

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

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Page 8



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The Soul of New Orleans

Three Years Later

**Not Just the Levees Broke:
My Story During and
After Hurricane Katrina**

Phyllis Montana-LeBlanc



Page 2



Newsmaker

Louisiana Announces
Critical Road Home
Deadline in September

Page 4

Trailblazer

Robert
"Kool Black"
Horton



Page 11

Three Years Later: Not Just the Levees Broke: My Story During and After Hurricane Katrina

Phyllis Montana-LeBlanc



LeBlanc stands in front of the Lafitte Public Housing Development, which is being demolished.

By: Edwin Buggage
Photos by Jamie Jones

New Orleans May 7, 1718 - August 28, 2005.

Before August 29, 2005 and throughout history, New Orleans was known as a colorful, vibrant place with a heartbeat and pace of life all its own. It had a leisurely way of life that valued human relationships, neighborhoods, and families. It was a place where on any given day you could find a people, regardless of their economic circumstances, celebrating the simple wonders that life has to offer.

But much has changed since those storied days, where the timeless, antiquated beauty of New Orleans, the smell of gumbo, the blaring dissonant sounds of a brass band and the warm and friendly people added to a tapestry that made the city a

cultural mecca, and a place unlike any other in the U.S.

In the city's darkest hour, Hurricane Katrina's wrath took a city to its knees, and the breaching of the levees washed away much of what people worked for their entire lives. Homes, containing the memories of one's life experiences, where loved ones shared in the joys and pains of life were swept away in an instant leaving behind a people who are still trying to make sense of their existence that has been changed forever.

Today, New Orleans stands as a place where the pace of the recovery is not to the likings of many, where bureaucracy and the politics of old have gotten in the way of a faster recovery. New Orleans is a tale of two cities. It is a mix of fixed and broken homes and neighborhoods, and it is a blend of development and destruction that dances a strange tango in a city trying to get back to a sense of nor-

malcy. And three years later it has left a people trying to repair a breach that has left many hearts and souls broken.

Not Just the Levees Broke

With the destruction, not just the levees broke but a way of life. *Not Just the Levees Broke: My Story During and After Hurricane Katrina* is the title of a new book by Phyllis Montana-LeBlanc, who is well known for her candid heartfelt words in Spike Lee's documentary, *When the Levees Broke*. In the book she recounts the tumultuous days of Hurricane Katrina, and her family's struggle to survive. It is a gripping book capturing the essence of what happened during those horrible days where many lost hope, and some lost their lives and loved ones.

LeBlanc is a product of the culture of New Orleans; her family is deeply steeped in the Mardi Gras Indian tradition as she counts as her relatives

Continued next page.

INSIDE DATA

Cover Story	2	Health.	10
Newsmaker	4	Trailblazer	11
State & Local.	5	@Issue	12
Data Zone	8	National News	14
In The Spirit	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	Contributors	Contributing
CEO/Publisher	Harry C. Alford	Photographers
Glenn Jones	Edwin Buggage	Jamie Jones
VP Advertising & Marketing	Raghan Durousseau	Editorial Submissions
Edwin Buggage	Aaron E. Harold	datanewseditor@
Editor-in-Chief	Cheryl Mainor	bellsouth.net
Shaniece Bickham	Glenn Summers	Advertising Inquiries
Managing Editor	Art Direction & Production	datanewsad@bellsouth.net
June Hazeur	MainorMedia.com	
Accounting		

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Continued from previous page.



New Orleans' culture is grounded in Mardi Gras, second lines and close-knit families. LeBlanc remembers all of these characteristics as uniquely New Orleans and can relate to each of them.

late 'Big Chief' Allison 'Tootie' Montana and 'Chief' Daryl Montana. She is as forthright about her feelings about what has happened in the past three years as she was in Spike Lee's documentary, and her speech is spiced with the rhythms and tones that are uniquely New Orleans.

"After the roof had come off our apartment, and this was the fourth day, we realized no one was coming to get us and we had to fend for ourselves," said LeBlanc as she recounted what happened during the Hurricane and the journey she and her family experienced. "We even had someone in helicopters who we spoke with asking for help to get to safety and they left us there."

Because of the lack of help like many people during the storm, Montana and her family along with others worked together to try to get to safety.

"We used refrigerators and put the elderly people and the children in them and floated them to higher ground on Hayne Boulevard because there wasn't any water over there yet, but as we walked the water was up to my neck," said LeBlanc. "I can still remember the smell. It was like being locked in a port-a-let at Jazzfest for three days... the water reeked of feces."

Chaos and Confusion

After going to the UNO Lakefront campus where they slept outside for two days with her husband Ron LeBlanc, who gallantly helped loads of people to safety, things began to fall apart for Phyllis.

"As we were sleeping outside I started having dreams that a body of black water was talking to me telling me to come in, as if to drown me," said LeBlanc. "That's how bad it was. I started hallucinating and going into an emotional breakdown."

After being there and upon

hearing there would not be anymore pick-ups, they walked to the New Orleans Lakefront Airport in pitch darkness as their lives hang in the balance as people began to lose hope.

"We didn't know what was going to happen. I just couldn't believe that something like this could actually be happening. I thought it was some kind of nightmare, but unfortunately it was real," said LeBlanc.

Rescue and Racism Collide

The issue of race is a problem that America continues to grapple with even in the 21st century. The thorns of racial misunderstanding stuck the people of New Orleans as the rescue was taking place, as the victims were being treated differently on the basis of race, according to LeBlanc.

"It was mostly Black people who were there, but people of other races were there as well, but I thought to myself that they just forgot about us, that no one cared about the Black people of New Orleans and they just left us there to die," said LeBlanc.

After leaving New Orleans and going to San Antonio, Texas, LeBlanc recounts how rescue workers treated people differently based on race.

"When they were giving out things, the Whites were requesting things and got them, and when Blacks did the same thing they would not comply with our request. I felt humiliated and less than human at that moment."

LeBlanc said that she was upset by the categorization of New Orleans people as refugees. "Here we are tax-paying American citizens and they are calling us refugees. That was something that really bothered me and made me really feel our government [city and state] had failed us."

LeBlanc also took offense when former first lady Barbara Bush stated that a lot of people in New Orleans are better off than

they were before the storm and breaching of the levees.

"I couldn't believe she could say such a thing, but it just shows the level of ignorance that some people have, that they thought the people of New Orleans—Black People—were just sitting around collecting welfare and that couldn't be further from the truth," LeBlanc said.

Spike Lee and When the Levees Broke

LeBlanc became a metaphor for the collective pain, suffering, and struggle many people went through during Hurricane Katrina. Her impassioned words rang of uncomfortable truths about what happened during the storm and its aftermath. She talked of how she came to be part of the project.

"I was called by one of Spike's assistants and told them my story, then eventually I met Spike Lee and they wanted me to tell my story, and said just be yourself. So I simply told my story and it connected with what a lot of people were feeling and I was glad to be part of the project," said LeBlanc.

As the film wrapped up LeBlanc recited a poem that encapsulated much of the angst that people were feeling about what happened to them. Lee put her in contact with an agent that helped her land a book deal to tell her story to the world.

"I am grateful to Spike and all he has done. He is a wonderful person, and I am glad to say that he is more than a great filmmaker, he has become a mentor and a friend," she said.

Recovery and Redemption

LeBlanc like many other New Orleanians is not satisfied with the pace of the recovery, but she does see some progress from when she first came back into the city.

"In three years I think more



LeBlanc in front of Dooky Chase's.

one person could have handled something so big. But I have learned that if this happens again that people must do what they have to do to take care of themselves because there is no guarantee that government will be there to assist," LeBlanc said.

In addition what has happened has tested her and made her a better and stronger person. "I was always a strong person and this has transformed my life. Today I am more prayerful and I feel blessed to have my husband Ron," she said.

LeBlanc has recently moved into her home in New Orleans East after living in a trailer since returning to the city. She said that despite everything, there is no place like New Orleans.

"It is all I know, it is home. I love my city and the people, and I hope it can change and become better, but still have the things that make the city special," said LeBlanc.

With a voice sounding upbeat and the staccato phrasing like a Mardi Gras Indian chant where all the words run together in a way that sometimes only those from New Orleans can understand, LeBlanc said, "I am glad to see some of the familiar things and hopefully memories of the storm will be just that someday, a distant memory. But it is something we should never forget as we go on [because] wherever we are, we are forever connected to New Orleans."

She feels she has not had time to mourn and cleanse herself of the memories of those horrific days. And sometimes still feels when storms come she relives the terror of the uncertainty of those moments where they did not know if they would live or die.

"I still have nightmares sometimes about what happened, and it is an everyday struggle, but like so many people I am a survivor and I will make it through this storm and I know brighter days are ahead," said LeBlanc.

Her words in the documentary cut like daggers and no holds were barred in her words, but today she said she has forgiven those who did a less than adequate job during the storm.

"I believe Mayor Ray Nagin did the best he could and no

Louisiana Announces Critical Road Home Deadline in September

BATON ROUGE - Road Home applicants who have not decided whether they will rebuild or sell their homes, who have not returned necessary documents or who have not provided proof of occupancy must do so by September 5, 2008, the state of Louisiana announced Wednesday.

Affected homeowners are being notified by letters beginning this week. This deadline affects several groups of homeowners:

3,100 who have not completed and returned a "Benefit Selection Form," commonly called the "yellow letter;"

1,800 who have yet to provide documents proving they occupied their homes at the time of the storms;

3,000 who have yet to provide ownership documents;

500 whose files are missing

other documents, such as social security cards.

