

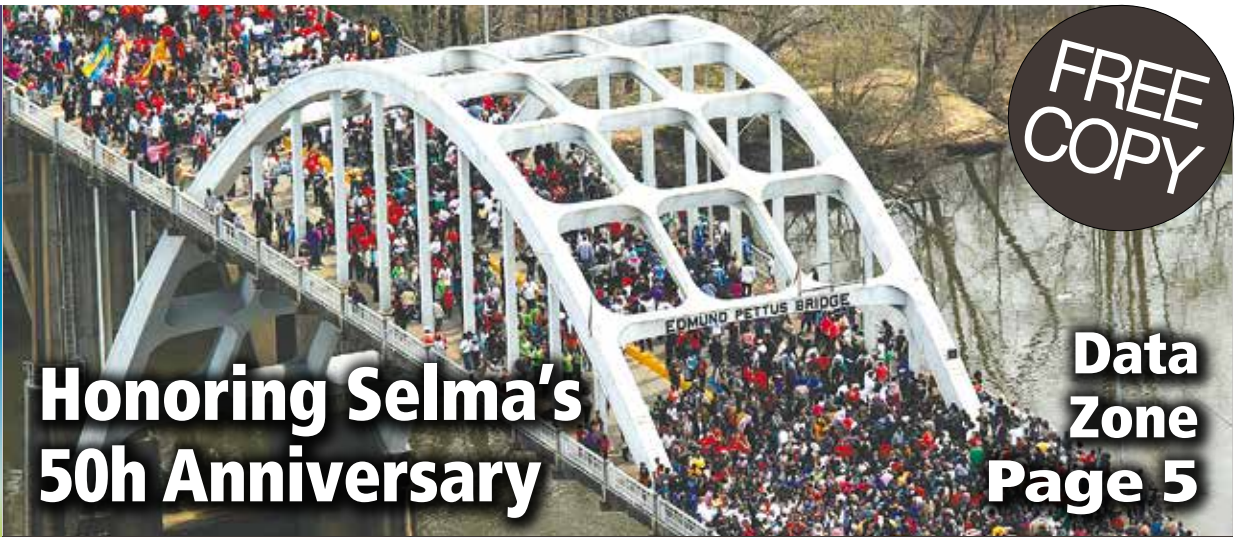
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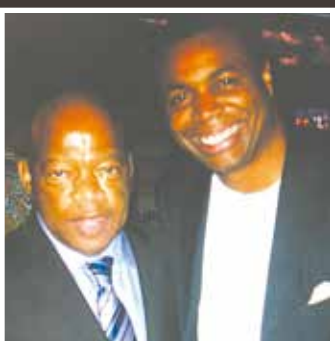
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A Data News Weekly Exclusive



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# New Orleans Getting Ready for Super Sunday

## A Look Inside the Mardi Gras Indian Tradition with Spy Boy Charlie Tenner of the Comanche Hunters

By Edwin Buggage and Nancy Hampton  
Photos by Pableaux Johnson

### New Orleans: A City of Traditions

New Orleans is a City of great traditions. It is a place where life is celebrated on a daily basis. From the dissonant sounds of brass bands, to the amazing food, festivals and an appreciation of the arts not seen anywhere else in the U.S. One of the many traditions that continue is the Mardi Gras Indians. It is a centuries old tradition where African-Americans "Mask Indian" as a way to pay homage to the Native-Americans that helped them during slavery. This fusion of African and Native-American culture has survived and continues to evolve as another generation is being exposed to the unique world that is the Mardi Gras Indians.

### Super Sunday Where Indians Come Together to Show their New Suits

The website [Mardigrasneworleans.com](http://Mardigrasneworleans.com) describes Super Sunday as... Aside from Mardi Gras Day, the most significant day for the Mardi Gras Indians is

their Super Sunday. The New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian Council always has their Indian Sunday on the third Sunday of March, around St. Joseph's Day. Their festivities begin at noon in A.L. Davis Park (at Washington & La-Salle Streets) where the Mardi Gras Indians once again dress in their feathers and suits and take to the streets to meet other "gangs".

