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Soledad O'Brien Tackles Tough Issues in Black in America 2

The Soul of New Orleans

Page 2



Newsmaker

Xavier Alum Named as
U.S. Surgeon General
Nominee

Page 4

Trailblazer
Actor
Wendell Pierce



Page 10

Soledad O’Brien Explores Race In America



O'Brien reports from CNN for Black in America 2. Credit: CNN

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief
“Data News Weekly Exclusive”

Race Matters
The thorny issue of race has been front and center during much of the sojourn of African-Americans in the U.S. It has been a history where Lady’s Liberty light shined dimly on the aspirations of generations of Americans who were locked out of the promise of the American Dream and the

promise of freedom, justice, and equality has been a check that has for centuries been marked insufficient funds.
As noted by the great scholar and activist W.E.B. DuBois, the problem of the 20th century was that of the color line where things were defined simply in terms of black and white and African-Americans were confined to the margins of American society. But in spite of the roadblocks that were present many people forged ahead, and during the watershed moment of the modern Civil Rights Move-

ment ordinary people came together to raise their collective voice to do extraordinary things.
In today’s America we see African-Americans the pinnacles of success and reaching the upper echelons of society and in January 2009 we witnessed the culmination of this upward spiral when Barack Obama made history being sworn in making him the first African-American President of the United States. But as this celebration was taking place, conversely many African-Americans were and are living in environments where crime, poor

Continued next page.

INSIDE DATA	
Cover Story	2
Newsmaker	4
State & Local.	6
Data Zone	8
Trailblazer	10
@Issue	11

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Cover Story, Continued from previous page.

schools and a host of other problems plague them from reaching their full potential. The beginning of this new millennium is an age where hopefulness and hopelessness dance a strange tango in this tale of Two Black Americas, where it is the best of times for some and worst of times for others. The question of the 21st century is: How can this be reconciled where all Americans can live, prosper and thrive in this nation?

Black In America 2

African-Americans have held countless forums and programs that have been aired where posturing and pontificating are ever so prevalent addressing the problems, but few if any have tried to tackle head on possible solutions. On July 22 and July 23, CNN will air "Black In America 2" reported by Soledad O'Brien and on Aug. 1 and Aug. 2 she will host a forum with CNN Contributor Roland Martin called "Reclaiming the Dream," a partnership between CNN and Essence Magazine.

O'Brien has been at the cutting edge of TV journalism covering everything from the Tsunami, to Hurricane Katrina, and more recently the election of President Barack Obama.

"We decided that we were going to focus on solutions that were scalable and replicable," she says of this installment of the series. "The first part will focus on pioneers, those people who are blazing the trail in their community with the positive work they are doing and the second night is about tomorrow's leaders, those people who are making change that more people need to see and we want to provide a vehicle for that to show that there are people out here who are making great contributions and coming up with solutions in Black America."

The series are a composite of compelling profiles on an array of African-Americans from familiar faces such as Tyler Perry, Colin Powell, and John Legend, to people who are lesser known, but no less important like Steve Perry, who is making strides in the field of education. "The stories are not just about celebrities, this is about real people doing real things that can inspire people in their community to create change," says O'Brien.

"Although we have people who are in the public eye, we have a host of others. For example you have someone like Chris Rock who is a star, but it is his wife Malaak Compton-Rock who took 30 kids and brought them over to South Africa for a life changing experience," says O'Brien. "We have problems in terms of educating some of our young people and we highlight Steve Perry. Here is a guy who lived in public housing, came back after receiving an education, then opened up a school where 100 percent of its graduates go onto college. It is just a program filled with stories of success, hope and optimism."

The Age of Obama: The End of Race as We Know It?

As Barack Obama won the Presidential Election in November 2008 and during his Inauguration in January tears streamed down the cheeks of many Americans who saw history unfold right before their eyes. This has led to some to say that the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King of a colorblind America has been fulfilled and that individual initiatives can trump any racial barriers, and that the days of racial repression are over in the age of Obama. O'Brien chimes in on this question saying, "Yes it is a monu-



O'Brien interviewed musician John Legend about his humanitarian efforts in New York City for Black in America 2. Credit: Presca Ahn/Reportage for CNN



Pete Thomas, Ph.D., Craig Spivey, Mike Woods and Marcus Murray work with Project Brotherhood to provide free healthcare services for black men in Chicago. Thomas and Murray are the co-directors of Project Brotherhood. Credit: Christopher Martin/CNN



CNN anchor and special correspondent Soledad O'Brien travels to South Africa with young volunteers in Malaak Compton-Rock's Journey for Change program. Credit: Jeff Hutchens/Reportage for CNN

mental event to have Barack Obama elected to the presidency, and there are those who say you can pull yourself up by your bootstraps, but there are still people in this country who do not even have

boots to begin with. There are places where people simply don't have the resources to even get to the starting line, much less finish the race."

