obama guilty by association. Why?

This is a less than transparent attempt to do what race sensitive whites always do to a high-flying Black figure in a White majority country who is about to gain some real national authority, they put him in a Black box. We saw this in the 1984 and especially the 1988 presidential campaigns of Rev. Jesse Jackson when, regardless of the fact that his campaign was more integrated than any other, and that he reached out to more diverse groups than any other, they

considered him the "Black" candidate.

Some of this could be justified because of Rev. Jackson's long history as a civil rights leader.

Barack Obama, however, is another case. The massive vilification of Trinity and Rev. Wright and the gross misunderstanding of the Black church have me wondering why "the Black church" does not throw the considerable arms of love support and power behind them. It is patently clear, for example, that no other church with the stature of Trinity would be so maligned without a considerable pushback from the community they represent.

The media simply does not understand

Continued next page.

Ferraro and Steinem: White Women Gone Wild



George C. Curry
NNPA

By. George E Curry

As difficult as it was, I resisted the initial urge to answer a Gloria Steinem column that appeared in the New York Times earlier this year that basically argued that African-Americans have had it easier than White women and that sexism is not taken as seriously as racism. I didn't want to get into a protracted debate over which mistreated group had been mistreated the most. However, now that former vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro has asserted that if Barack Obama were not a Black man, he would not be where he is now, it's time to take off the gloves and go toe-to-toe.

For the record, neither racism nor sexism should be minimized. The first paragraph of the introduction to *The Affirmative Debate*, an anthology I edited, began with a quote from a report from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: "Historically, discrimination against minorities and women was not only accepted, but was also governmentally required."

"The doctrine of white supremacy, used to support the institution of slavery, was so much part of American custom and policy that the Supreme Court of the United

States in 1857 [in the Dred Scott decision] approvingly concluded that both the North and the South regarded slaves 'as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.'"

I wrote in the next paragraph, "Women, like African-Americans and other racial minorities, were treated as less than full citizens throughout much of American history, though to a different degree. As Justice William J. Brennan observed, neither slaves nor women could hold office, serve on juries, or bring suit in their own names, and married women traditionally were denied the legal capacity to hold or convey property or to serve as legal guardians of their own children."

Clearly, both groups have been victimized by privileged White males. Therefore, it's surprising that Steinem and Ferraro are directing their anger at African-Americans rather than at White men. In her column, Steinem complained, "Black men were given the vote a half-century before women of any race were allowed to mark a ballot [translation: even before White women], and generally have ascended to positions of power, from the military to the boardroom, before any women (with the possible exception of obedient family members in the latter)."

Even if Blacks rose to the top of the corporate ladder faster than women, they were quickly surpassed by White women. The number of Fortune 500 Black CEOs fell from seven in 2007 to five this year. Meanwhile, the number of women CEOs has increased over that same period from 10 to 12. Neither figure is sufficient. For example, if African-Americans were represented at the top of the corporate world in the same proportion they are in the popu-

lation, there would be 63 Blacks CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, not five.

As a reporter who covered Ferraro's 1984 vice presidential campaign for the Chicago Tribune and witnessing how she was stereotyped, I was surprised by her insensitive remarks about Obama. In an interview with the Daily Breeze, a Torrance, Calif. newspaper, she said: "If Obama was a white man, he would not be in this position. And if he was a woman (of any color) he would not be in this position. He happens to be very lucky to be who he is. And the country is caught up in the concept."

Obama has two Ivy League degrees (from Columbia University and Harvard Law School) and to say he is where he is simply because he was "lucky" enough to be born a Black man insults his accomplishments and shows a profound ignorance about what Black men are subjected to living in this country.

If anyone is lucky, it's Geraldine Ferraro and other White professional women who have climbed the ladder of success by riding on the backs of African-Americans. Let me be more specific: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 has been hailed as a major landmark for Blacks. And there is no question that it removed many long-standing racial barriers. What is not widely known is that the law opened as many doors for White women as it did for Blacks.

In fact, including (White) women as a protected class was proposed by Howard W. Smith, a conservative Virginia Democrat who chaired the House Rules Committee, as a ploy to defeat a bill Smith opposed. The Congressional Record noted that when Smith proposed the amendment, it was greeted with laughter. Alabama Rep. Carl Elliott, another segregationist, explained, "Smith didn't give a damn about women's rights...he was trying to knock off votes either then or down the line because there

was always a hard core of men who didn't favor women's rights."

