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# Danziger Trial and the Question of Justice



Danziger Bridge

By Edwin Buggage

## Danziger a Question of Justice

Many in the Crescent City have on countless occasions rode over the Bridge on Chef Menteur Highway seeing it as the gateway that connects Gentilly to New Orleans East. But a recent fervor over the occurrences on the Danziger Bridge and what really happened during the torrid, tumultuous days of September 4, 2005 has re-opened the wounds of a city that remains sharply divided and has given the city yet another black eye in the court of national and international public opinion. It was nearly six years ago the chaos of Hurricane Katrina and the breeching of the levees that the place known as the "big easy" transformed into a place where lawlessness ensued and many were forced into

survival mode. From the citizens to law enforcement the city had become a place with an uncertain future and the already strained relations between disenfranchised citizens and the police reached a boiling point.

While desperation set in and with their pleas for help being unanswered some citizens believed that they would have to take matters into their own hands given the lack of federal, state and local response. With lawlessness amidst and the line between looting and surviving being blurred what would those who were given the duty to maintain law and order to do in the midst of this unprecedented event? With the question becoming how would an over extended police department enforce the law in the face of this tragedy. And larger questions arising was the actions of the officers wrong on this day given what they were up against, and within the scope of the events occurring were they doing the best they can to protect themselves and the citizens of the city? This is what a jury will decide in the Danziger Trial where five NOPD officers stand trial in the

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most recent Federal Civil Rights Prosecution case surrounding NOPD where in recent years the total number of cases is nine with most surrounding their conduct in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

### Thin Blue Line: Breaking the Wall of Silence

Like in the film *Serpico* and many of its type there is the mythical idea that there is a code of silence around those who protect and serve. That it is a common practice that they tamper with evidence, shake down people and do whatever they have to do to protect their own. While in recent years there have been high profile tri-

of excessive force particularly in respect to its treatment of African-Americans. Most recently one of its commanders was reassigned for his comments surrounding the targeting of young Black men during the Essence Music Festival. And while there were officers both Black and White involved in the Danziger Bridge incident, the question for many is would there be more outrage from more sectors of the community if the victims that day would have been White? The Danziger Trial is filed under the statute of Federal Civil Rights violations. But today the issue of civil rights and injustice in this case is not as simple as Black versus White, but of an histori-



Moments after New Orleans police officers shot and killed his brother on the Danziger Bridge in September 2005, Lance Madison is put under arrest and charged with eight counts of attempting to murder a police officer. Subsequently, a grand jury declined to indict Madison and instead charged seven police officers with murder and attempted murder in the Danziger Bridge shootings. Photo: Alex Brandon, Times-Picayune

als that have shown in some instances this is true. It is more the exception than the rule, in fact, the majority of those who don the uniform are hard working officers that go to work and do their job the best they can.

In this case five officers connected with the melee on that day have already pled guilty in what was a cover-up attempt with the prosecution alleging that secret meetings were held to coordinate stories, in addition to planting evidence. This case has again put New Orleans under the negative spotlight as a city where the line between the lawmakers, law enforcers and law breakers are a thin line. But as this case and many others lands in the hands of the federal government, it can work to cleanse a department of some of the negative elements inside the culture of the NOPD that continues to make the whole department look dysfunctional.

### Blacks and Blues

As the NOPD recently received a scathing report from the U.S. Department of Justice and of the many things cited that need improvement in their operating procedures, was their use

cal pattern of Black versus blue, where a system of justice has not always given African-Americans a fair shake.

And if history is to serve as any indicator of how people are dealt with by law enforcement, it has been chronicled that people who are black and brown are dealt a much stiffer blow by the hands of the law. From the Dred Scott Decision where in a Supreme Court Ruling said he had no rights, that Whites were bound to respect, or the Scottsboro Boys who were falsely accused of rape. The well chronicled days of treachery and the shameful legacy of lynching that was yet another of the many miscarriages of justice. Additionally, there has been a historical link between police misconduct and major uprisings and civil unrest by African-Americans in urban centers during the modern Civil Rights Era, and in recent memory one of the most high profile Federal Civil Rights cases, the Rodney King Trial in 1992. And with the acquittal of several of the officers involved it was the match that ignited the flame; this is what citizens perceived as an unjust verdict where they feel they have been wronged.



