Uptown Music Theatre
Planting the Seeds of Greatness through Art
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By Edwin Buggage

Planting the Seeds of Greatness through Art

The arts in the African-American community as is on the continent of Africa and in the Diaspora is like blood running through the veins of a people giving them life. It is more than just something that is a museum piece to be observed and marveled at or something separate from the everyday realities of life. Delfeayo Marsalis for over a decade has become a leader in passing on this tradition to young people through his Uptown Musical Theatre. Where he takes young people and uses the arts to help them tap into their greatness, teaching them lessons that go far beyond the stage. Speaking of the origins of the program Marsalis says, “It started in 2000, it was mainly for kids to have an opportunity to get dramatic arts education. So the idea was to have professional teachers, also it is based on the NOCCA model of when I was in high school. It is about training kids on a professional level. They are taught the same

Pictured above: Servant (Nya Lombard), President Roosevelt (Delfeayo Marsalis), and Annie (Jaelynn Ricks). Annie learns from President Roosevelt that her real parents are dead.

On the Cover: Annie (Jaelynn Ricks) comforts Molly (Nala Hamilton) after she has a nightmare in the opening scene.
Cover Story, Continued from previous page.

Ms Grace Farrell (Talaiire Ducre), Lily St. Regis (Kya Henderson), Rooster (Wynton Jones), Annie (Hilary Vaucresson), and Oliver Warbucks (Lloyd Dillon). Rooster and Lily try to run a con on Oliver Warbucks pretending to be Ralph and Shirley Mudge, Annie’s parents in order to get the $50,000 Warbucks promised for anyone that could prove they were Annie’s parents.

The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow: UMT Brings Annie to the Stage

In past years UMT have produced many shows starring the kids in addition to competing and winning in national theater competitions. This year UMT brought to the stage “Annie," it is to coincide with a Broadway production that will feature an African-American in the lead role. Speaking of his production of “Annie" and the theater festival with kids from across the country of all backgrounds and we have won awards three years in a row. That says a lot about the effectiveness of our program and our kids and their commitment to be the best.

For his production the role of Annie was double cast, with 10 year old Jaelynn Ricks and 8 year old Hilary Vaucresson playing the lead role. Jaelynn Ricks has been with UMT for four years and was excited to play the role of Annie and have learned a lot in the time she has spent at UMT that she applies both on and off the stage, “I had a lot of fun playing Annie and in my four years with UMT I have learned a lot of things, I have learned how to project, how to stay focused on one thing, how to get a point across. It’s also helped me do better in school with reading, because before I didn’t like to read but now I love it and I am reading more.”

The things that are taken away that one applies beyond the stage are a fact not lost on many of the parents who enroll their children in UMT. Vance Vaucresson, the father of Hilary Vaucresson who was also cast as Annie. This is his first year enrolling his daughter in UMT and he sees the immediate impact it’s had on her.

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It’s Back to School for the Eastbank Collaborative of Charter Schools (ECCS)!

The Eastbank Collaborative of Charter Schools (ECCS) invites you to come visit! We’re proud of our schools and excited to get back to work.

Back to School Dates:

- Grades PK-2: August 11 (1-8), August 18 (PK & K)
- Lower School (PK-3): August 11 (9-12)
- Upper School (4-8): August 11 (9-12)
- Elementary/Willow Campus (K-5): August 20 & 21 (K)
- Year round school: July 21 - August 28
- Year round school: August 12 (9-12)
- Academy (NOMMA): August 13 (1-12), August 20 & 21 (K)
- New Orleans Military and Maritime Academy (NOMMA): August 12-19
- New Campus: August 15 (9th only), August 18 (9th only)
- New Orleans, LA 70122

