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New Orleans

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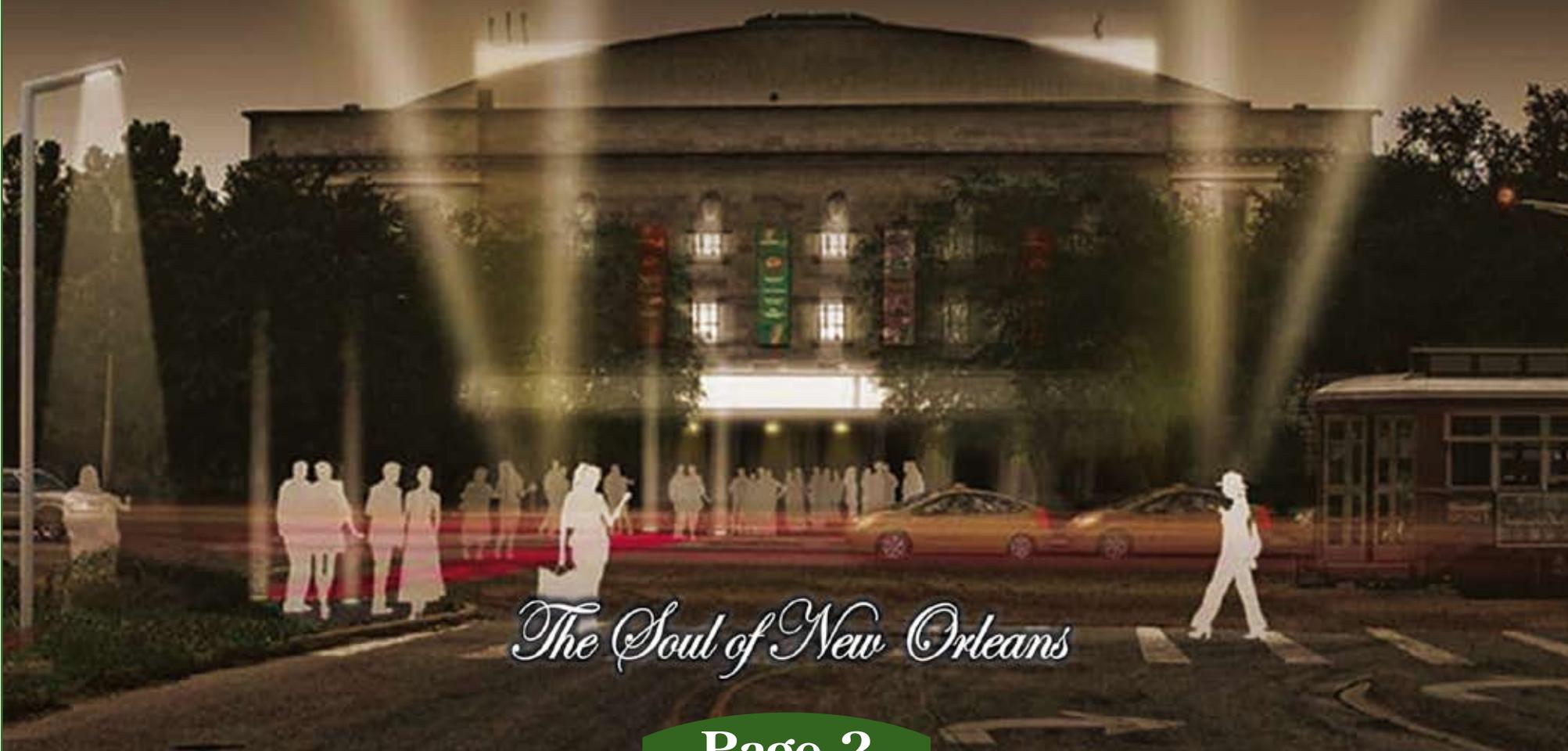
News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

**Carl SMUT Smothers:
A Soldier Bred Poet**

January 23 - January 29, 2010 44th Year Volume 19 www.ladatanews.com

**Local Developer Has Big Plans For
Municipal Auditorium Restoration**



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A Shared Past**



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Local Developer Has Big Plans For Municipal Auditorium Restoration



By Louis Parks

Since November, the future of Armstrong Park's Morris X. F. Jeff Municipal Auditorium has been the focus of attention in New Orleans' post-Katrina rebuilding effort. Local developer Stewart Juneau and his company leTriomphe Property Group (LTPG) presented a proposal in late October to the city calling for the transformation of the auditorium into an iconic structure dedicated to the cultural arts. The restored auditorium will be called the Center for Entertainment and the Creative Industry (CECI).

In November, the Nagin administration selected LTPG to oversee the restoration of the building, and is preparing to sign an agreement with Juneau to move forward with the initial stages of the development. That agreement will call for LTPG to work closely with the city to manage the development process, including the finalization of negotiations with FEMA to determine how much funding

the federal government will commit to the restoration of the building.

Based on his discussions with the city and consultants with experience working with FEMA, as well as preliminary estimates on the extent of hurricane-related damage to the facility, Juneau estimates that the contribution from FEMA will total at least \$35 million.

Juneau says that his proposed Center for Entertainment and the Creative Arts will become a facility unlike any other. "Armstrong Park is an inner-city gem," said Juneau. "CECI gives the people of New Orleans an opportunity to build a comprehensive cultural center within the park that will both pay tribute to Louis Armstrong and the city's cultural history as well as contribute to the creation of modern day history."

Developer Has Strong Building History

Stewart Juneau is no stranger to making history. He has developed thousands

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616 Barrone Street, Suite 584, New Orleans, LA 70113
Phone: (504) 821-7421 | Fax: (504) 821-7622

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

Terry B. Jones CEO/Publisher Glenn Jones VP Advertising & Marketing Cheryl Mainor Managing Editor Edwin Buggage Editor Dionne Character Arts & Entertainment Editor Melanie Mainor Copy Editor Intern June Hazeur Accounting	Contributors Edwin Buggage Dionne Character Jordan Flaherty Marc H. Morial Louis Parks Phil Wilson Art Direction & Production MainorMedia.com Editorial Submissions datanewseditor@bellsouth.net Advertising Inquiries datanewsad@bellsouth.net
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Cover Story, Continued from previous page.

of housing units throughout the South. He sits on the board of directors of Goodwill Industries and was instrumental in the construction of that group's new facilities on Tulane Avenue.

