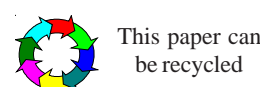




The Villager

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Osama bin Laden's Death Voted Top Story of 2011

Special to the NNPA from the St. Louis American
The killing of Osama bin Laden during a raid by Navy SEALs on his hideout in Pakistan was the top news story of 2011, followed by Japan's earthquake/tsunami/meltdown disaster, according to The Associated Press' annual poll of U.S. editors and news directors.



Osama bin Laden
Union's financial turmoil was No. 4.

The death of bin Laden, the al-Qaida leader who masterminded the Sept. 11 terror attacks, received 128 first-place votes out of 247 ballots cast for the top 10 stories. The Japan disaster was next, with 60 first-place votes. Placing third were the Arab Spring uprisings that rocked North Africa and the Middle East, while the European

The international flavor of these top stories contrasted with last year's voting - when the Gulf of Mexico oil spill was the top story, President Barack Obama's health care overhaul was No. 2, and the U.S. midterm elections were No. 3. Information from The Associated Press contributed to this report.

TDS AND GARDEN-VILLE ARE NOW ACCEPTING CHRISTMAS TREES FOR RECYCLING

Clean Christmas trees and organic decorations will be accepted free of charge from December 26-January 31.

Christmas trees, holly, pumpkins and other living decorations will be accepted at the times and locations listed below. The decorations must be free of lights, ornaments, metal, flocking and other non-living contaminants. Living materials will be repurposed through Texas Organic Products, the composting division of Texas Disposal Systems, to be made into products like mulch and compost.

Texas Organic Products at TDS Landfill

3016FM 1327
Creedmoor, TX 78610
7am-dusk Mon-Sat
Garden-Ville Eco-Depot in Bee Cave
4001 RR 620 S. Bee Cave, TX 78738
8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat
Garden-Ville Georgetown
250 WL Walden Rd. Georgetown, TX 78626
8am-5pm Mon-Sat
For more information, visit www.texasdisposal.com, or call TDS Customer Care at 800-375-8375. Visit www.garden-ville.com for certified organic products.

Republican Congressman Cites 1st Lady's Butt in Rant Against Healthy Food Initiative

Shrimp, Cheetos Lover Sensenbrenner Echoes Limbaugh, Plans Apology

Special to the NNPA from the Afro-American Newspaper
First Lady Michelle Obama's physical dimensions were the target of criticism by a Wisconsin Republican recently who criticized the First Lady's Healthy Food Initiative as unwarranted government intrusion.

Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) issued an apology to the First Lady Dec. 22 in a handwritten note. The congressman's spokeswoman declined to detail what the note said.

Sensenbrenner was apologizing for saying Obama has a "big butt" Dec. 10 at a Wisconsin church bazaar, then repeating the reference to her posterior in a cellphone conversation that was overheard in a Washington area airport.

"I regret my inappropriate comment and I have sent a personal note to the First Lady apologizing," Sensenbrenner said in a statement Dec. 22.

"She lectures us on eating right while she has a large posterior herself," Sensenbrenner was heard to say Dec. 21 in a Ronald Reagan-National Airport passenger lounge in what was described in *FishBowlDC* as a "very loud" cellphone conversation.

At the church bazaar the outspoken GOP lawmaker, speaking to a group of church members, criticized her initiative on healthy food and exercise, according to the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*. He railed against the First Lady's healthy foods initiative when talking about projects by other First Ladies. "And Michelle Obama,

her project is obesity. And look at her big butt," one female church member who was present during the apparently spontaneous comments told the *Journal-Sentinel*.

He said it is hypocritical of the First Lady to push healthy eating and exercise at the same time hamburgers and fries are served at the White House.

Sensenbrenner's rant echoes commentary by conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh who singled out the First Lady's physical dimensions in criticizing her for traveling the country with her message about healthy eating, encouraging grocers to locate in underserved communities—<http://www.afro.com/sections/news/health/story.htm?storyid=71901>—and urging the reversal of the nation's growing obesity problem in *Let's Move!*, an exercise program aimed at children.

"The problem is, and dare I say this, it doesn't look like Michelle Obama follows her own nutritional, dietary advice...I'm trying to say that our First Lady does not project the image of women that you might see on the cover of the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue or of a woman Alex Rodriguez might date every six months or what have you," Limbaugh said during one show.

The congressman, who is a fan of shrimp and the cheese-flavored salty snack Cheetos, was referring to the first lady's healthy food initiative in his remarks, the spokeswoman said. "He doesn't think the government should be telling Americans what to eat," a spokeswoman for Sensenbrenner told *MailOnline.co.uk*.

Texas Minority Voting Power Threatened



The Roberts Court, 2010 Back row (left to right): Sonia Sotomayor, Stephen G. Breyer, Samuel A. Alito, and Elena Kagan. Front row (left to right): Clarence Thomas, Antonin Scalia, Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Anthony Kennedy, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg

By Aswad Walker Special to the NNPA from the Houston Defender

The case of Texas redistricting took another dramatic turn recently as the U.S. Supreme Court granted state Attorney General Greg Abbott's request to temporarily block interim redistricting maps.

Some view the fallout from the decision merely as an inconvenience to Texas voters and aspiring candidates. Others, however, view the stay as a direct attempt to weaken Black and Latino voting power by dismantling critical provisions of the Voting Rights Act.

The Supreme Court's emergency stay means candidates were given until Dec. 19 to file for office. The stay could delay legislative and congressional primaries currently scheduled for March 6 until May. The groups involved in the redistricting battle are scheduled to make oral arguments before the court on Jan. 9.

The interim maps in question were drawn by a San Antonio court's three-judge panel after complaints were raised that the redistricting maps produced during the last Texas Legislative session bolstered the political power of Tea Party and Republican lawmakers while seriously damaging the voting power of minorities.

Abbott contended that the lower court's interim maps undermined the "will of the people" and asked the Supreme Court to intervene.

The Supreme Court decision further complicated the redistricting issue. Prior to the high court's ruling, five Black Texas

legislators publicly expressed concern that the lower court-produced maps negatively impacted voting power in historically Black districts.

"From the perspective of the Texas Legislative Black Caucus we support the interim plans for the Congressional seats and the State Senate maps," said Houston State Rep. Sylvester Turner, one of the five initially voicing reservations. He was joined by Houston lawmakers Alma Allen, Harold Dutton, Borris Miles and Senfronia Thompson.

"We voiced our concerns but we never asked for a stay," Turner said. "We would have preferred the Supreme Court to stay out of this matter entirely, because you never know what's going on in the minds of Supreme Court justices. I hope they don't do anything to weaken or eliminate the Voting Rights Acts, specifically Sections 2 and 5."

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act contains a general prohibition on voting discrimination. Section 5 deals with the process of "preclearance."

"Preclearance is what protects Black and Latino districts around the country," said Coleman. "Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott wants to get rid of preclearance."

"Preclearance means when a map is drawn the U.S. Justice Department has to give its opinion on whether or not it harms minorities and their voting power. Because you have to wait for preclearance before you can have an election, if you remove preclearance, elections can be run on new maps even if they

take away voting power from Blacks and Latinos," Coleman explained.

"This stay is the worst thing that could have ever happened because Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act is now in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, where there is no appeal of the rulings of the highest court in the land," said Coleman.

Coleman says he cannot predict how the current saga will play out, but believes there is ill intent behind Abbott's actions. "The goal of conservatives is to get rid of the entire Voting Rights Act; that's been their stated goal for the last five to 10 years," Coleman said. "But they can't get rid of it in Congress, so they go to the courts where they have the ability to win a case because the courts have conservative judges who agree with their point of view."

"A removal of preclearance doesn't just affect Texas, but every state. What the Supreme Court tells Texas to do becomes the law of the land. This stay is the most dangerous thing that ever happened with regard to the Voting Rights Act," added Coleman.

The San Antonio court's interim maps were produced to allow Texas elections to take place as originally scheduled while lawmakers worked to achieve a final redistricting map resolution.

"I can't say right now whether the Supreme Court's stay is good, bad or indifferent," said Thompson. "Everything's up in the air right now. People don't know when the elections are; they don't even know what the districts are."

RAPPIN' Tommy Wyatt

Political season heats up.

While much of the attention is being given to the Presidential candidates running for the opportunity to take on President Barack Obama in the fall, there is a lot of interest being shown in local races. A record number of candidates have filed for local races.

The race for District Attorney is getting a lot of attention. Former District Judge Charlie Baird is taking on DA Rosemary Lehmborg. Baird retired from the bench earlier this year and almost immediately started campaigning for the position. Lehmborg is completing her first term in that position.

