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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

# Justice and Beyond Concerned Citizens Come Together



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# Justice and Beyond

*A Group of Concerned Citizens Coming Together Working Towards  
Solutions that Plague the City of New Orleans*



Above and on the cover, Justice and Beyond meeting pictured left to right Rev. Dwight Webster, Pat Bryant and Rev. Tom Watson.

**By Edwin Buggage**  
**Photos by Peter Nakhid**

In a City that is rebuilding the struggle for justice continues. There are many issues that continue to plague the City. There are organizations and individuals dedicated to trying to deal with the problems that

continue to exist. While sometimes there's discord between groups about an agenda and the methods and means to come to solutions; there is a group that's has a big tent approach and thinking long-term and strategic in the fight for justice. Justice and Beyond is not a formal organization, but a group of concerned citizens that's come together to advocate and move towards so-

lutions to issues that adversely affect the community. Rev. Dwight Webster of Christian Unity Baptist Church serves as co-moderator of forums with Veteran Civil Rights Activist Pat Bryant, "What we do is try to come towards workable solutions through constructive dialog, we are not an organization per se, we meet weekly to discuss and devise strategies to address the gamut

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of issues that concern our community," says Webster whose church is also the site where the meetings are held every Monday from 4:45 to 7:00 PM and planning meetings are held Tuesday from 12:00 noon to 1:30 PM.

The group has been around for two years. Its initial formation was centered on advocating for Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Bernette Johnson in her battle to become Chief Justice. Speaking on this issue Webster says, "The original name of the group was Justice for Justice Bernette Johnson when it looked like she would be denied her slot for the Chief Justice of the Louisiana State Supreme Court." Continuing he says of this historic battle, "We went out in the community and around the state people were planning protests and creating awareness of this issue. Eventually, justice prevailed and now Bernette Johnson has made history as the first African-American Chief Justice of the Louisiana State Supreme Court."

After this triumph Webster said they celebrated her ascent, but changed the name of the group to Justice and Beyond, recognizing that there were many other issues in the community that needed to be addressed and needed not only soldiers on the frontline, but a different approach to get the desired

results. "Since we've been having these forums we have looked at issues ranging from the taxicabs and drivers, to issues surrounding education, to fighting for Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) participation, to the school board and what role media should they play in framing these issues; we have discussed all these issues in past forums and have put together action plans to hopefully remedy these problems," says Webster.

One of the major issues facing the City is crime, but further another issue that goes largely ignored is what do we do about those who once incarcerated and serve their sentence re-entering society? There are many problems they face that in many instances leads to them becoming repeat offenders because of lack of adequate support upon release. Webster says this is one of the issues the group plans to address moving forward, "One of our next topics that will be discussed and I feel this is major is in regard to the re-entry of those released from jail and how do we re-acclimate them to becoming productive citizens. In this forum we are going to look at the two things we feel are paramount for those who were incarcerated and that's jobs and housing, in addition we

Cover Story, Continued  
on page 5.

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## Judge John Michael Guidry Receives New Position

**First Circuit Court of Appeal Judge John Michael Guidry is the new President of the Louisiana Judicial College Board of Governors.**

The Louisiana Judicial College is charged with providing quality continuing legal education for Louisiana's judges. Continuing legal education courses focus on new law, ethics and cutting-edge issues. As lawyers, judges are required to attend a minimum of 12.5 hours of continued legal education every year—including one hour must be on legal ethics and one hour on professional responsibility. Judges must obtain at least five of their continued legal education hours from a Louisiana Judicial College Seminar.

Judge Guidry received his undergraduate degree from Louisiana State University in 1983 and his law degree from the Southern University Law Center in 1987. Guidry had a private law practice from 1987-1997. During that time, he also served as an Assistant Parish Attorney from 1988-1991, as a State Representative for District 67 from 1992-1993, and as a State



Judge John Michael Guidry

Senator for District 14 from 1993-1997. Guidry has served as an instructor for the Southern University Law Center since 1988 and Southern University since 1993. In 1997, Guidry was elected to the First Circuit Court of Appeal where he currently serves.

Guidry is a member of numerous professional organizations including: the American Bar Association, the National Bar Association, the American Judges Association, the Louisiana State Bar Association and the Judicial Council of the Louisiana Supreme Court.

## Section 3 Employment and Training Opportunity Fair

**Event to provide direct access to economic opportunities for low-income residents within the CNI footprint**

On Tuesday, May 13th, Woodward Design Build (WDB), HRI Properties (HRI) and Urban Strategies, contractors with the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), hosted a community event to highlight upcoming employment and training opportunities for Section 3 eligible residents.

"Thanks to HUD's \$30.5 million Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, the revitalization of Iberville is underway," Mayor Mitch Landrieu said. "It is important that local residents who are looking for work attend this important job fair to connect with employers and learn about training opportunities."

