

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

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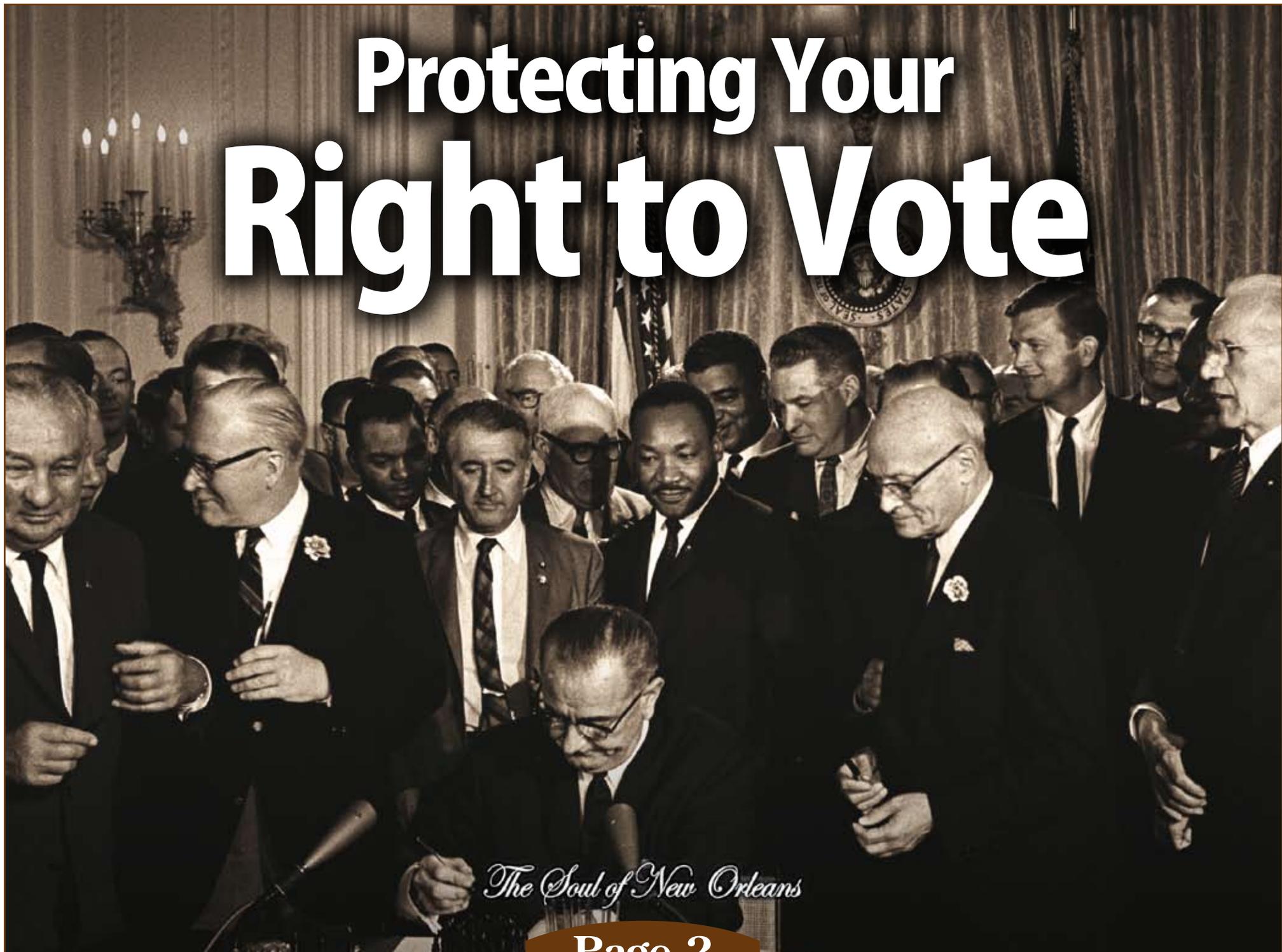


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Protecting Your Right to Vote



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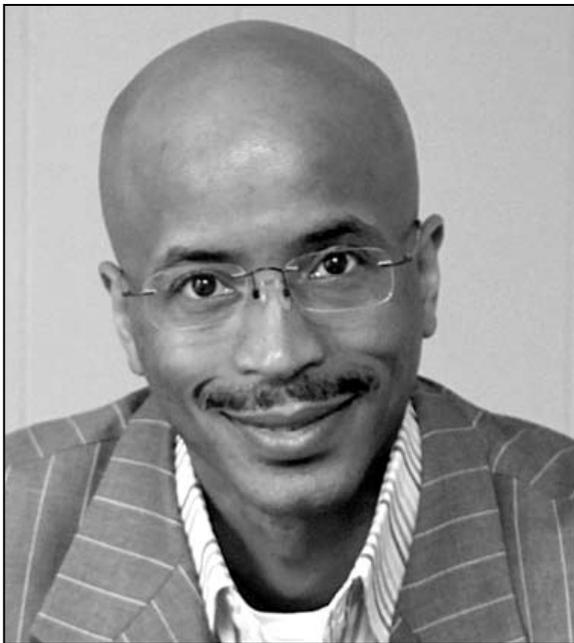
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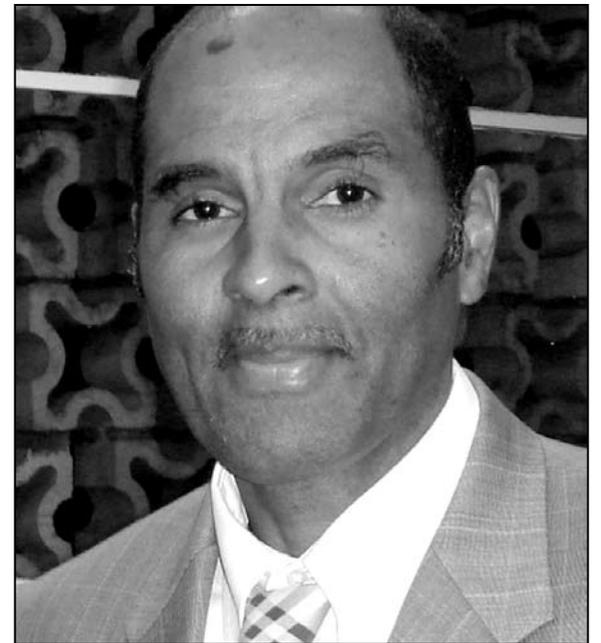
Protecting Your Right to Vote



