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2015 Asante Awards

June 20 - June 26, 2015 50th Year Volume 8 www.ladatanews.com

A Data News Weekly Exclusive



Honoring our Heroes

New Orleans renames two streets to honor
Pastors John Raphael and Robert C. Blakes.
Will it change the direction of the city?

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Will Changing Two Street Names Change the Direction of the City?



Recently, New Orleans changed the names of portions of two streets in New Orleans Central City Neighborhood in honor these two pastors who worked tirelessly to improve not only the communities they pastored in but the entire city. The name of four blocks of Carondelet Street and 11 blocks of La Salle Street to Robert C. Blakes Sr. Drive and Rev. John Raphael Jr. Way.

By Edwin Buggage

The City Honors Two Great Men

Last year New Orleans lost two giants in the religious community who came to symbolize the true meaning of giving back to their fellow man and woman; recently, New Orleans changed the names of portions of two streets in New Orleans Central City Neighborhood in honor of these two pastors who worked tirelessly to improve not only the communities they pastored in but the entire City. The name of four blocks

of Carondelet Street and 11 blocks of La Salle Street to Robert C. Blakes Sr. Drive and Rev. John Raphael Jr. Way, respectively.

The locations of the changes are as follows: Carondelet Street between Felicity Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard has been re-named after Blakes; who founded New Home Ministries who passed away at the age of 74 in April 2013. And LaSalle Street between Earhart Boulevard and Simon Bolivar Avenue after Raphael, the Pastor of New Hope Baptist Church who died at 60 in June 2013.

With the renaming of the streets to honor these

great men we must ask ourselves what does this mean and how do we as a community aspire to the greatness that these men personified in their lives. "Thou Shalt Not Kill" the signs that dotted the City by Pastor John Raphael, a true crusader for his community and Robert C. Blakes who fought against blight and worked to curb crime and violence.

Both men were beacons of hope in their respective roles as truly being their brother and sister's keeper and it is a great time to honor these men and their commitment as their lives are commendable and is an example of selfless giving.

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Please call 504-309-9913 for subscription information or to obtain a back issue of the paper ONLY.
Dated material two weeks in advance. Not responsible for publishing or return of unsolicited manuscripts or photos.

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"These were two great men that spent their lives working for the people of our great City, truly worthy of being remembered and honored for making a difference and saving lives," Latoya Cantrell, Representative of District B where both streets are located told Data News Weekly.

A Gentle Giant Leads by Example

Raphael was a man who may have been known more for what he did than who he was. His "Thou Shalt Not Kill" signs were a known sight all over the City. And was a ral-

community in the same way as both Pastor Blakes and Raphael performed during their lives. As a scholar who has taught African-American Studies in universities across the U.S. he feels it is an important step in the right direction to honor those who have served our community and can be an inspiration to the next generation.

"The notion of memory and remembering is important for the present as it is for the future. It gives honor to those who honor is due, but for the future we have so few things that remind our community of the positive contributions of

be in areas where all people can be educated about the person not just Blacks."

The Fight for Equality... Where Does the Solutions Lie?

Rainey's words while not the most politically correct is something that resonates with many in a post-Katrina New Orleans that sees resources being prioritized in some neighborhoods and not in others. That some neighborhoods are invisible and not on the radar screen when it comes to investment for local people, or given the resources

on the one hand the more things change the more they stay the same. We have seen things change, but for the people who need the most profound change it has not happened for them in a way that is has for many other people."

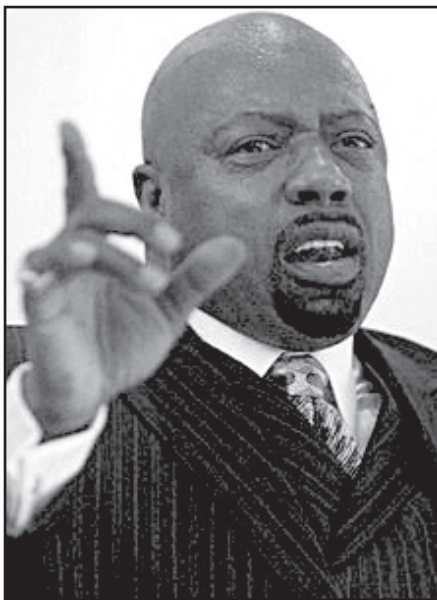
Webster also feels the same as many of Mayor's Landrieu critics that he does a great job promoting the City, but many times people who need the most help are left out of the equation of the "new" New Orleans.

