All Hail to New Commander-in-Chief
WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Barack Hussein Obama – a Black man – was inaugurated the 44th President of the United States Jan. 20 before a historic crowd of at least 1.5 million people - the largest, a non-partisan bi-partisan historic and modern day struggles of Black people, including the lash of the whip.

In his inaugural address, President Obama has started to consider the most powerful office in the world, the presidency. He said: "The work of those who laid the foundations of our democracy continues to this day. It's been the path of the future that has been the path of the heart and the soul. It has been the paths of those who labored on our behalf. It has been the paths of those who paved the way for the freedom we celebrate.

Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted – for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the path for the dedicated, for those whose eyes have never closed to the work of others, whose ears have never shut to the call of those in need. It has been the path for the humble and the hardworking.

President Barack Obama is sworn in by Chief Justice John Roberts. Credit: ewilfong/Flickr, NNPA
been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things - some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom," he said, reflecting on the hard work and pains of building a nation. "For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth. For us, they fought and died in places like Concord and Gettysburg, Normandy and Khe Sanh."

The “lash of the whip” and the plowing of the “hard earth” were obvious references to Black slaves, once considered only three-fifths of human beings and rarely credited for the work they did to build America. Descendants of those slaves converged by the hundreds of thousands on the U. S. Capitol this week to experience for themselves the historic moment. Their euphoric chants of “O-ba-ma! O-ba-ma!” were heard frequently during quiet moments of the inaugural ceremony as many without tickets packed in beyond the boundaries of the National Mall.

They punctuated Obama’s speech with wild cheers as he used words such as “equal” and “free” that African-Americans have longed to hear from people of power. "We remain a young nation, but in the hope for ultimate equality that has yet to be realized."

The historic inauguration comes amidst painful times for America. Obama – with his unique ability to inspire - is viewed as a transitional figure by people of many races and nationalities, particularly during this time of war and economic crisis. But, suffering is consistently greater for African-Americans. To have someone in the White House with a modicum of understanding of and identification with their problems appear to be a salve to many, bringing hope for ultimate equality that has yet to be realized.

“We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth,” says Obama, the son of a Black man from Kenya and a White woman from Kansas. “Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.”

Significant parts of the inaugural ceremony sent strong messages that the Obama Administration will maintain its consciousness where Black people are concerned. The “Rosa Parks” bus rolled along in the motorcade before the inaugural parade, symbolizing the struggle of African-Americans who were legally forced to sit in the back of buses in the South until Parks took a stand in 1955. Also, among the 90 units participating in the Inaugural Parade were the Tuskegee Airmen, who flew in a segregated Army Air Corp during World War II.

“Tillman, one of the elite African-American pilots who flew heroically in the all-Black unit. Most notable were the prayers of Revs. Rick Warren and Joseph Lowery, both of whom blantly referred to the racial magnitude of the moment. We celebrate a hinge-point of history with the inauguration of our first African-American president of the United States," Warren prayed in his invocation. The crowd cheered. "We are so grateful to live in this land, a land of unequalled possibility, where a son of an African immigrant can rise to the highest level of our leadership. And we know today that Dr. King and a great cloud of witnesses are shouting in heaven."

The poem recited by Elizabeth Alexander was also straight to the point: “Sing the names of the dead who brought us here, who laid the train tracks, raised the bridges, picked the cotton and the lettuce, built brick by brick the glittering edifices they would then keep clean and work inside of.”

But, perhaps it was the benediction of civil rights icon, the Rev. Joseph Lowery, that hit closest to home. Starting with the final verse of “Lift Every Voice and Sing”, the Black National Anthem, Lowery closed with an appeal that is yet to be realized: “Lord, in the memory of all the saints who from their labors rest, and in the joy of a new beginning, we ask you to help us work for that day when Black will not be asked to get back, when brown can stick around, when yellow will be mellow, when the red man can get ahead, man, and when White will embrace what is right. Let all those who do justice and love mercy say amen.”

Cover Story

Cover Story, Continued from previous page.
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The over 500,000 Americans of all colors spread from the statue of Abraham Lincoln down to the Washington Monument for the “We Are One” opening concert on Sunday - two days before the historic swearing, a visually striking mosaic of a nation long divided by race and class coming together on the eve of the inauguration of its first African-American president.

African-Americans, Whites, Hispanics, Asians, and other ethnicities stood side by side in the bitter cold, swaying to the sounds of a musical line-up that was just as diverse, ranging from Beyonce, Mary J. Blige and Stevie Wonder, to rocker Bruce Springsteen and country music star Garth Brooks in a star-laden event broadcast live on HBO. The crowd erupted in cheers as jumbo television screens flashed the image of Obama singing along with Brooks’ rendition of Don McLean’s “American Pie”.

For many African-Americans in the crowd, the day was a mixture of joy and pride, tempered by feelings that for all of the remarkable implications in Obama’s sweeping victory in November, the nation has yet to fully turn the corner on the matter of race.

“I think the theme of ‘We Are One’ is important. I just don’t want us to overstate it,” said Mike (who declined to give his last name), 34, a financial service worker who took the Amtrak train down from New York for the concert event. “A lot of people have talked today about the realization of Dr. (Martin Luther) King’s dream as the end of racial inequality, but the reality is there is still great disparity in income for African-American communities and still a huge problem in the prison industrial complex.”

The pre-inaugural event “is definitely a day to celebrate,” Mike added. “Great progress has been made since Dr. King, but I think we still have a ways to go before we reach full equality.”