Precinct 1 County Commissioner Ron Davis has drawn 3 candidates for his position. Among them are Richard Franklin III, Arthur Sampson, and Victor Gonzales. Davis has said that, if elected, this would be his last term on the court.

One of the biggest issues that is creating a lot of uncertainty for this election is the uncertainty over the U.S. Congressional Districts lines. That case is now before the U.S. Supreme Court. The court placed a stay on the Federal Judges decision to redraw the lines that were done by the Texas Legislature. They threw out the plan that would place Austin and San Antonio in the same district.

Judges Orlando Garcia and Xavier Rodriguez reunited San Antonio neighborhoods by removing District 35 from Austin and reuniting District 25, the district that would be represented by Lloyd Doggett. The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to issue a ruling in the case in early January.

In the mean time, Doggett has already drawn an opponent in the person of former Railroad Commissioner Michael Williams. While Williams was prepared to run in the newly drawn district that is being challenged, he has indicated that he will run for District 25, regardless of the decision of the judges.

The Republican dominated legislature had hopes of making district 25 an opportunity district for the Republican Party. Also caught up in the dispute are the districts that are being held by several of the Black Congress persons from Dallas And Houston. They are also looking for a different outcome.

Doggett has committed to continue to campaign in both of the proposed districts. However, he is hoping that the San Antonio courts decision will be up held. If so, he will be able to devote all of his attention to the Austin area.

In the meantime it is going to be up to the local voters to keep up on all of the latest changes in order that they will be prepared to vote whenever the smoke clears. But for now, there will be no March election.



During their 23rd annual *Holiday Extraordinaire*, The Group honored Ronnie McDonald (center with plaque), Bastrop County Judge, for his noble, calm, and spiritual leadership during the devastating firestorm in Bastrop County, TX. earlier this year. Judge McDonald received The Group's "Outstanding Community Leadership Award," at the Renaissance Austin Hotel (Dec. 10, 2011). McDonald kept the community informed on a regular basis about the conditions in the area. The fire devastated the area that is now being rebuilt. Photo by General Marshall.

EDITORIALS/COMMENTARY

Robert Champion: Drum Major for Change



By Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

Most parents of college students look forward to December, when their students come home for the holidays. Some are so excited to see their offspring come home that they actually come to their colleges to pick them up. Others prepare special treats and goodies as an antidote to the oft-complained about cafeteria food.

Robert and Pam Champion won't have that opportunity. Their son, Robert, died on November 19. His death has been ruled a homicide and he is allegedly the victim of hazing. Florida A&M University, one of our nation's most respected HBCUs, is in the headlines now, not because of its excellent academic programs, but because its celebrated marching band has apparently had a culture of hazing.

Robert and Pam Champion are to be commended for turning their pain into a force for change. In a recent media interview, they indicated that they have set up a Facebook page in honor of their son, who they describe as a "drum major for change" because they will use his story to help other victims of hazing. Mrs. Champion also indicated that she would set up an anti-hazing hot line so that young people can, anonymously, deal with issues of hazing. The younger Robert Champion has apparently not been the only victim of hazing in the FAMU Marching Band. In the past, one student has had her hip broken, and two have been hospitalized with kidney damage. And these are only the cases we know about.

The FAMU Marching Band isn't the only organization that hazes. Sororities and fraternities, whether part of the African American Divine Nine, or part of the larger Greek-letter organiza-

tion atmosphere, seem to think hazing is part of the culture. Whether it is yelling and screaming at pledges, to the use of actual physical violence, hazing is prevalent. The National Study of Student Hazing, which got results from more than 11,000 students at 53 colleges indicated that "8 percent of women in Greek life have experienced hazing". This study didn't focus on HBCUs, but it would not be surprising to learn that our numbers mirror these. Two questions - why is membership in a group so important that you'd risk your life; and why must people verbally and physically abuse those who want to join their group.

Our young people are no better than what we show them they can be. I have heard sorority women make the distinction between "pledging hard" and "pledging soft", with the implication that the brutal former is better. Young men and some not so young men, sport brands, some of which have been infected, as symbols of their fraternity and their "manhood". Many of those branded were either willing or subject to coercion. When elders show their sons these brands, they may well co-sign the con-

tinuation of a brutal trend.

What is hazing about? It's bullying, it's coercion, and it's descent into groupthink in the worst way. I've got something you want, and I'm going to make you suffer to get it. In order to join a band you ought to be able to play music, not survive a beating. How does the beating make you a better band member? Actually, it allows some folks to play a game of false superiority to the detriment of others.

The bottom line, though, is that it has to stop. The college experience should not be a brutal experience, or an experience where coercion and intimidation are ingrained into the process of joining a group. To be sure, there are bonding opportunities in ritual - in learning songs, history, steps, or chants. And there may be penalties when band members or pledges don't toe the mark in learning things on time. But the penalties should not be physical abuse, and that abuse has become too acceptable.

What do we do about it? Some parents whose children have been hazed have brought criminal charges or civil lawsuits. Others have pushed for systemic change. Leaders in higher education must assert zero tolerance for hazing and enforce zero tolerance policies with appropriate actions. Four members of the FAMU band have been dismissed from school, but only after young Robert Champion's death. Had they been expelled sooner, might Champion still be among us? Robert and Pam Champion are to be commended for turning their pain into change. But if hazing cannot be stopped, those organizations that allow it simply need to be disbanded.

The Importance of a Good Foreign Policy/Strong Defense



Harry C. Alford
NNPA Columnist

this big jam through our industrial might. We converted our massive auto industry into a military machine. We put out 2,000 ships per year along with 9,000 planes along with other military essentials. We supplied our troops as well as the troops of England and the Soviet Union all at the same time. In the end, we got out of this and became a world power.

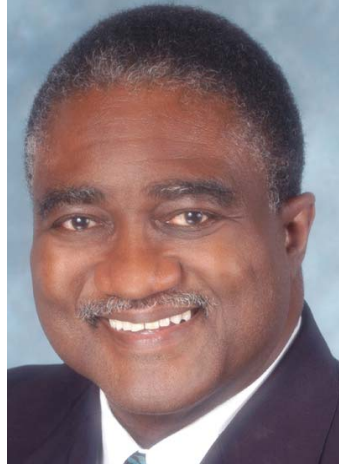
A few years after the war, we would repeat the same mistake. The communist powers, China and the Soviet Union, had its eyes on the Korean Peninsula. Korea was divided into a communist North and a quasi-democracy South. We felt the North would never become aggressive and forbade the South from adequately building up its army and started to decrease the funding of our own defense. All the while, the Soviet Union was stocking the North in preparation of invasion. Soon, they invaded the South and the Korean War was on. We miscalculated China coming in and slaying many of our troops. We settled the conflict with an armistice. For the second time in our history we had a war without victory but a settlement (the first was the War of 1812). Today, the tension on the Korean Peninsula remains the same.

Then came the debacle of Vietnam. It started back in the 1920's. The hero of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, approached President Woodrow Wilson to mediate between the people of Vietnam and the French colonialist. Wilson was a bona fide racist and would not give five minutes to the upcoming hero as he was brown and Asian. In fact, no European nation paid him any attention. He finally got attention from the Soviet Union. Thus, the future liberator became a recipient of communist funding and had to sing their "song". Vietnam ran the invading Japanese troops out at the end of World War II; overthrew the French colonialists and eventually would defeat the mighty United States. It was our first and only defeat in history. We left Vietnam on the run.

We haven't learned much from the above errors. The Middle East and lower Mediterranean are starting to boil. We don't know how to get out of Afghanistan and probably left Iraq too hurriedly. Iraq is about to go into civil war; Afghanistan will as soon as we leave there; and we don't know where Egypt, Libya, Syria and others are headed. All the while, Iran who hates us immensely based on our foreign policy against them for decades is fanning the "flames" whenever it can. We need a sound foreign policy.

One last thing. We have a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) that is out of control and hurts our foreign policy. The movie, *Colombiana*, illustrates just how out of control the CIA is. Remember, there wasn't an opium poppy growing in Afghanistan when we went in. Today, the nation is the drug capital of the world. It isn't a coincidence. It needs to be checked.

Ron Paul's Racist Rants



By George E. Curry
NNPA Columnist

If you've watched any of the Republican debates, you'll remember Ron Paul, the 76-year-old libertarian congressman from Texas whose oversized suit coats look like they are about to fall off his frail shoulders. You'll also remember that no debate questioner asked him about the overtly racist views that appeared in his newsletters for two decades.

