

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

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**News Weekly**

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# African-American Female Entrepreneurs

**Lighting the Way to the Future**



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# African-American Female Entrepreneurs

## *Lighting the Way to the Future*

By Edwin Buggage

### African-American Women in Business

African-American women have been the backbone of the Black community. Always carrying themselves with undeniable beauty, grace and style, they have been the ones that have nurtured and been the glue that have held us together. They have been the foundation that our community is built upon. Today women are taking on even larger roles, outnumbering men in college enrollment and breaking through the glass ceilings of corporate America. Also there is a class of young women who are also venturing out on their own to start businesses.

Three young entrepreneurs highlighted in this article are beauty industry professionals toiling away in the same way a young woman named Madam C.J. Walker did over a century ago as the first female millionaire in America. Making her fortune in the beauty industry and using her wealth to serve others as well. And today as technology is the new gateway to wealth and riches and is the modern equivalent to the gold rush, one of the women featured is in the field of information technology; which is the new frontier in a world where information and the mastery of new technologies equals power.

In the 21st Century the United States have seen a shift in power as the country elected its first African-American President, and along with that its first African-American First Lady and First Family that includes two African-American girls. This state of events has raised the profile of African-American women and girls to new heights. This century have also seen the first African-American female billionaire in Oprah Winfrey, a media and business mogul who's leveraged as a celebrity and now has a television network called "OWN." This is the where these women are today, the descendants of slaves are now in ownership navigating their own way, taking their fate in their own hands.



Janice Meredith

### She is Simply Divine

Janice Meredith is a woman who over the years has become a force to be reckoned with in the beauty industry. She is the owner of Simply Divine, a full service salon. "I really enjoy my work, it is more than just a business, this industry is an important part of our community; it is also a social space where people from all walks of life come together; and that is the one of the many things I enjoy about this line of work," says Meredith.

As a successful businesswoman she has branched out extending her brand with Salon Locators, a Beauty Industry Consulting Firm, "I saw a need for more organization in the industry and I felt it was a service that I could provide to help other businesses more effectively market themselves," remarks Meredith. She has also ventured out into the world of magazine publishing, "I have a beauty industry magazine called Stylebrity and I hold an Annual Hair Show and tattoo battle bearing the same name that brings together beauty industry professionals and people from across the region."

She is also a woman who has a giving heart; she has been featured in newspapers and magazines for her charitable work. "I feel like I have been blessed in my life and I feel those who are fortunate enough to have been successful should look to give to those less fortunate." Meredith has started a Summer Camp for young people and a magazine that focuses on young people called Stylebrity Teen. "I feel it is important to build for the future, and if I as a businesswoman could be an example for and inspire someone or contribute to their success, that is something that I have always set out to do and that is to give back."

*Cover Story, Continued on next page.*

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## DATA NEWS WEEKLY

P.O. Box 57347, New Orleans, LA 70157-7347  
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**  
Eric Connerly  
Edwin Buggage  
Lee Daniels  
Marc Morial  
Judge Greg Mathis  
Karen Reedus Jasper

**Art Direction & Production**  
MainorMedia.com  
**Editorial Submissions**  
datanewseditor@bellsouth.net  
**Advertising Inquiries**  
datanewsad@bellsouth.net

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Joaneane Smith

### Information is Power

In a field dominated by men Joaneane Smith stands out as the Owner, President & CEO of GCS, an IT Consulting Firm specializing in Software Engineering, Integration, Implementation, Cyber security, and Program/Project Management. She has more than 12 years experience in management consulting and information systems. "Yes this is a field where there are very few females, and that number is even smaller when you talk about African-American Women, but I feel it is important that women think outside the box and seek out new opportunities and that's what I've done," says Smith.

As a trailblazer in this field and as an entrepreneur she feels women are making great strides, but feels there is still more room for women to participate outside of the normal businesses that predominate, "Women-owned businesses make a significant contribution to the U.S. economy and have grown in number and size over the past two decades," says Smith of women-owned businesses and their impact. Being a business owner can sometimes be an uphill climb, but it does have its perks according to Smith, "I like being able to create my own work, set my own rates, set my own hours, and be choosy about the clients I take on." "I am a dreamer and always dreaming up new ideas, planning for the future, and focused on the next item on my To Do List."

Joaneane Smith is an example of a 21st Century Woman that is focused on being a success in business. As she continues running her business she says of young women and her influence on them, "When I get a chance to speak to young women and tell them that they too could be successful in life and be whatever they want." Continuing she says "In order to reach your goals, you need to remain focused and not let anything prevent you from reaching your objective; prepare yourself for the long-term and migrate to people that have the same mindset."



Shalome Jenkins

### Beauty, Brains and a Heart of Gold

Shalome Jenkins is a woman who is the full package, armed with beauty, brains and a mind for business. Her love of styling hair began at a young age, "Since I was very young I had a talent for styling hair but back then I didn't understand the gift that was given to me and that what I was doing in my mom's kitchen would become a lifelong journey of being in business for myself," says Jenkins.