Nolan Rollins
CEO, New Orleans Branch of the
National Urban League



Corey Anderson
Pharmacy Student, Xavier University



Danatus King
President, NAACP New Orleans Branch

By Edwin Buggage

Voting is a "Right"

As we lead up to the November Presidential Election changes in states and their voting requirements across the country are causing an uproar. Today's political climate is a far cry from four years ago when a nation was filled with hope and optimism. Fast forward to today and the U.S. Congress and segments of the population are polarized over so many issues and things doesn't seem to be getting better. Some in the Democratic Party feel that these changes in voting requirements will adversely affect poor and minority voters. Renee Lapeyrolerie is

the Executive Director of the Louisiana Democratic Party, "In many states across America we are seeing changes in voter regulations mostly with voter ID laws and with many people who may not have driver licenses or a state issued identification and nationally there are other forms of voter suppression," says Lapeyrolerie. Speaking of some of the things the LDC is doing she says, "We have a voter protection hotline and other things in place that let people know their rights, also another thing I do is encourage early voting." In Louisiana according to the LDC Executive Director she says laws in Voter ID Laws are already in place.

On the heels of an election where partisan politics and the planting of the seeds of xenophobia is inhibiting change and where the growth of the Tea Party Movement the question becomes why are

these challenges coming at this time? Nolan Rollins is the CEO of the New Orleans Branch of the National Urban League and is a vocal critic of these new initiatives. He feels the proposed changes are unfair to the nation's most vulnerable citizens. "There have not been any issue of widespread voter fraud in this country and they are trying to solve a problem where there isn't one," says Rollins. Continuing his critique he says partisan politics is getting in the way of what's best for the American people and questions the timing and motives of those who are proposing these changes, "The question is why now are there roughly legislation pending in 39 states pushed by mostly Republicans that all of a sudden feel it is time to change the way we've been voting for decades, and more so who will it affect the most and how will it impact elections on the lo-

On the Cover: Photo circa 1964 of US President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which was followed by the 1965 Voting Rights Act as Dr. Martin Luther King looks on. For generations, African Americans have continued to struggle with voter suppression efforts throughout the country.

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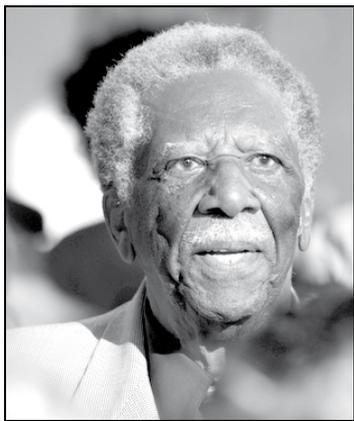
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cal, state and federal levels.”

A People Steeped in History

While attempts at voter suppression is not new, there have been times in our history where some of these same practices took place during periods where there have been a progressive period of Enfranchisement followed by the carving away of rights sometimes in the most blatant forms of intimidation. An example is after the passing of the 15th Amendment giving Blacks the right to vote following the end of the Civil War. Then by century's end Blacks in the south were subjected to Jim Crow segregation. This lasted almost a half century until the beginning of the modern Civil Rights Movement. Rev. Samson “Skip” Alexander is a Historian and Activist who worked alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and today he is still active in politics in New Orleans. Speaking of the importance of voting and the times when many Blacks were denied the power of the ballot he says, “I remember all the things that were done to discourage people from voting such as asking people a question like when they were

born and exactly what day that was during that year. They would ask all kinds of obstacles just to find a way to keep us away from the polls “ says Alexander, speaking of these horrendous times. Alexander talks about the vanguard and trailblazers who set the tone so people could vote in New Orleans, Clarence “Chink” Henry , Ernest Wright and A.L. Davis were just a few of the many he mentioned, “When Ernest Wright use to try to organize and get people registered to vote in what was the Shakespeare Park (A.L. Davis Park) he would always get arrested, then around the time Emmitt



Rev. Samson “Skip” Alexander
Historian and Activist

Till was murdered people began to think more about the issue of voting and how it could change our condition, and I remember someone asking Ernest Wright what would we get if we vote and he replied you won't get anything except your freedom.”

This is the beat of the drum that ushered in a wave of politically active citizens. The election four years ago of Barack Obama galvanized young people to become civically active. Corey Anderson is a Pharmacy Student at Xavier University who voted in his first presidential election in 2008. He says it felt good to know that he



Renee Lapeyrolerie
Executive Director,
Louisiana Democratic Party

was one of the persons who help elect the country's first African-American President. And he feels it is important that people get out and vote, “It is important to become involved and get out and vote, I think of it this way whether you vote or not someone is going to be in office making decisions that affect you, so why wouldn't you put your voice forward and vote for someone who speaks to issues that concern you and your community.” He says he and fellow students through their fraternity will be working to get people registered.

