Haiti Rebounds

Even as Needs Grow for Rainy Season

State & Local School Registration Begins
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by Herb Boyd
NNPA Special Correspondent

Hurricane-ravaged Port-au-Prince continues to rebound even as the rainy season earnestly approaches the Island of Haiti.

This week, U.S. officials are scurrying to deliver portable toilets, hurricane-resistant tents, and plastic tarps which Haitian Tourism Minister Patrick Delatour has said he prefers for the coming torrential rains, possible hurricanes and mudslides. Already eight people were killed over the weekend in flooding after a downpour - and the rainy season has not fully started in earnest.

Weather is key in Haiti right now as the rainy season is set to start in early April and last for several months. The forecast for this week fluctuated between sunny to partly cloudy; then more downpours at the end of this week. Temperatures are fluctuating between the mid 70s at night and into the 90s during the day hours.

Racing the rains, former President Bill Clinton, the United Nations Special Envoy for Haiti, on Monday convened a teleconference with United Nations officials involved in leading the emergency and humanitarian response in Haiti. According to a release that followed the conference, they assessed the relief operations, highlighted unmet needs - particularly in areas outside of Port-au-Prince and in advance of the rainy season - and encourage closer coordination with the Government of Haiti and with each other.

It’s not just the weather, but conditions potentially caused by the weather that’s concerning the citizens and relief workers. Those conditions could mean the spread of disease, human waste and even human bodies, many of which did not receive proper burial in the initial aftermath of the earthquake. Nearly 200,000 were killed.

Meanwhile, life in the capital continues to struggle for normalcy. After you get beyond the fact that Haiti, particularly Port-au-Prince, is a modern day ruin—which is not easy when around each new corner is a more devastating scene—there is the amazing vitality, ingenuity and creativity of the Haitian people.

This ability, this undying resilience, was evident from one end of the city to another during a whirlwind visit to the city by a team of Black journalists in mid-February. Here and there were welders, their torches melding torn metal; masons mending broken walls; carpenters repairing doors and roof tops; painters putting a fresh gloss on ravaged buildings;

**Continued next page.**
and the countless vendors setting up shop in front of totally damaged structures.

And exactly one month after the catastrophe, the spirit of recovery was seen in the hundreds of people walking along the streets and roads, many of them dressed in white, on their way to various sites of mourning, ready to remember the dead and dying as they celebrate another day of living.

“We are determined to put our homes and our lives back together,” said a young man, who stood as an eyewitness to the collapse of the World Trade Center, spending four days traveling with a delegation of African-American media representatives amid the rubble of Port-au-Prince and the surrounding neighborhoods is to experience a tragedy of almost incomparable proportions.

It was mindboggling to see the President’s Palace, an architectural wonder, its twin domes crushing the floors below; the beautiful National Cathedral where President René Préval was inaugurated in 2006 with only the historic statues as a reminder of its splendor; and all of the city’s municipal buildings in silent piles of dusty cement with rods of steel protruding like rusty fingers.

Immediately the question becomes why some buildings remain standing while others crumbled in the 7.0 magnitude earthquake? “Many of the buildings that collapsed were built without consideration of the building codes,” said Delatour, Haiti’s Minister of Tourism, a trained architect who studied at Howard University and is leading the recovery effort.

Fortunately, thousands of lives were spared because people weren’t at home and asleep when the earthquake rattled the land at 4:53 p.m. on January 12.

One concern for Haitian construction companies is how to build a home or an office building capable of withstanding an earthquake and, at the same time, hurricanes, which most of the current buildings that fell were constructed to endure.

It will take several years and $3 billion to complete the recovery, Delatour speculated, “Though it could be much more because it’s hard to factor in everything at the moment,” he added.

Meanwhile, it is estimated that some three million Haitians are homeless or dwelling in tents and other makeshift quarters, often waiting desperately for decent shelter, food, and medical attention.

