The State of New Orleans 2015

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“10 Years Later...” A Tale of Two Cities.... A matter of Perspective

Mayor Landrieu (above) unveiled K-10 a series of events during his State of the City address, that will commemorate lives lost, to tell the story only as we can, we today, are launching ‘Katrina 10’ to commemorate lives lost and to honor those who helped us survive.”

By Edwin Buggage

Mayor Landrieu Gives State of the City Address

Recently, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu gave his State of the City Address. In his speech he spoke of a city that has made great strides but has a long way to go. He spoke of how crime is at a 43 year low. He also mentioned that high school graduation rates are up from pre-Katrina. Regarding blight in New Orleans, he said, that the city has torn down up to 13,000 blighted units, a rate that is faster than any city in America. And he touted New Orleans as one of the fastest growing cities in America.

As we approach the 10th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, Mayor Landrieu unveiled K-10 a series of events that will commemorate lives lost. “To tell the story only as we can, we today, are launching ‘Katrina 10’ to commemorate lives lost. To honor those who helped us survive. To acknowledge the work that has...”

Cover Story, Continued

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been done and to ensure that we continue our progress into the future,” Landrieu said during his address. He continued speaking about the resilience of the people of the city and how the city is getting itself poised for the 300th Anniversary of New Orleans in 2018. His speech was upbeat and optimistic, but as we approach 10 years to the day when many lives changed forever, we must ask ourselves, truly how far have we come and how far must we go to make New Orleans the great city it has the potential to become.

“People don’t want to discuss race, if we cannot have this conversation we cannot go anywhere. How race had an impact on the recovery until people are willing to have a conversation. We don’t break bread down the same lines we would not have the problems. People have to stop going along to get along and talk about the things that are going on in our communities. And excuses for not doing anything and the present Mayor’s on his second term and what do we have to show for it in our communities. That economic pie has not been sliced in an equitable way.”

In general we are going in the right direction. I get disappointed at times that we don’t make as much progress, sometimes I feel we’re a straight A student that continues to make C’s. We have so many possibilities and opportunities but we never seem to do as well as we ought to do. It’s the Mayor’s job to make the people feel confident in the city and I think he does an amazing job at that nationally. I think we will get great press as we get to 10th year Anniversary, but the realities are that we still have a long way to go for the basic functions that the taxpayers expect from their government; and we need to be concerned about growing our middle class because that is also major problem in our city.”

Robert “Kool Black” Horton

Robert “Kool Black Horton”: Stopping the Violence, Fighting the Tide of Gentrification and the Need for a Living Wage

Robert “Kool Black” Horton is the Co-Founder and Director of Black Men United and formerly the New Orleans Campaign and Projects Director of Critical Resistance, founded by Angela Davis in an effort to dismantle the prison industrial complex. Recently he’s partnered with Lakiesha Bell, Anita Davis and Shantell Dominique in a movement called “Stop the Violence”. Echoing the stark inequality that exists, he also talks about the problems of gentrification and the need for a living wage.

“In the ten years after Katrina the progress has been made for the bankers and the people with the money and historical landmarks and but not the people. The poverty rate is the same, wages are not in line with the cost of living is soaring. We see rents being 1200-1500 dollars a month, yet people are making 8 dollars an hour. We were at 15 dollars when we returned to the city and that was reasonable when trying to match the new cost of living,” says Horton.

He also is concerned about what he feels is an education more geared towards statistics and not people. Where schools have become profit centers and a business where the children are secondary. “Pre-Katrina we had more black teachers and stronger unions. They were making like the children at Benjamin Franklin or Lusher because that should be the goal. As we enter hurricane season being prepared is very important in the case of a mandatory evacuation. Horton feels with the increased cost of living many people may either not be able to leave or that the little money they have been able to save will not sustain them very long.

“If another Hurricane Katrina was to hit today you would have more people stuck on the highway trying to get the hell out of New Orleans than you had before the storm because their money doesn’t stretch as long before the storm. Once upon a time you may have had some money saved, but within six weeks it dwindled down to nothing, but today within two weeks you would be down to zero because it is more expensive to live here and you cannot save any money.”

Stacy Head: New Orleans Needs a Government that Works for All Citizens

Councilperson-at-Large Stacy Head has been at the forefront of many reforms in New Orleans and has been on the council since 2006. She has been a voice on the council that has spoken out against the status quo of elitism, nepotism and corruption that in some cases, leaves many of the city’s residents without the resources of confidence in government to get things done.

“Unemployment of African American men is at 55 percent in a city where there is an economic boom going on; we’re not feeling that because folks I talk to can I help them find a job. With all this prosperity going on it should be spread around” said Henderson who says that there is a disparity in the resources and how they have been prioritized after the storm, and feels that race plays a part in this inequity.”

“I appreciate and share the idea of New Orleans’ resilience. I pray that as we move forward and evolve, that we as a city, can move from resiliency to sustainability. We can no longer be reactive we must be proactive. We must sustain. We will not be defined by what happened ten years ago, we will be defined by the past three hundred years” says Williams.

Norris Henderson

Norris Henderson: The Wide Divide and the Politics of Race and Class

Norris Henderson is known around the globe as a person who was wrongly incarcerated for nearly three decades in Angola State Penitentiary in 2003. He is presently Executive Director of Voice of the ExOffender (VOTE), Mr. Henderson has had tremendous success in his work impacting policy and public discourse about police accountabili- ability, public defense, and leading efforts to reform Orleans Parish Prison. He is also an advocate for the disenfranchised and sees a very different picture of New Orleans ten years later than Mayor Landrieu painted during his address.

