

# Newsletter of the LCHR

## Louisiana Council on Human Relations

James D. Wilson, Jr., Editor

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## Black Louisianians More Likely to be Poor

The Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus released a new study this month detailing the state of African Americans in Louisiana. Based on the report's key findings in areas of economics, education and health, the majority of blacks do not appear to be doing well at all. The nearly 200-page report was presented at the State of Black Louisiana Conference on Southern University's campus.

"When a third of this state is African American, it is important to know the state of black people," said caucus Chairwoman and state Rep. Regina Barrow, D-Baton Rouge. "If African Americans aren't doing well, the state of Louisiana is not doing well." According to the report, black people are three times more likely to experience poverty than their white counterparts. It also found that black people bring home only half the median income and per capita income of whites. "Disparities in income ... play huge roles in accounting for large gaps in wealth building (between the two races)," an abridged version of the report states.

In the area of education, black children are much more likely to be classified as having a learning disability than white children. Among older students, more black people than white people are obtaining degrees from two-year colleges, the report states. Black people, however, receive four-year degrees at half the rate of white people.

Barrow said she was especially alarmed to find that one in every 50 black students who want to go to college are not ready. She said they are often placed into remedial classes and serve as evidence of the poor educational system.

Wellness seems to be another area of concern for the black population, which faces higher cancer mortal-

ity rates than white people and which is four times more likely to contract the AIDS virus. "The prognosis for overall health of African Americans is grim," the report says.

Despite their unsatisfactory health outlook, black people are twice as likely to be uninsured, according to the report.

"The root cause (of the disparities) is poverty," Barrow said. "It's probably something dating back before slavery." Poverty is often indicative of poor education, she said. Lack of education leads to low-paying jobs, often without access to health care, thus the cycle of poverty begins and continues. Barrow said one way to break that cycle is through education. "This, to me, marks an educational tool," she said, pointing to the report. "When you don't know, you don't know how to do any better."

Barrow said she and the members of the black caucus plan to publicize and distribute their findings and policy ideas among colleagues and state government officials. The report is a joint effort by the black caucus and the Nelson Mandela School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs at Southern University, Barrow said. Authors of the report began compiling data using national and statewide Quality of Life Index reports shortly after Hurricane Gustav struck Louisiana on Sept. 1.

### REMINDER:

## LCHR Board of Directors Quarterly Meeting

April 18, 10am  
3867 Hwy. 167, Plaisance, La.

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## **Louisiana's Incarceration Rate is the Highest in the Nation**

One out of every 55 Louisiana residents is behind bars, a higher incarceration rate than any other state, according to research released today by a Washington, D.C., nonprofit group.

One in 26 Louisiana adults is under correctional control, if probation and parole are included, the group found.

The Pew Center for the States study of 2007 U.S. Census data found that Louisiana's incarceration rate spiked by 272 percent since 1982. That rate of increase is far from the nation's highest of 357 percent in North Dakota, and not far from Mississippi's 256 percent increase. Neighbor states Texas and Arkansas have seen increases around 200 percent.

The Pew group argued that, particularly during a recession, rising costs of incarceration should push states to reduce prison spending by moving more non-violent inmates out of prisons and into community-based parole and probation systems. One researcher pointed to Texas, where he said a recent shift in the politics of corrections has led to policy changes and a leveling off of that state's incarceration rate.

"I think what we're seeing is that the politics of this issue are changing," said Adam Gelb, director of Pew's public safety performance project. "The old question used to be, 'How can we demonstrate we're tough on crime?' More and more, policy-makers from both sides of the aisle are asking a better question, which is: 'How do we get taxpayers a better return on their dollars?'"

Gelb said Texas had saved \$500 million by expanding parole and probation, while stopping the construction of new prisons.

Louisiana's prison's chief said he's thinking along the same lines -- but is unable to back a big shift toward parole and probation, partly because those parts of his agency are already overburdened with work.

"Some states are paroling people out, but we're not in a position to do that, in my opinion," said Jimmy LeBlanc, the state's corrections secretary. "Probation

and Parole is already overtasked, and releasing even the best prisoners would not be good. We're kind of in a holding pattern as far as that is concerned."

However, LeBlanc said he's planning to convene a new committee within the next few weeks to consider how Louisiana could improve the way it handles criminals. He said the panel, to be chaired by state Supreme Court Chief Justice Kitty Kimball, would include prosecutors, defense lawyers, judges and lawmakers.

