

Lighting The Road To Freedom

New Orleans

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October 27, 2007 41st Year Volume 37 www.ladatanews.com



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Data News Exclusive: The Rise and Fall of Eddie Jordan



By Edwin Buggage
Photos by Glenn Summers

Politics New Orleans Style

Since Hurricane Katrina New Orleans has been in the spotlight as being a place where inequality, incompetent leadership, political corruption, crime and racial strife is as common as Red Beans on Monday or King Cakes and Zulu Coconuts during Mardi Gras, but this is not a flavor to savor. It is not the best of times in a city that is in its darkest hour seemingly sinking into the abyss. For many New Orleans is at its nadir and is struggling to become a viable city once again, and what it is to become is still a question that only time will answer.

In politics it is a short journey from fame and acclaim to infamy; it is a shell game where one can go from the penthouse of popularity into the outhouse of public outcry asking for their ouster. Eddie Jordan was once a political star rising to being appointed to the U.S. Attorneys Office Under then President Bill Clinton. The first for an African American in Louisiana in this the best of times for Jordan his name swirled around the city as a force to be reckoned with and when he made a run for District Attorney after longtime D.A. Harry Connick decided he would not run Jordan

won the race in a heated run-off against Dale Atkins. Before his election to the D.A.'s office Jordan garnered support in the African-American and the white community, now several years later Jordan has become persona non grata in some segments of the community. Since Hurricane Katrina Jordan has been facing a barrage of criticism and recently was engaged in a fight for his political life which was finally lost when he caved into pressure and announced his resignation.

Race to Justice: Jordan's Last Stand

Recently, losing a case appealing the decision that his office lost in connection with a 3.7 million dollar lawsuit brought against his office by thirty-six white former employees for racial discrimination. He says of the decision, "We fought the lawsuit throughout the court system and even through the appellate process and unfortunately we haven't been successful, so now we are obligated by law to satisfy the judgment." Continuing he says, "I did not think it was a fair result in trial court and unfortunately we lost despite our best efforts so we will abide by the law and satisfy the judgment."

But he opines that the judgment in this case is rare, "In general these cases are rarely decided in the favor of the plaintiff where a payment is

ordered." Continuing he says, "And when you think about the civil rights statutes and what they were designed to do and it is interesting that they rarely result in a substantial judgment but in some cases there have been where private companies have been sued successfully but it is rare that a city agency that has been sued successfully even though we know discrimination has taken place in the past in respect to some of our city agencies."

Jordan feels that what happened in his case was unfair and that the lawsuit itself was frivolous given the nature of politics where to the winner goes the spoils is the rule of the day. Noting that he is not the first person to reorganize a staff upon entering office, "I am by far not the first person to do this, and I did it at the time not with anything racial in mind but to ensure that I would have loyal people who would be enthusiastic about the mission, message, agenda and plan of my administration; that's generally why people do this in politics as well as business." Reiterating his point he said, "Again I was not acting on the basis of race; I was acting on the basis of the principals of what new office holders abide by."

As the city faces a recovery from Hurricane Katrina, and as people vie for positions of leadership and a possible attempt to reconfigure the racial make-up seems on the horizon a fact not lost on Jordan. "I feel there has been an effort to change the leadership of the city and my office is no exception so I think that is what's going on so its part of a much broader scheme to simply remove most if not all the leadership that has been in place for many years."

Crime at the Doorstep

In a recent turn of events District Attorney Jordan's longtime girlfriend Cherylynn Robinson was driven back to the home she shares with him by two men one of whom Elton Phillips who is a relative of an acquaintance of Robinson, later on that evening Phillips came back after allegedly committing an armed robbery Phillips, is also a suspect in a connection with the shooting of a police officer and his wife. This shocking development hit the mainstream media and a community that is

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Please call (504) 284-3840 for subscription information. Dated material two weeks in advance. Not responsible for publishing or return of unsolicited manuscripts or photos.

already concerned about crime said that enough was enough and that a criminal after committing a crime stopping at the District Attorney's was not just bizarre, but the last straw in an administration that some segments of the community see as a failure.

This occurrence according to Jordan has been sensationalized and taken out of the context of how it truly happened, "I think the media blew this out of proportion, and I made it clear that I did not know anything about this guy's alleged activity and there was no reason for me to know or suspect him of any wrongdoing." "There were not any red flags that were raised that alerted me that he would have been involved in any criminal activity, and soon as I discovered he was a suspect I immediately got in contact with Police Superintendent Riley." He continued by saying his reasons for calling Chief Riley were, "I didn't want anyone in the public to be in harms way, to be hurt by this person because he may have possibly been armed, and I did so for his benefit as well because if he was armed certainly the police could have hurt or killed him in the process of bringing him in, so I reached out to Chief Riley so that I could do my part in help bringing someone to justice and I think that is a laudable goal and that is something I shouldn't be criticized for." "Also I told the police what happened gave them a statement, and gave them some possible leads of where he might be."

Mainstream Media Bias Fact or Fiction?

While the mainstream media, political pundits and talk radio were ablaze with criticism of the D.A. office as one that has been unsuccessful under the reign of Eddie Jordan he says this is more of a myth shrouded in fiction than actual fact. "We have made substantial progress, we have a higher conviction rate than before the storm; it's the highest conviction rate in years, but it seems to be an effort to downplay the positive things that are going on in the office either it is ignored diminished or downplayed."

He points to one example to convey his point. He states that his office against insurmountable odds has reduced the backlog of pre-Katrina cases by eighty percent. Something that had been said could not be done by many high ranking people inside the criminal justice system. He says that this has been done even though the office has not been fully staffed and evidence was destroyed and his office still pursued those cases saying his of-

fice forged ahead in spite of the forces working against it. Referring to his successes he says his office sent out press releases but the information did not appear in print nor did any of the television outlets reported it. "I am disappointed at how the news gathering organizations tend to filter the news and not tell the whole story I think what they have done is unfair and gives the public a cynical view of what is going



on in the office when in fact we are working to prosecute criminals."

Jordan's Last Stand

As the city now faces a special election with the stepping down of Jordan but the city still faces a crime problem that has spiraled out of control, Jordan several days prior to his resignation held steadfast in his opinion that his office was doing their job in prosecuting criminals, but realized that there were other issues that needs to be addressed to reduce crime in the city and that the onus of responsibility lies in many hands not just the D.A.'s office, "I'm a tough D.A. who believes in imprisoning those who are endanger the lives of the citizens of our city but I realize that we cannot incarcerate ourselves out of the crime problems we have. I am a strong advocate of reform and rehabilitation services for drug addicts; I think that is a meaningful solution. And we also have to deal with preventive measures with better schools for our children, working with churches and community groups to stamp out this problem of crime."

Eddie Jordan says that not everyone is dissatisfied with his job and says that people of all races talk with him and commend him and understand that his office has a tough job to do. "I have had people tell me I am

doing a great job, and many times I'm approached by people both black and white who echo the same sentiment saying I understand you have a tough job and you are doing the best you can with the limited resources that you have and there have been problems in the criminal justice system over the years and you are addressing those problems." He says that people also talk to him about how he is portrayed

by the mainstream media outlets, "And I am often approached by people who said they know and understand and are opposed to a lot of the stories that are written about the office in the mainstream newspapers and they support me and they know that what they are doing is part of a much broader effort to change the leadership of the city as a whole and say they're opposed to that and they're not going to stand for it."

Epilogue

In light of Jordan's resignation this may seem like a victory for some of his opponents, but the sad truth in this tale is that the city is still a violent unsafe place. It is a modern day Dodge City that is in need of reforms at every level. And to think that Eddie Jordan's demise which led to his

resignation will make the city safer anytime soon may be wishful thinking. Whether Jordan's assessment that what happened during his tenure in office as part of a larger power struggle to change the leadership of the city only time will reveal, but due to this shake-up and many others it indicates that New Orleans resembles a patient that has suffered multiple gunshot wounds and is in critical condition.