"Though the Road Home has served more than 115,000 families since 2006, we have a few thousand who have not moved forward in the program. We want to help these homeowners take the next step toward receiving the rebuilding money they need, but we need their help to do this," said Paul Rainwater, executive director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority. "Homeowners should know that while this September 5 deadline is a reality, we will have Road Home staff travelling the state hosting information meetings during the month of August to assist them with moving forward."

"We want each applicant to get the rebuilding money he or she is eligible for under the Road

Home program, which is why these deadlines and this outreach is necessary. In our quest to improve customer service in the program as we move through its final year, we will be offering hands-on assistance to homeowners in the month of August to ensure that no homeowner who wants to continue to move forward is unable to do so," Rainwater said.

Each homeowner group will receive a letter outlining the action they need to complete by September 5, 2008. The largest group affected is those who have not yet notified the program of what they wish to do with their homes by returning a benefit selection form to the program. Homeowners have three options:

Option 1 - To stay in their home and rebuild;

Option 2 - To sell their home

to the state and purchase a new home within the state of Louisiana.

Option 3 - To sell their home to the state.

Several hundred homeowners who have not yet received their Benefit Selections Form will not be affected by this deadline. They will have a full 60 days from the time they receive their Benefit Selections Form to return it to the program and will be notified of such in a letter.

Homeowners who have not yet returned documents to the program have been notified multiple times in writing and by their Road Home representatives. Applicants with questions about which documents the program still needs from them should contact their Road Home representative or the Road Home hotline at 1-888-762-

3252 (TTY: 1-800-566-4224).

In addition to the letters, the Road Home will host outreach sessions across south Louisiana during the month of August. During the sessions applicants can turn in documents, complete benefit selection forms and ask questions directly of program staff, without scheduling an appointment, on a first-come, first-served basis.

Applicants should watch the newspaper for announcements of dates, locations and times for these outreach events. The Road Home will also send reminder post cards with information about outreach events.

Applicants with questions can contact the Road Home at 1-888-762-3252 (TTY: 1-800-566-4224) or go online to www.Road2La.org.

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Three Years Later ...

In Their Own Words



Charles "CharlieV" Vaughn Jr. Reflections On Hurricane Katrina

Although I'm truly blessed overall to be where I am today (Douglasville Ga.), I would've NEVER thought that I'd be living any other place on earth besides New Orleans, La.

There was a time I used to consider taking trips to Baton Rouge, La. & Woodville Miss. an "extreme road trip," which were only 1 1/2- 2 1/2 hour drives really,until now. Like many of my native New Orleanians, I rarely left the confines of the city until now. It feels as though I have two lives, one from birth until August 28, 3:48 pm, 2005 (the exact time me & my mother left the city) and the other, from August 29, 2005until now. Hurricane Katrina changed not only my life but in one clean sweep, tossed the entire city, state and gulf coast region in disarray. The after effects show in the perception of the city, the culture, politics, and stereotypes (No I'm still NOT A damn refugee!).

There's not a day that goes by, when I'm not thinking or talking about "HOME" even though I've physically moved on, gotten married, picked up a new trade, and purchased a new home. There are moments when I feel I'm not at home. There are days I'm so pissed at how and why this happened, whether because of nature or by lack of government faith, until I just yell out in disgust!!! Some say it is a part of God's plan

to make a better people out of us who survived by taking us away from our comfort zone.

While we mourn or celebrate the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, it is still surreal to see TV advertisements of "Come home to Nawlin's" yet I will get my "hood updates" on the crime and mayhem still going on in the Big Easy...it depends on who you talk to I guess. Many have asked, "When are you comin' home to be a part of re-building, the city needs you?" I wish that I could be that cut and dry to just say "Hell yeah!!!! Save me a spot..Uptown here I come, ya heard me???" The reality is that I promised MYSELF that I would come back better than how I left. Meaning that....without me improving my own situation,... what good am I to came back to struggle just as much as before? I have a wife to take care of now, plus I see things differently in the long run.

Make no mistake....YES, I AM still an Uptown/Hollygrove/17th Ward New Orleanian to the bone gristle. I won't ever forsake the people and place that gave me my southern characteristics.

Someday I hope to return to what used to be OR seems to be a "Re-New Orleans". I just pray that it will be for the natives and not just another "tourist trap"....New Orleans will always be my homeYa Heard me?



Geralda B. Williams

My name is Gerelda B. Williams; I was born and raised in New Orleans, La. I lived there all my life...that is until Monday, August 29, 2005. I didn't evacuate the city due to the fact that my grandmother suffered a stroke just prior to the storm (she was hospitalized at Touro Infirmary) The day of the Hurricane, my mother and I went to the hospital to be with my grandmother. Hours before the hurricane hit an employee at the hospital told us that only one person could stay at the hospital. Neither I nor my mother wanted the other to be alone for the hurricane, so we decided since the hospital staff would take care of their patients we would go back to the five-plex where my grandmother, mom and I resided.

Upon returning to the house we found out that my son hadn't left the city like I thought he had. So the three of us decided to ride the storm out in my second-story house. I have never been through a major hurricane before, and while I don't see how some people have done it, I can certainly understand when they don't have the finances to go anywhere. They rely on their faith in God to bring them through. And on August 28, 2005 that's what we did. The sound of the hurricane is something that I'll always remember. I can recall the wind howling as the shingles were blown off the roof and the rain started leaking into

my bedroom. Of course we lost power, so we used a cordless radio to find out what was going on. I remember callers saying that there was a breach in the levees.

After the storm passed, we went outside like some of our neighbors did to see the damage. The sun was shining. Had it not been for the trees and other major debris in the street, you would thought that it had only been a thunderstorm. We prepared to get some rest for the night and just start early in the morning cleaning up and hopefully have our power restored. No such luck, my mother went downstairs early Monday morning (August 29) to check on her things. She called me and said to get my things, the levee had broke. I looked out my second floor window and I saw the water coming up through the man holes, coming up the streets merging together. We evacuated to the Superdome because the radio announcer said if you can get to the Superdome you will be evacuated out of the city.

We ended up sleeping on the bridge in our car outside of the Superdome like so many other people did. A National Guardsmen told us that the only way we would be evacuated was to get inside the Superdome. We didn't get inside until August 31. A few hours later we had to go back outside because the buses had arrived to evacuate us.

While leaving the city I saw all the damage that was done and I was thinking the water would go down and we could come home in a week or two.....Fast forward to August 2008, I now reside in Dallas with my husband, and my mother and two children live here as well. I'm still homesick for New Orleans. My husband and I faithfully return home in July for Essence and November for Thanksgiving. Although I'm making more money in the same profession here in Dallas than I did back home, I still miss so many things about home. Of course my family. Before the hurricane I would see family members on a daily basis, now we're spread out in Houston, Dallas, New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

The people in Dallas aren't friendly. There is no such thing as 'Southern Hospitality' here. It has taken me time to adjust to how rude they are, especially when I was taught to greet people when you see them. My husband and I talk about returning to Louisiana but probably not New Orleans. We tour different parts of the city each time we come home to see if there are any changes. I'm between a rock and a hard place. I don't like living in Dallas, but New Orleans isn't fully on the mend yet. I can see the slow process that's being made, though. For now, I'm in Dallas, but my heart will always be in New Orleans.

More Katrina storie, next page.

Three Years Later ...

In Their Own Words, continued...

In the three years after Hurricane Katrina my life has changed a great deal. Before Katrina I was in business and it was doing fairly well, and I was satisfied with the life I was living.

After the storm, I helped people in their time of need and was profiled on several programs and magazines for the things I was doing in the community. I soon realized that it was important for me to be a force for positive change. I feel we need to rebuild for the future, so I have started "Walk a Mile for a Child" where we pledge to give our young people the things they need to be successful because they are the future leaders of the city and the world. We must give them the tools to be responsible and respectable adults.

As a small businessperson still trying to rebuild my business,

I feel that not enough is being done by the city to help in that effort. The pace of the recovery has been slow, and far too many people have not returned. It is heartbreaking to go through my old neighborhood and see so many people who are not back, or talk to friends who have just given up on the city.

I think that one day the city will come back and hopefully it will be a better place, one without all the vices that it had pre and now during post-Katrina. So I am trying to do my part in trying to be part of the solution by giving back, and hope that people see what I am doing and mimic that and help somebody help themselves.

I believe that the city must change the way it does things. We cannot have a city or city government that does not help small

businesses, because we are the heartbeat of the economy of the city. This is not a big corporate city, so it is essential for them to give us opportunities and assistance to remain in business during these lean times as the city tries to recover.

I will always love my city and I plan to be here to see it become the place it can be and needs to be; a vibrant, thriving place where it is safe, with an economy that is not just tourist-based, but more family-oriented. I think that this can happen if people fight for such a thing to happen and put leaders in place with the vision, courage, and commitment to make that happen.

For those who are not here, keep New Orleans in your heart. Remember the good things about the city and wherever you are represent the best of what



Wilbert Wilson

and who we are. And for those who are back let's put our best foot forward and move beyond the things that divided us in the

past and work together and build a better tomorrow for all the people of the city of New Orleans. -



Bart Everson

For the past three years, I have regarded myself as extremely fortunate. That may sound odd coming from someone who had five feet of water in his house. But it's true. It's a testimony to just how much

widespread misery there is around here that I count myself lucky. And around this time of year, I find myself counting all the reasons why.