While she is optimistic and cites that yes there has been progress, she feels there is still a widening gap between those who have gained access and those who haven't. And for O'Brien it is problematic for the Black community and the nation as a whole, "I think being black in the 21st century we have a lot of opportunities and hope." "I think the election of an African-American President have broken down a lot of barriers." "There is a lot of power in first and he is the most important first, but there is still a lot of work to do, and I am hopeful that the day will come where race won't be such a divisive issue in this country."

A Journalist's Journey: Soledad's New Orleans

Soledad O'Brien has witnessed many things as a journalist. After covering Hurricane Katrina she says she was dismayed and disappointed by the lack of response. But she says she is hopeful when she comes to the city, which she does quite often where she experience people in spite of what happened are upbeat and have not let life's unfortunate occurrences get the best of them, "I come to New Orleans on business and to visit my friend Kim and as I look around I think back to those days and yes some places still look like they did back then, but also I see where people are working very hard to bring back the city and that gives me hope."

She says New Orleans is an amazing place and will always have a special place in her heart, "New Orleans is a great city with a rich history, but what makes the city so great is the people, and it was sad what happened to the city on those days during the storm, but I am always encouraged when I come back and I see one more thing being fixed or improved and that is what will

See Cover Story, Continued next page.

Xavier University Graduate Selected as U.S. Surgeon General Nominee

The city was all abuzz earlier this week when the news spread that President Barack Obama had announced his intent to nominate Regina M. Benjamin as Surgeon General for the Department of Health and Human Services. People were excited not only because Dr. Benjamin is an African-American woman, but also because she is a graduate of both Xavier University of New Orleans and Tulane University.

"It's a good day, it's a great day," said Norman Francis, president of Xavier University in New Orleans on the university's website. Benjamin graduated with a bachelor of science degree in 1979. "I think the president made a great choice. Regina is a very special person," he continued.

"She is the model for what the payoff really is," said Francis, who said Benjamin is due to join the Xavier board this fall. "She was never about making money but

about helping people."

President Obama said, "Health care reform is about every family's health and the health of our economy. And if there's anyone who understands the urgency of meeting this challenge in a personal and powerful way, it's the woman who will become our nation's next Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin. I look forward working with her in the months and years ahead."

Regina M. Benjamin, MD, MBA, is founder and CEO of the Bayou La Batre Rural Health Clinic in Bayou La Batre, Alabama. She is the Immediate Past-Chair of the Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States, and previously served as Associate Dean for Rural Health at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine. In 2002, she became President of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, making her the first African American



Dr. Regina Benjamin

woman to be president of a State Medical Society in the United States.

Dr. Benjamin received her bachelor's degree in chemistry from Xavier in 1979 and is scheduled to join the school's board this fall. She was in the 2nd class at Morehouse School of Medicine and received her MD degree from the University of Alabama, Birmingham, as well as an MBA from Tulane University. She completed her residency in family medicine at the Medical

Center of Central Georgia.

Dr. Benjamin received the Nelson Mandela Award for Health and Human Rights in 1998, and was elected to the American Medical Association Board of Trustees in 1995, making her the first physician under age 40 and the first African-American woman to be elected. Dr. Benjamin was previously named by Time Magazine as one of the "Nation's 50 Future Leaders Age 40 and Under." She was also featured in a New York Times article, "Angel in a White Coat", as "Person of the Week" on ABC's World News Tonight with Peter Jennings, and as "Woman of the Year" by CBS This Morning. She received the 2000 National Caring Award which was inspired by Mother Teresa, as well as the papal honor Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice from Pope Benedict XVI. She is also a recent recipient of the MacArthur Genius Award.

Cover Story Continued from previous page



O'Brien reports from the home of Glorious Menefee, a student at Capital Preparatory Magnet School in Hartford, Conn., for Black in America 2. Credit: Christopher Martin/

really make the difference, people taking the initiative to bring back their community and those are some of the things we are trying to highlight with the stories in Black In America 2."

Moving Forward: Black in the 21st Century

The world has changed so much as the lines between race, and nation becomes blurred in a landscape that is becoming more global as everyday pass. Where old ideas about identity and what does it mean are being challenged.

Where in a country where a little over four decades ago people marched for the right to access, and to live with human dignity and today a man who is the product of a mixed marriage that was considered a crime in many states until 1967 occupies the nation's highest office. It a nation where the founding fathers determined that blacks would be considered 3/5 a person and where the noose became a symbol of racial reprisal, and stunted progress of a portion of the population it was a dream deferred that the remnants of are

still in place where there are still six degrees of separation between racial camaraderie and chaos.

Today, America is at a crossroads as the world is a very different place. The signposts of the past are being decimated and supplanted by new ideas as young people see the world through new eyes. The worlds of possibilities

dent and I said yes. While race remains to be significant in her world race does not hold a such a central place where it is so much of an impediment to hold her back," says O'Brien. "I thought about that and felt that would be a great place to be as we move forward, where race would not be as important as to determine where

ed to Blacks. This is the story of America and she thinks everyone should tune in and get a portrait of Blacks they rarely see on television.

