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**Page 6  
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# Stimulus, Public Housing and the Recovery of New Orleans

*The Soul of New Orleans*

Page 2



## State & Local

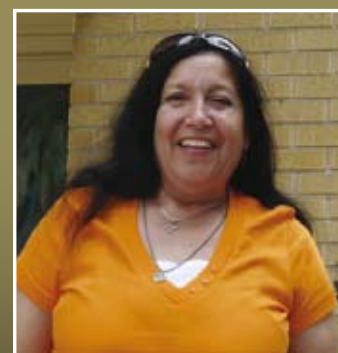
Oliver Thomas  
Supports Local Youth

Page 10

## Newsmaker

Spill threatens  
Cultural Life

Page 4





# Stimulus, Public Housing and the Recovery of New Orleans

*The ARRA and its impact on New Orleans Post Katrina*



The Former BW Cooper Apartments formerly and better known as the Callopie Projects housed hundreds of families prior to Katrina and their closure.

By Edwin Buggage

## Housing Woes and Other Lows

Five years after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans remains a sad tale of two cities. In one, the city has recovered and is a burgeoning, bustling place where commerce, education, and housing are not an issue; in the other, the city continues to resemble something from a science fiction movie called, *Apocalypse 504*. In

it lie the vestiges of a place where people once lived, where the sounds of families and people who gave the city its flavor and *je ne sais quoi* are now gone. Today many of the streets are eerily silent and houses are vacant, blighted, or have been destroyed.

One of the biggest challenges facing many low income residents who desire to return to the city is the lack of availability of affordable housing. After Hurricane Katrina, public housing developments that

sustained minimal damage were shut down, leaving a segment of the population without housing options. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the Housing Authority of New Orleans ran 10 properties housing families across the city. But the tide had began to shift in the city as it had nationwide for mixed income models to replace what were previously high concentrations of poverty in public housing developments. After Hurricane Katrina, there was a move amidst controversy to

*Continued next page.*

## INSIDE DATA

Cover Story . . . . .	2	Shoot Ya Best Shot . . .	7
Newsmaker . . . . .	4	Commentary. . . . .	8
Data Zone . . . . .	6	State & Local. . . . .	9

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Cover Story, Continued from previous page.



demolish what was known as the big four, B.W. Cooper, C.J. Peete Lafite and St. Bernard housing developments.

But it was in these projects where many residents working on low paying jobs helping to fuel the economy of the city of New

Orleans lived. Before the storm, more than 3,000 of these working class housing units were occupied, according to HUD.

The proposed replacement plan will be implemented in two parts. The first phase will consist of 1,904 units of which 668 will be

public housing rentals, 836 will be affordable rentals, and 400 will be market rate rentals. This in turn has created yet another roadblock for many low-income residents to return to restart their lives.

"The Housing Authority of New Orleans and leaders both lo-

cal and federal level have let the people of the city down by not providing affordable housing options," says fair housing advocate, Jeffrey May, Assistant Director of National Neighbors.

Making matters worse is the high level of scandal at the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), where recently the head of the Section 8, Dwayne Muhammed, pled guilty to corruption charges, admitting he lived in an apartment on a rental voucher while earning a six-figure salary. Another prominent figure, Elias Castellanos, who was contracted by HUD to oversee the finances of the beleaguered agency pled guilty to embezzling more than \$900,000. Representatives from HANO were contacted for interviews for this story, but our calls were not returned.

#### HUD, HANO and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Is there a quick fix for a problem that has been a housing stock and people who have been

neglected and not given the tools to succeed? Have a federal takeover of HANO and the infusion of \$35 million in stimulus funds enough? "Although monies are being allocated it is not nearly enough," says May "The problem is something that is more systemic, changes that need to take place in the city where it is not the same few people both black and white that are connected to one and other." "It is a case of the same old people getting new money and that is not fair."

"They have done a subpar job serving its residents," adds May.

A recent audit by HUD's Inspector General found HANO may not be able to account for stimulus monies it received. Upon discovery of mismanagement the auditors recommended that HUD reallocate stimulus monies earmarked for HANO to other housing authorities who could better utilize funds and have a record of better oversight and accountability.

Other questions remain regarding HANO, ARRA funds and

*Continued page 11.*



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# Cultural Extinction

*Louisiana's coastal communities fear they may never recover from BP's drilling disaster*

By Jordan Flaherty

As BP's deepwater well continues to discharge oil into the Gulf, the economic and public health effects are already being felt across coastal communities. But it's likely this is only the beginning. From the bayous of southern Louisiana to the city of New Orleans, many fear this disaster represents not only environmental devastation but also cultural extinction for peoples who have made their lives here for generations.

This is not the first time that Louisianans have lost their communities or their lives from the actions of corporations. The land loss caused by oil companies has already displaced many who lived by the coast, and the pollution from treatment plants has poisoned communities across the state – especially in “cancer alley,” the corridor of industrial facilities along the Mississippi River south of Baton Rouge.