In 1999 he converted the old Maison Blanche building into the luxury Ritz Carlton Hotel, a move that sparked the commercial revitalization of Canal Street.

Now Juneau wants to bring his creativity and development knowledge to Armstrong Park and the community of Tremé.

"The Center for Entertainment and the Creative Industry is a dream that is shared by the cultural community of our city," Juneau reflected during an interview at his rooftop home at the Ritz Carlton. "New Orleans doesn't have a home for the cultural arts, someplace that artists can call their own. When the development is completed, CECI will serve as a center where our whole community and tourists can gather to both celebrate our artistic heritage and to help create the cultural history that our children and grandchildren will enjoy."

A glimpse of Juneau's vision reveals a redesigned auditorium with fewer seats than in the past, and with an area devoted to housing and



Stewart Juneau

seats, was ahead of its time in many ways. One of the innovations built into the performance center was the nation's first stages with an elevator allowing the floor to be lowered into the basement level and raised again. The auditorium design allowed for two major events to be held simultaneously in the building. Stories are told of a concert on one side and a boxing match on the other. Reportedly the entertainer shuttled between stages and reported round-by-round boxing results to the concert crowd. But Juneau says that there is no

longer a call for a 6500-seat venue in the city.

"With the development of the Superdome, the New Orleans Arena, the Saenger and Orpheum theaters and the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, the Jeff Municipal Auditorium floor plan doesn't play a role in responding to today's entertainment needs in the city," continued Juneau. "Our job through the agreement with the administration is to help decide the best use of the auditorium based on input from the entire community. I have made a personal commitment to hear from any and everybody who wants to make

ment on the use of a public building before it is a done deal."

Jobs Creation Stressed in Plan

One key aspect of LTPG's auditorium vision is the concept of incubators for both for-profit and non-profit businesses. The incubators will provide low-cost office space while assisting new small businesses with shared resources such as a receptionist, accounting help and conference rooms to help them through the early stages of growth. Juneau anticipates that by including for and non-profit business incubators in the center, the project will lead to job generation and growth, especially for residents of Tremé.

"Living in South Africa for a year, I saw that some of the most successful activities throughout the continent were micro-loans – small loans of up to \$5000 to help very small businesses in the villages and towns obtain supplies and equipment," said Stewart Juneau. "I have decided to expand this concept into the business incubator by creating an Angel Fund. This will be an investment that we'll make into the small businesses housed in the incubator to help them in their growth. If we're selected to develop our vision for the auditorium, the federal government will allow us to take a developer's fee of 20%. A cornerstone of our vision is that LTPG will donate 75% of that fee to the micro-investment non-profit Angel Fund."

Juneau said that he is hopeful work can begin soon on the restoration of the auditorium. FEMA has already provided \$4 million for initial clean-



supporting non-profit and for-profit businesses in the cultural arts. Additionally, his vision includes a culinary institute bearing the name of New Orleans' grand dame of cuisine Leah Chase; a museum of jazz and a television production facility.

New Orleanians remember the Morris X. F. Jeff Auditorium as a home for Carnival balls, basketball games, concerts, graduations and even briefly, a temporary casino. The building constructed in the early 1900s with more than 6500

a contribution to the effort. Over the next few weeks you'll see a website developed and several community events where persons will have a chance to make their voices heard on this project. You will also find that the process that we're going to implement for determining the future of the auditorium will be unprecedented in the city in terms of openness and transparency. There hasn't been another project of this size and impact where citizens will have a chance to com-

up work on the facility that includes removal of standing water in the building and shoring up of some of the structure. According to the developer's timetable, work on the building is expected to be completed near the end of 2011.

Dale Atkins: A Woman of Vision

By Edwin Buggage

Dale Atkins is a woman who has given her life to serving others in both her public and private life. Presently, she is the Clerk of Court for the City of New Orleans. She draws a distinction saying her role as an elected official is an extension of her commitment to service. "A public servant is very different than being a politician," says Atkins.

She says her upbringing played a vital part, planting the roots for her wanting to serve her community. "Fairview Baptist Church is where I began my life of service. My parents and grandparents taught us that we should always be in spirit of giving back."

Atkins was raised near the St. Bernard Housing Development, in an environment where some would succumb to adverse circumstances never reaching their full potential. With the support of her family she would go on to attend Xavier Prep and the University of Notre Dame. She says her family was the key to her success, "My family was not financially wealthy, but we had each other for support, and that has made a difference." Further she says her parents and grandparents al-



Dale Atkins

ways stressed, "To whom much is given much is required and that has given me the will to strive and thrive even under the most adverse circumstances."

Demographers and pundits are saying that the Mayoral race and others will come down to the African-American woman vote. It has been an election cycle full of su-

prises, and where the topic of race has been paramount. Atkins does not negate race completely as a factor but says, "This election is not all about race, but more about who represents your values." Drawing on the common themes that bring people together she says, "We want the same things. Safe community, good education good opportunities." In respect to race and the election she says, "As an African American and female I understand we have been historically denied access and with respect to the candidates who are running we have to look at their track records and investigate how they stand on issues that affect our community," says

Atkins.

Atkins says she has always been a hard worker and never a quitter. This would be tested many times in her life. Atkins' sister was killed in 2000 leaving a daughter behind. Atkins took custody of her niece and has raised her since where today she is a student at Mt. Carmel. The waters of Hurricane Katrina and the breaching of the levees changed the lives of New Orleanians forever. Atkins was no exception. "I was able to get back into the city earlier than some and I lost everything, my family lost everything and our offices were damaged."

But with a spirit of resilience that has come to define her career and life Atkins found some of her employees, re-opened the Clerk of Court Office and began to rebuild her life. Today she continues serving in many capacities as a member of several organizations and sitting on numerous boards including: Mt. Carmel Academy, Links, UNCF, and Red Cross.

Harkening back to her parents and grandparents words and reflecting on her life and her mission she says, "They always told us if we played by the rules we could succeed." Continuing she says, "I grew up with a fighting spirit, one thing I'm not is not a quitter." "They also stressed working hard is nothing you should be afraid of if you have a goal in life."

Her life after Katrina has taken on an even greater purpose moving into a new home and also taking on the responsibility of her mother who is now elderly who chose not to rebuild her home and is under the care of Atkins. "I had to show people that I was not defeated and be an example of strength for my employees and my family."

When asked what would she want in a mayor she says, "I would want someone who would fight everyday and build partnerships and put the needs and interests of the people first."



