Russell Simmons Brings Water and Attention to Plight of Flint Residents

State & Local
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Commentary
Black Unity The New Normal
Russell Simmons Brings Water and Attention to Plight of Flint Residents

By Roz Edwards
Data News Contributor
Special to the NNPA News Wire from the Michigan Chronicle

When business mogul and founder of the RushCard, Russell Simmons, arrived in Flint early Monday morning to deliver cases of bottled water door-to-door, he did so with a minimal amount of fanfare.

Flanked by a handful of local reporters and several staff members, Simmons and his affable team carried case after case of Aquahydrate to eager and desperate residents. In total, Simmons and his team delivered 150,000 bottles of water to cardholders of the prepaid debit card, and students at Flint Southwest Academy.

Simmons partnered with Sean “Diddy” Combs and Mark Wahlberg (owner of Aquahydrate) to launch a relief campaign for victims of the Flint water contamination crisis, which includes a pledge of 1,000,000 bottles of water to the people of Flint.

However, the congenial mood became increasingly somber as citizen after citizen recounted horrific stories of how the contaminated water has and continues to affect their health and compromise an already frag-
ile quality of life, and wreak havoc on children whose damaging levels of lead poisoning have been diagnosed as acutely damaging to life threatening. The prognosis is not good for the citizens of Flint.

“My heart breaks for the people of Flint, who are being deprived of the most basic of necessities — clean drinking water,” said Simmons who hanged one teary resident as she shared her struggle regarding the health of her three-year-old son and one-year-old daughter.

“My three-year-old can’t talk and my baby has been having (violent) seizures,” said one distressed mother.

The extent of the water problem is appallingy evident. When 24-year-old Nalerya Cade turned on her kitchen faucet to demonstrate how shamefully ineffective the state supplied faucet filters are, as supporters looked on in horror, Cade filled a small glass with tap water and placed a lead measurement device in the glass. The reading of 185 parts per billion in the filtered water sample far exceeds the 15 parts per billion action level set by the U.S. Environmental protection agency.

“This is the third filter I’ve put on, and I just put this one on two weeks ago, but none of them have worked,” explained the distraught mother.

The lead filters distributed to residents and businesses in Flint have a National Safety Foundation International certification to treat water with up to 150 parts per billion of lead, although no amount of lead consumption is considered safe. Unfiltered water collection samples collected since late December have had readings reported as high as 4,000 parts per billion of lead contamination.

“This is environmental racism and Gov. Rick Snyder should be hanged out of here in handcuffs. This would never have happened in Beverly Hills,” said an outraged Simmons, who implored that all children are being deprived of their most basic needs and contribute to the relief effort,

The Def Jam co-founder and ultra-successful business magnate is using his celebrity to encourage other public figures to put their statuses to work by both making donations to the residents of Flint and elevating awareness of the severity of the water crisis in Flint.

“I know celebrities like Game, who donated 500,000 bottles of water and Puffy who donated a million bottles of water. Will Smith has made donations and I called Khloe Kardashian who wrote a check and tweeted about what’s going on here to her 40 million followers. And more people need to know,” Simmons said.

Simmons also chastised local corporations who operate locally, but have done little to help alleviate the nearly unbearable burden placed on the backs of residents. He challenged larger corporations and service providers to step up to the plate and do their part to bring some measure of relief to their customers, mentioning Time Warner on more than one occasion.

“You pay a cable bill and utility bills. They should respond to your needs and contribute to the relief effort,” Simmons told several residents during his visit.

Following the door-to-door water dropoffs, which were later joined by renowned civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump, who represented the families of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, and “Real Housewives of Atlanta” star and real life attorney Phaedra Parks, Simmons and Crump discussed with residents plans to file a class action lawsuit to hold parties involved in the water poisoning disaster ac-
Rep. Richmond Introduces Bill to Expand USPS to Include Basic Financial Services

Data Staff Report

Washington, DC – Rep. Richmond (LA-02) issued the following statement after reintroducing the Providing Opportunities for Savings, Transactions and Lending (POSTAL) Act – a bill that would expand access to basic financial services for millions of Americans and provide the United States Postal Service (USPS) an opportunity to generate billions of dollars in revenue:

“Currently, millions of hard-working Americans do not have access to fair and reasonable financial services,” said Rep. Richmond. “Allowing USPS to offer small-dollar loans and transactions would save working families thousands of dollars and reduce their dependency on predatory lenders. If signed into law, this legislation would provide both financial stability to the millions of unbanked Americans in this country and solidify the fiscal future of the USPS.”

The POSTAL Act would allow the United States Postal Service to offer basic financial services. Post office customers would be able to open checking accounts, deposit funds in an interest-bearing savings account, and receive small-dollar loans. The bill would also require that the Postal Service offer customers a convenient “Postal Card” that functions as a debit card and allows them to engage in in-store, mobile, and online transactions.