Also, the Tambourine and Fan Organization traditionally put on their Annual "Super Sunday" parade on the Sunday closest to St. Joseph's Day, with their event beginning at Bayou St. John. In recent years, there has been yet a third Super Sunday called Big Sunday, which falls in April during the open weekend between French Quarter Festival and Jazz Fest.

### Reflecting on the life of Big Chief Bo Dollis: A Culture Lives on in the Spirit of the Mardi Gras Indian Tradition

There will be a marked difference at this year's Super Sunday with the passing of legendary Chief Theodore "Bo" Dollis of the Wild Magnolias. This year during his passing there was celebrations everyday leading to his funeral that was attended by people from across the globe who paid homage to this great man who helped spread the Mardi Gras Indian Tradition to people from all over the world.

"Getting ready for 2015 Mardi



You can't get ready without hearing a Bo Dollis song being played or when you are fixing your suit. He may be gone physically, but he is still here," says Charlie Tenner.

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Cover Story, Continued from previous page.

Gras with the passing of Big Chief Bo Dollis it started off as very heavy hearted for anyone who's Masked Indian, but at the same time it is a joy. You can't get ready without hearing a Bo Dollis song being played or when you are fixing your suit. He may be gone physically, but he is still here," says Charlie Tenner Jr., Spy Boy of the Comanche Hunter Indian Tribe which is located in the Lower 9th Ward.

### Spy Boy Charlie Tenner Gives the Facts on Masking Indian

Tenner has been Masking Indian every year since 1999. While not a requirement many of those who are part of the tradition began with a family member being involved. This is also the case with "Spy Boy Charlie."

"I got started watching my oldest brother who is an original member of the Creole Wild West. He was a Spy Boy. And my mom didn't really want too much for me to do it but one night we were helping a member of my family who is the originator of the Comanche Hunters whose gang I'm in now. We were helping him get his suit together and we was up all night and I was looking at all the fun he was having on Mardi Gras Day and I told my brother I said "I believe that I'm ready." And he told me that if Charlie you sew one picture we'll make it happen from there. And from that day on it's been history ever since," he says recalling his beginnings in this great tradition.

Many have seen the amazing spectacle that is the Mardi Gras Indians with their amazing colorful costumes and rhythmic songs that make your heart race and feet move. But do not understand the intricacies of "Mardi Gras Indian Gang."

"There are several components when it comes down to making a Mardi Gras Indian Gang. You have the Wildman which keeps the law and order when you're on the streets so that the people won't get too close. He keeps the law and order on the street. A Spy Boy like myself, he's the one that goes out looking for other Indian Tribes and if there are Indian Tribes, the Spy Boy sends the signal back to the Flag Boy. The Flag Boy is the member who actually holds the gang flag. You'll see a flag that he'll have and it'll say "Flag Boy." Well he sends a signal back to the Chief. We also have a Queen who's the one that's right next to the Big Chief and she actually keeps the order with the young females that are located in the Indian Tribe. Once the signal's sent back to the Chief, the Chief sends the signal all the way



"I love going to other places. It's nothing like bringing New Orleans to Houston, Dallas, or even bringing New Orleans to China, London or Paris. People love the Mardi Gras Indian Culture because it is so unique and shows New Orleans at its best," says Comanche Hunters Spy Boy Charlie Tenner.

back vice versa the way that it came and the Spy Boy will know exactly what he wants to do and which way he wants to go," Explains Tenner.