I was fortunate to know about Katrina before she hit. I

was educated enough to take the threat seriously. We had our own car so we were able to evacuate. We didn't get stuck in traffic. We found a place to stay, and when we realized we couldn't return immediately, we were able to bunk down with my in-laws. The community of Bloomington, Indiana, proved to be a very good place to end up, and we were very comfortable there. While we were there we were fortunate because all our needs were met never missing a meal or a night's sleep.

We didn't lose any loved ones in the flood. We were worried about some of our neighbors. A couple of older folks passed away in the following months. But we eventually learned that most of our neighbors were all right. However, they were now displaced, flooded out of their homes.

Yet we were able to move back home in short order. Our raised basement meant that our main floor was ten feet off the ground, and relatively undam-

aged. The roof didn't blow off either. We only got a hole where the attic fan was ripped away by the winds; another piece of our good

fortune. So we only lost half our possessions, not all of them.

We had flood insurance. What's more, our insurance company didn't try to screw us. Meanwhile, friends and neighbors got bogged down in extended legal wrangling with insurers who didn't want to pay out.

We found a contractor, an old friend whom I knew I could trust. He wasn't always the most organized or punctual or competent, and the renovation of our house took much longer than expected. But he didn't screw us either. He got the work done — finally. Meanwhile, friends

and neighbors were getting ripped off by unscrupulous contractors.

I didn't lose my job, but I knew plenty of people who did. My wife's school did not reopen

immediately after Katrina (it was being used as SWAT headquarters) but she found work at another school quickly.

We've all been under some stress in these trying times, but we have been less stressed than others. We cherish our physical and mental well-being.

The birth of our daughter this February, our first and only child, sealed the deal. We feel we are fortunate, lucky in fact.

All of this led me to remark recently that we'd made a full and complete recovery. But that's not quite right.

One thing I've learned through the calamity and crisis is that we're all in this together. We're all connected. As long as so many of my fellow New Orleanians are still struggling, none of us have truly recovered. We need to work to recognize our underlying unity, find our common interests, and act together. We need an equal opportunity recovery.

School Officials Unveil Draft Blueprint to Rebuild Public Schools in New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS, La. – A draft blueprint for rebuilding public schools in New Orleans proposes a multi-phase school construction program over the next decade, including a fully funded \$685 million initial phase that would build or completely renovate 28 schools within five years.

A joint effort of the Recovery School District and the Orleans Parish School Board, the preliminary proposal, Building 21st Century Schools for New Orleans: A Blueprint, was announced earlier this week at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) in New Orleans. State Superintendent of Education Paul Pastorek, New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS) Superintendent Darryl Kilbert, and Recovery School District (RSD) Superintendent Paul Vallas unveiled the draft of the proposed blueprint.

Some projects included in the first phase of the draft blueprint

are a departure from the kind of educational facilities typically seen in New Orleans. They include a proposal for a citywide NASA Laboratory School near the NASA-Michoud Assembly Facility in eastern New Orleans, a citywide Biology, Botany and Reproductive Science Laboratory Center on the grounds of the Audubon Institute's Center for Research of Endangered Species (ACRES) site in lower Algiers, and a downtown International School that would make use of renovated space in multiple buildings, including the ArtWorks building and the CAC. On Monday, school officials briefed the media on the draft blueprint in the atrium of the CAC, 900 Camp Street.

"The blueprint outlines a plan for school construction on a scale that has not been seen in New Orleans since John McDonogh's bequest led to a significant building program beginning in the

mid-19th century," said State Superintendent of Education Paul Pastorek. McDonogh's 1850 endowment facilitated the construction of more than 30 public schools in New Orleans spanning several decades. "Katrina dealt this city and its schools a devastating blow, but this nearly \$700 million investment will allow the city to build back stronger and better than before," Pastorek added.

"In the aftermath of Katrina, tragedy has given way to many positive signs of recovery and meaningful reform - especially in the area of education," said General Douglas O'Dell, Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding. "The parents of New Orleans and their children deserve nothing less than a world-class education system that enables them to make choices. This blueprint for rebuilding schools is the result of exactly the kind of leadership and community involvement that

is needed to drive the rebuilding of 21st Century infrastructure in the City of New Orleans. The plan is both businesslike and visionary, and I applaud the dedication of Paul Pastorek and the residents of Orleans Parish in making tough decisions to focus existing resources on meeting future needs."

While all schools will have clean, safe and modern interiors, officials said, when Phase 1 is completed, 50% of the students in elementary and high schools will attend schools in a state-of-the-art learning facility. Currently, only about 9 percent of the city's public school students are in facilities that would be considered in "very good condition."

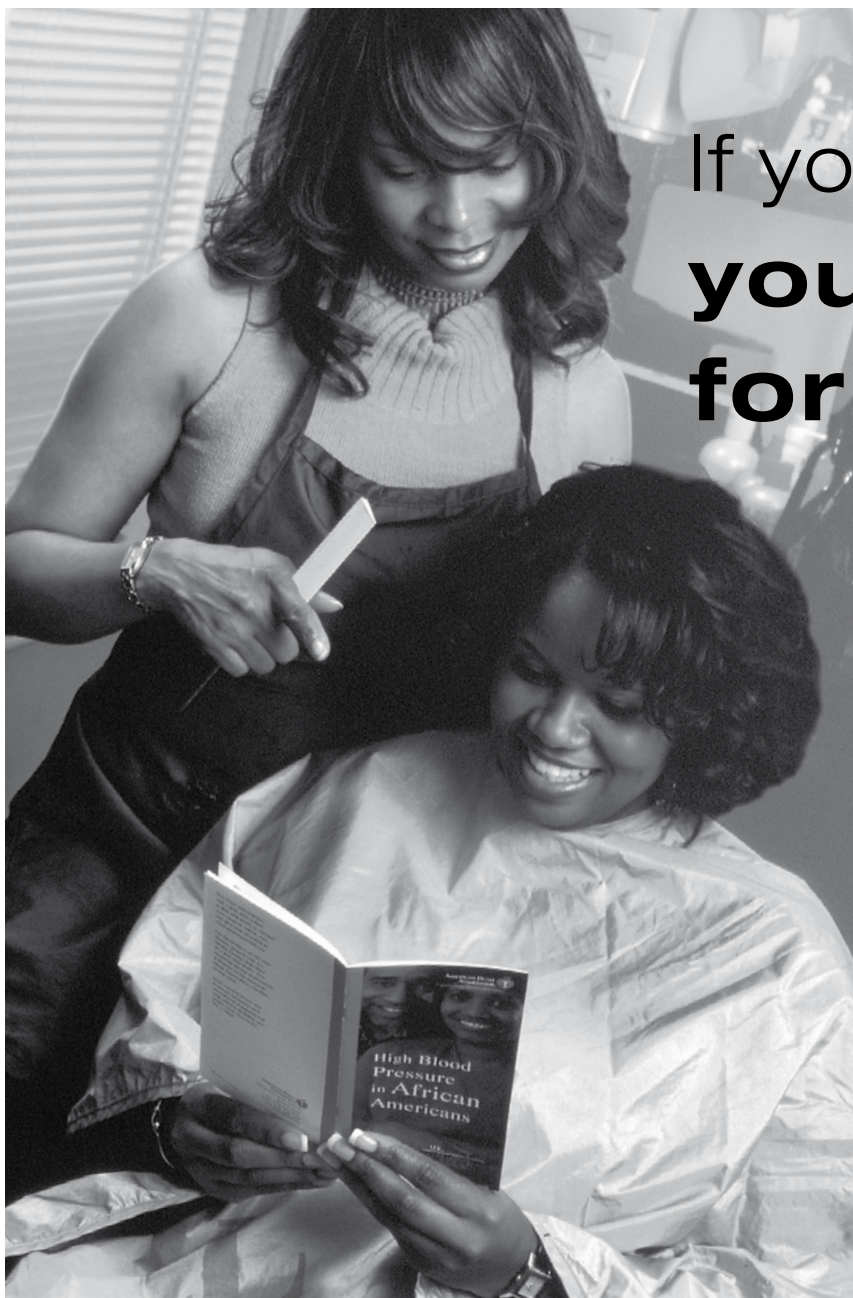
"This draft plan will represent our community's commitment to make a major investment in the future of public education in New Orleans," said NOPS Superintendent Darryl Kilbert. "It's impor-

tant for us to strategically place those resources into the types of school projects that will benefit not only this generation of children, but generations of children to come."

Added RSD Superintendent Paul Vallas, "Our goal is to put all children in superior learning environments. We want all of the public school buildings in New Orleans to be of world-class condition, but it is important for people seeing these preliminary recommendations to understand that to there are considerable costs involved."

Officials said the proposal considers the city's needs for modernized facilities that can accommodate 21st century educational requirements and that support current and projected student populations. The draft blueprint is the result of a year-long planning

Continued on page 12.



If you are an African American, you are at high risk for heart disease.

Hear disease is the No. 1 killer of African Americans. This year alone, over 100,000 blacks will die from cardiovascular disease.

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To learn more about heart disease, take the Learn and Live Quiz by calling **1-888-AHA-2222** or visit **www.americanheart.org**.