"HANO, The City of New Orleans, and partners are excited to once again provide job and training opportunities for our residents during the redevelopment and full transformation of Iberville," said Administrative Receiver Marilyn O'Sullivan. "This fair reaffirms our commitment to continue working

with developers to ensure access to employment and job training for residents within the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhoods Initiative footprint."

HANO's Employment, Training and Contracting Policy outlines the agency's requirement for contractors expending at or more than \$100,000 to provide training, employment and contracting (Section 3/DBE/WBE) opportunities at its construction sites in accordance with HUD's Section 3 Policy. HRI and WDB engaged national non-profit Urban Strategies to identify and implement a Section 3 strategy in line with HANO's policy for the Iberville site. Urban's role is to recruit and connect Iberville families with greatly needed employment and training opportunities, along with case management, workforce development, and educational and life skills support.

For additional information on Section 3 employment, training or contracting opportunities, call Mai Dang, Section 3 Program Manager with Urban Strategies, at (504) 920-5126, Larry Barabino, Jr. with HANO at (504) 670-3268, or visit [www.hano.org](http://www.hano.org).

### Opinion

## Black Council of Elders Deal with Trial of Public Perception

**By Lawrence Martin**

In recent months, Mercedes Place, a local bar in the Lower 9th Ward has been cited for being a "nuisance". These allegations have called for the Black Council of Elders to convene a special meeting tomorrow May 15, 2014, 2:30 p.m. at Mercedes Place.

(Public Invited) Despite that this bar predominately caters to elderly/senior patrons, of the average age of 50+ years old, with one of its oldest patrons who frequent this establishment, in the 90s, vicious efforts are being made to have Mercedes

Place Bar License revoked at the hands of greed.

Ms. Mercedes Gibson, a senior citizen also, is the owner and operator of Mercedes Place, and has been for nearly 30 years. Her business has been a gathering place for seniors to gather and express themselves and talk about issues that are important to them and their community.

The grounds for the complaint is that Mercedes Place was a nuisance, developed out of the hidden agenda of some developers who want her property, and a distant neighbor who wants to associate criminal activities that take place

within a six-block vicinity, and attribute it to her establishment. These mis-characterizations have resulted in imposed sanctions that are unconsciously and perhaps unconstitutional to Ms. Mercedes' rights, as described in a judgment ruling imposed by the City of New Orleans in 2013.

One major key element concerning due process before the ABO Board today is the NEED for the ABO Board to allow a continuance of Ms. Mercedes Gibson hearing, which will take place this Monday, May 20, 2014, 10 a.m. in the City Council Chambers, in order that she

may do the following:

- Have the opportunity to hire an Attorney to assess specific violations of items in the consent judgment;
- Assess the deprivation of Property Rights as a registered minority and senior citizen business owner;
- Allow sufficient time to address the serious denial of due process because the Petition does not address the enjoyment of property and business;
- The disparate treatment as compared with similar business in the community;
- An extension would also allow

her to request and received legal documents that support her responses.

Ms. Gibson has never requested a continuance before the ABO Board. So, to deny her a continuance, would be right out wrong. The denial would affect her livelihood. This rush to judgment would prevent her from adequately defending herself legally. This RUSH to judgment would impact the institution of elders safe place to congregate, and that is right out wrong. This RUSH to judgment would impact her land, and that, is

Right out wrong!

# Wynton Marsalis, Drew Brees to Help Salute Grads at Tulane Commencement

More than 2,800 Tulane graduates, their families and friends; keynote speaker and honorary degree recipient Wynton Marsalis; Carnegie Corporation President Vartan Gregorian and World Bicycle Relief founder F. K. Day, who will also receive honorary degrees; Saints quarterback Drew Brees and Jazz Clarinetist Dr. Michael White, who will each be awarded a Tulane President's Medal.

Other highlights will include the graduation of Devon Walker, who was paralyzed two years ago in a football game against Tulsa; a full academic procession led by gonfalon-bearing graduates; herald trumpets; performances by Dr. Michael White's Original Liberty Jazz Band and Topsy Chapman; confetti cannon blasts; a traditional New Orleans second-line parade and more.

The Commencement Ceremony will take place at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome on Saturday, May 17, 2014 at 9 a.m.



Tulane Football standout Devon Walker will be graduating on Saturday one year after his life changing injury on the field which left him paralyzed but not helpless.



Musical Legend, Wynton Marsalis will receive an Honorary PhD from Tulane University.

## Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

hope to get a better understanding of what their challenges are and how we can help them to not repeat offend and become transformed into an asset to the community."

With the passage and rollout of the Affordable Care Act, the State of Louisiana under Republican Governor Bobby Jindal has chosen to toe the party line something that's affecting the lives of many needy citizens of Louisiana. In this fight Justice and Beyond is working with other groups on fighting against this type of obstruction on health-care and other issues. "We support Medicare expansion and have joined forces with the Jeremiah Group and others that are marching on the State Capitol in addition to writing letters and other forms of civic engagement." In an issue closer to home they are working to thwart the efforts of the Landrieu Administration that's presently working to change some of the regulations around hiring Civil Service workers. "We are working to stop a proposal by Mayor Landrieu who is trying to radically alter Civil Service and we are in support of the protections that are historically given to people working in Civil

Service because we cannot move into an area where politics and political patronage can creep its way into Civil Service hiring practices."

