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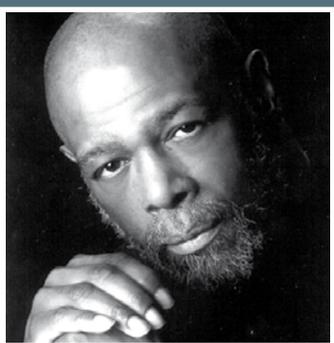
July 25 - July 31, 2015 50th Year Volume 14 www.ladatanews.com

A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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Obama Says Race Infects U.S. Criminal Justice System



President Barack Obama made history last week when he visited the El Reno Federal Correctional Institution in El Reno, Oklahoma. The visit is part of Obama's new push to reform the criminal justice system by calling for changes like the reduction or elimination of severe mandatory-minimum sentences for nonviolent offenders. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

By Damon C. Williams
Special to the NNPA from the
Philadelphia Tribune

Hours after announcing his administration had secured a multinational pact with Iran to limit their nuclear program, President Barack Obama told the NAACP national convention Tuesday that race has always played an outsized role in incarceration.

"There is a long history of inequity in the justice system in America," Obama said in Philadelphia. "It's important for us to realize that violence in our communities is serious and that historically has effected the African-American community, which many times has been under-policed, rather than over-policed."

"Folks were very interested in containing the African-American community, which led to segregated areas, but within those areas, there wasn't enough police presence. But here's the thing, over the last few decades, we have also locked up more and more non-violent drug offenders than ever before for longer than ever before, and that is the real reason our prison population is so high."

Obama said there has been a prison explosion in the U.S. over the past 35 years.

"The United States is home to 5 percent of the world's population, but 25 percent of the world's prisoners. Think about that. Our incarceration rate is four times higher than China's. We keep more people behind bars than the top 35 European countries combined. And it hasn't always been the case – this huge explosion in incarceration rates. In 1980, there were 500,000 people

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

P.O. Box 57347, New Orleans, LA 70157-7347 | Phone: (504) 821-7421 | Fax: (504) 821-7622
editorial: datanewseditor@bellsouth.net | advertising: datanewsad@bellsouth.net

Terry B. Jones	Contributors	Art Direction & Production
CEO/Publisher	Denise Hooks-Anderson, M.D.	MainorMedia.com
Edwin Buggage	Edwin Buggage	Editorial Submissions
Editor	Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.	datanewseditor@bellsouth.net
Calla Victoria	Benjamin T. Jealous	Advertising Inquiries
Executive Assistant	Terry B. Jones	datanewsad@bellsouth.net
June Hazeur	Ajaya Long	Distribution
Accounting	Julianne Malveaux	On The Run
	The Bookworm Sez	Courier Services
	Evan Vucci	
	James A. Washington	
	Aly Weisman	
	Damon C. Williams	

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In his address to the NAACP National Convention in Philadelphia, President Obama said there has been a prison explosion in the U.S. over the past 35 years. "The United States is home to 5 percent of the world's population, but 25 percent of the world's prisoners." (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

behind bars in America – half a million people in 1980... Today there are 2.2 million. It has quadrupled since 1980. Our prison population has doubled in the last two decades alone."

He added that some people should be in jail, including murderers, predators, rapists, gang leaders, drug kingpins. But some low-level, first-time, non-violent drug offenders should not be among those incarcerated, the president said.

"Over the last few decades, we've also locked up more and more non-violent drug offenders than ever before, for longer than ever before. And that is the real reason our prison population is so high," he explained. "In far too many cases, the punishment simply does not fit the crime. If you're a low-level drug dealer, or you violate your parole, you owe some debt to society. You have to be held accountable and make amends. But you don't owe 20 years. You don't owe a life sentence. That's disproportionate to the price that should be paid."

And people of color are paying a higher price than anyone else, the president stated.

"African Americans and Latinos make up 30 percent of our population; they make up 60 percent of our inmates. About one in every 35 African American men, one in every 88 Latino men is serving time right now. Among White men, that number is one in 214.

The bottom line is that in too many places, Black boys and Black men, Latino boys and Latino men experience being treated differently under the law."

Obama said he is in favor of reducing or eliminating mandatory minimum sentencing, and said he was hopeful of a bipartisan plan in Washington to address sentencing guidelines.

"Today, back in Washington, Republican senators from Utah and Texas are joining Democratic senators from New Jersey and Rhode Island to talk about how Congress can pass meaningful criminal-justice reform this year," Obama said. "That is very good news. This is

a cause that is bringing people in both houses of Congress together and created some unlikely bedfellows."

The president named unlikely alliances such as the Rand Corporation and Newt Gingrich, Americans for Tax Reform and the ACLU, and the NAACP and the ultra-conservative Koch Brothers as examples of organizations and individuals that may have philosophical and ideological differences coming together over criminal justice reform.