Knowledge is Power

Another issue that sometimes keep people away from the polls is misinformation surrounding voting. One of the myths in the State of Louisiana is once you have been convicted of a felony you are not allowed to vote. “Once a person has served their time and finished their parole or probation they are allowed to vote,” says Lapeyrolerie. She says that there is also time to still register to vote

in the upcoming presidential election, “The deadline for registering to vote for the November election is October 8th, so there is plenty of time to get registered.”

Civil Rights Groups across America are organizing get out to vote campaigns. One of them is the NAACP, the oldest organization dedicated to the cause of equality. Its local President Danatus King is at the forefront of the fight for justice not just at the polls but on multiple fronts including income inequality, police misconduct and reforms in education. He feels many of the present voting legislation is counterproductive to the African-American community. The organization as it has done for over a century stage marches and use the courts system to fight for justice. Speaking of their upcoming march to speak to issues concerning the Black community he says, “We will be holding a march, but also we will be getting people registered to vote. Continuing he says, “Since Hurricane Katrina there have been problems surrounding voting, as many people

Cover Story, Continued on page 11

Voting Rights and Voter Suppression Topic of 2012 Dinkins Forum



Ester Fuchs, Professor of International and Public Affairs and Political Science; Fred Harris, Director of Columbia's Institute for Research in African-American Studies and Professor of Political Science; Elinor Tatum, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the New York Amsterdam News; Benjamin Jealous, President of the NAACP; Ted Shaw, Professor of Professional Practice, Columbia Law School and Rodolfo de la Garza, Professor of Political Science

The 2012 David Dinkins Leadership and Public Policy Forum: Voting Rights v. Voter Suppression focused on a recent wave of legal measures which threatens voter participation. NAACP President Ben Jealous delivered the keynote address. The Forum took place on March 26th at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs.

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Danziger Police Officers Get Lengthy Sentences

Five former NOPD officers were given lengthy sentences for their roles in fatally shooting people and then covering up the incident that occurred on the Danziger Bridge in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Former Officer Robert Faulcon was sentenced to 65 years in prison, while former Sergeant Kenneth Bowen and Sergeant Robert Gisevius each received 40 years and former Officer Anthony Villavaso received 38 years in prison.

Former Sergeant Arthur Kaufman, convicted only of having been involved in the cover-up, received 6 years in prison.

"Today is a somber day for the citizens of New Orleans, but also an important day in the search for justice," said Thomas Perez of the U.S. Attorney's Office - Civil Rights Division. "The justice system worked in this case because the family members never gave up."

Lance Madison, the brother of Ronald Madison, who was with him when he was slain by the po-



Kenneth Bowen



Robert Faulcon



Arthur Kaufman



Robert Gisevius



Anthony Villavaso

The five men convicted in the Danziger Bridge shootings after Hurricane Katrina will be sentenced Wednesday April 4, 2012

lice, said his life will never be the same.

"I never go around the Danziger Bridge anymore, it brings back too many bad memories," he said in a short statement.

Faulcon faced the most time of the defendants. He was found guilty of both the cover-up and the shooting. Faulcon was the only one of the former officers found guilty of depriving both Brissette and Madison of their civil rights.

Bowen, Gisevius, Villavaso were each convicted of conspiracy, deprivation of civil rights and

firearms charges, and faced the mandatory minimum sentence of 35 years.

Kaufman, who did not shoot at the victims on the bridge, was convicted for his role perpetuating the cover-up. He was found guilty of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and fabricating witnesses and faced the least amount of time of the officers, from 10 to 12 years. He was the lone defendant who remained free on bond after the August verdicts.

The sentences came after a morning of emotional testimony

both in support and against the officers who were convicted in the infamous incident that made national headlines.

The emotion of the family statements was nearly matched by the heartfelt pleas by family and co-workers of the officers who testified that the men were brave warriors looking to help and defend the city in a time of chaos following Hurricane Katrina.

Sherrell Johnson, the mother

of 17-year-old James Brissette, who was killed in the hail of gunfire, admonished the convicted officers.

"Your actions were harsh, cruel and abusive," she said. "What happened to your oath to protect and serve? Maybe some day God will forgive you, but I never will."

"These officers shot Ronald down like an animal," said Ronald Madison's brother Lance. "You took the life of an angel and ripped my heart out. You lied for so long, I wonder if you even know what the truth is."

Kent Bowen, the father of Kenneth Bowen, who was convicted of deprivation of civil rights and firearms charges, stated that his son never would have fired a weapon at innocent people and that he would only have fired if he feared that he or someone he cared about was in danger.

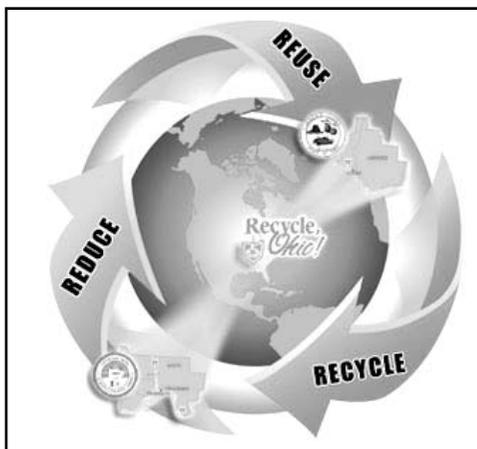
Lt. Louis Gaydosh, testifying in

Danziger, Continued on page 11.