There is a national fight to increase the minimum wage and Justice and Beyond is also involved in that fight. Something that can be very helpful in a City where many of the citizens of the City work in the fast food industry as well as other sectors of the service industry where pay is considerably low and many live below the poverty line; Webster believes that we must find more routes for people to get to the middle-class. He feels that if this were the case many of the issues that come along with poverty would decrease significantly. "We are involved in the fight to increase minimum wage, also we are working to help those employed in the fast food industry and we are also involved with organized labor fighting for fairness in wages and hiring practices. And we are vigilant in our cause to expose this wrongdoing anywhere it occurs and hopefully it can remedy these problems."

Justice and Beyond is organized around change and the fight for justice, but not a formal organiza-

tion; it is people from many walks of life that's come together to fight the righteous fight. In the two years of their existence they are on the frontlines of many of the issues affecting the City and its residents. They plan to continue to meet until they see the righting of the wrongs that persist in New Orleans and beyond. Speaking of how this approach works well, with their loose structure that fosters the forming of new partnerships, bringing together those with a common vision working to stamp out injustice, "We are an eclectic cross section of people fighting together for what's right, and the beauty of what we do is through our forums. We discover people doing the same work, so many new partnerships have been formed and is beneficial in many ways because where one individual or group may be weak their new ally can assist them and these kinds of coalitions build a stronger platform to put pressure on those to eradicate the problems that persists in our communities and this model has worked for us thus far and we plan on keep on utilizing it until we get to our ultimate destination and that is justice for all."



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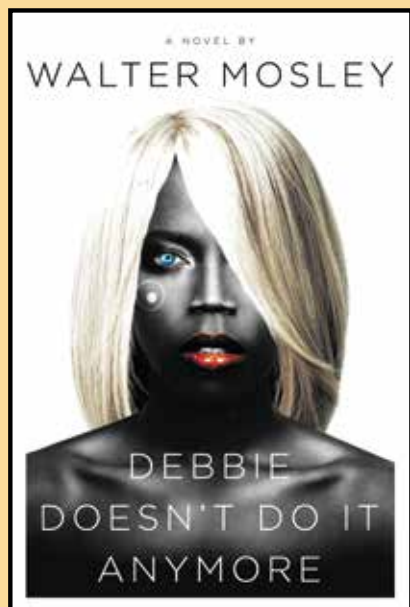
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# A Great Summer Reading Moment



**"Debbie Doesn't Do It Anymore"**  
by Walter Mosley  
c.2014, Doubleday  
\$25.95 / \$30.00 Canada  
266 pages

By The Bookworm Sez

## You need to change things up.

A new sense of style is called-for, a new job, new digs, maybe a new outlook on everything. Out with the old, in with the new, different, exciting.

Your old life isn't working for you these days and that goes doubly for Debbie Dare. In the new book "Debbie Doesn't Do It Anymore" by Walter Mosley, it'll be time for a change – if she survives.

The day that Debbie Dare learned of her husband's death had started out like any other. She went to work, naked, on her back, and wished her co-star would hurry up as she feigned passion for yet another porn film.

But there was no faking her surprise when she arrived home at the end of the day and found the front yard filled with cops. The housekeeper had found Debbie's husband, Theon, dead. He'd accidentally electrocuted himself in the bathtub – along with a naked teenager who was apparently auditioning for Theon's films.

Debbie supposed she loved Theon. He didn't beat her. They were as compatible as was possible, but he spent too much money – a fact that was underscored



Author, Walter Mosley

when a loan shark showed up at the door, hours after Theon's death, and demanded that Debbie pay up on the money Theon borrowed.

## It was the last straw.

Once upon a time, Debbie Dare was known as Sandra Peel. She was her parents' only daughter, the middle child of three, and she was wild. At fifteen, she was working on her knees in a parking lot, which was where she met the much-older Theon and her life changed. It was about to change again because, though Theon had left her broke and she

was about to be homeless, Debbie was done with porn.

Or was she? When the loan shark sold his debt to an L.A. mobster, Debbie was given an ultimatum: pay up or act again, a choice that she wasn't going to make. She suddenly saw the porn industry for what it was. The only passion she had was for a "handsome man" named Suicide, "all silence and smiles" and urges to die...

You know those old black-&-white war movies, where soldiers try to outrun exploding artillery shells? This book is something like that: it's run-run-BOOM, run-run-BOOM all the way to the end of "Debbie Doesn't Do It Anymore."

And that's quite a surprise: Debbie Dare is no Easy Rawlins, and she's not Socrates – two things that every fan of author Walter Mosley will want to know. There are hints of both of Mosley's most famous characters, but this book is much more explicit than his past few novels. That's not a bad thing, once you get into the heart of this most excellent story but it definitely bears mentioning – especially if profanity isn't your cup of tea.