Across the mall, Willie Chester, a brake contractor from Albany, Georgia, his wife, Peggy, a nurse administrator, and owner of a health care service, stood with their 8-year-old son, Jerrrell, harking in the fact that they are participants in an historic event.

“I’m glad to see everybody come together to be as one,” Willie Chester said. “It’s possible, and it’s beginning to come, slowly, but it’s coming.” His wife agreed. “Have we accomplished it all with this election? No, we haven’t. But at least this is the beginning of us coming together,” she said. “Looking around the mall I thought, you know, I see people of all different races, and if they bump into each other they’re smiling. It gives you a feeling of love and unity and it’s come about because of our President-elect Obama. He has given us a new sensation. What young folks saw when they were inspired by Dr. King, you see it again.”

There was the scent of change. “I think that the symbol of all the layers of what the root problem is, kind of like peeling an onion.”

A deeper, lasting change is the kind of like peeling an onion.

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - As the train lumbered slowly down the tracks, leaving Philadelphia, headed toward Wilmington, Del., one thing was abundantly clear through the windows.

That is that the excitement of President-elect Barack Obama’s “Whistle Stop” tour had permeated the nation. People lined the streets, waving and holding signs, families stood waving and leaping for joy in back yards, groups gathered in parking lots - even leamed from parking decks, and some

“Hope Abounded Aboard Obama’s “Whistle Stop” Tour

Hazel Trice Edney

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stood on roofs, just to wave to the passing train, carrying the then first Black president-elect of the United States.

But, it was the children of all ages who perhaps were the most impressive, hundreds of them, dressed in hats, gloves and thick coats, bouncing up and down in the streets, waving flags at the three rallies in Philadelphia, Wilmington, Del., and Baltimore. Then they swayed to Ray Charles’ “America the Beautiful” at the end of the rallies, smiling for media cameras, trying to capture their innocence and glee.

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Mayor Discusses Impact of 2009 Adopted Budget

Reduced Emergency Fund and Increased 2010 Budget Deficit Among City’s Concerns

In response to the New Orleans City Council’s approval of the 2009 operating budget last week, Mayor Nagin outlined the impact of the city’s newly adopted budget on city services, departmental operations and the city’s future financial position in 2010.

In December, Mayor C. Ray Nagin vetoed several budget items that included funding to third party agencies, cut spending for all departments except public safety, and issued an executive order that implements a hiring freeze for all departments, including public safety. Further, Mayor Nagin limited all garbage collection to basic collection, thereby cutting extra, enhanced services in the Vieux Carre (although twice a day collection was maintained).

Mayor Nagin stated during his November budget presentation that the 2009 budget would be one of the most challenging for the city due to increased expenditures, such as those related to health care administration, and other operating costs and the absence of new revenue streams in the city. He also outlined the guiding principles for the 2009 budget must be:

- To secure sufficient reserves for possible disasters, emergencies and revenue shortfalls; and
- To position for an improved credit rating to enhance the City’s ability to sell bonds in 2009 for various capital improvement projects – especially street and road projects – and other critical needs.

The Mayor’s budget adjustments reduced the city’s expenditures by $18 million in 2009. The reductions are necessary to fill a budget gap that began at $24 million; the gap was reduced to $18 million when President Bush reduced the City’s required match for Hurricane Gustav recovery costs from 25 percent to 10 percent, reducing expenditures by $6 million. The budget gap also resulted from the addition of recurring costs in 2007 and 2008 without the addition of a correlating recurring source of revenue, a measure the Mayor does not support as a “sound financial practice.”

On January 12th, the City Council passed the city’s 2009 adopted budget. The Finance Department has reviewed these actions and adjusted the budget accordingly. The impact is as follows:

Community Disaster Loan Fund (CDL)

Purpose: The $240 million Community Disaster Loan, which was received following Hurricane Katrina, was incorporated as a critical part of the city’s five-year financial plan. This plan was presented to the credit rating agencies as a demonstration of the city’s efforts to become financially stable and to encourage confidence among the rating agencies in the city’s ability to recover. Some of the credit rating agencies improved the city’s investment grade to “stable,” which allowed the city to sell bonds for millions of dollars that were used for street, road and other infrastructure projects. However, Standard & Poor’s (S&P) still has the city’s status at “junk bond.” The five-year plan called for using $25 million of the CDL in 2009 and the remaining $10 million in 2010.

Result: The City Council’s initial budget utilized the entire remaining CDL, including the $10 million scheduled for 2010.

The Council’s January 12 budget modifications leave $2.4 million of the CDL for 2010. $7.6 million was used throughout the budget in areas such as funding the District Attorney’s Office ($900,000).

Impact:
- The City’s access to the bond market will be limited and street/roadway projects will be eliminated and/or limited for 2009.

Emergency Fund

Purpose: After Hurricane Katrina, Mayor Nagin established an emergency/contingency fund to be set aside for emergency needs. The goal has been to set aside 10 percent of the city’s budget for this emergency fund, with a minimum set-aside of 8 percent, which is consistent with industry standards. Further, this emergency fund, coupled with the five-year financial plan, strengthened the city’s position to sell bonds.

Result: As of January 12th, the newly adopted budget added $475,000 in the emergency fund, bringing the fund to 6.6 percent of the adopted budget, below the minimum 8 percent. The 2009 emergency fund as reflected in the adopted budget is below the set aside from the previous year. In 2008, the city’s impact from Hurricane Gustav was $40 million.