New Orleans police officers, their attorneys and supporters arrive to turn themselves in at the city jail in New Orleans. Photo: Ellis Lucia, Times-Picayune

### The Search for Justice

As the Danziger Trial continues and many others to follow can we expect justice to be served, and will it be a time when the criminal justice system will be reformed where African-Americans and their lives be valued in the same way as White victims? Will this be a decision that if a guilty verdict is handed down that in fact the penalties matches the crime, and the city can move into a new era of relations between African-Americans and those in law enforcement. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has at times created and intensified the divide in misunderstanding; while at

other times have shown people working together to better their community and standing in a united fight to stamp out injustice wherever it rears its ugly head.

While this trial will play out scenes from a horrific time in this city's history and a verdict will be reached, it is important to note that in its aftermath regardless of the outcome can the city began to heal? And to reform itself and the way it does things in respect to the NOPD and other agencies in the city. To mature and evolve into a city where citizens can come together in respectful dialog and understand that today they are in the same boat trying to rebuild

their lives after a tragedy struck forever changing their lives. The Danziger Trial as well as the Glover case that preceded it opened up old wounds that if not handled correctly can spread the infectious disease of misunderstanding and further divide a city that is already at a boiling point. But today it is time for a different approach and regardless of the outcome of this and future trials that citizens begin to build bridges of understanding and cooperation and help create an environment that all people regardless of their background can receive justice.



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Rethink Possible





# Mayor Landrieu Appoints Michelle Thomas As New Deputy Mayor Of Operations

Mayor Mitch Landrieu announced that Michelle L. Thomas will serve as Deputy Mayor of Operations. Thomas, who as Mayor Cory Booker's Business Administrator served as the highest ranking non-elected official in Newark city government, became recognized as a leader who steered Newark, New Jersey's budget through the worst economic crisis in that city's modern history. She is credited with cutting the city's deficit by \$107 million and securing more than \$350 million in federal stimulus grants for the city. Most recently, Thomas served as a Federal Grants Consultant at Washington, DC-based government affairs firm, The Ferguson Group, LLC.

"I could not be happier to have such an experienced and well-



Michelle Thomas

respected individual like Michelle join our team," said Mayor Landrieu. "I have full confidence not only in her personal abilities, but in her ability to inspire those work-

ing with and for her in the various departments at City Hall to move our City forward. Her experience in helping Mayor Booker turn around Newark's government will be nothing but an asset as we continue to transform the way our City government operates."

In this new capacity, Ms. Thomas will directly oversee the delivery of many vital city services and will focus on improving our organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

"I am honored to be in New Orleans and to join Mayor Landrieu's team," said Thomas. "I have learned how powerful collaboration can be in transforming organizations and communities and I look forward to working with city leadership, employees, and residents as we build on the

foundation Mayor Landrieu and this team have laid in his first year in office."

At The Ferguson Group, Thomas oversaw TFG Grants, the firm's Federal Grant Advisory Practice, and helped clients to strategically pursue federal grant opportunities.

As Business Administrator, Thomas was responsible for the day-to-day operations of Newark municipal government, providing management oversight for water, sewer, transportation, budgets and finance, neighborhood and recreational services, emergency management, public safety, fire and health and human services. She previously served as Director of Innovation and Performance Management for the City of New-

ark. In that role, Thomas developed a performance management system to improve departmental performance and gave leadership to organizational restructuring efforts. In Newark, one of her significant achievements was the creation of the City's Non-Emergency Call Center, which enables residents to access a wide range of municipal services.

The City of New Orleans will launch its own AskNOLA! (3-1-1) System later in 2011.

Thomas has held several other positions in government, private and non-profit organizations where she has been devoted to improving operational efficiencies in organizations that primarily serve low-income communities. She also has experience in

*Newsmaker, Continued on next page.*

## Official Court Notice

### Children who lived, stayed, or visited at public housing in New Orleans before Feb. 17, 2001, might qualify for money from a \$65 million settlement fund.