The Pew group found that it costs the state \$39.75 to keep an offender behind bars for one day. The figure is \$2.70 per day for those on probation or parole.

## **The State of Higher Education**

The steady increasing costs of higher education, not just in Louisiana, but nationally, requires our attention. Measuring Up 2008 is the most recent in the series of national and state-by-state report cards for higher education that was inaugurated in 2000. The key findings this year reveal that the nation and most of the fifty states are making some advances in preparing students for college and providing them with access to higher education. However, other nations are advancing more quickly than the United States; we continue to slip behind other countries in improving college opportunities for our residents. In addition, large disparities in higher education performance by race/ethnicity, by income, and by state limit our nation's ability to advance the educational attainment of our workforce and citizenry — and thereby remain competitive globally.

Measuring Up 2008 focuses exclusively on results, outcomes, and improvement. State performance is evaluated, compared, and graded in six key areas: Preparation, Participation, Affordability, Completion, Benefits and Learning. In these categories, Louisiana earned the grades of D-, F, F, C+, D and I respectively. All states received an I in Learning due to insufficient data allowing meaningful state comparisons. This report, made possible by grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education, highlights Louisiana need for improvement in the education of our future.

## **Help for Elderly & Disabled**

On March 12, 2009 Jackie and Bruce Blaney of the Supported Living Network, held a forum at the Scotlandville Library entitled "A Reversal of Direction: Forced Group Living and Day-Time Institutions." They are working towards creating a petition to the State of Louisiana. The moral principle which drives the group's petition is simple: People with disabilities and older adults should be supported to enjoy lives at least as good as respected members of our community.

However, the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) Resource Allocation Model (RAM) exclusively targets the costs of in-home personal care services and does not assess costs, quality or waste in nursing homes, group homes or sheltered workshops. Also, the DHH/RAM cuts in day-time support hours will force people into daytime institutions ("workshop" or "day habilitation facilities") in order to receive sufficient hours of support. In addition, the cuts in elderly and disabled personal care services will force older adults into nursing homes and greatly under-serve others who will struggle to remain in their communities. In contrast, nursing home, group home and sheltered workshop providers are completely exempted from the DHH/RAM cuts in hours. The network is calling on the Administration of Governor Bobby Jindal to do the following:

1. Impose and enforce a Moratorium on the implementation of the Resource Allocation Model by the Department of Health and Hospitals and all Program Offices under the jurisdiction of that Department, including the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities and the Office on Aging and Adult Services.
2. Require the Department of Health and Hospitals to undertake a system wide assessment of cost, quality and cost-efficiency, to include nursing homes, group homes, sheltered workshops and day habilitation facilities. (The Human Services Research Institute's Sustainable Futures Planning Framework is one example of a proven and effective system assessment.)
3. Require the Department of Health and Hospitals to develop an implementation plan and time table for implementing the recommendations of the above system assessment.

Thus far the network is sponsored by The Social Justice Council of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge; Change Corps of Greater Baton Rouge; LA Alliance of Direct Support Professionals.

At the end of the day, the group's goal is to allow the elderly and disabled to continue to live "typical" lives in their home thereby continuing to be a part of the communities, by attending churches, working and developing relationships with those in the community.

## **Fixing Educational System will Reform Juvenile Justice**

LCHR has long had an interest in improving juvenile justice in Louisiana. Several years ago we called for closing one of the state's worst juvenile facilities. Cravins, currently Mayor of Opelousas, was well known in the Louisiana Senate as a champion of juvenile justice, helping in 2003 get juvenile justice Act 1225 passed. He was one of the main speakers at a Juvenile Justice Conference held March 12. He said that we would not be having this conference now if Louisiana had a good educational system.

A group of 140 persons gathered for the Louisiana Interchurch Juvenile Justice Conference at the Catholic Charities Complex in Baton Rouge. Dr. Mary Liv-ers, head of the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, claimed that the "Corrections Model" is not appropriate for juveniles. She is now working on the "Missouri Model," one of the best in the country. Collis Temple, former LSU basketball star, who operates twenty-five group residential homes, recommended that recovered criminals be recruited to help juvenile offenders. He opposed going out of state for help in improving juvenile justice. Dana Kaplan, director of the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, emphasized that the number of children in secure care should be reduced, since about half now in secure care are there for non-violent offenses.