“The cultural losses as a consequence of the BP disaster are going to be astronomical,” says Advocates for Environmental Human Rights (AEHR) co-director Nathalie Walker. “There is no other culture like Louisiana's coastal culture and we can only hope they won't be entirely erased.” Walker and co-director Monique Harden have made it their mission to fight the environmental consequences of Louisiana's corporate polluters. They say this disaster represents an unparalleled catastrophe for the lives of people across the region, but they also see in it a continuation of an old pattern of oil and chemical corporations displacing people of color from their homes.

Harden and Walker point out that at least five Louisiana towns – all majority African American – have been eradicated due to corporate pollution in recent decades. The most recent is the Southwest Louisiana town of Mossville, founded by African Americans in the 1790s. Located near Lake Charles, Mossville is only 5 square miles and holds 375 households. Beginning in the 1930s, the state of Louisiana began authorizing in-



Theresa Dardar

dustrial facilities to manufacture, process, store, and discharge toxic and hazardous substances within Mossville. Fourteen facilities are now located in the small town, and 91 percent of residents have reported at least one health problem related to exposure to chemicals produced by the local industry.

The southern Louisiana towns of Diamond, Morrisonville, Sunrise, and Revilletown – all founded by formerly enslaved African Americans – met similar fates. After years of chemical-related poisoning, the remaining residents have been relocated, and the corporations that drove them out now own their land. In most cases, only a cemetery remains, and former residents must pass through plant security to visit their relatives' graves.

The town of Diamond, founded by the descendants of the participants of the 1811 Rebellion to End Slavery, the largest slave uprising in US history, was relocated by Shell in 2002, after residents had faced decades of toxic exposure. Morrisonville, established by free Africans in 1790, was bought out by Dow in 1989. Residents of Sunrise, inaugurated near Baton Rouge by former slaves in 1874,

were paid to move as the result of a lawsuit against the Placid Refining Company. In the mid-1990s, Chemical producer Georgia Gulf Corporation poisoned and then acquired Revilletown, a town that recently freed Black families had started in the years after the civil war.

“We make the mistake of thinking this is something new,” says Harden. She adds that the historic treatment of these communities, as well as the lack of recovery that New Orleanians have seen since Katrina, makes her doubt the federal government will do what is necessary for Gulf recovery. “Since Obama got into office,” she says, “I have yet to see any action that reverses what Bush did after Katrina.”

Harden says Louisiana and the US must fundamentally transform our government's relationships with corporations. “We've got to change the way we allow businesses to be in charge of our health and safety in this country,” she adds. As an example, Harden points to more stringent regulations in other countries, such as Norway, which requires companies to drill relief wells at the same time as any deepwater well.

## Pointe-au-Chien

Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe is a small band of French speaking Native Americans along Bayou Pointe-au-Chien, south of Houma, on Louisiana's Gulf Coast. Their ancestors settled here three hundred years ago, and current residents describe the ongoing oil geyser as just the latest step in a long history of displacement and disenfranchisement. “The oil companies never respected our elders,” explains community leader Theresa Dardar. “And they never did respect our land.”

In the early part of this century, the oil companies took advantage of the fact that people living on the coast were isolated by language and distance, and laid claim to their land. Over the past several decades, these companies have devastated these idyllic communities, creating about 10,000 miles of canals through forests, marshes, and homes. “They come in, they cut a little, and it keeps getting wider and wider,” says Donald Dardar, Theresa's husband and part of the tribe's leadership. “They didn't care where they cut.”

The canals have brought salt water, killing trees and plants and speeding erosion. According to

Gulf Restoration Network, Louisiana loses about a football field of land every 45 minutes, and almost half of that land loss is as a result of these canals. Meanwhile, Pointe-au-Chien and other tribes have found they have little legal recourse. At least partly as a result of lobbying by oil companies, the state and federal government have refused to officially recognize them as a tribe, which would offer some protection of their land rights.

So late last month, when oil started washing up on the shores of nearby Lake Chien and fishing season was cancelled before it had even begun, members of Pointe-au-Chien took the news as another nail in the coffin of the lifestyle they had been living for generations. On a recent Sunday, a few residents gathered at the Live Oak Baptist Church, on the main road that runs through their community. They described feeling abandoned and abused by the government and corporations. They spoke of losing their language and traditions in addition to their homes.

Sitting on a church pew, Theresa said they had met with indigenous natives from Alaska who discussed their experience in the aftermath of the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill. “We don't know how long we'll be without fishing,” said Theresa. “It was 17 years before they could get shrimp.” And, she noted bitterly, this disaster is already much larger than the Valdez, with no end in sight.

BP has promised payouts to those who lose work from the oil, but few trust the company to make good on their promise, and even if they did, they doubt any settlement could make up for what will be lost. “It doesn't matter how much money they give you,” says Theresa. “If we don't have our shrimp, fish, crabs and oysters.”

“It's not just a way of life, it's our food,” she added. “It's the loss of our livelihood and culture.”