Jordan stood alone in front of the microphone in what may have been the saddest day of his life as his political career may have come to an abrupt end. In his resignation speech talked about not being a quitter and not wanting to disrupt the city and the criminal justice system from moving forward in this crucial time for the city. Which is admirable, but it is in these times that politicians talking about not being quitters is not of paramount importance, it is the citizens who must vow not to quit and through their actions do what they can to work together to heal the wounds that is tearing the city apart, to make it livable and viable as the struggle to make the city a safe place continues.



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Election In Retrospect

By Benjamin Bates

The Election

On October 20th 2007 the median's or neutral grounds as they are called in the crescent city were flooded with election signs, streets teams and the candidates themselves standing and waving at busy intersections attempting to garner support for their campaigns for elected office.

The primaries took place with several high profile races including the Governor's race where frontrunner Bobby Jindal easily defeating several opponents making Louisiana the first state to elect a person of Indian descent to its highest elected office. Several other races took place where many candidates vied for the right to represent the people of the State of Louisiana. When the voters got inside the voting booths they exited and as the votes were tallied many of the incumbents were victorious taking on lesser known candidates whom they easily defeated. One of the races that have been the most talked about has been the race for the vacant seat on the New Orleans City Council left by Oliver Thomas who resigned amidst scrutiny and con

troversy. The field of thirteen has now been narrowed down to two with two persons who are familiar with the council chambers. Present City Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis who placed first will face off against former councilmember Jackie Clarkson in the run-off in November.

Other high profile races are two seats on the Louisiana State Senate. One has two well connected officeholders competing for to represent Senate District 5. Cheryl Gray who was a State Representative of District 98 placed first in a heated primary race against Jalila Jefferson who was previously as State Representative of District 91 placed second as they now get ready to face off on Nov. 17 in a head to head contest to see who will lead District 5. In the race for Senate District the runoff is a rematch between incumbent Senator Ann Duplessis and long-time senator Jon Johnson pairing them again against one another for the seat that she won in 2003. District 2 is a very important district as it houses the Lower Ninth Ward and New Orleans East and is a vital part of the revitalization the city if it is to have substantial black middle class for many homeowners resides in the district.

The Issues

Discussions of the city and its recovery have been at the forefront and are one many of the hot button issues that concern Louisianans. Residents are voicing concerns specifically the desire to return, high rents and insurance as well as being distraught by the much maligned Louisiana Road Home Program. Ronald Johnson is a lifelong resident of New Orleans who feels that the politics of yesterday in the city is no longer tolerable. "We are in some rough times and the city needs leadership that is about bringing people home, and I can say that right now with the people who are in there that is just not happening right now."

Johnson echoes the feelings of many of the residents of the city, but when it comes to getting out to the polls the turnout among the voters are low. In the primary New Orleans recorded a turnout that was dismal perhaps making the difference in providing the margin some candidates needed to either win or lose the election. David Brown, who is a resident of the Bywater neighborhood says, "I don't know if the people are apathetic because they are not concerned or that the people who

are running for office don't excite them, but regardless of what their reasons are they need to get out and vote."

What Is At Stake?

As the city fights for its survival voting has taken on more importance, the future demographic make-up of the city and the amount of funding it will continue to receive lies in the balance. And the question of who are those that are best suited to be elected representatives in the seats of power as the spotlight of the world is on the city and the state. Lisa Thomas is a resident of uptown New Orleans who has a pessimistic outlook on the city and its leadership, "I think the people of the city want to come back and are doing everything they can to try and find the resources to get back home, but our leaders efforts seem to be half-hearted, and maybe it may be time for us to quit looking towards them and take matters into our own hands and do more things for ourselves." Janet Coleman who is a New Orleans resident that resides in Houston Texas is frustrated at the city's slow pace but empathizes with those who are in leadership positions, "I am frustrated that I have, but this is something that has never

happened before and we cannot place the blame all on one man or woman it is only so much they can do and we can't expect them to do and be everything to us."

Neighborhoods still lie barren and hollow, as empty abandoned houses, are the remnants of what were vibrant neighborhoods. And the question becomes what will New Orleans become in the years to come? Will that which has made this a special place no longer exist? And also who's responsibility is it to make sure that the city retains that which gives it its flavor and what types of leaders will ensure that will be the case? Anthony Bean, who is the founder of a school for the performing arts, and has over the years been involved in politics and in shaping the minds of tomorrow says, "It is important that we use our power to let our voices be heard at the polls, it is unfortunate that we don't vote as much as we should given the struggles and sacrifices that people have made so that we could have the right to vote." "And in this time we definitely need to do this because our future in the city is at stake, and we need to put those people in office who will further our agenda and if they don't we need to vote them out."



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Shades of Praise Announces Annual Fall Concert at Loyola's Roussel Hall

New Orleans gospel choir Shades of Praise will bring their joyous, high-energy, contemporary Gospel sound to Roussel Hall at Loyola University on Saturday, November 3, 2007, at 8 PM. Tickets are \$10. This year the group has chosen How Sweet the Sound as the theme and will host as a special musical guest the acclaimed Gospel trio Men of Judah.

The Concert is an important fundraiser for the non-profit group, but is also a unique opportunity for them. "Each year, this concert is a chance for us to perform some of our newer songs for the first time," said musical director Al Bemis.

Shades of Praise was begun in October 2000, when two friends, renowned New Orleans jazz vocalist Philip Manuel and Loyola University theologian Michael

Cowan had an idea to create a genuinely integrated organization. By bringing black and white people together to do something fun, meaningful, and valuable they hoped to create an environment where at least this small group of people could begin to get past the personal segregation that exists in life in New Orleans and in America.

Noted New Orleans Musician Al Bemis was enlisted as musical director for the fledgling volunteer choir shortly after its inception and under his direction the numbers grew to the present 60 members. The strength of the founding idea and the passion of its members have made Shades of Praise an integral part of New Orleans' amazing and difficult rebirth.



Shades of Praise Gospel Choir

Following the destruction of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Shades of Praise has been called upon frequently to appear at many events

associated with the rebuilding of New Orleans. They sang at the lighting of the 2006 French Quarter Christmas tree, Touro Syna-

gogue's 2007 JazzFest Shabbat, and the post-Katrina re-opening of several churches around town. Again in 2007 they were nominated for the Big Easy Award in the Best Gospel Choir Category.

In addition to concerts at various festivals, churches and other events, Shades of Praise sings annually at JazzFest. They were featured in the WWL TV promotion, nominated for the 2004 Big Easy Award in the Best Gospel Choir Category, and were at the center of a citywide series of "Care Again" concerts, to facilitate public dialogue on race and promote harmony and diversity.

Tickets for the concert are being sold by choir members or by calling Charlotte @ 865-5616.

Contact: John Wettermark, 522-3341

Xavier University's President Norman Francis Receives Wisdom Award for Education

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The National Visionary Leadership Project (NVLP) awarded Louisiana Recovery Authority Chairman and Xavier University of Louisiana President Norman C. Francis the distinguished Wisdom Award for education at its 2007 Intergenerational Summit on the State of Black America.



"We are so proud to honor such an extraordinary leader in education as

well as pay tribute to his tireless commitment to his beloved city during its most trying times," said Camille O. Cosby, co-founder and president of the NVLP.

The NVLP is a Washington, D.C. based non-profit educational organization created in 2002 "to ensure that the wisdom of our country's extraordinary

African-American elders is preserved by and passed on to the young people who will lead us tomorrow."

The summit, held at the Library of Congress, featured Dr. Francis as one of six extraordinary "visionaries" or African-American elders who have made a significant impact in shaping

the history of the United States. Other notable "visionaries" honored in the past include historian Maya Angelou, musician Ray Charles and civil rights activist Coretta Scott King.

To learn more about the National Visionary Leadership Project visit <http://www.visionaryproject.org>.