## **State of Black Lafayette Forum**

It will take a combination of more personal responsibility, more leadership from schools and authorities and increased involvement by the entire community to address some of the major issues facing blacks in Lafayette.

That was the message Saturday during the first State of Greater Black Lafayette Forum, which brought together panelists from all walks of life to discuss education and criminal justice in the city's black community. Instead of just a discussion, those involved said they want the forum to be a springboard to more tangible action. "We know that this forum is not a means to an end. It is a beginning," said attorney John Milton, one of the forum's moderators.

One of the major topics of discussion was who bears responsibility for educating children - their parents and other family members, or the public school system. A quick show of hands from the crowd at the Clifton Chenier Center indicated that most there felt that burden lies with the family, but some panelists said a combination of both is necessary. "The perceived lack of support from parents does not excuse the public school system from the responsibility of educating a child," said Cajundome Director and education advocate Greg Davis.

Davis said he believes school leaders need to work hard to establish strong relationships with parents to make sure both are on the same page when it comes to how to best educate students. "Right now, there is a tremendous gap between the two," he said.

When it comes to working in the classroom, former educator Patricia Colbert Cormier said teachers must recognize that a one-size-fits-all strategy will not work with students who have a variety of learning styles. "The question is what motivates the child," Cormier said. "You have to have something to arouse their curiosity. You have to make it interesting."

Some education panelists also questioned whether there are lower standards for black students in school, as well as the idea of expelling or suspending students for seemingly minor offenses.

**The LCHR / BRCHR is Online at:**

**[www.brchr.org](http://www.brchr.org)**

## **New Orleans Man Shot by Police Twelve Shots were in the Back**

On New Year's Day in New Orleans, twenty-two-year-old Adolph Grimes, III was killed by nine undercover police officers in a shooting just down the block from his grandmother's house. Grimes was shot at forty-eight times and hit fourteen times. Twelve of those rounds, according to the coroner's report, were to the back.

Police contend that Grimes shot at them. They simply returned fire, killing him.

Grimes had just left his grandmother's house. His grandmother and father say he was waiting for his cousin in a rented SUV at 3a.m. when gunfire erupted.

The police officers were part of narcotics task force patrolling the city New Year's morning.

Adolph Grimes was a New Orleans native who had evacuated during Hurricane Katrina and settled in Houston, Texas. He had been a good high school student and had no criminal record. He rented the SUV on New Year's Eve and drove to New Orleans, a five hour drive, to be with his family on New Year's, which was a family tradition. His father, Adolph Grimes Jr., said he made it with a second to spare. Three hours later, he was dead.

Police say they found a handgun on Grimes and a shotgun in the back of the SUV. Grimes had a permit to carry a handgun. It is unclear whether the handgun found by the police was registered to Grimes or not.

In fact, many things about the shooting of Grimes remain unclear. The family says the New Orleans police have not told them anything. All they want are answers. They contacted the FBI shortly after the shooting, feeling that the New Orleans police were involved in wrongdoing.

Patricia, Grimes' mother said, "It was like someone was a murderer, and they finally caught him. I ain't ever seen anything like this. And the worst part about it was I had to wait for the 5 o'clock news to find out my son was murdered."

The family's attorney, Robert Jenkins, said, "We know the FBI is going to do a fully complete investigation. We are hoping that criminal charges will be brought against all of these officers for the execution in this case."

The family does not believe the official story that they were told. They do not believe that Grimes shot at the undercover police officers. The family believes police shot him while he ran for his life. They are confident that the truth will come out in the investigation now that the FBI are involved and that Grimes name will be cleared.

Over a week after Adolph Grimes was killed, an official representative from the New Orleans Police Department had yet to visit and explain the incident to the family.

Adolph Grimes death in New Orleans seems to mirror that of Oscar Grant, who was also killed early on New Year's Day in Oakland, California. Grant, a twenty-two-year-old butcher, was shot once in the back by a BART police officer while he was being restrained by another. At least two videos were shot of the incident, the clearest of which has been played millions of times on the internet and on countless news broadcasts. Grant died from the shot.

Johannes Mehserle, the BART officer shown in the video shooting Grant, resigned and was eventually charged with murder.