Impact:
- The city is not adequately prepared financially to handle emergency events in 2009.

City Services

Under Executive Order CRN 08-08, a hiring freeze citywide has been implemented and all encumbered funds from 2008 will be returned to the General Fund. Further, Mayor Nagin announced in December that the budget for each department, except Public Safety, would be cut. The new adopted budget includes a 3 percent department reduction, which will lead to reductions in services in many departments.

The Mayor will phase-in enhanced services in the Vieux Carre beginning February 1st. These services include manual street cleaning, litter can patrols (twice weekly) and pressure washing. As the 2009 budget proceeds, Mayor Nagin will make Vieux Carre enhanced sanitation services available as funding allows.

Future: Pension Bond

Satisfaction: Pension bonds the city obtained in 2000, under a previous administration, have been unexpectedly called and the city may be required to repay the bonds over five years at an annual rate of $26 million beginning in 2010.

Impact: The cumulative effect of the existing shortfall and the bond payments could total more than $40 per year in 2010.
Tammy Stewart Announces Candidacy for Judge of Juvenile Court Section B

Benjamin Bates

Local attorney Tammy Stewart has announced her candidacy for Judge of Juvenile Court Section B. During a speech to her supporters she said, “A juvenile court judge has one of the most important roles in the judicial system.” Continuing she said, “They are the first step in the delivery of justice and the protection of our community.”

Tammy Stewart is a native of New Orleans, graduating with honors from John F. Kennedy High School and Southern University at New Orleans, where she received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science. Stewart earned her Juris Doctorate Degree from The Ohio State University College of Law in Columbus, Ohio.

Stewart has years of legal experience. She has served as Judge Pro-Tempore for First City Court in New Orleans and has worked for several law firms including Spears & Spears, Caster, Bordelon, & McGinty, McNamar, Hall, Larmann, & Pale, L.L.P.

In addition, Stewart formerly served as an Assistant District Attorney in Orleans Parish and a summer law clerk for the New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation. Her legal affiliations include the Louisiana State Bar Association, American Bar Association and New Orleans Bar Association. She was recognized as an Honored Professional in the Nationwide Registry of Who’s Who in Executives and Business. Stewart is a former board member of the Innocence Project New Orleans and a former adjunct professor of Criminal Justice at Southern University at New Orleans. She is a volunteer with the Louisiana SPCA, the Humane Society and the Louisiana State Bar Association’s Secret Santa Project, where she has worked as a liaison with organizations such as Boys Hope Girls Hope and Head Start.

Stewart said that there are problems inside of the juvenile justice system that are broken and in need of repair and reform and feels she is the candidate that fits the bill. “I have the experience on the bench serving as a judge pro tempore and I have the ability to lead the court in a new direction,” she said.

In Juvenile Court, the role of the judge is to be tough but compassionate; Stewart said she has both of these qualities. “I will work to bring more resources that can divert our young people’s attention away from criminal activities and give them the tools to turn their lives around and engage in more productive pursuits,” said Stewart.

While an advocate of diversion and rehabilitation programs, Stewart said that violent juvenile offenders must be kept off the street, “We must do what we can to keep our streets safe and administer justice, so we must protect our citizens from those who may cause harm to them,” she said.

But Stewart also said that she feels that these individuals need rehabilitation as well. “We cannot afford to allow our young people to become career criminals, and we must also be advocates so that we can do what we can to ensure that we have things in place that can transform those negatives into positives,” she said.

Throughout the years, Stewart has been active in her community and said as a native of the Crescent City, it is important that the court reaches out to organizations in the community to help young people before they get into a life of crime.

“It will take a cooperative effort to end the senseless violence and to stop the cycle of young men and women in our community who are throwing away their future and lives. That effort begins

Continued next page.
The New Orleans Public Library celebrates Black History Month

From History to Health Care, Library Celebrates African-American Leadership

NEW ORLEANS: The New Orleans Public Library will host a series of events to celebrate black history month. Under the theme, “Rising Up: African American Leadership”, branches around the city will host a variety of forums and workshops that will feature everything from family history to storytelling and genealogy programs. The library’s Black history month committee in conjunction with the African American Resource Center will bring in historians, artists and other experts to tell the story of African American leadership from reconstruction to the present. The New Orleans Public Library has celebrated Black History Month for over ten years. Previous themes included “Passing the Torch”, “Our Roots are Our Strength”, and last year’s theme the “Ties that Bind: Celebrating the African American Family”, to name a few.

The New Orleans Public Library system has re-opened eleven of the twelve library branches that were damaged or destroyed as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Their long-term goal is not merely a “return to normal,” but a model urban library system for New Orleans’ 21st century.

For more information on Black History Month events please visit www.neworleanspubliclibrary.org or contact the African American Resource Center 598-2097.

The lists of events:

Saturday, Jan. 31, 2009, 10 am through 3 pm Latter Branch Health Fair

Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2009, 10 am - Main Branch 3rd floor Storytelling

Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2009 10 am – Hubbell Library Storytelling by Roscoe Reddix, Jr.

Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2009, 6:30pm - Mid-City Branch The History of “Walkertown” by Diane Coleman


Saturday, Feb. 7, 2009- Main Branch Genealogy Programs

Beginners’ Workshop 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Intermediate Work 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2009, 10 am -MLK Branch Leaders of Tomorrow

Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2009, 6:30pm–Mid-City Branch African American Leadership: The Civil Rights Era & Beyond by Dr. John Perry

Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2009, 10:00am – M L King Branch Inside Spectacle - African Drum and Dance Program

Saturday, March 7, 2009, 1:00pm - Main Branch Paul Robeson Acting Competition

Poet, playwright and actress Maya Angelou will speak at the University of New Orleans free speaker series UNO Horizons: Speakers Helping Us See Tomorrow Today on Thursday, February 12 at 7 p.m. at the UNO Lakefront Arena.