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JMJ Foundation TRAILBLAZERS

L'Oreal Evans Birden: Each One Teach One

By: Tre Connerly

L'Oreal Evans-Birden, "Kamaria Esa" as she is known to the New Orleans arts community, has been a quiet community activist for most of her adult years in the New Orleans area. She began as an active member in the Student Government Association at Southern University at New Orleans under the leadership of James Wilson. This leadership closely resembled that of the 1960s administration of Valerie Ferdinand (Kalamu Ya Salam), affording L'Oreal the opportunity to advocate not only for student rights and decision making in administration, but also for civil and humane rights of all peoples. It is here that she began her volunteerism with the Kids Tent at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Umoja Festival: The Celebration of the African Child and a brief stint with ACORN which she rejoined after Hurricane Katrina in Jackson, MS. She has volunteered on and off briefly with artist Jamar Pierre in art instruction of Treme youth at the Treme Center through Tambourine and Fan.

She has dedicated her efforts to ensuring that parents understand that they are educators of their children. In a recent interview she stated, "...parents must be responsible for their children's education. When a parent is aware that the education that is instituted by the academia is insufficient, ineffective, and subordinate to the national standards, they have the right and duty to properly educate the child by his or her own standards."

In stating this, it must be noted that Kamaria Esa has been a contract worker in education for over 10 years now. Her first experience in this effort began as a dance teacher at Lockett Elementary



L'Oreal Evans Birden

and Jones Elementary through Young Audience. Later, she would find her self instrumental in the rebuilding and re-establishment of the KUUMBA Children's Academy. This school as she describes, "...was dedicated to the re-education of the emancipated African community. It educated youth from the age of conception to infinity." This experience not only caught the attention of area parents, but prompted respected and noted elders and activist of the community to strongly encourage her to open another independent school.

In addition to her efforts of re-educating the New Orleans African Diaspora, she advanced her cause to the city of Baton Rouge. In Baton Rouge she worked at Louisiana Learning Circle which was a program designed to target the un-

derlying problem with African Diaspora comprehension to mathematics, deficiency in basic arithmetic. She continues to fight the literacy effort within the community and views it as "a necessity in the re-education of a systematically mis-educated peoples".

In 2003 she had the opportunity of running a two week summer arts program (The Alkebulan Summer Arts and Reading Program) at O.Perry Walker High School through its band department under the supervision of Larry Birden, JR.. It is here that she instructed students in Kiswahili, Spanish, Reading and Writing, Visual Arts and Mathematics. She continued working through education to foster an appreciation of arts for youth. Summer of 2007 she worked with Young Audience as a visual arts

teacher for grades 1st through 8th at Fischer Elementary School affording her the opportunity to work with the Mohawk Hunters of Algiers and as a Creative Writing teacher at Live Oak for grades 1st through 8th. She will continue at Live Oak and will begin at Craig Elementary this Fall.

She is a noted poet and vocalist to the arts community and her talents have been lent to various arts projects throughout the city of New Orleans including the Nora Navra Branch of the New Orleans Library, Cultural Crossroads, and Community Bookstore, Afro-American Bookstop, Ebony Square, and a host of other venues.

Currently L'Oreal Evans-Birden is enrolled in the Museum Studies Program at Southern University at New Orleans and is fulfilling an internship at Ashe Cultural Arts Center. Here she hopes to aid in the production of a series of events geared towards the preservation and conservation of African Diaspora issues. She will begin weekly poetry readings for local youth at the Community Bookstore on Bayou Road and hopes to expand that activity to the Ashe Cultural Arts Center. In addition to this she says, "I would also like to produce an audio CD for local poets presenting at these readings. These poetry readings she says, "...is designed to further encourage literacy and appreciation for spoken and written word."

Mama Kamaria, as she is often referred to by area youth, possesses natural maternal energy that is exuded everywhere she goes. It is almost unnatural to see her without her children or someone listening for one word of knowledge that her many experiences in the community has taught her.

Genarlow Wilson's Life on the Mend, But System is Still Broken

By. Hazel Trice Edney

NNPA Editor-in-chief

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Genarlow Wilson, freed by the Georgia Supreme Court which ruled his 10-year prison sentence for oral sex with another teenager as cruel and unusual punishment, is now aiming to move on with his life. But, the system that kept him imprisoned for two years remains severely broken, ready to victimize others, legal experts say.

“He spent two years in prison. I don't know how happy of an ending that can be,” says former federal prosecutor Thomas N. Todd. “The criminal just system does not work for Blacks. Had it worked, he would never have spent two years in prison. The system has not been fixed.”

Followers of the Wilson case rejoiced at the news of his release last Friday following the Supreme

Court ruling last week. Wilson's has been one among a string of recent high-profile civil rights cases – including Jena Six - that activists have pointed to as examples of racial inequities in America's criminal justice system. But, even Wilson's lawyer described the victory as only bitter sweet amidst a system that has not changed.

“What's difficult about this case is the subtle racism here that's dangerous,” says B. J. Bernstein, the pro-bono lawyer for the teen, in a CNN interview. “[Prosecutors] see the video tape. There's rap music. Genarlow had dreds at the time. He was a great student, but he looked like a thug on a music video.”

Wilson was a football star and Homecoming king who maintained good grades. But, it is often the kind of imagery that Bernstein described – or simply the color of African-American skin

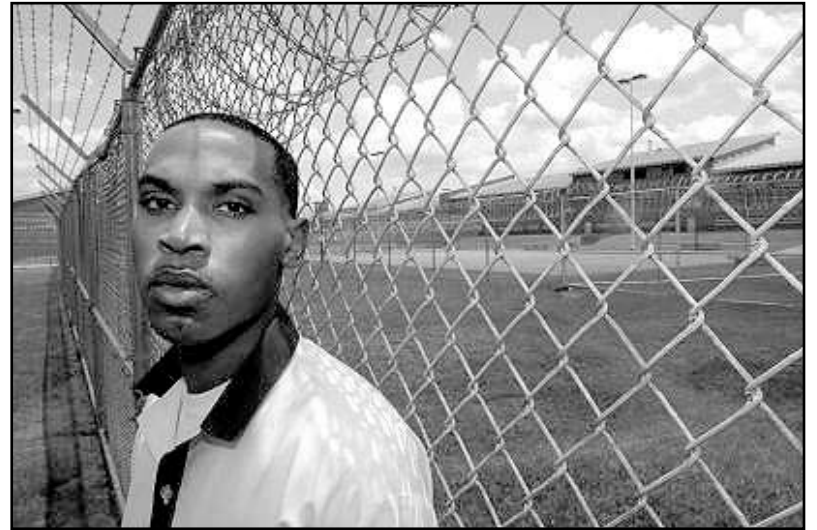
– that can cause a predominately White criminal justice system to convict a Black suspect, render an abusive sentence or acquit a law enforcement officer in his/her abuse or death.

That is the sentiment expressed by Bernstein as well as other legal experts who have followed the case of Wilson. At 17, he was sentenced to a 10-year sentence for allowing consensual oral sex from a 15-year-old girl at a New Year's Eve party Dec. 31, 2003. The legal age for consensual sex in Georgia is 16.

After two years of legal hurdles, Bernstein, who is White, says the picture to her is clear:

“If this had been a young man from a wealthy family of Whites I don't think this 10 years would have been there,” she said in the CNN interview.

According to reaction statements that flowed into the NNPA



Genarlow Wilson


News Service, supporters rejoiced in Wilson's freedom. But only amidst agreement around the nation that the system must be changed.

“Today is a day to celebrate a young man's freedom, but also to rededicate ourselves to the task of

correcting the glaring inequities in our criminal justice system that led to his ordeal,” said U. S. Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.).

The correcting must take place within the system says the Rev. Al Sharpton, among the activists who kept the case alive.

Continued on page 13.