The anxiety that Theresa expresses is also increasingly common in New Orleans, a city whose

*Continued next page.*



*Newsmaker, Continued from previous page.*



Backyard in Point Au Chien

culture is inextricably linked to the Gulf. "How do you deal with this hemorrhaging in the bottom of the Gulf that seems endless?" asks Monique Harden of AEHR. "That is just scary as hell. I've been having nightmares about it."

As the oil continues to flow, people feel both helpless and

apocalyptic; depressed and angered. Residents who have just rebuilt from the 2005 hurricanes watch the oil wash up on shore with a building dread. "I never thought I'd be in a situation where I wanted another Katrina," says Harden. "But I'd rather Katrina than this."

#### Loss of Land and Culture

Across the street from the church in Pointe-au-Chien is a bayou, where frustrated fishers wait on their boats hoping against all odds that they will be able to use them this season. Behind the

church is more water, and a couple miles further down the road ends in swamp. Dead oak trees, rotted by salt water, rise out of the canals. Telephone poles stick out of the water, along a path where once the road continued but now the encroaching waters have taken over.

The miles of swamp and barrier islands that stood between these homes and the Gulf used to slow hurricanes, and now the entire region has become much more vulnerable. Brenda Billiot, another local resident, gestured at her family's backyard, about a few dozen yards of grass that fades into marshes and water. "This used to be land," she says, "as far as you could see." Billiot's family is still repairing their home from the 2005 flooding, including raising it up a full 19 feet above the ground. She wonders if that will be enough, if there is anything

they can do to make themselves safe and hold on to their culture.

A brown rabbit hops across her backyard, and Billiot describes the dolphins and porpoises she has seen swimming nearby. Walking along the bayou here, where generations of people have lived off the land and fought to protect their territory from corporate theft, you begin to sense the gravity of what will be lost.

Theresa believes that the government and oil companies are looking for an excuse to permanently displace the tribe. She believes this latest disaster, and the upcoming hurricane season, may spell the end for their language and culture. "I tell people; if we get another hurricane, take everything you want, because I don't think they'll let you back in," says Dardar. "It's scary because I don't know where we're going to go."

"FOR TOO LONG OUR CULTURE HAS SAID, 'IF IT FEELS GOOD, DO IT.' NOW, WE WANT TO BE A NATION THAT SERVES GOALS LARGER THAN SELF. WE'VE BEEN OFFERED A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY, AND WE MUST NOT LET THIS MOMENT PASS. MY CALL IS FOR EVERY AMERICAN TO COMMIT TO THE SERVICE OF YOUR NEIGHBORS AND YOUR NATION. BY DOING THIS, WE SUSTAIN AND EXTEND THE BEST THAT HAS EMERGED IN AMERICA."

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# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

## Happy Birthday Nikki

Nicole "Nikki" Carter, barmaid and waitress and The Prime Example celebrates her birthday with her traditional Hawaiian Luau theme. Pictured are Julius Kimbrough, owner of The Prime Example, Nicole Carter, the birthday girl, Cheryl Williams, Kim Robinson, and other friends.



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# Patti Labelle Rocks the House



**By Dwight Brown**  
NNPA Entertainment  
Writer

"The first time I heard Patti Labelle she was at Madison Square Garden – and I was in Philadelphia!" says opening act and comic Paul Mooney.

Yes, over the years whether she was leading Patti Labelle and the Bluebells, Labelle or her solo shows, Patti has built a solid reputation as a show stopping belter. Turning age 66 this week, as the BB Kings Blues Club & Grill in New York (an intimate, over-sized

lounge/club; [bbkingblues.com](http://bbkingblues.com)) notched its 10th anniversary, was a reason for the Queen of Rock & Soul to celebrate. There she was in all her glory, with a badass band, fierce back-up singers and her signature "kitchen sink" adoring audience: multi-racial, multi-cultural and international, and multi-generational.

Prancing onto the stage with the old Labelle nugget "What Can I Do For You," Patti walked around the circumference claiming her turf.

Dressed in what looked like a splashy silk, pastel pajama outfit, with a chic short wig that she would tug at the entire night, Labelle got into her groove quickly. "I love Celine Dion, but when you hear this song, don't get it twisted, I did it first!" And with that Patti glided into the James Bond theme song "If You Asked Me To," followed by "If Only You Knew." "I must have rehearsed my lines, a thousand times until I had them memorized..."

From ballads to upbeat

*Continued on page 9..*

Left. At the age of 66, Patti LaBelle is still rocking audiences coast to coast.



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# Let Us Not Be Fooled By a Few Glimmers of Hope



Rev. Al Sharpton  
NNPA Columnist

dip recession emerge, some four months later, sadly, our work is just beginning.

Since 2008, the United States – and the world for that matter – has been consistently fixated on the pandemic of a financial crisis. As high unemployment, housing foreclosures and lack of job growth permeated the mainstream, the average man began paying attention to a phenomena that was well in to play in certain communities long before the collapse on Wall St.

Prior to the media focusing on the economic constraints in middle-class America, African Americans were already significantly unemployed and underemployed. In a city like New York alone, nearly 50% of Black men were found to be unemployed way back in 2004, according to a study by the Community Service Society.