If you don't mind X-rated scenes, though, and you need your Mosley fix, then this is the book you need to find. For you, "Debbie Doesn't Do It Anymore" will surely be a big change.

Visit [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com) for more photos from these events

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# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

## NDF 19th Annual House Party Gala 2014

By Glenn Summers

On Saturday, May 10, 2014, the Neighborhood Development Foundation (NDF) hosted its 19th Annual House Party fundraiser at First NBC Bank, located at 210 Baronne Street. The festive event began with a Patron Party which was followed by a fun filled gala. The evening was filled with food, fun, dancing, and a silent and live auction. House Party provides the critical financial support that has enabled NDF to provide its programs at an affordable modest cost to the many participants who have achieved the goal of home-ownership.



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# A Slow Response to Nigerian Atrocity



**Julianne Malveaux**  
NNPA Columnist

Long after completing his 8-year presidency, William Jefferson Clinton acknowledged that he should have intervened in the conflict in Rwanda. Hundreds of thousands perished from the genocide that shaped the country. In his zeal for international peace President Clinton intervened in Ireland, the Middle East and Bosnia. He acknowledged that had the United States intervened in Rwanda, at least 300,000 deaths may have been prevented.

Now nearly 300 Nigerian girls have been kidnapped from their school by an extremist group that calls themselves Islamic (I don't know of any legitimate Islamic group that approves of this kind of activity). Beyond the 300 stolen from their schools for the sole purpose of marrying them off, or selling them, it is not clear how many others have been taken from their schools. This extremist group opposes "Western education and uses their beliefs to justify their action.

Some have shrugged that this is a "cultural" or internal matter that Nigerians must settle among themselves. The United States and the United Nations are nodding on Nigeria if they choose to do little more than offer lip service in this crisis situation. It has been documented in Bosnia and Rwanda that rape was an instrument of war. What about Nigeria?

Dozens gathered outside the

White House and outside the Nigerian Embassy to plead that the powers that be "bring back our girls." First Lady Michelle Obama has also carried a sign to that effect. Nearly a month after the girls were seized the international community has begun to pay attention to this vile kidnapping. Again, this capture may well be the tip of the iceberg. Who knows how many girls have been captured from their homes or their schools.

Women have too often been tools in genocide, yet too often this form of genocide has been ignored. The United Nations spews pithy pronouncements and declares one year or another the year of human rights. But as former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton has often declared, "women's rights are human rights."

Now, every woman in the United States Senate has called for relief for kidnapped girls in Nigeria,

President Barack Obama, referencing his own daughters, has offered relief. There have been "high level" meetings to talk about the ways that U.S. can intervene in this repugnant situation.

Our intervention is spot on, but why did it take so long? Were these Bosnian women would there have been so much "deliberation?" As grateful as I am for U. S. intervention, the pace of it saddens me. Were we nodding on Nigeria?

The status of women and girls should be a global concern. Nigeria is one of the countries that visibly impose inequality. We have intervened in human rights that have no gender component all over the world, but have been notably silent when the African continent is involved. We say that these are "internal matters" that countries must settle on their own, but when human rights activists are massacred in China, we

manage to get involved.

To again quote Hilary Clinton, "women's rights are human rights." To suggest that women deserve any less is to deny our humanity all over the world. We cannot fight for social and economic justice by taking weapons from half of the army. The women who have experienced direct subjugation are often, also, the most passionate spokespeople.

Our country has been a champion of human rights all over the world, and when we nod on Nigeria we are suggesting that women's rights do not matter. We know about 300 Nigerian girls today. How many will we learn about tomorrow? How many in another country. How many will be swallowed in world patriarchy because we refuse to act?

Julianne Malveaux is a Washington, D.C.-based economist and writer. She is President Emerita of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, N.C.

## A Better Way to Compensate College Athletes



**George C. Curry**  
NNPA

Athletes at Northwestern University shocked the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the governing body of college sports, by taking steps to unionize student/athletes. Surprisingly, NBA Hall of Famer Bill Russell, former NFL great Jim Brown and Harry Edwards, who organized a human rights protest at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City that culminated in Tommy Smith and John Carlos giving a clenched fist salute when they mounted the winners platform, do not support the idea.

It's not that Bill Russell, Jim Brown or Harry Edwards have mellowed – they have not. Rather, they think there's a better way to help athletes who generate \$500 billion a year to major universities, athletic vendors and others.

"I am totally against the unions in college," Brown said. "I don't like the NCAA. I think it's a greedy organization, a dictatorial organization, an organization that's totally unfair to the players...But on the other hand, I think we have all gotten away from the value of an education."

Russell and Brown made their comments recently as part of a sports panel moderated by Edwards at the University of Texas. The discussion was part of 3-day summit at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Russell said the NCAA's money machine should be viewed within the context of other successful U.S. businesses.