**ECCS Locations:**
- **Einstein Charter School & Extension (PK-8)**
  - August 11 (9-12)
  - 3019 Canal St., NOLA 70119 (504) 324-7400
- **Audubon Charter School (PK-8)**
  - August 18 (K-8), August 20 (PK4), August 27 (PK3)
  - 6101 Chatham Dr., NOLA 70122 (504) 324-7100
- **Upper School (4-8):**
  - 1111 Milan St., NOLA 70115 (504) 324-7110
- **Middle/High School (6-12):**
  - 5624 Freret St., NOLA 70115 (504) 304-3960
- **International School of Louisiana, ISL (K-8)**
  - August 18 (1-8), August 20 (Kindergarten)
  - Uptown Campus (K-8): 1400 Camp St., NOLA 70130 (504) 654-1098
  - Westbank Campus (K-2): 502 Olivier St., NOLA 70114 (504) 274-4571
  - Jefferson Parish Campus (K-8): 8101 Simon Street, Metairie, LA 70003 (504) 934-4875
  - Lusher Charter (K-12): August 13 (1-12), August 20 & 21 (K)
  - Elementary/Willow Campus (K-5): 7315 Willow St., NOLA 70118 (504) 862-5110
  - New Campus:
    - 1400 Camp St., NOLA 70130
    - 2001 Leon C. Simon Dr., NOLA 70129 (504) 934-4875
    - 425 O’Bannon St, NOLA 70146 (504) 274-4571
    - 490 Harrison Ave, NOLA 70124 (504) 324-7160
    - 990 Harrison Ave, NOLA 70124 (504) 324-7160
    - International High School of New Orleans (9-12)
      - August 15 (9th only), August 18 (10-12)
      - 272 Carondelet St., NOLA 70130 (504) 613-5703

**Grades to work:**

- Grades PK & K
- Grades 1-8
- Grades 9-12

**Contact Information:**

- **ECCS Office:**
  - 12000 Hayne Blvd., NOLA 70128 (504) 324-7061

**Charter Schools (ECCS) invites you to come visit!**

**Data News Weekly is Hiring**

Data News Weekly Newspaper, The People’s Paper, is hiring for two positions in our New Orleans Office.

**Editor/Reporters**

**About the Job**

Journalists — tired of reading of layoffs, closings, the dire straights of the profession? Recent college graduates — think your job prospects are bleak? Not with us!

At Columbia-Greene Media, we are expanding! We are currently seeking a strong leader to proactively manage broad aspects of the advertising division. You will be working in a positive team-oriented atmosphere which has a modern press, leading website and award-winning newspaper.

Responsibilities include but not limited to:

- Develop a team sales atmosphere
- Increase overall revenue opportunities in both print and digital product lines
- Drive online and cross platform advertising sales
- Identify, create strategies, develop influential contacts, and help close new digital products
- Increase overall revenue opportunities in both print and online
- Develop a team sales atmosphere

Our ideal candidate will possess the following education, skills and experience:

- Minimum 5 years print and digital sales and manager experience
- Self-starters, capable of executing within all phases of sales cycle
- Strong relationship building and client service background
- Strong organizational, communication and presentation skills
- Team player and leader
- Understanding of Analytics and ad serving technology
- Strong motivational skills
- Recruiting talent

Our company provides a competitive salary, and an environment that encourages personal and professional growth.

If you are interested in a rewarding career, email a cover letter and resume to terrybjones@bellsouth.net or mail to: Data News Weekly, c/o Terry Jones, Publisher, 3501 Napoleon Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70125

**Sales Manager/Retail Ad Manager**

**About the Job**

Data News Weekly Newspaper is the leading African American media company in New Orleans, publishing a weekly newspaper. Additionally, its website under ladatanews.com is the most read Black website in the region.

We are currently seeking a strong leader to proactively manage broad aspects of the advertising division. You will be working in a positive team-oriented atmosphere which has a modern press, leading website and award-winning newspaper.

Responsibilities include but not limited to:

- Prospect and develop sales leads for print and digital product lines
- Drive online and cross platform advertising sales
- Identify, create strategies, develop influential contacts, and help close new digital products
- Increase overall revenue opportunities in both print and online
- Develop a team sales atmosphere

Our ideal candidate will possess the following education, skills and experience:

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- Strong organizational, communication and presentation skills
- Team player and leader
- Understanding of Analytics and ad serving technology
- Strong motivational skills
- Recruiting talent

Our company provides a competitive salary, and an environment that encourages personal and professional growth. We are an equal opportunity employer.

If you are interested in a rewarding career, email a cover letter and resume to terrybjones@bellsouth.net or mail to: Data News Weekly, c/o Terry Jones, Publisher, 3501 Napoleon Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70125
New Orleans City Planning Commission Releases Final Draft of City’s Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

The New Orleans City Planning Commission (CPC) released the Final Draft of the City’s Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO). The CZO is the law that governs land use throughout the city of New Orleans. The CZO includes lists of permitted land uses for each of the City’s zoning districts, in addition to height limits, setback requirements, urban design standards, operational rules, and other regulations. The release of the Final Draft CZO culminates nearly three years of review by CPC staff and consultants and includes refinements based on concerns raised by residents and neighborhood associations, as well as from interactions with City agencies, citizen advisory groups, various interest groups, and business community leaders.