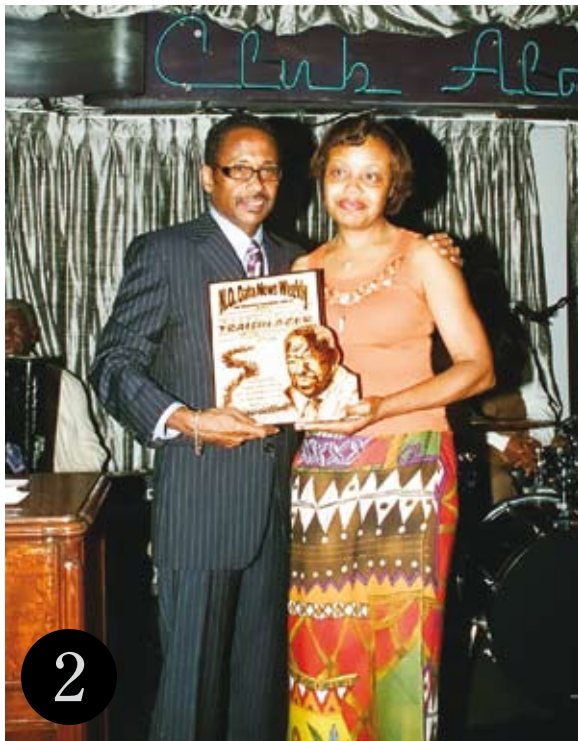
Wherever you are, start a conversation to stop heart disease. Share knowledge and encourage people to live healthier lives. You might help someone lower their risk — or save a life.

American Heart Association® 
Learn and Live™

Data News Weekly's 42nd Anniversary Gala Highlights

In the last issue, we included several pictures from our 42nd Anniversary Gala showcasing attendees, honorees, and sponsors. Here are even more highlights from the event.

Photos by Alfred Peters



1. Data News Weekly's Staff - Pictured from left to right are Terry B. Jones, Publisher, Shaniece Bickman, Managing Editor, Edwin Buggage, Editor, Glenn Summers, Photographer, June Hazeur, Accounts Receivables. **2.** Terry B. Jones, Publisher, Data News Weekly presented the Trailblazer of the Year Award to Gwendolyn H. Richardson, this years recipient. **3.** Trailblazer Harold X Evans and Keith Hitchens of AT&T.



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Sommore's The Queen Stands Alone Debuts Worldwide on Comedy Central

Comedienne, writer, producer and entrepreneur SOMMORE's worldwide premiere of "The Queen Stands Alone," will debut on Comedy Central on Saturday, September 13, 2008. Written and produced by Sommore and One Thousand Kisses, Inc., "The Queen Stands Alone" is a film version of her stand-up act and will be followed by the Vivendi Universal and CodeBlack Entertainment's DVD/Home Video release on Tuesday, September 30, 2008.

The undisputed "Queen of Comedy" is excited about the release of her long-awaited comedy special.

"This is a show that I've waited oh so long to do," explains Sommore. "Over the years, I had other offers, but I turned them down because I felt that I wasn't ready at that point in my career. Comedy Central is a perfect fit. I really challenged myself with this special. I produced it and it is just fabulous."

With the landmark deal of premiering of "The Queen Stands Alone" on Comedy Central, the comedienne/entrepreneur landed one of the highest paydays for a female comedian at the network [alongside comedienne Sarah Silverman].

This trendsetting, highly-acclaimed veteran entertainer is widely considered one of America's top comedic female entertainers. With a winning combination of class and sass, Sommore offers audiences a hilarious, yet piercing look at today's issues from a woman's perspective. She is frank and fearless in her routines, tackling topics that range from the mundane to the controversial with wit, intelligence and style.

Praised by critics, respected by her peers, and adored by a diverse fan base, she performs her stand-up act to sold-out audiences across the country, and she is among the top-grossing stand-up comedienesses. Oprah proclaimed her "a force to be reckoned with in the new millennium."

The New Jersey-native has had a meteoric rise to the top of her field and has been a trailblazer for women in the comedy business. She is the recipient of the Richard Pryor Award for Comic of the Year (1995). Sommore was the first woman to host BET's "Comic View," and she hosted Russell Simmons' "Def Comedy Jam" as well as "Showtime at the Apollo."

As part of the record-breaking "Queens of Comedy" tour in 2000, she garnered a wider fan base and was registered in Guinness' Book of World Records when she performed to a captivated audience of nearly 50,000 people in Atlanta, Georgia. The 2001 made-for-television movie based on that tour was the highest-rated and longest running special in the history of the Showtime Network. As well, Sommore was the only female comic featured in the "Latham Entertainment Presents" tour in 2002.

In addition to her stand-up performances, Sommore has also appeared in several films including Friday After Next (2002), Family Reunion (2002), Soul Plane (2004), Something New (2006) and Dirty Laundry (2007); and has appeared as a featured guest on television shows including "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," "The View," "Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher," CNN Headline News, and was profiled on Comedy Central's "Special Women in Comedy" program.

Sommore participated in season six of VH1's "Celebrity Fit Club," was cast as the cornerstone for the "mob" with Bob Saget for the NBC primetime show "1 vs 100," appeared as the special guest star on this season's MTV's "Nick Cannon's Wild N' Out," and hosted "Live at Gotham" for Comedy Central.

Before she became a comedy star, the Morris Brown College graduate earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and mathematics and taught algebra in the Atlanta public school system. She also owned and operated several businesses in Atlanta, including a clothing store, a shoe store, and a store that featured imported food and specialty products from Africa.

Sommore is also currently producing a documentary, developing several other projects for television and continues to perform her stand-up routine at venues across the country.



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Health

African-Americans and HIV: Are We Still Paying Attention?



Marc Morial
President & CEO
National Urban League

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released a report showing that new HIV infections are 40 percent higher than previously estimated, with the majority of new infections occurring among African-Americans.

African-Americans make up only 13 percent of the population, yet account for 45 percent of all new HIV infections. The CDC report begs the question: As the face of AIDS in America has turned increasingly Black, have our federal government and many of our fellow citizens simply stopped paying attention?

About 600,000 African-Americans are now HIV positive and as many as 30,000 are infected each year. According to an analysis by the Black Aids Institute, despite extraordinary improvements in HIV treatment, AIDS remains the leading cause of death among Black women aged 25-34, and the second leading cause of death among Black men aged 35-44. Blacks make up 70 percent of new HIV cases among teenagers and 65 percent of HIV-infected newborns.

At a time when the actions of our federal government and others are resulting in fewer deaths and greater access to affordable antiretroviral drugs in places like Namibia and Cambodia, more Black Americans are living with AIDS than the infected populations in Botswana, Ethiopia, Guyana, Haiti, Namibia, Rwanda or Vietnam.

In fact, according to the Black AIDS Institute, if Black America were a country, it

would rank 16th in the world in the number of people living with HIV.

The Bush Administration should be applauded for its allocation of \$50 billion in new emergency AIDS funding for the global fight against the disease, but I agree with NBLCA president and CEO C. Virginia Fields' contention that the president's focus on combating HIV/AIDS overseas has not been matched with a commitment to fighting the epidemic here at home. We need better and more targeted prevention efforts.

We must also do more to promote needle exchange programs, improve testing in prisons and deal with issues like poverty, homelessness and drug abuse which are known incubators for the disease. But government can't do this job alone. We also however, must do more in our own communities to change behaviors and end the stigma and homophobia that keep us from reaching out to those in greatest need.

The CDC report should be a wakeup call to Washington and to every American. We can and we must reduce this trend.

The National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (NBLCA) has called for an emergency Congressional hearing on the implications of the CDC report. The group has also called on the presidential candidates to develop a national AIDS strategy and to make fighting the epidemic in Black America a high priority. The National Urban League stands with groups like the Black AIDS Institute and the Congressional Black Caucus, in issuing a national call to action. We must do more to protect our communities from this national epidemic.

In The Spirit

Relationships

What a Woman Wants



Dr. Aaron E. Harold
Data Columnist

Hi folks, I hope and pray that each one of you are having a happy and wonderful marriage. As for you that are not married, I hope that you are having a happy and wonderful relationship. If not, I want to talk to you men particularly about a few pointers that could help you and the women in your life to have a much better relationship. I want to talk for a little while about what a woman wants. In other words, what she wants from her man.

Yeah, I'm talking to you fellas who are not listening to what your lady is trying to tell you. Try this; put the newspaper down, turn off the TV, get off the computer. Those things are not going away, they will still be there. As a matter of fact, listen to me fellas, they're surely not as important as your wife and your lady and the relationship that you are in. Maybe for some of you, this is why your relationship is not what it is today. So please, just listen to me for a little while.

First, a woman wants to know that you appreciate her for who she is and not for what she could be. When I was in high school, I had this friend that I knew. He was dating this girl that came from a very prominent family. He told me that she really cared about him and many times she would tell him how much she loved him when he would have a bad day in a game. She would hold him tight and tell him how lucky the team was to have him as a player. He said he liked how that made him feel on the inside.

He wanted to tell her how he appreciated her for being there for him, but he

didn't know how she would respond to it. One day, he finally built up the nerve with his six foot- three, two-hundred and fifteen pound frame and finally told her how much he cared and loved her. The response that she gave him was that she was waiting to hear that for a long time and how happy it made her feel. Look fellas, our women, our wives, just want us to bring out the best in them, and for them to know that we care. It's not so much the big things that they want, but it's the little things that they want from us.