Saying that Americans can't close their eyes anymore, Obama called for bipartisan action to revamp a criminal justice system riddled with inequities that result in unduly harsh prison sentences, particularly for minorities, and cost the federal government \$80 billion a year for unwarranted mass incarceration.

"In far too many cases, the punishment simply does not fit the crime," Obama said. "Mass incarceration makes our country worse off and we need to do something about it."

He spoke one day after he commuted the sentences of 46 drug offenders, 14 of whom had been sentenced to life.

Despite the new interest among Republicans in criminal justice legislation, not all GOP legislators saw the president's commutations as a positive step.

"Commuting the sentences of a few drug offenders is a move designed to spur headlines, not meaningful reform," said Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, a member of the House Judiciary Committee who has proposed bipartisan legislation.

In his address to the NAACP, President Obama acknowledged that racial inequality remains a fact of life in the U.S.

"We made progress, but our work is not done," he said. "By just about every measure, the life chances for Black and Hispanic youth still lag far behind those of their White peers. Our kids, America's children, so often are isolated, without hope, less likely to graduate from high school, less likely to

earn a college degree, less likely to be employed, less likely to have health insurance, less likely to own a home."

And part of that is by design, he said.

"Part of this is a legacy of hundreds of years of slavery and segregation, and structural inequalities that compounded over generations. It did not happen by accident," he explained. "Partly it's a result of continuing, if sometimes more subtle, bigotry – whether in who gets called back for a job interview, or who gets suspended from school, or what neighborhood you are able to rent an apartment in – which, by the way, is why our recent initiative to strengthen the awareness and effectiveness of fair housing laws is so important. So we can't be satisfied or not satisfied until the opportunity gap is closed for everybody in America. Everybody."

(The NNPA News Service provided additional reporting for this story)

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NBRPA and Partners Team Up To Bring NBA Cares Youth Basketball Event to NOLA

NBA alums Robert Horry, Robert Pack, 'Hot Rod' Williams, Sleepy Floyd, Donald Royal and Eldridge Recasner to participate



CHICAGO, ILL. -- The National Basketball Retired Players Association (NBRPA), the only alumni association comprised of former NBA, ABA, Harlem Globetrotters and WNBA players, will bring its successful Full Court Press: Prep for Success youth basketball and mentoring program to Tulane University's Hertz Center on Saturday, July 24, alongside its partners from the National Basketball Association (NBA), Police Athletic/Activities League (PAL), Leadership Foundations and Jobsy Wobsy. As part of this very special collaboration with the NBA and its NBA Cares Initiative, six former NBA standouts will be working with local youth, including:

Robert Horry: 7-time NBA Champion with Spurs, Lakers and

Rockets. Member of the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame.

Robert Pack: New Orleans native (Alfred Lawless High School), 13-year NBA career, assistant coach for the New Orleans Pelicans

Eric "Sleepy" Floyd: NBA All-Star, 14-year NBA career

Donald Royal: New Orleans native (St. Augustine High School), 9-year NBA career

John "Hot Rod" Williams: Louisiana native, played collegiately at Tulane, 14-year NBA career

Eldridge Recasner: New Orleans native (Alfred Lawless High School), 9-year NBA career

All participating youth will be pre-registered by the NBRPA, PAL and Leadership Foundations – the event is not open to the general public.

Rep. Richmond Announces \$82.4M in Disaster Recovery Grants for Southern University of New Orleans



WASHINGTON – On Tuesday, Rep. Richmond (LA-02) announced the availability of additional disaster recovery grants for Southern University of New Orleans (SUNO) for damage suffered as a result of Hurricane Katrina. These funds, through the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be used for the construction of four new school buildings on the SUNO campus:

"SUNO is an essential part of

our community and provides a quality education to many of our hard-working students," said Rep. Richmond. "This funding from the Department of Homeland Security will help revitalize the campus after the devastation caused by the storm. As we approach the 10th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, it is important to remember that our recovery will not be complete until all of our people and institutions are made whole. I will continue to work in Congress to ensure that this is a reality."

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trailblazer

Susan Henry

Giving the Community a Voice

by: Edwin Buggage

There are many things that are of concern to the African-American Community. In many instances those issues are filtered through a distorted lens that often times does not paint an accurate picture of the African-American Community and often does not lead to solutions.

Susan Henry is leading the charge to change that with her work in media in addition to her work as an advocate in her community.

"I work for a community radio station WBOK-1230AM and our mission is to give the Black community a voice. We try to find people who have something to say and give them a platform to voice their views," says Henry.

She believes WBOK and other African-American owned media outlets are a valuable resource.

"I feel most information we get about our community is not from an African-American perspective, so we try to provide information that is useful that can benefit, inform and empower our community."

Her life outside of work is one also centered on giving back and empowering others. Where she serves on several boards and giving her time she



takes part in civic activities that inspire the next generation.