#48

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Carl Weathers: The Making of the American Dream

By Edwin Buggage

His life embodies the American Dream. He was a boy that came from a small city that went on to conquer the world knocking down barriers becoming the best he could be. Coming from the rough and tumble streets of uptown New Orleans during the 1950's and 60's Carl Weathers has become a cultural icon recognized worldwide as an extreme talent as an actor. Before becoming an actor Weathers was a professional athlete playing football in both the NFL and the CFL where his background in sports came in handy as he talked about his latest film entitled *The Comebacks* which recently came to theaters, he says of the film. "It is a comedy that has a lot of cameos and it spoofs a lot of sports films I really had a great time making the film."

Weathers whose face has graced television as well as the silver screen reminisces about his humble beginnings where his dream of become an actor began in elementary school. "I remember the early love I had for acting began while I was attending James Lewis Elementary School where I acted in plays, then later I was in junior high at Samuel J. Green where I continued acting then I went to college where I majored in theatre."

After retiring from football Weathers like many struggled but survived doing bit roles in small films and ap-



Carl Weathers in *The Making of the American Dream*

pearing in television shows such as *Good Times* soon his big break would come with the role that would define his career Apollo Creed in the *Rocky's* film franchise. He says of how he got involved with the project. "I was out in California acting mostly in television, and I went on a casting call and they were trying to get someone for the Apollo Creed role and they wanted to use a professional boxer, and I convinced them that I could box, and since I had a sports background in football they were convinced I could play the role so I went out and learned how to box; I have to say the *Rocky* project was an amazing experience and I am proud to have been a part of it."

Like many young African-Americans growing up in the face of segregation

the ability to aspire and dream may have been a futile road that led to institutional roadblocks that extinguished the fire and drive of so many young people. Weathers says it was a tough time but he persevered, and says that young people must stay the course and remain focused and pursue their dreams. "I remember growing up on Eighth Street during the 50's and 60's it was hard, it was during segregation and opportunities were limited." But he says there are no limits today, "Today although some of those barriers have not completely come down there are more opportunities today than ever, so I say that was then this is now, so I say to young people whatever opportunities are there take advantage of them and seize the moment."

As he enters his sixth decade of life and over three decades of professional acting Weathers looks back on his career with pride. "Acting is a hard business to make a living at, and I have persevered, I look back at my body of work and I can say I am proud of what I have done over the years." "But my career is not over it is still a work in progress. Talking about how he chooses roles that defy stereotypes he says, "I feel it is important that I have some integrity with the roles I take so look at them and consider them on a case by case basis."

Weathers has not been back in the city since Hurricane Katrina but he sympathizes as well as empathize with the fate that befell those in his home town. "I have not been back in the city since the storm, but as a native New Orleanian I sympathize with the plight of the people of the city." He feels that much has been lost and that many of the persons who have led the recovery effort have given a lot as far as rhetoric, but the reality is a different story, but he still has faith that the city will recover. "I have been listening to what a lot of the leadership is saying and truthfully I don't know what you could tell people that have lost so much, but I know that hope is not a plan." "But I know that the will of the people will shine through and show that there is light at the end of the tunnel so I am confident that the city will be back."

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American Gangster – Shoots Blanks!

By Dwight Brown

NNPA Film Critic

Crime Pays. Consider the success of the Godfather series or Scarface. On paper, a bi-drama about the life of a Black crime lord/entrepreneur who made millions in Harlem during the '70s has great potential. Yet on the screen, even with star casting, a comprehensive script, and production elements by a stream of Oscar winners, American Gangster (Universal Pictures) is missing something: engaging performances, reason, heart.

This urban epic is based on the recollections of Frank Lucas, a crime kingpin who came to power in 1968 after the death of his boss Ellsworth "Bumpy" Johnson (Johnson became the central character in the movie Hoodlum).

Lucas was raised in North Carolina, where he once watched his cousin murdered by the KKK. He migrated to New York, eventually becoming Bumpy's second-hand man. The film chronicles Lucas' meteoric rise from lieutenant to tyrant.

The mafia controlled crime and drug dealing in New York in the late '60s. But when Frank Lucas (Denzel Washington) got the bright idea to import heroin from Vietnam with the help of a crooked American soldier (Roger Guenveur Smith), his business skyrocketed. He smuggled drugs into the U.S. in the body bags of soldiers shipped home from Vietnam [the so-called Cadaver Connection].

Heroin hit Harlem like a blizzard. Lucas' marketing plan was worthy of an MBA thesis. "My company sells a product that's better than the competition at a price that's lower than the competition." That product, pure heroin, undercut the marketplace and made Lucas a fortune. Fancy cars. Lush mansion. Trophy wife – former Miss Puerto Rico, Eva (Lymar Nadal), whom he stole from boxer Joe Louis. Ah, that's the good life!

Lucas' prowess doesn't go unnoticed by one stubborn, ethical cop: Richie Roberts (Russell Crowe). Some dirty policemen, like Detective Trupo (Josh Brodin), rob crooks.

Squeaky-clean Roberts wants Lucas arrested and tried in a



American Gangster

court of law. To that end, he attends law school on the side and is intent on being the cop who prosecutes Harlem's heroin king. His due diligence estranges him from his wife and kids; he becomes embroiled in a nasty divorce.

Lucas moves his family from the deep South up north to help him run his operations. Siblings like Turner Lucas (Common), sell drugs in their neighborhoods fronted by small businesses – from dry cleaners to car washes. Huey Lucas (Chiwetel Ejiofor) becomes his trusted, yet sometimes inept, deputy. His mom (Ruby Dee) lives in his swank chateau. Lucas's downfall begins when he ignores his own mantra concerning conspicuous consumption. Wearing an ostentatious chinchilla coat with matching hat to a boxing match and occupying front row seats, as dirty cops and mafia dons rage with jealousy, proves to be his undoing. The cops close in.

The line between truth and enhanced fiction is not clearly drawn by screenwriter Steven Zallian (Schindler's List), who used a New York Magazine article written by Mark Jacobson and conversations with Lucas to make this fact-based saga a Hollywood paint-by-numbers film. Even with all that pedigree – with an Oscar-winning screenwriter and mega producer Brian Grazer (A Beautiful Mind) – something important gets lost in the translation:

empathy. It's hard to like Lucas, he creates a drug epidemic in

empathy. It's hard to like Lucas, he creates a drug epidemic in

Harlem. Likewise it's hard to get close to Roberts. He ignores his family for his career.

Sure the uneducated Lucas ran a profitable business in the face of stiff competition. If he were White, educated and had an advanced business degree he may have led a Fortune 500 Company. Credit him with leadership skills, but that's no substitute for an engaging central character. If he were truly diabolical, like Tony Montana in Scarface or Hannibal Lecter, at least he'd be fascinating. Watching Lucas' rise and fall is never compelling even after the film has taken 157 minutes to make its case.

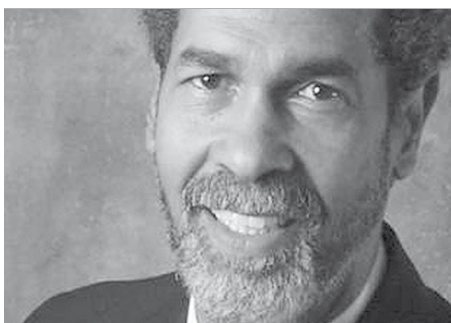
Part of the blame goes to Ridley Scott's cold direction. He's fine with action sequences, but he doesn't have a feel for family dynamics. He can't give Lucas

Continued on page 13.



Opinion

Is "Between The Lines" For Sale?



The Love Dr.
Data Columnist

other black businessman (prefers to stay anonymous) stepped up with some financial support for Paul and I with no strings attached, and I really have to tell you how good it feels to have these men validate what we do with something other than extremely cheap words. It felt as good as when Beverly McKenna featured us on her cover (even though I write a column for another paper, Data Newsweekly).

