New Orleans A City United or Divided in the Fight Against Crime?
Part 1 of a 2-Part Series

State & Local
Michael Darnell, Judge pro-tempore of OP Traffic Court

Home Style
Hail the Yard Bird
New Orleans
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America’s Conversation about Race, Justice and Public Safety Hits New Orleans in Shooting of Unarmed Teen
While the nation is still reeling, divided and debating many issues since George Zimmerman has being acquitted in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin. This case has again brought the issue of race and the justice system into the forefront, but what has gained the most attention is the controversial “Stand Your Ground Laws” first introduced in 2005 in the State of Florida with over two dozen states across the country adopting some form of the law including Louisiana.

Following the Zimmerman verdict protests all over the country took place surrounding the law as Civil Rights groups as well as U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder criticized the controversial “Stand Your Ground Law” at the 2013 NAACP Annual Conference. And on the heels of this debate another case that is gaining...
ing the public’s attention has happened in New Orleans in the Marigny neighborhood. A once mixed income neighborhood pre-Katrina that is now becoming gentrified and is only a stone’s throw away from a neighborhood rife with crime, violence and poverty. Where people scrape by to survive, it is truly a tale of two cities where hopefulness and hopelessness intersect. This is the setting of this tragedy that has beset the City and has citizens of the City asking the question that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of in 1967, will we find a way to be a cohesive community working together to fix the ills of our nation and our City, or will it spiral out of control into further chaos and misunderstanding?

On the 700 block of Mandeville Street two people’s lives changed forever on a late Saturday night. Merritt Landry, who works for the City of New Orleans was at home with his young family which includes his pregnant wife and small child. Upon hearing a noise in his backyard he went out and spotted 14 year old Marshall Coulter and struck him with a single shot to the head. According to Landry as he yelled out to the young man he thought he saw an object that was a weapon, to the young man he thought he was in danger and did what he felt was necessary?

Crime Does Not Discriminate

People on both sides of the issue would like to simplify this as a simple case of Black and White, but in life and sometimes things are not that simple. It seems that there are shades of gray that may explain what happened and how a community can move from the chaos of misunderstanding to one of reconciliation. Mama Dee is a lively 70 year old White from Alabama who owns two properties on the same block where the shooting took place and says that race is less the issue as it is a crime wave invading their neighborhood leaving them feeling powerless. I have had several bikes stolen from my yard and people running through my yard at all hours of night, and I know of several of my neighbors who have been mugged recently, and people’s houses and cars are getting broken into.” Continuing in a sympathetic tone she says, “I really feel sorry for what happened to the young man who was shot, but I don’t know what I would do if I were in his situation with his young family and somebody’s is in my yard at 2:00 A.M.

This is a neighborhood that is still feeling the 2007 death of Helen Hill, a filmmaker who was killed during a home invasion by an intruder who shot and killed Hill and shooting her husband three times and he survived and their young child uninjured. This along with a spate of other shooting including Dinerral Shavers of the Hot 8 Brass Band caused citizens to march on City Hall about the escalating crime problems in the neighborhood casing out houses and targeting our people walking through down the street to rob them.” Continuing he says with a bit of exasperation in his voice, “I have been mugged before and am sometimes afraid, but I love New Orleans and many of my friends do as well, but some of them who have also been victims of crime are considering leaving because they feel it is becoming too dangerous.”

Crime and Punishment

Who’s the Judge?

After the shooting Brothers Against Crime an organization led by Nadra “Captain Black” Nezi, Al “Brother” Mims and Tim Washington called a press conference to talk about solutions, “What we are stressing is unity in our community, what we want to focus on is personal responsibility, public safety and parental involvement in their children’s lives. We are sick of seeing our young men without a direction in their lives either becoming killers or being killed, this has got to stop and it is all our responsibility.”

During the press conference an exchange took place between Rev. Raymond Brown of National Action Now who is not affiliated with Brothers Against Violence and White citizens of the community when he made a statement about race and the similarities in this case and comparing Merritt to George Zimmerman. Captain Black feels that while racism is very real, that these cases are very different, “There are no similarities in these cases, Zimmerman stalked an unarmed teen who was minding his own business, in this case the young man was on his property at 2 A.M., and Landry was more than likely scared for himself and his family and a Black man might have done the same thing under those circumstances. Should Landry have done something different in this situation I cannot say, but the fact surrounding the case will be played out in the judicial process.”

End of Part 1.

Part 2 Stand Your Ground Is It a License to Kill? And Searching for Solutions.
Emcees Battle at The House of Blues

Photos by Dealia Pooler

The battle on the mic still reigns supreme, and the Emcees who stepped up last week at the Parish Room in The House of Blues left nothing on the stage. The performing artist pictured is Juice from AG (Air Gang) who got the crowd going with his rhymes and beats. Of course, Data was there!

Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events
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Commentary

To Be Equal

The State of Black Men, Part Two
Justice for Trayvon is About Justice for All

“Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago.”
-President Barack Obama

In the weeks since the not guilty verdict in the second-degree murder trial of George Zimmerman, widespread outrage and legitimate questions about the treatment and perception of young black men in America have reverberated throughout the nation. Last Friday, in an unscripted appearance in the White House Press Room, President Obama spoke personally about the historical racial context and the negative pre-conceptions that may have led to the death of Trayvon Martin. He also talked about the racial indignities and systemic disparities that millions of black men face every day and the questionable Stand Your Ground laws that may be causing more violence than they are supposedly meant to prevent. And the President suggested he would use his “convening power” to engage a cross-section of citizens in doing more to give African American boys “the sense that their country cares about them and values them and is willing to invest in them.” We applaud the President for his insightful comments. We hope they touch the nation’s conscience and advance the kind of dialogue and action that is needed to heal America’s festering racial divisions and prevent the deaths of more Trayvon Martins.