Public outrage over the Oakland shooting led to protests and demonstrations, which eventually turned into rioting and 105 arrests with 300 businesses sustaining damage.

Two police-related killings. Two cities. Two young men. Both cities' authorities slow to provide answers for the families. And those families simply want to know the answer to one question: Why?

**Stories or ideas for the newsletter  
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# **Thirty-Six Years of Solitude**

## **Why is Bobby Jindal's Administration Determined to keep Albert Woodfox in Permanent Lockdown?**

What's left of Albert Woodfox's life now lies in the hands of a federal appeals court in New Orleans. The sixty-two-year-old Woodfox has spent over thirty-six years in a 6-by-9-foot cell at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola.

With the exception of a few brief months last year, Woodfox has served nearly all of his time there in solitary confinement, out of contact with other prisoners, and locked in his cell twenty-three hours a day. By most estimates, he and his codefendant, Herman Wallace, have spent more time in solitary than any other inmates in U.S. history.

Woodfox and Wallace are members of a triad known as the "Angola 3" - three prisoners who spent decades in solitary confinement after being accused of prison murders and convicted on questionable evidence. Before they were isolated from other inmates, the trio, which included a prisoner named Robert King, had organized against conditions in what was considered "the bloodiest prison in America." Their supporters believe that their activism, along with their ties to the Black Panther Party, motivated prison officials to scapegoat the inmates.

Over the years, human rights activists worldwide have rallied around the Angola 3, pointing to them as victims of a flawed and corrupt justice system. Though King managed to win his release in 2001, after his conviction was overturned, Woodfox and Wallace haven't been so lucky. Amnesty International has called their continued isolation "cruel, inhuman and degrading," charging that their treatment has "breached international treaties which the USA has ratified, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture."

Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., chair of the House Judiciary Committee, has taken a keen interest in the case and traveled to Angola last spring to visit with Woodfox and Wallace. "This is the only place in North America that people have been incarcerated like this for 36 years," said Conyers.

Meanwhile, the prevailing powers in Louisiana, from Angola's warden to the state's attorney general, are bent on keeping Woodfox and Wallace right where they are. Governor Bobby Jindal, has thus far steered clear of the controversial case. Conyers, though, who has spoken with Jindal about Woodfox and Wallace, says the governor seemed "open-minded."

For his part, Conyers is optimistic that Woodfox's fortunes, at least, could soon change. On March 3, Nick Trenticosta, who is one of Woodfox's lawyers, urged the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals to uphold the decision of a district court judge in Baton Rouge, who last July overturned Woodfox's conviction for the 1972 murder of an Angola prison guard.

The murder, for which Wallace was also charged, occurred while Woodfox was already serving a sentence for armed robbery. Trenticosta, a longtime Louisiana death penalty attorney who heads the New Orleans-based Center for Equal Justice, argued that his client received inadequate representation from his court-appointed attorneys when he was retried in 1998, as well as during his original trial in 1973. Better lawyers, he argued, would have shown that Woodfox's conviction was quite literally bought by the state, which based its case on jailhouse informants who were rewarded for their testimony. The primary eyewitness to the murder received special privileges and the promise of a pardon. One of the corroborating witnesses was legally blind, while another was on the anti-psychotic drug Thorazine; both were subsequently granted furloughs.

Woodfox's lawyers also made the case that the state failed to provide his previous defense attorneys with crucial information about the witnesses - ensuring that they were unable to cross-examine them effectively - and lost physical evidence, which was inconclusive at best, and possibly favorable to the defendant.

Depending on how the appeals court decides, Woodfox may get a chance at another trial, where this time he'll be represented by a team of highly skilled lawyers. If given that opportunity, Trenticosta believes, he and his colleagues will go beyond just refuting the evidence

that led to their client's conviction.

They intend to reveal the identities of the real murderers of prison guard Brent Miller, who, Trenticosta says, are now dead. He says his team has "numerous witnesses who saw" the murder and others "who have good information." (Asked for the names of the witnesses and others with specific knowledge of the murder, Trenticosta said he would reveal their identities only if there is another trial.)

The state's case against overturning Woodfox's conviction was argued by Kyle Duncan, a University of Mississippi law school professor who suggested that Woodfox's previous defense attorneys, despite what Trenticosta might say, had every opportunity to cross-examine the witnesses, so no new trial is warranted.