Waste Management Named to Ethisphere's 2012 World's Most Ethical Companies for the Fifth Consecutive Year

NEW ORLEANS - Mar. 30, 2012 - Waste Management (NYSE: WM) has been recognized by the Ethisphere Institute, the leading business ethics think-tank, as one of the 2012 World's Most Ethical (WME) Companies. This is the fifth year the company has been honored for promoting the highest of ethical standards. Out of a record number of nominations for the award, WM secured a spot on the list by implementing and maintaining business practices and initiatives that are instrumental to the company's success, benefit the community and raise the bar for ethical standards within the industry.

"It is an honor to be recognized by Ethisphere for our strong corporate culture that values ethics,



diversity and sustainability," said David Steiner, Chief Executive Officer and President of WM. "As an industry leader we strive to operate in a way that contributes to the success of our business and the communities we serve. I believe it is our responsibility to make positive change for the en-

vironment and for society."

This is the sixth year Ethisphere has published the WME rankings. Ethisphere reviewed hundreds of companies and evaluated a record number of applications utilizing its propriety methodology through in-depth research and multi-step analysis, naming the companies that surpassed their industry peers to this year's World's Most Ethical Companies list. The 2012 list features companies in more than three dozen industries, including 40 companies headquartered outside the United States.

"As an employee of WM working to support Mississippi communities, I couldn't be more proud of this achievement," said Jason Freese of Waste Management of New Orleans.

Xavier's Richardson selected GCAC Player of the Week

Xavier University of Louisiana's Sean Richardson is the Gulf Coast Athletic Conference Player of the Week in men's tennis for March 19-25.

Richardson, a Senior from Ellenwood, GA, and a graduate of Stockbridge High School, was the only Gold Rush player to win in singles and doubles against NAIA No. 5 Auburn Montgomery during a 6-3 dual-match home loss to the Warhawks on Saturday. Richardson's 6-4, 7-5 decision against Matias Dasso was his 10th consecutive victory in his past 11 singles matches.

This is the third time that Richardson was won the GCAC's Weekly Award and the first time since his sophomore season. The Gold Rush has received four GCAC Awards this season; Zach Taylor won it twice, and Viktor Svoboda won it once.



Both Xavier Teams will compete Monday at Vanguard in the first of four consecutive days of dual matches in California against ranked opponents. The XU men are No. 9 in the NAIA, and the women are 24th. The next top 25 polls will be announced Tuesday.

Parents: The Missing Engine Behind School Reform

by Khalil Abdullah
New America Media, News Report,

A series of first-ever forums brought front-line education reformers and community media representatives together in Atlanta, Memphis, Miami and New Orleans. The consensus was clear: improving schools is a Civil Rights issue but will become a movement only when parents are fully involved – and a movement in which media must play a more compelling role.

“It’s a right for the children to have an education,” said Elise Evans, Co-Chair of Southern Avenue Middle Charter School in Memphis. “It’s a Civil Right.” Her demand was seconded by Marleine Bastien, Executive Director of the Haitian Women of Miami, Inc., who questioned how parents could be adequately informed unless community media are fully engaged in covering education reform issues.

New America Media, a national consortium of ethnic news organizations, convened the forums to foster a better communication exchange between education reformers and news organizations serving communities most impacted by low-performing school systems. The results of the recently released NAM poll, which surveyed 1400 parents of K-12 students in eight southeastern states about the quality of their children’s education, served as



Modesto E. Abety-Gutierrez, President of The Children’s Trust (with the mic), along with other panel speakers, including (from left) Liz Looney, Service Manager with City Year Miami; Principal Pablo Ortiz with Miami Edison Senior High School; School Board Member Raquel A. Regalado with Miami-Dade County Schools; Dr. Lenore Rodicio with Miami Dade College; McNelly Torres with Florida Center for Investigative Reporting; and Lucie Tondreau, a Parent and Haitian Community Advocate and Parent.

the impetus to spark the symposium in each city.

Conducted in seven languages, the poll found parents overwhelmingly satisfied with the quality of their children’s education and with high aspirations that their children would not only attend college but pursue advanced degrees. However, the data show that six of the eight states surveyed are in the bottom half of Math scores when compared to other states within the United States; seven are in the bottom half in Reading. Yet, parents showed no sense of urgency or outrage. “How is it possible,” asked Pollster Sergio Bendixen, “that parents seem to think the quality of their children’s educa-

tion is okay?”

Though the poll did not include questions about where U.S. Students ranked internationally, Bendixen’s presentation underscored the decline of America’s educational competitiveness by showing data that placed the U.S. Students 18th in Math, just behind Estonia, and, at 17th, trailing Poland in Reading. Chinese students now hold the top spot in both categories. The U.S. rankings were markedly lower from only a few decades ago when the country ranked either number one or two respectively.

“The signals are starting to turn in the right direction in terms of how important the quality of

education is,’ said Kent McGuire, President of the Southern Education Foundation. “We’re starting to appreciate that the competition is global in nature.”

Atlanta Forum Focuses on Undocumented Students

McGuire, who served as the lead-off panelist in Atlanta, the venue for the first symposium, urged parents to demand accountability and to “ask for the evidence” of whether the school system or purported reforms are working, particularly because of the demographics in the Southeast. “Kids of color are the ones we do the least well with,” he said, noting that their numbers will continue to grow.

Angelo Hurtado said the media could assist in dispelling stereotypes ethnic students often embrace about their inability to succeed. However, Hurtado, Co-Founder and Vice president of H.O.P.E. (Hispanic Students Promoting Education, Inc.), said the most pressing issue for many of her peers was the looming passage of a state bill in the Georgia House that will mirror the Senate’s SB 458. The legislation would effectively bar undocumented students from receiving an education at Georgia’s public colleges and universities.