“The New Orleans has made great strides planning and rebuilding in the years since Hurricane Katrina,” Mayor Mitch Landrieu said. “The CZO builds on this momentum by incorporating the vision, priorities, and goals that New Orleanians have been working toward since the storm. The CZO is a crucial step to implementing the City’s Master Plan and creates a blueprint for development moving forward.”

The First Draft CZO was released in 2011. Initial input was gathered at a series of Neighborhood Planning District meetings attended by more than 2,000 residents. In October 2013, the CPC released a Second Draft CZO and held ten community meetings across New Orleans that was attended by 1,500 residents. During the public comment period, over 1,000 written comments were received. CPC also hosted approximately 30 follow-up meetings with various neighborhood, business, and interest groups to discuss the Second Draft CZO.

Some of the key attributes of the Final Draft CZO include:

- Adjustments to ensure that the administration of the ordinance is consistent, predictable, and understandable;
- The replacement of the cumulative zoning structure with place-based zoning districts;
- Design controls and review processes to preserve neighborhood character;
- New requirements to guarantee meaningful neighborhood input;
- Clear standards for sites and uses that allow flexibility and protection adjacent uses;
- New parking standards to reflect on-the-ground realities of historic and non-historic areas of the City;
- Landscaping and storm water management standards.

AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

The Final Draft CZO can be viewed on the CPC’s website at www.nola.gov/cpc. Beginning Monday, July 28, 2014, copies of the Final Draft CZO are available at the following New Orleans Public Libraries:

- New Orleans Public Main Library
  219 Loyola Avenue
  New Orleans, LA 70112
- Algiers Regional Library
  3014 Holiday Drive
  New Orleans, LA 70131
- East New Orleans Regional Library
  5641 Read Blvd.
  New Orleans, LA 70127
- Rosa F. Keller Library & Community Center
  4300 S. Broad Street
  New Orleans, LA 70125
- Martin Luther King Library
  1611 Caffin Avenue
  New Orleans, LA 70117
- Norman Mayer Library
  3001 Gentilly Blvd.
  New Orleans, LA 70122
- Robert E. Smith Library
  6301 Canal Blvd.
  New Orleans, LA 70124

The CPC has scheduled hearings on the Final Draft CZO for Tuesday, August 26, 2014 and Tuesday, September 9, 2014. Once CPC approves a recommendation on the Final Draft CZO, it will go to the New Orleans City Council for review.

Blessed 26 College Send Off Celebration

The Blessed 26 Organization and the American New Wave Media Group New Orleans invite you to come celebrate and send off of Mr. Darrell Howard who is on his way to New York to attend Bard College on a full scholarship. The celebration will be hosted by Shawn Barney of Fulton Alley.

Where: 600 Fulton Alley New Orleans LA 70130
Time: 6:30 - 9:30 pm

Guests are welcome and we are asking that everyone bring a monetary gift of any denomination for Darrell so that we can assist him in purchasing airline to travel home and real winter clothes. You will also be able to support the Blessed 26 program and the “Illumination of Invisible Men” Film Project.

Help us inspire you: https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-illumination-of-invisible-men/x/8249565#home
Texture in the Garden

By LMG Calla Victoria
Data News Weekly Columnist

Of course we look for color and fragrance when planning a garden, but texture is an important design element that we must always include to round off garden interest. Texture in the garden is achieved by introducing different kinds of foliage to your garden. Unusual shaped leaves like the Poor Man’s Parasol (Gunnera insignis) with its huge sandpaper-like leaves and scarlet branches definitely command attention.

Some grasses like papyrus add a soft wispiness to the garden while others like bamboo and sugarcane add cylindrical interest, structure and sound. Juniper ground covers add a layer of fullness, cactus and succulents can add texture, color, and sculptural interest in the garden. Cockscomb (Celosia argentea) also known as the wool flower; it’s one of those plants that gives you a 4-fer for your money providing velvety texture, vibrant color in the bloom, contrasting striking color in its chartreuse foliage, as well as the unusual shaped blooms that resembles the comb on a rooster’s head.