Help Victims of Disaster

People affected by disasters like the recent earthquake in Haiti need your help. Your donation to the American Red Cross International Response Fund provides immediate relief and long-term support through supplies, technical assistance and other support to help people in need.

Your help is urgently needed.

Call **1-800-RED CROSS** or visit **redcross.org**



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and like a bird
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Her Crime? Sex Work in New Orleans

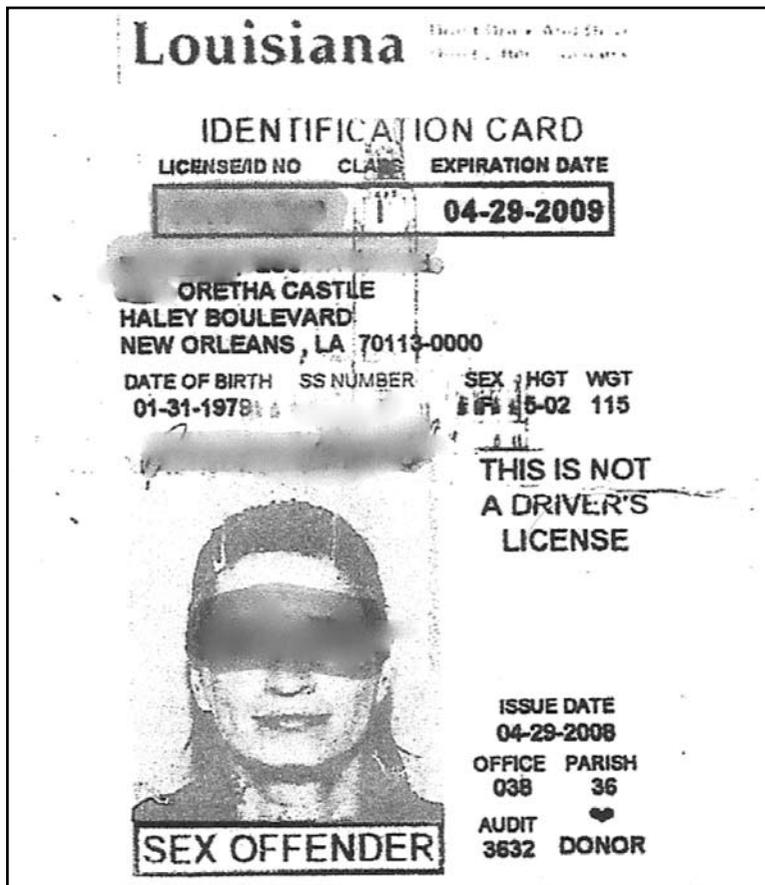
By Jordan Flaherty

More than half of the people on Louisiana's Sex Offender Registry - which was designed for rapists and child molesters - are indigent women convicted of sex work

Tabitha has been working as a prostitute in New Orleans since she was 13. Now 30 years old, she can often be found working on a corner just outside of the French Quarter. A small and slight white woman, she has battled both drug addiction and illness and struggles every day to find a meal or a place to stay for the night.

These days, Tabitha, who asked that her real name not be used in this story, has yet another burden: a stamp printed on her driver's license labels her a sex offender. Her crime? Offering sex for money.

New Orleans city police and the district attorney's office are using a state law written for child molesters to charge hundreds of sex workers like Tabitha as sex



offenders. The law, which dates back to 1805, declares it a crime against nature to engage in "unnatural copulation"—a term New Orleans cops and the district attorney's office have interpreted to mean anal or oral sex. Sex workers convicted of breaking this law are charged with felonies, issued longer jail sentences and forced to register as sex offenders.

Of the 861 sex offenders currently registered in New Orleans, 483 were convicted of a crime against nature, according to Doug Cain, a spokesperson with the Louisiana State Police. And of those convicted of a crime against nature, 78 percent are Black and almost all are women.

Impacts on Women's Lives

The law impacts sex workers in both small and large ways. Tabitha has to register an address in the sex offender database. Her driver's license has the label "sex offender" printed on it. She also has to purchase and mail postcards with her picture to everyone in the neighborhood informing them of her conviction. If she needs to evacuate to a shelter during a hurricane, she must evacuate to a special shelter for sex offenders, and this shelter has no separate safe spaces for women. She is even prohibited from ordinary activities in New Orleans like wearing a costume at Mardi Gras.

"This law completely disconnects our community members from what remains of a social safety net," said Deon Haywood, director of Women With A Vision, an organization that promotes wellness and disease prevention for women who live in poverty. Haywood's group has formed a new coalition of New Orleans activists and health workers who are organizing to fight the way police are abusing the 1805 law.

Activists like Haywood believe that using the law in this way is part of an overall policy by the New Orleans Police Department to go after petty offenses. According to a report from the Metropolitan Crime Commission, New Orleans police arrest more than 58,000 people every year. Of those arrested, nearly 50 percent are for traffic and municipal offenses, and only 5 percent are for violent crimes.

"What this is really about is

over-incarcerating poor and of-color communities," said Rosana Cruz of VOTE-NOLA, a prison reform organization that is also a part of the new coalition.

Haywood, Cruz and other activists believe they have an opportunity with the mayoral and city council elections next month to change the system. With all of the candidates attempting to distance themselves from Mayor Nagin, who is prevented by term limits from running again, the new mayor is likely to be open to making changes. This includes hiring a new police chief, as all the candidates have pledged to do. Advocates are hoping this is an opportunity to shift the department's focus. "When there's a new police chief, we can educate them," said Haywood.

Many of the women Haywood's group works with are at the most high-risk tier of sex work. They meet customers on the street and in bars. Most are dealing with addiction and homelessness, and many cannot get food stamps or other public assistance because of felony convictions on their record.

"I'm hoping that the situation will look different because of this coalition," Haywood said. "I can't tell you how overwhelmed we've been from the needs of this population."

Condemned

Miss Jackie is one of those women. A Black woman in her 50s, she was arrested for sex work in 1999 and charged as a sex offender. Her name was added to the registry for 10 years. When the registration period was almost over she was arrested for possession of crack. She says the arresting officer didn't find any drugs on her person, but the judge ruled that she needed to continue to register as a sex offender for another 15 years (the new federal requirement for sex offenders) because her arrest was a violation of her registration period.

"Where is the justice?" she asked, speaking through tears. "How do they expect me to straighten out my life?" Struggling with basic needs like housing, Miss Jackie added: "I feel condemned."