Settlements have been proposed in a class action lawsuit about whether children were injured by lead at Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) public housing developments. People who qualify must register by **October 20, 2011** to receive future settlement notices and to get a claim form to ask for a payment. If you are included you may object to the settlements, or ask to speak in Court about the fairness of the settlements. The Orleans Parish Civil District Court in Louisiana authorized this notice. The Court must decide whether to approve the settlements before money is paid to those included.

#### Who's Included?

You qualify as a Class Member if, before February 17, 2001, you were damaged by lead present in the Iberville, Florida, Lafitte, B.W. Cooper, St. Bernard, Desire, Guste, Fischer, St. Thomas, or C.J. Peete/Magnolia public housing development and either: (a) You filed a lawsuit against HANO and/or C.J. Brown Property Management, Inc., C.J. Brown Public Housing, Inc. and/or Ventana Property Management, Inc., Ventana Public Housing Management, Inc. and/or the City of New Orleans saying that you were hurt from exposure to lead at one of the HANO public housing developments; or (b) You have or can get medical documents or other evidence showing you were lead poisoned, specifically a document that shows you had an elevated blood lead level of 10 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dl) of whole blood, or higher, when you were six years old or younger and you were born on or after December 12, 1987. Register, and get more information, including a Detailed Notice, at [www.HanoLeadSettlements.com](http://www.HanoLeadSettlements.com)—or—by calling toll free 1-888-768-2043.

#### What Do the Settlements Provide?

A \$65 million Settlement Fund will be set up. After deducting money for lawyers' fees, expenses, and other settlement costs, the fund will pay valid claims from an estimated 10,000 or more Class Members. If you are a Class Member, the exact amount of money you might get will be based on how bad your injuries are, and other factors, for example, how long you

lived, stayed, or visited at HANO housing, your blood lead level, how long your elevated blood lead level lasted, the medical evidence you have or can get, your medical treatments and bills, and the total number of valid Claim Forms received after the settlements are approved. The settlements do not mean that the defendants did anything wrong.

#### How Do You Ask for a Payment?

First, you must register before **October 20, 2011** at the website or by calling the toll-free number. If the Court approves the settlements, Class Members who register will receive another Notice with a Claim Form. The Claim Form will tell you what you need to prove your claim and receive a payment. You will need evidence, for example a test result that shows you had an elevated blood lead level (>10 µg/dl) when you were six years old or younger and proof you were born on or after December 12, 1987, so you should start now to find these documents.

#### What Are Your Other Options?

You may object to the settlements if you think the Court should not approve them. The Detailed Notice explains how to object properly before the **October 20, 2011** deadline. By that deadline you may also ask to speak at a Fairness Hearing the Court will hold on **December 21, 2011**.

At the Fairness Hearing the Court will consider whether to approve the settlements, and how much to pay the Class lawyers. They will ask the Court for fees and reimbursement of their expenses totaling up to 45% of the Fund, plus \$15,000 each for the five named Plaintiffs and five Class Representatives who provided service in the class action. Significant administration costs are required by the settlements, and will also be deducted from the Fund, but the total cannot be known until Claim Forms are processed. For more information on this case (*Billieson v. City of New Orleans, et al*, No. 94-19231) call toll free, see the website, or write to Billieson Notice Administrator, P.O. Box 2010, Chanhassen, MN 55317-2010.

**1-888-768-2043**

**[www.HanoLeadSettlements.com](http://www.HanoLeadSettlements.com)**

# In Post-Katrina New Orleans, Redistricting More Important Than Ever

**Khalil Abdullah**  
New America Media,

New Orleans ethnic media convened June 21st to discuss the need to increase their coverage of the redistricting process now underway in the Crescent City. The symposium included guest speakers from The Advancement Project, a national non-profit that provides legal and strategic counseling to community organizations; One Voice Louisiana, which seeks to develop more empowered communities in that state as well as Mississippi; and other advocates with distinct concerns and recommendations for how to make the redistricting process more inclusive for communities of color.