Other plants that add textural interest in the garden include the Mimos tree Albizia julibrissin (Persian silk tree, pink silk tree) with its small leaves on linear stems and the powder puffy blooms that add texture and whimsy. The puckered leaf varieties of hostas are a great inexpensive texture tool for the garden, also Lambs Ear, so named for its fuzzy texture. Sedums, Kalanchoe, and other broad leaved succulents like Jade and Hens & Chicks (Sempervivum tectorum), have waxy-like foliage that add a smooth texture to the garden. While succulents like the Aloe cameronii, with curvy spiny foliage, crimson hues, and chandelier shaped orange blooms; brings drama, drama, drama to the landscape.

Of course we cannot discuss texture without including the Foxtail Fern (Asparagus densiflorus var. meyeri), a type of asparagus fern rather than a true fern, a great little textured jewel to enhance any garden room. This unusual evergreen fern with its long tapered plume-like stems resembling a fox’s tail. On your next trip to your favorite garden center, think texture when making your plant selections.

Check our my “Gardening Tip of the Week” at thegardeningdiva.com Remember, never get too business to stop and enjoy the beautiful flowers!
NNPA Legacy Awards Highlights

Photos courtesy of Worsom Robinson

The National Newspaper Publishers Association “The Black Press of America, held its Annual Convention in Portland, Oregon recently. Former San Francisco mayor and Democratic powerbroker Willie Brown received the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) prestigious Legacy Award last week for his distinguished public service. As a proud member of the Black Press of America, Data News Weekly was there.
The High Cost of Injustice

By Walter Fields
Northstarnews.com
NNPA Columnist

It was one of the most difficult scenes in Spike Lee's classic movie "Do the Right Thing," the brutal strangulation of peace-loving Radio Raheem by New York City police in a Brooklyn pizza shop. That scene touched a raw nerve as it recalled the 1983 death of 25-year-old graffiti artist Michael Stewart, another choke-hold victim of the New York City Police Department. Now, we find ourselves engrossed over the police killing of Eric Garner in Staten Island, which was captured on cell phone video as a police officer puts him in a choke hold, with the man pleading that he can't breathe. Garner was taken away unconscious and later pronounced dead. Another day in America.

Let me be clear – Eric Garner was lynched. He was brutally assaul ted and choked to death by a police officer who, supposedly trained, abused his authority with deadly precision. It is not enough to state that the officer used deadly force because when it comes to Black males and police, there is a violent regularity that has persisted for decades. The manner in which Black men and boys are set upon by law enforcement is consistent with their marginalization in society and the degree to which they are a criminalized class. There is no belief in the doubt, no reasonableness, no dialogue – just force and upon the slightest protest on our part, violence and probable injury or death.

We need to be clear and unambiguous about Eric Garner's death in the larger context of the suppression of Black males. What is experienced by Black males on a daily basis is seldom the experience of Whites, and cannot be fathomed by Whites in general. White mothers do not have to counsel their sons on their behavior should they encounter police or worry when their sons step out their door whether they will be a victim of police violence. Even in the most extreme situations when White males are the perpetrators of violent crime, police are in apprehend mode and not in pursuit with deadly intent.

Eric Garner was lynched. He is the most recent case in a gigabyte file of such cases. I have yet to see the movie "Fruitvale Station" because I know how difficult it will be to see the reenactment of the killing of Oscar Grant. It cuts too close to home because I remember the killing of 15-year-old Phillip Pannell by a White Teaneck N.J. police officer in 1990. The boy was shot in the back with his arms raised in surrender mode. The White police officer, Gary Spath, was acquitted by an all-White Bergen County jury. The acquittal came amidst a massive police march through the community in support of the officer. That's the other piece of this ongoing horror show; the closing of the ranks of the blue fraternity and the perpetual denial on the part of law enforcement that these episodes are not the end result of racist intent.

Eric Garner was a victim of racism.

The New York City Police Department is not alone in perpetuating crimes against Black males or operating in a way to violate the civil liberties of Black people. The NYPD just happens to be the largest police force in the country and has perfected the art of police abuse. Last week, the federal government announced the monitoring of the Newark, N.J. police force, which for years residents lodged
My Brother’s Keeper Initiative Is Destroying the Black Male Mentoring Movement

By Phillip Jackson
Founder and Executive Director, The Black Star Project

The White House’s “My Brother’s Keeper” initiative is destroying the Black Male Mentoring Movement in America—decades-long work to save Black boys. Virtually all of the small, community-based agencies that comprise this substantial, historic effort to mentor Black boys have been left out of the overall conversation, the planning, and the funding essential to save Black boys and to chart a new course for their continued survival.