But Duncan is little more than a mouthpiece; the force behind the state's appeal is Louisiana Attorney General James "Buddy" Caldwell Jr., a former prosecutor, who moonlights as an Elvis impersonator. Since his election in 2007, Caldwell has fought efforts by Woodfox and Wallace to overturn their convictions.

After Woodfox's conviction was overturned last year, Caldwell declared, "We will appeal this decision to the 5th Circuit. If the ruling is upheld there, I will not stop and we will take this case as high as we have to. I will retry this case myself ... I oppose letting him out with every fiber of my being because this is a very dangerous man."

Caldwell shares this position with Angola's warden, Burl Cain, who has likened the Black Panthers to the KKK, and is adamant that the aging Woodfox is and always will be a menace to society by virtue of his political beliefs. Cain has said that Woodfox is "locked in time with the Black Panther revolutionary actions from way back when."

It will be at least six weeks, and possibly many months, before the three-judge appellate panel rules on the appeal. If it concurs with the district court's decision, Woodfox will be retried or released. If it overrules the lower court, his conviction will remain in place, and his defense team will have to go back to the drawing board.

Louisiana's attorney general Buddy Caldwell has made clear that he will go to great lengths to keep Woodfox

and Wallace in prison - and preferably in solitary confinement. If need be, he says, he will personally prosecute Woodfox for a third time for the Miller murder. And if at any point it looks as if Woodfox will be returned to society - whether on bail or through exoneration - Caldwell has said he intends to launch a prosecution on what he claims are several 40-year-old charges of rape and robbery for which the prisoner was never prosecuted.

Good luck, says one attorney, who notes that Caldwell is referring to an arrest record from the 1960s. Such charges were then commonly used to hold black men, but seldom stuck because they had literally been pulled off a list of existing unsolved rape cases.

After Caldwell, the man who appears most determined to keep Woodfox and Wallace behind bars is Angola's current warden, Burl Cain. Cain has made clear that one of the reasons he thinks Woodfox and Wallace are dangerous is his belief that the prisoners are moles for the Black Panthers, who might take the opportunity to start a revolution in the prison if they are released from solitary. If they're let out of prison altogether, Cain suggests, they will take their militant agenda to the streets.

Asked to assume, for a moment, that Woodfox was not guilty of killing Miller, Cain insisted that his treatment of the prisoner would remain unchanged.

"I would still keep him in CCR [solitary confinement]," he said. "I still know that he is still trying to practice Black Pantherism, and I still would not want him walking around my prison because he would organize the young new inmates. He has to stay in a cell while he is at Angola."

Asked to define "Black Pantherism," Cain replied, "I have no idea. I have never been one. I know they hold their fists up, and I know that I read about them, and they advocated violence ... Maybe they are nice, good people, but he is not."

Pressed him on why Woodfox was dangerous, Cain grew angry. "What can I say? He's bad. He's dangerous. I believe it. He will hurt you ... They better not let him out of prison."

For more on the Alfred Woodfox case, please visit:  
<http://www.sfbayview.com/2009/36-years-of-solitude/>

## **N.O. Public Housing Complaints Residents Cite Lack of Basic Maintenance, Recreation, and Social Services**

As the Housing Authority of New Orleans spends millions of dollars redeveloping the city's four biggest public housing developments, residents of Iberville -- the city's only remaining full-size housing complex -- complain that the agency has skimmed on basic maintenance, recreation and social services.

Though HANO has never spent a fortune on such programs, a little money can go a long way in improving quality of life, and the agency cut spending down to almost nothing before its fiscal year started in October, said Resident Council President Kim Piper.

That month, she signed a budget agreement with HANO that she said provided just \$12,000 for the operation of her office in the Iberville community center. Social programs accounted for just \$3,600 of that total. That compares with between \$78,000 and \$100,000 spent on similar programs before Hurricane Katrina, when the development served about the same number of families. Then, in January, HANO announced that it would not finance the complex's annual eight-week summer camp for children.

HANO has contested the budget figures, supplying budget documents that showed the agency spending \$44,000 on such programs -- more than four times the amount Piper cited. The cancellation of the summer camp was "a miscommunication or misinterpretation," said Karen Cato-Turner, the administrative receiver appointed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"We are also striving to avoid duplication of services already available in the city," Turner wrote in an e-mail. As a result, the agency had executed contracts with nonprofit groups across town to provide resident services, she said, attaching a list of the agencies HANO has partnered with.