"I am on the Board of Reach Beyond Nola a mentoring program for young girls. We work with girls' with ages that

range from nine to fourteen. In working with them we take them on journeys outside of New Orleans that we hope can broaden their horizons and allow them to see life beyond the City giving

them a better perspective of the world and the possibilities of their lives."

Susan speaks proudly of one of the young ladies she's mentoring and recalls a recent trip she took with her to the State Capitol for a life enriching experience.

"There is a young girl I presently mentor whose parents were relocated to Houston and have not returned, so she lives with her grandmother. Throughout her short life she hasn't had many female role models. So I've stepped in to try to help guide her in the right direction. She hasn't traveled much outside the City so I took her to Baton Rouge to the State Capitol and her eyes lit up thinking about life beyond her neighborhood. These are the kinds of things I enjoy doing and nothing makes me more proud than to see these young ladies reach their full potential."

She also is training the next generation at the radio station, for she

feels it is important that what she does there with young people they will be able to replace her and carry on the tradition of giving people a voice and serving others.

"We need to think about the next generation and preparing them to carry on the work we do today to improve our community for tomorrow and beyond. I have had interns at the station and after being there many of their lives have been changed from just being around positive Black female role models."

Henry is an advocate of education and says that change begins with adults doing things that can inspire greatness in young people.

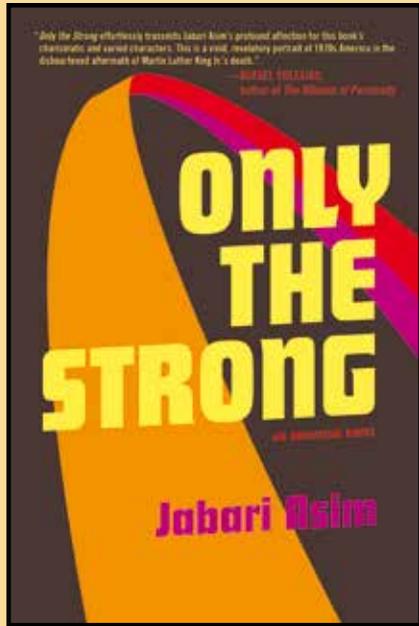
"We can speak about change all we want, but the best thing we can do for the next generation is to lead by example; we need to show them people who are doing great things and encourage them that they can reach greatness as well."

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By The Bookworm Sez

Never underestimate yourself.

You can carry the weight of ten worlds on your shoulders, and still have time to do your job. You can lift spirits, move mountains, and haul out in a hot minute. You have more power deep inside you than you realize – but, as in the new novel, “Only the Strong” by Jabari Asim, you still have weaknesses.

Lorenzo “Guts” Tolliver never had reason to show a soft side.

Being soft, in fact, was detrimental to his life and his job as right-hand man for Ananias Goode, who more-or-less ran Gateway City . Softness wasn't what you wanted a man to see as

you broke his legs or killed him.

Well over six feet tall and looking like a tank, Guts was deceptively fast of feet and fists, and Goode something in Guts years ago that he liked. Through the decades, Goode learned to trust Guts, and he liked him – so when Guts asked to step back as Goode's driver-body-guard-enforcer, Goode gave his blessing.

It was, Goode knew, all about a woman.

He knew because he, too, had a woman he wanted but really couldn't have.

Years ago, when she was just fifteen, Dr. Artinces Noel watched her Mama wither away from grief, and she promised herself that

**Book Review,
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Kurte Pellerin Throws One Hell of a Party for Coco

Photos by Terry Jones

On Friday, July 17th at The Regency Reception Hall Kurte Pellerin threw a huge birthday bash for his then girlfriend, Vanessa Roche' who turned 49; celebrating with friends and family, including Kurte's 84 year old mother, Audrey Pellerin and his two sons. After singing Happy Birthday, Kurte surprised Vanessa with a marriage proposal, now his fiancée. There was lots of food, beverages and dancing especially by Kurte and Vanessa. Live entertainment was provided by BRW R&B Singing Group and DJ Non-Stop.



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Obama Calls for Criminal Justice Reform



Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
NNPA Columnist

Whenever the president of the United States speaks to a national convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), millions of people pay attention. As a former Executive Director and CEO of the NAACP, I listened very carefully last week to President Barack Obama's historic keynote address to the organization's 106th annual convention in Philadelphia.

There was a noticeable deliberate "freedom of expression" style and substance in President Obama's speech to the NAACP. He was confident, candid and clear. Obama was unrestrained, passionate and focused. In other words, the president went straight to his main subject matter: The urgency and mandate today for criminal justice reform in the United States.

President Obama stated, "But today, I want to focus on one aspect of American life that remains particularly skewed by race and by wealth, a source of inequity that has ripple effects on families and on communities and ultimately on our nation – and that is our criminal justice system."