But now that Paul has surged to front-runner status in Iowa, he is being grilled about comments that range from denigrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to objecting to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In the 1990s, he described Dr. King as a "world-class philanthropist who beat up his paramours" and "seduced underage girls and boys." He even claimed - without a hint of proof - that Dr. King "made a pass at" fellow civil rights warrior Ralph Abernathy, who succeeded King as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

When Ronald Reagan signed the Martin Luther King Holiday bill into law, Paul wrote, "What an infamy Ronald Reagan approved it!" He added, "We can thank him for our annual Hate Whitey Day."

The controversial remarks were published in various for-profit Ron Paul newsletters in the 1980s and 1990s. The newsletters included: *Ron Paul's Political Report*, *Ron Paul's Freedom Report*, *Ron Paul's Survival Report* and the *Ron Paul's Investment Letter*.

On January 8, 2008, *The New Republic* ran an article on Paul titled, "Angry White Man." It was accompanied by an illustration of Paul wearing a Confederate necktie and rebel hat. The story, written by James Kirchick, noted that Ron Paul's newsletters were published on a monthly basis from 1978 to at least 1999. Most are on file in the right-wing extremists literature collections at the Wisconsin Historical Society and the University of Kansas.

After the uprising in Watts, the *Ron Paul Political Report* said in June 1992, "Order was only restored in L.A. when it came time for the blacks to pick up their welfare checks three days after rioting began." According to the newsletter, the uprising was caused by government-backed "civil rights," quotas, mandated hiring preferences, set-asides for government contracts, gerrymandered voting districts, black bureaucracies, black mayors, black curricula in schools, black tv shows, black tv anchors, hate crime laws, and public humiliation for anyone who dares question the black agenda.

"... If you have ever been robbed by a black teen-age male, you know how unbelievably fleet-footed they can be," one report said.

According to a newsletter bearing Paul's name, "...Opinion polls consistently show only about 5% of blacks have sensible political opinions."

The late congresswoman Barbara Jordon of Texas was called the "archetypical half-educated victimologist."

* A December 1989 edition of *Ron Paul's Investment Letter*, it was predicted that "Racial Violence Will Fill Our Cities." According to the publication, "...Mostly black welfare recipients will feel justified in stealing from mostly white 'haves.'"

* In June 1991, following a racial incident in the Adams Morgan section of Washington, D.C.,

one headline screamed, "Animals Take Over the D.C. Zoo."

* In October of 1992, a newsletter bearing Paul's name stated, "I've urged everyone in my family to know how to use a gun in self defense. For the animals are coming."

"* Given the inefficiencies of what DC laughingly calls the criminal justice system, I think we can safely assume that 95 percent of black males in that city are semi-criminal if not entirely criminal," one Ron Paul newsletter asserts.

* Praising former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke in 1990, Ron Paul said through his newsletter that "our priority should be to take the anti-government, anti-tax, anti-crime, anti-welfare loafers, anti-race-privilege, anti-foreign meddling message of Duke, and enclose it in a more consistent package of freedom."

Ron Paul's venom was not limited to his newsletters. While many were celebrating the 40th anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act in 2004, Ron Paul was still objecting to it, saying June 4, 2004 on the floor of Congress, "...the Civil Rights Act of 1964 did not improve race relations or enhance freedom. Instead, the forced integration dictated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 increased racial tensions while diminishing individual liberty."

Incredulously, Ron Paul wants us to believe that not only did he not write the un-bylined racist comments in the newsletters that carried his name, but that he was unaware they appeared in his publications.

"I didn't write them, I didn't read them at the time, and I disavow them," he told Gloria Borger of CNN. "I never read that stuff. I was probably unaware of it 10 years after it was written, and it's been going on 20 years that people have pestered me about this. CNN does it every single time. When are you going to wear yourself out?"

When Borger continued to press Paul, he abruptly terminated the interview. "These are pretty incendiary," she told Paul. Unclipping his microphone, he said, "Only because of people like you."

"Remembering a Poor Baby"



By Marian Wright Edelman
NNPA Columnist

When Britany Lewis was born, no trumpets and glad tidings or even balloons and baby showers greeted her arrival. She was just another poor baby. Britany never knew her father, and for the first six years of her life lived in virtual squalor with five siblings and a mother addicted to drugs who eventually went to prison. Britany barely remembers her, though there are some details of her early childhood that do stand out—like the maggots everywhere in their run-down house, even in the refrigerator.

When Britany was six, her then nineteen-year-old sister was awarded custody of her young siblings. But her sister was hardly prepared to be a parent or provider for her younger sisters and brothers, and the family was forced to live for over a year in a two-door Honda Prelude. The deplorable living conditions and lack of parental guidance caused Britany to miss an entire year of school. No one cared enough to notice or do anything about it. Her sister also began a destructive pattern of physical abuse toward Britany that would last for several years. Once, she dealt a devastating blow that forced Britany to miss two days of school while she nursed a black eye. Britany remembers that the physical pain paled in comparison to the disappointment of tarnishing the perfect attendance record she'd built up and determinedly maintained for several years in a row in the midst of the chaos at home. By then, school had become a refuge.

While millions of children have found safe harbor with relatives, Britany did not until she was 16. Her sister kicked her out and left her then in the care of her grandparents. In this cur-

rent home Britany has finally found the love, support, and guidance she needs and deserves. Despite the abandonment, homelessness, and physical abuse that permeated her childhood, Britany managed to stand tall against the odds that constantly threatened to destroy her dreams. Now a high school senior, she has a 3.94 GPA and is, according to her guidance counselor, "a proven force" on her high school campus. Britany serves as Associated Student Body President and is a vigilant community leader in programs such as the Youth Commission-City of Lancaster, California and the Teen Builders Community Service Club. Selected as a "Future Leader" by the Valley Press Newspaper, Britany believes "I overcame the things from my past because I refuse to let them hold me back. My plan is to continue to do my best in school and help others along the way."

Britany is now also one of the newest winners of the Children's Defense Fund's Beat the Odds® awards program, which recognizes outstanding high school students who have overcome incredible adversity to excel in school and display incredible self-determination and a drive toward achievement through the common thread of

hard work, academic excellence, and service to their communities. On December 1, celebrities and child advocates joined CDF's California office at an awards gala honoring Britany and four other extraordinary high school students from the Los Angeles area. Each of them will receive a \$10,000 college scholarship and support services including rigorous SAT prep, one-on-one college counseling, statewide college tours, internship opportunities, educational and life-skills workshops, and guidance and mentoring throughout the high school and college years.

I am so proud of Britany Lewis and the other youths recognized in *Beat the Odds* awards programs in eight cities this year. But how many more of America's 16.4 million poor children will never beat the odds stacked against them and grow up to reach their full potential the way she has? How many millions of Britanys have we already lost? How many poor babies were born today who will never win any awards and whose names we'll never know—but who will instead grow up hungry, homeless, poorly educated, and unloved on the outskirts of the American dream?

In the afterglow of Christmas when Christians celebrate the birth of the most famous poor baby in history—the miracle of the incarnation and the belief that God actually came to live among us as a poor, homeless child—I hope we can honor this holy baby in our lives today by raising a mighty voice for justice and protection for all the poor babies and children made in God's image still left behind in poverty and hopelessness.

CHURCH & TOWN BULLETIN

Texas Pastors' Group Urges Congress to Reverse Anti-Holiday Rule

Houston, TX – A trans-denominational, multi-ethnic coalition of pastors in cities across Texas is asking all thirty two Texas U.S. Representatives to support a rule change that would reverse a long standing prohibition on any mention of holidays in their “franked” mailings or other official communications from their office. The Franking Commission has interpreted a 1974 code very broadly and some Congressmen are now asking for change.

“Section 3210 (a)(5)(B)(iii) appears to have clearly been focused solely on avoiding the use of tax dollars to send holiday cards. To extend it to any and all mention of holidays in every and all forms of official communication is absurd,” stated Texas Pastor Council Executive Director Dave Welch. “While there are many more critical issues to which our Congress should be devoting their time and attention, to censor our elected representatives from expressing a simple reference to anything from Christmas to Memorial Day is irrational.”

Welch pointed out the hypocrisy in the federal government recognizing official holidays while telling those charged with oversight of that same government they cannot even mention them. “Federal law (5 U.S.C.

6103) establishes ten public holidays for Federal employees, including Christmas Day. While a case might be made to avoid using tax dollars to send Christmas cards to constituents, there is no constitutional or reasonable defense for completely censoring the mention of that or any other holiday in any and all communications,” he asserted.

The pastors also raised the issue that only two of the federal holidays have any connection to religion so this policy of censorship is either direct hostility toward religion and the others are simply “collateral damage”, or this is simply a case of bureaucracy overreaching its original intent. “We believe that this horse can and should be put back in the barn by either the return to the original purpose of the statute or the Franking Commission reversing their interpretation and allowing Congressmen to communicate freely with those who elected them as does the U.S. Senate,” Welch said in closing.