### It also takes a lot of time to construct a suit and in many cases is a joint effort.

"The average suit needs to be done by Mardi Gras morning. Saint Joseph's night is the night that comes right after Mardi Gras. That suits, me personally, I like my suits to be done at least two to three weeks before Mardi Gras; that way I can have time to play and do the adjustments that need to be done. It usually takes the average Indian at least one year to complete a suit. And we begin at least two weeks or a week right after Mardi Gras making a brand new suit." Continuing he says, speaking of the songs they sing and their origin and meaning, "When it comes down to singing Mardi Gras Indian songs we always start with our prayer chant. And our prayer chant is kinda like get real emotional and the name of that prayer chant is Indian Red. And we'll get there and everybody get together and the Chief will start the prayer chant and he'll go like (singing in native language). And all the Indians will come in and sing "Indian Red" and then that's when he'll call out each member of the Indian tribe. He'll say "here is my Spy Boy" and then we just take it from there but each song have different type meanings. We have a song that they sing called Shallow Waters, one of my favorite songs. This was a song to where the Indians would sing to help the slaves to get them free and let them know that there's life on the other side of the tunnel."

### Tragedy Brings Tribes Together to Preserve Tradition

Tenner's family home as were many in the Lower Ninth Ward destroyed during Hurricane Katrina. Overcome with emotion he recalls Masking Indian the first Mardi Gras after the storm.

"Any other Mardi Gras, pre-Katrina, we would be joyful. I mean we would be out and it would be like you couldn't sleep the night before. Well this particular Mardi Gras, it wasn't more of a let's go get'em type thing, it was more of a this is what I'm going to do for my neighborhood. This is what I'm going to do for my community. Singing Indian Red, I don't think I ever shed tears like I did that morning listening to my Chief, Big Chief Nelson Burt, Big Chief Romeo Burgess, and Big Chief Demond Melancon sing Indian Red that morning together. Bringing our neighborhood together as one even though we were like four Indian Tribes coming out of one neighborhood; on a personal level I think that had to have been one of the touching moments for me for Mardi Gras morning coming right after Katrina."

As attention has centered on Big Chief Bo Dollis and the Mardi Gras Indian Culture, Tenner who is like an encyclopedia when it comes to Mardi Gras Indian history pays homage to many who passed away and blazed the trail for him and so many others to follow.

"In addition to Big Chief Bo Dollis you've got to start first and foremost with the legendary Tootie Montana who died fighting for what he believed in when it came down to the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians and to his son, Darryl

Montana. I have to give it up for my Chief, Big Chief Gipson of the Comanche Hunters. We also have another legendary chief who passed away a few years ago and Big Chief Rudy. He was one of the pioneers who actually put the Lower Ninth Ward where it is. Big Chief Jake, is another chief that passed on. And we have a lot of chiefs who set an example for young people like me. They didn't just teach us the elements of how to put the beads down, they actually went out and taught young people their culture and where they come from and the reasons behind the suit."

### 5-0-4-Ever: The Future of the Mardi Gras Indian Tradition

After Hurricane Katrina many have speculated that the things that make New Orleans unique would disappear in the face of a changing City landscape. Tenner sees some things in the City changing, but feels that the Mardi Gras Indian Tradition is strong as ever.

"When I think of the future of our tradition I believe it's beautiful. When I think of the future I think of my nephew who is a fourth grader at MLK and his name is Michael Tenner Jr. He's been masking since he was four years old, and he's a Spy Boy also. Now at the beginning it used to be him and I. when I used to have to kind of watch him. Well, he's to the point where he has developed into this culture and I can just let him go and he does a wonderful job. He actually has some friends at MLK that he's recruiting. I'm looking at him and within the next five to ten years maybe he's gonna be someone's Chief."

With a note of optimism and excitement in his voice "Spy Boy Charlie" talks about the camarade-

rie and unity among the various Indians from all over the City.

"When I look at the future of the Indians coming out of the Lower Ninth Ward, I love it! I see things changing, I think of Mardi last year, it was the first time that all of the Chiefs gathered together and went Uptown and we rolled and rocked tambourines and we all did it together. So I believe that in the future, the Mardi Gras Indians will continue to thrive and it's an exciting thing."