For instance, taking out the trash when it's time, without begging you. Here's one-when was the last time you washed or vacuumed her car or truck? My guess, it has been a while. Here's another thing a woman wants; she wants to know that you have confidence in her. I know that she may not be perfect, but you're not either. When she knows that you have extreme confidence in her, it will make a big difference in her and the relationship.

You must bring out the best in her so that she will know without a doubt that you care and love her. A woman wants to know that in spite of her shortcomings that you are still going to be there for her. The dinner that she worked hard to prepare-and maybe it didn't taste like mama's-but she still needs to know that you appreciate her for trying. Listen fellas, a woman wants you to bring out the best in her and when you do that the relationship will go to a new level of fulfillment.

In closing, fellas when was the last time you held her and told her that you loved her and meant it? When was the last time you touched her passionately and held her hands? When was the last time you took her out on a date and gave her flowers? Oh, and one more thing, take the time out to be sensitive to her needs and not just yours, because the old saying is that "whatever you sow into, that's what you are going to reap." You can't make a withdrawal from the relationship until you truly learn how to deposit into it. These are some of things a woman wants. God Bless and have a prosperous relationship.

trailblazer

Robert "Kool Black" Horton

"Fighting the Righteous Fight"

Edwin Buggage
Data Editor-in-Chief

The August Trailblazer is a story of perseverance, and the ability to change one's life for good. Robert "Kool Black" Horton changed his life from being once caught up in drugs and violence to helping people around the city and the world in the fight for justice.

For nearly two decades he has been at the forefront fighting for the rights of the disenfranchised. Robert "Kool Black" Horton is a native of New Orleans, La. Horton is a veteran community organizer, and has been organizing for the past 17 years. He feels that it is important that people get involved in posing solutions to the problems in their community.

"Over the years I have tried to work with community groups and individuals to help give them a voice, because sometimes the voices of those who lack resources often doesn't have access or information so that's been my goal is to give them that," said Horton.

Horton is a Core-Trainer for the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, a national multi-racial anti-racist organization that focuses on systemic oppression based on race, anti-racist organizing, and leadership development. Also, since 1994 onto present, Horton has been active as Co-founder and Director of Black Men United for Change, Justice, and Equity Inc., a citywide based grassroots organization established to combat racism, black on black violence, employment disparities, police brutality, and policies that negatively impact fathers and families which all have plagued the African-American community.

"It is important we work more closely with Black Men in helping them because they have to deal with a set of circumstances in this country that are very different from other groups, and what we are trying to do is work closely with them

to eliminate the things that get in the way of Black men reaching their full potential and providing them with hope and opportunities to prosper," said Horton regarding his commitment to helping Black men.

In 1997, he co-founded the People's Youth Freedom School an anti-racist youth initiative of the People's Institute, which helped over 150 kids in New Orleans between ages 9 and 19 develop tools for anti-racist youth organizing. Today through the People's Institute, there are Freedom Schools around the country, including Native American Reservations.

"Some think after the Civil Rights Movement the struggle against racism was completed, but today we still face problem in regards to race, and I feel that to eradicate this thing that keeps us from moving forward we have to start with our young people and our program has been effective in doing just that," said Horton.

Horton has also been an active part of the leadership in the fight for Low-Income Affordable Housing, and the No Demolition Coalition.

"In post-Katrina New Orleans affordable housing has become a pressing issue and with the demolition of several public housing developments it has become an even worse problem, but it is something that needs to be addressed and we have been working hard to make sure that this issue stays on the agenda as the city rebuild," said Horton.

Robert Horton understands that there are problems within the criminal justice system where a disproportionate number of Black men trapped within it placing limitations on them once they

are released. So in response to that problem he has recently been working to eradicate that problem through Critical Resistance's Prisoners of Katrina Amnesty Campaign where he partnered with Safe Streets Strong Communities and the Public Defender's office to get over 400 hundred people's records expunged.

Since August of 2006, Horton has been fulfilling the role of Campaigns and Projects Director for Critical Resistance, a national grassroots prison abolition organization, where he has worked closely with human rights icon Angela Davis in building an international movement to end the Prison Industrial Complex (P.I.C.), by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people is will solve the things that plagues the society. "I feel that locking people up is not the way to make a society safe, and I think it is the failure of so many other things that needs to be addressed, education, community, family as well as a host of other things as opposed to just locking people up for profit."

Robert "Kool Black" Horton has been a dedicated advocate for the disenfranchised as he continues to fight the righteous fight for equality and fairness.

He is a courageous and selfless advocate empowering people with the tools to make their lives better. He is one who has taken a stand to make things happen and not sit passively by and accept the status quo. For all he has done for the city of New Orleans and the world in the struggle for human rights Robert "Kool Black" Horton is New Orleans Data News Weekly Trailblazer for the month of August.



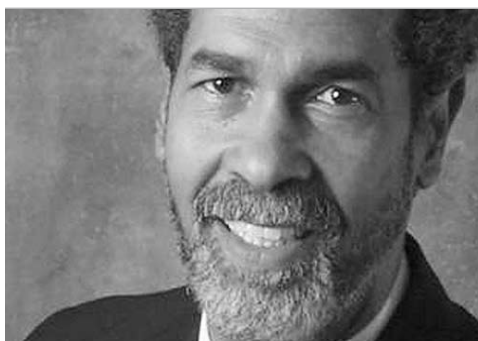
Robert "Kool Black" Horton

JMJ
Joseph M. Jones
Continuing Education Fund



About Obama

Pessimistic but Still Hopeful



The Love Dr.
Data Columnist

My life has coincided with the “enlightenment” of America about its own racial inequities and the ever changing policies about how to correct the inequities that resulted from the inability of an enslaved people to create capital and law enforced racial discrimination in the south that had persisted since the end of the Federal occupation of the south after the Civil War. Over my life time public policy has swung from grants and aid flowing like milk and honey to all who qualified to student loan burdens that define life and limit the goals of too many young people. I was blessed to have been educated and learned most of my craft during the brief period of outright victory for those who believed in many social theories that also became popular during this time. If you needed money to learn something and

couldn't afford it you could often get grants to cover even living expenses.

Now at 57, I see life being more difficult for my children and grandchildren. For God's sake, I had a GI Bill loan guarantee and a “first black” job as a radar and radio technician working tugboats and ships and shipyards in the area. I was the first and only one while I did the work and that kind of employment with the GI Bill had me in a home by the time I was twenty five. Lived there while pursuing additional training and eventually turned the equity in that house into the business I've run ever since, but now from a much nicer place.

My pessimism is based on the present state of affairs in government. I must say that I'm a bit confused about the Barack Obama candidacy. Confused to the point of developing a theory about European-Americans, that in the south the scars of the ass whipping they got by the Feds and the humility they

suffered during their occupation, imagine Blacks elected to office, dressing like dandies, telling White folk what to do. I truly believe that Americans are finally fed up and have recognized that you cannot trust powerful Republicans who have demonstrated only one real interest, helping the wealthy abuse the poor, the environment, public airways, working people, professional people... So I know that people are peoed about the way the Republicans have run roughshod over their economy and their children's futures, but are they peoed enough to elect a man, who is black, to the White House. (noticed how even I have learned to diminish the significance of his blackness lest I be accused of weighing down his campaign)

Actually, I'm making sure I stay on the

right side of this one. I'm down with brother Obama. (oops I mean “I really believe that Obama represents the kind of major change its going to take to make this a country for the people, again”). No, nobody's going to be able to blame me if Barack should

lose out by only a state or so. What if it's his home state of Illinois? Man, you know that if it's really cold in Chicago and two to three percent of blacks don't vote, you know they're going to blame Jessie. No, not me. I'm supporting and voting for Barack Obama. If you hear anything different, it's a malicious lie.

Back to my theory. I hate to draw even a cultural distinction less someone believe that I believe that you can stereotype people, but the culture of groups has a large effect on behavior and choices by a group of people. There are places in America where there literally are no hard feelings or guilt about race between blacks and whites because there wasn't ever a legal system that made a difference, or a foreign occupation. Unfortunately, my experience has been dominated by living in the south. Even my time in the military was spent in the south. So, I really don't have a lot of interaction with people, black or white, to whom your race would play no role in their decisions about you, from business circles to social invitations.

So every time someone tells me that Barack Obama is well ahead in some poll, I have to consider that there are European-Americans in this country that will not even flinch about voting for a brilliant young man who represents such a needed major change, and I am certain there are others who will look

past his color because we just can't have another four years of Republicans setting national policy.

On the other hand! Those of you who have watched our TV show, Between The

Lines, will know that I have declared the white people of Louisiana to be the dumbest white people in America. They have consistently done everything to destroy public education since it was integrated. They have elected “conservatives” believing that it means conserving their way of life “white

supremacy”, which is a way to make the poorest, illiterate trailer trash accept having nothing, because at least he wasn't a n____. They don't pay attention to the fact that rich folk have it better and food stamps don't go as far as they did and its Republicans that have put the screws to poor and working people.

Even here, in Louisiana there are many exceptions to the rule, so please don't accuse me of classifying individuals, but you have to admit that one of the poorest states in the union consistently has voted for Republican presidential candidates, the party that always tries to eliminate taxes and spend humongous amounts of money on military stuff, but they were not progressive about race issues. I have little hope for Obama in Louisiana, but like the cliché, I really do hope I'm wrong. It would be great to have my lack of faith in the judgment of southern whites rebuked. I would be a welcome addition to my limited experiences, and might even lift my pessimism.