The Texas Pastor Council is a trans-denominational, multi-ethnic coalition of pastor councils in cities throughout the state of Texas who serve to bring a united, Biblical voice to spiritual, social, moral and political issues.

The National Urban League and League of United Latin American Citizens Urge Express Scripts to Reach Agreement with Walgreens

Imminent Loss of Access to Pharmacy Care will be Detrimental to Our Communities

New York, NY – The National Urban League (NUL) and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) today urged Express Scripts, Inc. (ESI) to resume negotiations and come to an agreement with Walgreens on new contract terms. If an agreement is not reached, millions of Americans, especially in diverse and underserved communities, stand to lose access to pharmacy services on January 1, 2012.

In an open letter to Express Scripts, Marc H. Morial, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Urban League and Margaret Moran, National President of the League of United Latin American Citizens state that “Walgreens has been a valued partner with the National Urban League and LULAC for many years. Together we have worked to address the health issues, improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities in our communities across the country.”

While this is a dispute between companies, open and fair input from communities across the country is critical, as the outcome drastically affects the healthcare options of millions of Americans. NUL and LULAC have a vested interest in ensuring that all people have access to affordable and convenient neighborhood pharmacies. Families and communities across the country deserve a quick resolution that preserves access to care and medicines in their own neighborhoods.

“As the nation’s largest pharmacy chain, with nearly 8,000 stores nationwide, Walgreens



Marc H. Morial

serves 40 million consumers every week. Walgreens fills an important role in our neighborhoods. In many areas Walgreens is the only pharmacy that can fill health care needs and prescriptions 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is of great significance to communities that we serve.”

For more than 100 years, Walgreens has been committed to serving urban neighborhoods and continues to serve communities throughout the United States where quality health care services are scarce.

As noted in the letter, with stores in virtually every community, 63 percent of all Americans, 75 percent of African Americans, and 78 percent of Latinos live within 3 miles of a Walgreens, and Walgreens fills one out of every three prescriptions in the country.

In the letter, the leaders of the NUL and LULAC emphasize the need to discuss the dispute, stating, “It is with great concern that we contact Express Scripts regarding Express Scripts’ unwillingness to reach a fair and reasonable agreement with Walgreens in your recent contract negotiations. We strongly urge you to put Walgreens’ customers, your customers and the health of our communities at the forefront of this issue.”

Travis County Sheriff’s Office Hosts Free Car Seat Inspections

On Tuesday, January 17, 2012, at 10 AM, the Travis County Sheriff’s Office with Austin-Travis County EMS and Texans in Motion at Scott & White, will conduct free child passenger safety seat inspections at the Lake Travis Fire Rescue Station #605 (3048 Steiner Ranch Blvd, Austin, TX 78732). This event is scheduled from 10 AM – 1 PM (last appointment begins at 12:30 PM.)

Inspections will be conducted by appointment only. Please call (512) 854-3248 or emailkimberly.orts@co.travis.tx.us to schedule an appointment.

With increased motorists on the roadway due to winter holiday travel and the likelihood of inclement weather upon us, the opportunity for motor ve-

hicle collisions grows. According to Safe Kids, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among children ages 3 to 14.

Learn the safest practices to keep your child passengers safe. It is the goal of the Sheriff’s Office to educate as many families as possible to ensure each child is properly restrained, every time.

Proper use of child passenger safety seats can not only lessen potential injuries that could be sustained in a crash, but could prevent them entirely.

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Bus Ministry Call 512-478-1875

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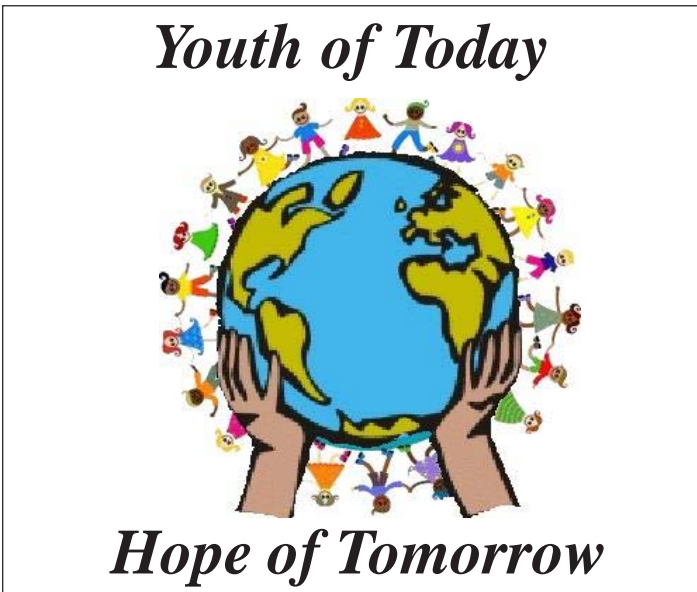
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YOUTH BRIGADE



A New Beginning

Celebrate the New Year

Making Plans For 2012



Jaquarry Wilson
Del Valle High School

January 1st has been recognized as a national holiday for as long as I can remember. It marks the start of a new year, a chance for us to start fresh. For our family celebrating New Year's Day is just as important as celebrating any other holiday. We eat, drink, and be merry, as stated by numerous family members of

mine. It's exactly a week after Christmas Day. Usually we celebrate it on the night before New Year's Day, or New Year's Eve. We would reflect on both good and bad events of the past year. Then we would discuss our New Year resolutions. A New Year resolution is a goal you set for yourself that you hope to accomplish within the New Year. I am always excited for the New Year because something new always occurs. Also during the beginning of the New Year school begins. The new semester starts and we have some new classes. I am extremely excited to both spend time with family and to start school to see what new classes I have. I hope everyone has had a merry Christmas and has a great New Year!



Marshay Hatcher
Pflugerville High School

It's officially time to say goodbye to 2011 and hello and welcome to 2012. The start of the year will, without a doubt be full of celebration, holiday cheer, and resolutions.

For 2012, my new year resolutions will include working harder in school, to ensure good educational opportunities. As a

freshman in high school, taking many Pre-AP classes, I am required to work hard and learn college level studies. I plan to study more often, review my notes, and also ask for help, or schedule a tutorial with my teachers. I value my education and want to receive all the benefits it has to offer.

I also plan to try and be more outgoing, and not afraid to try new things. I want to be involved in activities I usually wouldn't be interested in. I want to enjoy all that life has to offer, and not be too shy, to meet new people, or learn a new language.

I feel very good about my resolutions and expect nothing but the best for the New Year. I hope everyone has a fantastic holiday season and a terrific year for 2012.



Adrian Jackson
Pflugerville High School

Most people make resolutions for the New Year, but many are not successful at

achieving, or sticking to them. I want to choose the right resolutions for me. I want to make plans now that will help me to be a successful person in the future.

My New Year's resolution is to dedicate more time to producing music. I love everything about music and plan to become a producer in the future. Taking more time to practice, and learn all there is to know about the music business, will help me with my long term goals.

So lets say "so long" to 2011 and "hello" to 2012. A year of prosperity and success.

My Resolution for 2012



Andrae Hatcher
Pflugerville Middle School

For 2012 my New Year's Resolutions are to work on keeping good grades, exer-

cising, practicing my guitar, and to be a better person. I want to do these things to be successful, fit, become a musician, and have good friends. I'm going to accomplish this by working hard, staying dedicated, and studying.

I want to make time for the things are really important to me, like reading, family, and friends. Preparing for the new year by setting positive goals and taking a look back at the past year, to move forward to a successful and positive future. Happy New Year.

My New Year's Resolutions



Darius Hatcher
Pflugerville Middle School

The 2012 year is here, and around the world, there are many people that make resolutions, or goals for the new year, that are expected to be reached before the next new year.

This year my resolutions will be to keep my grades passing and continue to show great citizenship in school. I would like to keep my grades up so I won't fail. To do this I will do my best on everything, turn my work in on time, and study. I also would like to stay out of trouble because the choices I make now, good or bad, will follow you throughout your future.

I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday and a happy New Year. Good luck to those of you who have already set goals or made your resolution for 2012.

Spike Lee and Eddie Murphy allies to star Marion Barry

By Yacine Simpure
Special to the NNPA from the New York Amsterdam News

Eddie Murphy will be back on the big screen again this year, this time playing a more serious role. He will join the cast of the new Spike Lee movie on the life of Marion Barry, the former Washington D.C. mayor and civil right activist.

In 1990, Barry became an international celebrity when he was caught smoking cocaine by the FBI. After a short prison sentence, he was voted back into office as mayor's 1995 to 1999. Today, Barry is still serving the City, as a councilman.