Eyes on the Future

Jason Williams: Healing the Wounds of the Past and having our Eyes on the Future

Jason Williams is a City Councilman-at-Large, he is a new face who pulled a surprisingly landslide victory against longtime Council member Cynthia Hedge Morrell who was endorsed by Mayor Landrieu. Thus far he has been an independent voice who has not been a rubber stamp for the mayor which allows for a system of checks and balances between the branches of government.

violence, Fighting the Tide

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“And as such we must look far ahead beyond the next five to ten years. We must include lessons from our entire past so that we may build a strong future. It is about being good shepherds of our envi- ronment, living with water, mend- ing the racial scars of our past, to ensure a prosperous future to our children and grandchildren.”

City Council Member Stacy Head

City Council Member Stacy Head

Cover Story, Continued from previous page.
The organizers of the 2015 Oyster Fest held May 30 and 31, put together the best oyster restaurants in the city of New Orleans to deliver some outstanding dishes during this year’s festival. The New Orleans Oyster Festival isn’t just an opportunity to indulge in the oysters we all love, but is also a chance to support the industries that makes them available. The highlight of the Fest was the Oyster Eating Contest who’s winner, Sonya “Black Widow” Thomas of Alexandria, Va ate 41 dozen (that is 492) oysters in 8 minutes.
The Preservation Resource Center hosted A Red Hot Jazz Gala to Honor Jazz Musicians

15th Annual Ladies in Red Celebration at the Historic Carver Theater on Friday, May 15th.

The event was a celebration of the cultural legacy of jazz musicians – with dancing, cocktails and jazz music. The patron party featured David Torkanowsky’s Trio, Big Sam’s Funky Nation and the best of New Orleans cuisine and cocktails.

Plaques were awarded to an extensive list of jazz musicians and the institutions that support them to continue the significant impact to preserve New Orleans culture. The honorees were Antoine “Fats” Domino, Deacon John Moore, Do-reen Ketchens, Tipitina’s Foundation, Ellis Marsalis and Joseph Torregano.

Funds raised by Ladies in Red support PRC’s African American Heritage Preservation and Heritage Education programs.

Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events
Justice is not Blind

The Educational Equity and Excellence Project

“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”
– Benjamin Franklin

To Be Equal

The higher education initiative of the “Equity and Excellence” project is currently being run at three National Urban League affiliates: The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, The Urban League of Springfield and the Urban League of Lexington-Fayette County. In those communities, communities that mirror so many Black and Brown communities in our country, national and local advocacy and engagement efforts are underway to ensure that more of our young people go to college.

Right now, there is much to celebrate in our country when it comes to academic achievement in African-American and Latino communities. Today, we enjoy the highest high school graduation rates in history. More students of color are in college and dropout rates are at historic lows. But more work lies ahead.

Despite the fact that more Blacks and Hispanics are getting a college education than ever before, there is a gap in postsecondary attainment. In 2013, about 14 percent of Hispanics had a bachelor’s degree or higher, degree attainment was at 20 percent for African Americans and 40 percent for Whites, according to recent Pew Research Center analysis.

When a young man or woman is denied access to opportunity through education, we all lose. That potential graduate loses a well-known and well-worn path to individual success. College Board research demonstrated that people with bachelor degrees earned over $21,000 more than high school graduates. People with some college and no postsecondary degree earned 14 percent more than high school graduates who worked full time. When young people are not obtaining postsecondary degrees, our nation suffers from the loss of their talent, their increased tax revenues, their civic engagement and more.

As was often quoted by President John F. Kennedy, “a rising tide lifts all boats.” We need to rethink our funding of grants, we need to take a serious look at our student loan system, we—as a nation—need to confront head on all the obstacles to equity in access to quality postsecondary education. The return on our investment of the time, effort and money necessary to increase college attainment and completion, would be a competitive American workforce, a stronger economy and thriving communities.
What is Enough?

By LMG Calla Victoria

How much Soil is Enough?

We hear so many different suggestions when it comes to planting, but what really is the bottom line? We are told that we should increase the pot size as our plant grows, however I have a friend who has a large Dieffenbachia seguine which has grown to over seven feet in height. It is so tall he has to stake it and tie it to keep it upright. One would assume this plant is in very large pot; but oh contraire it is in a 12 inch diameter, 6 inches deep terracotta pot that is only half filled with soil, yet this is the largest Dieffenbachia that I have ever seen.

While watching Garden Smart, one of my favorite gardening shows, the host visited the amazing Key West Tropical Forest and Botanical Garden. This garden is thick with lush healthy foliage as you can see from the images. Everything is flourishing, tall trees, dense shrubs, etc. I was in shock when I was in the garden with Adam and Eve, plants flourished happily on their own. Take a long road trip and you will notice wild flowing plants, and lush tall trees lining every highway. So stop coddling your plants, give them what they need according to the care tag instructions, add some time released fertilizer, mulch, make sure they get a good weekly drink of water, and let them be.

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

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

Commentary, Continued from page 8.

There are people just like you who are making good financial decisions every day. To learn how you can join them, and take control of your financial future, visit feedthepig.org.

Job Opportunity

Freelance Writers Wanted

Data News Weekly, “The People’s Paper,” is looking for freelance writers to join our team print and digital team. We want to hear from you if you are a working journalist, or an aspiring journalist who has 2 years or more of newspaper or PR writing experience.

We need writers who can cover New Orleans news stories, ranging from local high school sports, community events, City Hall and entertainment.

Experience in print is necessary, experience in digital and social media are encouraged.

Compensation is competitive and great story ideas will be appreciated.

If you are interested, please email your resume and 3 writing samples to: terryjones@bellsouth.net and datanewseditor@bellsouth.net.

We can’t wait to hear from you!
I take care of her
BUT WHO
takes care of me?

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