Many of these groups provide training for Black boys and work to adjust the system so they can be dealt with more humanely. The most visible of these groups is Jon Burge, a black Chicago police officer who was convicted for his role in the torture of police suspects. He was convicted in 2010 for lying about the torture of police suspects. He was convicted in 2010 for lying about the torture of police suspects. He was convicted in 2010 for lying about the torture of police suspects.

Fact sheets, press releases and photo-ops will not transform the state of Black men in America. Yet these seem to be the initiative’s most-used tools. A recent study, also out the University of Chicago, claimed there has been little-to-no progress for Black men in America over the past 45 years. The National Assessment of Educational Progress recently reported that only 10% of 8th-grade Black boys in America read at or above a proficient level while the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University reported unemployment rates for various age groups of young Black men and teens are two, three and four times that of non-Black age-related groups.

The murder statistics for young Black men, and for Black and Latino children in Chicago, are astounding and some of the highest statistics for any population in the world. President Obama does not have to go far see and understand the magnitude of challenges, on all levels, faced by Black men and boys. He can simply walk down the block on which he lives in Chicago to see the problem—and the solution. The question is, will he?

Where are the “Brothers” in the “My Brother’s Keeper” initiative? “My Brother’s Keeper” can be a good thing for young Black men in America—just not in its current, shallow iteration. Experienced stakeholders and grassroots leaders need to be a part of this initiative for it to succeed. And this initiative must succeed! It is hypocritical for America to continue to fail/destroy Black men and boys and still consider itself to be one of the greatest, most humanitarian countries in the world.

-- Phillip Jackson
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Commentary, Continued from previous page.

complaints against. Now, it has come to light that officers in New Jersey’s largest city are even suspected of stealing personal property from residents they detain. In Chicago, the former city police commander, Jon Burge, presided over a department that regularly brutalized citizens and he himself was alleged to have engaged in violence. He was convicted in 2010 for lying about the torture of police suspects.

NYPD Chief Bill Bratton’s order that all officers undergo training on the proper techniques to apprehend suspects is too little in light of the brutality of Garner’s death. For starters, every officer on the scene should be dismissed. If officers sworn to uphold the law can witness a citizen being choked to death and not intervene, they are not capable of fulfilling their duty to protect and serve. The video clip clearly shows a man who was not confrontational, who was attempting to defuse the situation and was trying to communicate with the officers. He is taken down by the officers and then thrown to the ground as an officer puts him in a deadly choke hold. Garner can be heard on the video pleading “I can’t breathe,” but his physical condition was of little concern to the officers who were intent on demonstrating that they were the dominant force.

Eric Garner was lynched.

Walter Fields is executive editor of NorthStarNews.com
LSUHSC Initial Site for Lung Cancer Clinical Trial

LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans’ Stanley S. Scott Cancer Center is one of the six initial sites to enroll patients in the Lung Cancer Master Protocol, or Lung-MAP, clinical trial. Sponsored by the National Cancer Institute, Lung-MAP is a collaboration between six major cancer programs and five pharmaceutical companies. For the first time, the trial offers patients with advanced lung cancer a personalized medicine approach to investigational treatments based upon the genetic makeup of their cancers. Lung-MAP uses genomics profiling to match patients to medications targeting the genetic changes fueling the growth of their tumors. Participants will be tested just once using a “master protocol” before being assigned to one of five different clinical trial arms.

New Orleans, in partnership with Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center, will enroll patients at four clinical sites in Louisiana – the Interim LSU Hospital in New Orleans, as well as Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center locations in Houma, St. Tammany and Baton Rouge. The overall goal of the Lung-MAP trial is to enroll a total of 10,000 patients among all sites.

The genomic profile screening uses a comprehensive and sophisticated platform to check more than 200 cancer-related genes for abnormalities. The results of this screening will determine which one of the five arms testing investigational medications will best suit each participant’s individual needs. Lung-MAP is characterized as an innovative approach that will improve a patient’s likelihood of receiving a drug that will work for them while allowing for new therapies in development to be added as the trial progresses. Medications will be provided to participants at no charge.

For more information about the Lung-MAP clinical trial, contact Eileen Mederos, RN, LSUHSC Program Manager, at 504-447-7885.

Cover Story/ Continued from page 3.
Drug Offenders Receive Retroactive Sentence Reductions

By Jazelle Hunt
NNPA Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – In a major move last week, the U.S. Sentencing Commission voted unanimously to moderate federal sentencing guidelines for drug offenses, and apply the guidelines retroactively. Consequently, more than 46,000 currently incarcerated drug offenders – 73 percent of whom are Black or Latino – will now be eligible for a reduction in their sentences.