“Not only undocumented students are being affected by this, but documented students as well,” Hurtado said, explaining that, collectively, these students form one community. Other speakers in Atlanta also decried the legislation as short-sighted and contrary to the goals of education to yield productive members of society. Many in attendance agreed that the media should devote greater attention to the legislation and expand their coverage of education in Georgia.

William Teasley, Director of Evaluation and Research at Atlanta Education Fund, challenged ethnic media in particular to become advocates of education reform, in part because it “reaches audiences our traditional media and our traditional organizations have trouble reaching.”

McDonogh 35 Student Places 1st in Annual Louisiana DECA Career Development Conference



Michael May, a McDonogh 35 student, won two academic awards at the Annual Louisiana DECA Career Development Conference. DECA Inc., (Distributive Education Clubs of America) is a national 501(c) (3) non-profit organization that works to prepare high school and college students from around the world for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and management. The organization hosted its Annual Louisiana DECA Career Development Conference, accepting participants from across the state.

May placed 1st in the Sports and Entertainment Promotional Plan Research Paper. He also placed 2nd in the Sports & Marketing Series Exam.

Photo Caption

McDonogh 35 Student Michael May accepts 1st Place Prize at LA Career Development Conference.

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Monica Pierre Presents Her One-Woman Show At Dillard University



Monica Pierre

Emmy Award-Winning Journalist, Author and Motivational Speaker Monica Pierre will showcase her one-woman theatrical production, *Dream Stories*, Thursday, April 12th – Sunday, April 15th, 2012 at Dillard University's Cook Theatre, 2601 Gentilly Boulevard. Performances are at 8:00 p.m. (April 12-14) and 3:00 p.m. (April 15).

Written and produced by Pierre, *Dream Stories* follows the journey of nine characters as they share their struggles, doubts, lessons learned and inspiration. Pierre's motivational characters include a young girl with a powerful dream, an aging housekeeper who embraces her true purpose, and a fun-loving 40-something woman who reaches a crossroad in her life.

As part of a special collaboration with Dillard University's Theatre Department, *Dream Stories*' entire production crew will consist of student directors, set designers, managers and assistants. Students will also write, produce and

perform original music for Pierre's one-woman show.

"I am honored to work with such talented young directors and crew who will help me shine on stage," said Pierre. "I look forward to learning from them as we collaborate on *Dream Stories* and inspire audiences to take action on their dreams."

A portion of the production's sponsorship dollars and ticket sales will go to support Dillard's Theatre Majors through scholarships and stipends.

Hyatt Regency New Orleans is a supporting sponsor of *Dream Stories*.

Dream Stories marks Pierre's second theatrical production to be staged at Cook Theatre. *No Permanent Scars*, based her book of the same name, debuted at Dillard University in 2004. Show and ticket information: www.monicapierrepresents.com/tickets

The Chi-Lites to Headline Dillard University's Annual Pre-Commencement Concert on May 3

Chicago R&B Legends to Perform on the Avenue of the Oaks

With Special Guests the Dillard University Concert Choir

Legendary Soul Group the Chi-Lites will headline Dillard University's Annual Pre-Commencement Concert on Thursday, May 3rd. The Dillard University Concert Choir will open the show, which will be held outside on the Avenue of the Oaks on Dillard's Campus at 8 p.m. All proceeds will go to benefit Dillard student scholarships.

"We're excited to come back to New Orleans, and to play at Dillard University for the first time," said Marshall Thompson, Founder and Leader of the Chi-Lites. "We're going to play all the hits, do some new material, and try something completely different: performing a song with the Dillard University Concert Choir. We're going to have fun. We always do!"

The Chi-Lites have been touring and record-

ing for over 50 years. They scored a string of hits in the 1970s, including "Oh Girl" and "Have You Seen Her," which have remained radio staples to this day. Younger listeners may recognize "Are You My Woman? (Tell Me So)," which was sampled on the Beyoncé Knowles hit "Crazy In Love."

The Dillard University Concert Choir has enjoyed an exciting school year that featured a performance at the White House and a spring tour with shows in New York, Washington, D.C. and Atlanta.

To purchase tickets, go to www.dillard.edu or www.holdmyticket.com, or visit Dillard's Development Office in 222 Rosenwald Hall during business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday). Tickets are \$35, and \$30 for seniors, military personnel, and Dillard students, alumni, faculty and staff. A variety of food and beverage options will be available at the show.



The Chi-Lites

Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Don't Shoot!

Photos by Louis Francis

Citizens from around the city marched in protest of the recent spate of police shootings. They gathered at City Hall to let their voices be heard. More protest marches are scheduled as things heat up in New Orleans and across the country in racial matters.



Civil Rights Community Mourns the Loss of John Payton



Marc Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

To Be Equal #13

“Diverse democracies depend on diverse people who know and respect each other.” – John Payton

Over the past century, the most powerful force behind America’s on-going struggle for equality has been an outstanding group of Civil Rights Attorneys. Imagine where we would be today without lawyers like Charles Hamilton Houston – “the man who killed Jim Crow” — or his protégé, Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall, who in 1940 founded the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDF). For over 70 years, LDF has been America’s first and foremost civil and human

rights law firm. During that time, the organization has had just six leaders: Thurgood Marshall, Jack Greenberg, Julius Chambers, Elaine Jones, Ted Shaw and the LDF’s Sixth President and Director-Counsel, John Payton who passed away last week at the age of 65.

Whether he was defending affirmative action before the United States Supreme Court or leading the fight to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act, John Payton was one of the most brilliant and fearless civil rights champions of our generation. A graduate of Pomona College and Harvard Law School, Payton’s commitment to civil rights led him from a career at WilmerHale, one of Washington, DC’s most prestigious law firms, to his leadership of LDF beginning in 2008. It was at WilmerHale that Payton laid the foundation as a great Civil Rights Attorney.

