

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

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Super Sunday Highlights

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Drexel Prep

Continuing the Dream of Katharine Drexel and Preserving the Legacy of Xavier Prep



Cheryllyn Branche, Principal of Drexel Prep says "This is all our mission and we must do our part to help educate our future leaders."



Founded in 2013 by a group of alumni dedicated to continuing the Drexel Dream, St. Katharine Drexel Preparatory School is located at 5116 Magazine Street, formerly the site of Xavier University Preparatory School, with an emphasis on academic excellence.

By Edwin Buggage

Founded in 2013 by a group of alumni dedicated to continuing the Drexel Dream, St. Katharine Drexel Preparatory School is located at 5116 Magazine Street, formerly the site of Xavier University Preparatory School, with an emphasis on academic excellence,

Drexel Prep provides an advantageous environment for girls from grades 7 thru 12, providing both Education and Self-Development by exposing students to analytic and creative thinking while developing self-esteem, spirituality, leadership and respect for others.

The story of the school and its mission began in 1915, when Katharine Drexel, Born Catherine Marie

Drexel, Realized her dream of developing a school in New Orleans, Louisiana for the Education of African-Americans and Native Americans. For her lifetime of work serving others she was canonized on October 1, 2000. St. Katharine Drexel and her Legacy of Love, Courage, Selfless Service and belief in quality education for all is the foundation of St. Katharine Drexel

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Joseph Peychaud, President of Drexel Prep says, "The school has a great history and that is something that is widely recognized by the community and people across the City continue to believe the vision of Katharine Drexel and did not want to see the school close."



Preparatory School. Today, St. Katharine's Dream, continues in their students, faculty and alumni. Speaking on the significance of the life of St. Katharine Drexel and her mission and how that still resonates and is relevant today the school's President Joseph Peychaud says, "The school has a great history and that is something that is widely recognized by the community and people across the City continue to believe the vision of Katharine Drexel and did not want to see the school close." Speaking on the social value of education and the need to support it he says, "I think that is the key for us to continue to view edu-

cation as the great equalizer. Katharine Drexel was a woman who saw a need and addressed the inequities to fulfill that need throughout her life. And we continue to do what she started."

The new vision and rebranding is being led by President, Joseph Peychaud and Principal, Cheryllyn Branche who is also a Xavier Prep Alum. A short time ago amid the school facing possible closing, it was with the effort of many alums as well as people from around the community who would not allow this great institution that's been serving young people for nearly a century. Today it is an example of

what people can do if they put their resources together they can make a difference, "What we saw was a commitment from parents and alumni who wanted to keep their school open and what we also saw was an entire community that said they did not want to see Xavier Prep close, so with their help along with so many others we were able to keep the school open, so I am excited about the direction we are headed in continuing the legacy of this great school," says Principal Branche.

As a private school there are several fundraisers that go on throughout the year, but one of their big

events for over two decades have been their "Remember When" Annual Gala that raises money for scholarships and other expenses associated with the institution. "It was conceived by alums, to help the school, but it is not only about the school it is to help young ladies to be able to attend the school and continue what we call the Drexel Dream," says Principal Branche. Continuing she says, "When we give scholarships that are academic or needs based we know it's a good thing investing in the young people in our City."

In a City post- Katrina many educational institutions at all levels have

been affected, with some being made smaller, taken over, consolidated or closed down as was the threat to Xavier Prep/Drexel Prep. But with the resilient spirit of its alumni and leadership it was not allowed, and showed that there is power in numbers when people get together to fight the noble and righteous fight. "I think the community saw that the school is a great resources and asset with the caliber of young people who go on to contribute great things to the community. And that is part and parcel of why we continue to exist

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Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Super Sunday

Photos by Edwin Buggage

For two weeks the weather stood in the way of the great event known as Super Sunday. Where the Mardi Gras Indians don their new suits, and marching clubs and brass bands come out and celebrate in the city that seems to celebrate life every day. It was a beautiful day and people came out from all walks of life having a grand and festive time. And of course Data News Weekly was there.