NFL Player Care Foundation Signs Tulane as Screening Partner

Data News Staff Edited Report

Tulane University School of Medicine has been named the official screening partner for the NFL Player Care Foundation’s Healthy Body and Mind Screening Program, a national program, held with the support of the NFL Alumni Association, that offers free medical evaluations and mental health resources to former NFL players.

Tulane physicians and staff will be in San Francisco to conduct a two-day screening event Feb 4-5 prior to Super Bowl 50. The program offers comprehensive cardiovascular and prostate evaluations as well as mental health education to retired players. Tulane conducted a similar screening in December for more than 50 retired players at Tulane Institute of Sports Medicine.

“This is a very important program for these guys. We have found former players with significant heart disease and some with prostate cancer. This program saves lives,” said Dr. Gregory Stewart, medical director of the NFL Player Care Foundation screenings program at Tulane. “There has been a lot of concern about concussions and brain health for athletes. While that is important, heart disease and prostate cancer are the silent killers and need to be addressed.”

The NFL Player Care Foundation hosts up to 10 screenings each year across the country in NFL team cities and at regional events that attract large numbers of retired players such as Pro Football Hall of Fame Week and the NFL Players Association and NFL Alumni Annual Meetings. The screenings are offered as part of the NFL Player Care Foundation’s research programs, which help to advance public awareness and scientific understanding of health issues that affect former NFL players.
Get More Of Your Refund.

If you earned less than $54,000 in 2015, you could qualify for a credit of up to $6,200 through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program. Super Tax Day provides free, professional tax return assistance to help you get the refund you deserve.

Entergy is proud to partner with local community advocates to sponsor Super Tax Day at Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites in your community. These sites provide free tax preparation from IRS-certified volunteers. They’ll also make sure you get the full refund you deserve, including any available credits.

Get the help you need, free of charge on Super Tax Day. It’s the smartest, easiest way to get more of your refund.

What to bring:

- A valid photo ID.
- Your W-2s and/or 1099s.
- Medical insurance proof including your 1095A or other Marketplace forms.
- Social Security cards for you and everyone you claim on your returns.
- Previous years’ tax returns (if you have any).
- For faster direct deposit, bring a canceled or voided check, or your bank account number and routing number.

For more information on VITA site locations and services and to find out if you qualify for EITC, visit entergy.com/eitc and get more of your money.

Join us at Super Tax Day!

Saturday, February 13, 9am – 3pm
Dillard University, 3301 Annette
Total Community Action, 1410 S. Jefferson Davis
Puentes LatiNOLA, 4205 Canal
Xavier University, 909 S. Jefferson Davis

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Intergalactic Krewe of Chewbacchus Mardi Gras Parade

Photos by Kichea S. Burt
Data News Weekly Contributor

The Intergalactic Krewe of Chewbacchus is a Mardi Gras parade organization for the most rivalrous Star Wars Freaks, Trekkies, Whovians, Mega-Geeks, Gamers, Cosplayers, Circuit Benders, Cryptozoologists, UFO Conspiracy Theorists, Mad Scientists, and all the rest of Super Nerdom. They also have a special place for Fantasy fandom within the Krewe under the auspices of the Mystic Krewe of P.U.E.W.C. and a contingent specifically devoted to Horror… the Krewe of the Living Dead. The Intergalactic Krewe of Chewbacchus puts together an amazing Carnival parade each year and rolls through the streets of New Orleans dispensing the blessings of their Sacred Drunken Wookiee to the masses. They will throw an amazing party… the CHEWbacCHANAL!

Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events
It's Mardi Gras, and the parades are in full swing now. Here are scenes from the Pre Parade Party in Lafayette Square along the parade route the weekend before the weekend of Mardi Gras. Of course, Data was there.
Standing on Sacred Ground

Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

Three unarmed Black men encountered a group of White men walking down a dirt road in Slocum, Texas on July 29, 1910. Without warning, and with no reason, the White men opened fire on the Black men. And for two days White men simply slaughtered Black people. Eight deaths have been officially acknowledged, but historians who have studied the Slocum Massacre say that it is likely that dozens more were killed, with some saying as many as 100 were killed in Slocum as in Tulsa in 1921 (and those numbers range into the hundreds). The New York Times quoted William Black, the sheriff at the time of the massacre:

“Men were going about killing Negroes as fast as they could find them, and so far as I was able to ascertain, without any real cause. I don’t know how many were in the mob, but there may have been 200 or 300. . . . They hunted the Negroes down like wild beasts.”