She is the owner of Emolah's Hair Restoration Center, a full-service hair salon where she specializes in repairing damaged

hair and regrowing hair in problem areas. Jenkins was raised in a single-family home and was as determined to be successful from a very early age, "I think I was a natural born entrepreneur, I remember finding gratification in high school, being able to buy prom dresses and other things from monies that I earned in addition to being able to treat my Mom to nice things," says Jenkins.

Jenkins is a woman who understands she is part of a rich tradition in the beauty industry, "It is women like Madam C.J. Walker who paved the way for me to do what I do and her contribution is significant as a source of inspiration for women to be in business for themselves." Shalome Jenkins is still a young woman but a veteran in business, she says to young women who want to become successful, "You need to have self-discipline and vision and you can become a success at whatever it is you want to do whether it is a doctor, lawyer, teacher or in my case a businesswoman."



Lacie B. Robinson

### Finding the Secret to Style and Grace, "Laced"

Lacie B. Robinson is a stunning woman of style, grace and class. She has spent many years working in upscale establishments such as Saks Fifth Avenue, the Ritz Carlton and Dillard's as an Aesthetician and she is also a Licensed Cosmetologist. Three years ago Lacie took her gift for beauty and

fashion and opened an upscale boutique and salon called Laced. "My company is more than just the service or merchandise I provide, it is a lifestyle." Continuing she says, "It is a one stop shop for the woman who desires a first-class beauty experience."

Today as women are entering the upper echelons of society as executives, professionals and business owners, Lacie feels it is important that there are services that match this bold new breed of woman who desires to be pampered in an upscale atmosphere. "I feel every woman regardless of her income level deserves to pamper themselves, or in the case of what I do are "laced" which simply means from head-to-toe, she exudes elegance style and class."

Robinson feels the woman of the 21st Century is one who knows herself and is self-determined. She is successful on her own and independent, but yet sexy and feminine. "I am a woman who went out and followed her dream of becoming a business owner and it feels good everyday coming to a place I can call my own, and I acknowledge all the other female business owners and those who came before me, and while there are a lot of women in business for themselves there is still a need for more."



## Justice Department Issues Scathing Report on New Orleans Police Department

By Lee A. Daniels  
Special to the NNPA from  
thedefendersonline.com

A U.S. Department of Justice report on the New Orleans Police Department released last week has described it as wracked by a culture of incompetence and corruption that is “serious, systemic, wide-ranging and deeply rooted” and in need of complete reform.

The city’s police force, which nearly completely collapsed when Hurricane Katrina devastated the city in 2005, has been the subject of multiple city, state, and federal investigation since then. Some of these probes have led to criminal indictments and convictions of more than a dozen officers thus far for unprovoked lethal and deadly use of force against innocent citizens in the storm’s aftermath.

But, this investigation, conducted by the federal agency’s Office of Civil Rights, deliberately did not consider those cases. In one sense, it didn’t need to because, it stated, pointedly, “these serious

deficiencies existed long before” Hurricane Katrina struck.

In fact, the department was enmeshed in scandal in the 1990s after a series of criminal convictions of police officers – including the conviction of two for murder – exposed widespread problems. But, its deterioration in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, with a wider national and even international audience looking on, has forced the concerted, multifaceted effort at reform now underway.

Mitch Landrieu last year, asked the Justice Department for a “top to bottom review” of the beleaguered police force, one that would help him bring about its “complete transformation.

Certainly, the resulting document leaves no doubt that a complete transformation is vital. For, believing its prosaic title, “Investigation of the New Orleans Police Department,” it is one of the most damning indictments of an entire police department – and, implicitly, of a city governmental

structure responsible for its oversight – in the modern history of policing.

The report states that, bolstered by its unwillingness to adhere to seemingly basic rules and bureaucratic procedures, the New Orleans force indulged in “patterns or practices of unconstitutional conduct and/or violations of federal law” so pervasive and constant that they came to be routine. They include: unwarranted use of force; illegal stops, searches and arrests; rampant discriminatory behavior toward New Orleanians of color, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgendered citizens; and, often, women who reported that they have been sexually assaulted. Not surprisingly, sanctions against police officers who abused their positions were virtually non-existent.

One of the more striking indications of the depth of the department’s managerial incompetence cited in the report was that its canine unit was so badly misman-

aged—the police dogs were so badly trained—that they often attacked their own handlers.

These attitudes and practices made New Orleans itself less safe for its law-abiding citizens, the federal report stated, in part because police officials had often failed to investigate actual crimes and because their behavior produced a widespread distrust of the department among many citizens that inhibited their calling on or cooperating with police officers when they witnessed a crime being committed.

In fact, the report states, New Orleans Criminal Courts have trouble empanelling juries because so many prospective jurors say they wouldn’t trust the sworn testimony of police officers.