"Black In America 2' is about how we provide solutions so we can move to an understanding where we can all work together [and] make life better for every-



Steve Perry

for some are limitless; a fact not lost on O'Brien as she talks about her 7-year-old daughter.

"My daughter asked me during the inauguration about Barack Obama and she asked is he the first African-American Presi-



CNN anchor and Soledad O'Brien interviewed Glorious Menefee at her home. Menefee, whose goal is to go to college, attends Capital Preparatory Magnet School in Hartford, Conn. Credit: Christopher Martin/

someone ends up or how they are perceived a certain way because they are of a certain race."

O'Brien says the story of Black America should not be just isolat-

one and the hope that all people can have the opportunity to live the American Dream," O'Brien says.

Recovery Act Changes To SBIC Program Mean Increased Funding Available For Small Businesses

WASHINGTON – Small businesses that would otherwise have difficulty securing private equity or venture capital may find funding easier to get as a result of changes made as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to the U.S. Small Business Administration's Small Business Investment Company program.

"The Recovery Act expands SBA's venture capital program to increase the pool of investment funding available to the Small Business Investment Companies licensed by SBA," said SBA Administrator Karen G. Mills. "We believe those companies will be better equipped by these changes

to help sustain and grow small businesses for their next important growth steps."

SBICs are privately owned and managed venture capital firms which are licensed and regulated by SBA. SBICs use a combination of funds raised from private sources and money raised through the use of SBA guarantees to make equity and mezzanine capital investments in small businesses. There are approximately 338 SBICs with \$17.4 billion in capital under management.

The changes made as part of the Recovery Act are:

- The Recovery Act makes SBICs eligible for greater SBA guaranteed funding and requires

SBICs to invest 25 percent of their investment dollars into "smaller" businesses. Also, the amount of funding an SBIC may invest in a single small business is set at 10 percent of an SBIC's total capital rather than the previous limit of 20 percent of an SBIC's private capital only. This translates to an effective 50 percent increase in funding available to a single business by an SBIC.

- Maximum SBA funding levels to SBICs will increase up to three times the private capital raised by the SBIC, up to a maximum of \$150 million for single SBICs, or up to \$225 million for multiple SBICs that are under

common control. The cap for all licensees was set at \$137.1 million before the Recovery Act.

- These limits are even higher for SBICs that are licensed after October 1, 2009, that certify that at least 50 percent of their investments will be made in small businesses located in low-income areas, up to \$175 million for single licensees and up to \$250 million for jointly controlled multiple licensees.

- Changes made to the SBIC program under the Recovery Act are permanent.

Industry associations have commended SBA for these changes and SBA continues to encourage new SBICs to apply for li-

censing and actively participate in the program.

The SBIC program was created to stimulate the growth of America's small businesses by supplementing the long-term debt and private-equity capital available to them. Since the SBIC program's formation in 1958 through April 2009, it has invested approximately \$56 billion in more than 106,000 small businesses in the United States. For more information about the SBA's Investment Division and SBIC program, go to www.sba.gov/INV or call 1-800-ASK SBA.

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Michael Jackson's Death Hits Close to Home for One New Orleans Native

Shaniece B. Bickham, Ph.D.
Managing Editor

People all over the world watched in awe last week as news stations and websites aired the public memorial service of pop icon Michael Jackson. New Orleans native Kevin McLin, a close friend to the Jackson family, was able to experience the spirit of the event first-hand when he attended the service in California.

McLin, chair of the mass communication department at Dillard University, has been friends

with the Jackson family, including Michael, for over 30 years, even serving as his publicist at one point. Back in the 1970s, the Jackson family patriarch, Joe Jackson, served as manager for McLin's band The Windjammer. The personal relationship that developed as a result of their business dealings only grew stronger over the years. McLin not only attended the public memorial service, but also spent time with the family at the Jackson compound.

"Losing Michael is like losing a

family member," said McLin. "It really hasn't sunken in yet at this point, it hasn't".

McLin said that by attending the memorial service, he was forced to think about Michael's death. According to McLin, it has been difficult for the family as well, and Katherine Jackson made certain that the service was referred to as a memorial as opposed to a funeral, which sounds much more final.

Many of Michael's friends at the memorial service as well as in interviews have been critical of the media coverage of Michael while he was alive and even now after his death. Even with the heavy coverage of his memorial service and death, several stories have aired revisiting the darker sides of Michael's life. Both Rev. Al Sharpton and Michael's broth-

er Marlin addressed the media's negativity and the fact that he was never left alone during their comments at the memorial service. McLin shares similar views regarding the coverage Michael has received over the years.

"The media in this country build you up to tear you down," said McLin. "There is a sensational appetite to find negative things about people and they want to ignore the positive aspects of people's lives."