"The present administration is doing Good PR, also there are huge and massive amounts of money be-

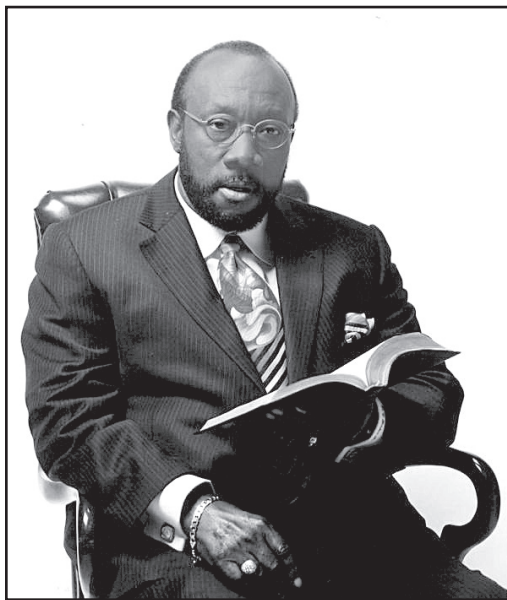
Speaking of his own work in the community he says, "We have to do more to prepare our young people for the well-paying jobs that are coming to our City. Because right now many of the jobs some are qualified to do are menial jobs, I am working to change that. I would like to see young people get education and training to access these opportunities."

Fighting for a Seat at the Table of Power

New Orleans for better or worse is changing. Whether it is the names of streets or the composi-



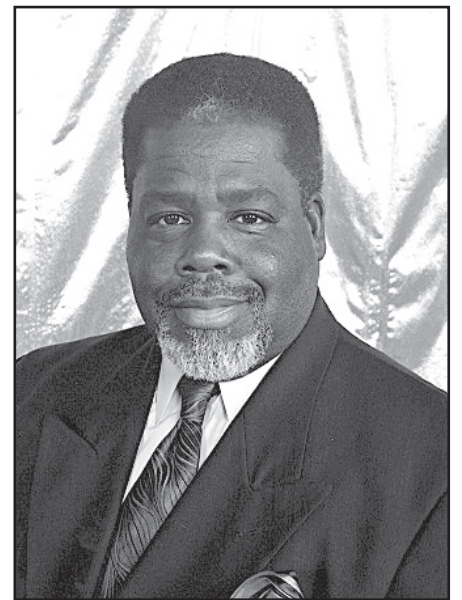
The Late Pastor John C. Raphael, Jr.



The Late Pastor Robert C. Blakes, Dr.



City Councilmember Latoya Cantrell



Rev. Dwight Webster Ph.D.

lying Cry to stop the violence in our community.

"He was a great man, he was more of a traditional preacher who cared about the community, and saw himself with a responsibility for the community. The church took care of the people not the other way around," says Lloyd Dennis, who is a media personality, educator and co-founder of the Silverbacks Society, a group of men who mentor young men of Pastor John Raphael and his contribution to helping others.

Raphael was a man of great humility who did not seek the lime-light but his work shined a great light on him as he did work to stop the violence in the community in addition his work in Haiti and in West Africa helping those in need.

"He would be honored, but he would be humbled because he was not a person that sought attention," said Catherine Raphael, widow of the reverend said in a report that aired on WDSU TV-6, a local NBC affiliate.

Knowing and Celebrating Your History is Important

Rev. Dwight Webster, Ph.D. is Senior Pastor of Christian Unity Baptist Church in New Orleans and is involved in community outreach projects that empower the

African-Americans so it is a good thing to honor them and spread their message and purpose in our community," Webster told Data News Weekly.

Our Heroes and Sheores are Americans Heroes

Asia Rainey is an artist/educator and community advocate who worked for many years in corporate America. But today she is the Director of the Oya Market, a space that gives small local business and artists a place to sell their items in addition to having a performance space and meeting/teaching spaces. It is located in an area that is transitioning and the center of controversy surrounding gentrification on N. Rampart in the Marigny/St. Roch section of New Orleans. While she believes it is good to honor African-Americans who have made a difference she feels that more should be done than naming streets to honor them and their legacy.