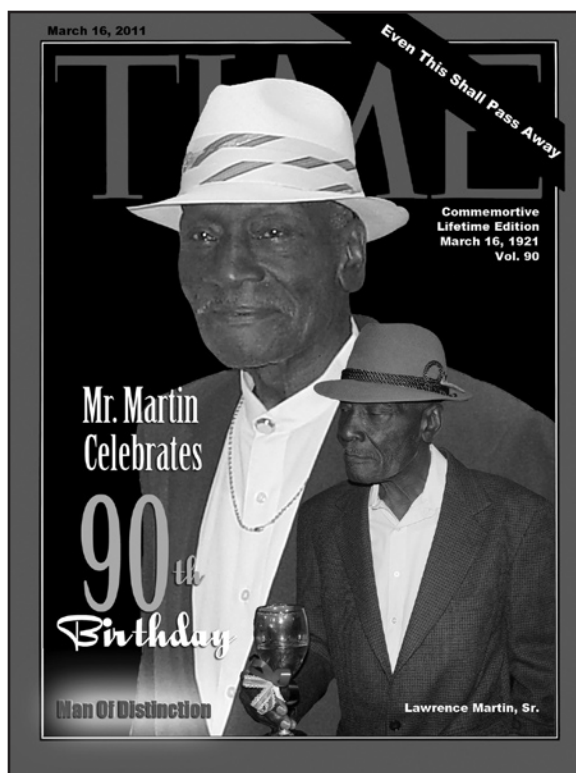
“There is nobody in this room that is surprised by the general tenor and the tone of what this report has to say,” Mayor Landrieu said at a news conference in New Orleans.

He was flanked by Thomas E.

Perez, the Assistant U.S. Attorney General in charge of the department’s Office of Civil Rights, and New Orleans’ Police Chief, Ronal Serpas, and other city and federal officials. The city and the Justice Department will sign a consent decree that maps out specific avenues of reform, which will be overseen by the federal court.

They said that Chief Serpas has already begun making substantive reforms of the department, aided by a revision of some civil service rules to give him more flexibility in hiring, shifting, and firing personnel within it and the report pointedly praises what it describes as “a remarkably strong shared commitment to the City [among New Orleanians] that spans race, class, and neighborhood ... [and] provides a strong foundation upon which to transform” the police department.

## Happy 90th Birthday Laurence Martin Sr.





# Penelope Randolph-Biagas

## *A Giving Tradition*

by: Eric Connerly

She is someone who comes from a long line of women and a family that have lived their lives to serve others. Penelope Randolph-Biagas has dedicated herself to the betterment of her community. "I was born into a family of social workers, my mother, Dorothy Sturken-Randolph was very involved in the community and was the first Director of Social Services at Charity Hospital and the first African-American Professor at Tulane University School of Social Work," says Randolph-Biagas.

Continuing on the theme of her family and the importance they played in her being self-determined she harkens back to her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, three generations of women who helped shape her drive to succeed. "I am someone who believes everything is possible, but you have to be dedicated, serious and disciplined, this is something I learned early in life seeing strong female role models in my family," says Randolph-Biagas.

As a social service professional she has witnessed many things change in the African-American community. She says of some of the problems surrounding the young women of today,

"I find that in some families and communities there is not a lot of support that use to exist at one time, the breakdown of community is a product of the breakdown of family and this is something we have to work on to improve our community." "We need more unity and people to understand that if we don't work to improve the lives of the people at the bottom it makes life for people harder at the top."

Civic involvement is an important part of her giving back as she sits on several boards. One that holds a special place and is dear to her heart is the Jazz and Heritage Foundation. "We do so many things in the areas of the cultural arts and that is a very important part of our city, preserving its heritage and culture," says Randolph-Biagas.

Over five years later the city is still experiencing the effects of the Katrina debacle that continues to impact the lives of many people. Randolph-Biagas likens her city to an old friend, "I love New Orleans



Penelope Randolph-Biagas with her daughter, Judge Candice Bates Anderson

and even in spite of some of its problems." Continuing she says, "I was fortunate enough to not have much damage and be in a position to help others." "That's what we do in New Orleans we are just a giving, loving people and as we rebuild it is not just about the buildings that make the city great I believe its greatest asset is its people."

She is a loving mother to her daughter, Juvenile Court Judge Candice Bates-Anderson. Beaming with pride when speaking of her, "My daughter is very determined and has grown into being an accomplished young woman. Continuing she says, "I am so proud of my daughter and what she's done with her life; she has had the will to do what she wanted to do and made it happen." Randolph-Biagas

also says she gets extreme joy from her grandchildren Caydance and Penelope.

As women roles in society have evolved, Randolph-Biagas think much hasn't changed it's simply the same wheel with a new spin she says, "While women's place in society have changed I don't think the 21st Century Woman is that different then the 20th Century Woman, we have always spent time balancing work and family." "I came from a home where my grandmother did not work outside of the home but she managed the home, and my mother always worked even traveling to Baton Rouge for school because Tulane did

not accept African-Americans at that time."

Penelope Randolph-Biagas comes from a long line of people who have been examples of great women. Giving advice to young women she says, "Stay focused, know who you are and what you want, set goals for yourself and be motivated, determined and disciplined while pursuing your goals." She is a woman tied to a rich history continuing to dedicate her life to building for the future. That is why today we honor Penelope Randolph-Biagas as New Orleans Data News Weekly Trailblazer for the Month of March 2011.