"All great fortunes are amassed on cheap or slave labor," he explained. "The NCAA – the one group everybody is focusing on – has this money machine. To keep it this way, the labor force has to be free or paid low wages."

As Everett Glenn, a former sports agent, pointed out in a 3-part series for the NNPA News Service: "College sports is big business – for

everyone except the athletes who make it possible. College basketball and football have long operated as quasi-farm systems for professional teams by discovering talent, training players, and highlighting performance."

For example, Glenn noted, "Black athletes represent 52.9 percent of Ohio State University's basketball and football rosters and dominate among its star players, fueling a nearly \$130 million athletic department budget on a campus where Black males represent only 2.7 percent of the student body. The disparity between the graduation rate for OSU's Black football players, at 38 percent, and all student-athletes, at 71 percent, represent the highest disparity in the Big-10."

If colleges are serving as farm teams for the pros, players are spending less and less time on the farm.

This year, for example, Kentucky freshmen basketball stars Julius Randle and James Young have announced that they will enter the 2014 NBA draft. It's one-and-done for the Wildcats. Randle is projected to be among the top five picks, which means he may earn \$6.1 to

\$7.5 million over two years.

But many pro athletes have received a truckload of money, only to squander it. Terrell Owens, Allen Iverson, Antoine Walker are just a few who come to mind.

Sports Illustrated reported that by the time former NFL players have been retired for two years, 78 percent of them "have gone bankrupt or are under financial stress because of joblessness or divorce." Within five years of retirement, approximately 60 percent of former NBA players are broke.

Athletes have to cope with other issues as well, said Harry Edwards

"Fifteen percent of the athletes who show up for the combine having already been in concussion situations before they even get to the NFL – and concussions are not something that you get over. That's something the unions can't address."

Instead of unions, Edwards said, the emphasis should be put on making sure athletes get an education so that even if they end up broke, they will have other skills with which to support themselves.

"When we talk about young students, I think there are other con-

siderations that take priority over the monetary aspect," Edwards told me after a press conference in Austin, Texas. "Money shifts the focus even more than already is the case and away from the education imperative that these institutions are obligated and should be committed to delivering on."

Edwards said rather than rushing into the pros. Student/athletes should have scholarships that allow them to complete college within six years. For those who complete their education in four years, they should be given another two years for graduate study.

"Ninety-eight percent of athletes who play college football will never be on a professional roster," Edwards explained. "They are going to have to go with what they achieve educationally."

He should know. Edwards has a Ph.D in sociology from Cornell University and has been a longtime professor at the University of California-Berkeley.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine, is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA.)



# Spiritually Speaking...

*When in Doubt, Go Home!*



**James Washington**  
Guest Columnist

For most of my life I have been the kind of person who found it hard to ask anybody for anything. Asking for help was like declaring defeat. So I spent a good portion of my adult life consumed with making it on my own. The joke on me was that I had just enough success to actually believe that what I achieved was done so, mostly by my own devices. I've since learned that personal or professional success with said perspective can be dangerous and in some

cases, spiritually lethal. In a world where you think you're the reason you got it going on, you give God no credit. As a matter of fact, giving God any praises when you believe it's all about you actually goes contrary to the spotlight you think you've created for and by yourself.

In this instance God becomes an intruder sharing in the spoils of your supposed victories. After all wasn't it your guile and wily ways that got you where you are today? Your life becomes a game of get over, keep away and I've got mine, now you get yours. People don't say this publicly, but, if you know anyone who operates this way, you also know that over time they begin to look and sound quite foolish. Do you know anyone who has fallen from their own self made perch? I believe God gives us all a chance. Free will allows us to choose right from wrong, good

or bad, Him or the devil. In the long run it's up to us, but I have to believe the Lord lets each of us know, wherever we wind up, the right choice was always Him. We are now and will forever be His "love" children, whether we admit it or not.

Have you ever noticed that the older you get the smarter your parents become? I swear by the time you reach middle age, your folks are downright brilliant. If the truth be told, they don't change. You do. Like our parents, God is waiting, sometimes patiently, for a change in us. Any advance towards him is met with open arms and spiritual kisses. Let me continue my analogy. It is very often hard to admit that Mom and Dad were right all along. Begrudgingly, or maybe never, you finally realized the only thing that kept you from listening to someone who loved you deeply, kept you from hearing someone

who tried to save you from yourself, kept you from heeding the advice of someone who only had your best interest at heart, was your single minded determination to stay stuck on stupid. At this point of revelation, when it's our parents, you don't have to say much. All you have to do is show up. Mama knows. Big Momma knows. Aunt Mary knows and they all agree whether to tell Daddy or not. The important thing is you're home and you're okay. If you're lucky, you haven't wrecked your life permanently. And even if you have they still love you and that fact goes a long way towards your ultimate survival. You draw strength from it.