Nothing was more depressing than to see the long line of injured people outside one of the city’s few functioning hospitals, where emergency rescue units have set up tents to provide additional space for the injured. “We can handle maybe 500 patients a day here,” said Dr. Alix Lasseque, executive director of the State University Hospital in Port-au-Prince.

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These are just a few of the problems President Préval has given the energetic minister and he seems more than equal to the task.

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“Overall, Dei said, referring to the relationship between her organization and the Haitian government, “We can do better than we’re doing…what’s needed is a whole new paradigm.”

That new paradigm, especially in reference to the rebuilding of Haiti, is something that Delatour has given considerable thought. “You see, I’m an optimist,” he told the African American delegation.

For me the glass is always half full, not half empty.

“The first thing we have to do is to rebuild the waterfront and the city’s infrastructure,” he continued, “rising from behind his desk and facing a wall-size map of Port-au-Prince. "Then we can begin to deal with the 17 ministries which have been destroyed. Customs, the churches, the schools all have to be rebuilt. We lost more than 8,000 schools. There is the problem of demolition and what’s to be done with the rubble.”

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On March 12th Fox Searchlight will release a film that will be the fodder for water cooler conversations, dinner table discussions, and happy hours; people will be abuzz about a new film that explores stereotypes and prejudice in a thought provoking way that while we laugh we are being educated in new ways of thinking about a world that has emerged. One where issues of nation, race and ethnicity are being questioned; where the walls that were previously erected keeping people divided are now being torn down creating a colorless bastion of brotherhood as we move into a new century . In which new questions are in a global world where old identities and traditions are merging with new ones in this global cosmopolitanism in a film that has the potential to be a colorless bastion of brotherhood as we move into 10 years into a new century. In which new questions abound about identity and traditions.

Our Family Wedding is the Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner of the 21st century. It is the story of an interracial couple and their attempts to plan a perfect wedding. It is a film where tradition meets prejudice in a thoughtprovoking way that while we laugh we are being educated. It is a comedy that sheds light on the ignorance that keeps people separated along lines of race and ethnicity. “Although this film is a comedy it is so of the moment and I hope it can become a conversation starter about an issue that a lot of people don’t talk about in our society racial prejudice among minorities,” says Whitaker. The movie is a unique blend of slapstick and seriousness exploring stereotypes, magnifying them in the end deeming them irrelevant and silly. “In this age a lot of these old ideas are not important in the age we are living in,” says director and screenwriter Rick Famuyiwa. “The world is changing around us and we are in a global world where old identities and traditions are being merged with new ones in this global world we are living and I wanted to make a film that reflects that reality.”

Lance Gross and America Ferrera are very convincing as an attractive young couple trying to make things work while their parents take control of what was to be a small intimate wedding. “It was really fun making this film and be a different type of character,” says Gross. “America is a wonderful actress and it was great working with her.” He says of being a black actor in Hollywood and the available opportunities. Ferrera who has come to mainstream attention and international fame as the underdog heroine on the hit TV show Ugly Betty transforms into a swan in amazing performance in this film. In real life she is beautiful like a Jennifer Lopez but in a girl next door kind of way. This role explores many of the same issues facing young Latina girls, how generational shifts affect tradition. In her breakout role in Real Women Have Curves she was a young girl with ambition beyond what Latina Girls are expected to achieve, and in this film she is a young girl, who is willing to sacrifice her ambition in the name of love. Talking about her TV fame and her transformation as a woman and actress she says, “Ugly Betty was a great show and I am glad to have been part of it and it has helped my career, but I am ready to take on new roles and this is a step in this direction that will help me grow as an actress and as a woman.”

In this film Whitaker shows he is a true thespian, transforming into a likeable but misguided character, lending his talent this light but heady comedy, “I just wanted to do something different and have some fun and that’s what I’ve done in this film it was a real release for me.” Whitaker has spent time in New Orleans after the storm decimated the city. He starred in the film Hurricane Season, an inspiring film about a basketball team succeeding against the odds after Hurricane Katrina. Whitaker says he was disappointed that his film Hurricane Season wasn’t promoted properly. His attachment to New Orleans topics will continue as his next project is a biopic about New Orleans jazz icon Louis Armstrong which he will direct and star in.