Obama's remarks were timely and welcomed by millions of families that have been devastated as a result of the injustice of the current

court and prison system. It was full of analysis and statistics that went beyond typical political rhetoric. He cited the following facts to stress that now was the time for bipartisan corrective action by all levels of government:

The population of the U.S. has only 5 percent of the world's population, but holds 25 percent of the world's prisoners;

In 1980, there were 500,000 people in prison in the U.S., but today there are 2.2 million, a disproportionate number of them African American and Latino;

The U.S. spends \$80 billion per year on keeping people in prison, about the same amount of money it would take to make tuition free at all public universities and colleges across the nation;

One third of the entire budget of the U.S. Justice Department is

spent on incarceration;

While African Americans and Latino Americans combined make up about 30 percent of the U.S. population, we make up 60 percent of the prison inmates in the U.S.;

One in every 35 African American men is imprisoned, compared to one in every 88 Latino men as compared and one in every 214 White men; and

Research studies have confirmed that African Americans are more likely to be stopped by the police, frisked, questioned, charged and arrested than any other racial group in the U.S.'s

We all should be willing to join and support the emerging criminal justice reform movement in America. Hopefully, President Obama's address to the NAACP will stimulate the passage of bipartisan legislation that will stop racial profiling

and other legislative measures that will help to dramatically reduce the prison population in the United States. In the absence of real reform, the issues surrounding mass incarceration will not be adequately resolved

President Obama made reference to the fact that on reaching the ultimate goal of criminal justice reform, there are today converging interests between the NAACP and the politically conservative Koch brothers, as well as between the ACLU and Americans for Tax Reform and among other divergent groups who have not worked together on social justice issues in the past. That is a good sign of what might be possible going forward.

Frederick Douglass said it best, "If there is no struggle, there is

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Release Low-Level, Non-Violent Drug Offenders



Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

Jerry Alan Bailey was sentenced to more than 30 years in federal prison for conspiring to violate federal narcotics laws. Shana Barry-Scott was sentenced to 20 years for having cocaine in her possession and intending to distribute it. Jerome Wayne Johnson grew marijuana plants and was charged with intending to distribute marijuana. He was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison. Douglas Lindsay initially was sentenced to a life sentence for possessing cocaine with intent to distribute, but early on his sentence was reduced to 24 years.

Bailey, Barry-Scott, Wayne and Lindsay were among the 46 people

whose sentences President Obama recently commuted. They are the lucky ones.

There are 95,165 people – 48.6 percent of all federal inmates – incarcerated for drug-related crimes, according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons. (That's triple the second-largest category that includes weapons, explosives and arson; 31,743 or 16.2 percent of federal inmates are confined on those charges). Another 210,200 – 16 percent – were imprisoned in state facilities on drug-related offenses as of 2012.

President Obama's commutations of non-violent drug sentences are a step in the right direction. By choosing non-violent drug offenders, he highlights the draconian sentences that those committing these crimes receive. The American Civil Liberties Union says that of the nearly 3,300 people getting life sentences for petty crimes, almost 2,600 will spend decades in jail for non-violent drug offenses.

According to AlterNet, thanks to the "three strikes" law, Tyrone Taylor got life for selling an undercover

agent \$20 worth of crack. Taylor says he was a drug user, not a dealer. Still he got more time than many killers would. Leland Dodd, 59, got a life sentence for conspiracy to traffic marijuana, and has already served 24 years in federal prison. Army veteran David Lincoln Hyatt had no prior record when he got a life sentence in 1993 for his role in a cocaine conspiracy. Now 65, he has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, and hopes to receive a compassionate release. Even the judge who sentenced him under mandatory minimum sentencing laws has advocated for his release.

According to President Obama, we spend \$80 billion a year on incarceration. In contrast, according to the White House Initiative on HBCUs, these colleges got between \$600 and \$700 million from the Department of Education on grants and contracts.

I applaud President Obama's step forward in pardoning 46 non-violent drug offenders. Many of whom would have been better off had they been sentenced under the less harsh Fair Sentencing Act

of 2010. After passage of that act, inmates were invited to apply for lighter sentences and about 20,000 did. The Office of the Pardon Attorney reviews these requests, and forwards those they deem worthy of commutation to the president. The 20,000 applications are delayed because of a "backlog" in reviewing them.

It costs the federal government \$82 per day or approximately \$30,000 a year to support one inmate. If even only half of those who have applied for clemency deserve it, that's a savings of \$822,000 a day or \$300 million per year. This is money that could go for all kinds of initiatives around job training, drug treatment and education. Imagine that, instead of incarcerating addicted people, they were sentenced to residential drug rehabilitation programs.