That's one out of every two Black men between the ages of 16 and 64 in a city that prides itself on diversity, acceptance and opportunity not found elsewhere in the country. If this was the case in New York, and if this was the horrendous reality several years back, I cannot even put in to words, the dire situation today in our communities all across the nation.

Lately, we hear news of a stagnating jobless rate, or spurts of economic growth, but let us not be fooled by a few glimmers of

hope into thinking that people – especially marginalized people – are on the proverbial road to recovery.

As the Labor Department reported last week of adding some 41,000 jobs, the unfortunate reality was that many of these new hires are simply temporary. As census workers are employed to collect data and other project-based jobs only last a few months at best, the larger issue remains ever troubling. And despite the President's best efforts to spur job creation, and stall or halt an economic downturn, many are warning that this recent upside will quickly descent back to an even larger downfall.

In finance terms, it's referred to as a double-dip recession: when the GDP slides back to negative after a short positive growth. No one of course wishes for such a horrific situation, but we must, we must be prepared for the unfortunate possibility that it may occur. If the community was forecast to witness record-breaking unemployment back at the top of this year, what will happen to us if a double-dip recession does in fact take place? As families struggle to put food on the table and maintain a roof over their heads, what can we as a collective do to bring about change that will in the end, help us all?

Just last week, Bank of America agreed

to pay \$108 million to Countrywide Financial Corporation (its subsidiary) after the Federal Trade Commission charged it with collecting unwarranted fees from overwhelmed homeowners. This initial move in the right direction will hopefully deliver some of this settlement money to homeowners that suffered under predatory lending practices. And although this is joyous news, it is still only a fraction of the solution to a dilemma that is as complex as the structural hierarchy of the country.

President Obama understood the fierce urgency of now and made it a point to meet with Morial, Jealous and myself in February. But in order to combat the staggering disparity among the haves and have-nots, we all need to work together to level the playing field. If economic predictions turn out to be true and a double-dip recession does in fact ensue, we must be prepared with effective mechanisms for salvaging not only ourselves, but also our neighbors. The current impact of the financial crisis is a human rights issue and we all must stand in unison and actively bring about the change for which we seek today – and tomorrow.

## The Need for a Smaller, Safer Jail Complex

By Sheriff Marlin Gusman

Facility funded by FEMA reimbursement monies for jail & existing Orleans Parish Law Enforcement District proceeds, not the City of New Orleans.

"Last night, more than 3,500 inmates were housed in Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office facilities, spread out over 5+ city blocks and in temporary or rehabbed buildings. In 2009, the Sheriff's Office processed more than 63,000 individuals who were arrested by local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

Special interests have issued press releases and e-mails, trying to convince the people of New Orleans that our city needs a jail that can house 1,000 fewer inmates than were in jail last night.

The new jail complex is not being increased in size, it is being decreased. The proposal is not for 5,832 beds, it is for 4,300

beds—more than 3,000 less than existed before Katrina under a prior administration. Therefore, all of the ACLU projections and percentages based upon 5,832 beds relative to our population are erroneous. The New Orleans jail has never been the largest jail in America, even when it had 7,500 beds.

Furthermore, our records do track and account for the various charges lodged against inmates, but it is the New Orleans Police Department and not the Sheriff's Office who selects persons for arrest and incarceration. We simply exercise care, custody and control.

The Sheriff's Office will construct this complex in phases, starting with a new Intake and Processing Center and housing for 1,500 inmates in a smaller footprint for the neighborhood.

For the foreseeable future, the recommended size of 4,300 beds is needed to

protect the lives and property of our city's residents, as well as to increase the protection of those who work in the criminal justice system.

Our new facilities meet the standards for public safety set by the American Correctional Association. They were designed by national experts in the field, who considered every aspect of preferred jail design relative to safety of the community, inmates, visitors and deputies. These advancements include best practice jail design for cell sizes, medical facilities and a single, secure access for the processing of arrested individuals that directs traffic away from the surrounding residences.

The City of New Orleans is contributing no funding for these improvements. They are all part of FEMA reimbursements from Hurricane Katrina, along with funding from the Law Enforcement District.

Even before and since Katrina's floods, the current facilities are spread out over too wide an area. By any community's standards, they are inadequate and strain our human and capital resources. The Sheriff's Office has eight facilities, including temporary tents. We have to deploy our deputies in less than desirable situations because of the size, number and condition of the facilities.

Our new jail facilities will mean that New Orleans is a safer city.

However, demanding an artificially small facility just to satisfy a quest for national comparisons, in other words to wish New Orleans to be safer, is unrealistic and it puts the public's safety at risk.

There are specific reasons for designing the jail complex in the fashion we presented, and all of them are justified to improve public safety.