Free tickets are available at the UNO Lakefront Arena Box Office, 6801 Franklin Avenue at Leon C. Simon Boulevard. Hours are Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Maya Angelou

Angelou, hailed as one of the great voices of contemporary African American literature, has the ability to shatter the barriers of race and class between reader and subject through her poetry and autobiographical works.

She lectures throughout the United States and abroad and is a lifetime professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University in North Carolina. Angelou has authored 12 bestselling books and numerous magazine articles and received Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award nominations. She was awarded a Grammy award for best spoken word for On the Pulse of Morning which she recited at President Bill Clinton’s inauguration in 1993.

Angelou, born Marguerite Johnson on April 4, 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri, was raised in segregated rural Arkansas. In 1970, she became one of the first African American women to hit the bestseller’s list with I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, which chronicles her life to age 16. At the request of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Angelou became the northern coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the 1960s. In 1975, she received the Ladies Home Journal Woman of the Year Award in communications. She has received several honorary degrees and was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the National Commission on the Observance of International Woman’s Year, and by President Gerald Ford to the American Revolutionary Bi-centennial Advisory Council. She is on the board of the American Film Institute and is among the few women members of the Director’s Guild.

Angelou, who speaks French, Spanish, Italian and West African Fanti, began her career in drama and dance. She married a South African freedom fighter and lived in Cairo where she was editor of the Arab Observer, a weekly newspaper published in the Middle East. In Ghana, she was feature editor of The African Review and taught at the University of Ghana.
America’s Renewal... Yes We Can: A Photo Essay

Photos and text by Edwin Buggage

The Presidential Inauguration was a tapestry of faces of all colors, creeds and races, and a time when America attempted to become an oasis of unlimited possibilities for all. It is now in this time of renewal that Americans cry out “Yes, We Can.” It is a time when this year we celebrate 200 years of a man who led a divided America and was a great emancipator. In this year of hope, we also celebrate 80 years of a man who dared to dream that one day all could enjoy the ever illusive American Dream. And today a man who had the Audacity of Hope is now in the White House. And as the nation celebrates, New Orleans Data News Weekly captured in photos the spirit of the moment in a photo essay entitled, “America’s Renewal... Yes, We Can.”
A Night of Spirituality in Song

Irvin Mayfield and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra featuring Yolanda Adams

It was once said that some singers just know how to sing and a few chosen singers really know how to “sang” and in New Orleans for one night at the Mahalia Jackson Theatre, we heard some “sang”!

Irvin Mayfield brought together guest contemporary gospel singer, the amazing, Yolanda Adams and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra for a heartfelt night of gospel and jazz music.

Opening the show was a host of the best New Orleans gospel singers who created the atmosphere allowing us to do just what Mayor Nagin suggested, to leave your troubles at the door because tonight we came to celebrate our resilience and God’s grace.

Last but not least, the beautiful and talented Yolanda Adams appeared on stage singing “Be Blessed.” This solo act did not come with background singers nor was there a band and a fierce production team, but because it was the incomparable Yolanda Adams who can “sang”, there was no need for further assistance other than the grace of God himself.

Irving Mayfield together with his handcrafted trumpet dedicated to all those who lost their lives during Hurricane Katrina, including his loving father, became one in song, playing a beautiful rendition of “Walk With Me.”

This night was a night of entertainment and healing as the people of New Orleans continue to pick up the pieces left in the wake of Katrina.

An Inauguration and Celebration to Remember

Washington D.C. was filled with people from all across the nation and world excited about the Inauguration of the first African-American President of the United States. There were several parties, special events and galas to celebrate the historic moment. New Orleans Data News Weekly was there to capture the spectacular events.

New Orleanians Arnold Baker and his wife enjoy the music of the New Stylistics.

Attendees at the Black Chamber of Commerce and NNPA Gala in Washington DC. Standing left to right are: Mr. & Mrs. Arnold Baker and Mr. & Mrs. Ronnie Burns.

Terry B. Jones, Publisher of Data News Weekly; daughter of Doris Ellis, Doris Ellis, Dorothy R. Leavell, Chair of the NNPA Foundation; Harry A.ford, President of the National Chamber of Commerce; Linda F. Miller, Chicago Public Schools Counselor, Pluta Marshall, Secretary/Treasurer, NNPA Foundation; Kimberly McCooman, Continental Airlines Pilot and Michael House, Publisher of the Chicago Defender.

Enjoying a party while attending the inauguration. Pictured left to right are: Tyra Scrupps, Karen Valteau Williams, Germaine Robottom, Sy Davis, Arment Guillaume and Holly Harris Monk.

Taking time out from a hotel party to pose for Data. Left to right: Terry Williams, Karen Valteau Williams, Germaine Robottom, and Byron Robottom.

From left to right: Data News Weekly’s Publisher Terry Jones, L.A. Sentinel’s Publisher Danny Bakewell, Motown legends Smokey Robinson and Berry Gordy, and President of the National Chamber of Commerce Harry A.ford. Mr. Robinson and Mr. Gordy were special invited guests of Danny Bakewell.