There have been previous attempts to tell Barry's story. For a series called Barry's Tale, HBO previously had Chris Rock slated



Eddie Murphy

to write the politician's story and Jamie Foxx playing the main role but the project never panned out.

It is hope for all the best on this new Lee/Murphy alliance.



The Villager Youth Brigade Youth of Today! Hope of Tomorrow!

Special to the NNPA from the Florida Courier

A crowd estimated at approximately 2,000 people, mostly students of Florida A&M University, Florida's largest historically Black university, staged a nonviolent, spontaneous nighttime protest march on the home of Florida Gov. Rick Scott, demanding that he rescind his decision requesting that FAMU's Board of Trustees immediately suspend FAMU president Dr. James Ammons.

The FAMU board scheduled a meeting for Monday, following a request by Scott that the school suspend Ammons amid an investigation into alleged hazing and questions about the finances of the school's band.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement announced Wednesday that its investigation into the death of Robert Champion, a 26-year-old band leader who died after what police say appears to have been a hazing, was widening to include the finances of the school's famous "Marching 100" band. Champion died after the annual Florida Classic football game between FAMU and Bethune Cookman on Nov. 19.

"I called President Ammons and I suggested that at this time, that he step aside during the investigation, make sure that everybody is comfortable that the right things are happening there, that there's complete cooperation," Scott told reporters Thursday evening. "I hope the president wasn't involved in anything, but I think it's the right thing at this time."

The governor also confirmed that he spoke with FAMU Board Chairman Solomon Badger to request the board suspend Ammons. Until Thursday, Scott had largely refrained from passing any judgment on Ammons, saying his fate should be decided after FDLE concluded its investigation.

Scott's change of mind upset thousands of FAMU students. Even though thousands of students had already left Tallahassee for Christmas break, thousands still remain who are taking finals, are set to attend Friday's fall commencement ceremony, or both. Many of them converged on the governor's mansion late Thursday night.

Scott, accompanied by former FAMU Board Member Rev. R.B. Holmes and former state Sen. Al Lawson, among others, spoke directly to the students from the front yard of the governor's mansion which was ringed by uniformed police and, according to one student who relayed the event via Twitter, the Tallahassee Police Department's SWAT team.

Scott waded into the middle of the crowd and began answering questions about the decision to suspend Ammons (the decision stands) whether FAMU would be merged with Florida State University ("I've heard nothing about that," Scott replied) and increasing educational funding (Scott's focus is on jobs).

A Florida Courier reporter who heard live cell phone audio reports that the crowd was generally impatient with Scott's answers. For example, when a student asked Scott a question about educational funding, Scott began responding with, "I come from public housing," to which one student responded, "Not all of us are poor!" The crowd did not give Scott a chance to finish his response to the question.

At the end of his five to seven-minute appearance, Scott retreated back to the governor's mansion as one student yelled, "We will stay here until you change your mind!" As of this writing, students are reportedly still assembled on the front yard of the governor's mansion, and are prepared for an overnight stay.

New Study Says Immigrants Actually Create More Jobs for Americans

By Stephon Johnson
Special to the NNPA from the New York Amsterdam News

Despite what many people think about immigration and jobs in the United States, immigrants may actually help create jobs, according to a new study.

The study, "Immigrants and American Jobs," conducted by economist and professor Madeleine Zavodny on behalf of the American Enterprise Institute and the Partnership for a New American Economy, analyzed the relationship between the foreign-born workforce and the employment rate for natural-born American workers. The report focused on two groups that policymakers and employers call critical to the economy: foreign-born adults with advanced degrees and foreign workers here on temporary employment visas.

According to the study, in both cases, more foreign-born workers meant more jobs for Americans—with almost 262 more native-born workers employed for every 100 foreign-born workers with advanced degrees who work in science, technology, engineering or math, often referred to as the "STEM" fields.

The report also analyzed the fiscal impact of foreign-born workers and found that, on average, all immigrants pay more

in taxes than they receive in benefits—particularly highly educated immigrants.

"This report adds important evidence to the case that economists have been making for years: that identifiable categories of immigrants unquestionably give a lift to native employment," said Zavodny, an economics professor at Agnes Scott College. "But I hope it's not just economists who take note—the study offers insight for legislators who need to know what's at stake in immigration policy."

According to the study, adding 100 workers in the H-1B visa program for skilled workers results in an additional 183 jobs for native-born Americans, while adding 100 workers in the H-2B program for less skilled, nonagricultural labor resulted in 464 more jobs for U.S. natives.

Based on the data, the report called for several legislative proposals that Zavodny said would create more jobs for Americans: give priority to foreign workers who earn advanced degrees from U.S. universities, particularly those who work in STEM fields; increase the number of green cards for highly educated workers; and make temporary visas for both skilled and less skilled workers more available.

ENTERTAINMENT

DARIN SHAW NAMED ANDERSON HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC DIRECTOR, HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

AUSTIN – Anderson High School Principal Donna Houser announced today that Darin Shaw has been named the school's Athletic Director and Head Football Coach. His duties begin Jan. 4, 2012.

Coach Shaw has been the Trojans' Defensive Coordinator for the past five years. Before coming to Anderson, he was the Linebackers and Secondary Football Coach at Pflugerville High School. He served as the Head Basketball and Assistant Football and Track Coach at Connally High School prior to joining the Pflugerville athletic program and also spent three years as an Assistant Football Coach at Lamesa High School in Lamesa, TX. Coach Shaw has been recognized for his work as a Biology teacher at Anderson in both 2009 and 2010 when he was a finalist for the school's Teacher of the Year Award.



Coach Darin Shaw

Coach Shaw has received from the current Anderson coaching staff to return for the 2012-13 school year will serve our athletic program well as we transition to a new District 15-5A alignment," said Mrs. Houser. "Being the smallest 5A school in the district presents challenges for our athletic programs, but Coach Shaw shared an impressive plan to work with Anderson's vertical team schools to increase the number of participants in all sports. He'll bring enthusiasm

to his position and promises to develop quality athletes who are good citizens and good representatives of their school and their athletic teams."

"I look forward to continuing the phenomenal growth of all of our athletic programs," said Coach Shaw. Mrs. Houser went on to thank Coach Bill Ramzinsky for his willingness to act as Anderson's interim Athletic Director since the spring. "Coach Ram led our students through a difficult time and inspired them to achieve at their highest levels," she said.

Coach Ramzinsky, who has elected not to return to coaching at Anderson High School, has notified the current staff of his decision. "We wish him success in the future and thank him for his tireless work and support of Anderson athletics," said Mrs. Houser.

Tiny African Country to Host Largest Base of U.S. Troops

Special to the NNPA from the Global Information Network Dec. 13 (GIN) – With the departure of U.S. troops from Iraq, Djibouti - a major U.S. ally - will be the "central location" in fighting terrorism, according to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta during his visit this week to the north African nation.

The U.S. base in Djibouti, which borders Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, has more than 3,500 military personnel, most of them assigned to combat terrorism in Somalia, Yemen and other flash points.

"We've made a hell of a lot of progress," Defense Secretary Panetta told the troops this week in Camp Lemonnier Thun- derdome.

In addition to ground troops, American drones are launched from Djibouti against Al-Qaeda operatives in the region, according to Globalsecurity.org. The country was an active participant



Djibouti Pres. Ismail Omar Guelleh (Courtesy of Global Information Network)

during the Bush years in the detention and rendition of detainees, and held prisoners until U.S. intelligence agents determined where next to send them, according to testimony by the International Crisis Group before the African Commission for Human and Peoples Rights.

This month, Washington announced the opening of a new multi-building embassy for

Djibouti, constructed by Caddell Construction Company of Montgomery, Alabama. The \$147 million project generated jobs in both the United States and Republic of Djibouti, according to the press release.

Meanwhile, Djibouti's president, Ismail Omar Guelleh, in a recent interview with Jeune Afrique, a French language magazine, defended his regime from critics who cite the absence of a free press, TV or independent radio. He also disputed charges by the International Federation of Human Rights of "all-out repression" and the existence of political prisoners in Djibouti jails.

Finally, U.S. advisors are believed to have been piloting a plane belonging to the Uganda People's Defense Force that crashed near the Dem. Rep. of Congo this week where a military offensive against the Lord's Resistance Army is underway. There were no survivors.

A First Family Christmas



First lady Michelle Obama, accompanied by Santa Claus, reads "The Night Before Christmas" at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, Monday, Dec. 12, 2011. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Special to the NNPA from the Afro-American Newspaper

"It's a Wonderful Life" is her favorite Christmas movie, "A Charlie Brown Christmas," her favorite Christmas program, "T" was the Night Before Christmas," her favorite story and her family eats pie - "lots of pie" - during the holidays.