President Obama has solid ideas for criminal justice reforms, but it is not likely that this Congress will pass any of them. So he is left working with presidential commutation, an inmate at a time. Is it possible to grant "mass"

commutations for those convicted of relatively minor drug crimes, especially those who had clean records before arrest? In addition to saving lots of money, it would, in many cases reunite families. Strict conditions of probation would likely prevent recidivism. Nearly 150,000 children have mothers in prison, some for poverty-related, non-violent drug crimes. Some of these mothers desperately want contact with their children, and many of them deserve it. Most would gladly comply with restrictive probation conditions if they could just hug their child.

It's good that President Obama "gets it" when it comes to reforming the criminal justice system. Can he implement change more quickly than pardoning one non-violent offender at a time? There is no difference between Jerry Alan Bailey and Tyrone Taylor except that Bailey received the pardon. There are thousands waiting on a similar break. Let these people go!

Julianne Malveaux is an author and economist based in Washington, D.C.

Trust Me. Trust Me Not? Your Call



James Washington
Guest Columnist

Sometimes words alone cannot convey meaning and feelings the way we'd like them to. Trust for example. The reference point for my meaning is "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all things acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6. Trust is such a complex thing. Have you ever been betrayed

by someone in whom you had total trust? Have you been able to totally trust another person since? See how easy misplaced trust takes you to a terribly vulnerable place. It's uncomfortable. It's abnormal. It ain't fun. Yet, in this passage we are instructed to put our trust in the Lord. The question is can you do it? Are you able to put trust in your heart after you experience devastating betrayal? And we've all been betrayed in one way or another; either by having our beliefs proven false or maybe your heart has been broken. Every one knows someone who has been crippled by a lover or spouse gone crazy, or, watched someone stumble up on the truth about a situation that everybody but them knew the real deal. In the real world that kind of stuff hurts.

In a real sense, once destroyed, trust 'don't' come here anymore.

Now wait a minute. Go out and trust in the Lord implicitly. You get my meaning? Extreme caution usually follows crippling betrayal. New relationships are founded largely on mistrust and 'prove it to me;' not, blind faith and unconditional trust. Life teaches us that only a fool would allow themselves to be misused again. Therein lies my question about trust and what it means to you. Can you deal with this concept everyday? How much of a struggle are you having trying to trust people who have taught you not to give them the time of day? Do you treat all people this way or just the one(s) who betrayed you? Can you forgive? Can you ever forget? Do you really want to? And what does all of this

have to do with God? Well, how are you treating Him in the trust area? "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:2. Now exactly, who's proving what to whom? Are you requiring God to prove something to you before you trust Him? Are you demanding from God those same things you demand from someone, anyone before you would even consider giving him or her your love? You see it is so easy to succumb to a lifestyle which requires proof before love is given. It's so easy to demand the impossible from people who are incapable of giving it to you. But how can you base your relationship with God on worldly principles grounded in betrayal and disappointment? Are you requiring God to prove His love

to you before you give Him yours? The key to this trust thing lies deep within each and every one of us. We first have to confront those demons which have plagued us for years. And yes, that means all the pain that goes with them. Then and only then can we begin to even accept the concept of trust and loyalty, total and without equivocation. Because then trust means knowing. Trust means truth. Trust means no matter what, I know that regardless of conditions and circumstances, I am God's child, made in His image and the recipient of His love. It's a always got your back thing.

May God bless and keep you always,

James, jaws@dallasweekly.com

Revealing Black Men During National Black Family Month



By Benjamin Todd Jealous
NNPA Columnist

July is National Black Family Month, which is a good time to take a moment to celebrate the role of Black men in their families and in society at large.

Let's take a moment to reveal Black men to America. Let's upend the stereotypes and honor what is best about the men who are raising children in our communities and our country.

Tell somebody that according to the U.S. Army, Black men serve this country in uniform at a higher rate than all other men. By that measure, Black men are the most patriotic men in America.

Post on Facebook that according to the U.S. Census, the rate of

business creation by Black males has been growing at nearly twice the national average for more than a decade. By that measure, Black men are among the most enterprising men in America.

Share on Twitter that according to the Cultures of Giving Report by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Black households continue to give to charity at a higher rate than all other households. By extrapolation, Black men may be among the most generous men in America.

Enlighten somebody that according to the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, Black men who live with their children are the most likely to bathe, dress, diaper and interact with them daily. Also, Black men who do not live with their children are the most likely to still maintain contact even after remarrying. By these measures, Black men are arguably the most engaged fathers in the country.

Black men may lead the nation in patriotism, entrepreneurship, generosity and parental engagement. But that's not the story you've heard, is it?

Well, you can change that. You can begin to see and tell a more accurate story, one that is fact-based, optimistic and aspires to illuminate Black men's roles in society as community-builders.

This is not just a wish on our part. More than 100 Black men who head community organizations, called "BMe Leaders," have agreed to promote a vision of America's future based upon valuing all members of the human family, recognizing Black men as assets, rejecting narratives that denigrate people, and working together in asset-oriented ways to strengthen communities.