Those who seek to thwart the voting rights and electoral power of ethnic or minority communities have refined their tactics and strategies over the years, said Donita Judge, a Project Director and Attorney with the Washington, D.C. based Advancement Project. So long as the powers that be propose redistricting plans that make communities no worse off than they already are, the maps can be in compliance with the letter of the law – the 1965 Voting Rights Act – if not its intent. Judge called this approach a sophisticated form of retrogression that impedes fair



representation of diverse neighborhoods and communities.

Part of the discussion centered on a new redistricting proposal, drawn with the assistance of the Advancement Project, that would add two new single-member City Council districts, for a total of seven. Currently, New Orleans has five wards, each represented by its own councilmember, with an additional two councilmembers elected at-large. Thus, while the total number of council seats would stay the same, the two existing at-large seats would be

eliminated.

The City Charter requires the council to redraw the district boundaries by early August. Several other alternative maps have also been proposed.

However, in order to implement a new seven-member council structure, the charter would have to be amended. Norris Henderson, a New Orleans' native and Founder and Executive Director of VOTE (Voice of the Ex-Offender), noted that the city's charter was enacted in 1954, during the Jim Crow era. "My grandparents

didn't have no say in this," Henderson said of the charter.

Henderson also explained prison-based gerrymandering – how Louisiana's incarceration rate, the highest per capita in the world, distorts accurate political representation. For purposes of the Census, Louisiana counts its inmates, the majority of whom are African-American, in towns and parishes where they are incarcerated, rather than in their hometowns. When political maps are drawn, these "prison communities" – which tend to be rural and less ethnically diverse – reap the benefits of their inflated population counts, gaining increased political representation in Congress and the State Legislature and increased state and federal funds.

Panelist Rosana Cruz, of Vote NOLA, expressed concern that the city's emerging immigrant and Latino communities will remain politically marginalized after the 2011 redistricting process. But she argued that the critical issue is to find ways to heighten civic engagement, of which voting is only one measure. "We really need to look at ways in which we frame the conversation," Cruz said.

Even with a flawed redistricting process, city residents "deserve representation whether we voted

for you or not," said Cruz, adding that even undocumented workers pay taxes. She argued that expanding community empowerment is at the heart of a more inclusive city; otherwise, she said, New Orleans would remain a city "divided by neighborhood, and then divided by race."

Ashley Shelton, President of One Voice Louisiana, described her frustration with a redistricting process that seemed intentionally designed to discourage community participation. While the State Legislature was redrawing congressional maps, she said, community input was scheduled at the end of sessions, when time was limited; special sessions were called on short notice; and microphones for public comment sometimes didn't work.

Henderson noted that the officials who conduct redistricting hearings are frequently condescending to people who come to participate. "Just be grateful you're in the room," is how he described the attitude of those in power. "The real issue is community involvement... it's supposed to be about 'We the People,'" Henderson said of the redistricting process.

*Newsmaker, Continued  
from previous page.*

higher education administration, having served as assistant to the dean in the School of Continuing Studies at Northwestern University. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Afro-American Studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"I am honored to have Michelle join the dedicated team that is leading our city's transformation right now," closed Landrieu. "We welcome her to her new home in New Orleans."

In a departure from previous administrations, Landrieu chose the deputy mayor structure in May 2010 as an innovative way to make government more efficient and responsive. The streamlined structure allows for various department heads to report to the deputy mayor who is in charge of their specific policy or program unit.



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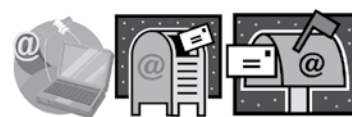
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## 2011 Essence Festival Highlights

### Essence Festival Kick Off Press Conference



Essence Staff, Sponsors & New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu at the Essence Kick-Off Press Conference.