Those were some of the tidbits that First Lady Michelle Obama shared during a visit this week to the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C., where she visited the neonatal intensive care nursery and was joined by first dog Bo and Santa Claus as she read her favorite story with children at the hospital.

Afterwards, the children asked what the first family does on Christmas Eve (have dinner, wait for Santa), what the first

lady was giving the president for Christmas (it's a secret) and what was on the Christmas day menu (Sometimes turkey, sometimes steak and lots of veggies, especially broccoli).

"Well, we have a tradition. My husband grew up in Hawaii, right? That's where his family is; and that's hometown for us. And we've gone there every year for 20 years. So every year, we go to Hawaii. And by the time Christmas Eve comes around, we put out the cookies for Santa. We usually have a fun Christmas Eve dinner, and all the kids get around - they're playing, they're really excited, and they don't go to bed right away because they're too excited, and then we have to make them go to bed. It's a big hassle. And then we wait for Santa. It's pretty simple," Obama said, according to a White House transcript of the visit.

Similarly, the first lady asked the children what they did on Christmas Eve, what they ate

and acknowledged the excitement and anticipation of waiting for Santa to put gifts under the tree.

"All right, so you know, with your dinner, having a little meat and having some vegetables, be a good thing. We do it at our house, okay? And then we have dessert. And we have pie. Lots of pie. The president loves pie. (Laughter.) All kinds of pie."

Obama was chided after admitting she had yet to put together her list for Santa this year.

"You got to get on that," one child told her. "I got to get on it. It's true," the first lady said. "But what I really, really want is for all kids to grow up with the chance to be healthy and happy, and to live a good life, and to get a good education, and to grow up and be anything they want to be. And if every child could have just that simple gift out of life that would be a wonderful Christmas present for me."

Activists, Lawyers Gather on Abu-Jamal's Behalf

Special to the NNPA from the Philadelphia Tribune

Hundreds of supporters of Mumia Abu Jamal gathered at the National Constitution Center to hold Friday to attend the "We the People" forum hosted by the National Lawyers Guild and held in honor of Troy Davis, who was recently executed in Georgia and death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The hall of the Constitution Center filled to overflowing as attendants gathered, some wearing shirts bearing the photo of Abu-Jamal and carrying small signs in support of his relief. Hosted by Pam Africa and Johanna Fernandez, the event featured well-known activists including attorney Michael Coard, poet laureate Amiri Baraka, and Monica Moorehead, who ran for president of the United States under the socialist party.

"Recently the Supreme Court has told us what we have known all along, that the cops, the prosecutor's office and the judges in this country railroaded Mumia onto death row, and they did it unlawfully," said Fernandez. "We are here today to say to the city of Philadelphia and the nation of the United States and to the world that we will not stand for life in prison without parole for Mumia Abu-Jamal."

This was the resounding cry of most of the speakers of the evening, many of who vowed to continue their pursuit of Jamal's release.

The event opened with a tribute by Pam Africa to Troy Davis, Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners.

Fernandez called on District Attorney Seth Williams to fulfill a promise, which she said was made by former D.A. Lynne Abraham whom Williams refer to as "Mama Lynne."

"In 1995, 'Mama Lynne' said that if she discovered that there was only one incident of a police officer lying in a case, she would throw out the case. I want to tell Seth Williams to make good on Abraham's promise," said Fernandez who went on to state that several officers in the Mumia case made fraudulent and false statements during the original Mumia trial.

"She [Abraham] was identified at the time as America's deadliest D.A. She was the deadliest D.A.



From left, community activist Michael Coard, Princeton scholar Cornell West, and Lennox Hinds call for the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal on Friday at the National Constitution Center as part of the "We The People" forum on human rights. (Courtesy of Philadelphia Tribune)

because she put more Black people, more Latino people, more poor people on death row than any other D.A. in America," said Fernandez.

Those gathered at the event represented a wide cross section of society including judges and a videotaped message from former state Representative David Richardson.

"They [the authorities] will continue to do what they do to Mumia, because they think we don't have any heart," said Richardson taped at a previously held rally. Richardson railed at the Fraternal Order of Police and other government agencies that he believes often discriminate against poor people of color.

"To the FOP [Fraternal Order of Police] I ain't scared of ya'll." A videotaped message from television judge, Judge Greg Mathis, was made the day after the execution of Troy Davis, who was convicted in the 1989 murder of a police officer despite the fact that, according to Mathis, seven of the nine witnesses against Davis later recanted their testimony. Davis himself maintained his innocence until his execution earlier this year.

"Despite overwhelming doubt surrounding his case, Davis never received a new trial. Davis should have received a new trial and was unjustly put to death by lethal injection. I don't like to contradict other judges, but Davis should have received a new trial," said Mathis.

The audience applauded when Mathis described the justice system as broken and called for a nationwide ban on the death

penalty. "Too often prosecutors and the parole board refuse to admit when they are wrong or have doubts about the guilt of the accused," said Mathis who said Davis was failed in every step of the judicial process.

The highlight of the evening appeared to be when Jamal himself called from prison to address the audience. The crowd stood to their feet in cheers and applause when they heard the live voice of Jamal himself who spoke to the audience via telephone.

"There has to be a mass movement against mass incarceration," said Mumia in reference to the book "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration" written by Michelle Alexander who also spoke to the crowd via videotape.

Attorney activist Michael Coard railed against the district attorney whom he repeatedly referred to as Mr. Lynne Abraham during his presentation.

"The same system which tried to murder Mumia Abu-Jamal is the same system which incarcerates more juveniles in prison to life than any other state in the United States. More than Mississippi, more than Alabama - and has more juveniles sentenced to life in prison without parole than any country in the world," said Coard.

The event marked the 30th anniversary of the incarceration of Mumia Abu-Jamal who was convicted of the murder of police officer Daniel Faulkner, and has been on Death Row since 1982.



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CITY ~ STATE ~ NATIONAL ~ WORLD

Commissioner Ron Davis and Sheriff Greg Hamilton Campaign Opening

By Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon



Ron Davis

Last week, the incumbent County Commissioner Ron Davis and the incumbent Sheriff Greg Hamilton held their official ceremony of their joint office campaign opening. Moreover, Commissioner Ron Davis and Sheriff Greg Hamilton opened up their office on Loyola Street, which, is situated in the heart

of North-East Austin. During the office campaign opening, the public had the opportunity to meet, greet, and talk with the both incumbent Commissioner Ron Davis and the incumbent Sheriff Greg Hamilton. For instance, one attendee mentioned that "both Commissioner Ron Davis and Sheriff Greg Hamilton are very dedicated to the community."

After the "greeting and meeting" the public, both incumbent Commissioner Ron Davis and incumbent Sheriff Greg Hamilton spoke to the general public gathered at the ceremony. Moreover, incumbent Ron Davis spoke about the fact that the recently passed bond would greatly help Precinct 1. Then, incumbent Sheriff Greg spoke about the various changes, in which, the sheriff office has undertaking, such as: building trust among the community

that they served. Finally, some supporters spoke about the fact both incumbent Commissioner Ron Davis and incumbent Sheriff Greg Hamilton are always helping with the needs of the community.

Moreover, both incumbent Commissioner Ron Davis and the incumbent Sheriff Greg Hamilton do have challengers. In the case incumbent Ron Davis, he has three different opponent. As a result, he has an uphill battle but believe that he can overcome due to the fact that he enjoys great support from both the public, community leaders, and from certain elected officials. For instance, incumbent Commissioner Ron Davis enjoys the support of Willie Mae Kirk, Micheal Lofton, Rudy Malveaux, and the Honorable Ada Anderson. On the other hand, incumbent Sheriff Greg Hamilton has a challenger in the Democratic primary.

Austin School Board Vote for IDEA Charter School

By Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon



Parent attending the AISD board meeting. Photo by Tsoke Chuch Adjavon

Last week, the Austin School Board meet and had the hard choice of whether or not to let the group IDEA run the "in-district" charter school at Allan Elementary and East-side Memorial High School. Throughout the night, the public expressed the fact that they disagree with the notion of letting IDEA runs these two schools. According to Carole Keeton Strayhorn the disagreement stem from the fact the "contract between IDEA Charter School and the Austin School Board was done behind close doors. Moreover, the board members needed to get off the dais and go into the community, in order, to meet and speak directly with the parents."