The nation is hungry for a better story about who we are and where we are heading. We should not ignore the problems facing the Black community – but we must stop ignoring our community builders whose actions create safety, knowledge, opportunity and community.

Black men are willing to lead. Are you willing to #ReachWithUs to build more caring and prosperous communities? Get involved at www.bmecommunity.org.

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Summer Tips



Denise Hooks-Anderson, M.D.
Title

Nothing says summer like flip-flops, bathing suits, ice-cream cones and concerts in the park. After Spring Break, kids along with teachers and administrators start the countdown to summer vacation. In contrast, parents are stressed out trying to figure out what they will do with those kids for 10-11 weeks and they are secretly wishing school was in session year round.

However, the merriment of the long-awaited warm weather cannot lessen the importance of summer safety. Having a less rigid schedule should not be synonymous with emergency room and urgent care visits. Injuries and illnesses are not uncommon during this time of

year and can definitely transform what was planned as a tranquil experience to a disaster. So, to launch summer into the right direction, here are some simple tips to follow.

Tip #1: Everyone needs sunscreen.

No matter your complexion or ethnicity, your skin can be damaged by those intense rays from the sun especially between the hours of 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Ideally, skin should be protected with a hat, clothing and sunscreen with an SPF of 30. Furthermore, per the American Academy of Dermatologists, the sunscreen should be broad-spectrum and waterproof. Repeated episodes of sun damage will increase the likelihood of developing skin cancer in the future.

Tip #2: Respect the water.

About one in five drowning victims is younger than age 14. Per the CDC, 80 percent of the people who die from drowning are male. Children between the ages of 1 and 4 are more likely to die in a home

pool. The fatal drowning rates of African American children between the ages of 5 and 14 are almost three times that of whites.

It is imperative that children be supervised around bodies of water and follow general safety guidelines such as not running on the slippery surfaces next to the pool, obeying the directions of the lifeguards and wearing life vests when appropriate. One of the main factors involved in drowning injuries is lack of swimming ability. Participation in formal swimming lessons can decrease the risk of drowning in children ages 1 to 4.

Tip #3: Listen to your body.

After surviving a brutal winter, it is understandable that when summer arrives being outdoors as much as possible is a major priority. But, excessive heat can cause a variety of heat-related illnesses such as heat rashes, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat strokes. The body normally controls internal temperatures by sweating however during excessive heat, this mechanism is

insufficient and body temperatures can reach dangerously high levels. Seniors, children, and people who are ill or overweight are most at risk. Feeling clammy, dizzy, or nauseated are all symptoms of being overheated and should alert you to seek shade, rehydrate with cool water-not ice water, and elevate feet.

Heat strokes occur when temperatures reach 104 or higher either by excessive exercise or inappropriately treated heat exhaustion. Internal temperatures that reach such levels can cause multiple organ damage and is an extremely dangerous condition. On average, over 600 people die each year in the United States from heat related illness which is more than tornadoes, hurricanes, floods and lightning combined.

Tip #4: Obey the rules.

Although highway deaths have declined about 25 percent since 2004, the National Highway Safety Administration reported 32,719 deaths in 2013 from crashes. On the other hand, injuries caused by

distracted drivers increased by 1 percent. During that same time, about a third of the people between the ages of 21-34 involved in a fatal crash had blood alcohol levels above the legal limit. Furthermore, a large percentage of the pediatric fatalities were unrestrained occupants.

Speed limits are recommended for your safety. Wet roads, curves, and construction are all hazards that not only endanger you but the surrounding drivers as well. Reducing your speed during those road conditions will enable you to more effectively handle your vehicle. In addition, medications, fatigue, and illicit substances like marijuana can delay your reaction time and contribute to driver errors.

Therefore, the bottom line about summer is that it should be a time of fellowship, friendship and fun! Let's make summer 2015 one of the best vacation times ever!

Denise Hooks-Anderson, M.D. is an Assistant Professor at SLUCare Family Medicine in St. Louis, MO.

Sexual Health Coalition Urges African Americans to Use Preventive Health Services

By Ajoya Long

The National Coalition for Sexual Health (NCSH), which consists of over 50 leading health and medical organizations, is urging African Americans to take advan-

tage of little-to-no cost preventive health care services.

With increased access to health insurance coverage, African Americans can now utilize many recommended sexual health services for free, including the HPV vaccine, fe-



male contraceptives (including the IUD, implant, and pill), pap smears and screening for sexually transmitted diseases.

However, statistics show that not enough African Americans are using these services. For example, in 2013, only 34 percent of Black girls and 16 percent of Black boys received all three doses of the HPV vaccine, the only

cancer prevention vaccine currently available.

"You and your health matter. We know you have a lot on your plate, but we all need to make room for our sexual health. Just like protecting your heart health, managing your blood pressure, and exercising regularly – it's worth your time," said Christian J. Thrasher, director of The Center of Excellence for

Sexual Health, Morehouse School of Medicine.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force also recommends that all Americans take advantage of these services.