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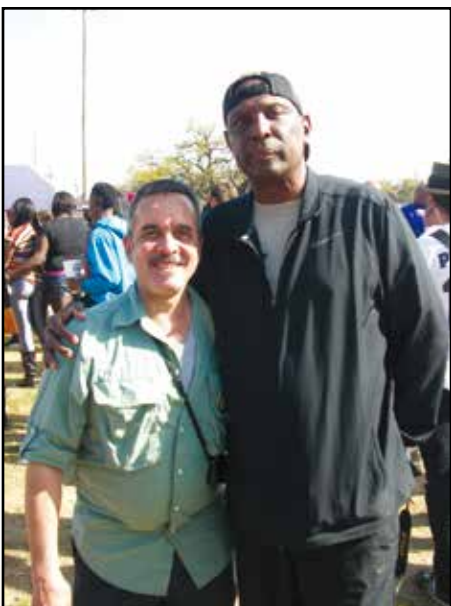
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Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Super Sunday



Vantage Point

Can We Make It to the 'Promised Land?'

Ron Daniels
NNPA Columnist

Friday, April 4, marks the 46th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination on a balcony in Memphis. Black America and people of goodwill in the nation and the world were stricken by grief, frustration and anger at the murder of this great man of justice and peace. Indeed, rebellions erupted in urban centers across the nation by people who could not fathom how an apostle of non-violence could be struck down so viciously and violently. It was clear that America was at yet another cross-road in the quest to achieve racial, economic and social justice.

Despite constant death threats, Dr. King never flinched in his determination that this nation should be made to live up to its creed. The night before he was murdered, he reluctantly mounted the podium at the Mason Temple Church in Memphis and seemed to have a premonition of his impending demise. Yet, he proclaimed that he was not afraid dying. In the most memorable part of his oration he took the audience to the "mountaintop" with

him and declared that he had "seen the promised land." Sensing that his life would be cut short he said, "I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land."

As we reflect on King's courage and optimism in the shadow of death, the question is: Can we make it to the Promised Land? Clearly Dr. King was speaking to the long suffering sons and daughters of Africa in America when he referenced "we as a people." But given his fervent belief in the promise of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, there is little doubt that he also believed that one day America as a nation must arrive at the Promised Land. King also knew that for the "promise" to be realized Black people and people of good will in the "beloved community" would have to struggle to achieve its fulfillment. There would be trials and tribulations because there were forces deeply committed to restricting economic and political democracy to an elite "few" to the exclusion of the "many" in this society.

As Dr. King peered over into the Promised Land, he saw a nation



that embraced his concept of an Economic Bill of Rights modeled after Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms," where every human being would have a decent standard of living: a land where no-one would lack for a job with a living wage or guaranteed annual income, quality affordable housing, healthcare and education.

To get to the Promised Land, Dr. King was preparing a Poor People's Campaign to galvanize the "many" to struggle for an Economic Bill of Rights even in the face of the fierce resistance of the "few" at the commanding heights of capital and

finance. To get to the Promised Land, King also warned that the people, those who aspired to create the change must themselves undergo a change, a personal "revolution" that would translate into creating a just and humane society.

Hence he proclaimed, "I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a 'thing-oriented' society to a 'person-oriented' society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered."

The people must create a "moral movement" to get to the Promised Land and that movement cannot countenance a system incompat-

ible with "person-oriented" values. Therefore, those who would get to the Promised Land must challenge and change systems of oppression and exploitation; they must advance a politics of social transformation. As King put it, "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that the edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring."

As we witness the calculated, mean-spirited assault on Blacks, labor, women and poor and working people by rightwing extremists, the explosive growth in mass incarceration within the prison-jail industrial complex and the ever increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, we must continue to be inspired by King's view from the mountaintop. Black people in particular must be dedicated to leading ourselves and the downtrodden/dispossessed to the Promised Land.

Ron Daniels is President of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century and Distinguished Lecturer at York College City University of New York. His articles and essays also appear on the IBW website www.ibw21.org and www.northstarnews.com. He can be reached via email at info@ibw21.org.