Luckily, technology has changed the process of selling music or video. The ability to economically "burn" individual copies of your own work means that individual artist, like Paul and me, can reproduce our creations one or few at a time and still be able to sell at an affordable price. Hell, I just built a new computer that that can burn two copies at a time at sixteen times as fast as it plays so I guess if it gets really hectic tomorrow, I could do 32 DVDs an hour. (I wish). What all this means is that even if only you order one, I can produce it in a few minutes, throw it in a mailer and drop it in the mail. That makes selling you a copy feasible.

The other part of technology that makes it feasible is the internet. With the internet, I don't have to stay in a store, be home to answer the phone, or have to spend time talking to people while they make up their minds. With the internet, selling you a DVD requires that I read an email and drop a blank in a burner, generally while I writing something, editing video, or working Photoshop magic on somebody's pimple. After that, print the label side, drop it in a mailer and your DVD is on the way, and it was worth my while.

Believe it or not, there are people who would take issue with that "worth my while" statement, and that's all right. I took the position some time ago that my family owned my productivity, that being husband and father means providing enough resources for a family to prosper and enjoy life, perhaps not to have leisure wealth, but be as comfortable as the sweat of my brow can provide.

My productivity certainly doesn't belong to other grown folk, even though I believe deeply in giving as my heart feels and I believe is my responsibility for the blessings I have received. I have compassion, but forgive me if I feel that anyone who has a DVD player should pay for our stuff just like they pay for other stuff they play. It's called paying the artist, and that brings up another thing. I believe that copying people's music is wrong as are buying bootleg music or video. Yes, I pay for all my music and movies, so once again the golden rule applies.

If you or anyone is interested in owning official DVD copies of any of the last few or future "Between the Lines" shows, go to my web site at WWW.LLOYDDENNIS.COM and click appropriately.

People, who love it, want it and people who hate it want it. I'm talking about copies the "Between the Lines", cable access show that Paul Beaulieu and I produce each week on Cox-8 for viewers inside New Orleans only.

Actually, it's only recently that I began recording the shows consistently. I started after not being able to make copies of certain shows for viewers, simply because we hadn't recorded them. It's funny because just as many people wanted the shows because they had issues, as wanted it because they love and admire the job Paul and I do every week.

That's when it hit me. This might be like that Muhammad Ali thing. Some people went to his fights because they hated him and others because they loved and admired him. The point is they went... and paid admission.

Another factor in my decision to sell DVDs of the show is the exile of so many New Orleanians post Katrina. Some people may miss the show enough or want to show it off to people in other cities as the black perspective about what goes on in New Orleans. Yes, there actually are people who are proud of what we do on the show.

As some of you viewers know, one of my issues with the show is that we do it for no money, and here I was turning down paying customers simply because I hadn't recorded the show. So, I checked and there is nothing wrong with Paul or me selling copies of the show once it has aired on access television. We own it once it is shown, so guess what?

That's right! From now on (if it pays off) I'll record the shows and make a master DVD of each. Somebody said I ought to do that for history anyway, but history don't pay no bills around here, and the only real benefit of living in a capitalistic society is that you can sell stuff and make money, so I hope all of my good brothers and sisters in the struggle don't mind me trying to make a dollar on some work that we've been doing free for five years now.

Well it really isn't free this year, as Jimmie Woods of Metro Disposal, and an-

In The Spirit

Being Thankful In Spite Of



Dr. Aaron E. Harold
Data Columnist

even next door don't have that much. Ask yourself this question; "What do I have to be thankful for?" Come on, ask yourself that. Take your time and let's think about this. What happened to that car that could have killed you in that car accident, but it didn't. That's something to be thankful for, isn't it?

What happened when you were sick, and that sickness should have taken you out, but it didn't? Hey, what about that job promotion that was given to you and you know that there were others that were more qualified than you? What about that house that you bought and your credit was not exactly up to par? These things should have taught you to be thankful, if you are truthful with yourself. Some of us may still be living in a FEMA trailer, and it may not be what you want, but you still have a roof over your head and that should make you thankful.

Some of you are working on your house or houses, and it's been two years and you are frustrated about that, but be thankful that you have a house to work on. Family, I know that there have been a lot of things that have been taken away from us because of Katrina and Rita, but there have also been a lot of good things that God has given back to us and we should be thankful. Listen family, whether you are rich or poor or anything in between, you need to be thankful for where you are. In the word of God, the Bible tells us to be thankful in all things, regardless of our situation (1st Thessalonians 5:18). So remember, all of us have a lot to be thankful for in spite of.

Dr. Aaron E. Harold is the pastor New Millennium Breakthrough Ministries. To contact him with your comments or suggested topics he can be reached at rharold@cox.net or (504) 813-5767

Folks we are approaching the Thanksgiving Holiday again. I know that many of us have lost a great deal as it relates to Katrina and Rita. Some of us have lost love ones, houses, businesses, jobs, joy, and peace of mind. Some of us have lost our way of life, and our zeal of living life to its fullest. Surely, it has been a very difficult time for all of us. We all are dealing with change, and trying to reorganize our lives all over again.

I know that many of you have asked the question; "What do you have to be thankful for on this upcoming Thanksgiving Holiday?" Can I take you back in the past when there were people that we loved and respected that taught us to be thankful just for the little things in life. Do you remember that back then? Our folks worked hard so that we could have just some of the basic things in life and we were thankful for that. Some of us didn't even have the basics, because we were barely making ends meat. However, we were still thankful for what we did have.

I remember being taught by folks that it was not how much you had that should make you thankful, but be thankful for the little bit you do have. Somebody down the street, or around the corner, or



A Time to Return to Jena



George C. Curry
NNPA

By. George E Curry

NNPA Columnist

On Sept. 20, the original date for one of Mychal Bell's court hearings, up to 100,000 people descended on the tiny town of Jena, La. Although the court date had been postponed for Bell, the first of the Jena 6 to go on trial for allegedly beating a White fellow student, buses and automobiles from around the nation clogged all roads leading to the central Louisiana town.

Bell, 16 at the time, and the others had been charged with attempted second-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder, charges that allow anyone 15 or older in Louisiana to be prosecuted as adults. Those charges were reduced to aggravated second-degree battery and conspiracy to commit battery, crimes that do

not allow teens in the state to be tried as adults.

Last June, an all-White jury found Bell guilty of both crimes. However, District Court Judge J.P. Mauffray set aside the conspiracy conviction because of Bell's age but asserted that he should maintain jurisdiction over Bell on the battery charge in adult court.

In the end, a Louisiana appeals court threw out the remaining charge against Bell and his case was remanded to juvenile court, where it should have been all along. Another Black juvenile avoided Bell's fate when the prosecutor made no attempt to try him as an adult.

The crucial test for Black America was not Sept. 20, but Nov. 7. That's when four of the Jena 6 now out on bond – Robert Bailey Jr., Carwin Jones, Bryant Purvis and Theo Shaw – are scheduled to return to court. And unlike Bell, they can indeed be tried as adults because they were at least 17 at the time of the incident.

Will the international outpouring of support for a single person on Sept. 20 be greater than that for four young men facing Jena's criminal injustice system next Wednesday? Will Jesse Jackson, Rev. Al, SCLC's Charles Steele, radio personalities Tom Joyner and Michael Baisden along with others who protested in September return to Jena in droves next Wednesday?

If we can't organize even more people to return to Jena, the first outpouring will be

remembered as a one-day spectacle and be further evidence of our inability to sustain a movement.

Whether it was the Million Man March, the Million Woman March, the Millions More March or the presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, a valid criticism of today's organizers is that there is little, if any, follow up once the crowds have dispersed. Sure, we can put on a stirring demonstration – even while some civil rights figures operate on separate but equal platforms – but what happens after the buses have left town? What happens when the cameras are turned off?