Instead of rejecting Smith's proposal to add women as a covered class under Title VII of the bill, supporters of the proposed law, to Smith's surprise, accepted his amendment and that is how women became a protected class under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Instead of complaining, as Steinem did, that "gender is probably the most restricting force in American life," she should acknowledge that women wouldn't have gotten this far without riding on the back of the civil rights movement.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emerge* magazine and the NNPA News Service, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. He can be reached through his Web site, www.georgecurry.com.

Continued from page 14.

Black preaching, which has always used apocalyptic language to cut deep into the heart of the truth and they really do not understand the perspective by which blacks view public events which comes from the pain of their disproportionate sacrifices.

Nevertheless, in this we see a culture clash, that of the Black community and the arena in which presidential politics is conducted. In that arena, one must display an unerring patriotism whether or not the country has killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people in pursuit of a misguided, illegal and disastrous war policy. The president of the country – and running to succeed him – must uphold the dignity of the country at all cost. So, there is a level of official symbolic ritual that clashes with the level of truth telling where people grapple with who they are and where they are in relation to public events. Thus, to associate Obama with Rev. Wright's statements is to attempt to negate his legitimacy in the official symbolic arena and tie him to that level of belief that is the often the harshest

critic of America.

I have also seen the attempt to pain Obama in the black corner by media commentators who are obsessed with the black vote as the base of Obama's victories. Rev. Jackson won the lion's share of the black vote, so that expectation should not be the story in this campaign – unless one is tilting toward the Clinton's explanation of his victories. No, the real story of this campaign is why he has been legitimized by so many white voters black vote, why they have pushed into the leading position in this race.

To answer this question forces an analysts to go beyond the easy explanation of race, and to deal with what is really hurting the American people. When you do that accurately, you must go beyond the official symbolic level and explain some nasty, undemocratic, inhuman and economically rapacious things that have been done in the name of America. So many Americans have vowed that this will not be done on their watch, meaning that they have joined

the movement for change to redirect the course of the country. And I cannot help but believe that to kill the messenger, Obama, is to try to kill the possibility for change. That is what sends them back to the tool kit every week, trying to find something to stop this movement.

We must be clear that there are powerful forces in this country that do not want real change and they will fight back to retain their status and power. But we should understand that and not go for the weekly rope-a-dope.

Dr. Ron Walters is the Distinguished Leadership Scholar and Director of the Africa American Leadership Center and Professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland College Park. One of his latest books is: *Freedom is Not Enough: Black Voters, Black Candidates and American Presidential Politics* (Rowman and Littlefield Press).

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Amidst Church Controversy, Obama Envisions Receiving NNPA NewsMaker 'from the White House'

By: Hazel Trice Edney

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Democratic Presidential frontrunner Barack Obama, “distressed” after disavowing controversial remarks made by his former pastor and spiritual advisor the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, says he will press past that hurdle and is looking forward to receiving the NNPA Newsmaker of the Year Award again next year – as the nation’s first Black president.

“Michelle and I are distressed by some of what’s happened. Obviously, I think that some of the snippets of the sermons that were the source of controversy were unacceptable,” he said in an interview with the NNPA News Service. “I’m somebody who believes deeply in this country and believes deeply in one America and so Rev. Wright and I disagree profoundly on some of these statements.”

Due to 21 consecutive votes on Capitol Hill in preparation for Easter recess, Sen. Obama (D-Ill.) was not able to attend the NewsMaker award ceremony, sponsored by the National Newspaper Publishers Association March 13.

The next day, he was embroiled in the controversy in which he issued a statement repudiating remarks made by Wright, who recently retired from the pastorate of the Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. Those remarks included a 2003 sermon in which Wright said, “They want us to sing God bless America. No, no, no, God d**n America! That’s in the Bible - for killing innocent people...God d**n America for treating our citizens as less than human. God d**n America for as long as she acts like she is God and she is supreme.”

In a statement, Obama said, “All of the statements that have been the subject of controversy are ones that I vehemently condemn. They in no way reflect my



attitudes and directly contradict my profound love for this country.”

In the NNPA interview, Obama was clear that he was not denouncing his former pastor – just the remarks.