Prior from voting to approve IDEA charter school,

Trustee Anne Voigt mentioned that the agreement may violate 7 out of the 19 AISD rules. However, AISD lead attorney contradicted the assertion and mentioned that the contract does address the various charter rules; but in different wording. Then the Austin School board debated over the various point and eventually took a vote. Moreover, they voted 6-3 in favor to allow IDEA run the "indistrict" charter school at Allan Elementary and Eastside Memorial High School. Moreover, the six board members who voted in favor of allowing the Idea run the "in-district" charter schools were: Christine Brister, Sam Guzman, Cheryl Bradley, Lori Moya, Vincent Torres and Mark Williams. On the other hand, the three board members who oppose the vote

were: Robert Schneider, Annette LoVoi and Tamala Barksdale.

Moreover, the majority of the public and parents were upset because they felt that they were not consulted, prior from imposing the charter school upon the district. According to Carole Keeton Strayhorn, "the vote in favor for the proposed IDEA in- district charter goes against the will of democracy, due to the fact that the general public was not consulted." However, certain board members who voted in favor of this deal, believe that it would help ease the over-crowding; and also help boost the performance of the students. In addition, certain board members believe that IDEA would help AISD from losing more student to non-district charter school.

New Challenger To the County Wide and Precinct Races

By Tsoke (Chuch) Adjavon



Richard Franklin

As the filing date to run for Political office comes to a near end, there has been new faces challenging the various incumbents. From the top of the Democratic party ticket of

county wide to the precinct level, every race is being contested. Moreover, the various challenges mean that, people are heavily involved in Travis County politics. Hopefully, the various challengers will drive a high turn-out in both the primaries and also the general elections so that the people's voice can be heard.

In all the race, the challengers believe that they can bring "fresh ideas" to the table; Consequently they are challenging the methods of various incumbent. For instance: in the Constable Precinct II race, Micheal Cargill is challenging the incumbent Constable Adan Ballestro. According to Micheal Cargill the challenger, he believe that the ideal constable's office as a

more active participant in the community. If elected, he would create a Precinct website to inform and communicate with the public."

Not only is the Precinct II constable race is being contested, but also Precinct I constable race; Precinct 4; Commissioner race precinct 1 and Commissioner Precinct 3. In Commissioner race Precinct 1, the incumbent Ron Davis is facing the challenger of three other candidates, such as Arthur Sampson, Richard Franklin III, and Victor Gonzales (Pflugerville City Council Member). According to Ron Davis," he has an uphill battle but believe that he can overcome due to the fact that he enjoys great support from both the public, community leaders, and from certain elected officials."

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1332	Money Tripler Overall Odds are 1 in 4.68	\$3	01/06/12	07/04/12
1337	\$100,000 Fortune Overall Odds are 1 in 3.59	\$5	01/16/12	07/14/12
1269	Break the Bank Overall Odds are 1 in 4.99	\$2	02/29/12	08/27/12
1329	Scorching 7's Overall Odds are 1 in 3.42	\$7	02/29/12	08/27/12
1334	\$50,000 Player's Club Overall Odds are 1 in 3.78	\$5	02/29/12	08/27/12
1340	\$5,000 Winnings Overall Odds are 1 in 4.33	\$1	02/29/12	08/27/12



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PUBLIC INFORMATION ~ SPORTS

VILLAGER SPOTLIGHT

Daje Johnson burst onto the scene



Daje Johnson

By: Terry Davis

This football season was a coming out party for Daje Johnson. The Hendrickson Hawk senior running back was a relative unknown coming into the season. Last year Johnson rushed for 701 yards in his junior year behind the Texas Tech Red Raiders' freshman Kenny Williams.

This year was a different story Johnson rushed for 2,084 yards and 23 touchdowns. Johnson also had 496 receiving yards and 6 touchdowns. Johnson's best game of the season was against the Connally Cougars. Johnson finished the game with 337 rushing yards and 5 touchdowns in the 37-35 win.

Despite the individual success he has experienced; he wanted better success for the team. In his junior year the team finished with a 5-6 record and lost in the first

round of the playoffs. In his senior year his team finished with a 9-3 record and lost in the second round of the playoffs.

Johnson is a very versatile athlete. He plays running back, wide receiver, kick returner, and linebacker. As great of a runner Johnson is, he takes pride in playing the corner back position. He likes being able to take the other team's best receiver out of the game, as a lock down corner.

Football is not only sport Johnson is good in. He played basketball in his freshman year. He also played at Michael Jordan's middle and high school in North Carolina.

High school recruiting is an inexact science and most college coaches rely on a player's junior year film to evaluate their talent. The

lack of productive game film from his junior year has put some doubt into most high profile colleges from recruiting Johnson. Johnson has used this lack of publicity as a motivation for his senior year.

The preseason rankings did not include Johnson in them. Central Texas has taken notice of his accomplishments this season. Johnson has been named to second team All Texas and Central Texas Most Valuable Player.

Johnson gives his father, Clyde Johnson, all the credit for his success. Clyde played his college football at Kansas State and played professionally in the NFL with the Chicago Bears and the Kansas City Chiefs.

Athletics is not the only thing that he is focused on. He has a three point grade point average and he is looking forward to going to college to not only play football, but to get his degree. Johnson is a grounded person and enjoys hanging out with his friends when he is not on the field or in training.

Johnson has verbally committed to Texas Christian University. Johnson selected TCU, because head coach Gary Peterson is also the defensive coordinator. Peterson will allow Johnson to play defense and will also allow him to be included in some special packages on offense. Although Johnson has not signed he still plans on taking more official visits to other schools. He has already visited the California Bears.

Johnson is looking forward to proving all of his critics wrong by continuing his upward mobility and being a great team player in college. Johnson is a very selfless individual that lets his talking be done on the field and with his words.

The Texas Longhorns look to put North Carolina loss behind them

The Texas Longhorns men's basketball team would like to burn the game film against the North Carolina Tar Heels last week. Texas was out played and out hustled by the Tar Heels. The Tar Heels defeat the Longhorns 83-62. This was the worst loss of the season for the Longhorns.

Rick Barnes was less than pleased with the lack of effort

to run the designed offense. Barnes wants players on the court that wants to play the way they practiced for opponents. The Longhorns are 9-3 and winners of seven of the last eight games.

However their next opponent is looking to get another Big 12 victim under their belt. The Rice Owls comes into the game after and im-

pressive win over Texas A&M.

The Owls come into this game with an 8-4 record and have played a game against a common opponent of the Longhorns. The Owls lost to the Temple Owls 77-70 at home. The Longhorns defeat Temple 77-65 a couple of weeks ago.

Texas will host Rice at the Erwin Center on Saturday December 31 at 1:30.

EMPLOYMENT/BIDS/PROPOSALS/
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Purchasing Office

The City of Austin Purchasing Office invites you to view current bid solicitations at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/purchase/vs/p2.htm>. Vendors are encouraged to register on-line in the City's Vendor Self Service System. Once your company is registered, you will receive notifications about new bid opportunities. For additional information regarding current bid opportunities or Vendor Registration, please call the Purchasing Office at 512-974-2500. For information on the City of Austin's Minority-Owned and Women-Owned Procurement Program and the certification process, please contact the Small & Minority Business Resources Department at 512-974-7600 or visit their website at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/snbr>.



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Toros hope to keep hot this

week

By: Terry Davis

The Austin Toros have been very hot in the middle of winter. The Toros have won four of their last five games and currently holds a two game winning streak. The Toros has a 6-3 record and are looking to continuing their winning ways.

Justin Dentmon the team's leading scorer returned last week to the active roster after a tryout with the New Orleans Hornets of the NBA. Dentmon is aver-



aging 22 points in his first year with the Toros.

The San Antonio Spurs are the owners of the Toros and have the ability to assign up to three players from their current NBA roster at any time. Despite who is on the roster the Toros always play an up tempo game and always play hard for head coach Brad Jones.

The Toros hosts the Springfield Armor at the Cedar Park Center on Thursday December 29 at 1:00 pm and again on Friday December 30 at 7:30 pm.

Melanie Amaro Crowned First Winner of "X-Factor"

Special to the NNPA from the Houston Style Magazine



Melanie Amaro

It's been a long run for the "X-Factor USA" contestants and it all came to an end last night on the season finale. After a long couple months of tears, dance moves and Astro's antics, this star studded finale showed us who was America's next breakout star, and that star is 19 year old Melanie Amaro.

Melanie faced off in the with Josh Krajcik after Chris Rene was given the

third place spot. After a long pause of waiting, surprise performances from Justin Bieber, Ne-Yo, Pitbull, 50 Cent and many more, plus the suspense and task of tallying up votes, it was announced that Melanie was the winner of the competition, recipient of a \$5 million recording contract, star in a new Pepsi commercial and undoubtedly America's favorite.