Mayor Landrieu's Staff



Data News Publisher Terry Jones & Lori Bilingsly of Festival Sponsor Coca Cola

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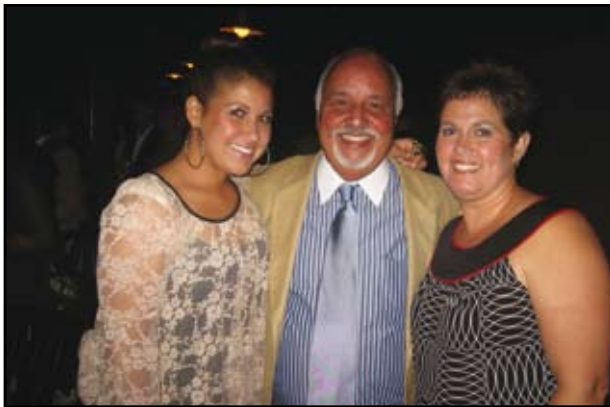
Coors Light presents Coors Light Search for the Coldest Promotion at the House of Blues featuring Music powerhouse N.E.R.D.

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# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

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## Scenes from the Essence Suites



## GM Media Night!



General Motors Jocelyn K Allen GM's Regional, Grassroots and Diversity Communications Director take media reps from around the country to Dinner at Emeril's during Essence.

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# "Lil Dee, New Orleans Hip Hop Savior...?"

**Special Commentary by**  
**Mariteze Stafford**  
**Photos by Huey J Moss**

God's given New Orleans Hip-Hop yet another chance to redeem themselves; a new representative chosen from amongst the people, a spokesman of sorts. New Orleans Westbank native Danny Rogers, known as Lil Dee has been divinely sent to help deliver a City, New Orleans, and a nation, Hip-Hop, in crisis. He's come up amongst the masses and assembled a faithful following of disciples who call themselves Zone Gang. Dubbed as God's Gift he's ready to help solidify New Orleans as a reputable place to find true Hip-Hop artist. Standing at about 5'6 and weighing in at maybe 130, he delivers one hell of a blow to naysayers and 'yay-sayers' alike. Oh and I forgot to mention he's White!

So I walk into this barely crowded pizza joint off of Decatur St. in the Quarter. I can just see the stage ahead of me but the crowd's bouncing to this crazy sound flowing from the speakers. I move in a little closer to get a better look. Performing at the release party for his third album, The Spokesman V.2, Lil Dee gives it the only way he knows how, 110%. My eyes are just as mesmerized as my ears. Track after track he commands the crowd and looks as if the stage was his throne. I'm so, I'm so sick wit it! Three mix tape albums and he remains humble and focused. He's thankful for having energetic and supportive fans at his shows and reminds us that struggle has no color and that we're all in it trying to find a way. Now I know what some of you might be thinking, 'Not another White rapper wanna be!' but trust me this one is not that. A White kid with soul, Lil Dee has sick flows of real music we all can relate to.

Rap and Hip-Hop music as a genre began as a way for people to express themselves about the very issues and real life experiences that connected every hood on common ground. "I don't aim



to make hit records" says Lil Dee. "Every day I go in into the studio and if I'm feeling like a party song one day I'm partying that day. If I'm sad the next day, we sad on the song the next day. So it's everyday to day music. You feel me?" The experience factor is very relevant to Hip-Hop and is where many rap artists fail to deliver. Lil Dee stays true to Hip-Hop music while bringing his own style to the game realizing that your fans connect with you on a personal level when they listen to your music. They can say things like 'I remember when I was going through that' or 'I'm on my grind trying to make something of myself'. Because of that connection they have a greater appreciation for your music and you as an artist.

Although all artists like to proclaim their uniqueness they're

all undoubtedly influenced by somebody. When asked who were some of his greatest influences Lil Dee credits Notorious BIG in the 90's, T.I.'s Urban Legend, Nas, and Fabolous. He jokes "You mix them in a blender, and then you add some milk and you got [Lil Dee]". I asked him why did he chose Hip-Hop music and he states "Hip-Hop chose me". Growing up in a rough and predominantly Black area, he was one of the only White kids around so as a result he was more exposed to rap and Hip Hop. "In school I played sports and everything but I was never just the best at any of it [...]" so like when I started rapping, it was like in middle school I set the bar so I felt like I wanted to do it in high school and it kept growing and I was just blessed to keep going and I got a team around

me that's pushing and we got the same goals". The team he refers to is Zone Gang, and it stands for one zone in the sky with God. "We don't do anything without him. Everything's run through him. Everything's premeditated through him; talked about through him [...]" As long as we got God with us who can be against us."