“He is somebody who brought me to Christ and the United Church of Christ is a wonderful community where Rev. Wright has delivered thousands of sermons. Many of the ones I’m familiar with talk about family and faith and justice in ways that I think all Americans wouldn’t mind being inspired by,” Obama says. “I’ve denounced some of the remarks that are a source of controversy, but Michelle and I continue to be a part of the community. Rev. Wright is retiring and I only wish him well.”

He says he and his family will continue attending the church, now pastored by the Rev. Otis Moss III. Moss issued a statement Sunday, saying the controversy is an offense to the Black church and that Wright’s character was being “assassinated in the public sphere because he has preached a social gospel on behalf of oppressed women, children and men in America and around the globe.”

Wright was on a cruise and could not be reached for comment.

Meanwhile, Obama says he regrets missing the opportunity to interface with Black newspaper publishers at an annual NNPA celebration in which he was named NewsMaker for the second time. He first received the award in

2005. He had turned down an NNPA candidates’ forum, held last Wednesday, due to a scheduling conflict, says Obama spokeswoman Candice Tolliver.

“Obviously the Black newspapers around the country are so important, not just to those of us who you cover but to your readership who might not otherwise get the kind of information that is so important to the community,” he says. “I’m so honored by the distinction. And as we move forward, I’m hoping that next year we might be able to make a little history from the White House.”

His comment during the interview Saturday – two days after the award ceremony – was in sync with the sentiments expressed by NNPA Foundation Chairwoman Dorothy Leavell, who made the

award to Obama in his absence.

“I don’t need to make a long speech about his accomplishments and all that he has done,” said Leavell. “We are extremely proud and we are looking forward to being at the inauguration in January 2009, where again in 2009, we’ll have to give President Obama the third NewsMaker of the Year Award. So, in anticipation of that great day, it is indeed a great day today.”

U. S. Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) the first Black chair of House Judiciary Committee, received the award for Obama as he received his own NNPA Lifetime Achievement Award.

“I’m going straight to the Senate Floor and present this to him as soon as I leave,” Conyers said. “I hope you’re as ready as we are about the excitement that’s building across the land. More people have voted in presidential primaries than any other time in American history. And it’s because of Barack Obama,” Conyers said to applause.

Obama has rarely appeared rattled by any controversy. Even now, he says he believes the racial issues that his campaign is forcing Americans to face and discuss is good for America.

“I think that it was probably inevitable that some of these issues came up right now as race has been an enduring theme in our society and in this country. But I have been very clear from the start that I am not running on a platform that divides this country. I want to bring this country together. I truly do believe that we can solve the key problems that everybody’s facing – lack of health care, an economy that’s sputtering, people losing their homes, the situation in Iraq. We can’t solve those problems unless we come together as one nation. And that’s something that has been at the center of my campaign.”

Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

like the Louisiana Road Home Program was extremely flawed and have gotten better but still have a lot of problems that is getting in the way of people returning to their homes.” He says a major problem was a lack of resources, “The monies that were promised from the federal government has just started coming in November of 2007.” “You can look at and fault and place it in a lot of areas,

but it’s just the magnitude of the event.”

With all the things that have happened in the city and what some see as bleak days ahead, Nagin says that this cloud has a silver lining and that in the very near future the city will see an economic boom and investments like never before. “This city is on the verge of something great, while other parts of the country is experiencing an economic

downturn we are about to see something the runs counter cyclical to that trend.” “Rising oil and gas prices help our state, as other monies start to pour in there are opportunities for well paying jobs in construction and other industries related to rebuilding.” “Also if you want to start a business this is a great time to be in the city as it moves forward.”

Nagin sees this as a turning point in his administration and

what it is now capable of doing with the resources that are finally coming into the city. And he encourages residents of the city that desire to return and are presently here to keep faith and know that he is working to bring every citizen who desires to return back to New Orleans. And not simply to what it was but something better, “Most people wrote us off and we have bucked all those trends there was a price to pay for that.” “We

went through what in my opinion was a deliberate attempt at economic starvation, and we’ve gotten past that the money is starting to flow, the economy is picking up and people are coming to the city both nationally and internationally to invest.” “I feel now is not the time to give up on the city, with all the dollars that are coming in we can now be about the business of making this a better city for all the citizens as we rebuild.”