# Haiti: Why New Orleans Should Care

By Adrian Bostick  
Data News Correspondent

Most, if not all, of us are familiar with the earthquake that struck the Haitian capitol city of Port-au-Prince. An estimated 105,000 homes, 1,300 schools, 50 hospitals, the presidential palace, parliament, courts and the port were all destroyed. A whopping 1.5 million people remain homeless. Many other structures were damaged, and the country was left with enough rubble to fill the Superdome five times.

Within days, the humanitarian response to the disaster included national governments, and organizations from around the world which began coordinating humanitarian aid.

For weeks the devastation in Haiti dominated the public's consciousness in a way that few international disasters ever have. But 6 months later, stories of Haiti are becoming scarce as recent disasters of local concern have taken its place.

But why, with all of the issues facing New Orleanians, should we care about the plight of those with



A spray-painted mural in Port Au Prince, Haiti expresses the country's sentiment as millions of citizens are still without food and shelter. On January 12, 2010 a 7.0 magnitude earthquake devastated the Haitian capital resulting in an estimated 200,000 deaths and 1.5 million left homeless. (AP Photo/Adrian Bostick)

whom we have hardly any connection? Haiti and New Orleans are forever bound by significant historical ties.

In 1804, many Haitians fled to New Orleans to seek refuge from

The Haitian Revolution. While state officials wanted to limit the number of free blacks, French Creoles wanted to increase the French-speaking population. As more refugees were allowed in

Louisiana, Haitian immigrants who had initially fled to Cuba also arrived, with nearly 90 percent of them settling in New Orleans. By the end of 1809 Haitian migration brought over 9,000 refugees

to our city, doubling the French-speaking population.

The similarities between Haiti and New Orleans can even be found in more contemporary history. One of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, Haiti in recent years has struggled with problems ranging from corrupt politicians, severe environmental degradation, and an annual barrage of hurricanes. Sound familiar? Remind you any place you know?

In many ways the world has forgotten Haiti. While the world's attention is on the oil spill in the gulf, the issues in Jamaica and the tension on the Gaza Strip, Haiti is still suffering and struggling to get itself back together after the earthquake earlier this year. As a city very familiar with being forgotten after a natural disaster, the citizens of New Orleans should feel a special kinship to Haitians. As such, they should always be in the forefront of our thoughts and prayers even the midst of our own environmental tragedies.

## Data Zone, Continued from page 7.

dance songs, with lots of pauses in-between, "I'm taking my time," Ms. Labelle reminded the packed house that she was 66, menopausal, diabetic and that she'd been married for 32 years and divorced for 12. Looking more like the late salsa queen Celia Cruz, Labelle's flashy hairstyles (remember that "New Attitude" angle-food-cake-pan hairdo?) and metal brassieres (from the Labelle days) were a thing of the past. She didn't look matronly, more like that eccentric aunt you always loved to visit. At points she kicked off her shoes, stood on a tapestry rug, then sat comfortably on a wingback chair and talked to the crowd like they were family. The place was enthralled.

She worked her biggest magic, getting the folks into an emotional grip, when she launched into "If You Don't Know Me By Now." "I sing this song for women who can't sing like me, for those women who don't have a stage to sing on." This kind of moment could easily have turned into a man-bashing session, but when that tune ended she proudly sang her bouncy hit "Right Kind of Lover," a song about a man who knows how to please her.

The evening ended when Patti performed the classic "Lady Marmalade" and

she invited four male fans on stage to sing with her. This could have been a cringe-worthy moment, but three of the wannabe singers could actually hold a tune and the German tourist who couldn't, danced with abandonment. The crowd roared! The spirit had been in the room almost all night, in the form of gospel yells, but now the audience got what they came for, a healing, heart-warming, rousing concert from a senior citizen who's voice, though not as angelic as fortysomething years ago, is still distinctive and bewitching. Hearing her only makes you wish other vocalists, like Whitney Houston, had taken better care of their voice, so in the twilight of their careers they could still mesmerize listeners.

As Patti continues her evangelical rock & soul concert tour across the U.S., she'll hit places like Hammond Indiana; Baltimore, Maryland; San Antonio, Texas; Reno Nevada; and you can catch her on December 10th, at Beau Rivage Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi. For exact dates go to <http://www.pattilabelle.com/>.

Patti Labelle, a legend, rocked BB Kings Blues Club & Grill. She'll rock your world too.

Visit NNPA Entertainment writer Dwight Brown at [www.DwightBrownInk.com](http://www.DwightBrownInk.com).