"I have never quite understood the rational where they choose to rename these streets. Typically, across the country from my own traveling I've seen many cities where streets named for Martin Luther King is usually in the poorest section of town." Continuing she says, I sometimes feel when they are re-naming streets it should

to make them resemble what many of the great people who sacrificed to make this City a better place for all people to live a quality life regardless of their address.

When will the City see MLK Blvd. be a bastion of hope and prog-

ing poured into the community, and it has not been a fair and equitable distribution of the material resources around the entire community."

While there is structural and historical inequality that continue to exist in New Orleans, Lloyd Dennis

"These were two great men that spent their lives working for the people of our great city, truly worthy of being remembered and honored for making a difference and saving lives, – Latoya Cantrell, representative of District B where both streets are located told Data News Weekly."

ress or Oretha Castle Haley being the center for small businesses that can feel the economic impact that is often spoken of by some of those in leadership? When will these resources trickle down and affect those who need it most. Where do the solutions lie? In post-Katrina New Orleans there is more of a need for substance than style from leadership and real gains vs. tokens and symbols.

Rev. Webster feels that more needs to be done as we approach 10 years after Katrina. He sees the change, but feels it is not equally distributed; that the wealth and opportunities lie in the hands of a few.

"One of the messages I preach

feels that the solutions lie in the African-American Community doing what it can to empower themselves in the same spirit of Pastor Blakes and Raphael.

"I look at the change of these streets far beyond the naming of them. I feel during their lives they may have impacted some young preachers influencing them to become shepherds of people of their people," says Dennis. Continuing he says, "There is a need for us not others to step up and do things. And when you name a street after someone and then someone may ask who this person was and then when they are told of the contribution it might inspire them."

tion of neighborhoods; the question becomes what battles do the community choose to fight to get the end result they deserve. What steps need to be taken to recognize that African-Americans mattered in New Orleans before Katrina and will continue to have a presence in post-Katrina and not merely as a bystander but participant in what it is to become.

Asia Rainey sees the polarization in her work establishing the Oya Market, but feels that African-American begin to work together and with others to let them know that they will not be in the margins but in the room at the center of the conversation about the direction of the City moving forward.

"There is a divide in the perception of what that looks like, I find myself in the middle of two sides of the conversation I am seeing people coming in and lot of boost to tourism, the other side is there are communities that wonder how do they fit into that. Are they a part of the plan, from housing to business some are trying to answer that question for themselves like the Oya Market. Others wait for permission to carve out our space inside of that, this is a time how we are not only part of the conversation but part of the growth."

Plant Habits



By LMG Calla Victoria
Data News Weekly Columnist

In our zeal to purchase plant material, it is a good idea to research the natural growth habits of plants to make sure that you are positioning them correctly in your garden. Know the spread and growth habits before making purchases, even go online and research images of the plants you are considering in landscapes. Take for example one of my favorites, *Gaura lindheimeri* (also called the butterfly plant). It is a wonderful wildflower, easy care perennial, and is spectacular in the landscape. Its tall delicate branches trail over cre-

ating a waterfall effect. The problem is the branches can bend way down and touch the ground; and then there is the careless yard guy with a weed whacker, oh my! I planted a white gaura in one of my raised flower beds in front of my home and the gaura was still touching the ground. This plant that needs to be in a tall container or planted behind other plant material that can prop the gaura up. I solved the problem with some pink gaura that I planted behind my huge *Agave Americanas* (century plants). As the gaura's delicate branches drape through my agaves, they soften the look of the large sculptural plants, while at the same time the

agaves prop up the gaura so that it is not sweeping the ground. Also, I did learn that the pink gaura are much hardier than the white ones. My white gaura, which is a much larger and older plant, dies back each winter while the pink ones just sail on through.

Now let us discuss a plant's spread. The general rule, when buying plants, is to buy at least three of the same plant to make a statement. Now that is a good rule for most plants, however some plants spread so quickly and widely that one plant is more than enough. For example, cat whiskers *Orthosiphon aristatus*, an enchanting perennial but it get huge very fast, so one

is more than enough to make a statement. It is a distant relative to mint, so it can take over very quickly. I purchased one of these amazing plants a couple of years ago, and by the second spring I had to dig up and move this plant because it had gotten so large. The same is true for the sweet potato groundcover, in the attached image two small sweet potato plants covered all of the area.