At NNPA Event: Conyers Warns 'Struggle isn't Over'

By. Hazel Trice Edney

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – U. S. Rep. John Conyers Sr., the first Black chairman of the powerful House Judiciary Committee, gave pointed words of warning as he received the Lifetime Achievers Award from the National Newspaper Publishers Association last week.

"Our struggle isn't over with now by any means," Conyers declared. He should know. Chairman of one of the most powerful committees in the House of Representatives, he leads oversight of the Department of Justice; including the FBI and the federal courts, Judiciary has jurisdiction over copyright, constitutional, consumer protection, criminal justice and civil rights issues.

This is why the 34-year member of Congress was honored by

the association of more than 200 Black-owned newspapers during Black Press Week, the 181st birthday of the founding of the first Black newspaper.

"If Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were alive and with us tonight, he would embrace John Conyers and thank him for his exceptional leadership in Congress in introducing and pushing legislation to make Dr. King's birthday a national holiday," said Black Press Week Chairman Ofield Dukes, a member of the NNPA Foundation's board of directors.

Making the award to Conyers, Dukes described him as a man with "political savvy and legislative steal."

Conyers, elected to the House in 1964, was the first Black member and is now its first Black chairman. He is also known as the dean of the Congressional Black

Caucus having been among its founders in 1970.

"It's the most exciting work that I could possibly be in," Conyers said. "Especially as we now move into the beginning of a new era of American governance," he said, applauding U. S. Sen. Barack Obama who could become the nation's first Black president.

Conyers also honored the Black Press in his remarks.

"I am here to celebrate the legacy, the contributions and the continuous struggle that the African-American press is confronted with," Conyers said. He added that he would ask that NNPA be honored in the Congressional Record for its historic contributions.

The evening of celebration over the NewsMaker of the Year, Sen. Barack Obama, who was not able to attend due to a string of

votes on Capitol Hill, was hosted by NNPA Foundation Chair Dorothy Leavell and NNPA Chair John Smith Sr.

"We are joining the Black church in longevity and many other institutions. And we are pleased that we have been able to serve our community," said Leavell.

NNPA's third top award was given to radio talk mogul Tom Joyner for his philanthropic efforts toward historically Black colleges and Universities.

"Using his medium to get the word out about America's Black Colleges has done more than any of us can imagine," says Lezli Baskerville, president of NAFEO, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, who introduced Joyner. NAFEO had 50 Black college presidents in the audience at the NewsMaker

event. She credits him for doing perhaps more than "any individual to not only raise tens of millions of dollars for Americas Black colleges and universities, but to raise awareness" of social ills and injustices through his string of programs and institutions.

Joyner also praised the Black Press, saying he concurs with its single focus on justice for Black people. "What does this mean for Black people?" he recalled a recurring question he has asked at press conferences and events since his days as a cub reporter. "Someone called and said I don't like listening to your show because you're always bringing up race. You're always playing the race card. I'm sorry. That's the hand I was dealt and that's the only card I can play."

DataZone, Continued from page 8.

media. In Atlanta she found an environment more conducive to take her company to the next level. Building on the skills she acquired as the development director of the YWCA and the National Kidney Foundation of Louisiana, the by-lines that she earned writing for New Orleans Dat a News Weekly as well as her experience as publicist for national hip-hop artists such as Soulja Slim, BG, C Murder and MAC that allowed her not only to make a name for herself. It set the stage for Simms who is now one of the most highly respected African American females making their mark in the world of public relations. In the past two and a half years, Simms has been able to successfully expand her business, elevate her career and her lifestyle. Simms has planted roots in Atlanta buying a home in a multi-million dollar community in Atlanta.

One who is not afraid of taking risks, some of which has started to pay the 'DIVAdends. One to never say the word quit she took this new beginning as a challenge to up her game. While most evacuees were trying to figure out their next move, Simms produced parties, events and even sparked movements while living in a FEMA hotel room. She hosted a six-month weekly run of a New Orleans themed club night and launched the annual New Orleans Weekend In Atlanta to commemorate surviving Hurricane Katrina and to pay homage

to lives lost. This year's event will celebrate the culture of New Orleans. Simms has used her influence to secure opportunities for New Orleans artists with Atlanta entertainment industry executives. Her maternal bond to New Orleans seems eternal, "Even though we live away from home. It's still our home and our maintaining a connection to the city is key to our mental health shares Simms. If not me, then who? We have Mardi Gras parties, we get together when the Saints and Hornets play, we have crawfish boils and second lines." At press time simms was preparing for a mixer called Network New Orlanta with the help of Maurice Saffor, Carl Gamon and the Young Urban Professionals.