Advocates and former defendants claim that the decision over who is charged under which pen-



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Sex Worker, Continued on next page.

Mayor Nagin To Present Key Recommendations To Improve The Stafford Act During U.S. Conference Of Mayors

Mayor C. Ray Nagin will continue his leadership to reform the Stafford Act, which governs federal response to disasters, when he presents recommendations for changes in the legislation during this week's meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Washington, D.C.

Mayor Nagin also will deliver a plenary address on Friday about the Stafford Act as well as the current disaster in Haiti. In addition, he is scheduled to meet with President Obama, members of Congress and key Cabinet officials while in Washington.

Mayor Nagin's presentation will include a report on the current deficiencies in the Stafford Act and recommendations to

President Obama and the Congress that would allow the federal government to respond more efficiently and speed recovery by local communities. It also will include a resolution to be adopted by the USCM.

Mayor Nagin's recommendations cover a range of topics related to disaster response and recovery, including the need for a designation of catastrophic disasters, hazard mitigation, individual and household assistance; insurance, other disaster grants, emergency preparedness and response, and FEMA administration.

"Though it is intended to provide great flexibility to the agencies directly interacting with

affected communities, the responses to Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Rita and subsequent natural disasters have highlighted the inadequacies of the law and the need for greater flexibility in some areas and stricter requirements in others," Mayor Nagin wrote in an open letter to President Obama and the Congress that accompanies the report. "City leaders need the assurance that as they work to prepare for and mitigate disasters or rebuild their communities after they occur, the federal government, with its access to significantly greater resources, will be working in lock-step with them throughout the process."

The leadership of USCM asked

Mayor Nagin to chair a working group to formulate comprehensive recommendations for improving the Stafford Act. Working with his co-chair, Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, and with the participation of mayors, emergency managers and other staff from cities throughout the country, he outlined a comprehensive set of reforms. Mayor Nagin presented a white paper on the topic to USCM in October.

"New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin has experienced something that I hope no other mayor will ever have to experience. We appreciate his willingness to chair our Stafford Act Reform Task Force and to lead our efforts to identify needed reforms in fed-

eral disaster assistance," Tom Cochran, USCM CEO and Executive Director, said. "In the difficult period since Katrina, he has amassed a wealth of knowledge about what needs to be done to improve this nation's responses to disasters. Through the Task Force he has passed along that knowledge to all of us, and for that we are most grateful."

"One of my goals throughout our recovery from Hurricane Katrina has been to share what we have learned to help ensure that no other city will experience what we did in New Orleans," Mayor Nagin said.

Sex Worker, continued from previous page.

alty is made arbitrarily, at the discretion of police and the district attorney's office, and that the law disproportionately affects Black people, as well as transgender women. When asked about the allegations of abusing the crime against nature statute, New Orleans Police Department spokesman Bob Young responded: "Persons are charged according to the crime they commit."

Wendi Cooper's story, however, paints a different picture.

In 1999, Cooper had recently come out as transgender. A Black transwoman, she tried prostitution a few times and quickly discovered it wasn't for her. But before she quit, she was arrested. At the time, Cooper was happy to take a plea that allowed her to get out of jail and didn't think much about what the "crime against nature" conviction would mean on her record. As she got older and began work as a healthcare professional, the weight of the sex offender label began to upset her more and more. "This is not me," she said. "I'm not that person who the state labeled me as...it slanders me."

Cooper appealed to the state to have her record expunged and talked to lawyers about other options, but she still must register for at least another five years and potentially longer. "I feel like I was manipulated, you know,

pleading guilty to this crime... And it's hard, knowing that you are called something that you're not," she said. She is also afraid now that the conviction will prevent her from getting her license as a registered nurse or from being hired.

Although some women have tried to fight the sex offender charges in court, they've had little success. The penalties they face became even harsher in 2006 when Congress passed the Adam Walsh act, requiring tier-1 (the least serious) sex offenders to stay in the public registry for 15 years. There's also an added danger to fighting the charges, according to Josh Perry, a former attorney with the Orleans Public Defenders office.

"The way Louisiana's habitual offender law works, if you challenge your sentence in court and lose, and it's a third offense, the mandatory minimum is 20 years. The maximum is life," he explained.

Perry estimates that on an average day two or three people are arrested for prostitution in New Orleans, and about half of them are charged under the crime against nature statute. "Right now, there are 39 people being held at Orleans Parish Prison [for] crimes against nature," Perry told a gathering of advocates. "And another 15 to 20 people...

Sex Worker, Continued on page 11.

Fighting The People's Battles

As Council President, Arnie Fielkow has fought for the most urgent needs of the people. He's fought for **improved flood protection**. He has fought to improve and **expand job creation and economic development**. He has fought for **quality, affordable housing opportunities**.

He's worked to **reform the police department**. And he's worked for racial unity.

It's time to bring us together to move our city ahead.

"In the next four years, I want to complete our recovery, revitalize recreation, streamline government and create a safer, healthier city. I believe in the greatness of New Orleans, and working together we can realize the full potential of our recovery."



Early voting begins Saturday, January 23, through Saturday, January 30. Please show up to vote.

Paid for by the Arnie Fielkow Campaign

Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Wayne Benjamin celebrates his 60th birthday with family & friends at the Autocrat club last Sunday night.



COMBINED NOTICE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND INTENT TO REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS

JANUARY 13, 2010

This Notice shall satisfy the above-cited two separate but related procedural notification requirements.

REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

On or about February 1, 2010 the City of New Orleans Office of Community Development, (OCD) will submit of behalf of BP1315,LLC for the release of HOME funds under Title II of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (NAHA) of 1990, as amended, to undertake a project known as Blue Plate Lofts, for the purpose of the rehabilitation and conversion of the Blue Plate Building into multi-family housing rental units, located at 1315 S. Jefferson Davis Parkway. Grant numbers M08MC220201 and M09MC220201 for \$3,500,000.00.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The City of New Orleans has determined that the project will have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) is not required. Additional project information is contained in the Environmental Review Record (ERR) on file at Office of Community Development, 1340 Poydras Street, 10th Floor, New Orleans, LA 70112 and may be examined or copied weekdays (9:00) A.M. to (5:00) P.M.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any individual, group, or agency disagreeing with this determination or wishing to comment on the project may submit written comments to the Office of Community Development, 1340 Poydras Street, 10th Floor, New Orleans, LA 70112. All comments received by January 28, 2010 will be considered by the City of New Orleans Community Development prior to authorizing submission of a request for release of funds. Commenters should specify which part of this notice they are addressing.