With the City's changing landscape after Hurricane Katrina and more attention via programs such as Treme' and others shedding light on New Orleans and its unique culture, it has been a great time for cultural artists from the City to spread their wings and expose more people to the great cultural traditions that exist in New Orleans and it continues to grow.

"I love going to other places. It's nothing like bringing New Orleans to Houston, Dallas, or even bringing New Orleans to China, London or Paris. I don't know if you remember when the Saints played over in London and they brought hundreds of Indians over there with them for the half-time show. People loved the Mardi Gras Indians. The culture of the Mardi Gras Indians is so unique. It's like once you see them, the cameras come out. Everybody wants to take pictures. Their eyes just light up; it's an exciting feeling when you go through parties, you go through weddings, you go out of state, or out the country they just love the culture of the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians, I see us continuing to have a brighter future and show one of the many things that's great about the City of New Orleans."



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# Shoot Ya Best Shot!

## Black Men of Labor Celebrates the Release of Talk That Music Talk with a Book Signing

Black Men of Labor Social Aid and Pleasure Club celebrated the publication of *Talk That Music Talk* with an open-to-the-public concert and book signing at Sweet Lorraine's on Saturday, March 6. Performers and dancers included the Treme' Brass Band.

The book showcases the cultural organizations, bands, churches, barrooms and music programs

that have created the musical lineages that have sustained jazz in New Orleans.

The book begins with the history of the Black Men of Labor Social Aid and Pleasure Club, which was formed after Danny Barker's brass band funeral, and their commitment to fostering his legacy by sponsoring, along with Barnes, the Music for All

Ages program. By pairing younger musicians with legendary ones, brass and jazz music has never been more alive.

*Talk That Music Talk* is a partnership between Black Men of Labor, the Neighborhood Story Project, and the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.



Pictured left to right are: National Park Service Interpretive Ranger Bruce "Sunpie" Barnes, Neighborhood Story Project Co-Director Rachel Breunlin, and Fred Johnson with Black Men of Labor S&P Club.



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

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## Honoring the Past

# The 50th Anniversary March on Selma

Photos by Pete Souza  
White House Photographer

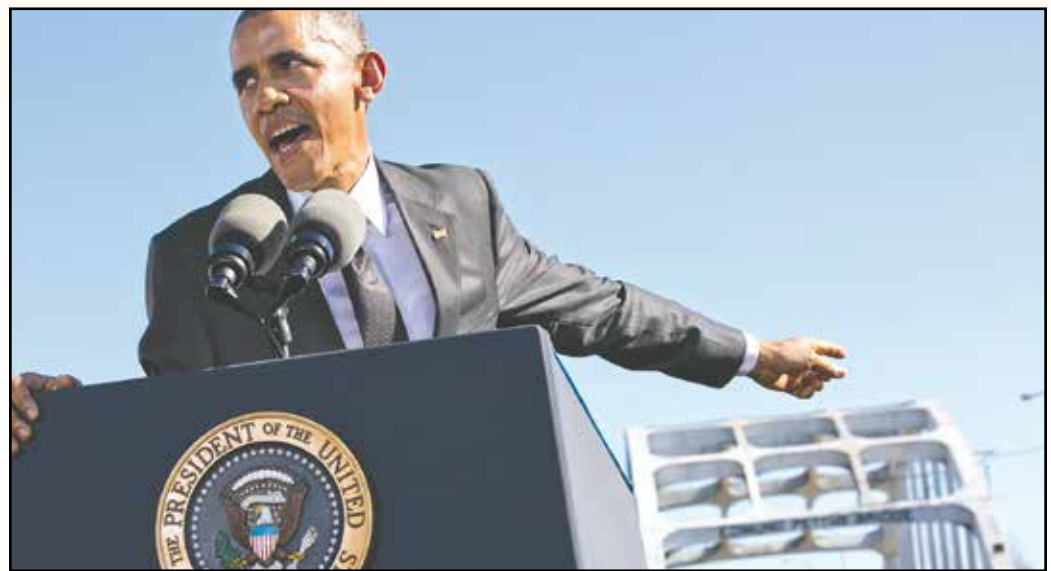
Tens of thousands of people marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama

on Sunday to commemorate the 1965 “Bloody Sunday” march. Marchers from across the nation were joined by numerous dignitaries and leaders, marking the 50th anniversary of a turning point in the U.S. civil rights movement. The

highlight of the weekend event was an address by President Barack Obama who made the trip to honor the bravery of the original marchers, the brutality they faced, and to acknowledge the challenges that Blacks still face today.



The President hugs Rep. John Lewis after his introduction.



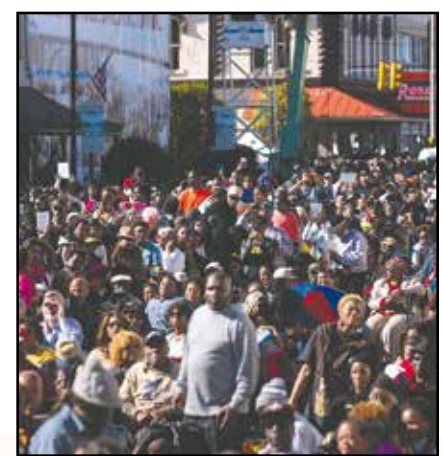
The President points towards the bridge during his speech.



Tens of thousands of people attended the ceremony.



In Selma, the President greets former foot soldier Amelia Boynton Robinson, 103 years old, backstage before the ceremony.



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



# Strides Toward Freedom

*The March from Selma to Montgomery 50 Years Later*



By Edwin Buggage  
Editor, Data News Weekly

Last weekend thousands of people converged on the small town of Selma, Alabama at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the site of the historic marches in 1965 to give voice to those who were disenfranchised at the polls. It was a march for justice and freedom during the tumultuous days of the Civil Rights Movement. During the march commemorating the 50th Anniversary where so many brave people put themselves in harm's way in their unrelenting quest for justice including Congressman John Lewis, who while a member of SNCC (The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Com-

mittee) was one of the organizers of the Selma March on March 7, 1965 that left him and many others bruised and bloodied. In what had come to be known as "Bloody Sunday." Something a new generation gained interest in since the release of the movie "Selma" that shows many of the unsung heroes and sheroes of the Civil Rights Movement.

In this a half century later Lewis marched arm-in-arm in lockstep between President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. I could only imagine the thoughts of a man who was and still is a freedom fighter live long enough to see a nation elect an African-American President. And that he who spoke at the 1963 March on Washington on that historic day when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. proclaimed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial that he had a dream that one day people will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. And as he walked across that bridge that once was a symbol of

repression, but now is a bridge of hope asking himself as we must ask ourselves has this day come?

President Obama in his remarks proposed to the people of America a widening of the lanes of democracy for all Americans to include immigrants, women and members of the LGBT community. Today regardless of our political orientation the quest towards justice is all our charge and we must ask ourselves what we can do to make this nation a better nation for all. Today we can beam with pride and look at many signs of progress, but we can also look at the many signs of distress and ask ourselves how far have we really come?

As an example let's look at the turbulent 1960's under President Lyndon Johnson when he put together the Kerner Commission to study the causes of race riots that took place all over America. In its pages it talked about Black frustration and lack of economic opportunities as one of the root causes, but one of the most quoted passages of this report states we are moving to-

wards two societies one Black, one White, separate and unequal. Today we can say our nation is a more diverse than ever and that is something that adds to our strength and global competitiveness, but conversely, we must ask ourselves who holds the reins of power. And I feel that even Stevie Wonder can see that we are still struggling as a nation that is separate and unequal.