Lovely ladies of Zulu including former queens, wives and family members attending the inauguration. Standing left to right: Sy Davis, Ashley J. Hill, Jaelyn A. Carr, Jacqueline H. Banks, Pat Hamilton, Donna Gipson, Wilnertha C. Harris, Linda A. Cinar, and Arletia Bennett-Banks.

Dui Jarrod

Art from the Heart

by: Edwin Buggage

He is a young man with a vision to use art as a tool to entertain as well as educate. Dui Jarrod has used his talents as a director, actor and writer to defy stereotypes and be a positive force for change onstage and in the community. "I feel that art is an important tool that can be used to educate people about who we are as African-Americans," said Jarrod.

Jarrod's plays and short films are uplifting, true to life and inspirational. They mirror the life of a young man who came to New Orleans from his native Arkansas and began using his art inside the church producing plays and where his spirituality still is at the center of it all.

"My spirituality is what guides me in this, and it shows in my art. Even [when] it's secular, I want to be able to touch someone's soul and regardless of where they are know that through believing in God's divinity they can change their circumstances."

Spirituality is something that has guided Jarrod to work with young people throughout the southeast region.

"This is something I feel passionate about and I feel that we must do a better job at preparing the youth for the future," he said.

Jarrod has taken his shows to schools and is also in the beginning stages of creating acting classes for inner-city youth. "I think that people can learn a lot about themselves through acting, so I wanted to provide an opportunity for kids to have an avenue to express themselves."

Working for worthy causes is something Jarrod continues to do while lending his time and talent to several worthy causes ranging from literacy to raising awareness about HIV.

"I believe literacy is important because the ability to read and write is the building blocks for all learning. And as far as HIV awareness in our community, one of the major things that is happening that makes this epidemic more problematic is a culture of silence," Jarrod said. "We don't talk about it enough, but that won't make the problems go away, so I decided to get involved because it is essential that we become more aware and responsible so that our loved ones who are infected can get the help they need and lead normal healthy lives because today that is possible."

Jarrod said that through hard work, dreams can come true. "A lot of people have dreams, but it is about sacrifice and perseverance and that is what I try to convey through my life and through my art."

Continuing he said, "I hope what I do can inspire someone to aspire to be the best possible person they can be."

Dui Jarrod is an artist that has given the gift of his work to help his community and city. It is truly art with and from the heart. With his gift, his goal has been to uplift, and Data News Weekly is proud to honor him as our Trailblazer for January 2009.
Dr. Aaron E. Harold
Data Columnist

Dr. Aaron E. Harold
We all need to be spiritually healthy. One of the most important ways to a better life is for us to keep ourselves happy, rather than satisfy everybody around us. Many times we take on a false sense of responsibility because we feel we are required to make sure that others are happy and we are not putting enough time and effort into our own happiness. There is nothing wrong when we are caring and concerned about others we know. It’s wonderful to reach out to others in need, but we can’t forget about our own spiritual well being.

Our spiritual health is very important just like our physical health. When we exercise our physical muscles to stay healthy, we must also exercise our spiritual inner person. Family, our Creator wants us to be spiritually happy and energized. Stop trying to sacrifice your happiness to keep someone else happy. However, that’s not being selfish; it’s about being real about you as a complete person. Our number one goal is to take care of ourselves.

In order to do that, we must keep in mind that some people are still not going to be happy no matter what we do for them; no matter how kind we are; no matter how much time and energy we give to them. Family, people have their own issues and things on the inside of them that they too need to resolve. We can’t take responsibility for other folks’ mistakes in life. If we do, those people will start to control and manipulate you, and eventually you will become spiritually unbalanced and sick. Spiritual wellness is very important to you and me.

Spiritual Wellness can also determine the quality of happiness in our lives. Stop letting everybody interfere with your spiritual happiness. Family, let me tell you this story. There was a couple that I grew up with who got married, and their marriage was fine for a little while, but soon their marriage was miserable. Shelly came from an extremely negative family environment where she had endured many unfair hardships growing up. She brought unhappiness and negativity right into her marriage with John.

You see Shelly didn’t get her way like she wanted to, so she would pout and cut up. Shelly would do that for days sometimes weeks. She was always having some kind of crisis where she needed attention. She was always miserable and always snapping people up, if you know what I mean. We all know people like that. Folks, she did her best to make everyone around her spiritually miserable. John was a good, loving man to Shelly; a good husband; I mean one of the best. He went out of his way to keep Shelly happy; he would always build her up, trying to solve her problems, and letting her know that she would be fine. John did this for five years. He gave up his own happiness, but that didn’t keep her happy and satisfied. John made up his mind that his wife was never going to change. He was spiritually miserable and exhausted. He went to Shelly and said to her “I love you, but no matter what I do for you, you’re not going to be happy. So I’m finished trying.”

She never heard John say that and mean it. Folks, he forced her to look within herself and deal with her problems for a change. That previous remark from John woke Shelly up, and now she is spiritually happy and loving it. Family, our Creator wants you and me to be spiritually happy and have his peace in us. God said, “Peace I give to you, not as the world gives it.” Family, don’t let no one or anything rob you from your joy. God Bless You, and remember, be happy because you deserve it.

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief

As I looked around and saw all the people who came from all over America and the globe to witness President Barack Obama being sworn in as Commander-in-Chief, I was overcome with joy. It was in this moment that I thought that the day may have finally come in our nation when we can move beyond the divisions that have kept people in the country bickering over things that in today’s climate of a world that is global seem irrelevant.