It's time to ask the tough questions. Why was Mychal Bell allowed to languish in jail for so long? At one point, his bond was as high as \$130,000 and later reduced to \$90,000 prior to the trial. Upon Bell's conviction in adult court this summer, he was not allowed out on bond. But the appellate court reversed his conviction, ruling that he never should have been tried as an adult; his bond was then reduced to \$45,000.

Only 12 percent of the bond was needed to get Bell released. Still, civil rights leaders did not act, which causes me to wonder whether some of them were so busy concentrating on gaining publicity for themselves that they forgot about the fate of Bell. And when Bell did make bond, it was because of the efforts of Dr. Stephen Ayers, a Black physician in Lake Charles, approximately 135 miles away. Ayers, who

did not participate in the Jena march, put up \$5,400 to get Bell out of jail. Two weeks later, Mauffray, the original judge in the case, switched roles and as a sitting juvenile judge revoked Bell's probation on a previous juvenile conviction and ordered him back to jail.

The parents of the Jena 6 have established a defense fund. Donations can be sent to: The Jena 6 Defense Fund, P.O. Box 2798, Jena, La. 71342.

Additionally, there are creative ways of opposing the selective prosecution of African-Americans in Jena. My favorite one was undertaken by the Philadelphia NAACP's youth division. Because LaSalle Parish District Attorney Reed Walters originally charged the Jena 6 with attempted murder, claiming the murder weapons were sneakers worn by the accused, branch members are urging people to send their old, dirty, smelly, sneakers to the district attorney (His address is 1050 Courthouse Square, Jena, La. 71342-1288).

It would be even better to attend a second march next Wednesday and save time and postage by leaving the sneakers with Walters before leaving town.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine and the NNPA News Service, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. He can be reached through his Web site, www.georgecurry.com.

The Political Prognosticator

Kingfish
Data Columnist

Welcome to the inaugural political editorial column.

This column's aim is to bring a fresher look at the political landscape of New Orleans. As we rebuild, not only our homes, we are rebuilding the way we do business and re-evaluating the politicians who represent our efforts to improve the quality of life in New Orleans and our surrounding parishes.

Quality of life- What is quality of life? Is it one's personal gain or the middle class life you provide for your family? I believe not. First and foremost personal gain has nothing to do with "Quality of Life". Since life, as we know, is not a singular activity. Quality of life is the value placed on your community. When value is attached you work harder to care for, protect and sustain that entity. Thus, the community benefits because

there is a unit working together to meet the needs of the community instead of working to meet the needs of the one. You begin to see more efforts put into establishing better schools and better school systems which equates to better education. An individual who has been given and taken advantage of better educational opportunities is then prepared for the better employment opportunities that will arise. In turn, you have a better prepared community who understands the worth and benefit of education which lends itself to a smarter community that researches and votes the facts. This community is then empowered to elect public officials who will develop better laws to fine tune or, in our case, overhaul the way our community works.

I know, I know everybody knows this..... or do we? Over half of this city does not know how the branches of government interact or how they

are supposed to work to help the community. So, how in the hell do we vote? On what principle do we vote?.....Personal Gain! Do I know this politician? Do my people know this politician? Can I get close to them to get what I need? This city was conceived out of the port system. Meaning trade, boarder, entertainment, taxation, legislation, police and corruption and I beg to differ, it has not changed much.

In this political season, we have one of the largest candidate turn out since the first mayoral race after Katrina. There are oh so many family names connected with long political ties to this community. Which begs one to ask, is that, along with beginning each speech with, "I've lived in this community all my life" or "My family roots are deep in this community" enough qualification to represent us? Correct me if I'm wrong but, before Katrina the state was coming in to take over our schools, Foti built a

Kingdome via the revolving door and overflow of uneducated African Americans and whites during the city's stint as the murder capital. Some of these family names participated in our community's present failing state.

Now were amid political corruption: elected officials in and out of indictments, political organization testifying against each other, and schools in complete disarray. I ask, are we all that tunneled vision to not see the big picture? It seems as though everyone is trying to save the window dressing they bought and the house is burning down! Over this political season I went to several events hosting candidates. The crowds were usually sparse and not to mention if there was a party afterwards most people came after the candidates were finished. Out of the crowds that showed, the candidates were asked few questions and even fewer relevant questions were posed. If you are unsure

what a good question is here's a good way to find some. First, write down ten concerns or things you would like to see happen in your community. Categorize them by priority. Ask three research questions about each one:

a) Is my community zoned for that?

b) How much money has been allocated for that type of project or community improvements?

c) Who and how will it get to the community? (Follow the trail)

With that little amount of research you will find a bevy of good questions. All I ask this election is that voters think community first and vote for the person who has a real and viable plan. Until we speak again keep your head on a swivel and your ears open and most of all be safe in our beautiful city of New Orleans.

Injustice!

By. Stephanie Lambert
Special to the NNPA from the
Capital Outlook

TAMPA (NNPA) - After 24 years, six month, 13 days and 4 hours in prison, wrongfully convicted Alan Crotzer was released from prison when DNA evidence proved his innocence in a 1981 robbery-rape and kidnapping case.

"I guess by me being young, Black and poor, I was very convenient," Crotzer said during an interview with the Capital Outlook. "It was a horrendous crime and they needed someone to put that crime on-and I was available."

But his story doesn't end there.

Florida is one of 29 states that do not have a law that compensates people wrongfully convicted as felons after their release.

After being released on Jan. 23, 2006, Crotzer hoped to be compensated for his years behind bars. He, along with his attorneys pushed for a bill to be passed that would pay Crotzer \$1.25 million.

The bill died in committee



Photo of Crotzer

in the Senate.

"We had two bills, one was a global bill that would help all wrongfully incarcerated," said Michael Olenick, an attorney who works with the Innocence Project, a non-profit legal clinic dedicated to exonerating wrongfully convicted people through DNA testing and reforming the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice. "And then we had another bill that

was directed only to Al."

Olenick said they have been working with the Legislature and Crotzer for the compensation.

"Last session, we had a bill that if you had been wrongfully incarcerated, you get paid, you get counseling, you get your education benefits," Olenick said. "And that bill came out the House unanimously, but it was stopped in the Senate. It was heard in two committees and then never heard again. It never came out to the (Senate) floor."

Crotzer's nightmare

On July 8, 1981, three young black men forced their way into a Tampa residence, according to police records.

There were five victims inside, all of them white. The three perpetrators, all black, tied up the five victims, forced them to lie on the floor, robbed them and removed items from the home.

The assailants then kidnapped two of the victims - one adult woman and a 12-year-old girl. The

three drove to a rural clearing outside Tampa, where two of the perpetrators raped their two captives.

The license plate was observed by the male victims, and was traced back to Douglas and Corlenzo James. Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office detectives included the James' brothers' photos in photo-paks that were shown to the victims shortly after the crimes.

Crotzer's photo appeared in the photo-paks. Three of the five victims identified Crotzer as the ringleader.

"The perpetrator that (the victims) said I was, was supposed to be six feet tall, light complexioned and 180-200 pounds," Crotzer said. "At the time, I was five-foot-five, 135 pounds and I'm very dark in complexion. I don't know how they got me mixed-up like that."

He was convicted by an all-White jury and sentenced to 130 years in prison.

"I think that the system failed me horribly," Crotzer said. "Had they have done a little research, a little background checking even into my alibi... the police did none of these things, the detectives did none of these things, the state at-

orney did none of these things."

Crotzer said after his conviction, he tried to contact the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union for help, but says no one came to his aid.

Exoneration at last

In 2004, biological (DNA) evidence proved Crotzer's innocence.

"They found five microscopic slides from the actual rape kits of the victims," Crotzer said of the evidence. "They found these slides stapled to the back of a manila folder... at an FDLE crime lab in Tampa."

Jennifer Greenberg, of the Innocence Project said, "Florida has a moral debt that needs to be paid" to Crotzer.

"We need to move on to get the criminal justice system fixed to the extent that we can fix it," Greenberg said. "Florida has a lot of work to do."