No stranger to controversy, Simms made headlines for taking on city leaders decision to host Mardi Gras 06 so soon after the disaster. Her face and passionate position was seen and heard on CNN, FOX, CNBC and NPR to name a few of the media outlets that covered this story. "I have always been in a posture to speak and fight for the least of these. My passion is to be a voice for the voiceless. My father is a career politician so it's just naturally a part of me." "So I involve myself in being a part of the solution. I will give of myself and my resources, even if I am among the ones who need help."

Since living in Atlanta, Simms list of clients have grown where

she serves Down Magazine, The Source Magazine and its President Jeremy Miller, as publicist. She has secured media and red carpet opportunities with MTV, BET, and VH1 for countless celebrities. She continues to represent BG & The Chopper City Boyz as well as C Murder as clients for life, but has worked with pop icon Usher's protégé's One Chance, Grandaddy Souf, Baby Boy, Actors/Comedians Pierre and J Anthony Brown, Houston's Lil Troy, and ODS Automotive Magazine. Adding to a list where in New Orleans she has worked the political campaigns of Judge Kern Reese, former Mayor Marc Morial, former District Attorney Eddie Jordan, Bernadette D'Souza for Civil Court Judge, Paulette Irons for Mayor, and her father, former Las Vegas Speaker of the Nevada Assembly Wendell P. Williams. Simms has also worked as publicist for NBA Champion Jaren Jackson and former Buffalo Bill Raion Hill. These clients and her many other public relations accomplishments have earned her the title - Goddess of PR.

Simms company DIVAdend Entertainment, the parent company to her other endeavors as she works to expand her reach is a staff of six intelligent ladies who each have a specific and unique role within the company. Under the DIVAdend Entertainment umbrella is Fashion Fetish, an event series that was created to market fashion brands. Today, Fashion

Fetish operates as the premiere celebrity style and gifting suites for special events. Simms has hosted Fashion Fetish suites for the BET Hip Hop awards, The Billboard Awards and most recently for the NBA All-Star weekend. Some of the brands that she represents are Shmack, Indigo Re d, Imperial Junkie, Miskeen Originals, Azzure Ladies, Dereon, Phat Fashions, Asada and Flytastik Clothing owned be her son DJ. She has outfitted top entertainers for the stage and the red carpet including Ludacris, Lil Boosie, Webbie, Chingy, Yung Joc, Gorilla Zoe, David Banner, Baby Boy, BG, C Murder, and a host of athletes and industry executives.

Today, Simms is in the midst of her biggest challenges to date, completing her first novel, Industry Chick and producing the T.H.U.G. Awards a joint venture between DIVAdend Entertainment, The Source and DOWN Magazines. "The concept T.H.U.G. (an acronym for True To His/Her Urban Genius) was created by me and an ex-boyfriend who at the time was encouraging me to start a magazine. I do not desire to be to be a magazine publisher but I did have a dream to produce a televised awards show, shares Simms." The T.H.U. G. Awards is a reality and is taking place May 15, 2008 in Atlanta, Georgia< /st1:country-region> at the legendary Uptown Comedy Corner.


"I am very competitive. Whatever I put my name on has to be trendsetting. I am not content unless I am blazing a trail. If there is something that has been done, my goal is to do it better, faster and more efficient. I am a thinker and am always creating and figuring out a way to keep the attention on my clients and company. In my mind, there is no such thing as reaching a plateau. I will be re-inventing myself from the grave, shares Simms." Already seeking higher ground the Goddess of PR has changed her title to Superwoman 08.

"I gave so much of myself nearing the end of 2007, until I had an unwellcomed meltdown, shares Simms." The pressures of rebuilding her life and career, the challenges of raising her teenage son, the constant fight for professional respect, and figuring out her place between two cities are among the personal challenges that consumed her. She was forced to face every fear, pain, doubt and demon that she had ignored. Simms credits Alicia Keyes for the new Superwoman title that Simms borrowed from a song off Keyes latest album I AM. Simms finds inspiration daily in the song title, lyrics and chorus which simply say "Even when I'm a mess, I still put on a vest with an 'S' on my chest, I'm a Superwoman! Yes I am, yes you are!"

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