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# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

## Mardi Gras Indians Super Sunday 2011

On Super Sunday 2011, thousands of people came to Central City for food, music, and to see the stunning costumes of New Orleans' Mardi Gras Indians. The annual St. Joseph's Day event included the parade, cultural activities and musical performances which were presented by the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian Council and R.E.A.L.

Photos by Jordan Flaherty



Data News Weekly

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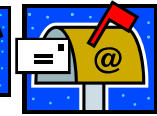
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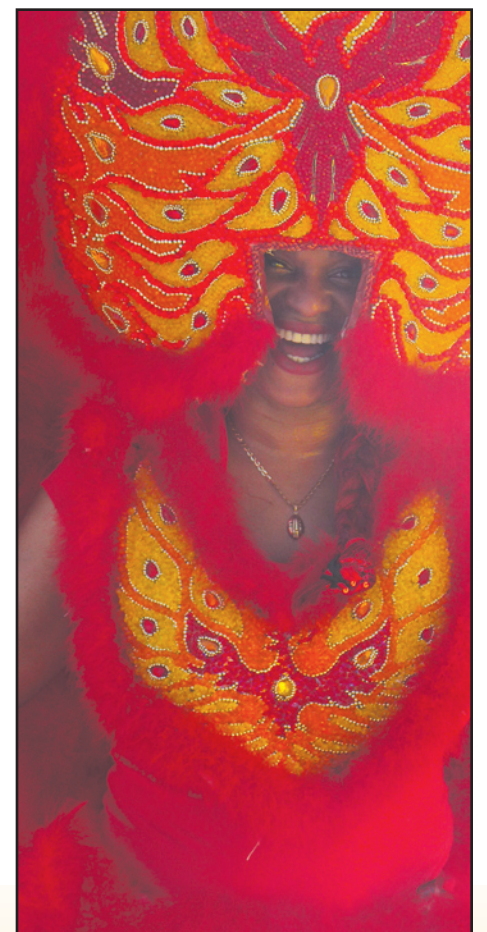
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# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

## Jazz Filled Weekend on Broad Street

It was a weekend for Jazz on Broad Street with Donald Harrison, Jazz Saxophonist performing at The Prime Example and Ka-Ville Music Experience performing at The Broad Street Cafe with vocalist, Vernon Ward and Data was there.

Photos by June Hazeur



Left to right - Percy Williams, Trumpeter, Uncle to Kermit Ruffins and Lester Singleton, Saxophonist



Terri Barre's Aunt, Mrs. Theda Gaudin celebrates her 82nd Birthday with family.



Left to right - Brice Egana, Terri Barre's Egana, Donald Neveu and Elaine Neveu.



Seated left to right are Kim Krivjanick, Leah Green and Alicia Espadron



For more pictures check us out on Facebook.



# State of Black America Town Hall to Explore Jobs of the Future



**Marc Morial**  
President and CEO  
National Urban League

Next Thursday, I invite you to join the debate about the number one issue facing the nation – the deep and persistent jobs crisis that has been especially devastating in urban communities of color. As part of the National Urban League's Annual Legislative Policy Conference in Washington, DC, we will convene a Free State of Black

America town hall meeting on March 31st, from 10 a.m. to noon at Howard University's Cramton Auditorium. A panel of notable policy experts, scholars and journalists will lead a public dialogue about ways to end the jobs crisis in our communities. But the most important voices invited to this meeting belong to you – the student struggling to pay college tuition, the father who lost his job six months ago and is wondering if he will ever be able to support his family again, and the single mother having to choose between child care and health care for her kids.

The great recession has seen a loss of more than 8 million jobs. Many of those jobs are in declining industries and may never return. According to a recent CNN Money news report, "Home building lost nearly 1 million jobs since the start of 2008, while the auto industry shed 300,000 manufacturing jobs due to plant closings. The finance and real estate sectors lost more than 500,000 jobs." Unfortunately, many of

those lost jobs are never coming back.

That is why the discussion about bringing jobs back to urban America must focus on ensuring that people in our communities are educated, trained and have access to the jobs of the future. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that between 2008 and 2018, the industries projected to produce the largest number of new jobs are health care and social assistance, and professional and business services. And nearly half of all new jobs created during those years will require some type of post-secondary education. Because of high dropout rates and low college graduation rates in communities of color, it is projected that 70 percent of prime working age African-American adults and 80 percent of Hispanics will lack the requisite education for almost 40 percent of projected new jobs.

Clearly immediate action is needed to turn this picture around. The National Urban League's 12-point Blueprint for Quality Job Creation offers several powerful rem-

edies, including a plan to boost minority participation in emerging Broadband and Green Industries. We also call on Congress to reform, revise and reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act to focus on preparing and retraining workers for 21st Century jobs by targeting young adults with less than college education as well as high school dropouts and older workers whose jobs were eliminated by the recession. We must also do more to reverse troubling recent trends in minority high school dropout and college enrollment rates.