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

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

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The 2015 Asante Award

Photos by Glenn Summers

The Asante Foundation recently held its 2015 Salute to The Mass Media Profession where Terry Jones, Publisher of Data News Weekly Newspaper received the Crystal Award.

2015 marks the Sixth Anniversary cel-

ebration of The Asanté Foundation Festival and Awards. The organization is using its platform to say Asanté to individuals who work in all facets of the mass media profession in New Orleans, LA. Award categories included book publishers, news

reporting, marketers, cartoonist, and researchers to ancillary services administrative, editors, producers, camera operators, graphic artist, public relations, and meteorologists. For ticket information visit www.asanteusa.org or call 504-416-9699.



Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events

To Be Equal

Summer Jobs Pay Future Dividends



Marc Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

"Your first job brings you more than just a steady paycheck – the experience teaches young people life and work skills that serve them long after the job is done. But as our nation continues to recover [from] the deepest recession since the

Great Depression, American youth are struggling to get the work experience they need for jobs of the future." – White House, "We Can't Wait Initiative" Statement Release, January 2012

I can still remember my very first job – and the valuable lessons I learned from it that continue to inform my career to this day. I got my first taste of entrepreneurship as one-third of a three-man janitorial company I started with two childhood friends. We mowed lawns, washed cars and cleaned windows. If it needed fixing or cleaning, we were the ones to call.

At the age of 15, I earned my first steady paycheck as a copy boy for a

local newspaper. Like so many millions of teens before and after me, I had the chance to be exposed to the world of work at an early age. And I earned more than money from the experience. With work came important lessons about responsibility, effective communication, time management, interpersonal skills and more. Today, as our nation continues to recover from the crippling impact of the Great Recession on our economy and job market, the ability of teens to jump-start their future careers, as they were once able to, remains in jeopardy.

Not only did jobs disappear during our nation's economic downturn, summer jobs – widely

acknowledged as the traditional means of entry into our nation's workforce for teens and young adults – became scarce. Competition from older workers for those entry-level jobs once reserved for teens increased as the labor market weakened, and with states slashing budgets to make ends meet, state and federally-funded summer jobs placement programs were either underfunded or cut.

But teen employment matters for their future and for our nation's. It not only gives young people something productive to do during the summer months, that job in the retail store, library or the local newspaper is money in their pock-

et and money being spent within the community. Studies have also shown that those who work when they are young are more likely to be employed in the future and will earn higher salaries.

After a high of 27.2 percent teen unemployment in 2010, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment for workers ages 16-19 is now down to 17.9 percent. As is the case with adult workers, teens are beginning to find jobs as the market recovers, but unemployment remains high for young people—disproportionately affecting low-income youth and Blacks and

Commentary,
Continued on page 7.

Michelle Obama's Real Life Experiences



By Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr.
Founder & President, Rainbow
PUSH Coalition

Last month at the graduation ceremony of Tuskegee University, a historically Black college in Alabama, first lady Michelle Obama spoke candidly about the racial barriers facing African Americans and encouraged them to overcome continuing discrimination by staying "true to the most real, most sincere, most authentic parts of yourselves."

People, she said, "will make assumptions about who they think you are based on their limited notion of the world." She and her husband have "felt the sting of those daily slights throughout our entire lives." But "those feelings are not an excuse to just throw up our hands and give up. ... They are not an excuse to lose hope."

Michelle's comments were

deeply moving because they came from her lived experience. Today, two of three Americans have a favorable opinion of her; she is far more popular than her husband. She's hailed as a fashion icon for her stylish mixing of designer with off-the-rack clothes. She's confident enough to release a video of her exercise routine featuring kick-boxing and lifting weights. Her campaign for obesity and for healthy living has helped transform school lunches and vending machines across the country.

But it wasn't always this way. She was raised in the South Shore community in Chicago. Her father, a municipal worker, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis as a young man. Her mother and father surrounded her and her brother, Craig, with love, with high expectations in hard conditions. This month in Chicago, Michelle gave another commencement address, to graduates of Martin Luther King Jr. Preparatory High School, and spoke to students from experience: "I know the struggles many of you face. How you walk the long way home to avoid the gangs. How you fight

to concentrate on your homework when there's too much noise at home. How you keep it together when your families are having hard times making ends meet."