Public Schools, Continued from Page 7.

process that included a study of population trends and projects, an assessment of building conditions and locations of currently open schools, and the identification of existing and potential rebuilding funds. The planning process also included 20 public meetings and numerous meetings with neighborhood and school interest groups from the fall of 2007 to the spring of 2008.

On Tuesday, August 19, the draft blueprint was presented to the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) during the State Authorized School Oversight Committee meeting. This committee meeting will take place in Baton Rouge at 11 a.m. at the Claiborne Building, 1201 North Third Street. Also Tuesday, the

blueprint will be presented to the Orleans Parish School Board at its regular monthly meeting. The meeting will take place at 5 p.m. at McDonogh #35 High School, 1331 Kerlerec Street.

A series of public hearings will take place over the next two months. No final recommendation will be made to BESE or OPSB until officials are confident there has been ample time in which to receive and consider public comment.

“When you try to put together a blueprint of this magnitude, some difficult decisions are going to have to be made, especially considering the great needs that existed before and after the storm and the funding that is available,” Pastorek said. “Our needs greatly exceed the resources we cur-

rently have. However, this is a very significant down payment on the future of our city and our children.”

The proposal's total cost is an estimated \$1.7 billion (in today's dollars). Phase 1 could be fully paid for using Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Partial funding is available to implement Phase 2, which includes 18 proposed school projects. School officials say additional funding sources would have to be identified to fully fund Phase 2 and subsequent phases. However, such additional funding could come from federal, state, local or non-profit sources.

“The proposal considers all public schools in New Orleans,

without regard to governance,” Superintendent Pastorek continued. “We're not building schools for the OPSB, we're not building schools for the RSD, nor are we building schools for charters. We are building schools for the city of New Orleans. The names of the schools will be evaluated at a later date. We will put together a policy that will determine how the process will work.”

The blueprint recommends neighborhood elementary schools, spaced roughly a half mile apart, so that the schools are within walking distance. It also recommends the city have career-focused high schools that are fewer in number and attract students from across the region. It also considers whether sites have sufficient acreage to create

facilities such as gymnasiums, auditoriums and libraries that could be used by the public.

Phase 1 includes previously identified projects scheduled to be completed over the next two-three years, including Langston Hughes, Andrew H. Wilson, Fannie C. Williams, Lake Area, L.B. Landry, Joseph Craig, Lawrence D. Crocker, William J. Guste and Edward Hynes. Construction has been completed on Guste and is currently underway at Hughes and Wilson.

The draft blueprint also proposes that the following elementary schools be rebuilt or renovated: Mahalia Jackson, Audubon, Bienville, Parkview, Charles J. Colton, William Frantz, Edwards/Moton, Little Woods, Mildred Osborne, Lake Forrest, Alice Harte. One

The Struggle for Party Unity at the Democratic Convention



Ron Walters
Data Columnist

campaign, they are still a force within the Democratic party and while he is campaigning, Obama needs them to not make waves.

Notice I did not say that he needed them to win, because he is doing very well in the polls against John McCain and, all things considered, he might be able to win without their active support. But if they muddy the waters, by crying that Hillary's constituents are not respected and if Bill keeps pouting, that conflict will most surely detract from Obama's credibility among some voters, perhaps just enough to cause him the election.

So, what the heck, give Hillary and Bill speaking roles at the Convention. However, I would not have given them both prime-time slots. I would have put Bill on Monday morning out of prime and Hillary on Tuesday in prime; that would have left Thursday for Obama's VP choice and Friday evening for his speech.

Then, it's ok by me to put Hillary's name in nomination. It puts Obama in the powerful position of allowing her historic primary effort for women to acquire some dignity. But it is also not unusual in that the names of other candidates such as Congresswoman.

Shirley Chisolm in 1972 and Rev. Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988, were put in nomination even though it was known they

would not win. In any case, the fear that Hillary would "accidentally" be nominated is far-fetched by those who know how conventions operate. The nominee-to-be controls every thing that is said from the convention podium, and his advisers, many of whom are superdelegates, control most of the state delegations which, in turn, are controlled by the Obama campaign. So, only so many votes could "accidentally" be cast for Hillary. The second issue is who else speaks and I have suggested that Black voting America, who will constitute 20 percent of the Democratic party total and thereby make a serious difference, should have a clear and unequivocal voice speaking from the podium that characterizes the condition of the Black community and projects its policy demands into the political system. Blacks are used to making demands on nominees, but it may be difficult to do it this time, because they are so afraid it may cost Obama victory.

Nevertheless, I believe that either Rev. Jackson, Rev. Al Sharpton or someone like that should speak at the Convention. Both are former candidates for the Democratic Nomination for president, both have given one of the best speeches at previous conventions and both are recognized leaders today. I fear that the tendency may be to give this task over to one of what is wrongly called the "post-civil rights," "post-Black" –

post-everything Black, institutionally controlled leaders who will stand up and give a compromised view of where the black community stands at this point in history.

Of course, the major media would love it. They desperately desire the Corey Bookerization of Black leadership because it validates their power and ultimately their perspective. I say this not to denigrate the Mayor of Newark, but to emphasize the many views of journalists who approve of this style as representative of a new, race-neutral, non-confrontational, technocratic, style of Black leadership.

For Blacks to lose this opportunity to speak truth to America from this vantage point could put a seriously flawed façade on "party unity." But regardless, almost everyone will leave Denver happy that history for women and for Barack Obama has been made.

Dr. Ron Walters is the Distinguished Leadership Scholar, Director of the African 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)

Public Schools, Continued from previous page.

as yet undetermined elementary school is also proposed.

New or renovated high schools proposed in Phase 1 include Booker T. Washington, a new school on the Philips/Waters site, a citywide maritime/military academy, and a new school in the Lower Ninth Ward. Phase 1 also recommends exterior renovation work to Warren Easton, Sarah T. Reed, and Fortier (which houses Lusher High School). Those school communities not funded in Phase 1 could look for funding from other sources and could apply for permission to proceed with construction projects earlier than projected, officials said.

In total, the blueprint proposes 67 elementary school sites (grades Pre-K to 8) and 17 high school sites (grades 9-12). Further, it proposes that 52 sites be "land-banked," meaning they could be retained for future use as schools or other district facilities, redeveloped for community use or converted to housing, office space or other public or private uses. Sites proposed for landbanking include 28 sites that are currently vacant and 24 sites currently

being used for schools.

The blueprint proposes a period between 2012 and 2016 when buildings currently occupied could be discontinued if the recommendations are implemented. Any buildings on landbanked property that are in excess of 51% damaged will be demolished. Any historic property or other important or valuable buildings will be repurposed, including the possibility that these properties may be sold to third parties and used for another purpose. Land-banked or repurposed schools could be made available to third parties to revive as a school, if permission is secured from the appropriate governing authority.

According to officials, the current inventory of public school buildings in New Orleans far exceeds existing enrollment, as well as projected student enrollment. This gap in enrollment and the number of schools has existed for more than 30 years. Since peaking at more than 100,000 students in the 1970s, enrollment in New Orleans declined steadily in the years before Hurricane Katrina; however, the number of schools – and the seats they provided –

did not decline. The seat capacity in New Orleans public schools exceeded the student enrollment by more than 40,000 seats before the storm.

"Clearly, adjustments should have been made before the storm," Pastorek said. "Now, they will be."

A total of 84 school projects are proposed. The projects are divided into phases, based on the understanding that it would be impossible – given funding limitations and construction capacities – to implement a blueprint of such magnitude all at once. Implementing the school rebuilding blueprint on a project-by-project basis may require the acquisition of additional land through land swaps or land purchases.

The proposals included in the blueprint are guided by the following considerations:

- desire of the community for the type of schools that they want
- educational requirements of the student; age and condition of buildings
- resources available
- need to quickly withdraw from temporary buildings.

"Phase 1 identifies where the greatest needs currently exist, driven by actual and projected demographics. One of our top priorities is getting students out of temporary modular buildings. We also want to focus on using our available resources on new construction that will get our students in state-of-the-art facilities," said Karen Burke, Deputy Superintendent of Operations for the Recovery School District.

The planning process began in the summer of 2007. Parsons, a management and planning firm, and Concordia, LLC., an architecture and planning firm located in New Orleans, were selected to develop the blueprint for rebuilding schools.

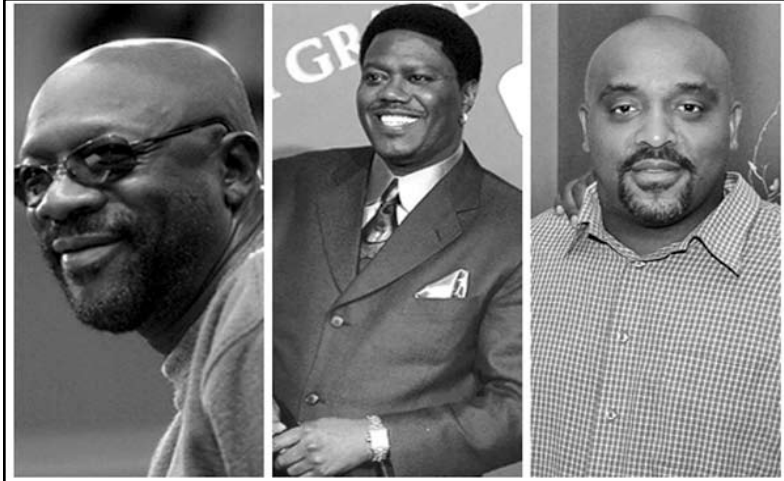
The final blueprint will be re-evaluated every two years to consider the actual demographics of the city to determine if changes should be made.