For instance, Michael was very instrumental to making several charitable causes a success. He has dedicated time, provided funding and supported several organizations over the years. A few of his notable charitable contributions include his spearheading of the "We are the World" song and initiative to provide assistance to people starving in Africa, the

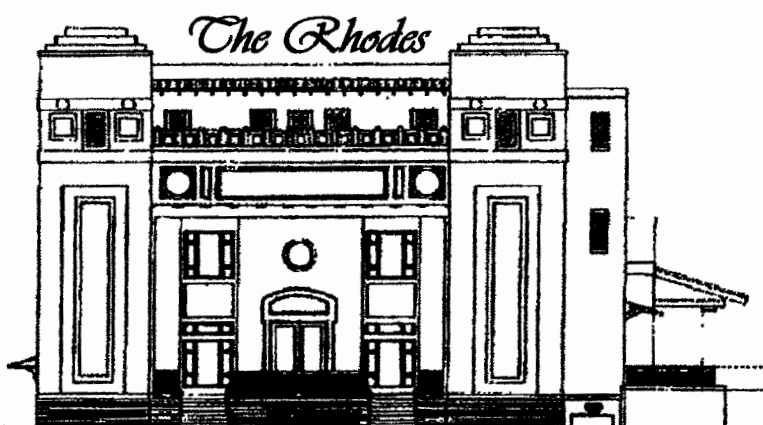
formation of the Heal the World Foundation to fight against AIDS, and his support of the United Negro College Fund.

"He was a humanitarian to the highest order because no one else in the entertainment industry has given more than he has," said McLin. Michael had planned to donate a portion of his proceeds from the scheduled London tour as well.

McLin said that Michael always had a thirst for knowledge, and also wanted to leave a legacy through his work.

"Michael was always concerned with creating a body of work that would live well beyond him. I think he has done that," said McLin. He created a body that will stand the test of time, thus leaving a legacy. I don't think anyone would argue with me on that."

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Local Artist Showcases Talent at Tipitina's



New Orleans native and artist J. Pierre recently conducted a live art demonstration at Tipitina's. Pierre incorporates the spirit of the City of Jazz in each of his vibrant paintings. The expressive reflection of New Orleans culture in his work led to the opportunity to exhibit and sell his art in international and national galleries and museums. J. Pierre was commissioned to create the exclusive 2007 Essence Festival official poster and one of the 40 Fleur De Lis displayed in the New Orleans Central Business District. His paintings have been exhibited at the Jazz and Heritage Festival and the Mississippi River Festival and shipped worldwide through J. Pierre's Fine Art Gallery. His fans laud his unwavering dedication to the preservation of New Orleans' music and culture within fine art.

Couple Helps Keep New Orleans "Green"



Eric and Jennifer Weishaupt, owners of the Ruby Slipper Café, have struck "green". Located on 139 South Cortez Street, this young couple is working together with their community in a sustainable and profitable way. In May 2008, the Weishaupts restored and opened what was a nuisance corner-store pre-Katrina into a community icon that is cleaner, greener, and more distinctly "New Orleans" than ever before.

Actor Wendell Pierce hosts Independence Day Picnic in Pontchartrain Park

New Orleans – Actor and New Orleans native Wendell Pierce, president of the Pontchartrain Park Neighborhood Association, hosted a July 4 picnic in Pontchartrain Park to celebrate families in the historic, African-American neighborhood and to highlight the groundbreaking and placement of new homes in the subdivision that is being redeveloped by Pierce and residents after being severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina.

The “Classic Fourth of July Celebration” lasted from noon to 9 pm. The event featured barbeque, games, waterslides, music, a talent show, movie and a fireworks display. Invited guests include U.S. Congress Representative Maxine Waters, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, national radio personality Tom Joyner, and CNN correspondent Roland Martin to witness the



Data News Columnist Dionne Character catches up with Actor Wendell Pierce and U.S. Congress Representative Maxine Waters.

placement of new homes in the neighborhood.

Pierce has spearheaded redevelopment of his flood-ravaged childhood neighborhood,

Pontchartrain Park, which was one of New Orleans' first middle-class African American subdivisions and was among the hardest hit in the aftermath of Hurricane



Katrina. The picnic is designed to celebrate the residents of this community and to spotlight the successful redevelopment that is taking place as we approach the

4th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. For more information, visit www.pontchartrainpark.org.

15th Annual Essence Music Festival is a Success

Edwin Buggage
Editor in Chief

The Essence Music Festival recently celebrated its 15th year with a star-studded first class event that touched down in the city of New Orleans where a sea of beautiful people came to experience what has become the premiere event for African-Americans. It was a weekend that was an all day and all night affair that by day featured empowering inspirational words from some of the leading voices in the African-American community. And as the sun set, the mood changed as a throng of well-dressed ebony faces made their way down to the Louisiana Superdome to hear some of the most incredible soul stirring sounds running the gamut from, jazz, soul, r&b, and everything in between. It was something for everyone to enjoy, and Data News Weekly was front and center capturing the splendor that is the ...Essence Music Festival.

Photos by Glenn Summers



Tom Joyner and Lionel Richie



DJ Capt. Charles



Charlie Wilson



Eva Pigford



Robin Thicke



Ledesi



Maxwell

Shoot Ya Best Shot!