These are just some of the ideas that will be discussed at the March 31st town hall meeting. We need your input too. If you can't attend in person, the event will be webcast live at [www.nul.org](http://www.nul.org) beginning at 10 a.m. ET. You can also join the conversation on Twitter@NatUrbanLeague using #SOBA11 or on Facebook.

## Don't Cut Head Start!



**Judge Greg Mathis**  
NNPA Columnist

### Mathis' Mind

After being urged by President Obama to invest in our nation's students, you would think our federal lawmakers would do anything they could to preserve a program that sets the foundation for a lifetime of achievement, right? Wrong. Once again, Republicans are moving to cut a program that helps average Americans and, in this case, specifically the poor.

The Head Start Program is yet another social program the Republican Party has targeted for major cuts. Head Start provides educational and health services to low income children and their families. Head Start has been one of the most stud-

ied early education programs since it began more than 40 years ago. The program has proven itself to be one of the United States' most successful social experiments and an efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Research shows students who complete Head Start do better both socially and academically and are less likely to drop out of high school.

Yet, Republicans want to cut the program by more than 22-percent. They say Head Start isn't as effective as supporters claim. To be fair, some studies show that achievement levels of some Head Start attendees start to drop off after first grade.

However, this could speak to the quality of the school they enroll in after the program. Additionally, the program's opponents say too much money is spent maintaining the program and not enough on enrolling new students.

It's not clear if the Republican Party is against poor people, working mothers, low income children or all three. All of the cuts it's leaders have moved to make have been to programs that support and empower the poor. If they are successful in taking away the building blocks that many have used to create a foundation for future success, America's middle class will continue to shrink and the number of families living below the poverty line will increase.

If the Republicans were serious about

balancing the budget they'd take a look at programs with inflated and misappropriated budgets, starting with the military. Sure, it's critical that the U.S. has a strong military in place but studies have shown that program is rife with wasteful spending. It's not the only area where money is either being wasted or being misused. A good, honest budget scrub will show the Repub-

licans – and Democrats – which programs can handle significant cuts.

If you believe in the power of Head Start and can testify to how it helped a child – past or present – in your life, call your elected officials. Let them know that they absolutely cannot cut Head Start. Our children's – and our nation's – success depends on it.





# Phenomenal Woman: Melanie Fiona

By Edwin Buggage

The great Writer Maya Angelou composed a poem entitled "Phenomenal Woman" an ode to the inner beauty of Black Women. These are two words that describe the talented chanteuse of song Melanie Fiona, who embodies with her music and style a template for women to emulate. She is stunningly beautiful, a great vocalist with thought provoking lyrics, and is extremely intelligent.

She has come a long way from her days as a young Canadian girl with a dream of becoming a singer. Today she is a woman who has been nominated for a Grammy and her songs resonate with audiences across the globe, as evidenced by her infectious music that transcends genres and categories had the captive crowd entranced during a recent perfor-



Melanie Fiona and Data News Weekly Editor Edwin Buggage

mance at the House of Blues in New Orleans.

Her musical palate is a rich fla-

vorful gumbo blending the best of the old and the new. Talking about herself and her music she says, "I

am from Toronto, Canada and at heart I am a Caribbean woman who grew up listening to different types music and my music reflects that diversity of growing up with different cultural influences." Continuing in her very engaging way she lists some of the greats that filled her musical plate, "Sam Cooke, Sade, Bob Marley, Marvin Gaye, Brandy, and of course Whitney Houston, I have always been in love with anyone who was a great singer and storyteller and all these singers have done that and I just want to add to that tradition with my music."

Armed with hits in the U.S. and abroad Fiona is making an impact in the entertainment industry. One that sometimes unfortunately objectifies females, she hopes to empower women through her music, "I think I exude integrity

and the progression of women and how they are viewed in the music industry, and I root that in that I want to be respected for my talent and my intelligence and what I have to say and contribute to society," says Fiona.

Since gaining more recognition and notoriety she remains humble in her success, Fiona is an accessible artist that seems to sincerely love people and has a giving heart. She has been involved in several important projects that speak to important issues facing society, performing on "We are the World 25" a song for Haiti and collaborating with John Legend, the Roots and Common on the remake of the classic anthem of uplift, Harold Melvin and the Blue

*Data Zone,  
continued on page 11.*

## Health News

# Doctors Express Plans to Revolutionize Urgent Care in the New Orleans Area

*First National Urgent Care Franchise Awards Territory to Local Physician*

Doctors Express, the first ever National Urgent Care Franchise, has awarded a territory to a local couple in the medical field who plan to revolutionize urgent care in the New Orleans area. Dr. John Pigott is a Practicing Cardiac Surgeon with more than two decades of experience. He and his wife, Rebekah, a former nurse, have been awarded the exclusive rights to the Doctors Express Center in Metairie. They, along with their Medical Director, Dr. Pat Gary, plan to establish a high quality, state-of-the art, walk-in medical center that is comfortable, convenient and affordable for patients. The Pigotts and Dr. Gary are committed to friendly, courteous and prompt care.