Michelle flourished in school, and went on to Princeton, where she felt virtually like an alien in a school filled with the children of privilege, where only 8 percent of the student body was African American. Yet, she graduated with honors and went on to earn her law degree at Harvard Law School. After experience in a corporate firm, she turned her energy to more public-spirited work, eventually as a vice president for external affairs at the University of Chicago Hospital, creating bridges to the surrounding community where she had been raised.

But as Barack Obama's political comet rose in 2008, Michelle became the target of harsh criticism. She was burlesqued as "Mrs. Grievance" or "Barack's bitter half." The fist bump she gave Barack when he clinched the Democratic nomination was called a "terrorist fist jab." She was accused of exhibiting a "little bit of uppityism." As she told the

graduating class at Tuskegee, "as potentially the first African-American first lady, I was also the focus of another set of questions and speculations; conversations sometimes rooted in the fears and misperceptions of others. Was I too loud, or too angry, or too emasculating? Or was I too soft, too much of a mom, not enough of a career woman?"

But she made her way. She focused her political energy on fighting obesity, a plague across America, disproportionately afflicting African Americans and Latinos. She made healthy eating and exercise more popular, while mobilizing public pressure on food and beverage companies to cut the sugar and change the offerings in school lunches and vending machines. Her work on issues military families face, particularly the pressures they feel not only when deployed, but after they come home, helped thousands find decent work.

Perhaps her biggest triumph was her biggest priority – raising her children in the White House. Her mother moved in to provide an anchor. The president came back

at 6:30 p.m. to eat with this family, attended school events and athletic practices like a regular parent. Their tight and loving family has been an exemplary model for families across the country. And today, the vast majority of Americans have respect and affection for the first lady who made this happen.

Michelle Obama has said she has no intention of running for political office when she leaves the White House. But the interest in her running never subsides. If she decides to run, she would be the odds-on favorite, particularly for the Illinois Senate seat now held by Mark Kirk, whose most recent infamy was his attempt to use "street language," degrading Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and the South Side of Chicago.

As Barack Obama's presidency heads into its final years, one thing is clear: Michelle Obama's grace, intelligence and discipline have served her family, her husband and the nation well.

Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. is founder and president of the Chicago-based Rainbow PUSH Coalition. You can keep up with his work at www.rainbowpush.org

Hospitals Profit from Exorbitant Markups

By Jazelle Hunt

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Hundreds of American hospitals are turning a profit by charging patients exorbitant rates for necessary procedures. And for 50 hospitals in particular, the mark-ups are as high as 12 times the amount it costs them to deliver those services.

This is the revelation from a paper published last week in the Health Affairs medical journal, titled "Extreme Markup: The Fifty US Hospitals With The Highest Charge-To-Cost Ratios."

"These 50 are outliers, they're very skewed. But that does not mean all the other hospitals are hidden," says Ge Bai, assistant professor of accounting at Washington and Lee University, and co-author of the paper. "It's very difficult to tell [though]. You'd have to ask the question, when you walk in, at the front desk...about the ownership of the hospital."

The researchers looked at 2012 hospital price lists for nearly 5,000 facilities across the country, and compared them to the Medicare-allowable costs, defined as the most reasonable fees a hospital can expect to spend in effectively delivering any given service to Medicare patients, as calculated by the government. They are not intended to guide hospital charges to patients, and every hospital creates its own price list. These lists are called chargemasters and are often difficult for patients to access and decipher unless a hospital takes the rare initiative to be transparent.

According to the study, most hospitals charge patients between 1.5 and 4 times the Medicare allowable cost. A smaller, but sizable number of facilities charge between 4 and 9 times the cost. The 50 outliers – 49 of which were for-profit facilities – were charging patients between 9.2 and 12.6 times the cost they incurred in delivering services.

The top five hospitals with the steepest mark-ups, all charging at least 12 times the Medicare cost, were North Okaloosa Medical Center and Bayfront Health Brooksville in Florida; Carepoint Health-Bayonne Hospital in New Jersey; Paul B. Hall Regional Medical Center in Kentucky; and Chestnut Hill Hospital in Pennsylvania.

Florida is home to 20 of the 50 high mark-up hospitals identified in the study. The rest are spread across 12 other states – mostly in the South (76 percent are), and mostly in urban areas (84 percent are).