New Orleans Filled with Essence Festival Fun

Essence Festival was a huge success during the 4th of July weekend. Friends gathered at the concert and at special events and parties to enjoy the festivities. Data News Weekly was in the mix catching up with some of the party-goers. To have your photos featured in the Shoot Ya Best Shot spread, email photos and photo credits to datanewsphotos@gmail.com



The top of the Ritz Carlton was the place to be at Terry and Bernardo's Essence Party.



Essence Music Festival Honors Bishop T.D. Jakes



Dionne Character
Data News Weekly Contributor
Author

As I entered Hall D at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, I was es-

corted through a set of dark black curtains. On the other side were hundreds of people standing, singing and dancing to the live performance of gospel singer J. Moss.

Hot from the 90 degree weather outside, I surely appreciated the cool breeze as the air from the vent above blew down my right arm, causing the hairs to dance to the coolness of the room.

Everyone seemed to be full of joy as the spirit in the room reminded them of a man who has captured the universe in his global efforts to make a world-wide difference across the nation. While he sat in his black and white ensemble with a sense of reflection on face, there was a line up of stars who graced the stage showing their appreciation through song

for an anointed soul who constantly reminds many of "knowing your purpose."

Mary Mary, Kirk Franklin, Ledisi, and Pastor Deborah Morton seemed to have been touched by the spirit of Bishop T. D. Jakes. Our own Mayor C. Ray Nagin spoke in a somber tone as he awarded A Key to the City of New Orleans to the Bishop for his eager support during Katrina.

In spite of the good music, the background singers, the cushioned red seats, screen tvs and banners reading Essence Music Festival hanging from all corners of the room, this movement was "free." My spirit was awakened in knowing what my purpose really is. Each week that I am able to communicate to many of you who may enjoy my works and those of

you who may not like my hair, I was reminded that "purpose" lies within all of us. We have to channel into it like we eat gumbo, like we watch TV, like we report to work everyday, with no fear.

This tribute was my resurrection to my fingers and why I write. I received the spirit to create, thank and reflect on what the creator has done for me individually. This All-Star Tribute to a man with purpose was exactly what the community and the people of New Orleans needed—a weekend of soulful, compelling, and inspirational words of reflection, reminding us all from whence we've come.

Data Reviews

"The Vixen Manual"

Terri Schlichenmeyer
Data News Weekly Contributor

"The Vixen Manual" by Karrine Steffans
c.2009, Grand Central Publishing
\$25.99 / \$28.99 Canada 250 pages

Sick to death.

That's you – sick to death of buying lingerie with no one in mind to see you wearing it. Sick of one-serving meals eaten alone. Sick of watching sappy movies by yourself, of not wearing make-up because who cares, of looking at an empty calendar filled with empty weekends.

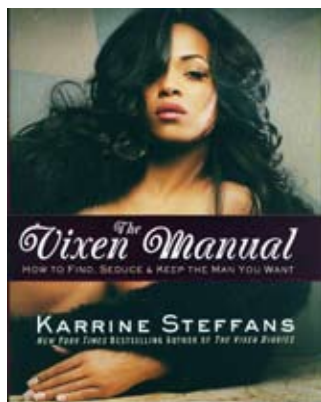
Common sense tells you there are men "out there", but you'd like to know where. Meanwhile, until you find one, you're sick to death of being single.

But then along comes real, down-to-Earth wisdom from a surprising source: in the new book

"The Vixen Manual" by Karrine Steffans, you'll learn how to find a man, catch his eye, and keep his interest.

First of all, are you single or singular? The first word describes the state of not having a man in your life. The second one is the way you define yourself. Steffans says that you must remember to remain singular, even when you're with someone.

And who might that "someone" be? Steffans says it should be someones, plural. Limiting yourself to one man in the early stages of dating is doing yourself a disservice. And don't let anyone call you out for seeing multiple men; what you do with your dating life is nobody else's business. You might even want to consider a younger man, but check IDs to be sure he's as old as he claims to be.



See *Vixen* continued on page 11.

TODAY'S FORECAST:
100% CHANCE
OF REFRESHMENT.



Wendell Pierce

An Artistic Visionary

by: Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief



He is a versatile talent who has graced us on-stage, and in television and film. Wendell Pierce is a New Orleans native who has made his mark on the screens big and small, but today he is preparing for another role with his sights set on doing something more, serving his community.

"I felt it was necessary to get involved in the rebuilding of the city of New Orleans. It is where my roots are and [what] made me the person I am, so I felt it was important to come back to my city and use my visibility to help a city I love," says Pierce.

Pierce has come back, and with residents in the Pontchartrain Park, is developing a non-profit entity working with the city and the state to acquire homes in the community, redevelop them and put them back into commerce.

"After Hurricane Katrina there was a buzz that there were plans to redevelop the area as an upscale golf community," says Pierce. "But this was and is a viable community and an important part of Black

New Orleans and must continue to be part of the city's footprint as we move forward in rebuilding the city."