Crotzer is currently working, married and has two children.

Says Olenick, "We are going into our third (legislative) session and hopefully this will be the charm."

Data Zone, Continued from page 9.

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an impressive aura, doesn't get the black community's vibe and can't capitalize on New York City's ambiance. Francis Ford Coppola made clannish behavior iconic in the Godfather. Brian De Palma made Al Pacino's Tony Montana an indelible image. Directors Antoine Fuqua (Training Day, Replacement Killers), John Singleton (Shaft, Four Brothers) or Sidney Lumet (Prince of the City, Q&A) would have made better choices.

Also, the film's manic pace flits from scene-to-scene never giving the film a grounded feel (editor Pietro Scalia, Gladiator). The cold blue-hued cinematography doesn't capture the warmth of black, brown or tan skin and the lighting is often too dark (director of photography, Harris Savides, Zodiac). The '70s costumes seem dull considering the times (Janty Yates, Gladiator).

Washington growls, struts and kills with no conscience. His one-dimensional, archetypical, angry-man persona is becoming too predictable, almost a carica-

ture worthy of a Saturday Night Live parody.

He needs to showcase the full range of his talent. Don Cheadle (Hotel Rwanda, Talk To Me), Jeffrey Wright (Ride With The Devil, Syriana), Javier Bardem (Before Night Falls, The Sea Inside) they're brilliant, chameleon actors taking risky, variant roles. Washington needs to follow their lead. Russell Crowe never gets under his character's skin, not like he did in The Insider or Gladiator. The supporting cast is dotted with familiar faces: Ruby Dee, Common, T.I., Armand Assante and a miscast Cuba Gooding, Jr. as the thug Nicky Barnes. Way too many supporting actors - it's like having too many side dishes at a Thanksgiving dinner.

So why see the film? In the 11th hour, a bond grows between the crime lord and cop, which mirrors a relationship the real Lucas and Roberts have until this day. That unique kinship, which lasts for scant minutes at film's end, has more heart than the rest of the movie.

Breast Cancer/New Medicines

By Larry Lucas

The word hope can inspire a range of feelings. But to someone facing cancer, as I have, hope is a lifeline to a better tomorrow, a breakthrough treatment, a cure. As we observe breast cancer awareness month this October, let hope also mean that one day, no woman will have to face this terrible disease with a poor prognosis for recovery.

In the African American community, the hope to win the fight against breast cancer is particularly profound. Our community is disproportionately affected by a variety of cancers, including breast cancer. African American women are 28 percent more likely to die from breast cancer than white women, according to the American Cancer Society.

There are a variety of complex

factors that contribute to this health disparity. One is that African American women are more likely to be diagnosed later with more advanced cancer – which is much more difficult to treat, according to the American Cancer Society. That's why it's so critical that women be vigilant about doing monthly self-examinations and getting regular mammograms as directed by their physicians. These steps help detect any irregularities earlier and can make a life or death difference.

More than ever before, medicines also have the power to provide hope to cancer patients. Until recently, killing cancer cells without harming healthy cells in the body has proven to be extraordinarily difficult. But that's changing. Right now, researchers from America's pharmaceutical com-

panies are creating new "smart" medicines that ignore healthy cells and go straight to the cancer. In addition, companies are working on medicines to improve the quality of life for people undergoing cancer treatment. In fact, a new survey by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) revealed 229 new medicines in development for cancers that disproportionately impact African Americans, including 88 for breast cancer.

But, just knowing about the treatments available to you isn't enough. If you are diagnosed with cancer, it's very important to follow through with the treatments prescribed by your doctor. Columbia University Medical Center researchers found that African American women with early stage breast cancer are less likely to fin-

ish chemotherapy treatment, contributing to lower survivor rates.

There are likely a variety of factors for why patients might not take their medicines as prescribed; cost may be one of them. For those who need help affording their prescription medicines, there are programs that can help. The Partnership for Prescription Assistance (1-888-4PPA-NOW or www.pparx.org), a national program sponsored by America's pharmaceutical research companies, provides a single point of access to 475 patient assistance programs. More than 2,500 brand-name and generic prescription medicines are available through the participating programs. So far, the program has already helped more than 4.3 million people in need nationwide.

One of our community's greatest leaders, Martin Luther King,

Jr., once said, "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." This month, as we remember those who have won and lost the battle against breast cancer, may we also preserve that infinite hope for a new treatment that helps save a life, ushering in a cure to cancer forever.

Larry Lucas is the vice president for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA).

Continued from page 7.

"The release of Genarlow Wilson by the Georgia Supreme Court is a significant victory in redressing the reckless and biased behavior of the criminal justice system that now operates in many states across the union," Sharpton says. "The Justice Department and federal government must review state courts that willfully and almost without pause violate the civil rights [of] people, particularly young Black men around this country. We must continue to fight because Mychal Bell is still in jail and others are under the same state's rights judicial runaway system."

A national march being organized by Sharpton and others is slated for Nov. 16. He says the march on the Justice Department will serve to "raise the awareness about the Genarlow Wilsons all around the country that still await delayed justice."

Now 21, Wilson says he is headed to college to study sociology. He says he is excited about reuniting with his mother, Juanessa, and his 9-year-old sister.

Douglas County prosecutors had offered Wilson a plea deal to cut his time significantly if he had confessed to aggravated child molestation, the crime for which he was convicted. But, in confessing he would have labeled himself a sexual predator and the system would not have allowed him to be near his sister, nor other children.

The principle alone made his freedom worth the wait, he said.

Visiting Atlanta's historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where he worshipped on Sunday, Wilson said, "No words really can explain how thankful me and my family are...The Bible says there's a time and season for everything. I guess that time finally came."

He reportedly told reporters at the church that he felt no "negative energy" toward prosecutor David McDade who fought to keep him in the maximum security prison.

Georgia's General Assembly last year changed the law under which Wilson was convicted,

making it a misdemeanor rather than a felony. That was too late for Wilson, who was already serving his time.

Short of divine intervention, his last hope was in the Supreme Court, which ruled 4-3 that his sentence "constitutes cruel and unusual punishment."

Reflecting on his past in a CNN interview, he said this week, "That night, I don't think any of us made very wise decisions...It should have been something to teach us a lesson, but I don't think it should ever have come this far."

Rights activists fear that such court decisions will continue if the system as a whole is not fixed rather than fighting case by case.

"The Genarlow Wilson tragedy is another example in an alarming series of cases that demonstrates overly aggressive prosecution against African-American youth," says a statement from Kimberly Alexander, president of the West Metro NAACP Branch, which intervened and fought for Wilson alongside the Douglas County NAACP. "Wilson's case

and countless other recent dehumanizing attacks led the NAACP to declare a 'State of Emergency' that requires immediate action by local and state authorities as well as the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Congress. The NAACP has called for hearings in Congress and every community around the nation in order to clearly understand the scope of this problem and most importantly craft viable solutions."

Those solutions are largely in the hands of Black people, says Todd.

"Black people have to understand that they should use their political and economic muscle and hold Black [lawmakers] accountable as well as White people accountable. This should not be confused by race. Unless this is focused on and dealt with, it will happen again," he says.

Congressional Black Caucus Chair Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick (D-Mich.) says the CBC's "43 Members representing 40 million Americans from 21 states will continue to confront the crises of

injustice and change course to ensure equal protection under the law for all Americans, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status."

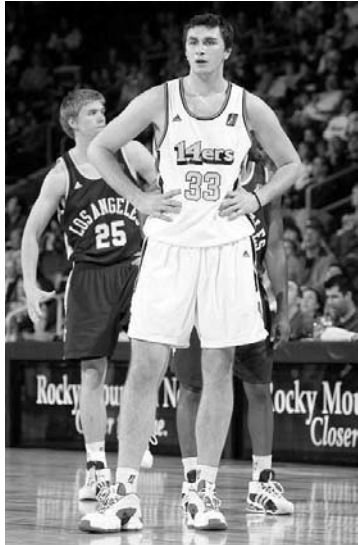
She continues, "The Wilson case, along with Jena 6, and countless lesser known rulings speak to a systemic flaw in our nation's criminal justice system. There must be a thorough assessment of both state and federal laws to ensure that the punishment parallels the crime. Overzealous prosecutors must be condemned for allowing their political aspirations to prejudice the judicial process."