The death of Trayvon Martin has re-energized the civil rights community and inspired an outpouring of citizen action not seen since the height of the movement 50 years ago. Last Saturday, in dozens of cities across the nation, thousands of people, appalled at the Zimmerman verdict, attended peaceful rallies in support of justice for Trayvon Martin and a civil rights investigation into his killing. The National Urban League stands in solidarity with them. And as we convene our annual convention in Philadelphia this week, we will be intensifying our quest for a thorough civil rights investigation, along with efforts to end to racial profiling and abolish of Stand Your Ground laws across the country. Many of those “shoot first” laws are contributing to needless bloodshed and are ripe for unequal application based on race.

A recent study by Texas A & M University found that Stand Your Ground type laws increase homicides by 17-50 percent, “which translates into as many as 50 additional justifiable homicides a year.” And as the case of Marissa Alexander shows, the Florida law is not even being applied consistently. Alexander, who is black, is serving 20 years in prison for firing a single shot at the ceiling to scare off her abusive husband who was charging towards her with murderous intent. Unlike the Zimmerman case, a Stand Your Ground self-defense claim did not prevent Alexander’s conviction. Clearly, something is wrong when the man who killed Trayvon Martin is acquitted, while a black woman who fired a warning shot gets 20 years. As President Obama noted, “there is a history of racial disparities in the application of our criminal laws, every-

Marc Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

Morial, Continued on page 7.
Orleans Parish Prison. Every day desperately needed reforms at continue to obstruct and delay the Center’s Louisiana office: toor of the Southern Poverty Law ed to Katie Schwartzmann, direc- the City’s motion can be attribut- appealing the decision. The fol- to significant reforms for the Or- consent decree that would lead ruling last month to approve a tion to stop and smell the beautiful r the work. Life is good! Send the free chicken manure I can flowers. 

Michael Darnell appointed Judge pro tempore of Orleans Parish Traffic Court

Darnell will fill the vacan- ny created by the retirement of Judge Ronald J. Sholes. He will serve from August 1, 2013 through December 31, 2013, or until the vacancy is filled, whichever comes sooner.

Darnell received his un- ergraduate and Juris Doc- tor degrees from Yale Uni- versity. He has been in the private practice of law since 1982. Formerly a partner with Adams and Reese Law Firm, since 1995 Darnell has been a partner in the law firm Murray, Darnell & Associates, LLC. While prac- ticing law, he has served in numerous legal and govern- ment positions.

Darnell is a member of the Louisiana Bar Association, the American Bar Association, and the Louis Martinet Society in New Orleans. He is the recipient of the Award for Outstanding Ser- vice as President of the Southwest Louisiana Lawyer's Association.

SPLC Responds to City’s Appeal of Court Ruling on Orleans Parish Prison

Following a U.S. District Court ruling last month to approve a consent decree that would lead to significant reforms for the Orleans Parish Prison, the City of New Orleans today filed a motion appealing the decision. The follow- ing statement in response to the City’s motion can be attribut- ed to Katie Schwartzmann, direc- tor of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Louisiana office:

“We are deeply disappointed that the City has chosen to con- tinue to obstruct and delay the desperately needed reforms at Orleans Parish Prison. Every day of delay puts New Orleanians, who the City has a responsibility to house safely, at risk of sig- nificant harm and even death. The dangerous conditions at the jail harm thousands of people every year, as illustrated by the numerous letters of public sup- port written to the Court. This administration is out of step with the expressed will of its constitu- ents, and with the public interest. It’s extremely unfortunate that the City continues to expend ex- traordinary amounts of taxpayer dollars to avoid compliance with the Constitution.”

Judge Pro-Tempore, Michael C. Darnell OP Traffic Court

Attorney Michael C. Dar- nell has been appointed by or- der of the Louisiana Supreme Court, as judge pro tempore of Orleans Parish Traffic Court, Section “D,” accord- ing to Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson.

Morial, Continued from page 6.

Chickens, Continued from page 5.

thing from the death penalty to enforcement of our drug laws. And as I mentioned in my first column on the State of Black men several weeks ago, these dispari- ties are more than demeaning, they are leading to the over-incar- ceration, under-employment and disenfranchisement of millions of African American men.

The death of Trayvon Martin has ignited a firestorm of protest. And it’s not just about the shoot- ing, but the many ways America continues to devalue young black men. Justice for Trayvon is about justice for all.

Eggs yearly. You are going to end up harvesting a lot more eggs than you can use, so you can give some away or sell them.

By all means be kind to your chickens and make sure their area is secure. So many times you see chickens on the street, which is so cruel because you know that chicken is going to try to cross the road and that’s the end of it.

I am one of the lucky ones because while I was contemplat- ing getting chickens my neighbor Charles beat me to it. So now I get all of those won- derful big brown eggs, all of the free chicken manure I can use for my garden, and none of the work. Life is good! Send your gardening questions to me at sowing@thegardening- diva.com and check my “Gar- dening Tip of the Week” at www.thegardeningdiva.com.

Remember, never be too busy to stop and smell the beautiful flowers.
I take care of her

BUT WHO takes care of me?

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