Our Family Wedding is a funny film that is insightful and delightful foray into the beginning of a new age in Hollywood. This film may be an entry point and introduction to a new genre Black and Latino united creating a bridge of understanding between the two groups. Veteran actress Regina King who has gone from child star to adult actress without missing a beat, a rarity in the entertainment industry says, “I learned a lot doing filming about Mexican traditions during filming, I grew doing this filming and this is what this movie is about getting past our prejudices and moving forward,” says King. She goes on to say, “The world is a very different place now and it is time for us to see ourselves and each other different and understand we have more in common than the things that separate us and if this film can create that it is a good thing.”
Chic Nouvelle’s Hope for Haiti Fashion Fundraiser

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Mo'Nique's Oscar - Victory and Setback

NNPA Columnist

Julianne Malveaux

By Hazel Edney
NNPA Editor-in-Chief

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Black Press Week, the annual celebration of the nearly two centuries-old mission of Black-owned newspapers, will be fueled this year by the fact that the 183-year-old civil rights institution is continuing to plead its own cause even as it honors the achievements of others.

“When Mr. Russwurm and Mr. Cornish said, ‘We wish to plead our own cause. For too long have others spoken for us’, they began publishing the very first Black newspaper on March 16, 1827,” says Dorothy R. Leavell, chair of the National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, which leads the annual event in Washington, D.C. “It certainly is momentous because 183 years later with a Black President in the White House, we still have to plead our own cause. As evident in the lack of meaningful outreach to count all African-Americans in the United States in the Census that’s now being conducted; it’s evident in many of the advertisers in this country who shun us even though we have strong economic impact upon the economy of the United States and the World. And yet, our newspapers suffer for advertising. And even in this day and time, we are still an afterthought in the main stream media.”

NNPA newspaper publishers, who over the past year have taken stands against what appears to be advertising discrimination in economic stimulus dollars, the auto-industry, the U.S. Census and other industries, will convene in the nation’s capital next week for the annual celebration of pleading the cause, a phrase first coined by John B. Russwurm and Samuel Cornish as they founded Freedom’s Journal, the first Black newspaper, in New York City.

Among those to be honored during the annual NewsMaker of the Year Awards Gala on March 18 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel are civil and social justice warriors Dr. Dorothy I. Height, chair and president emerita of the National Council of Negro Women for her lifetime of civil rights achievements; Dr. Ron Daniels, president of the State of the Black World, 21st Century; Earl and Amanda Stafford of the Stafford Foundation; and Dallas County District Attorney Craig Watkins for their outstanding community service; Rep. Barbara Lee, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus will be awarded for her political leadership; and a posthumous salute will be given to entertainer Michael Jackson.

Height, among one of the most important figures in civil rights history, is to receive the lifetime achievements award at the NewsMaker dinner.

“She is a jewel in our community,” says Leavell, comparing her to famous publishers of old like Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells who were counselors to United States presidents. “She is still vibrant, she is still a warrior and at 97 we are excited that she will grace us with her presence on that evening.”

A special State of the Black Press Address by NNPA Chairman Danny Bakewell will be given during a State of the Black Continued next page.
THE DISTRICT OF JEFFERSON, LA

After a long and contentious period, the District of Jefferson, LA, has finally reached an agreement with the teachers union to end the strike. The teachers have accepted a contract that includes a pay raise and improvements to their working conditions. The school district has committed to improving infrastructure and providing additional support to underprivileged students. The students are expected to return to school next week, with plans for a safe and conducive learning environment.

BLACK PRESS, Continued from previous page.

NEW ORLEANS - From now through April 9, 2010, more than 70 public schools throughout New Orleans are accepting the Common Application, a simple form that parents can use to apply to any Recovery School District (RSD) direct-run or charter school for the 2010-2011 school year.