Piper and other residents said they never received services from any of the organizations except for the Boys and Girls Club and the nonprofit Great Expectations, which provides a few after-school tutors on weekdays.

HANO's new budget included some services that Piper

said were dropped because of a lack of money, including a dance program and senior-citizen activities that she said she had to cut after Katrina.

Other items on the budget -- \$5,000 for adult education and \$1,500 for transportation -- have never been provided to complex residents, Piper said. On her own, she takes the elderly to the pharmacy or the supermarket because there's nothing but corner stores nearby. She would like to do GED prep and regular transportation, but needs tutors and access to a vehicle.

Last week, a few days after a reporter's inquiries, a HANO representative visited Piper, a new \$44,000 budget agreement in hand. She's glad to receive the additional money, she said, but was confused as to why her budget suddenly ballooned fourfold halfway through the fiscal year.

Marcellus White is also skeptical. Known merely as "Sensei" around the development, White has led the Iberville Karate Academy for a decade but hasn't been able to buy uniforms for his students or attend tournaments since last summer. "If we have a budget, tell us. If not, not. The smoke and mirrors have to stop," he said.

To the 630 Iberville families who pay "HANO rent" -- up to one-third of their income -- to rent apartments here, it seems inevitable that these brick buildings will also tumble down someday soon. But for now, they have nowhere else to go, they say.

The Iberville's location, blocks from the French Quarter, also makes sense for many of the residents, most of whom lack cars. Since the storm, many are elderly and disabled former residents of other, now-demolished developments who would find it hard to use a Section 8 housing voucher because they're on fixed incomes and can't afford to pay utilities.

Those who are employed typically work minimum-wage jobs in the Quarter or in nearby hospitals. "We have construction workers, janitors, cooks and electricians: You name it, they're back here," said Shack Brown, who was raised in the Iberville by a mother who worked as a nursing assistant and now returns there to volunteer as head of the Iberville's drill team.

Last week, as the mother and her toddler passed the

Marais Street courtyard, two children raced toward them on tricycles, with a grandmother close behind them. But just before they got to Iberville Street, the young racers steered sharply to the right, holding their noses, to avoid a large puddle of sewage that has been there for months, residents say.

On each side of the puddle, tire tracks mark the route of squad cars from the New Orleans Police Department, which has recently increased its patrols of the complex, where seven people have been killed since January 2008. Despite that, HANO stopped paying overtime to NOPD officers to patrol the development in the fall of 2008 and the development's police substation remained shuttered, said HANO counsel Wayne Woods.

After a spate of shootings in January, the 1st District commander placed some officers at the Iberville substation, Woods said. But unlike before the storm, residents don't have a phone number to call when they see a fight that might get violent. Residents can be a big help when someone is killed, said karate teacher White, an NOPD officer who worked out of the substation for years. "Within 15 minutes we would know exactly who did it," he said.

In December, HUD's inspector general found that six of nine randomly selected public-housing units "were not in good repair." At the Iberville, the report specifically noted a long-standing sewer leak in a stairwell and a "serious rat infestation." In a written response to the inspector general, HANO said it has implemented inspections to make sure the units were acceptable.

"It should be noted," HANO said in its response, "that the Iberville development is obsolete and in need of major rehabilitation. Currently, HANO is managing major redevelopment plans at four public-housing sites. Once construction is under way at those sites, plans will be implemented to address the Iberville site."

That frustrates Thaddeus Delay, who heads up the Iberville unit of the Boy and Girls Club of Southeastern Louisiana. His nonprofit is financed separately, without any money from HANO. But Delay, known around the development as "Mr. T," sees how the neglect of the development makes families there feel as though no one cares about them. "I think HANO has pretty much washed its hands of these bricks. And the people inside are stuck," Delay said.

A continual sore point for many residents is the preponderance of vacant apartments. Nearly 200 of the development's apartments have been repaired but sit empty, frequented by drug addicts, dealers and prostitutes even during the day. Residents say that because of the extreme shortage of affordable rentals in the city, they've tried to get their cousins, grandmothers or friends into the complex but HANO employees have told them that the agency's public-housing waiting list is closed.