Lil Dee has definitely seen progression as an artist over his last 3 albums and he feels like he's just now finding his own sound. Over the next year he hopes to have another album ready with "that Lil Dee sound" so when people hear his records they'll know it's him. I asked him what was his favorite track on his current mix tape, The Spokesman V.2. He says it has to be track 5 - On My Mind. He experienced some crazy emotions and went through a tough situation after making a bad decision concerning the mother of his child so he wrote a song that captured what he was going through at the time. Tracks like 'On My Mind' remind us that no matter how far to the top we get we're still human and capable of falling but that we should always remember those who keep us grounded.

One of his biggest obstacles as a rap artist is him being White, but he considers it a gift and a course. "For people who don't know me I get on stage and they look at me like I'm bout [...] to be corny or something like that. [...] they looking at you like what he really bout to do but when they hear the music it's like [me being a White dude that can rap] is a plus, like 'dang a White dude doin that!'" Despite the fact that he's White, Lil Dee is truly a gift and he's here to prove that Hip-Hop's not dead after all. A talented artist with heartfelt flows, he's well on his way to the top. Think I'm crazy? Well...maybe just a lil' bit! Check out track 13. But real talk, don't take my word for it. Check him out for yourself at LilDee-GodsGift.com and grab the new mix tape, The Spokesman V.2, 17 tracks of true, quality Hip-Hop.



# Michele Bachmann

## The John Wayne of Political Lies



George C. Curry  
NNPA

Whether making the round of Sunday morning talk shows, giving the Tea Party response to President Obama's State of the Union Address, or announcing her own presidential candidacy, Michele Bachmann does one thing consistently – lie.

The Republican Congresswoman from Minnesota, who has been described as Sarah Palin with a brain, has enjoyed a dramatic rise in public opinion polls following the latest debate among GOP Candidates seeking the party's presidential nomination. But Bachmann's comments are a reminder of the adage: Figures can lie and liars can figure. Here are some of the most egregious examples:

**BACHMANN** [CBS "Face the Nation," June 26]: The Congressional Budget Office estimated Obamacare will cost economy 800,000 jobs, probably the –

**HOST BOB SCHIEFFER**: Again, that is data that other people would question.

**BACHMANN**: That's – well, that's what the Congressional Budget Office, that's not Michele Bachmann, that's Congressional Budget Office figures saying that we're – we have the potential of losing 800,000 jobs.

**FACTS**: As Factcheck.org noted, "The CBO didn't say that. Instead the CBO said that the law would cause a reduction in the amount of labor workers choose to supply. Some Americans would decide to work fewer hours or retire earlier because their ability to get health insurance would be more secure. And low-income workers would receive subsidies to purchase insurance, putting more money into their pockets. Overall, the CBO said the impact on jobs would be 'small.'"

**BACHMANN** [Jan. 25 Tea Party Response to the State of the Union address]: Unfortunately, the President's strategy for recovery was to spend a trillion dollars on a failed stimulus program, fueled by borrowed money...Not only did that plan fail to deliver, but within three months the national jobless rate spiked to 9.4 percent. And sadly, it hasn't been lower for 20

straight months. While the government grew, we lost more than 2 million jobs. Let me show you a chart. Here are unemployment rates over the past 10 years. In October 2001, our national unemployment rate was 5.3 percent. In 2008...it was just 6.6 percent. But, just eight months after President Obama promised lower unemployment, that rate spike to a staggering 10.1 percent.

**FACTS**: The watchdog group Media Matters, on its politicalcorrection.org site, stated: "From December 2007 to July 2009 – the last year of the Bush second term and the first six months of the Obama presidency, before his policies could affect the economy – private sector employment crashed from 115,574,000 jobs to 107,778,000 jobs. Employment continued to fall, however, for the next six months, reaching a low of 107,107,000 in December of 2009. So, out of 8,467,000 private sector jobs lost in this dismal cycle, 7,796,000 of those jobs or 92 percent were lost on the Republican watch or under their policies. Some 671,000 additional jobs were lost as the stimulus and other moves by the administration kicked in, but 630,000 jobs came back in the following six months. The tally, to date: Mr. Obama can be held accountable for the net loss of 41,000 jobs (671,000-630,000), while the Republicans should be held responsible for the net losses of 7,796,000 jobs."