"Knowledge is power. It's important to take charge of your own sexual health, and get informed about the services that are recommended for you. Don't assume that you are automatically getting these services when you go to your health care provider. You need to ask your provider to be sure," said NCSH Co-Director Susan Gilbert.

To help Americans get the services they need, a free guide and website are available from the NCSH, which features action steps for good sexual health, charts of recommended services for men and women, questions to ask health care providers, and other resources.

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50 Cent Testifies

'I take the jewelry and cars back to the stores'

By Aly Weisman
The Business Insider

Curtis Jackson, aka 50 Cent, appears in Manhattan Supreme Court on Tuesday, July 21, 2015 in New York to testify in a lawsuit about a sex tape he allegedly posted online.

After filing for bankruptcy last week, 50 Cent, whose real name is Curtis Jackson, appeared in a Manhattan Supreme Court on Tuesday morning to testify that he is not as wealthy as his flashy lifestyle makes him appear to be.

While Forbes estimated the rapper's fortune to be about \$155 million in May, Jackson's lawyer said in court Tuesday that his client's worth is \$4.4 million, which presents a problem after he was hit last week with a \$5 million verdict for publishing a sex tape starring rival Rick Ross' ex-girlfriend.

Jackson explained in court that while his social-media accounts may be filled with flashy photos, "I take the jewelry and the cars back to the stores," according to the New York Daily News.

When the judge asked the rapper



Photo Credit (Jefferson Siegel/New York Daily News/POOL)

about his 38 million record sales, Jackson said, "I make 10 cents a record."

Jackson also said he made \$100,000 for the two movies he's currently in, "Spy" and "Southpaw."

For his current role on Starz's hit series "Power," which he also executive-produces, Jackson said he's pocketed only \$150,000 from each of its first two seasons.

Despite the filing, Jackson did

admit that he recently threw cash around at a Florida strip club but said "I took two others back in order to buy it, according to the NYDN."

During his testimony, Jackson also said he was worried that his "brand" had been tarnished since the bankruptcy filing last week, saying, "Now that I filed for bankruptcy, I'm not as cool as I was last week."

Jackson did manage to say a minor apology to Lastonia Leviston, who was awarded \$5 million after he allegedly published a sex tape on which she is featured without her consent: "I'm sorry if you feel like I hurt you."

Since the bankruptcy filing last week, 50 Cent has been vocal about trying to get out of paying Leviston.

"I need protection," 50 Cent explained while appearing on TBS' "Conan." "You get a bullet eye painted on your back when you're successful, and it's public. You become the ideal person for lawsuits."

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Commentary, Continued from page 8.

no progress." But the struggle to reform the criminal justice system must move beyond just a momentary national news cycle event response to whenever President Obama makes an outstanding speech. I wish social change was that easy to achieve. It is not. The work has begun, but we still have a lot of hard work and coalition building to do to make real reform happen.

I believe we in the African American community has to take more responsibility to end mass incarceration and to challenge all the inequities of our society. Ending poverty and injustice, first and foremost, is our demand and it also has to be our responsible leadership to keep pushing forward. The government has its role, but we should not solely rely on the government. I believe in self-development and self-improvement. Our struggle for freedom, justice, equality and empowerment must continue with renewed energy and determination.

Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. is the President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and can be reached for national advertisement sales and partnership proposals at: dr.bchavis@nnpa.org; and for lectures and other professional consultations at: <http://drbenjaminfchavisjr.wix.com/drbcfc>

Book Review, Continued from page 6.

she'd never fall that in love with a man. She might have kept her promise to herself – work, charities, her clinic, saving black babies from death-by-being-poor, those were her life – but then Ananias Goode came around one night with a stab wound that he wanted quietly stitched. One thing led to another, led to a regular Wednesday session at a local motel, but they couldn't let anyone know.

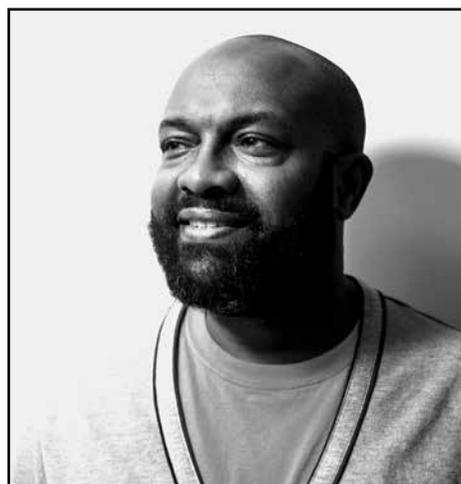
Ananias Goode was still a married man.

Deep inside his well-appointed home, amid whooshing respirators and the smell of antiseptic, the comatose Mrs. Goode lay curled in a fetal position, a victim of the war her husband had with another gang, a war that also left her infant son dead. Remembering that, knowing it, was something Ananias Goode lived with.