Since Katrina, the agency hasn't housed anyone from a waiting list or anyone else who wasn't a HANO resident before the storm, Cato-Turner said. Nearly four years after Hurricane Katrina, the public-housing waiting list containing thousands of names -- many probably outdated -- has not been addressed, she said. But the agency is preparing to hire a contractor to produce an accurate list, she said.

Cato-Turner said the apartments remain vacant because most HANO residents "don't have a great desire to live in the Iberville." Piper disagrees. Despite its problems, Iberville would be full in no time if HANO was using its waiting list as it was intended, she said. "Trust me, there would be a stampede."

When there isn't enough for Iberville children to do, resident Elaine Robiho, 62, can tell immediately. "The kids run wild, doing nothing, pitching rocks at cars and doing dumb stuff," she said.

Though HANO has cut back on such efforts, New Orleans Hornets basketball star Peja Stojakovic in January financed the installation of a full-size aqua-blue basketball court near the Iberville community center. On a recent night, a few blocks from the recent shootings, the Iberville Street courtyard was filled with children playing basketball, riding skateboards and running.

Robiho basked in the waning sun in front of her home of twenty-one years, where she raised her daughter and now baby-sits her grandson Kyren, five, while her daughter works at a nearby Family Dollar store and attends nursing school.

"This court is very peaceful, and this apartment's been a gem since I got it," she said.

The reason is simple: "Busy people don't make trouble," she said.

# Newsletter of the BRCHR

## Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations

Tamikia Y. Jones, Assistant Editor

Volume 44, Issue 2

### Amendment to the BRCHR Bylaws

At the annual meeting of the BRCHR in June 2009, a motion will be made to amend the bylaws to include a "Membership Secretary." The bylaws require that the membership be informed of this action at least 20 days prior to the meeting. We hereby officially notify the membership. The details of the change can be found on the web site [www.brchr.org](http://www.brchr.org). There is a button, "BRCHR bylaws" which brings up the (1) current bylaws, (2) the proposed changes and (3) the final form the bylaws will take if passed by the membership.

### BRCHR Website Update

Richard Haymaker, Membership Secretary for both the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations and LCHR, urges readers to visit the website [www.brchr.org](http://www.brchr.org). Recently the former LCHR website had to be removed. Webmaster Haymaker is constructing and re-organizing a new joint LCHR-BRCHR website. LCHR documentation can now be found on the current BRCHR website. Important for members of the BRCHR is the proposed amendment to the by-laws calling for the officers of the council to include the Membership Secretary; and additional duties of the Membership Secretary are proposed to include website maintenance. At the annual BRCHR meeting to be scheduled in June 2009, this by-laws amendment will be voted on, and this is the official notice to BRCHR members.

Recent forums are posted, as well as newsletters 2004-2008, humanitarian awards made 1978-2008, chronicle (history) of LCHR 1964-1999, the BRCHR, mission statement, BRCHR by-laws, a list of the BRCHR Board of Directors, events scheduled, description of The Advocacy Coalition, and an invitation to join the human relations council. A description of the holdings of the LSU Library of the archives of the BRCHR may be accessed from our website.

Haymaker and long-time Board member Paul Burns have recently re-organized the 15 active LCHR Position Papers, and for the first time ever they are on our website. Position Paper titles are: 1. Affirmative Action, 2. The Death Penalty, 3. Dialogue on Race Relations in America, 4. Prison Reform, 5. Poverty, 6. Labor Organizations, 7. Police-Community Relations, 8. Women's Rights, 9. Against Discrimination on the Basis of Ethnic/National Origin, 10. Formation of Local Councils of LCHR, 11. Education, 12. The Disenfranchisement of Felons, 13. Labor, 14. Institutional Racism and the Jena Affair, 15. The War on Drugs. The dates of the latest revision of each Position Paper are shown.

Many nonprofit organizations like LCHR have Position Papers. They are particularly useful when a member of LCHR wishes to write a letter to an editor or a politician or to testify for or against legislation. The Position Paper states what the official position of LCHR is, which may provide additional needed information, and the member may present the Position Paper in full or in part, or the member may use the Position Paper to strengthen her/his own exposition. Permission to use the Position Papers in this way need not be sought.