RELEASE OF FUNDS

The City of New Orleans certifies to HUD that C. Ray Nagin in his capacity as Mayor consents to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. HUD's approval of the certification satisfies its responsibilities under NEPA and related laws and authorities, and allows the Associated Neighborhood Development to use Program funds.

OBJECTIONS TO RELEASE OF FUNDS

HUD will consider objections to its release of funds and the City of New Orleans certification received by February 16, 2010 or a period of fifteen days from its receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if they are on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Certifying Officer or other officer of the City of New Orleans approved by HUD; (b) the (RE) has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 58; (c) the grant recipient or other participants in the project have committed funds or incurred costs not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of a release of funds by HUD; or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the required procedures (24 CFR Part 58) and shall be addressed to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at 501 Magazine Street, 9th Floor, New Orleans, LA 70130. Potential objectors should contact HUD to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

WWW.CITYOFNO.COM



Kenya J. H. Smith
Director, Office of Community Development

Anthony Faciane
Deputy Director, Neighborhood Stabilization

C. Ray Nagin
Mayor, City of New Orleans



ONE
NEW ORLEANS

Rethink • Renew • Revive

C. Ray Nagin, Mayor

Carl SMUT Smothers: A Soldier Bred Poet



Dionne Character, Author Entertainment Editor & Columnist

Green, Raion Ramsey and Elliot Love, opened the show, along with CON, a poet who blessed the mic before the feature hit the stage.

Carl Smothers, a/k/a SMUT DaPoet, was featured on Thursday, January 14th at a "live" taping of his first CD entitled, SMUT Presents Carl Smothers.

Carl Smothers got his start at Sweet Lorraine's Jazz Club, as one of his inspirations was none other than, Shelton "Shakespear" Alexander. Along with a host of other poets like Hollywood, Sunni P, Saddi and many who were featured on HBO's Def Poetry Jam, SMUT knew this was the scene for him.

A full time student at the University of New Orleans majoring in

Urban Planning and Studies, and a Sergeant in the Louisiana National Guard, SMUT is in tune with the hearts of women, the minds of intellectuals and those who are out to experience his thoughts on raw paper.

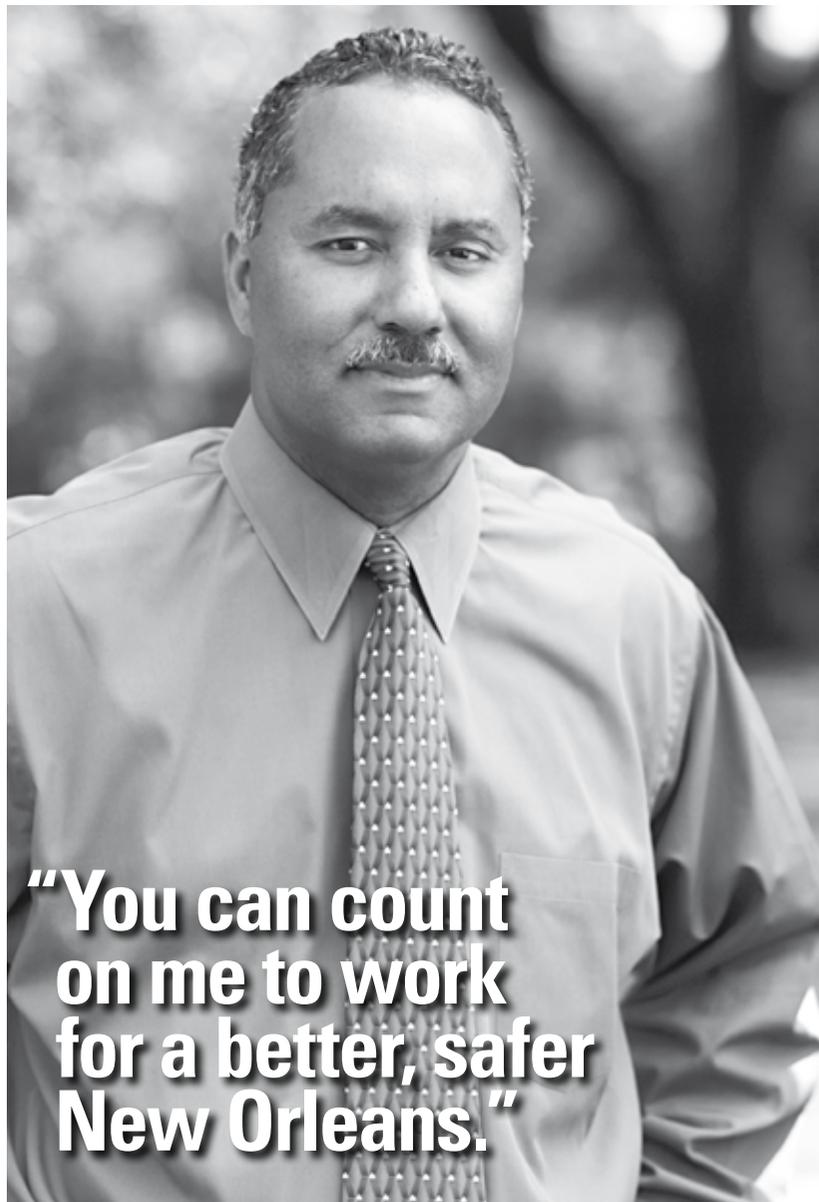
He is the Maxwell of poetry. Before he steps on any stage, you will hear screams of those requesting their favorite pieces. To know Carl Smothers, is to know he will bring poetry with a twist of style, always wearing a fresh fit.

His wave has caught many. Check him out for yourself at Brown Suga Thursdays at the Event Room II or online at www.facebook.com/smutdapoe.



Carl SMUT Smothers

The event, urban, sexy, prolific, filled with poetry and those who respect the game. Singers, Caren



"You can count on me to work for a better, safer New Orleans."



"The office of Civil Sheriff is being combined with the office of Criminal Sheriff, giving voters the chance to choose one Sheriff on February 6. For 27 years, I was the Civil Sheriff, but I'm retiring now. I urge you to vote for someone who I know has what it takes to handle the new job, Sheriff Marlin Gusman"

- Civil Sheriff Paul Valteau

"Marlin Gusman has been a leader of outstanding character in the movement for change and reform in New Orleans. He enjoys a well-deserved reputation for honesty and integrity. Marlin Gusman is an outstanding Sheriff."