The other states were Alabama (which had five of these facilities), Arizona (one), Arkansas (one), California (three), Kentucky (one), New Jersey (one), Oklahoma (one), Pennsylvania (seven), South Carolina (one), Tennessee (three), Texas (five), and Virginia (one).

Two publicly-traded corporate hospital systems – Community Health Systems and Hospital Corporation of America – own 38 of these facilities.

Chargemasters vary widely, in general and within this top-50 group. For example, at Orange Park Medical Center in Florida (number eight on the list), if an un-

insured person is admitted for one to two days for chest pain, he or she could be charged somewhere between \$12,000 and \$23,000. About 15 miles away at Memorial Hospital of Jacksonville, the same patient would be charged between \$9,000 and \$17,000, and that's with an extra day of care. Both hospitals are owned by the same company, which voluntarily provides its price estimates.

Uninsured people feel the full force of these charges. While the Affordable Care Act has helped millions get coverage, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 13.7 percent of Black people are still uninsured as of 2014 and will likely remain so. Many are low-income or below the poverty line, living in states that did not expand Medicare coverage. Half of the states housing the top-50 high mark-up hospitals did not expand Medicare.

Insured people who are "out-of-network" at these facilities are also vulnerable. Insurance companies do not set their terms based on the hospital's prices – if a policy covers 70 percent of all emergency visits, then the patient is responsible for the 30 percent, whether the hospital charged \$100 or \$1,000. When a person gets a bill from a hospital that isn't partnered with his or her insurance company, the company often pays little to nothing of that bill.

People who are both insured and in-network end up paying higher premiums when a hospital with high mark-ups is part of their network. As insurance companies

have to cover members who end up in these for-profit facilities, they spread the steep charges among all their members.

"We don't have price regulations in other industries so people can do comparative shopping. But in the health care market it's very different. In many cases, we as consumers do not have the time...to compare prices," Bai says, adding that during treatment, physicians don't know or are not at liberty to discuss the hospital's pricing systems. "We as consumers have no options before the service is provided. We just wait there hopelessly...we're sick and anxious."

About 30 percent of the hospitals sampled in the study were considered for-profit – Bai says that about half of all hospitals in the country are.

Maryland and West Virginia are the only states with complete health care pricing regulations. California and New Jersey have regulations for what hospitals can charge uninsured patients. Maryland's system is widely considered a national model, with the lowest mark-ups in the nation (1.5 of Medicare allowable cost). The report recommends a federal system patterned after it.

"We knew these high mark-ups have been going on for a while, at least 15 or 20 years, but this is really over the top," Bai says. "I think the public needs to understand...there's a loophole in our system. The market has stopped working. That's why we need the government to step to help regulate some of these prices."

Commentary, Continued from page 6.

Hispanics. The national unemployment rate stands at a staggering 30.1 percent for Black teens and 19.2 percent for Hispanic teens. The groups of teens who need the work most in order to help themselves, and very often make a significant contribution to their family's budget, are not finding the jobs.

Our nation's answer to this dilemma has been a fractured portrait of private and public initiatives and success. Cities and states have cobbled together money – when it's in the budget – and have funneled it to local groups or agencies that connect youths to jobs or job training.

In 2012, the White House launched Summer Jobs+ as part of the "We Can't Wait" initiative. The project brought together the federal government and the private sector to create 180,000 employment opportunities for low-income youth.

At the National Urban League, we work with at-risk youth to introduce them into the workforce through a comprehensive set of services through the Urban Youth Empowerment Program. While all of these efforts are laudable and have changed many lives and communities for the better, it is not enough. Our nation needs to

expand summer job programs and create year-round employment for our young people. We need a commitment that says yes to teens and to their future. Our nation needs a comprehensive jobs solution for young people, because piecemeal solutions will only deliver far-flung pockets of success.

Investing in our young people is an investment in the continued strength of this great nation and its workforce. Young people need the formative workplace skills they can get in those entry-level jobs to move on to greater career success and higher salaries in the

future. Our nation, and its local economies, benefit when teens spend their disposable income. Surely there are tax loopholes, corporate or otherwise, that can be closed, bringing additional dollars to the table to invest in our young people. The financial cost of not investing in teens, not creating opportunities for future success, is what will cost this country, and our future in the fast-paced global economy, the most.

Marc H. Morial, former mayor of New Orleans, is president and CEO of the National Urban League.

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