### LA Swift Transit Growing

The Louisiana transit service born in the wake of Hurricane Katrina continues to grow at a whirlwind force. The service is still being provided three years after the storm. The program behind as a pilot program to give displaced New Orleanians a free ride from Baton Rouge to help rebuild the area. Since its' onset, LA Swift has evolved into a fee-based service that continues its recovery mission. To date, LA Swift has provided about 547,000 rides. LA Swift now offers a park-and-ride service at The Home Depot parking lots on Highland Road in Baton Rouge and on Highway 30 in Gonzales. The fee to ride is \$6 one way and \$12 for a round-trip. For more details, visit [www.laswift.com](http://www.laswift.com) or call (877) 947-9438.

## **CATS**

In late February, RJ Goebel, Director of Planning for Capital Region Planning Commission which oversees CATS, requested a letter of support for a grant application. The grant application is designed to support and bring mass transit to a new level for the Baton Rouge, Louisiana regional area. Some of the potential projects are new rolling stock that will improve air quality, new and improved passenger terminals, shelters, and benches and improved security projects, all of which are greatly needed for our area. All of the projects combined will benefit the transportation infrastructure, improve our air quality, provide better quality of life and support economic development for this area.

## **CAWS**

During the February meeting, BRCHR adopted CAWSC as a special project. Previously, Istrouma High School was BRCHR's special project. CAWSC, Community Association for the Welfare of School Children, is a non-profit United Way assisted agency. CAWSC was established in January 1959 and incorporated on December 10, 1963 and is under the leadership of a Board of Directors with the Executive Director reporting to the Board. The association is staffed by paid employees and volunteers and has partnerships or collaborations with various agencies.

CAWSC's mission is to provide academic reinforcement and enrichment activities to school-aged children in East Baton Rouge Parish in partnership with their families and collaboration with other agencies. The Community Association for the Welfare of School Children currently provides wholesome constructive recreational activities, help in the development of accuracy reading and writing at an early age, and provides clothing for those in need, all of which increase a child's chance for success.

Their vision is to assist parents by emphasizing family values and reinforcing them in nurturing environments, inspire strong ownership and commitment among our membership and community, and expand services to surrounding parishes, thereby improving opportunities for children. For more information on the organization, visit [www.cawsc.org](http://www.cawsc.org)

## **LSU Bus Service Out for Bids**

In February, LSU sought bids for a new and expanded bus service that features plenty of technology perks and more environmentally friendly fuels, university officials said. Out of nearly 3,000 LSU student survey participants, fifty-two percent said they use LSU buses often. More than fifty-two percent described the existing bus service as "poor" or "needing improvement." Only seven percent felt the service was "good."

The move is in response to large price increases by the Capital Area Transit System, CATS, that has served the LSU area for more than thirty years, and the desire to modernize bus services, according to Gary Graham, LSU director of parking, traffic and transportation. Last summer, CATS upped its hourly price for bus services at LSU from about \$60 to about \$83, Graham said. CATS officials have cited increased diesel fuel costs as the primary reason for the changes. LSU had to cut back from twenty-one CATS buses to only twelve in recent months, severely limiting bus services on and around campus.

The goal is to select a new bus system contractor in March and have the services in place before the beginning of the fall semester. LSU hopes to use twenty-five buses for its new system.

Students currently pay a \$44-per-semester fee for buses. Any changes will not be known until a new contractor is chosen. LSU Student Government President Colorado Robertson felt as though students would accept some small fee increases as long as the bus services significantly improve. But any fee changes would go before the students for a vote.

Georgia-based Solstice Transportation Consulting put together a "Mass Transit Operations Master Plan" for LSU that was completed in December. Alternative fuel options include biodiesel fuels, diesel/electric hybrids and compressed natural gas, according to the report. The report encourages more expanded routes into downtown, the Garden District and the Perkins Road/South Acadian areas. If one-fourth of LSU students reduced their driving by ten miles per day because of bus services, those students would easily reduce their driving by about ten million miles per year, the report states.

**Membership Information**

**(for fiscal year beginning July 1, 2009)**

**Single Membership ..... \$15.00**

**Family Membership ..... \$20.00**

**Student / Low Income Membership ..... \$1.00**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone** \_\_\_\_\_

**(Baton Rouge area residents make checks payable to BRCHR,  
other residents make checks payable to LCHR.)**

**Send all payment to:  
Richard Haymaker  
254 Nelson Drive  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808**

Newsletter of the Louisiana Council on  
Human Relations and the Baton Rouge  
Council on Human Relations  
254 Nelson Drive  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

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