2008 'Soul Jam' Dedicated to Icons Hayes, Mac and Activist 'Bo' Taylor

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) - The annual Compton Soul Jam concert series took on an added significance last Saturday at its Par 3- Golf Course when it paid fitting tributes to star comedian Bernie Mac, musical legend Isaac Hayes and local peace icon Bo Taylor, all of whom died recently.

Their deaths - all days apart - left the African-American nation and the Los Angeles community with tremendous voids in the lives of many, particularly in their professions at which they were at the least among the elite.

Mac, who died on Aug. 9 in a Chicago hospital after complications relating to pneumonia, was a star comedian who became a television sitcom star in his highly acclaimed "The Bernie Mac Show" and on the motion picture screen in 2001 in "Ocean's Eleven" and the two sequels that followed. He was 50 years old.



His death had an immediate impact on Soul Jam because one of his close comedian friends DL Hughley was scheduled to perform, but had to cancel to attend a memorial in Mac's honor in Chicago on Aug. 16.

Ironically, Mac and Hayes recently completed filming a soon

to be released movie 'Soul Men,' also starring Samuel L. Jackson. The film, directed by Malcolm Lee, the cousin of Spike Lee, will be re-edited in an attempt to honor both Mac and Hayes.

"It goes without saying that Bernie was one of the pre-eminent comedians of our generation," said

Jackson. He was also an attentive husband, a great father and loving grandfather. I feel blessed to have shared years of friendship with Bernie Mac, and I'm honored to have finally co-starred with him in what I consider to be his finest cinematic achievement."

Actor Don Cheadle who co-starred with Mac in the Ocean Eleven and sequel hits added:

"He brought so much joy to so many. He will be missed, but heaven just got funnier."

Comedian and star actor Chris Rock called Mac, "One of the best and funniest comedians to ever live, but that was the second best thing that he did. Bernie was one of the greatest friends a person could have. Losing him was like losing 12 people because he absolutely filled up a room he was in. I'm gonna miss the Mac Man."

Family and producer Kyle Bowser said, "He was always a

very warm person...Anyone who had a chance to spend five minutes with him gained an appreciation of him way beyond him as a comedian, actor or performer."

Another, Michael McCant of Billionaire Catt Entertainment added: "He didn't really know me from Adam, but when I met him and asked for his support he graciously offered his time and talent without hesitation. I know in my heart there there's not another man in the world like him."

The following day on Aug. 10, Black America lost Oscar and Grammy-winning music icon Hayes who ushered in the disco era. He collapsed near a treadmill in his Memphis home and died of an apparent stroke, according to authorities. Hayes was 65.

Last year Hayes was the star headliner at Soul Jam.

Continued next page.



On September 6th we have to elect a Democratic candidate for Congress. Elect James Carter- the officially endorsed candidate of both the Orleans and Jefferson Parish Democratic Executive Committees.

Since his election two years ago to the City Council, James Carter has emerged as the leader of change and reform that works for people. He'll show the same kind of leadership in Congress.

CRIME. James Carter is calling for a better police department, more accountable for its actions. That's why he created the Independent Police Monitor to fight misconduct in the department. He also supports a regional approach to fighting crime. As Congressman, he'll fight and secure federal funding to build a new criminal justice center.

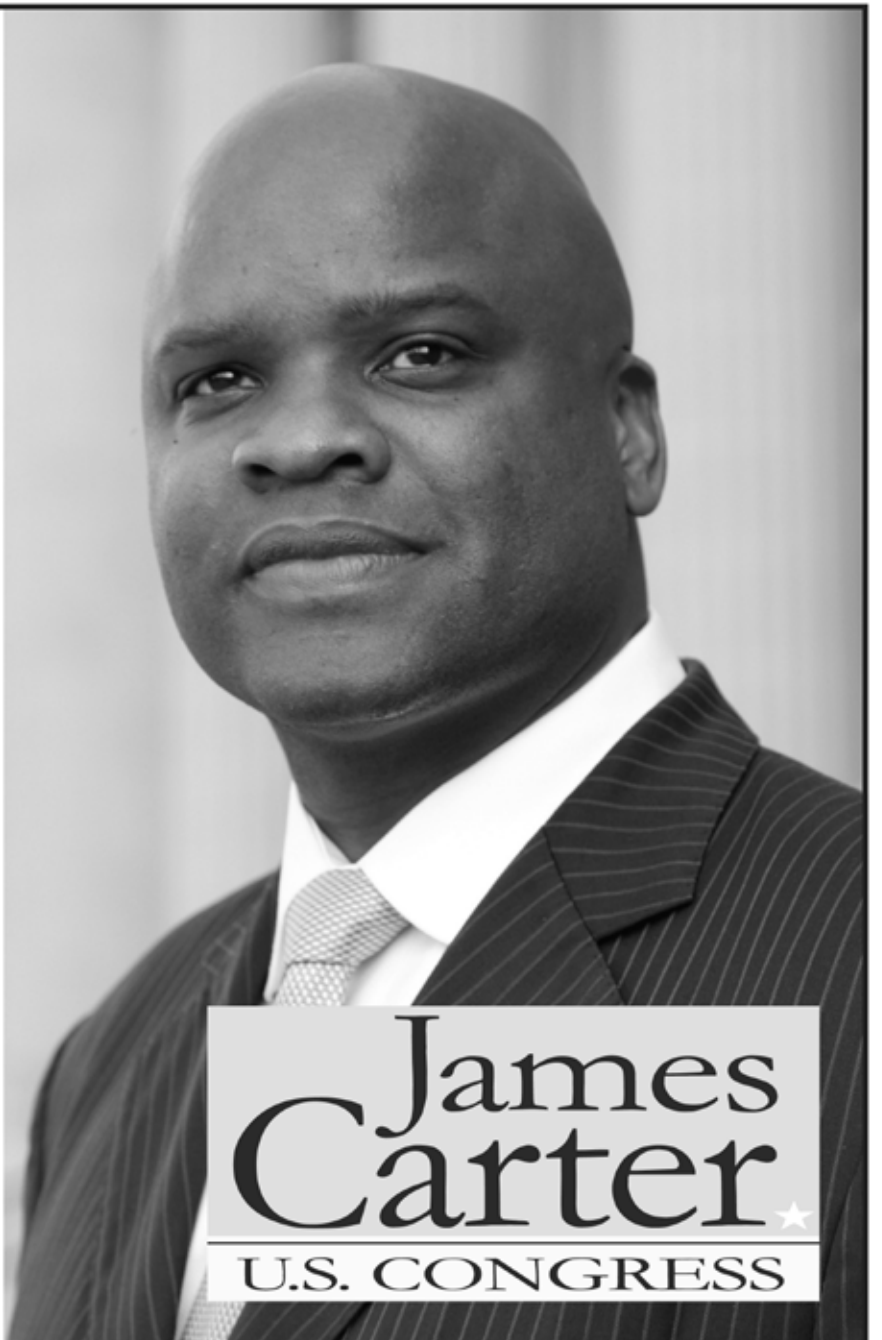
FLOOD PROTECTION. He'll fight to make sure that our federal tax dollars come home to rebuild New Orleans and are not squandered on an unjust and unpopular war.

ECONOMY. James Carter will fight the big oil and insurance companies. He'll work for job training programs and educational opportunities to allow our workforce to participate in the global economy. Under his leadership we will attract new industry and local businesses will succeed.

JAMES CARTER. THE CHANGE WE NEED.



Approved by James Carter. Paid for by the committee to elect James Carter- Congress.



Democrats Descend on Denver, Convention Highlights Include Obama on Mile High

Zenitha Prince

(NNPA) - In what is arguably the most anticipated event of the summer, more than 50,000 Democrats will converge on Denver's Pepsi Center Aug. 25-28 for the Democratic National Convention.

While this gathering will be glutted with the who's who of politics, business and even Hollywood, the undisputed star of the show will be Sen. Barack Obama, the Democrat's presumptive nominee for president.

"This is an inspiring, engaging celebration of Barack Obama and his vision for America," said Damon Jones, spokesman for the Democratic National Convention Committee.

And for a majority of the convention's 4,439 delegates, it will be the chance to show their ultimate support for the senator—casting their votes to elect him the Democratic Party's official presidential nominee. "I wanted to be intimately involved in this campaign," said Jeff Hart, an at-large delegate from Denver and Obama supporter. "Obama's the only candidate that can bring our country together—Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, Blacks and Whites, rich and poor, urban and rural—to heal the country and heal the world."

But first, the candidate and the Democratic Party will have to heal the breach opened up during the primaries. Supporters of Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., have called for her name to be on the ballot and some supporters have even said they will protest if proper

recognition isn't given to the New York senator during the convention.

"There's a special effort behind Clinton supporters to bring us all together to defeat McCain and that's going to be an ongoing process because you have some individuals who supported Clinton and don't want to come over," said at-large delegate James Tucker of Colorado Springs.

Obama and Clinton have been negotiating ways to give voice to her millions of supporters while furthering the convention's ultimate goal, but it would demand the cooperation of her devotees.

"I hope that 100 percent of her delegates will honor the joint decision of Clinton and Obama," Hart said. "I believe that Sen. Clinton and Obama understand that the most important thing to come out of this convention is 100 percent unity behind Sen. Obama."