And for the man watching him, it was also something Goode would die with...

Wow. Well, here's the thing: I almost never read a book twice, especially a novel. I'd definitely make an exception for this one.

The most appealing thing about "Only the Strong," I think, was that it seemed as though I lived inside the story itself, and finishing it felt like I'd been evicted. I felt unmoored. Author Jabari Asim does that: he draws a reader in with richly-worked charac-



Author Jabari Asim

ters who, though often despicable, are attention-grabbing; settings that you can almost step right into; and flashbacks that move the story forward at a perfect pace. That's the kind of writing that sometimes makes you forget that you're reading a piece of fiction. Yep: wow.

Though I generally don't like to compare authors, Mosley fans will eat this debut novel right up. It's noir, it's fast-paced, it's hard-hitting, and it's one you shouldn't miss. "Only the Strong" will leave you weak in the knees.

This space can be

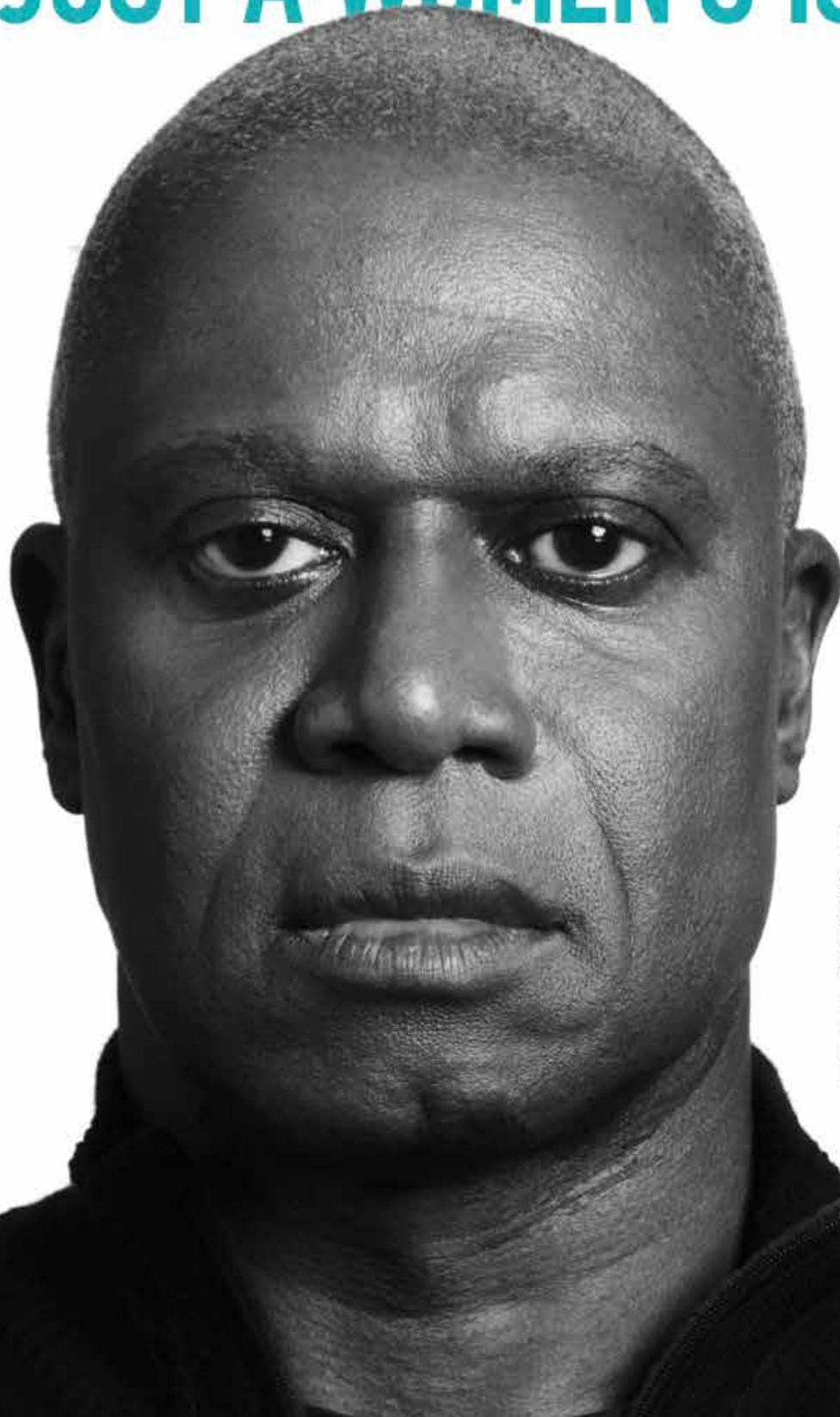
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