A Meeting Between the Pope and the President



Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
NNPA Columnist

History is often made by leaders who make a consequential difference in quality of life of people. The world has now witnessed the historic meeting between the first African American to serve as president of the United States and the first Latin American to be Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. President Barack Obama and Pope Francis met recently at the Vatican in the heart of Rome.

At 77, Pope Francis, who was born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in 1936 in Buenos Aires, Argentina,

is 25 years older than President Obama. The 266th Pope is easily the most powerful religious leader in the world, the head of more than 1 billion Roman Catholics throughout the world. In the U.S. alone, there are more than 3 million African American Catholics. Though considerable, that's just a fraction of the 270 million-plus Catholics of African descent across the Diaspora.

With a deep political divide in the U.S., President Obama remains the most powerful political leader in the world.

Even the cynical establishment U.S. media in the U.S. praised the Obama-Francis dialogue as being crucial to the world discourse on income inequality, hunger and poverty, health care, immigration reform and the fundamental human rights of all. A CBS News correspondent remarked, "A visibly energized President Obama held a nearly hour-long audience

with Pope Francis at the Vatican, expressing his great admiration for the pontiff and inviting him to visit the White House."

Obama is acutely aware of his low standing in public opinion polls. There is a scripture that seems particularly apt in this case: "A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." [Mark 6:4, KJV] This is not to suggest to President Obama is a prophet. Rather, the point is that the president's leadership can be properly described as prophetic as he pushes the socioeconomic envelope on such issues of equal justice and fairness for all people.

And it is in this type of setting – the most powerful religious person in the world sitting down with the most powerful political person in the world – that we are reminded of the enormous responsibility the president carries as a national and international fixture.

Many people, especially "in his own country, and among his own kin," would like the president to adopt an even stronger posture opposing various voter suppression schemes and pushing harder to close the income inequality gap.

But that's a tall order than cannot be accomplished in two presidential terms.

This is a good time to remind ourselves, as a leading sociologist at the Catholic University of America did recently when he said: "A good deal of the economic agenda of President Obama and of the Democratic Party is consonant with Catholic social teaching." I would expand that by saying it is also consonant with the teachings of other religious groups.

While President Obama's meeting with Pope Francis was originally scheduled for only 30 minutes, it lasted almost an hour. At the end, Pope Francis gave President Obama a "strategic theo-

logical" gift. It was a copy of Pope Francis' papal mission statement, "The Joy of the Gospel," that has a sharp focus on "decrying a global economic system that excludes the poor."

President Obama thanked the Pope for the gift and promised to read it and keep it as a ready reference on his desk in the White House. President Obama, in turn, presented Pope Francis with fruit and vegetable seeds from the White House garden.

For of millions of poor and oppressed people, the hope and prayer is that the bond between President Obama and Pope Francis will extend beyond a courtesy call to the Vatican. Ultimately, each leader will be judged by what he does for "the least of these" among us.

Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. is president of Education Online Services Corporation and the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network and can be reached at: <http://drbenjaminfchavisjr.wix.com/drbcfc>

Prepping Your Garden for Spring

By MG Calla Victoria

The most important thing that one can do to get ready for spring planting is to prepare the soil. Rich soil is the secret to a beautiful garden. If you don't prepare the soil your plants will not flourish. Have you ever noticed, when you start to plant your seedlings (infant plants), all of those small hair-like fine roots? Those thin weak, fine little roots need to be able to stretch out and grow so that your plants will have strong foundations. Those fine hair-like tiny roots cannot push through hard compacted soil and will not flourish in nutrient-depleted soil. Therefore it is imperative that you aerate (loosen up) the soil, and add nutrients that will benefit your young plants. Oh yeah! It's time to get down and dirty!