That theme of unity has been incorporated into all aspects of the convention.

For example, on Aug. 24, the convention will kick off with the first-ever interfaith service, which, Jones said, "reflects our desire to bring a number of people under our big tent in the spirit of unity."

The nightly themes also reflect Obama's mantras of unity and change.

"Millions of Americans are facing tough challenges every day [and] they know we can't afford four more years of the same old divisive politics that are light on policy specifics and ways to help people and heavy on cynicism and negativity," said Convention Co-Chair and Kansas Gov. Kathleen

Sebelius about the themes in a statement.

"From Monday through Thursday, our convention program will highlight the people of this country who want positive change and who believe Barack Obama is the leader who will listen to their concerns and get our country moving in the right direction again."

To demonstrate that willingness to listen, the DNC hosted listening forums in the months leading up to the convention, which allowed average citizens to contribute to the Party's platform.

"This lays out what the party stands for, its vision and its plan of action," Jones said. "And this year there was a real effort to make sure voices from all across America are heard."

Jones continued, "We've been committed to making it more open than it has ever been and to make the local community feel a part of the convention. And that's what influenced our decision to move the last day's program to INVECO Field at Mile High which will allow more than 75,000 citizens to stand shoulder-to-shoulder behind Sen. Obama."

That event has created "an awful lot of excitement" in Denver, Hart said. Already, some 60,000 Coloradans have submitted requests for tickets.

Beyond that event, however, people are excited about the convention in general. Residents and businesses have been sprucing up their properties and bartenders and waitresses at downtown establishments are preparing to offer their best service to the flood of guests.

And there seems to be a renewed interest in the Democratic Party and Sen. Obama as well, Hart added. Hundreds of new volunteers have come forward for the Obama Campaign for Change like those who gathered at his house over the weekend and a monthly Denver Democratic Party forum was filled to the rafters.

"For all those people who say they don't know who Sen. Obama is, after this convention they'll know exactly who he is and what he stands for," Hart predicted.

Colorado is a swing state, its politics juxtaposed between conservative cities like Colorado Springs, Grand Junction and the Denver suburbs and liberal college towns like Boulder and Fort Collins and metropolitan Denver. The state can also boast to electing President Bill Clinton in 1992 and later electing President George W. Bush in 2000.

Holding the convention in Denver was highly symbolic of the party's determination to lobby in both red and blue states, Jones said.

"This is the first convention in Colorado in 100 years and so very much consistent with the direction set by Chairman Howard Dean that this is a 50-state strategy," Jones said. "A western convention is a great way to highlight this idea and the belief that if we stand up for what we believe and reach out to everyone, we can win up and down the ballot everywhere."

**Democratic National Convention Highlights
Sun., August 24**

– Interfaith Gathering
DNC's first ever gathering of people of many faiths. Bishop Charles E. Blake, presiding prelate, Church of God In Christ and pastor, West Angeles Church of God in Christ; Dr. Ingrid Mattson, president, Islamic Society of North America; social activist Sister Helen Prejean and Rabbi Tzvi Weinreb, executive vice president, Orthodox Union, will keynote the event. Musical selections by Grammy® award-winning gospel artist Richard Smallwood & Vision and The Spirituals Project of Denver.

Mon., August 25

– One Nation
– Michelle Obama, prime-time speaker.

Tues., August 26

– Renewing America's Promise
– Sen. Hillary Clinton, prime-time speaker.

Wed., August 27

– Securing America's Future
– Barack Obama's vice presidential nominee is prime-time speaker.
– Former President Bill Clinton addresses the convention.

Thurs., August 28

– Change You Can Believe In

DNC will throw open the Convention doors and move to INVECO Field at Mile High so more Americans can be a part of the fourth night of the Convention as Barack Obama accepts the Democratic nomination. Obama will communicate the urgency of the moment, highlight the struggles Americans are facing and call on Americans to come together to change the course of our nation.

Soul Jam.,

Continued from previous page.

"Isaac Hayes was the first African-American to win an Oscar for a music score, but never lost sight of his commitment to his community and the betterment of mankind. He was an artist who was a trailblazer. He was an innovator. He was a creative genius," said civil rights activist The Rev. Al Sharpton.

Then on Monday Aug. 12, Taylor a community legend known for his work as a peace organizer and gang intervention pioneer died of apparent complications of

cancer. Taylor was just 42-years old.

For the past 16 years, Taylor always fought the unpopular battle with fierce determination and is responsible for founding Unity ONE gang intervention organization, and also instrumental with the launching of Unity TWO and Unity Three.

His core work began at the height of the Los Angeles civil unrest in 1992 and continued steadfastly in L.A. and throughout the nation.

Born Darren "Bo" Taylor, he survived his own struggle with street gang fare, and set out on a journey to promote peace.

His work earned the respect of acting legend Harry Belafonte and super star Danny Glover. Civil Rights attorney Connie Rice and USC football coach Pete Carroll were also among his biggest supporters.

Taylor also worked for a time with Jim Brown's Amer-I-Can program. He carried hope to men in prison and fought for funds

for those on the battle line, risking their lives for the benefit of a truce.

Taylor also implemented a training program that enrolled active gang members and graduated them to a life of a former gang member. More than 3,000 people are reported to have graduated from the said program.

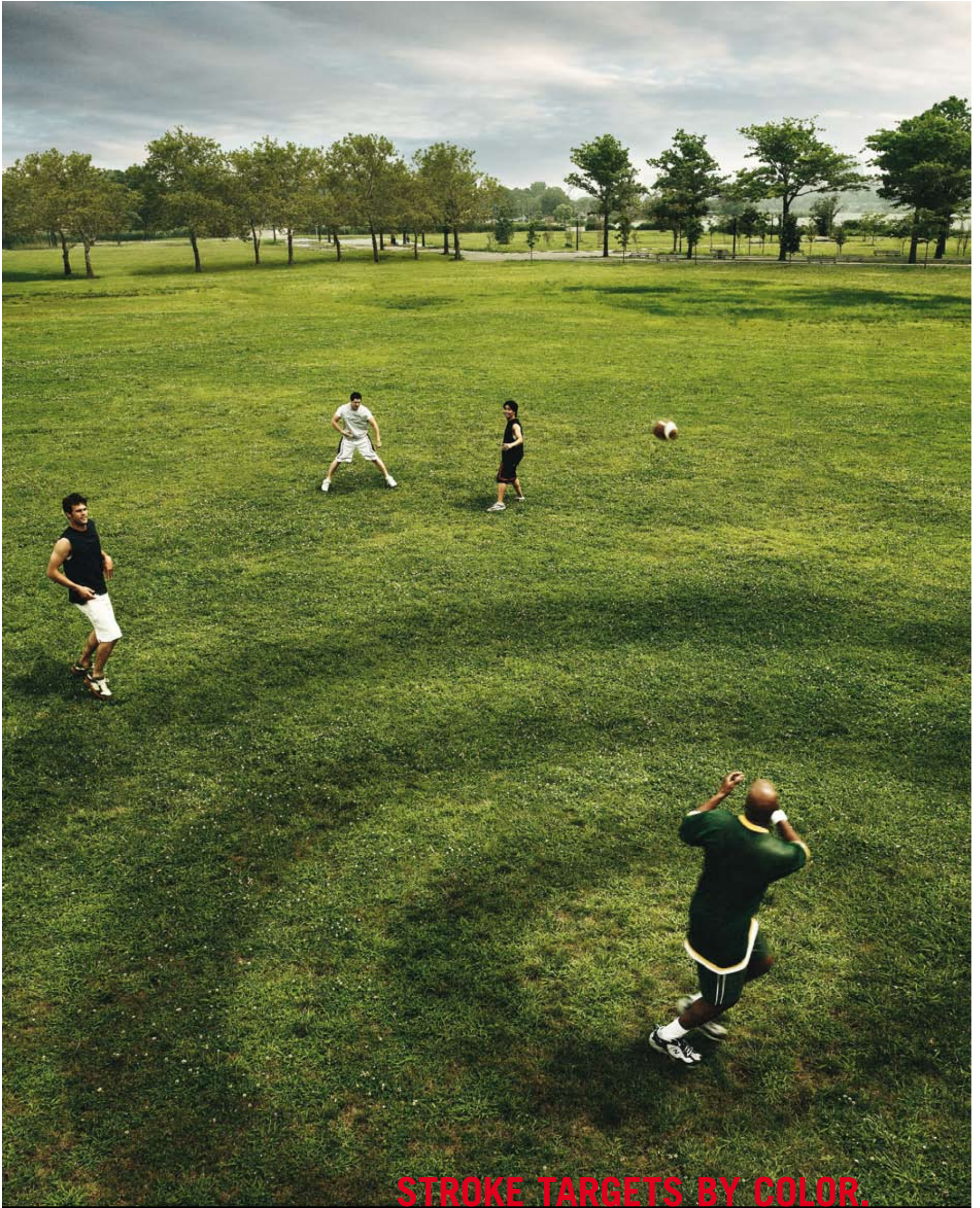
Taylor had recently developed a program with Carroll, considered to be among the elite coaches in America.

"He motivated me, inspired

me, and taught me. I am going to miss him," stated Carroll.

Earlier this year, Taylor worked for V100 radio station that was sold, as a talk show host promoting peace over the airwaves.

Three men. One made people laugh. Another made them sing and dance. And the other made it safer for everyone to do those things.



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