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# Former City Council President Oliver Thomas To Support Local Youth Mentoring Program

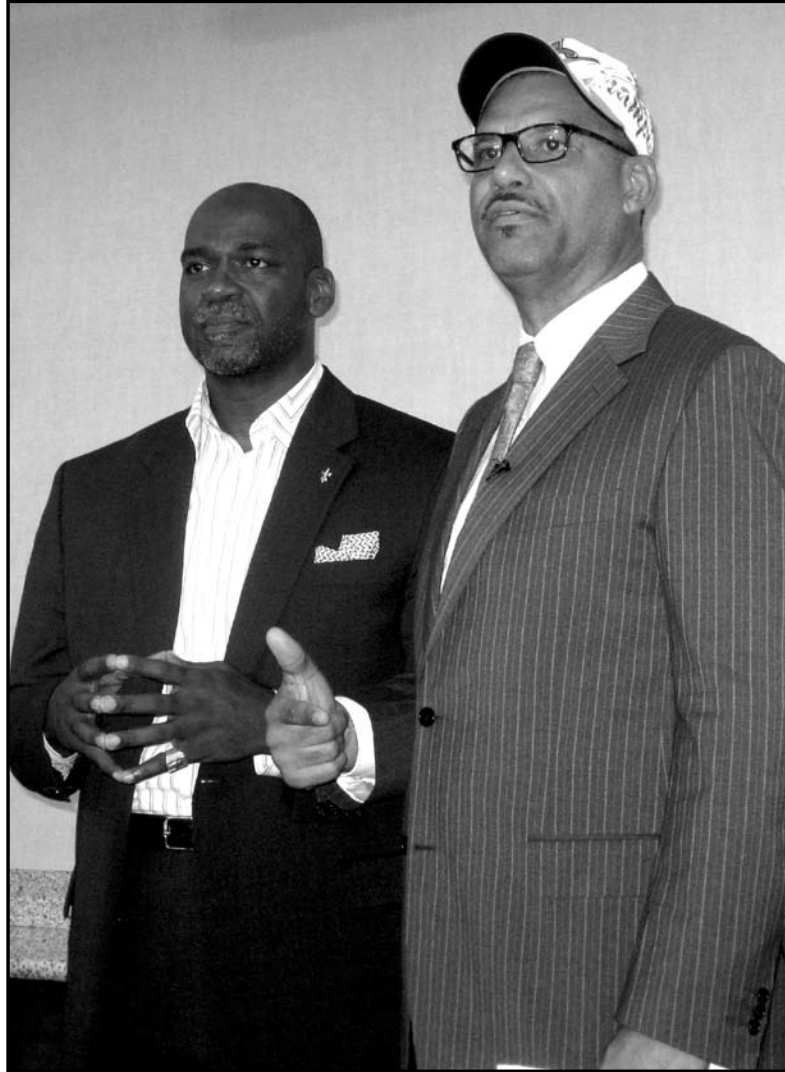
By Erica Dourousseau

As New Orleans faces new challenges with preventing crime throughout the city, it's no secret that there is a strong need for community support and outreach programs that focus on fighting street violence and offer significant attention to inner city youth. When Data News Weekly heard about The Circle of Courage Mentoring Program, founded by Khalil Osiris, we knew it was something big. Osiris organized the "Be The Change For At-Risk Youth" Seminar, held at The Goodwill Training Center on Tulane Avenue in Mid-City earlier this month.

In the middle of this powerful mentoring program, emerged one of the most familiar names in New Orleans, and perhaps the biggest supporter of The Circle of Trust Program, keynote speaker and Former City Council President Oliver Thomas. Osiris describes him as "A Native Son. Someone who has inspired the dreams of so many people in our city." And while city leaders, educators and

conference attendees piled into The Goodwill Center conference room, the impact Thomas left on our city since his two and a half year absence while serving time in Federal prison was still alive, and still inspiring residents with the hope of more positive experiences and a new outlook on the fight against violence and crime in schools and in neighborhoods. "Twenty percent of all high school seniors are functionally illiterate" says Oliver, "We're not talking Black, White, and Asian. The statistics are blaring for everyone".

Education, one of the main topics the seminar focused on, offered a fresh approach to "moral development" and helping youth find their own personal power. Thomas spoke specifically about the impact that the citizens can have to help save at risk youth and the school system and encouraged attendees to adapt the concept that there is no better cause than to save and improve the lives of children, especially the youth in New Orleans who face such



Circle of Courage Founder Khalil Osiris and Former City Council President Oliver Thomas

disadvantageous and unfavorable circumstances.

Thomas shared his outrage over "rat infested, run down, hole in the roof" schools he visited and helped to repair through a community service program while in prison in Oakdale, that lacked adequate books or classroom equipment to accommodate the students, only to return to clean, freshly painted, air-conditioned prison facilities where amenities were endless, compared to what was offered to children in the school system. His adaptation of the Circle of Trust Program has sparked the interest of other influential names in New Orleans, one being former Police Chief Eddie Compass III. Their mission is to get as many summer programs and educational facilities to adopt the program in a direct effort to counteract the current problems the city faces in schools and on the streets.

Author, Pastor, College Professor and Circle of Courage founder Khalil Osiris has a personal moti-

vation in eliminating illiteracy and violence in New Orleans. He spent twenty years in Norfolk Prison Colony in Massachusetts. During his incarceration he earned his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from Boston University. While serving time, Osiris became rigorously involved in changing the lives of his fellow inmates through education and literacy. He created numerous programs that taught the basic principles of "restorative justice", coordinated several study groups for prisoners and organized several book clubs that focused on promoting literacy. Since his release, Osiris has co-authored two books, Talking Listening with Care: A Communication Guide for Singles and Couples and Psychology of Incarceration: A Distortion of the State of Belonging. He also conducts seminars, workshops, and faith-based retreats around the country on topics ranging from Jobs Not Jail and Five Steps to Freedom to Self-Imposed Limitations and the Power of Forgive-

ness. At the center of his message was one main focal point that he adapted and still believes in, "turn the cell into a classroom and the prison into a university." Osiris believes "It's our responsibility as John and Jane Doe citizens to do our part".