The first step needs to be a road trip to your favorite gardening center and load up on mulch, potting soil, and fertilizer. Leaves and grass clippings are free and excellent alternatives to commercial mulch products. The leaves add pure nitrogen to the soil and the leaves are an excellent weed deterrent; both are organic gardening techniques as well. So when your gardener cuts your grass, have him bag the grass clippings and leave them for you. Other items to add to your list are eggshells, banana peels, fish emulsion; charcoal, chicken manure and Miracle Grow Potting Soil for those extra thirsty heavy feeders. The Miracle Grow Potting Soil has gotten a bad rep because it does retain moisture. So I would



suggest using it when you plant those thirsty plants like supertunias, and tropicals which can never get enough water, or in plantings near trees. The trees, with their large roots, will suck up a lot of the moisture; therefore smaller plants around trees will need the added moisture retention to sustain themselves.

Preparing your soil:

Discard all dead plant materials, dig up old roots.

Aerate soil by turning with a tiller or using a pitch fork. The purpose of aerating the soil is to loosen it up as it has compacted over the winter month, and to assist your new plant material (with those fine hair-like small roots) to be able to spread and thrive.

Sprinkle a thin layer of lime over the soil and let it sit for three days, after aerating the soil. Liming garden soil reduces the acidity of the

soil by increasing the pH level. Plants can't get the nutrients they need from soil that is too acid.

Note: (If you have some plant material like azaleas that prefer acidic soil, don't lime in those areas.)

After three days you can begin installing your plant material.

Customize your potting soil mixture

a. Ground up charcoal, use a hammer to ground up the charcoal and add it to your purchased potting mixture. The purpose of adding charcoal to your garden soil is to improve air circulation and increase the soil's ability to retain water and nutrients. Once added, the benefits of charcoal continue for years.

b. Dice up banana peels and add to potting soil—potassium promotes strong roots.

c. Crush up eggshells and add to potting mix. Egg shells serve as

a source of calcium to the plants.

d. Add a time-released fertilizer to your potting mix. This saves you the headache of trying to remember when to fertilize your plants. There are other organic fertilizer options like fish emulsion which puts micronutrients back into the soil constantly replenishes and rebuilding it. It is an excellent all-purpose fertilizer. You can buy fish emulsion or if you happen to fish or have a friend who does, you can just plant the discarded parts of fish innards after cleaning the fish. Of course that is provided you do not have any feral cats in your yard like the ones who have adopted my yard. In that case you will have to go with the purchased product. Also chicken manure is a great organic fertilizer option. You can purchase it AT most garden centers or if you are lucky enough to have a neighbor who owns chickens, like my neighbor Charles, then you get free manure and free eggs.

After you have prepared your soil, you can begin planting your seedlings. Always buy seedling in odd numbers starting with three. Your garden will look lush if you plant in multiples rather than one-of-a-kind plantings.

Remember, never get too busy to stop and enjoy the beautiful flowers.

Check out my "Gardening Tip of the Week" at www.thegardeningdiva.com

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Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

and be a bright spot not just for the African-American community but the entire City where the school graduates go on to do great things not just in the City but across the globe and we want to continue to provide this opportunity for future generations," says Peychaud.

When we think about the future all hands must be on deck in helping to shape the minds of young people. And it is more than giving money, for our young people need more if their dreams are to become a reality. A fact not lost on Principal Branche, "At Drexel Prep we have opportunities for people to give

endowments, or give monthly. We also need people to volunteer and mentor, because as we know our young girls continue to need support beyond the school building. This is all our mission and we must do our part to help educate our future leaders. No matter what they become in life, role models are important and we need them and it is not all about money, it is about time and commitment."

The success of Xavier Prep now Drexel Prep is the story of the little school that could; with limited resources it continues to thrive. It continues to be a bright