When it's the Lord, something special also happens. You let go. You let God. Arrogance gives way to humility. Ego is transformed into submission and pride disappears altogether. Just show up on Daddy's doorstep and not only is

all forgiven, He throws a party in your honor. I believe that's why so many people cry when they come home to the Lord. The recognition is there that before the "I'm sorry" exits your mouth, forgiveness is understood. The reality that He saved you before you asked just increases the emotional outburst of knowing you're back home. It's easier to accept this from family, because we take them for granted most of our lives anyway. It's more difficult to accept this from God because we don't really accept or understand the risk of taking Him for granted until it's almost too late.

Like I said, take this from someone who knows. I thank God all the time for showing me the way home in the midst of my madness and my chaos. I pray the same for you.

May God bless and keep you always.....

## Home Style

# Brighten Up Your Shade Gardens

By MG Calla Victoria

Usually when we think of shade gardens we consider planting hostas and a few other plants that can survive in those low-light conditions. In most cases shade-loving plants don't give you an explosion of color that you get from sun-loving plants. However there is an exception to that rule, bromeliads are shade-loving and can provide Technicolor interest in a shady area. Many of the species are epiphytes, meaning they don't even need soil to grow so they can be nestled in the branches of a tree or attached to almost anything. The epiphytes are commonly known as "air plants" because they can survive on the humidity in the air for nourishment. However the ones that are not in soil must be misted daily to prosper if kept indoors. If kept outdoors, you don't have to do anything to them because the dew and humidity will give them all they need.

The neoregelia species of the bromeliad family has the largest varieties of plant specimens of all of the bromeliads, and includes every color of the rainbow from the brightest yellows to the deep-



est hues of wine and purple. Neos are coveted for their colorful foliage and not for their blooms, which are hardly visible and sets down deep in the cup of the plant resembling a pin cushion. Other species of bromeliads which lack luster foliage,

boast amazing blooms that can last for months. Then still other bromeliads have interesting textures and shapes. One of my personal favorites is the Quesnelia 'Tim Plowman.' It has very tall stiff spotted foliage that forms a deep tight curl

at the very top; it reminds me of a tall vase. When it blooms it sends out a hot pink inflorescence that really stands out against the dusty gray-green mottled foliage. Then there are the Cryphtanthus variety of bromeliads that are called "earth

stars" because they really look like starfish with variegated, ruffled, delicate foliage. All bromeliads are no-care if kept outside and minimal care if kept indoors.

If I have wet your appetite about bromeliad there is another tidbit of information that you are going to love. Bromeliads multiply by giving off little baby plants that are called "pups or offshoots." After the mother plant blooms she pushes out the pups and you can slice them off the mother and have more bromeliads. So there is no hassle of trying to root a cutting to propagate these plants, the mother plant does all of the work. All you have to do is separate the pups from the mother plant when the pup is half the size of the mother plant. There are numerous videos online demonstrating how to separate the pups from the mother plant. Theoretically the mother plant will give off as many pups as leaves in her foliage, in most cases four or five pups.

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

Check out my "Gardening Tip of the Week @ [www.thegardeningdiva.com](http://www.thegardeningdiva.com).

# Insufficient Vitamin D Linked to Prostrate Cancer in Blacks

By Jazelle Hunt

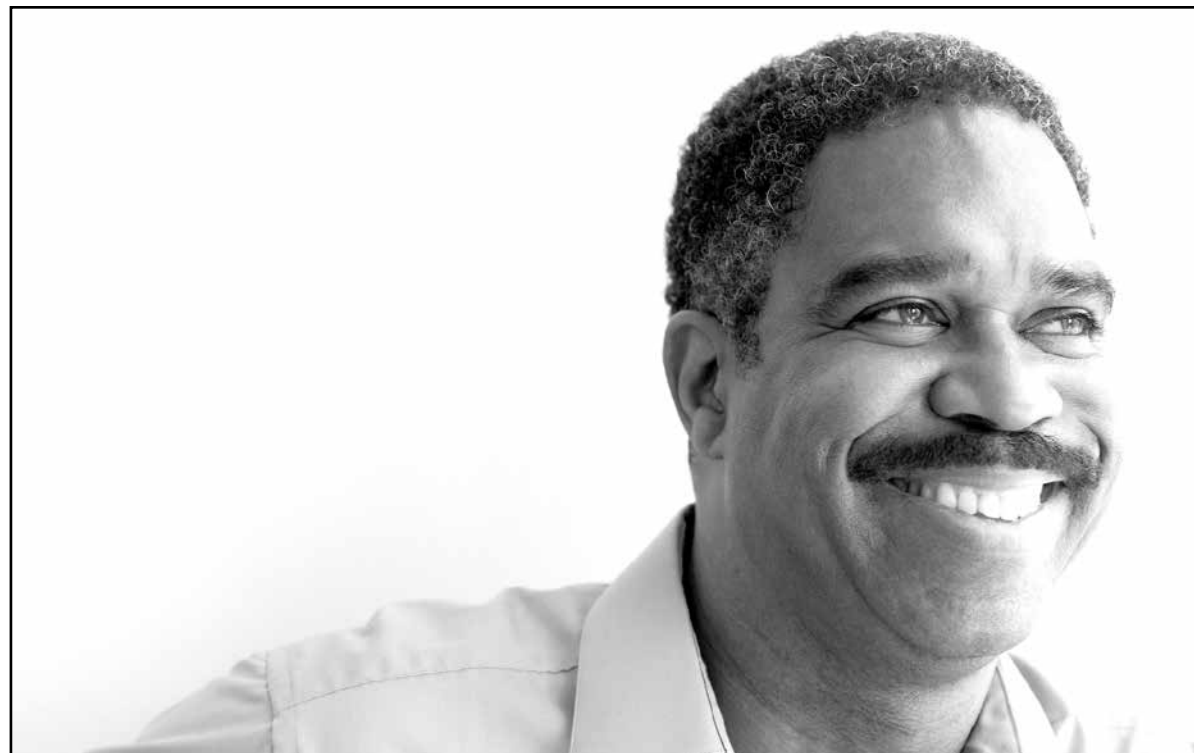
NNPA Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — The relationship between melanin and vitamin D—the nutrient that sunlight provides—may explain why African American, Caribbean, and men of African ancestry have the highest rates of prostate cancer than anyone in the world, according to a new study.