The Metairie Doctors Express walk-in Medical Center differs from other medical clinics by of-

fering a consistent, broad range of treatment and services on the spot. Under one roof, experienced physicians will diagnose and treat illnesses, dispense medication, provide travel health vaccinations and have the capabilities to x-ray and stabilize fractures. The center will also include on-site labs that give quick test results for ailments such as mono and strep throat. Plus, the average wait time to see a physician is only 15 – 20 minutes. This is the first time urgent care has been nationally franchised. The national franchise will benefit the local Doctors Express by sharing best practices across all centers and leveraging its size to keep prices lower for local consumers.

Local Physician, Dr. Gary, is board certified in emergency medicine with 30 years experi-

ence. Dr. Gary will deliver affordable, efficient, non-emergency treatment to almost anyone who walks in the doors of Doctors Express. She has teamed up with Doctors Express franchise owners, the Pigotts, and will treat patients and oversee all of the day-to-day medical operations of the center.

Consider this:

- 46 million Americans (1/6 of the population) do not have medical insurance and many do not have a primary physician of choice.
- The American Medical Association reports it takes an average of 18 days to get an appointment with an internist and 30 days for an appointment with a specialist.
- A study by the Physicians Foundation reveals the number

of primary care physicians is shrinking because nearly half of our nation's primary care docs, including pediatricians, plan to stop practicing or reduce the number of patients they see over the next 3 years.

- The CDC attributes the increase in ER visits partly to the difficulty patients have getting an appointment with their primary physician.

The Doctors Express Difference

All patients are handled in a single visit: initial doctor's exam, lab work, x-rays, minor surgical procedures and in-house medication dispensing.

Every patient is seen by an experienced physician.

Services are affordable and most insurance, including Medicare, is accepted.

Discounts for those without insurance/pay in cash.

The Doctors Express Urgent Care in Metairie begins seeing patients on Saturday, April 1st.

It's located at 3348 W. Esplanade Ave., Suite A.

Center hours: Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday-Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Currently, there are 33 Doctors Express Centers up and running throughout the country. A total of 81 franchises have been awarded in 23 states and 40 will be operating by the end of the first quarter of this year. The long term goal is to have 1,000 Doctors Express Centers across the nation, so that a recognizable, reliable health-care option is available wherever you travel in the U.S.



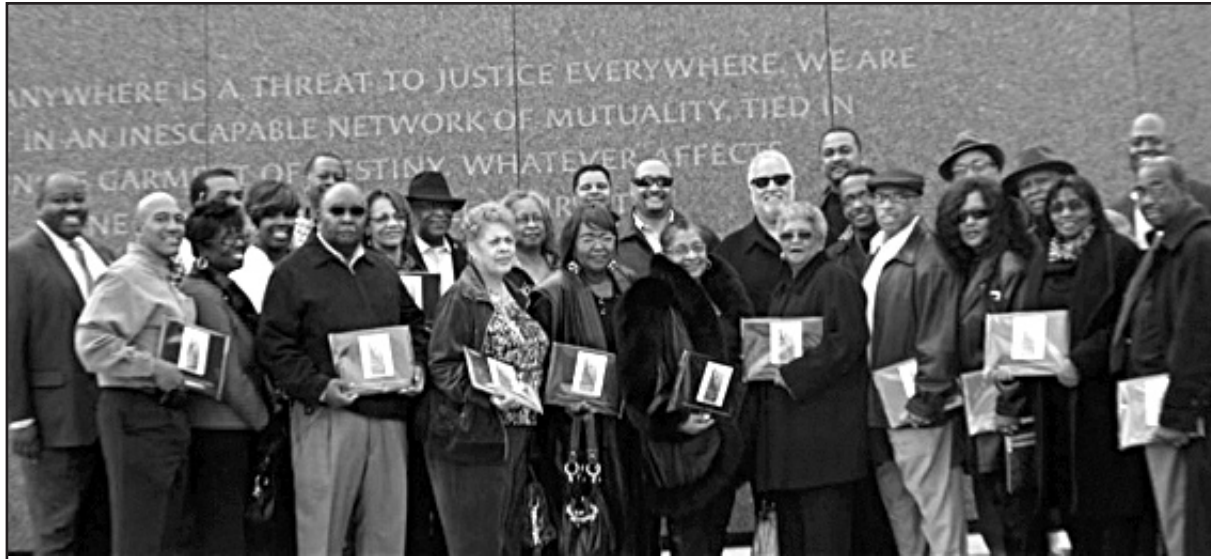
# Black Press Week Commemorates the Founding of Freedom's Journal

By Karen Reedus Jasper

Special to the NNPA from The Chicago Crusader

In celebration of the 184th Anniversary of the founding of Freedom's Journal, the first Black newspaper on March 16, 1827 by John B. Russwurm and Samuel E. Cornish in New York City, the National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation held three days of activities to commemorate the milestone as part of Black Press Week.