According to a statement on the firm’s website, “Beginning in 1997, he led the firm’s representation of the University of Michigan—from the District Court through the Supreme Court—in the Gratz and Grutter cases, which hold that public institutions



John Payton

of higher education may consider race as a factor in admissions in order to achieve the educational benefits that flow from having a racially-diverse student body.”

Payton continued his exemplary defense of Civil Rights at LDF

where, in 2010, he won a Supreme Court employment discrimination case on behalf of a group of Chicago African-American Fire Fighters. He also won a Supreme Court victory in Northwest Austin v. Holder, which upheld the con-

stitutionality of a core provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

On a personal note, John Payton was a dear friend and colleague. I had the pleasure of working closely with him on a number of initiatives, including a new effort just underway to develop a collective voice on Education among Civil Rights leaders. He also recently arranged for the National Urban League to sign onto an amicus brief on the Health Care case that will be argued before the Supreme Court beginning this week.

I admired John’s sharp intellect and enjoyed the lively talks we had about the law and Supreme Court strategy. He was a seasoned, thoughtful litigator who earned a place alongside great Civil Rights Lawyers like Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall. President Obama called Payton “A true champion of equality who helped protect Civil Rights in the classroom and at the ballot box.” I will miss his friendship, his partnership and his humanity. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Gay McDougall, and his wide circle of family and friends.

Marc H. Morial is the President and CEO of the National Urban League.

The Dream Lives On



Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief

This week we celebrate the loss of a man who died for freedom, justice and equality. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s life ended during this time over four decades ago, but his legacy and mission lives on. Today

I ask how close are we to the dream and what would Dr. King think about the present world? Who would have thought that a people who were fighting for the right to vote and full enfranchisement would have one of their own occupying the White House.

Today, the hands that once picked cotton can now pick Presidents. However, this country is not yet not fully color blind and has not arrived at the place where a person can be judged by the content of their character, although, we as a society are a far cry from a past where Jim Crow was the law of the land. I feel Dr. King would look at where we are

and feel proud seeing his people being able to live with dignity. Conversely, he would be disappointed that segments of this country are still trapped in the mindset of the past. That there are people who refuse to accept that America as is the rest of the world is; becoming progressive in its polices and moving away from the dark ages of isolationism.

In what has happened over the past four decades we cannot forget that there still is a long way to go to fight the fear and ignorance that becomes a roadblock to communication when it comes to accepting and respecting different perspectives. If King were

alive today who knows where he would be, but one thing is for certain he would be working to solve the problems that keep people divided and continuing in building bridges of understanding.

Today a man who by some considered divisive now has a national holiday and a monument in his honor on the National Mall. A place where millions of people have come to this hallowed ground to see monuments to Lincoln, Washington and Jefferson now Dr. King joins this illustrious group because of his commitment to make this nation a better nation.

In his life filled with selflessness and giving, much of what his

life embodied is needed today in a world filled with selfishness, greed and a lack of compassion. America and the world is at a crossroads and we must remember as the lyrics of the great Marvin Gaye sang so beautifully in his epic song “What’s Going On,” “That only love can conquer hate and we got to find some understanding today.” This is the America King envisioned and today we must not lose sight of the common bonds that tie us together as human beings. So as we reflect on the life of a man who dared to dream what was thought of a impossible at the time work to make it a reality.

Affordable Housing Out of Reach

Growth in Renters and Low Wages Create Severe Housing Shortage

By Charlene Crowell

Late last year America's homeownership rate dropped to 66 percent, the lowest since 1998. Amid continuing foreclosures and short sales, millions of former proud homeowners now find the cost of their American Dream financially out of reach. For many displaced by foreclosures, rental housing has become a long-term housing alternative. But new research finds that the huge growth in America's renters has worsened an already troubling problem: an inadequate supply of affordable housing.

According to Out of Reach 2012, an annual report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, renter households rose by nearly 4 million between 2005 and 2010. In 2012, a household must earn the equivalent of \$37,960 in annual income to afford the national average cost of a two-bedroom market rate of \$949 per month. To comfortably afford market price for the typical rental, incomes must meet or exceed \$18.25 per hour. However Out of Reach found that the 2012 average renter's wage was a few dollars less at \$14.15.

This gap between housing costs and typical worker earnings will continue to grow until or unless more affordable housing be-

comes available. Looking ahead, over the next decade the report predicts that the number of renters may increase by upwards of 470,000 annually.

The report states in part, "The analysis illustrates a wide gap between the cost of decent housing and the hourly wages that renters actually earn. The numbers in Out of Reach demonstrate that this year in every community across the country, there are renters working full-time who are unable to afford the rents where they live."

In 2012, many who are severely cost-burdened are adult workers whose wages are less than their locale's fair market rent. Determined by HUD on an annual basis, fair market rent reflects the cost of both shelter and utilities. This federal standard is also used to determine eligibility for HUD's Housing Choice Voucher program and Section 8 contracts.

Out of Reach found that in every state an individual working full-time at the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment for his or her family. In fact, there are very few places in the country where even a one-bedroom apartment at fair market rent is affordable to these workers.

Currently 18 states have mini-



Developing affordable housing for New Orleans.

mum wages higher than that of the federal government and earlier this year, the City of San Francisco became the first in the nation to have a minimum wage above \$10 an hour. Unfortunately, California rates third highest in the nation's rental housing costs with \$26.02 an hour needed for a two-bedroom dwelling. Other states where a two-bedroom apartment would require an hourly wage of \$20.00 or more are: Connecticut, DC, Hawaii, Maryland, Massa-

chusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia.