The study by a team of researchers at Northwestern University, which appears in this month's issue of *Clinical Cancer Research*, finds that vitamin D deficiency is associated with increased risk of diagnosis among Black men—but not among White men.

"Our report is the first to describe the association of vitamin D deficiency and outcomes of prostate biopsies in high-risk men with an abnormal [blood test or clinical exam]," the study states. "If vitamin D is involved in prostate cancer initiation or progression, it would provide a modifiable risk factor for primary prevention and secondary prevention to limit progression, especially in the highest risk group of African American men."

Among American men, prostate cancer is the most common cancer, and the second leading cause of cancer deaths. One in seven American men will develop it in their lifetime. However, Black men are 60 percent more likely than Whites to be affected, according to the American Cancer



A new study suggests that Black men with low vitamin D levels have a higher risk of prostate cancer.

Society. Although the mortality rate is among the lowest of all cancers, it is more than twice as high for Black men than White men. (The incidence of prostate cancer is low among Latino and Asian men).

It's especially a concern for men over 50, as the risk of onset rises steadily over time; cancer (in general) is the number one cause of death for Black men age 65 to 84 in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The study tested the vitamin D levels of nearly 700 men in the Chicago area undergoing their first prostate biopsies, which is the usual recommendation after an abnormal test result or clinical exam. Researchers found that while severely low vitamin D levels were associated with more aggressive tumors, across race, African American men with even moderately low vitamin D levels had higher odds of being diagnosed after that initial biopsy. There was no similar link among the White men studied.

Vitamin D primarily allows the body to absorb calcium, but it also plays a role in regulating cell growth and creation. Although the nutrient can be found in a handful of foods—most significantly in fatty seafood, such as wild-caught salmon—the body primarily creates its own vitamin D by absorbing sunlight. Melanin, which naturally blocks the sun's ultraviolet (UV)

rays, alters this process.

"The darker the color of the skin, the less effective sunlight is in producing vitamin D in skin," says Dr. Donald Trump, president and CEO of the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, the first cancer center in the nation. (Trump was not involved in this particular study). "An African American person is more likely to have lower levels of vitamin D than a European person, because the same amount of sun exposure doesn't generate the same amount of vitamin D for darker skin as it does for lighter skin."

Additionally, people who are overweight are more likely to have low vitamin D levels. According to 2011 data from the Office of Minority Health, 70 percent of African American men 20 years and older are overweight or obese. The National Cancer Institute asserts that studies have shown obese men to be at greater risk for aggressive

sive prostate cancer than men at a healthy weight.

"The fatter I get, the lower my vitamin D level goes, because it gets absorbed into body fat instead of my blood. That could be one possible explanation for the [racial] disparities in data," Trump said. "So maybe vitamin D is just a surrogate or marker for obesity. You see a few of these confounding factors in the vitamin D literature."

Although the association between vitamin D and cancer has already been discovered and is still being explored, this study takes a targeted look at how this link manifests differently between Blacks and Whites. There is still controversy in the medical community regarding how significant this link is, or if it has real-world treatment or prevention implications. Further complicating matters, a study released last year in the *New England Journal of Medicine* asserts that Black people generally do have sufficient vitamin D levels—it's just a different, more readily-available form than the one measured by the standard test.

"We know a lot about the fact that in a lab test tube or animal, the active form of vitamin D can moderate, slow, or stop prostate tumor cells, and at high doses can even kill them. We don't know yet whether treating people with vitamin D will reduce the chance of getting [cancer]," Trump said.

He recommends a vitamin D-level test for his patients who are diagnosed with prostate cancer. In his experience, at least 70 percent diagnosed men are deficient, and he does prescribe supplements.