History mostly swallowed the horror of the Slocum Massacre. Some descendants of those massacred pushed for official acknowledgment of the horror, but there have been efforts to cover up the carnage, with some in Slocum pretending that the Massacre never happened. It took more than a century, until 2011, for the Texas Legislature to formally acknowledge the massacre. A roadside marker commemorating the tragedy was just placed on January 26, 2016. A local member of the Anderson County Historical Commission opposed the marker because, “The citizens of Slocum today had absolutely nothing to do with what happened over a hundred years ago. This is a nice, quiet community with a wonderful school system. It would be a shame to mark them as racists from now until the end of time.”

E.R. Bills, author of The 1910 Slocum Massacre: An Act of Genocide in East Texas, says that there are more than 16,000 historical markers in the state of Texas. “The Slocum Massacre historical marker will apparently be the first one to specifically acknowledge racial violence against African Americans.” His book meticulously documents the Slocum facts, and asserts, “Many white folks got away with murder”. Only 11 were arrested for their role in the massacre. Seven were indicted but none were prosecuted for their crimes. The eleven were only the known criminals. According to Bills, many murderers buried dead bodies on their land to perpetuate the cover up.

The Slocum historical marker stands on sacred ground. There is much more sacred ground in these United States, ground that is soaked with the blood of lynched and murdered African Americans. Yet there are few markers of our nation’s historical madness. The Equal Justice Initiative, an Alabama-based organization that has documented the magnitude of our nation’s lynching history, hopes to build markers and memorials on lynching sites, much like the one in Slocum. We need these memorials to remind us of an era of racial terror, and to consider the contemporary consequences of that terror.

This year the association for the study of African American life and history (ASALH) has chosen Hallowed Grounds: Sites of African American Memories as their Black History Month Theme. While ASALH has not focused specifically on markers and memorials for sites of lynching and massacres, the focus location is important. They mention plantations, historic homes, and historic streets (like Beale Street in Memphis, Sweet Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, and 125 Street in Harlem) as important places to embrace and celebrate.

Many of our nation’s major cities have experienced gentrification in the past decade or so. Washington, DC is no longer Chocolate City – more like neapolitan or chocolate chip. The 125 Street of the Harlem Renaissance has diversified, as young whites with deep pockets are pushing the prices of historic brownstones into the seven or eight figure price range. No matter. The places are still sacred ground, and should be recognized as such. It is important to acknowledge these places with statues, markers, and memorials, lest we forget. Those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it. We assert that Black Lives Matter because so many black lives were obliterated in Slocum, and because for too long it was convenient and comfortable to forget a heinous massacre.

Mardi Gras Indian Queens to Ride in Krewe of Muses Parade, February 4

Queen of the Golden Blade (Photo Credit: Kichea S. Burt (G) )

Commentary, Continued from page 8.

ing each other and showing hatred toward one another. At the heart of most issues, conflict and hate-filled actions in the Black community, is a lack of love and a lack of unity. It is time for us to start effectively communicating with one another, with a foundation of Black love and Black unity leading the way.

As a people, we must both, have a LOVE for God and once again UNITE ourselves to God.

As a people, we must both, LOVE our community and once again UNITE as a community.

As a people, we must both, LOVE our youth and once again UNITE to teach our youth and help bridge the gap between them and our elders.

As a people, we must both LOVE our history and once again UNITE our minds with the knowledge of our history and embracing our culture.

Once again, it is time for us to return to Black love and Black unity – that is, if we really want to see our communities return to the strength, pride and prominence it once experienced. Without Black love and Black unity, the Black race as we know it in America is doomed. Let’s make a decision to make Black love and Black unity “The New Normal” right now and moving forward.

Jeffrey L. Boney serves as Associate Editor and is an award-winning journalist for the Houston Forward Times newspaper. Jeffrey is a frequent contributor on the Nancy Grace Show and has a daily radio talk show called Real Talk with Jeffrey L. Boney. He is a Next Generation Project Fellow, dynamic, international speaker, experienced entrepreneur, business development strategist and Founder/CEO of the Texas Business Alliance. If you would like to request Jeffrey as a speaker, you can reach him at jboney1@forwardtimes.com.

Data News Stuff Edited Report

On Thursday, February 4, a group of Mardi Gras Indian Queens will join the Krewe of Muses on a special float (boat #5).

The Krewe of Muses Captain Staci Rosenberg said, “I am beyond thrilled to announce that the Mardi Gras Indian Queens will join the Muses on a special float this year. The influential roles that they play are an embodiment of the values we embrace as Muses. I am honored to be riding with them this year.”