The fight will always be worth it, says Georgia Rep. Sanford Bishop, also a CBC member: "As Martin Luther King said, 'the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.'"

Hornets Complete Deal With Nets



David Wesley



Mike Ilic



Bernard Robinson

Wesley's Contract Sent to New Jersey, Deal Gives Hornets Cap & Roster Flexibility

NEW ORLEANS - The New Orleans Hornets announced today that they have traded the contract of David Wesley to the New Jersey Nets in exchange for Mile Ilic, Bernard Robinson and cash considerations. The Hornets immediately waived Ilic and Robinson upon completion of the trade.

"This trade gives us more cap and roster flexibility and sets our opening night roster at 14 players," said General Manager Jeff Bower.

Wesley's contract was originally acquired by the Hornets along with cash considerations from Cleveland in exchange for Cedric Simmons on September 29.

Hornets Exercise Contract Options On Armstrong, Paul

The New Orleans Hornets also announced that they have exercised the fourth-year option on point guard Chris Paul and the third-year option on center Hilton Armstrong. Per team policy, financial terms of the contract were not released.

"Chris has exceeded all expect-

tations both on and off the court since we drafted him and we're pleased to have him officially under contract through the 2008-09 season," said Hornets General Manager Jeff Bower.

Under the terms of the NBA's collective bargaining agreement, the first two years of a first round

draft pick's contract are guaranteed while the third and fourth year of the contract are the team's option. Paul was selected by the Hornets with the fourth overall pick in the 2005 NBA Draft, while Armstrong was selected with the 12th overall pick in the 2006 NBA Draft.

"Hilton has shown great improvement this summer and in the pre-season," said Bower. "He

is a key piece of our frontcourt and we look forward to him growing as a player in a Hornet uniform."

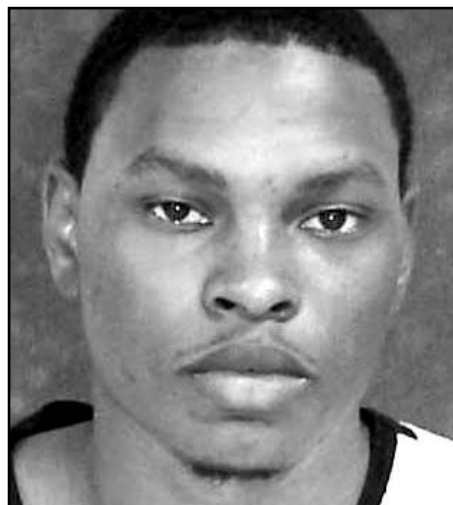
Paul averaged 17.3 points, 8.9 assists, 4.4 rebounds and 1.84 steals in 64 games (all starts) in 2006-07. The 2006 T-Mobile Rookie of the Year, was fourth in the NBA in assists per game and led the Hornets in assists, steals and total points last season.

Armstrong averaged 3.1 points

and 2.7 rebounds in 11.3 minutes over 56 games (five starts) last season.

Paul averaged 12.5 points, 7.0 assists, 2.6 rebounds and 2.0 steals, while Armstrong averaged a team-high 13.6 points to go along with 6.3 rebounds and 1.3 blocks in the Hornets' eight preseason contests.

Xavier's Dumas and Stewart make preseason All-GCAC men's basketball team



Shaun Dumas

6-1 senior from Destrehan, La., and a 2002 graduate of Destrehan High School, was All-GCAC this past season and third-team All-Louisiana. As a junior he led the Gold Rush with a 16.8 scoring average and set Xavier records for 3-pointers made in a season (109) and career (202). He scored a game-high 19 points, including five 3-pointers, in Xavier's 82-79 upset of NAIA No. 3 Georgetown (Ky.) - the Gold Rush's first victory in the national tournament since 1973.

The Gold Rush, 22-10 this past season, will travel to the University of Texas for an exhibition game next Friday (Nov. 2). Xavier will play Wesley (Miss.) at The Barn in the regular-season opener on Nov. 6.

The preseason All-GCAC team, listed alphabetically:

Shaun Dumas, Xavier
Walter Fitzgerald, Mobile
Jeremy Holder, William Carey
Kevin McCoy, Tougaloo
Dax Miller, Belhaven
Jamon Morris, LSU-Shreveport
Josh Porter, LSU-Shreveport
Jeremy Price, Spring Hill
Mark Stewart, Xavier
Luke Zumo, Loyola

NEW ORLEANS - Xavier University of Louisiana guards Shaun Dumas and Mark Stewart were selected to the preseason All-Gulf Coast Athletic Conference men's basketball team by the league's head coaches.

Dumas is a 5-foot-11 junior from New Orleans and a 2004 graduate of St. Augustine High School. He averaged 13.2 points, 6.1 assists and 3.1 steals this past season for the Gold Rush and was a third-team NAIA Division I All-American. Stewart, a

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Gold Nuggets beat Nashville All-Stars in exhibition



NEW ORLEANS — Jarryn Cleaves scored 23 points and Erica Turnbull 16 Saturday to lead Xavier University of Louisiana to a 76-62 women's basketball exhibition victory against the Nashville All-Stars at The Barn.

It was the lone preseason contest for the Gold Nuggets, who will open the regular season at

6 p.m. Thursday at Langston. Cleaves, a senior guard and a three-time All-Gulf Coast Athletic Conference selection, scored 17 first-half points and put the Nuggets ahead to stay at 8-6 with consecutive 3-pointers in the first two minutes. Turnbull, a senior forward/center and an All-GCAC selection this past season, scored

12 points in the second half and led Xavier for the game with eight rebounds. Xavier led 41-31 at half-time and maintained a double-digit lead throughout the second half. The Nuggets took their largest lead, 67-41, on freshman Danielle Jones' 3-pointer with 10:33 remaining.

Jones and Tiffany Norris scored nine points apiece, and senior Patrice Hawkins came off

the bench to contribute six points and seven rebounds in 15 minutes. Tonisha Jones scored 19 of her 30 points in the second half for the All-Stars, who are composed of former college players, and C'Kala Humes scored 14.

Xavier outshot the All-Stars 46 to 31 percent from the floor. Four Xavier freshmen combined for 16 points, 11 rebounds, 10 assists, two steals and two blocked shots.

Jones grabbed six rebounds. Shayla Boyd started at point guard and had seven points, six assists and three rebounds in 34 minutes. Xavier won its exhibition game for the second consecutive season. Nashville's next exhibition will start at 4 p.m. on Nov. 10 at Lane College.

Xavier University announces changes to its 2007-08 basketball schedules

NEW ORLEANS - Xavier University of New Orleans has announced changes to its 2007-08 basketball schedules.

Xavier's women:

- Added a home exhibition game against the Nashville (Tenn.) All-Stars at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 27.
- Moved the starting time of their Saturday, Nov. 3 home game against Texas College to 3 p.m.
- Moved their home game against Houston Baptist to Sunday, Dec. 2 at 5 p.m.
- Have new dates for the Gulf Coast Athletic Conference Tournament - first round on Tuesday, March 4, quarterfinals on Thursday, March 6, semifinals on Saturday, March 8 and championship game on Tuesday, March 11. The only change for Xavier's men involves the GCAC Tournament - first round on Monday, March 3, quarterfinals on Wednesday, March 5, semifinals on Friday, March 7 and championship game on Monday, March 10.

Complete schedules can be found online at <http://www.xula.edu/athletics/wb/schedule> for the women and <http://www.xula.edu/athletics/mb/schedule> for the men.



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