"We don't know for sure that it makes a difference, but I believe it does," Trump said. "I think there is a distinct possibility that low vitamin D levels might contribute to the severity of prostate cancer in African American men—but we don't have proof of that at the moment."

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# Civil Rights and Education Justice Groups File Title VI Complaints in Chicago, New Orleans and Newark

## Civil Rights Complaint and New Report Detail Discriminatory Impact of School Closures and Privatization on Students of Color

WASHINGTON – This week marks the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine for public schools. But 60 years later, stark inequities remain in public education and communities of color are still fighting to make the promise of *Brown* a reality. One of the most striking examples is predominately African-American and Latino communities being targeted for school closings – with students re-enrolled in different schools, or neighborhood schools turned over to private companies.

Today the Journey for Justice Alliance (a coalition of community and education justice organizations across 21 cities) and the national civil rights organization Advancement Project took bold action. On behalf of Journey for Justice organizations, Advancement Project filed three complaints under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination in use of federal funds, alleging discrimination in Newark, New Jersey; Chicago and New Orleans – each a city deeply impacted by school closures. The complaints, which detail the racially discriminatory impact of school closures and privatization on children of color, were filed with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, as well as with the U.S. Department of Justice. Details in the complaint include:

In Chicago, 50 public schools were closed during the last school year alone. These closures targeted African-American communities, with Black students accounting for only 43 percent of all Chicago students but making up 87 percent of the students affected by the closures.

With the dramatic rate of school closures and the expansion of charter schools in New Orleans, the city's Recovery School District has only five remaining traditional public schools and is on its way to being the nation's first all-charter school district.



Newark's public schools have been under state control since 1995, with no local control or community accountability for nearly 20 years. As a result, Newark communities are powerless to stop New Jersey's plan to close neighborhood schools – many of which are generational schools that fathers and grandmothers of current schoolchildren had attended years before.

"So-called school 'reformers' have consistently shown that they are more willing to subject children of color to unproven education practices," said Jitu Brown, National Coordinator for the Journey for Justice Alliance. "They are less concerned with providing experienced teachers and small class sizes, and less willing to accept that our communities know what is best for our children. Young people should not be treated as collateral damage in these failed and discriminatory educational experiments."

"In each of the cities where we filed Title VI complaints, African-American children are being uprooted, shuffled around and ultimately sent to schools that are no better than the one that closed," said Advancement Project Co-Director Judith Browne Dianis.

"Districts are shirking their responsibility to educate our children and instead are giving multi-million dollar contracts to companies to do the job. In each city, African-American students' hopes of equal educational opportunities are being dashed."

Also today, Journey for Justice released a report on the real-life impacts of school closings and privatization. Entitled *Death by a Thousand Cuts: Racism, School Closures, and Public School Sabotage*, the report provides a searing look at the national pattern of school districts setting community schools up to fail through policies including high stakes testing-based accountability systems, and enrollment policies that concentrate the most disadvantaged students in a few schools without providing the needed resources. Once these schools consequently suffer under-enrollment and financial shortfalls, public officials then justify closing them.

As the report details, school closures not only hurt educational outcomes; they have far-reaching negative consequences for children of color and their communities. For example, since 2001, 20 area schools near Chicago's Dyett

High School have been closed, converted to charter or selective enrollment schools, or subjected to other "turnaround" strategies. Students have been displaced multiple times, leading to increased community violence as well as emotional and academic harms to area youth. When schools close, people lose their jobs and their families suffer as a result. Residents lose community services housed in schools, such as pre-K programs and health clinics. Meanwhile, there is no empirical evidence that closing schools down is beneficial to students' education.

"Under the guise of education reform, corporate profiteers and politicians have zeroed in on Black communities, leaving behind devastation and destabilization," said Debra Jones of the New Orleans organization Conscious Concerned Citizens Controlling Community Changes (C-6). "The approach of closing, turning around and privatizing schools has not only kept public education separate and unequal, but increasingly not public at all."

"In the process of school closings and turnarounds, public education has been put under the control of a powerful few while taking away community accountability and involvement," said Karran Harper Royal, an education advocate with the New Orleans organization Coalition for Community Schools.

"We cannot tolerate anyone telling us that these policies are for our own good," said Sharon Smith, president and CEO of the Newark, New Jersey organization Parents Unified for Local School Education (PULSE). "Research shows that school closures, privatization and charter school expansion have not produced higher-quality education for young people. Our lived experience shows that these policies cause emotional harm to our youth and devastate our neighborhoods."

"These educational experiments target communities of color as solutions to a problem that *Brown v. Board of Education* should have solved – the need for access to a fair, quality education," said J. Brian Malone, executive director of Chicago's Kenwood Oakland Community Organization. "Instead, education 'reformers' have created a system of failed education policies that continues to burden youth of color."

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A Black man with short hair and a goatee, wearing a grey cardigan over a purple shirt, is gesturing with his hands while speaking. He is in a classroom or office setting with various items in the background, including orange geometric wireframe structures, a pink sticky note, and a red wall.

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