Activities held during Black Press Week included a visit of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument, which was sponsored by General Motors Corporation and was led by Jocelyn Allen, GM's Regional Grassroots and Diversity Communications Director. More than 40 Black Publishers and guests were greeted at the monument by Harry E. Johnson, Sr., President of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc., Dr. Ed Jackson, Jr., Executive Architect, and Richard W. Marshall, Chief Financial Officer, and Lisa Anders, of McKissack & McKissack,



NNPA Publishers and General Motors executives, represented by Jocelyn Allen, stand in front of the prophetic words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project. GM, a major contributor to the monument, sponsored the publishers' tour of the site. (Photo by Carole Geary)

Senior Program Director. During the event, the publishers were briefed on the construction process that has taken nearly eight years to complete. The publishers marveled at the beauty and concept that captures the life of the Nobel Peace Prize recipient and Civil Rights Icon.

The annual visit to Capitol Hill began with a breakfast meeting

attended by several members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO), CBC Chair, served as host of the gathering that included Reps. James Clyburn (D-SC), Donna Christensen (D-VI), Chaka Fattah (D-PA), Danny K. Davis (D-IL), former CBC Chairwoman Barbara Lee (D-CA), Bobby Scott (D-VA), Mel Watt (D-NC), Charles

Rangel (D-NY), Karen Bass (D-CA), Marcia Fudge (D-OH), Al Green (D-TX), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), and Laura Richardson (D-CA). Joining the CBC members was Democratic Leader and House Minority Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), who expressed her appreciation and pleasure in meeting with the Black Press each year during Black Press Week. Sharon Jenkins, a representative for Cong. Bobby Rush (D-IL), also attended.

During the two and one-half hour meeting on Capitol Hill, the Black Publishers and political leaders discussed issues affecting African-Americans and the nation.

Following the Capitol Hill event, Danny J. Bakewell, Sr., presented the power of the Black Press message during a National Press Club luncheon, at which he also announced a NNPA initiative to have the Wilmington 10 pardoned. Emceed by noted Journalist and NNPA Columnist George Curry, the audience was spellbound by the video of the Wilmington 10 and remarks by the most well-known member of the group, Dr. Benjamin Chavis, who is now President of the Education Online Services Corporation.

Among the highlights of the activities were the Newsmakers of the Year ceremony. More than 200 guests attended the semi-formal event that honored Newsmaker of the Year Shirley Sherrod, former employee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; Lifetime Achiever Publisher Emeritus Garth Reeves, of The Miami Times; NorthStar Com-

munity Service Award Recipients, John Boyd, of the National Black Farmers Association and Timothy Pigford, a Black Farmer from North Carolina, who filed the class action lawsuit to aid Black Farmers; and the 10 members of the Congressional Black Caucus Financial Services Committee that took a courageous stand to benefit African-American citizens, as well as the Black Press.

NNPA Foundation partners - the National Cancer Institute, represented by James Alexander, Centers for Disease Control, represented by Dr. Robert Bailey, and a representative from the University of Maryland - discussed their relationship with the Foundation and the publishers. The Republican National Committee, represented by Rick Wiley, Political Director, also spoke with the publishers about a collaboration with Black publishers.

The culminating event for Black Press Week was the Enshrinement of Deceased Publishers in the Gallery of Distinguished Publishers at Howard University's Moorland Spingarn Research Center. A highly emotionally charged ceremony was attended by the family members of the deceased Publishers honored during the event, including Cloves Campbell, Sr. and Dr. Charles Campbell, Publisher of the Arizona Informant, Charles W. Cherry, Publisher of the Daytona Times and Florida Courier Newspapers, and N.A. Sweets, Publisher of the St. Louis American, all of whom joined the 63 other NNPA Publishers inducted in the Gallery of Distinguished Publishers. Dr. Clifford L. Muse, Jr., University Archivist of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, received the plaques of the deceased publishers to add to the Gallery.

Publishers in attendance lauded the coordinators for one of the best Black Press Week observances in recent memory. Cheryl Pearson McNeil, Senior Vice President, Public Affairs and Government Relations for The Nielsen Company, Larry Waters, Director of Multicultural Relations, for MillerCoors Brewing Company, and Chuck Morrison, UniWorld Group, representing Ford Motor Company, were major supporters of the events.

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# New Orleans Carpentry Apprentice Completes Prince's Foundation Historic Restoration Program With Trip To London

*New Orleans is commonly referred to as the most European City in the United States.*

New Orleanian and Carpentry Apprentice, Wilbert Brass will get to determine that for himself when he visits London, England this summer to complete his 9-month Prince's Foundation For The Build Environment historic building craft apprenticeship. The Prince's, as in Prince of Wales, Foundation is a London-based, non-profit organization founded by Prince Charles to revive the crafts associated with historic restoration, conservation, and to promote environmentally-friendly new building techniques. Since 2006, the Foundation has invited Louisiana craftsmen to apply for the apprenticeship in an effort to support the post-Katrina restoration of New Orleans' abundant antique housing stock.