While jetting between both coasts he still considers New Orleans home and is committed to its recovery. "Regardless of where my career takes me this will always be home for me. My family is still here and the people who are important to me, so I will always be connected to the city," Pierce says.

As he has enjoyed recent success in HBO's "The Wire," he has again teamed up with creator David Simon and will star in a show called "Treme" set in New Orleans.

"This show is about people trying to recover in the wake and aftermath of what happened to their city. We will be showcasing a lot of local talent and music and I just feel good that I can be home doing my craft," says Pierce.

Pierce also said he feels that this is a good venue to show another face of the people of the city. "All too often when we are presented it is not very accurate, so with this production it is our hope to show the world who we are and that we are working hard to put our lives back together. I hope this series can be sort of a window where people can get a real slice of New Orleans," he says.

Pierce is a graduate of Benjamin Franklin High School and he also attended The New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA) before going off to Julliard to pursue his dream of becoming an actor. He said he feels strongly that education is one of the most important ingredients to success.

"Every time I get an opportunity I try to talk to young people and commit my time to try to give something back and to be an inspiration. Sometimes all some of our kids need is someone to tell them that they can do and be whatever they want to be and for me that is what I have always done—tried to inspire people to be better at whatever they choose to pursue," says Pierce.

When he is not working Pierce is a common sight at cultural events around town. "That is the thing I enjoy about this city, it is a cultural Mecca and there is no other city like it. People come from around the world to experience what we have to offer and that is something we have to retain as we rebuild and that's what I am trying to do in the community I grew up in. This is my contribution to our renewal as a city to hopefully be even better than we were," says Pierce.

Wendell Pierce is a true renaissance man, and a talented New Orleanian that has taken his gifts to give back, and Data News Weekly is proud to honor him as our Trailblazer recipient for July of 2009.

JMJ
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at&t

McNair's Death Ruled a Case of Murder-Suicide



Shaniece B. Bickham, Ph.D.
Data News Managing Editor

several times before shooting him again in the head. She then allegedly turned the gun on herself. Even more disturbing about these events is that evidence suggests Kazemi shot McNair while he was asleep.

I don't know what the circumstances of McNair and Kazemi's relationship were, or what circumstances would cause her to want both McNair and herself dead, but I don't think they required this form of action. From reading various reports that indicate that Kazemi had mounting financial problems and emotional issues because of the status of her relationship with McNair, it appears as though Kazemi was a confused, young woman who may have allowed the stresses of life to overwhelm her. But what 20-year-old isn't overwhelmed and confused?

Just because someone has reached the age to legally be declared an adult does not mean that they are equipped mentally to make adult decisions. What may have been a mere secret rendezvous for McNair was obviously something more to Kazemi, even though they had reportedly only known

each other for six months. None of us truly knows what goes on in the minds of others, and sometimes that is a curse. Obviously, Kazemi's mind could not process everything that was happening to her and the direction her life was going in. The same way some people are physically stronger than others, some are also mentally weaker.

It is utterly disturbing that this young lady could not see beyond her problems to realize that at such a young age she arguably had a lot of time to start anew. It is sad to think about her feeling as though she had found the love of her life, only to realize she was not the love of his, and to then not be able to deal with that reality. It is even more depressing that in addition to taking her own life, she found it her duty to take another's. Was this a case of "if I can't have you no one can"?

But then you have to consider McNair's wife, Mechelle McNair, who reportedly, had no idea who Kazemi was or that she was part of her husband's life. I don't know whether McNair was separated from his wife, but they certainly were not divorced.

It must be difficult for Mechelle to not only deal with her husband's death, but also deal with the fact that he was killed at the hand of his mistress. And while considering Mechelle, you can't possibly forget about McNair's four sons and the devastation they are experiencing because of their father's death.

When entering relationships, whether they are innocent friendships, business acquaintances, or romantic involvements, consider the feelings of all parties involved and how your decisions may or may not affect them. Be mindful of how these individuals respond to you and monitor their behavior so that you can recognize any change from when the relationship started. Do not throw caution to the wind, take your life into your own hands and never take threats lightly. Kazemi's friends are now reporting that she said she wanted to end her life. Obviously none of them took her seriously and I am sure they are now wishing that they had.

After about a week of probing, Nashville police finally confirmed that they had reason and evidence to believe that former NFL quarterback Steve McNair's girlfriend is behind the 4th of July killings that left him as well as her, Sahel Kazemi, dead. Apparently, according to Nashville police, it was a murder-suicide. It appears as though Kazemi shot McNair in the head and chest

Vixen, Continued from page 9.

Grandma had lots of advice and, as a single girl today, you should reach back and listen to her. In Granny's day, women came with a dowry but Steffans says today's single girl is her dowry. When you meet a man you think you might want to be with, have something to offer. Men love strength, confidence, goals, and a woman who cares about herself. And they love when you make an effort to know them.

"Get into his head... before you get into his bed," says Steffans. And with that, she presents tips on relationships inside the bedroom, too.