Before Circle of Courage was born, Osiris was busy with TKOP, a non-profit that specifically focuses on providing reentry programming for prisoners and promoting restorative justice practices. TKOP also offers intensive cognitive behavioral training for facilitators. Osiris and his staff are committed to teaching and implementing the 12 Values Curriculum into to community and lives of at-risk youth. Infusing TKOP and Circle of Courage has produced a new road into re-evaluating troubled youth, and working directly with educators to adopt the program into their own curriculums.

For educational institutions and alternative schools that already adopted the program, the results have been positive. Teachers who attended the conference gave their first-hand account of the changes they experienced in students and boast that the program has helped some students make a complete life change. Most noticed positive social changes as well as higher grades and improved reading levels. Troubled students who were already behind several grades and facing punishment from the justice system showed an increased interest in school and extra-curricular activities provided for them outside of the classroom. Children who were considered unfit for regular classroom attendance have reportedly progressed into model students. The overall feedback suggests that programs like this one could have the kind of positive impact that is needed to begin the fight against illiteracy and crime in schools.

Thomas and Osiris will be working together on the Circle of Trust Program and are currently working on future opportunities to promote the project through seminars and information sessions throughout New Orleans. For more information on TKOP and Circle of Trust, visit tkoponline.org.



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Sean Kennedy Santos



Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

a leadership model that is flawed when it comes to the 'R' in the act that is reinvestment. For a city the size of New Orleans it hails fourth in the nation in funding poured into public housing. Only the Housing Authorities of New York City's \$423 million, Chicago's \$143 million and Philadelphia's \$90 million are ahead of New Orleans.

Aside from stimulus monies directly given to HANO, Recovery Gov, a government website dedicated to tracking stimulus funds, reports the Louisiana Department of Housing and Urban Development has received nearly \$200 million dollars available in stimulus funding in which 35 million have been awarded to HANO. With all these resources available and construction projects happening in the redevelopment of public housing where do minority contractors and public housing residents' factor in the equation? Can it or will ARRA funds empower them or will further divide a city along the lines of race and class?

### Section 3 in Black and White

One place to look to try to answer these questions is Section 3, a provision of the 1968 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Act that requires that recipients of certain HUD financial assistance, to the greatest extent feasible, provide job training, employment, and contracting opportunities for low- or very-low income residents in connection with projects and activities in their neighborhoods.

With the amount of construction activity going on in public housing and with unemployment at record highs in inner-cities one would expect to see training classes full of people and work-sites with residents and minority owned businesses providing jobs to those who have acquired new skills. But when you look at the HANO directory of Section 3 certified businesses to eligible employee's ratio there is a great disparity. Where there are 63 pages of certified businesses there is only one page of eligible employees that number's less than 40 persons.

Al Tharpe, a manager at New Corp Inc., which provides technical and financial assistance to small and emerging businesses, says the goals giving 20 percent of contracts to disadvantaged busi-

nesses and 30 percent of new jobs to Section 3 workers are not being fulfilled. "When you go to these sites you will not see very much minority participation in these construction projects," says Tharpe. "And even when people get trained for jobs in some of these programs they still are not placed on jobs, and also, they are not enough minority firms receiving contracts to hire them as well."

As work is being done rebuilding public housing there is a dearth of minority participation. Tharpe says only a few minority contractors, specifically; Arnold Baker Ready Mix and Doucette Associated have gotten a considerable amount of work on the housing projects.

Rene Paige, is a minority business owner who is Section 3 certified. He feels that more needs to be done to assist minority business, to compete and be more than sub-contractors. "Receiving training and being certified is fine but there are still barriers to entry that keep minorities who have the capabilities and skills but sometimes don't have the bonding, insurances to even get to the starting line as prime contractors and I believe that should be the goal," he says.

### Voices from Behind the Bricks

As policy makers and pundits debate the merits and benefits of the stimulus package, the future of public housing, and the effectiveness of Section 3, rarely are the voices heard from those who are impacted by public policy decisions. The Section 3 program at HANO is fraught with problems of oversight and inefficiencies that inhibits its effectiveness. "I went through the training, it lasted three months and I have not been employed with the Housing Authority," says Tanya Davis.

The Section 3 list is short, leaving a lot to be desired in the realm of accuracy and accountability. Ernest Green, who is listed as an electrical worker, when contacted

about his Section 3 eligibility stated he never received any training and was confined to a wheelchair. According to Farrah Wilson, who completed the program he says, "I am doing some other type of work, I needed to get a job."

"After I finished there was really not any follow-up I called about work, but I was unsuccessful in my attempt to get work through the program," she adds.