Mardi Gras Indian Queens riding with the Muses:

Cherice Harrison-Nelson (Honorary Muse, 2002), Maroon Queen, Guardians of the Flame
Cara Harrison Daniels, Guardians of the Flame
Herreast J. Harrison, Queen Mother Supreme, Guardians of the Flame
Michele J. Harrison, Guardians of the Flame
Veronica Henry, Third Queen, Golden Blades
Malita Thompson Martin, Guardians of the Flame
Jamila Y. Peters-Muhammad, Ambassador Queen, Guardians of the Flame
Roslyn Johnson Smith, Guardians of the Flame

Mardi Gras traditions for parade goers and carnival season enthusiasts to enjoy. The 2016 Muses parade will roll on Thursday, February 4 at 6:30 p.m. The parade will follow the extended route, beginning at the corner of Magazine St. and Jefferson Ave., proceeding down Magazine to Napoleon Ave., where it resumes the traditional St. Charles Ave. route.

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Protect Your Heart on Valentine’s Day

Valentine’s Day is usually filled with love, friendship and romance for millions of Americans. The nation’s emergency physicians say the best way to show how much you care for your loved ones and yourself, is to get a health checkup, especially when it comes to your heart.

“Heart disease is still the leading cause of fatality in the United States for men and women, accounting for 1 in every 4 deaths,” said Dr. Jay Kaplan, president of the American College of Emergency Physicians. “If you or your loved ones aren’t getting a complete physical every year, stop what you’re doing and schedule one now.”

About 610,000 people die of heart disease in the U.S. every year, according to the CDC.

More than half of those deaths were in men.

Every year, about 735,000 Americans have a heart attack, about a third of those people (210,000) have already had a heart attack in their past.

Coronary heart disease is the most common type of heart disease, killing more than 370,000 people each year.

Early action is essential when noticing the signs of a heart attack. The chances of survival increase when emergency treatment begins quickly.

About half of all heart attacks are register when noticing the signs of a heart attack. The chances of survival increase when emergency treatment begins quickly.

Some of the major warning signs of a heart attack include:
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Upper body pain or discomfort in the arms, back, neck, jaw or upper stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea, lightheadedness, or cold sweats

Women can have different heart attack symptoms than men. Where-as men might experience chest pain first, a woman might experience other common symptoms such as shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

If you think you are having the symptoms of a medical emergency, call 9-1-1 immediately.

In addition to scheduling an annual check-up now, there are steps you can take immediately to improve the health of your heart. They include:

Exercise — Daily exercise (walking, running, cycling, aerobics, etc.)

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Health, Continued on page 11.
Powering the Future

Entergy New Orleans Breaks Ground on First Utility-Scale Solar Project

NEW ORLEANS - Entergy leadership hosted elected officials, community leaders, and other dignitaries today at the company’s existing property in New Orleans East to break ground on the city’s first utility-scale solar property.

The 1 megawatt pilot project, which is expected to be in service by mid-2016, will be the only utility-scale solar installation in the Entergy System—and one of only a few in the country—to integrate state-of-the-art battery-storage technology.

“This pilot project is of great value to our customers,” said Charles Rice, President and CEO of Entergy New Orleans. “One of the issues with solar panels is availability on cloudy days, at night or generating enough electricity at the right time of day when energy usage peaks. Our pilot project will evaluate the ability to store and deliver solar energy to the electricity grid when customers need it—not just when the sun is shining.”

Health, Continued from page 8.

...issues that go into that same pocket. Some racial differences are more nuanced. But there are issues of disparity and there are issues relative to racism that operate in a very broad context.”

Like Dr. Bell, Dr. Terry Mason, Chief Operating Officer of the Cook County Health and Hospitals System says, “There is no disease that cannot be managed by diet.” Both men agree that the time is ripe for Americans to come to grips with the issues that fail to connect diet to health and understand the direct correlation between diet and their well being. Then we have to teach them to accept responsibility for making the right choices that will empower them rather than contribute to the deterioration of their health. For example if People stop eating white sugar for 7 days they will see a weight loss and if they stop for 14 days the weight loss will be dramatic. If they cut down the carbs they will lose even more.” Dr. Bell says that impoverished people seem to eat more sugar and carbs because it’s what is available in their communities and their budget. He adds, “There are health disparities often caused by such dietary habits that are handed down generation to generation. There are things that may have more sinister origins in institutionalized racism. But we as doctors need to spend more time recognizing these disparities and addressing them—together with our patients—on a very individual level,” says Dr. Bell.
February 2016

Join us this February as we salute a rising icon of African American culture!

African American actors, artists and performers have been commanding the spotlight for decades, but the newest generation of trendsetters is in a class all its own.

Join us “In Conversation” with actress JURNEE SMOLLETT-BELL for an entertaining look at the next wave of African American cultural luminaries and taste makers! Then enjoy a special reception following the discussion where you’ll get a chance to meet Jurnee and snap a photo with her!

Check out our exclusive interview and content, and find an event near you at macys.com/celebrate

Jurnee Smollett-Bell

Best known for her award-winning performance in The Great Debaters, and for her role on the critically acclaimed series, Friday Night Lights. Jurnee has appeared in numerous films and television shows, and her newest project, Underground, debuts on WGN America this spring!