When Melanie received

the news that she was the winner of the singing competition, she couldn't help but to fall to her knees and thank God, while fighting back tears. I was so incredibly happy to see Melanie win, and felt that by her response that she was definitely the best woman for this job.

To close out the show last night, Melanie performed Beyonce's "Listen" for the audience one last time before taking her official reign as the "X-Factor's first winner". Congratulations to Melanie Amaro and we all can't wait to see how you're going to turn this music industry upside down! Melanie's final words before exiting the stage: "Thank you so much! OMG, I don't know what even to say... God is good... Thank you America!"



HBCUs Plus Budget Cuts Equals Disaster!

It appears that with every proposed budget cut Congress slices just a bit more from the American Dream of equal opportunity in education. African American students, as well as other minority groups will especially feel the deep slash of cuts aimed at the federal Pell Grant.

The Pell Grant has been the means by which so many African American students have been able to further their education. And everybody knows - education is the one proven route available for Black students to become leaders in business; to improve their lives and the lives of others.

Now, Congress - charged with looking out for the best interest of all Americans - is targeting the very means by which the majority of African American students are able to access a college education. What was once considered a public good is quickly turning into a costly private investment. Higher education will soon be unattainable by those in low-to-moderate income families, creating a greater divide between the wealthy and the middle and lower class.

In a move that puts them at odds with President Obama, members of the House are proposing a reduction in the yearly maximum budgeted for Pell Grants. They are attempting to bring the current cap of \$5,550 down by a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. Eligibility requirements would become stricter, as well. It has been suggested that the annual household income limit be reduced from



\$30,000 to \$20,000. Do these Representatives - supposedly attuned to the needs of the American public - really believe that those who are barely getting by on that meager \$10,000 more each year are going to be able to fund a child's education without assistance?

Students will also be required to enroll in 15 credit hours per semester instead of 12. Working students - those who do not have the luxury of focusing 100% of their time and attention on their coursework - will have to struggle that much more to complete their education in a limited number of years. This added stress can cause a student's grades to suffer, which will in turn affect the amount of assistance they receive.

Colleges and universities that have a higher Black student population, such as Howard University, Tuskegee Institute and Texas Southern University, will also see major cuts, nearly 36 percent, in special programs and grants for students.

These cuts, which will have such a huge impact on African American education, are going to hinder the advancement and growth of businesses owned by Afri-

can Americans. Without the benefit of higher education, the strength of leadership within the African American community is going to wane.

President Obama speaks of our nation being among the best and the brightest, but slashing the funding needed to shape future African American leadership greatly undermines that claim. We cannot sit idly by and watch as the current leaders of our nation make the wrong choices for our young Black students.

I am a graduate of two Historical Black Colleges and Universities: Florida A&M University and Clark Atlanta University. Yes, we had our challenges at my alma maters, but I would not change my experience. It helped mold me into the man I am today.

As an alumnus of these esteemed institutions, I understand the importance of a solid education. It is the foundation on which a person builds a successful life. It is unconscionable and inexcusable for us to let our government limit access to educational opportunities available to African Americans. Take action today! Write your Senators and Representatives and tell them not to cut this critical funding.

African Americans have struggled throughout the years to gain equality in education at every level. Higher education should not be a privilege that is only available to the wealthy. If we truly believe that education is the key to success in life, the opportunity should be available to every American, regardless of their income level.

SPORTS



CTAA host its annual Christmas Banquet

By: Terry Davis

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Attendants enjoy the holiday cheer. Photos by Terry Davis

The Central Texas Tennis Association (CTTA) held its annual Christmas Banquet at Doris Miller Auditorium. CTTA is a non-profit organization that provides tennis as a sport for the community. The program is open to anyone from age 5 to any adult. The primary mission of CTTA is to promote the sport of tennis and to give the youth in the inner city of Austin, particularly East Austin, and the opportunity to participate in tennis that would otherwise not be able to.

Sarah Pernell is the President of CTTA. Pernell stated, "The purpose of the Christmas banquet is to give back to the community, recognize its sponsors, and award the achievements of the participants and volunteers. This is a time for me to give back to them, because the give to me all year long. CTTA does not have a permanent home and plays at 24 area sites around Austin".

"It starts with my kids they talk to me about things going on in their life. We try to talk about everything and not just tennis. We try to help with everything. Everything we do affects what the kids do throughout their life academically, emotionally and mentally. A lot of times some of the kids come to me and say I am hungry, I did not have any breakfast, and we will take care of that. We also do a science program, we do mentoring we do a lot of things that is not a part of tennis. Tennis is the hook that we get the kids involved

and it is a family sport. We try hard to get the parents involved, because if the parents get involved the more likely it is for the kids to stay involved and it benefits my parents because it is healthy", according to Pernell.

Pernell continued, "They have to maneuver their way through a lot of projects. The same with life they have to maneuver through life. My kids get to go to a lot of different places here in Austin, but that they have never been so they think they are out of town. So they need to learn how to deal outside of the bubble. Science is one of those they explore. We are always exploring, always learning something new in the thing of life. I am always trying to get them out of their area".



Tony Robertson seeks to inspire audience.

According to Ken Blakely this will be the first year that CTTA will give a scholarship to one of their program participants. Any junior who has a 2.5 grade point average and plan to continue their education whether to a college, university, trade or vocational school is eligible to apply for the scholarship. The initial amount of the scholarship will be \$500 but will vary from year to year depending upon available funds for the scholarship award.

CTTA works in conjunction with another non-profit group called Project Helping Hand. The program assist the community with housing needs, educational assistance, food, clothing and when possible, financial assistance. Glimmer of Hope is the biggest sponsor, along with Austin Parks and Recreation United States Tennis Association and Capital Area Tennis Association for CTAA.

The program is open to anyone in the community who want to learn how to play tennis or just want to join a tennis club. The program is always looking for volunteers. Volunteers are need for year-round programs, the tennis program, tutoring, and mentoring the youth. CTTA offers an annual tournament, junior play dates, adult mixers and other special events throughout the year.

Texans look to tune up against Titans

By: Terry Davis

The past two weeks the Houston Texans have looked very beat up and has losses two games to inferior teams. The Carolina Panthers and the Indianapolis Colts have mad the Texans look like the Texans of last year with the in ability to close out games.

The Texans host the Tennessee Titans who has a very slim chance of making the playoffs, but still will come into this game with something to play for. Texans has absolutely nothing to play for. The Texans can't improve their playoff position; they will be the number three seed no matter what.

The Texans will host a playoff game either on January 7 or 8. The Texans have had two record crowds this year and expect to have another record crowd for the franchise's first ever playoff game at Reliant Stadium.

If the Texans would like to play more than one game in the playoffs this year, there a couple of areas they



DeMeco Ryans look to inspire his team

will need to improve upon. The first area is the passing game. The vertical passing game has been missing the pass few games. The return to the lineup of Andre Johnson on this week should improve the passing game. The Texans can't afford to hold Johnson out another week to make sure his hamstring is 100 percent healed.

The return of Wade Phillips from his medical surgery that caused him to miss the last two games. Phillips is the architect of the number one ranked defense in the NFL. Phillips will be able to make mid game adjustments that were not made in the prior two games.

The Texans will play the Tennessee Titans on January 1, 2012 at Reliant Stadium at noon.

The second area will be the

The Cowboys look to the playoffs against the Giants

The Dallas Cowboys football season has not lacked any drama this year. In the last game against the Philadelphia Eagles after Tony Romo injured his throwing hand the Cowboys pulled Romo. At that point in the game winning or losing did not matter because the Giants had already won and the winner of the NFC East would be decided next week.

The game against the Giants next week will feature two teams that are mirrors of one another. Both team's coaches have been on the hot seat this year. Both quarterbacks have been criticized for their play. Both teams have looked very impressive at one point in this season.

Romo's throwing hand should be completely healed by Sunday. Eli Manning is looking to make another impressive run in the playoffs. The Cowboys defense has looked for impressive at times this year. The Giants would like nothing better than to knock their division rival out of the playoffs.

Felix Jones would love nothing better than to restore some shine to his play that was lost earlier this year due to an injury and the stellar play of rookie



Cowboys will look to NY for playoffs. Courtesy of the Dallas Cowboys

DeMarco Murray. DeMarcus Ware has had a great year on defense for the Cowboys, but a loss will make it all done for nothing.

The play of Victor Cruz this year had been incredible. Cruz had over 1,300 receiving yards and last week had a 99 yard touchdown reception. In the preseason Manning made a

statement that he is one of the best quarterbacks in the game today. With a win he may be able to silence some of his critics.

The NFL got it right when they moved this game to the last game of the regular season. The kickoff for this game will be 7:15 at the Giants. The winner of the loser goes home.



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