We must remember the initial march was about people getting to the polls and the ballot equals power. But today many do not vote and that is not only Blacks, but voter apathy cuts across racial lines. This is something that must cease. The Civil Rights Movement was about civic engagement and today it is important that we all get involved. That we all realize that we can play a small part in big change for our society and that it is when ordinary people come together extraordinary things can happen. So while we celebrate we must remember to go back into our communities and participate in something that can improve

the society we live in whether it is large or small.

Admittedly, while structural and institutional racism is still a problem we must not get distracted and shortsighted and fighting the wrong battles. Today many people of all races are struggling to stay afloat in a country where the wealthiest one-percent collectively owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent of the population. In the world we live in today that should be a cause for alarm. We must become enlightened as a nation because we can ill afford to find ourselves fighting over the things that divide us, but identify the things that unite us. We must remember that although we all may have come here on different ships, but today as a nation we are all in the same boat. It is today that we will either sail together or sink together and our fate will be determined by our ability to work together. When we get to that day and accomplish this goal we can truly say we have made true strides towards freedom.

## Spiritually Speaking...

# Pray on God's Time, Not Yours



James Washington  
Guest Columnist

If you're like me, prayer is a subject that keeps popping up because sometimes out of sheer habit, I keep doing it. Intellectually I understand its purpose and its benefit. But sometimes I get lost in the reality of whom and under what circumstances, I'm moved to pray. It's then that I want my prayers answered on my time, for my reasons, forgetting or not wanting to remember all things happen for a reason; God's reason to be precise. On a recent Sunday, my pastor reminded me that God's plan happens on God's time and our

job is to be open and ready for His answer to our prayers. Simply put, he said, delay is not denial. God answers all prayer in His time, in His way, with His power and for His purpose. That's it and we need to learn how to deal with it. But as Christians when you think about it, God's time, His will and power for His purpose is not so bad. As a matter of spiritual fact, we should prefer it that way even when we have the audacity to think we know what's best for us. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts (higher) than yours." Isaiah 55:8-9.

First of all God answers all prayer in one of three ways: 1.) Yes, 2.) No, or 3.) Not now. The question is never can God answer. The real question is does your faith acknowledge that you know that He can? One of the

hardest things to reconcile is that there are times that God puts you in helpless impossible situations in order to let you know it's all about Him. "Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but he was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." These words... were written not for him alone, but also for us to whom God will credit righteousness for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." Romans 4: 20-24. The more you read about and try to really comprehend prayer, the more you come away knowing how pure this communication should be between you and God. There is no disbelief for a child who believes in Santa Claus because his parents told him to. God keeps telling us to believe in Him. Can you? Do you re-

ally? "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours." Mark 11:24. Each and every time it comes down to that belief thing. Prayer always calls your faith into question.

I sometimes pray for the faith that accesses the power of God. This is not ego on my part, but humility to ask that I might be a vessel empty enough of me to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I believe God's grace will flow more freely and through me, His will, will be done. Wouldn't you like to know that kind of power up close and personal in your own life? Think again about why that mustard seed example was given in the first place. "Then the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?' Matthew 17: 19. They couldn't do something they thought they should have been able to. "He replied, 'Because you have so little faith. I tell you the

truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Matthew 17:20-21. Unfortunately, maybe fortunately, faith is tested each and every day. Most times I think we merely look at it as "life happens" and try to move on, get past it at least until life serves up the tragically impossible. Prayer comes to mind first when unwavering faith is called for. As I catch myself praying out of habit sometimes, I'm reminded it's more about God and less about my circumstance. Put it in God's hands and let it go. Believe me. I know personally that's so much harder than it sounds. But my God said in His time, in His will, by His way and because of His power, it will be done. I'm just trying to take those words all the way to the bank.

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

# In Selma, Obama Proved That He is 'Black Enough'



The Obama family join hands as they begin the march with the foot soldiers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson.