It is on this day I felt as though I watched tears stream down the cheeks of countless Americans—those I believed “Yes, We Can” become a nation where the hope that we can become the country the forefathers envisioned. I began to believe, while watching Americans in this moment as they celebrated their collective accomplishment of putting Barack Obama into the Oval Office, that the Liberty Bell is ringing louder and Lady Liberty’s light is shining brighter as the nation forges ahead.

It is on this day that we can believe that Americans can aspire to new heights and depths of the imagination. That on this day we can sail to a place called the sea of freedom, liberty and justice. That this nation can put behind it the dark days of its unfortunate past and march towards the sunlit arms interlocked believing in the nation can dream and believe in the American Dream.

It is in the spirit of these historic times, I find that America is in a moment of renewal of the hope that we can in this century become the nation we were destined to be. And show the world that America is ready to lead and partner with nations of the world to solve the problems that affect nations across the globe. That for yes on this day when millions came to the National Mall, hope for America was reborn.

And as we move forward in the days to come, it is my hope that what has gotten us to this historic moment will not be forgotten, that this will be the beginning of a new day for this country. That people will bring back to their communities a renewed spirit of what America can be. And as we celebrate the accomplishment of a man who gave us the Audacity of Hope, now it is up to us the people with whose votes help make history to continue on this journey down the road renewing the hope for this nation and for the world. For in this day we are the architects that will build a better tomorrow, and we have begun laying a new foundation today.

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Now Is the Time to Bail Out Our Poor Children and Families Out of Poverty

Marian Wright Edelman
NNPA Columnist

As the current recession has turned into what may be the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s, we all witnessed televised coverage of the CEOs of big banks, investment houses, mortgage companies and auto makers testify before Congress and plead for financial bailouts. They argued that bankruptcy of these corporate behemoths would result in a national economic catastrophe. So American taxpayers got strapped with bailing them out to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars. Never mind that many of those corporate executives presided over colossal business failures while receiving multimillion dollar compensation packages.

President Barack Obama and Congress are preparing economic stimulus legislation to jump start the economy, a desperately needed measure to help the millions of American families heading for the jagged shoals of financial disaster as a result of job and home loss.

Even before the dramatic growth in unemployment, now at 7.2 percent, more than 37 million low-income Americans scrambled to survive one day at a time, including about 13.3 million children—one in six. Among poor children, 5.8 million live in extreme poverty—in families with incomes below half the poverty line (in 2008, that was $10,600 a year for a family of four). These are households struggling to hold on to the basics, from a minimally adequate diet to keeping a roof over their heads.

Working poor families are among the hardest hit by the current recession. But working families did not start losing economic ground with the onset of the recession. Median family incomes in the United States have declined for several years since 2000. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has projected that between 2.6 and 3.3 million children will fall into poverty during the recession—and 1.5 to 2.0 million children will be counted among those pushed into extreme poverty. Research from CDF’s new State of America’s Children 2008® Report, reveals that Black children are more than three times as likely to be poor as White children.

How deeply poverty poisons the lives of children varies widely from state to state. A Black child is two and a half times as likely to be poor in Louisiana as in Maryland. A White child is three times as likely to be poor in West Virginia as in Connecticut. The ten states with the highest poverty rates are Mississippi (23.3 percent), Louisiana (26.8 percent), Arkansas (25.8 percent), New Mexico (25.5 percent), Alabama (24.3 percent), Kentucky (23.9 percent), Texas (23.2 percent), Tennessee (23 percent), West Virginia (22.8 percent) and Oklahoma (22.5 percent). The rate for the District of Columbia was 22.7 percent.

Isn’t it time to end the lottery of geography on child survival and provide every child a national safety net of decency? Isn’t it time to end child poverty in America, which costs our country hundreds of billions in lost productivity every year? Sadly, our nation’s poor children don’t have a team of bank presidents or investment house CEOs to plead for an economic bailout for their families in the corridors of power in Washington.


A Bailout for our Students

Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

Why do banks and businesses get breaks when college students do not? While some are getting multi-billion dollar bailouts, the students who so enthusiastically supported Barack Obama are being offered a federal government bailout, Thanks to a federal government bailout, Bennett College for Women. She can be reached at presoffice@bennett.edu.

Banks, too, are getting subsidized loans.

Through federal programs, students pay between 5 and 9 percent for government loans. When their parents cannot qualify for federal programs, they go to private lenders, and pay as much as 15 percent for loans to cover college education.

Some pay for college on their credit cards, paying between 18 and 24 percent for their children to go to college. If we can offer cars at zero percent, and give banks subsidized loans, why not offer students college loans at one percent.

Rev. Jesse Jackson calls it the one percent crisis, and he is right. One percent money for students helps them with better repayment terms, and helps their parents as well. And it helps colleges maintain enrollment, because there are students who are dropping out of school because they can’t afford to pay.

When college students have federally subsidized loans, they are required to begin paying them back within six months of graduation. In this economy? We need a reality check. As long as the unemployment rate exceeds six percent, students should have eighteen months to begin paying back their loans. Otherwise, students are pressured to pay their loans back by whatever means necessary. Some use credit cards, at 18 percent, to pay loans back. Others struggle and find that if they do not pay their credit scores, or their lifetime of opportunities, are affected.

Student credit rating is not the only thing affected by failure to repay. Colleges are judged on the loan repayment rates of their students, and accrediting agencies penalize colleges who have repayment rates over 25 percent.