I had mixed feelings about this book. On one hand, author Karrine Steffans offers (mostly) sensible advice for single girls who complain that there are "no decent men out there." Her pointers are useable, relatively simple, and quite empowering.

This is wonderful until you begin to no-

tice that, on the other hand, Steffans often contradicts her own recommendations. For instance, she indicates that truth is essential in a relationship, then later advocates game-playing to keep a straying man guessing. She writes about how no woman should engage in casual sex, then includes several surprisingly graphic drawings depicting "adventurous" sexual positions. Part of "The Vixen Manual" is spent preaching virtue while another part avows that a "good girl" won't keep a man around for long.

Overall, this book isn't bad but - as with anything on this subject - you'll want to winnow out the useful from the personally absurd. If you're willing to do that and you're not easily shocked, "The Vixen Manual" may soon have you hearing "Til death do you part."



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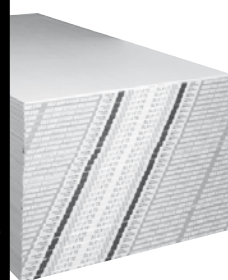
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New Orleans... A ToXic City?

Story and Photos by Edwin Buggage
Editor in Chief

Prologue

New Orleans is a city with a rich cultural history, its grandeur and splendor has made it a destination for generations of people from around the globe. Walking at its own pace the city is unique in so many ways earning it the title of America's most interesting city. Where the syncopated rhythms of the music, or the savory taste of many of the delicacies of the city and architecture that rivals the great cities of the world, it is where people may not have been rich in terms of money, but were enriched in terms of quality of life, where the good life meant family, friends and community.

This was life in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina toppled the levees washing away the much of what the city was, where today nearly four years later the city is a strange tale of two cities, and a study in contrasts. On the one hand there is the city that is marketed to tourist that posits the idea the city is back and flourishing. And as tourist ride the street car and go to places of fine dining, or come to visit during many of the festivals, oftentimes they get to see a city that is quaint and charming, where concierges give them a map of things to see, but there is so much that is absent that lies not so far away. Where debris filled homes that remain unoccupied except for rodents and other pests, and where the stench in the air of mildew, mold, and human waste overwhelm you. Also this tour their is the unsightly jack-of-all-lantern effect where people are inside of homes trying to put the pieces of their lives back together while living adjacent to homes that loll as fire and health hazards. Begging the question has New Orleans become America's most toxic city? And how does the future of the city look for those who are disenfranchised; how do they factor into the equation that is the 'new' New Orleans?

Blight in Black and White

New Orleans was a city where blight was a problem before Hurricane Katrina. According to the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, 17 percent of the city housing could be considered either blighted or abandoned. After the damage caused by the levees



breaching, today that figure has risen to more than 50 percent. And for those that are occupied, many of the homes have not been treated properly for potential health hazards according to Jeffrey May, who works with the National Community Reinvestment Coalition based in Washington D.C. and is the former Executive Director of the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center. "We have been working vigorously on behalf of citizens who are returning that they are able to move into units that are safe and where people who are just trying to get back home will not have situations where they face danger because they are exposed to toxins," says May.

Linda Williams is an elderly African-American woman with a short cropped afro hairdo that is salt and pepper grey. As she sits on her porch with a walker, close by her side is her daughter and granddaughter and neighbor who are talking about the abandoned house next door filled with clothes, overturned furniture,

mold and debris, where a placard with a large white X has issued by the fire department. "I have been living here for a year, and this house has been abandoned the fire department came out and put up this sign months ago saying it was a hazard, but they haven't done anything again," she said. "My landlord called about it several times but nothing has been done." Of the problems associated with living near the property she says, "We have problems with mice, and now that it's hot the smell coming from over there makes sitting out here hard sometimes because it can make you feel sick to your stomach."

Dr. Corey Hebert MD is the Chief Medical Editor, WDSU-NBC, and Asst. Professor, Tulane University Medical Center, says that there are many health problems he has seen as a result of blight in the city of New Orleans post Hurricane Katrina. "I have had patients that had very high lead levels since the storm. There have been many instances of chronic illness due to 'sick' hous-

es. Meaning houses that were not appropriately cleaned and sterilized, people that live in these houses can have allergic symptoms such as runny nose, watery eyes, bronchitis and asthma exacerbations," said Hebert.

Housing Woes and Other Lows

As much of the housing was taken out of commerce after Hurricane Katrina, shortages occurred causing price spikes in the rental market where apartments that may have cost \$500 a month was now renting for twice that amount and where several public housing developments that had minimal damage was reduced to rubble and are now being redeveloped as mixed income housing. A situation that caused citizens who desire to return to reconsider because it is not affordable or does not benefit them, "I'm back in the city working doing construction, and I went with my son to look at an apartment that was a small efficiency apartment and they wanted \$600," says Leon Joseph.