**BACHMANN** [Tea Party State of the Union response]: But instead of cutting, we saw an unprecedented explosion of government spending and debt, unlike anything we have seen in the history of our country. Deficits were unacceptably high under President Bush, but they exploded under President Obama's direction, growing the national debt by an astounding \$3.1 trillion dollars.

**FACTS**: The rising debt can be attributed to Bush-era policies and the recession that began before Obama took office. As the conservative Washington Times observed, "The Congressional Budget Office announced a projected fiscal 2009 deficit of \$1.2 trillion even if Congress doesn't enact any new programs...About the only person who was silent on the deficit projection was Mr. Bush, who took office facing a surplus but who saw a spending balloon and the country notch the highest deficits on record."

**BACHMANN** [Tea Party response]: We need to start making things again in this country. And we can do that by reducing the tax and regulatory burden on job creators. America will have the highest corporate tax rate in the world. Think about that.

**FACTS**: Researchers at the Center on



Republican Presidential Candidate Congresswoman Michelle Bachmann (R-MN)

Budget and Policy Priorities have thought about it and what they realize is that to grasp the corporate tax burden, one needs to look beyond statutory tax rates to the effective tax rate, which takes into account tax deductions. Judging by that standard, the Center notes, "The U.S. corporate tax burden is smaller than average for developed countries. Corporations in 19 of the member states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development paid 16.1 percent of their profits in taxes between 2000 and 2005, on average, while corporations in the United States paid 13.4 percent."

Appearing on Fox News after officially declaring her candidacy for president,

Bachmann said on June 27: "What I want them to know is, just like John Wayne is from Waterloo, Iowa, that's the kind of spirit that I have too."

John Wayne wasn't from Waterloo. He was born in Winterset, Iowa and grew up in California. Bachmann apparently got John Wayne mixed up with another John Wayne – John Wayne Gacy, the serial killer who was from Waterloo.

George E. Curry, former Editor-In-Chief of Emerge Magazine and the NNPA News Service, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. He can be reached through his Website, [www.georgecurry.com](http://www.georgecurry.com). You can also follow him at [www.twitter.com/currygeorge](http://www.twitter.com/currygeorge).

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# The Greater New Orleans Foundation Awards \$1.5 million from Housing Fund

*Four local non-profit organizations working toward eliminating blight and restoring neighborhoods*

The Community Revitalization Fund, a collaboration of 21 national and local foundations, continues to invest in organizations working to put families back into their homes thereby reducing the number of blighted properties throughout New Orleans. To date, the fund has supported the development of 9,000 new or rehabilitated housing units to bring at least as many families home. "It's impressive that this funding group—now in its fourth year of working together—is still strategically addressing needs within our community," says Ellen Lee, Senior Vice President for programs at the Greater New Orleans Foundation, which oversees the Fund and has invested \$19.5 million in 48 organizations addressing housing needs in Orleans Parish. "When the funding

collaboration began in 2007 we were primarily funding organizations in housing production. Now, our focus has slightly shifted, and we're looking at creative ways to help eliminate the 43,000 blighted properties in the city," said Lee. "This work is incredibly complex," said Lee. "We're fortunate that our funding partners in addition to bringing resources to the table are bringing their expertise and knowledge from their investments in other parts of the country." The four recent grantees are as follows:

Enterprise Community Partners received \$500,000 to fight blight through targeted, effective property redevelopment. Enterprise plans to support the production of 1,000 homes over the next two years.

Southeast Louisiana Legal Ser-

vices in partnership with the Pro Bono Project, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and Louisiana Appleseed received \$592,000 to resolve title and/or succession problems for at least 400 low-income homeowners that are trying to access resources to rehabilitate their homes by engaging local law schools to recruit, train, and mobilize attorneys to provide pro bono legal services.