A little over a year ago, Wilbert Brass was finishing the Environmental and Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Program (ECPAP) in a carpentry workshop at the Carpenter's Apprenticeship School at 1215 Japonica Street in New Orleans' Ninth Ward. At that time, Wilbert never dreamed

that in a relatively short time he would be on his way to London, England as well as to making 3rd Year Carpentry Apprentice. With credits for completing the pre-apprenticeship program and on the job training, Wilbert entered the Local Carpenter's 1846 and started his apprenticeship as a second year apprentice. When it was time to recruit for this year's historic building craft apprenticeship Carpenter's Apprenticeship School staff encouraged Brass to apply.

In his two-week visit to England this summer, Brass will tour the city and the University of Oxford as well as Fountain's Abbey in Yorkshire, England. He will work in the stained-glass and stone mason's workshops at Lincoln Cathedral. Brass will even visit the sustainably-planned town expansion at Poundbury in Dorchester developed by the Prince's Foundation using environmentally-friendly new building techniques to produce structures with historic architectural detail and natural materials.



New Orleanian and Carpentry Apprentice, Wilbert Brass

During the apprenticeship classes/workshops and work sites in New Orleans, Brass learned to restore old structures and to build new ones. In the mill workshop on Japonica Street he made windows, doors, mantles, brackets, cabinets and even furniture. Besides carpentry, Brass was exposed to the brick mason, black-

smith, and plaster trades. He laid bricks in a herringbone design, learned to plaster cast and install a ceiling medallion, and observed metal-work fence making.

According to Wilbert Brass, he is so excited about all the new skills he's acquiring he hasn't missed a day of the 9 month historic restoration apprenticeship and plans, in

the future, to build a career in custom cabinet making. ECPAP, the program that launched Brass's carpentry career, is part of CPWR – The Center For Construction Research and Training Minority Worker Training Consortium and is funded through a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). ECPAP gave Brass a solid trade foundation including: construction job readiness and life skills, basic construction safety, CPR/First Aid, trade-related math and vocabulary, environmental remediation, basic carpentry, intro to green construction, weatherization, confined space, and scaffold erection.

Since 1996, ECPAP helped launch the careers of its more than 450 unemployed/underemployed New Orleanian trainees. Most ECPAP graduates move up the career ladder by entering the carpenter's apprenticeship program to continue skills upgrades in an 'earn-while-you-learn' system leading to journeyman carpenter status.

*Data Zone, continued from page 9.*

Notes "Wake Up Everybody." She says of these projects and others, "I feel it is an honor and a blessing and I take pride in what I do and I love collaborating with people I respect and admire like Cee Lo Green, John Legend, Common, the Roots and Stephen Marley."

She says of working on songs that are relevant and touches people hearts and making them aware of issues gives her a great feeling of satisfaction. "I feel so blessed to be a part of meaningful projects and I am humbled by the respect of those artists choosing me to be on their record." "Secondly, I think it's important that artist unite to use their voices to create awareness around social causes and whether the songs are relevant to radio or not it's relevant to the people and that's what really matters."

Her connection to her Guyanese roots runs deep and as some say New Orleans with its cultural similarities is the northern most point of the Caribbean. Fiona has been to New Orleans many times and loves the Crescent City and its people, "I love New Orleans, it has so much

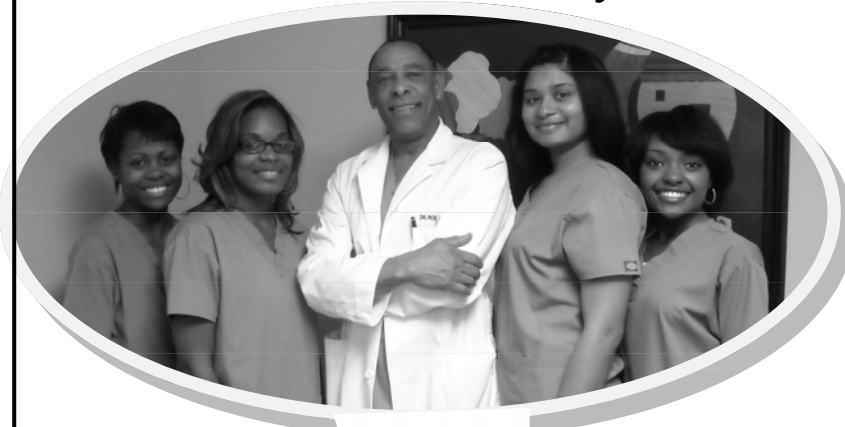
character and personality and so much life, and the people here really enjoy their city." Continuing her appreciation for the city she says, "New Orleans has a rich history and amazing energy, and is one of the most unique cities in America."

Melanie Fiona is truly a "Phenomenal Woman" exuding both an inner and outer beauty. She is an angelic presence who has blessed the world with her gift of song. The future seems to be paved with great things as she continues to blaze a new trail and impact in the entertainment industry showing that a female artist can be unabashedly bold, beautiful and brilliant coupled with sexiness, sass and class. This is a recipe for the 21st Century Woman and as Melanie Fiona continues her journey down the road of success she says of her mission in life and career, "I strive to be the best that I can be, and do things and make choices that positively affects the world. I am using my voice and through music I hope I'm getting closer to achieving that every day."

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