But in a rotten economy, it is understandable that some students have difficulty repaying their loans. An economic stimulus package that helps students and colleges might suspend sanctions for those colleges with high loan repayment rates until the economy is more stable.

Thirty years ago, students were more likely to get grants than loans for college. Indeed the equation was that students paid for college with one-third grants, two-thirds loans. Now the equation has been reversed. The Pell grant, our need-based grant program, provides students with $4750 a year toward their costs.

Bennett College costs $22,000 for tuition room and board, so where does the other $17,500 come from? Further, the Pell grant is granted fully to students with the lowest incomes, phasing out when parent income is about $55,000 a year.

President Obama proposes raising the Pell Grant to $2350 a year. That’s help, but it isn’t enough. The Pell Grant ought to be $10,000 per year. It helps us train the next generation, it helps maintain college enrollment, and while it is high enough to make a difference, it does not fully cover the cost of education, forcing students, too, to invest in their futures.

Already Republicans are carping that they don’t want the Pell Grant to go up. But young people need help with their tuitions. The average student graduates the $20,000 in student loans, and the average African American student graduates with $26,000 in loans. Our young people are shackled before they begin their lives, their loan status dictating some career decisions.

The Obama Administration has also offered a $4,000 tuition grant for students who do community service. That grant program is also a step in the right direction. I do hope that as the regulations for this program are developed, the Obama Administration seeks input from college presidents, and also from students, about ways the requirements for service will be measured.

At Bennett College, far too many of our students are struggling with the effects of this economy. When parents lose jobs, students struggle to stay in school. When parent credit scores change, the ability to qualify for some loans changes, and again students struggle to stay in school. Good students, dean’s list students, students with stellar GPAs are beginning the spring semester worried sick about whether they can graduate with the balances they carry. The data is compelling, but the challenges that some of our young women face are all the more challenging.

Students need a bailout! They need one percent money for loans, more time to begin to repay their loans, and higher Pell Grants. If we can find $138 billion for Bank of America, and offer car loans at zero percent, can’t we provide a bailout for college students?

Julianne Malveaux is president of Bennett College for Women. She can be reached at presoffice@bennett.edu.
To Be Equal

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

On behalf of the National Urban League and its affiliates, I offer my heartfelt congratulations to Barack Obama and Joe Biden as they officially assume their roles as President and Vice President of the United States.

For millions of Americans and freedom-loving people all over the world, the inauguration of President Barack Obama breathed new life into our nation’s oldest and highest values. Watching the ceremony at the U.S. Capitol with the Lincoln Memorial in the background, I was reminded of the 1963 March on Washington.

Then as now, the nation was on the brink of dissolution and despair. And then, as now a visionary leader stepped forth with a message of hope onto the stage of history.

In one of those rare acts of divine timing, President Obama was sworn in one day after the nation celebrated what would have been the 80th birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is amazing to think that the moral arc of the universe has given us a prophet and a president in the span of 40 years. With the inauguration of President Obama, we have moved closer to realizing Dr. King’s dream. The forces of inequality, injustice, and division are clearly on the run, but as long as those forces hold sway in any corner, our work is not yet done.

In the time of legal segregation and denial of the right to vote, Dr. King’s extraordinary moral authority helped lead us to a better day. In these times of unprecedented domestic and foreign upheaval, we now have a President who possesses both the moral and political authority to get this country back on track.

But democracy has never been a solo act or spectator sport. If we are to regain our economic and moral standing in the world, all of us are going to have to get in the game.

The National Urban League is already working with the new President and Congress to pass a major stimulus package designed to create new jobs and put our people back to work.

We will continue to be a strong advocate for the urban communities we serve. We will give the new President our support when we think he’s right and we will not hesitate to tell him when we think he’s wrong.

With so many challenges facing this nation, within the next four years we could very well reach a tipping point that will determine what kind of America we leave to our children. Will it be an America that works only for the wealthy and connected, or will it be an America where everyone who is willing to work and contribute has an equal chance to live out their dreams? In the words of President Obama, “Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.”

Marc H. Morial is President and CEO of the National Urban League.

Marc Morial
NNPA Columnist

From Prophet King to President Obama in 40 Years

WE SALUTE YOU
PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

All of us at Airware are inspired by the inauguration of our new president. His platform of “change-now” for the better has become one of the core values of our company.

—Terry Williams, President

www.AIRWARELLC.com
The Economy: Whites are Hurting, But Blacks are...

James Wright

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Barely a week in office as president of the United States, Barack Obama is facing one of the worst economic downturns since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The nation's economic woes top the new president's agenda even as the war in Iraq continues and the conflict in Afghanistan heats up.

For African-Americans like Carl Gray, a D.C.-based freelance videographer and entertainer, with a wife and two children, things always seem bad. Gray suspects that because he is Black, he will suffer economic discrimination, much of it subtle at times.

“I voted for Obama because I wanted someone in the White House who understood what I was going through,” Gray said. “I know he does but the question is does he know the answer.”

When it comes to Blacks and the economy, two old sayings seem to sum up the struggle: “last hired, first fired” and “when recessions take African-Americans from a bad situation to a worse one.

“In 2007, the Black unemployment rate was 8.3 percent... This figure is still above the pre-recession level and more than twice the White unemployment rate,” said Alphonso Jackson, the cabinet secretary for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A 2006 U.S. Census Bureau survey showed that while 75 percent of White families owned their homes, only 47 percent of Blacks did so. A 2005 U.S. Department of Commerce survey showed that barely 5 percent of the nation’s businesses are Black-owned.