- Clerk of Courts Dale Atkins



Committee to Elect Marlin Gusman Sheriff

Early Voting Begins on Saturday, January, 23rd. Be Sure To Vote.

Bishop Paul S. Morton and the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship Mass Choir Celebrate

The Stellar Award Win for Traditional Choir of the Year

This is the second year in a row that Bishop Morton and the choir nab this award.

Bishop Paul S. Morton, along with the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship Mass Choir, wins the award for Traditional Choir of the Year, announced at the 25th Annual Stellar Gospel Music Awards January 17, 2010. The golden Stellar statute represents the second consecutive year Morton and the Full Gospel choir are recognized for the inspiring performance captured in their

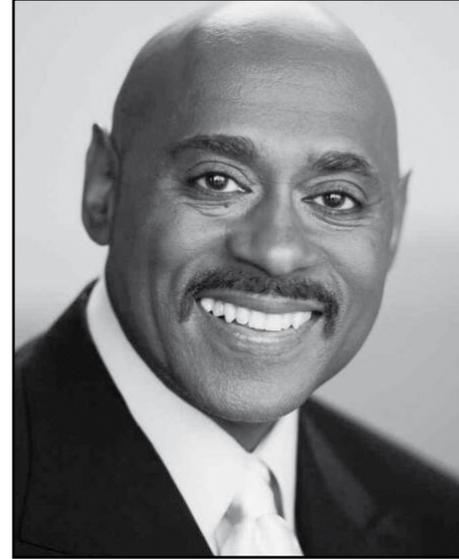
latest release, CRY YOUR LAST TEAR (Tehillah Music/Light Records).

The Stellar Awards presented an emotion packed show that kept the audience standing and praising. Serving as a time capsule, the stage was filled with performances, presenters, and hosts that have impacted the show in the past 25 years. Bishop Morton presented The Allstate James Cleveland Lifetime Achievement Award to the 2010 recipients, Lee Williams & The Spiritual QC's.

While in Nashville, Bishop Morton joined the Gospel and

CCM community to record the heart gripping song for Haiti, "A Song For Pain", by Kirk Franklin. Morton's voice will be heard throughout the track which will be released the weekend of January 23rd. All of the proceeds will go to the relief efforts for Haiti.

The Stellers remain a staple in the Gospel community as they congratulate those who share their musical talents with the world. The show is syndicated in over 100 markets as well as on the Gospel Music Channel, which will air February 28th at 8pm ET/7pm CST.



Bishop Paul S. Morton and the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship Mass Choir Celebrate The Stellar Award Win for Traditional Choir of the Year Bishop Paul S. Morton and the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship Mass Choir win The Stellar Award Win for Traditional Choir of the Year for the second year in a row.

Sex Worker, Continued from page 7.

charged with failure to register as a sex offender."

Sex workers accused as sex offenders face discrimination in every aspect of the system. In most cases, they cannot get released on bond, because they are seen as a higher risk of flight than people charged with violent crimes. "This is the level of stigma and dysfunction that we're talking about here," said Perry. "Realistically, they're not getting out."

Organizing for Change

Advocates have said the ideal solution would be to get state lawmakers to change the law, but they feel there's little hope of positive reforms from the current legislature. For now, organizers want to put pressure on police and the district attorney's office to stop charging sex workers under the crime against nature statute.

There is a great deal of work that needs to be done. Haywood is working with lawyers and national allies to develop a legal strategy, as well as a broad local coalition that includes criminal justice reform organizations like VOTE-NOLA and activist groups like the New Orleans chapters of Critical Resistance and INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence.

"We're trying to organize, but we're also working on the human rights side of how it's affecting their lives," she said. "This is a population that works in crisis mode all the time."

Jennifer, a 23-year-old white woman who asked that her real name not be used in this story, has been working as a prostitute since she was a teenager, and also works as a stripper at a club on Bourbon Street. She recently broke free of an eight-year heroin addiction. Unless the law changes, she will have the words "sex offender" on her driver's license until she is 48 years old.

Haywood said that stories like this show that the law has the effect of forcing women to continue with sex work. "When you charge young women with this—when you label them as a sex offender—this is what they are for the rest of their lives," she said.

Jennifer said it's affected her job options. "I'm not sure what they think, but a lot of places won't hire sex offenders," she said.

Haywood said the women she sees have few options. Many of them are homeless. They are sleeping in abandoned houses or on the street, or they are trading sex for a place to stay. "The women we work with, they don't call it sex work," she said. "They don't know what that means. They don't even call it prostitution. They call it survival."

John Georges Brings Leadership and Business Skills

Candidate For Mayor Wants More Hospitals, Better City Brand

NEW ORLEANS — Democratic mayoral candidate John Georges says he's the only person in the race with experience running a large organization with more than 1,000 employees.

That's experience that he said proves his leadership ability.

Better leadership is the cornerstone of Georges' campaign platform. He points to experience running Georges Enterprises, a family business that started out as the Imperial Trading Company in 1916. Georges is quick to tell people that he started working for the company when he was just 11 years old, sweeping floors.

The company is now in nine states and does \$1 billion in sales. So why does Georges want to be mayor?

"I think post-Katrina, we all looked to what we could do best, and I understand politics and business and I think I can bring leadership to our city," Georges said.

Georges tried to bring leadership to the entire state in 2007 when he ran as an independent for governor. He came in third, but managed to get 36 percent of the vote in Orleans Parish. That was Georges' first campaign for



John Georges

public office, but he's no stranger to politics.

"I have 30 years experience in government by being on the Board of Regents for seven years, which is the board that governs higher education, and also serving 16 years on the Public Belt Railroad," Georges said.

Georges said his leadership experience will be what he uses to reduce the crime rate, increase economic development, bring more flights to the airport and increase the number of hospitals in the city.

"The most important thing that I'm going to do is work with the industry to re-brand the city of

New Orleans, to become a serious city of historic importance," he said. "The historic relevance of New Orleans is what we need to sell, and not be a city of having good times. We need to change the brand of New Orleans, and I'm the person that knows how to do that."