Based on a federal standard, affordable housing should cost no more than 30 percent of a household's gross income. When housing costs exceed this threshold, the residents are considered 'housing burdened'. When housing costs more than 50 percent of household income, the households are 'severely cost burdened'.

By 2010, extremely low-income

(ELI) workers, those earning less than 30 percent of the area median income rose to 9.8 million people, or one out of every four renter households. For every 100 ELI households in search of an apartment, only 30 affordable units are available. NHLIC estimates that an additional 6.8 million additional rental units are needed to overcome this shortage.

Commenting on the NLHC report, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan said, "This perfect storm of growing need and rising costs is why it is more important than ever that we provide a supply of affordable rental homes at the scale that families require and in the places that need them."

Secretary Donovan has proposed that HUD's FY13 budget make renewing rental assistance for over 5.4 million families the agency's top priority.

Here's hoping that Secretary Donovan's budget request will fare better than earlier housing efforts. In 2008, the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund was enacted for the purpose of building more affordable housing. In 2012, it remains unfunded.

Charlene Crowell is a communications manager with the Center for Responsible Lending. She can be reached at: Charlene.crowell@responsiblelending.org

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Supreme Court Takes Up 'Obamacare'

By Talib I. Karim
Washington Informer

(NNPA Newswire) Poor, African-Americans to be Most Affected (Courtesy Photo)

This week, the U.S. Supreme Court convened hearings to settle the question once and for all of whether the Historic Health Reform Law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, dubbed "Obamacare" by Republicans is constitutional. Supreme Court experts suggest that this case is the most significant before the Court in more than 50 years – rivaling *Brown v. Board of Education* – a landmark case that led to the end of legalized segregation.

Given the magnitude of the case, the Supreme Court had set aside six hours of arguments over a three day period which began on Monday, March 26th through Wednesday – more time given to any case since 1966. The justices have also postponed half of their normal monthly case load to clear way for the Court to issue a decision by as early as July.

The case will have a significant impact on the upcoming election



in November. If the Court strikes down the Affordable Care Act, it could be considered a win by Republicans who seek to unseat President Obama and take over both houses of Congress. However, if the Court allows the law to stand in whole, or in part, the President could declare his signature legislative achievement to date, a victory.

A recent report by Brown University Professor Michael Tesler makes the point what many, includ-

ing former President Jimmy Carter, have long stated: much of the opposition to Obama's initiatives like health reform has less to do with policy than with race. While Obama himself has attempted to set aside the racial dimensions of debates over health care and even the tragic killing of Trayvon Martin, Tesler's study is clear.

"African-Americans were about 20 points more supportive of the Barack Obama [health] plan than

they were of Bill Clinton's plan," said Tesler during an interview with National Public Radio's Michel Martin. Yet, the divide isn't simply an issue between African-Americans and European Americans, Democrats or Republicans, Tesler said. Instead, Tesler contends that health and other Obama policies are likely to be supported by people of all races who have liberal attitudes about race.

Four Separate Hearings

The reason behind the unprecedented three-day, 6 hours of oral arguments before the Supreme Court is rooted in the four separate issues being considered. Each issue is considered so unique, that the Supreme Court has afforded separate hearings for each. On Day One, lawyers were asked to debate whether the Supreme Court has the power to decide on the merits of the Affordable Care Act's penalty for failure to get health insurance – considered a tax by some – since the fines and other sanctions don't kick in until 2015. If the Court rules that the penalty for not getting health insurance is a tax then it could punt and put off the issue for three more years, after the presidential elections.

On Day Two, the Court requested arguments on whether the health law's individual mandate itself is constitutional under the Commerce Clause, which allows the federal government to regulate interstate activity.

The final day of arguments focused on two questions, the first: whether the Health Reform Law can stand even if the Court declares the individual mandate unconstitutional; the second whether the Affordable Care Act's expansion of Medicaid to cover everyone under 133 percent of the federal poverty line [individuals with yearly earnings of about \$14,000] by 2014 is too onerous. The federal government argues that Medicaid is a voluntary grant program, thus states can opt-out if they object to the expanded coverage.

People of Color, Poor Caught in the Middle

While health reform was being debated by lawyers before the Supreme Court, the nation's top African-American Physicians – members of the National Medical Association (NMA) – along with

state legislators from across the country lobbied federal officials to ensure people of color are able to get their fair share of benefits.

NMA President, Dr. Cedric Bright, said people of color may likely feel the brunt of any decision. On the one hand, if the law stays intact, out of those unable or unwilling to get health insurance as mandated, Bright acknowledges that African-Americans in particular may be those disproportionately required to pay the lack-of-insurance fine [at least \$695 per year by 2016]. Bright argues, that even this modest sum is a lot for "... folk with only a few dollars a month left over in their pockets." Bright said, "I believe an ounce of prevention is much better than a pound of cure." He also said that the mandate is a small cost for benefits provided by health reform: billions to build community health centers, funding to address ethnic health disparities, and increased minority participation in clinical trials.

Another historic dimension of this case is the record number of legal filings [at least 170, including more than 120 "friend-of-the-court" or amicus briefs]. These briefs, or written legal arguments, are known to have great weight on the Court's decisions, so much so that often justices quote directly from these submissions in writing their own decisions.

One such brief was filed by a coalition led by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund under the lead signature of John Payton who served as the organization's president until his death on March 22nd, days before the Supreme Court hearing. In their brief, the legendary Civil Rights Attorney and his colleagues write, "[U]ninsured persons experience significant hardship that has a profound cumulative impact on our nation ... These burdens are disproportionately borne by racial and ethnic minorities, lower-income persons ... For many individuals, being uninsured is not a choice, but rather is a consequence that is imposed on them due to circumstances largely beyond their control."