The Common Application process offers centralized locations for parents to pick up and return applications and a unified timeline for the application submissions, school lotteries, parent notification and registration. Applications are available at participating schools; the RSD Central Office, 1641 Poland Ave.; and the RSD Welcome School, 2239 Foydres Street. The RSD Central Office and Welcome School are open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The application and registration process is designed to streamline the student application process in a landscape of unprecedented public schools in New Orleans. “Parents have the freedom to choose from more than 40 different elementary schools and more than 20 different high schools,” said RSD Superintendent Paul Vallas. “We hope parents will become actively engaged in this process, learn about their school options and take advantage of this open application period in order to have the best opportunity to secure a spot in the schools that will be the best fit for their children.”

The application is a one-page form that asks for basic demographic and geographic information about the student and the name of the school in which he or she is applying. Parents and guardians may apply to more than one school, but must complete an application for each. While multiple applications are encouraged, parents may only enroll their child in one school.

The deadline for returning completed application forms is April 9, 2010. Applications may be returned to the schools where applying, the RSD Central Office or Welcome School. The applications may also be faxed to 504-827-4728. Parents should retain the carbon sheet that is attached to the application form for their records. If faxed, the fax receipt should be retained. Schools that have more applicants than available spots will conduct lotteries by April 30 to fill those seats. Schools will notify parents and guardians of acceptance into schools by May 7. Parents must go to the school with the necessary documents to officially register their children by May 21 to reserve a seat at the school of their choice.

To help parents decide which schools are the best fits for their children, the New Orleans Parent Organizing Network will publish an updated edition of the New Orleans Parents’ Guide to Public Schools, which has information on each of New Orleans’ public schools. The Parents’ Guide will be distributed to public schools and public library branches beginning March 15th 2010. For more information about the Parents’ Guide or to download an electronic version, visit www.nola-parentsguide.org.

In addition, the Urban League of Greater New Orleans is sponsoring Schools Expo 2010 on Saturday, March 27, 2010 at the Lindy Boggs Center on the campus of UNO.

For more information about the Common Application, call the RSD’s toll free help line at (877) 342-4773. The helpline is available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

Xavier University of Louisiana #1 in placing African American Students into Medical Schools for 16th Consecutive Year

New Orleans, LA Xavier University of Louisiana continues its track record of successfully placing more African American students into medical schools each year than any other higher education institution in the country, a distinction that it has maintained since 1993. A total of sixty-nine (69) Xavier graduates were accepted into medical and dental schools during the 2008-2009 academic year. The University is off to a good start for the 2009-10 academic year, as evidenced by the more than two dozen seniors who have already been accepted into medical schools.

“The distinction of leading the nation in placing so many deserving and talented young people into medical school is a clear indication of our commitment to academic success,” said Dr. Norman C. Francis, Xavier’s president. “There’s something special about Xavier,” he said. “Our faculty and staff take great pride in working with all students from the moment they enter as freshmen until the day they graduate and enter their chosen professions. It’s not just that the nurturing and academically challenging environment that we offer is a key factor in our continued leadership in not only the health professions, but in the wide range of academic disciplines that we offer.”

Xavier, the nation’s only Black & Catholic university has long enjoyed a solid reputation for its excellence in the biological and physical sciences. XU Pre-Med advisor JW Carmichael was individually recognized by Meharry Medical College with an honor- ary degree in 2008 for his role in helping to make Xavier the leader in African American medical school acceptances. Xavier University, founded in 1925 by St. Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, maintains the distinction of being the only college or University in the United States that was founded by an American born saint of the Catholic Church. High school students interested in receiving more information on Xavier University are encouraged to visit www.xula.edu/admissions or by calling 504-520-7388 or 1-877-XAVIERU.
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Send us your candid shots along with the photographer’s name for publishing consideration. Photos should be emailed to datanewsphotos@gmail.com