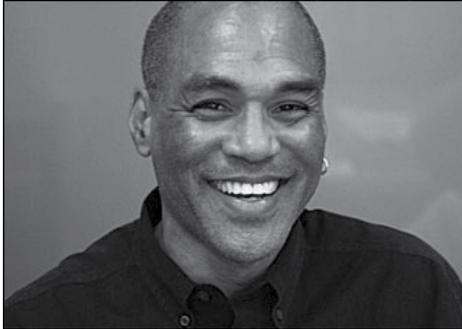
Georges said turning around failed businesses is what he does for a living, and he said New Orleans needs a turnaround.

Georges is also known for his philanthropic work, contributing millions of dollars to nonprofits, universities, museums and civic groups. He also played a significant role in the recovery efforts for the University of New Orleans and its arena.

Earlier this week, Georges honored the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by participating in a ceremony at City Hall, marching to the MLK Memorial and sponsoring a voter registration rally.

"Martin Luther King, Jr. had the ability to bring people together," John Georges said. "I was honored to be a part of various events this morning to celebrate his life. We can all learn from Dr. King, and we should all strive to be more like him."

What Would Martin Do?



By Phil Wilson
Black AIDS Institute

This Monday marked the commemoration of what would have been Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 81st birthday, had he not been assassinated in 1968. As we pause to reflect upon his life, it's appropriate—actually, imperative—that we ask ourselves “What would Martin do?” about the major challenges facing America today.

Of course, everyone knows of Dr. King's

stand on racial segregation and civil rights for Negroes, as we were then called. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is in large part a testament to the leadership, commitment and vision of Dr. King and other committed citizens and leaders who courageously imagined a better world and worked to make it happen.

But as time passes and fewer and fewer people have a firsthand memory of Dr. King's work and his life, we risk losing the significance of his entire body of work and of other important stands he took during his life, which ended when he was just 39.

In addition to his leadership around civil rights, Dr. King was committed to economic justice. The reason he was in Memphis that fateful April evening was to help the Black sanitation-workers union—the trash men (yes, they were all men back then)—obtain better treatment and wages. And earlier that year, he and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized the Poor People's Campaign, a coalition pushing Congress to create a bill of rights for economically disenfranchised people of all

racess.

Dr. King fought against injustice, poverty, hunger and homelessness during his lifetime—issues that are inextricably connected to the AIDS epidemic today in the United States and globally. He also spoke out against the Vietnam War. Roughly 58,000 Americans died during the 10 years that our nation deployed combat troops to Vietnam, a little more than get infected with HIV/AIDS every year.

Forty-one years after his assassination, America is still struggling with injustice, poverty, hunger and homelessness; the divide between the “haves” and “have-nots” is greater today than it has ever been. Our country is engaged in two wars. But there is no question where the Prince of Peace would have stood on the major issues of our day.

Dr. King would be leading a movement against the war and for creating jobs, passing meaningful health-care legislation, educating our young and protecting our environment. And yes, just as he stood up for the sanitation workers, Dr. King would be

passionate about HIV/AIDS. There is no question that ending the AIDS epidemic would be at the top of his agenda. And because it would be at the top of his agenda, it would be at the top of our agenda.

As we celebrate Martin Luther King Day, we should honor the life and work of Dr. King by courageously standing up on behalf of the weakest members of our society—people of color, the poor, those who are homeless, folks without health insurance, people with HIV and AIDS. We can make our voices heard at the highest levels of government. We can demand that resources be allocated to AIDS prevention, treatment and research just as they have been allocated to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, to the H1N1 (swine-flu) virus and to Wall Street.

We can remember Dr. King and continue his legacy by standing up and taking action on the issues confronting our country today.

Phill Wilson is the founder and CEO of the Black AIDS Institute.

To Be Equal: Help Haiti Now



Marc Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

My faith in the essential goodness of the American people and our government has been strengthened this past week as I have witnessed the extraordinary mobilization of relief efforts on behalf of the nation of Haiti following the devastating January 12 earthquake that has taken the lives of perhaps as many as 100,000 or more of its citizens. As I watch the screaming, tear-stained scenes of death and anguish unfolding on the nightly news, I cannot help but recall that only five years ago, my own hometown of New Orleans might have disappeared into the abyss of forgotten history were it not for the compassionate outreach of millions of people in this country and around the

world. As President Obama said, it is times like these that remind us of our common humanity.

But, as governments, the United Nations, and relief organizations scramble to rescue an already distressed nation from a crisis of biblical proportions, there is still a desperate need for all of us to donate whatever dollars, supplies and expertise we can. As in New Orleans, this tragedy also challenges the United States and other countries to change long-standing policies that have contributed to Haiti's status as the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. But, first things first.

As recovery and relief efforts intensify, we recommend the following:

It is clear that right now, cash donations are the best way to help. We are urging everyone to donate to the Haiti Support Project's Haiti Relief Fund at www.ibw21.org. Headed by noted political scientist and scholar, Dr. Ron Daniels, IBW, or the Institute of the Black World 21st Century, is committed to an enhanced quality of life and the overall development of Black people and the Global Black Community. The group's Haitian Support Project provides humanitarian and economic assistance to Haitian non-governmental organizations seeking to ameliorate the dire conditions of the Haitian people, most of whom live on less than \$2 dollars a day. You can also go

to www.whitehouse.gov/HaitiEarthquake to choose another organization to contribute to.

While we applaud President Obama's swift response and commitment of \$100 million in immediate emergency relief, we urge the government to take further steps to rectify years of U.S. trade and immigration embargoes that have had adverse consequences for the people of Haiti. We are pleased that, in the wake of this disaster, the Obama Administration has halted deportations and has granted Temporary Protected status to 100,000 Haitian nationals who, prior to January 12, 2010, have been living in the United States illegally.

This will allow them to continue living and working here for the next 18 months.

For years, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), the IBW and others have been fighting for more aid and engagement with Haiti. CBC Chairwoman Barbara Lee has made an impassioned plea that we take this opportunity to bring more of those efforts to fruition. We agree. In our view, the United States has both a moral and political obligation to lead a comprehensive plan for the reconstruction of Haiti, like the Marshall Plan, to ensure that the physical infrastructure and human lives are permanently rebuilt.