For the nation, and the tens of millions who benefit from the Health Reform Law, eyes are likely to stay glued on the Supreme Court until its ruling this summer.

Pastors Aim for Spiritual and Political Power on Easter Sunday

Goal: To Register a Million New Voters

By Hazel Trice Edney

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - This Sunday morning, April 8, millions of people will head to Easter services to hear the Gospel on the day that some call Resurrection Sunday. But, for many, this year will be different.

Pastors of dozens of congregations across the nation will not only preach the good news of a risen savior; but they will also call for their congregants to resurrect the movement for equality and justice in America by registering to vote. A million new voters is the goal.

"I really felt like I couldn't see or hear where the Black church was becoming engaged in the national conversation relative to the politics of America," said the Rev. Dr. Jamal-Harrison Bryant, pastor of the 8,000-member Empowerment Temple in Baltimore, who is leading the drive.



Rev. Jamal Bryant locks arms with the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. during "Justice for Trayvon" rally last month. National Urban League President Marc Morial locks arms on the other side. Bryant has started new organization to address civil and social inequality - The Empowerment Movement.

"I couldn't hear a voice. I really felt like there was a void and our generation was really listening to hear one. And out of that I called the churches together to see what we could do collectively, realizing that there is strength in numbers."

He continues, "You can listen

to Black Radio, Christian Radio or watch Black Christian television hours on end and not hear pastors say anything of social regard. And I think that this is a call for pastors and the people back to the front lines and to get off of the side lines."

ABCT Premieres "Blues For An Alabama Sky" April 6th - 22nd

The Anthony Bean Community Theater presents the New Orleans premiere of the acclaimed drama, "Blues For An Alabama Sky" by Pearl Cleage. This is a love story of a sort, set in the Harlem Renaissance, rich with history, culture, music and dreams. It takes a dramatic turn when religion, lies, and sexual preferences collide.

"[The play] introduces a rich cast of characters, scrambling to survive and make some sense of their overlapping personalities, politics and love lives: Angel (Inas Mahdi) is a struggling blues singer and nightclub performer who cannot find a job; her friend Guy, (Anthony Bean) a costume designer, is also out of work but dreams of being hired to design dresses for the famous African-American singer and dancer Josephine Baker; their neighbor Delia, (Candice Ross) a social worker, is trying to organize a family planning clinic in Harlem; their friend Sam, (Damien Moses) a doctor, works long hours



delivering babies at the Harlem Hospital; and Leland, (Greg P. Williams) having recently moved to New York from Tuskegee, sees in Angel a memory of lost love and a reminder of those 'Alabama skies where the stars are so thick it's bright as day.' Directed by



Anthony Bean. Scenic Designed by John Grimsley. Lighting Designed by Damany S. Comier and Costumes by Wanda (Mrs. B) Bryant. Performances are April 6 - 22. Friday and Saturday at 8:00 pm., and Sunday matinee at 3:00 pm. Tickets are \$20.00 and

\$18.00 for students and seniors and \$15.00 for child, 14 years and under. (Box Office hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 6pm-8pm and two hours before performances.) You can also charge by phone or charge on line at www.anthonybeantheater.com

Cover Story/ Continued from page 3.

are returning they don't know where to vote because some of the places they use to vote have changed. What we have done is to put them in touch with the Secretary of State to know their proper polling places and we are also developing a call center where people can get information about voting."

It Takes a Village

In this important election season and with the many challenges to equal voter participation many feel this assault can set back the hands of progress and they encourage the community to get out and vote. "So many people have fought, sacrificed and died so we can have can have these rights and now we must exercise them like never before to show the strength we have when we do come out in large numbers," says Rev. Alexander. This is a point Nolan Rollins of the Urban League agrees with, "Voting is not just about the issues and how it affects us today but how we empower the next generation, when I go to vote I always take my son, so he knows its importance and significance."

Today the African-American community may have to look to the past to move forward. To realize that there is strength in numbers, and realize that as the assault on African-American rights will not be taken lying down. It is important in this time that the African-American community and those who support justice and equality can come together and not let repressive legislation keep them away from what so many fought to secure...the right to vote.

Danzinger/ Continued from page 4.

support of Bowen, said the officer "was a warrior."

"He wanted to rescue people. He wanted to go back to New Orleans East. He wanted to go back to the boats. Please take into consideration the hell we went through."

While Sgt. David Slichon asked Engelhardt to consider the plight of the officers who went to sleep each night and woke up with the sound of gunfire, concerned about the chaos and lack of help.

On Aug. 5, 2011, Bowen, Faulcon, Gisevius, Villavaso and Kaufman were found guilty for their respective roles in the fatal shooting in the days after Hurricane Katrina that left Ronald Madison and James Brissette dead and four others injured, after officers responded to the bridge on for a call that police were under fire on the bridge.

Looking at approximately 60 years, Faulcon faces the most time of the defendants. He was found guilty of both the coverup and the shooting. Faulcon was the only one of the former officers found guilty of depriving both Brissette and Madison of their civil rights.

Bowen Gisevius, Villavaso were each convicted of conspiracy, deprivation of civil rights and firearms charges, and face the mandatory minimum sentence of 35 years.

Kaufman, who did not shoot at the victims on the bridge, was convicted for his role perpetuating the cover-up. He was found guilty of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and fabricating witnesses and faces the least amount of time of the officers, from 10 to 12 years. He was the lone defendant who remained free on bond after the August verdicts.

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