“Some applied for zero-percent financing then were charged interest for the entire financing period,” said a woman who received $2,000, and was later billed $668 in finance charges. “I was told to pay the finance charges in 30 days if no date is specified.”

One consumer said she made a purchase with zero-percent financing for 18 months and made her payments on time. But the last payment was applied late. The customer was then billed $668 interest for the entire financing period.

The new recession would increase the national unemployment rate to 6.4 percent by 2009.

The Black unemployment rate has already passed 11 percent. To combat these numbers for all Americans, the Obama administration has designed a stimulus package to fuel the economy by building thousands of quality schools, lower electricity bills and public works projects, increasing the federal portion of public assistance programs that states manage, some tax cuts and taking on some uninsured Americans through a new, comprehensive health care plan.

“There are millions of Americans trying to find work even as, all around the country, there’s so much work to be done,” he said. But Obama cautioned again against expecting instant results: “No one policy or program will solve the challenges we face right now, nor will this crisis recede in a short period of time.”

Gray, the videographer, said he understands that things will take time and he will be patient. “At least I know that Obama is trying,” he said. “That is the important thing - that somebody high in the government understands that people are hurting and trying to do something about it.”

Dell Agrees To Refund Consumers Under Settlement With 34 States

Special to the NNPA from the Seattle Medium

SEATTLE (NNPA) - Washington State Attorney General Rob McKenna has announced an agreement between the Attorney General of 34 states and Dell under which Dell will provide restitution to customers who experienced problems with the company’s financing promotions, rebate offers, technical support and repair policies.

“It’s time for a reboot of Dell’s customer service system,” McKenna said. “Our agreement requires disclosures to prevent future communication breakdowns and ensures that customers who are owed money are promptly paid.”

Under the agreement, Texas-based Dell, Inc., and its subsidiary, Dell Financial Services, LLC, admit no wrongdoing but agree to pay $1.5 million in restitution to eligible consumers who file claims postmarked by April 13, 2009. Dell cooperated fully with the attorneys general during their investigation.

Dell agreed to an additional $1.85 million to the states for reimbursement of legal costs and other expenses. Washington will receive $200,000 of that amount.

Assistant Attorney General Katherine Tassi of the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division said Washington and Connecticut jointly led an investigation into Dell’s sales practices after customers complained about an array issues.

Some applied for zero-percent financing then were charged higher interest rates. Others had trouble obtaining warranty service on their Dell computers. Many said they never received promised rebates.

“The deals Dell made and the terms computer buyers thought they agreed to didn’t always compute,” Tassi said.

One consumer said she made a purchase with zero-percent financing for 18 months and made her payments on time. But the last payment was applied late. The customer was then billed $668 interest for the entire financing period.

Under the settlement, Dell agreed to the following:

FINANCING AND CREDIT OFFERS
• Disclose in advertisements for promotional credit offers that the majority of consumers who apply won’t qualify for the best annual percentage rate (APR), and disclose the range of initial APRs that consumers who are not considered the “most qualified borrowers” are likely to receive.
• Inform consumers considering applying for promotional financing that the application is for a revolving open credit account, that minimum monthly payments are required and that approval of the account does not guarantee that the consumer will also qualify for conditional financing promotions (such as zero-percent interest for 90 days). Explain how finance charges are calculated, disclose any penalties and inform the consumer whether subsequent purchases made using the credit account will be subject to the same or different financing terms.
• At the time of credit acceptance, disclose whether the applicant has qualified for any conditional financing promotion.

Surety for Goods and Services
• Disclose the nature and scope of the surety for goods and services.
• Mail rebates within the specified timeframe, or within 30 days if no date is specified.

ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES AND POLICIES
• Implement written policies to ensure compliance with the settlement, including procedures that address issues such as:
  • Informing consumers of their rights.
  • Fulfilling its warranty obligations within 30 days from the date of notification or receipt of a defective product.
  • Disclosing whether phone-based troubleshooting or remote diagnosis is required before Dell will provide on-site repair or warranty-related service.
  • Mail rebates within the specified timeframe, or within 30 days if no date is specified.

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right to cancel orders made with the Dell Credit Account within three days after receiving final credit approval and the written terms and conditions.

• Communication between Dell and Dell Financial Services when a consumer returns a product purchased with credit.

• Removing consumer accounts from collection agencies and providing accurate information to credit-reporting bureaus.

• Substantiate any claims Dell makes about the quality of its customer service. Dell can use the term “award-winning” to describe its customer service only if the company received such an award within the past 18 months.

• The following states participated in the settlement: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

CONSUMER REFUND REQUESTS:

It’s not yet known how many consumers in Washington or nationwide may be entitled to refunds under the settlement. Consumers may be eligible for restitution if 1) they have a valid complaint concerning a product that was purchased between April 1, 2005, and April 13, 2009, and is addressed by the agreement and 2) Dell owes them money.

Consumers can also call 1-800-551-4636 between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. weekdays to request a form by mail. The deadline to submit claims is April 13, 2009.

Eligible consumers who previously filed complaints with the Attorney General’s Office on or after April 1, 2005, will be mailed claim forms. If you believe you are eligible and do not receive a claim form within two weeks of today’s date, download one from our website or contact the Attorney General’s Office for a claim form.

Consumers in participating states should contact their Attorney General’s Office.

The amount of money issued to individual consumers depends on the number of eligible recipients and the total amount claimed.
TO THE COMMUNITY
TO THE COUNTRY
TO THE PLANET

celebrate together