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Experience

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**“I’m asking for your vote.
Let’s get this done together!”**

MITCH LANDRIEU'S RESULTS FOR NEW ORLEANS

- \$20 million in Rebuilding Grants to more than 500 homeowners, many in the 9th Ward
- Juvenile Justice Reform
- Investing in our Culture
- Funding Youth Education Programs
- Rebuilding Playgrounds with volunteers
- Tax Incentives to help rebuild neighborhoods
- Recovery of the Tourism Industry and the 70,000 jobs it creates
- Bringing the Essence Festival back home



#26

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New Orleans' Heart is in Haiti



Many New Orleanians have roots in Haiti, and their revolution lent inspiration to our city. The 500 enslaved people from the parishes outside New Orleans that participated in the 1811 Rebellion to End Slavery were directly inspired by the Haitian revolution.

by Jordan Flaherty

New Orleans and Haiti are connected by geography, history, architecture, and family, and news of mass devastation and loss of life in the island nation has hit hard in the Crescent City. Almost every hurricane that has hit our city first brought devastation on our neighbors in Haiti. We are linked not just by a shared experience of storms, but also by first-hand understanding of the ways in which oppression based on race, class and gender interacts with these disasters.

Many New Orleanians have roots in Haiti, and their revolution lent inspiration to our city. The 500 enslaved people from the parishes outside New Orleans that

participated in the 1811 Rebellion to End Slavery (the largest armed uprising against slavery in the US) were directly inspired the Haitian revolution. Even much of our housing design – such as the Creole cottage and shotgun house - came here via Haiti.

As historian Carl A. Brasseaux has noted, “During a six-month period in 1809, approximately 10,000 refugees from Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti) arrived at New Orleans, doubling the Crescent City’s population...The vast majority of these refugees established themselves permanently in the Crescent City. [They] had a profound impact upon New Orleans’ development. Refugees established the state’s first newspa-

per and introduced opera into the Crescent City. They also appear to have played a role in the development of Creole cuisine and the perpetuation of voodoo practices in the New Orleans area.”

After Katrina, Haitian American writer Edwidge Danticat said New Orleans looked more like Haiti than the US. “It’s hard for those of us who are from places like Freetown or Port-au-Prince not to wonder why the so-called developed world needs so desperately to distance itself from us, especially at a time when an unimaginable tragedy shows exactly how much alike we are,” Danticat said. “We do share a planet that is gradually being warmed by mismanagement, unbalanced explo-

ration, and dismal environmental policies that might one day render us all, First World and Third World residents alike, helpless to more disasters like Hurricane Katrina.”

In the days after Katrina, there was no rescue plan for the thousands of people trapped in Orleans Parish Prison, most of whom had not been convicted of any crime, the majority held for nonviolent offenses that ranged from drug violations to traffic tickets. In Port Au Prince, nearly 4,500 Haitians held in a prison built for 800 had the walls fall around them. Many died while others managed to escape. And the corporate media used the fact that these prisoners had freed themselves as an

excuse to sow fear against the earthquake victims.

Now, just as after Katrina, the media is eager to demonize and criminalize the victims as “looters.” Pat Robertson has even added a new twist to this old libel, accusing the people of Haiti of literally making a deal with Satan.

New Orleans’ education, health care, and criminal justice systems were already in crisis before Katrina. In Haiti, two hundred years of crippling debt imposed by France, the US and other colonial powers drained the country’s financial resources. Military occupation and presidential coups coordinated and funded by the US have devastated the nation’s government infrastructure.



Toussaint L'Ouverture was a leader of the Haitian Revolution. Born in Saint-Domingue, in a long struggle for independence Toussaint led enslaved Africans and Afro-Haitians to victory over French colonisers, abolished slavery, and secured "native" control over the colony, Haiti, in 1797

Haitian poet and human rights lawyer Ezili Dantò has written, "Haiti's poverty began with a US/Euro trade embargo after its independence, continued with the Independence Debt to France and ecclesiastical and financial colonialism. Moreover, in more recent times, the uses of U.S. foreign aid, as administered through USAID in Haiti, basically serves to fuel conflicts and covertly promote U.S. corporate interests to the detriment of democracy and Haitian health, liberty, sovereignty, social justice and political freedoms. USAID projects have been at the frontlines of orchestrating undemocratic behavior, bringing underdevelopment, coup d'état, impunity of the Haitian Oligarchy, indefinite incarceration of dissenters, and destroying Haiti's food sovereignty, essentially promoting famine."

Author Naomi Klein reported that within 24 hours of the earthquake, the influential right-wing

think tank the Heritage Foundation was already seeking to use the disaster as an attempt at further privatization of the country's economy. The Heritage Foundation released similar recommendations in the days after Katrina, calling for "solutions" such as school vouchers. Our Katrina experience has taught us to be suspicious of Red Cross and other large and bureaucratic aid agencies that function without and means of community accountability. In New Orleans, we've seen literally tens of billions of dollars in aid pledged in the years since Katrina, but only a small fraction of that has made it to those most in need.

A recent letter signed by six human rights organizations brings these concerns to the discussion of Haiti relief. "There is no doubt that Haiti's hungry, thirsty, injured, and sick urgently need all the assistance the international community can provide, but it

is critical that the underlying goal of improving human rights drives the distribution of every dollar of aid given to Haiti," said Loune Viaud, Director of Strategic Planning and Operations at Zanmi Lasante, one of the drafters of the letter. "The only way to avoid escalation of this crisis is for international aid to take a long-term view and strive to rebuild a stronger Haiti—one that includes a government that can ensure the basic human rights of all Haitians and anation that is empowered to demand those rights."

INCITE Women Of Color

Against Violence and other feminist organizations brought attention to the way that disaster in gendered, noting that women were especially victimized by Katrina and it's aftermath. An organization called the Gender and Disaster Network released six principles forengendered relief and reconstruction, stating, "Gender analysis is not optional or divisive but imperative to direct aid and plan for full and equitable recovery. Nothing in disaster work is 'gender neutral.'" INCITE activists forwarded a list of Women-run organizations in Haiti, encourag-

ing activists to support relief that focuses on those hardest hit by this disaster.

The final lesson from New Orleans is this: Haiti will still be in crisis long after all of the news cameras have left. As concerned family and friends of Haiti, New Orleanians have pledged to stay involved and not forget about the continuing needs of rebuilding and recovery. We share a common history, and we will work for a shared future of justice and liberation.

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- ▶ **Real accountability** in government and the police department.
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- ▶ High-quality, affordable **Housing** and increased home ownership opportunities.
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- ▶ Getting the recovery moving again for a **Better Quality of Life**.

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JOHN
Georges
MAYOR #21