St. Paul's Homecoming Center received \$220,000 to complete the renovation of 80 homes to bring up to 320 residents back to Gentilly.

Volunteers of America of Greater New Orleans' Renaissance Neighborhood Development Corporation received \$200,000 to trans-

form blighted properties into affordable housing.

For a complete list of all the grants from the Community Revi-

talization Fund at the Greater New Orleans Foundation, please visit [www.gnof.org/grants-awarded/](http://www.gnof.org/grants-awarded/).

## Louisiana Non-profits Invited to Apply for \$50,000 in Literacy Grants

The Verizon Foundation is inviting non-profits in Louisiana to apply for a total of \$50,000 in grants to support literacy programs.

Organizations may submit proposals for projects that:

- Enhance GED and/or adult literacy programs.
- Support pre-k and/or k-12 literacy programs.
- Use resources from the Thinkfinity Literacy Network for programs for families and adult learners.
- Improve literacy skills for a particular group or individuals.
- Target under-resourced communities.

In Louisiana, 80 percent of fourth and eighth grade students

read below proficient level, and one in six adults reads at the lowest literacy level, according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy.

Literacy is the gateway to lifelong learning, personal opportunities and success, so the Verizon Foundation supports the development of literacy skills of children and adults. The foundation invests in online resources, community-based initiatives and national programs that teach non-readers to read and advance the complex skills necessary for educational achievement and job success in the 21st Century.

To be eligible, a grant applicant must be a non-profit 501(c)

(3) non-profit organization in Louisiana. All grant applications must be submitted through the Verizon Foundation's website, [www.verizonfoundation.org/apply](http://www.verizonfoundation.org/apply), using invitation code LALiteracy. Additional information regarding grant guidelines and frequently asked questions can be found at the foundation's website. The deadline for submitting proposals is Sept. 1 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern time. Verizon will notify recipients of grant decisions by early October.

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# Obama Administration Selects New Orleans' Lake Pontchartrain Area For Urban Waters Federal Partnership Program

Mayor Mitch Landrieu announced that the City of New Orleans is one of seven cities selected by the Obama Administration for the "Urban Waters Federal Partnership" pilot program. This partnership will reconnect urban communities with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts to improve the Nation's water systems. The initiative is also designed to promote the selected water systems' economic, environmental and social benefits.

To begin this effort, the partnership identified seven pilot locations in which to enhance existing work, with the Lake Pontchartrain area as one of those waterways.

"Lake Pontchartrain is a vital resource for recreation and economic development for our region," said Mayor Landrieu. "A



widerange of our residents has historically enjoyed all Lake Pontchartrain has to

offer, and this project will help in reconnecting citizens to the Lake through

revitalization, restoration and education. It is fitting that this important body

of water be selected to benefit from this partnership."

Environmental Protection Agency Director Lisa Jackson joined Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, White House Domestic Policy Council Director Melody Barnes and other federal officials in announcing this new initiative to restore and revitalize waterways in cities across the nation. Partner agencies include the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Commerce and Health and Human Services, along with the US Army Corps of Engineers, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Further information on the Urban Waters Federal Partnership and the specifics to Lake Pontchartrain can be found at [www.urbanwaters.gov](http://www.urbanwaters.gov).

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## New Orleanian Charles Dickerson Launches Program Aimed at Helping Youth

By Eric Connerly

Photo by Dominique Polk

New Orleanian Charles Dickerson is the Founder and Director of K.I.T (Kids in Training). With programs in New Orleans and Houston it is designed to provide an opportunity for students to learn and build competency skills that will lead to brighter futures. It primarily focuses on communication, critical thinking, self-confidence, initiative/ motivation, conflict management, goal setting, cooperative learning and self-assessment. Dickerson feels it is important to tap into the hidden potential of young people. "They are the future and I feel it is necessary that we all step up and give of ourselves and our time, these are our kids and in these tough times it truly does take a village to raise a child," remarks Dickerson on the importance the community stepping up to helping the youth. He says his goal is to expand and have programs throughout the U.S. and abroad, "Children around the world are hurting and in need of inspiration and experiences that can broaden their horizons, it is the water that will help them grow into adults that can be an asset to society."



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