“This amendment [to the guidelines] received unanimous support from Commissioners because it is a measured approach,” said Judge Patti B. Saris, chair of the commission. “It reduces prison costs and populations and responds to statutory and guidelines changes since the drug guidelines were initially developed, while safeguarding public safety.”

The Sentencing Commission is an independent agency in the federal court system tasked with creating federal prison sentencing policy. Though the amendment is aimed at reducing overcrowding (another of the agency’s responsibilities), there are also implications for the legacy of the war on drugs. The Commission reports that federal prisons are over capacity by 32 percent. In the long run, the amendment could save nearly 80,000 “bed years.”

“We think [the amendment] represents really an historic step forward in terms of making changes to the war on drugs, which has been waged for three decades – and hasn’t really reduced the amount of drugs that are available, and hasn’t done that much about drug abuse, but has filled half our federal prison cells with people with drug offenses,” says Jeremy Haile, federal advocacy counsel for the Sentencing Project, a national incarceration reform, research, and advocacy organization.

“It’s been a particularly devastating blow—the war on drugs—to communities of color. So even though people of all races use and sell drugs at roughly the same rates, Blacks and Latinos are far more likely to be incarcerated for drug offenses.”

The amendment works by raising the drug quantity thresholds that trigger mandatory minimum sentences. Sentencing for federal drug offenses moving forward will use this new threshold, but the amendment is also retroactive. Many offenders’ cases would no longer meet those thresholds.

Offenders must meet seven criteria to be eligible for a revised (and likely reduced) sentence, including: an original sentence longer than the mandatory minimum; no convictions under career criminal guidelines; and no alterations to the original mandatory-minimum sentence through special leniency or assisting authorities.

Starting now, eligible offenders can file a motion to have their cases reviewed and sentences reduced. The courts will review to determine whether reducing the sentence poses a public threat. Motions will be decided on a rolling basis—but actual releases won’t begin until November 1, 2015.

The time allows for a smooth transition. Judges will be able to carefully review each of the eligible 46,290 cases, and prosecutors will have time to object, if desired. Federal probation professionals will have time to prepare to supervise those being released earlier than expected, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons will have time to set up reentry provisions for them.

The commission estimates that those approved will receive a reduction of about two years, on average. Because the eligible cases span a few decades, these early releases will take place over many years. There are a few thousand offenders whose resentencing would allow them to be released immediately on the November date.

This amendment is another step in a slow, but sweeping effort to get a handle on ineffective drug policy. In 2010, the Obama administration released its first plan for drug policy reform, a holistic strategy to address drugs as an international and public health issue. And according to independent political fact-checking project, Politifact, President Barack Obama has kept most of his drug reform promises.

In 2010, he signed the Fair Sentencing Act, which reduced the mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines that had created a decades-long 100-to-1 sentencing disparity between crack and cocaine offenses. Funding to state drug courts, which funnel low-level drug offenders to treatment as opposed to incarceration, has increased each year since 2012.

Additionally, there has been some traction and effective collaboration on drug reform in recent years. In 2008, for example, President George W. Bush signed the Second Chance Act into law, which gave subsidies to companies that hired ex-offenders. Even the Commission’s vote has been a collaborative process, eliciting more than 60,000 mostly-favorable letters from elected officials, organizations, citizens, and legal professionals during a public comment period.

However, social, executive, and judicial interventions alone are not enough to address the lingering effects of the drug war. For example, the scope of the Sentencing Commission’s vote only affects those serving time in federal facilities; meanwhile, the bulk of the nation’s drug offenders are convicted at the state level.

Without Congressional action, some drug policy problems—particularly the mandatory minimum guidelines that impose sentences based on the amount and drug involved, regardless of the case facts and/or judge’s assessment—will remain in effect. Several elected officials have made attempts at legislation to address these issues. Most recently, the Smarter Sentencing Act, introduced in the Senate last year, and again in March, seeks to allow the court to disregard the mandatory minimum guidelines in cases involving low-level, nonviolent offenders.

“The Sentencing Commission did about as well as it could, given the constraints with mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines, which can only be repealed or reduced by Congress,” says Haile. “Some people might be tempted to think that…this [vote] means the problem is solved, but really it’s going to continue to be a problem even when all these reforms are carried out. We’ll still need to heal the problems from mandatory minimums, and we’ll still need Congressional action.”
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aarp.org/caregiving or call 1-877-333-5885