**By George E. Curry**  
NNPA Editor-in-Chief

SELMA, Ala. (NNPA) – Throughout his campaign for the presidency, Barack Obama was dogged by one question: Is he Black enough? The question was repeated so often that after showing up late for an appearance at the 2008 annual convention of the National Association of Black Journalists in Las Vegas, Obama said, “I want to apologize for being late, but you guys keep asking whether I am Black enough.”

After a 33-minute speech Saturday in Selma, Ala. commemorating the Selma to Montgomery March and passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, nobody was asking: Is Barack Obama Black enough?

President Obama rarely discussed the issue of race in his first six years in office except in reaction to a major racial catastrophe such as the shooting deaths of Trayvon Martin in Florida and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo. or the arrest of Harvard University Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. for breaking into his own home.

On Saturday, however, President Obama seemed comfortable discussing race in public, showing he has a deep appreciation for the accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement and quoting or referencing the Bible, Black spiri-

tuals, James Baldwin, Sojourner Truth, Fannie Lou Hamer, Langston Hughes, the Tuskegee Airmen, Jackie Robinson and even his favorite hip-hop artist Jay-Z.

While connecting with African Americans, President Obama also underscored the significance of civil rights warriors making America hold true to its creed.

“As John [Lewis] noted, there are places and moments in America where this nation’s destiny has been decided. Many are sites of war – Concord and Lexington, Appomattox, Gettysburg. Others are sites that symbolize the daring of America’s character – Independence Hall and Seneca Falls, Kitty Hawk and Cape Canaveral,” the president said.

“Selma is such a place. In one afternoon 50 years ago, so much of our turbulent history — the stain of slavery and anguish of civil war; the yoke of segregation and tyranny of Jim Crow; the death of four little girls in Birmingham; and the dream of a Baptist preacher – all that history met on this bridge.”

He made his comments with the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where civil rights marchers were attacked by Alabama State Troopers on “Bloody Sunday,” serving as a backdrop.

Obama addressed two hot-button issues – the criminal justice system and voter disenfranchisement efforts – directly.

“With such an effort, we can make sure our criminal justice system serves all and not just some. Together, we can raise the level of mutual trust that policing is built on – the idea that police officers are members of the community they risk their lives to protect, and citizens in Ferguson and New York and Cleveland, they just want the same thing young people here marched for 50 years ago – the protection of the law. Together, we can address unfair sentencing and overcrowded prisons, and the stunted circumstances that rob too many boys of the chance to become men, and rob the nation of too many men who could be good dads, and good workers, and good neighbors. With effort, we can roll back poverty and the roadblocks to opportunity. Americans don’t accept a free ride for anybody, nor do we believe in equality of outcomes. But we do expect equal opportunity.”

Regarding Republican-led efforts to suppress the Black and Latino vote, Obama said: “Right now, in 2015, 50 years after Selma, there are laws across this country designed to make it harder for people to vote. As we speak, more of such laws are being proposed. Meanwhile, the Voting Rights Act, the culmination of so much blood, so much sweat and tears, the product of so much sacrifice in the face of

wanton violence, the Voting Rights Act stands weakened, its future subject to political rancor.”

But the problem does not stop there, Obama said.

“Of course, our democracy is not the task of Congress alone, or the courts alone, or even the president alone. If every new voter-suppression law was struck down today, we would still have, here in America, one of the lowest voting rates among free peoples. Fifty years ago, registering to vote here in Selma and much of the South meant guessing the number of jellybeans in a jar, the number of bubbles on a bar of soap. It meant risking your dignity, and sometimes, your life.

“What’s our excuse today for not voting? How do we so casually discard the right for which so many fought? How do we so fully give away our power, our voice, in shaping America’s future? Why are we pointing to somebody else when we could take the time just to go to the polling places? We give away our power.”

In his speech, Obama had his own line that showed he was in tune with Jay-Z’s lyrics: “We honor those who walked so we could run. We must run so our children soar.”

He added, “And we will not grow weary. For we believe in the power of an awesome God, and we believe in this country’s sacred promise.”

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