Joseph is a lanky angular man in his early 50s who along with his son Leon Jr. sits outside the legendary Dew Drop Inn, a performance venue where black performers such as Ray Charles, and local legends Fats Domino and many others came to perform which is under renovation. As they stood outside the hollow shell of a place he says, "You see how they tore down all the projects, and the price of everything else is going up and then you have all these other people who aren't from here coming in and we're the ones who have to suffer." His son chimes in saying, "It's tough coming back where there hardly any jobs, at first when they were trying to get people to come back it wasn't so bad but now some of these jobs pay like they did before Katrina, but the problem is it costs more money to live here now."

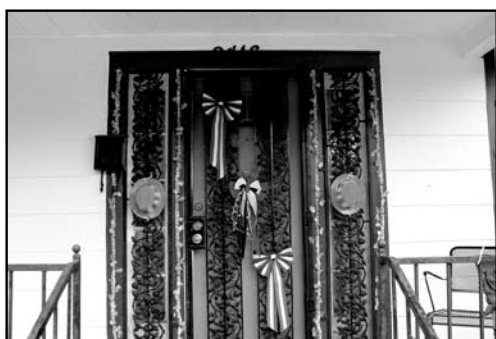
Looking around on Washington Avenue where the Magnolia/C.J. Peete Housing Project once stood, where the hustle and bustle of people and where the dissonant sounds of the Mardi Gras Indians and Brass Bands have second line parades, on this day there is an eerie silence. Across the street there is nothing as vacant land lies where the construction for what is to replace the old 'Magnolia.' Joseph Sr. talks about what happened when the city began to redevelop other areas that were formerly working class and poor communities and feels that his neighborhood may experience a similar fate. With his New Orleans accent in full lilt, his words come out in a rhythmic staccato that sometimes is only recognizable if you have spent time in the city, "I grew up around here, I mask Indian, we are part of a tradition in this community, but what I see happening is what happened to the St. Thomas Project, where they told the people that they would be able to come back, but only a few people are back and now all you see is an area that's become a mostly white area, and I think that's what could happen to us in this area, but we gotta fight to stay and be part of this city this is our home too."

Green New Orleans

New Orleans was a city with a high number of older residences that had not been updated in quite some time and a city that had problems with its soil, the



These photos tell the story of a city in despair. The rebuilding effort from Hurricane Katrina also includes efforts to restore hearts, homes, and businesses that gave New Orleans its unique flair. The recovery will be a long one that many have decided is a journey worth taking.



two toxins that cause the greatest concern are lead and arsenic, says according to a study done by the Natural Resources Defense Council. A San Francisco-based group's public health researchers surveyed air, water and soil quality in New Orleans following Katrina. According to their study, arsenic has been linked to birth defects, neurological disorders, skin abnormalities and cardiovascular disease. Lead exposure can cause neurological damage in children, leading to learning disabilities and other problems.

"New Orleans is a city that is in dire need of infrastructure improvements, and green initiatives in housing especially for those most vulnerable and those are usually the poor and people of color," says Jeffrey May. Continuing he says "While Hollywood stars

such as Brad Pitt is doing work in the Ninth Ward there is still not enough information out there for people who live in or own rental properties about building in a more energy efficient way."

But in February President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 that may have an impact on the city of New Orleans. \$2,000,000,000 in funding resources are to be invested in addressing the impact of foreclosures through the purchase and rehabilitation of foreclosed, vacant properties in order to create more affordable housing and renew neighborhoods devastated by the economic crisis. How will this affect New Orleans in green building? "It can help in some ways because those who receive the funding must follow strict

guidelines and thresholds to obtain funding and three of those are directly related to things that have a direct positive impact on the environment that includes energy star standards for appliance, water conservation, and using green building materials," said May. "I feel if this is implemented correctly, it could be a win-win for the city where a portion the housing market can be redeveloped in the city that's affordable and be done in a way where it has a positive impact on the environment. "And with this and other initiatives I believe New Orleans could become an example of a Green City."

Epilogue

New Orleans is a city that is at a crossroads. It is a place where hopefulness and hopelessness

co-exist in a city that is trying to find its way back. It is a city that is grappling with how to retain its rich historical past, but yet become steeped into the 21st century.

It is a city where a lot was washed away in the horrid days in 2005, but yet showed the ugly underbelly of a New Orleans they didn't know existed. Today, New Orleans has a unique opportunity to renew itself from the toxins that affect more than just its physical environment—crime, poverty, underfunded schools, and racial inequity and unrest. These are just a few of the many things that have prevented it from becoming the city it could become; a city with a spirit and resilience that will never die.

That spirit is embodied in a woman that simply referred to

herself as Ms. Johnnie Mae, an older black woman in her late 60s who sat on her porch like a neighborhood griot telling stories about how her community was and always will be in her mind and how important it was for her to come back. As she looked over at the blighted property next to her and one across the street that's been decorated with patriotic regalia from the 4th of July she says, "I've lived here for forty years. I could have left and stayed with my children who all have their own homes out of town, but this is my home. I've seen all these kids grow up around here and we all know and look out for one another even after the storm. "I think if I could survive Hurricane Katrina I could survive anything."

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