The purging or updating of HANO's Section 3 doesn't seem to be done with any regularity. Many persons contact numbers are non-working, and it would seem that HANO would provide other ways to contact potential employees such as an email, but that information was absent from the listing. Some appeared on the list as completing the program and finding work with HANO but were employed through a temporary service and were not hired directly by the agency or those contracted to do the work.

"I am working, in one of the developments, but I'm working through a temp service, and a couple of other guys I went through the training with is doing the same thing," says a gentleman who completed the Section 3 training but asked not to be identified by name.

Tyrone Martin and Donna Torrich together are weathering the storm after the disaster of August 29, 2005 drastically altered their lives. Donna works in the food service industry at a local university. Before Hurricane Katrina she was a supervisor, upon coming back to the city she was re-hired, but demoted to an hourly wage

shift worker. "There is not much I can do I need to work to help keep a roof of our heads and pay bills." Talking about the cost of living and what is affordable housing she says, "The price of everything has gone up and I am starting to think that there won't be a place for us in the city."

Tyrone Martin's name appears on HANO's Section 3 list as a laborer. He has worked hard throughout his 45 years of life doing various jobs. Hitting hard times after Hurricane Katrina, he found himself for the first time in his adult life unable to find work. Down but not out he heard about an opportunity to receive training through a program called Section 3. He went down to the processing center filling out all the necessary paperwork including a W-2 form. He excitedly told Donna he was about to get trained in the building trades and that he would receive a job upon completion. Days passed, and no one contacted him. Tyrone and Donna grew concerned and continuously called requesting to speak with someone who could provide some answers to no avail. For he would not receive any training although his name appears on HANO's Section 3 eligible employee list; today Tyrone is working as a maintenance person at McDonalds punching in at four in the morning to begin his long day of hard work doing what he has to do to survive.

### Stimulus and the Future of New Orleans..... An Overview

The U.S. is witnessing a home mortgage crisis, and increased

unemployment. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national unemployment rate is almost 10% up from 6.8% at the same time last year when Barack Obama was elected in November of 2008. Recent statistics shows Louisiana with an unemployment rate of 6.7 percent and 6.1 in New Orleans bucking the trend in some cities that have seen unemployment rise exponentially. But are these numbers truly accurate in showing the complete picture of those who are disenfranchised?

The Recovery Act is a major investment in jumpstarting the economy presently on a downward spiral. Is it a panacea that will fix all the problems of the nation's economic crisis? Its supporters would say it is saving jobs as well as investing in things such as education, healthcare, housing, infrastructure, energy and a host of other things will pay dividends later. But the larger question is will it be enough to help jumpstart and revive the American economy? Only time and history will tell the real story in the days to come.

New Orleans is a city that is trying to rebuild and renew itself. The question for the city is whether it will use of stimulus funds to put band-aids on bullet wounds, or tries to patch up holes on the Titanic with sponges. Will the city continue to hemorrhage and sink further into the abyss and be an example of government mismanagement and malfeasance running amuck?

Or, will the city use stimulus funds in a responsible way and hold people accountable and become a place where government and its officials began to turn the clock forward; as opposed to having the hands of time stuck, suspended in the past, not moving forward as the city lags further behind the rest of the country? These are questions where there are no easy answers, but there is no question that the U.S. and New Orleans have something in common. Both are fractured and need to be repaired. One maybe more than the other and on a number of fronts need to be restructured, renewed, rebuilt and revived if they are to survive and thrive.







Darryl Willis  
BP Claims

# Making This Right

- Beaches
- Claims**
- Cleanup
- Economic Investment
- Environmental Restoration
- Health and Safety
- Wildlife

My name is Darryl Willis and I'm responsible for overseeing BP's claims process in the Gulf Coast. I was born and raised in Louisiana. At age 70, my mother lost her home to Hurricane Katrina. Afterwards, she experienced enormous frustration. So I know first hand that when tragedy strikes on a scale like this, people need help without a lot of hassles.

### How To File A Claim

To speed that help, BP's Claims Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The number is 1-800-440-0858. When someone calls, they'll find out how to submit their claim and can schedule a face-to-face meeting with one of our claims specialists. They can also file online at [bp.com/claims](http://bp.com/claims).

### Replacing Lost Monthly Income

Our focus has been on helping the fishermen, small businesses and others who aren't able to work until the spill is cleaned up, by making payments to replace their lost monthly income. These payments will continue for as long as needed. When we talk, we'll help people determine which documents they need. We will then be in touch in four days or less and can issue them a check right on the spot.

So far, we have paid more than 19,000 claims, totaling more than \$53 million. We have nearly 700 people assigned to handle claims and 25 walk-in claims offices in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. We have promised to honor all legitimate claims and we will. We want all Americans to know that these efforts will not come at any cost to taxpayers.

### Our Responsibility

I volunteered for this assignment because this is my home. Doing this right is important to me. My commitment is that we will keep you informed, and we'll be here as long as it takes. We may not always be perfect, but we will make this right.

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