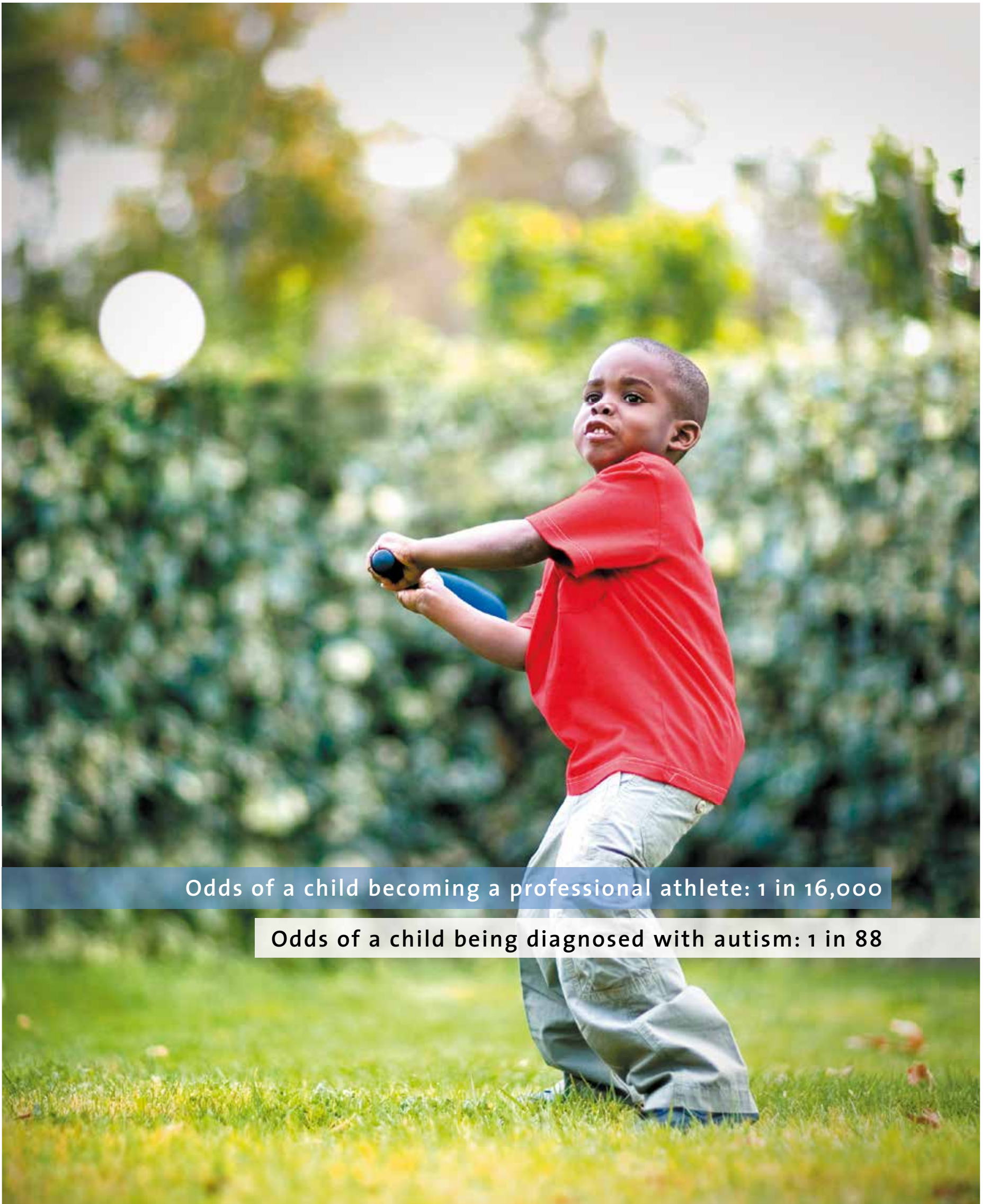
spot on the education front in New Orleans. When we look at our contemporary history many of the most prominent women in our City are graduates of Xavier Prep (School was co-ed into the 1960's). And now as Drexel Prep this legacy lives on in the spirit of its founder and those who know that their good work continues to inspire a City as it rebuilds. Recalling the life of Katharine Drexel as a metaphor for the work anyone can do to make the world better Principal Branche says, "I think when you look at Katharine Drexel's story she saw a need to

do the work because of what she saw in the south, she had many road blocks but she kept doing the work. So for us knowing her history and how she got others to commit to her work it is important for us to understand never to give up or give in you and know that can accomplish anything. And this is not just her story, many have fought and sacrificed to help and serve others. From her story and many others we can say that people can persevere no matter the color to stay the course and continue the work they are called to do."

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