

Howard fundraising speaks to HBCU support

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — The news for Historically Black Colleges and Universities has not been great of late. For instance, Fisk University administrators, amid a deepening financial crisis, have announced that they are ending all of the university's NCAA athletic programs after this year.

Meanwhile, the 142-year-old institution, which graduated such notables as W.E.B. DuBois, Florida Congressman Alcee Hastings, poet Nikki Giovanni, former Washington Mayor Marion Barry and historian John Hope Franklin, is struggling to hold on to a multimillion dollar art collection the school was hoping to use to bail it out of its financial doldrums.

Additionally, the *Wall Street Journal* recently published a commentary by Abigail Thernstrom, vice-chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and her husband, Harvard historian Stephan Thernstrom, that asked, "should we still support an institution of higher education that is less than 1 percent Black?"

Their question has been answered with a resounding yes by much of the nation and tens of thousands of



(L-R) Corey Griffin, Microsoft director of International Development; Jannette Dates, dean of Howard's Johnson School of Communications; Dorothy Leavell, NNPA foundation chairwoman and John B. Smith Sr., NNPA chairman cut the ribbon on the NNPA/Microsoft Converged Media Lab at Howard. Microsoft recently refurbished the 6-year-old university lab with all-new computer equipment and software.

Howard University graduates who have made the university's recently completed \$272 million capital fundraising campaign the most successful in history for any African-American institution.

Howard exceeded its five-year fundraising goal by \$22 million. The university's campaign, which began in 2002, also exceeded a number of its initial objectives.

For instance, the school had hoped for 47 gifts of more than \$1 million. It nearly doubled the amount with 81 gifts of over \$1 million, totaling \$182 million.

One of the campaign's more striking success stories was the response from the university's alumni.

According to Howard University President H. Patrick Swygert and Virgil Ecton, vice president for

University Advancement, the graduates contributed 36 percent of the donations received. Alumni ranked just

second in giving to the 40 percent contributed by corporations.

"There was significant support from alumni and a major increase in overall giving from this key university constituent group," said Ecton, who spearheaded the campaign.

Ecton, one of the nation's premier fundraisers, called the campaign "phenomenal."

It certainly answered the critics who say African-Americans won't support their institutions.

Ecton noted that the number of alumni who gave increased dramatically from 12 percent to 17 percent. In fact, the giving by Howard alumni far exceeded the national average for alumni participation for all colleges and universities, which is 12.4 percent.

"There is so much to be happy about with the way the campaign was executed," Ecton said. Additionally, the

university received 100 percent support from its board of trustees.

Howard University's president praised Time Warner chairman Richard D. Parsons and Renee Higginbotham-Brooks, chairman and CEO of the investment firm Block Capital Inc. The two Howard board of trustee members chaired the campaign.

"I deeply value the contribution of each individual, foundation and organization and corporation to the campaign and to the success that we are enjoying, Swygert said. "This campaign has played a decisive role in placing the university on a solid financial footing, and its importance cannot be underestimated."

Swygert said he wants to see the university double its now \$532 million endowment, which is more than triple the \$144 million when he took office in 1995.

Half of New Orleans' poorest still displaced after Katrina

By Bill Quigley
Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW ORLEANS (NNPA) — Government reports confirm that half of the working poor, elderly and disabled who lived in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina have not returned. Because of critical shortages in affordable housing, few expect tens of thousands of poor and working people to ever be able to return home.

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) reports that Medicaid, medical assistance for aged, blind, disabled and low-wage working families is down 46 percent from pre-Katrina levels. DHH reports that before Hurricane Katrina there were 134,249 people in New Orleans on Medicaid.

February 2008 reports show participation down to 72,211. That's a loss of 62,038 since Katrina. Medicaid is down dramatically in every category: by 50 percent for the aged, 53 percent for the blind, 48 percent for the

disabled and 52 percent for children.

The Social Security Administration documents that fewer than half the elderly are back. New Orleans was home to 37,805 retired workers who received Social Security before Katrina; now there are 18,940 — a 50 percent reduction.

Before Katrina, there were 12,870 disabled workers receiving Social Security Disability in New Orleans, now there are 5,350 — 59 percent less. Before the storm there were 9,425 widowers in New Orleans receiving Social Security survivor's benefits; now there are less than half, 4,140.

Children of working-class families have not returned. Public school enrollment in New Orleans was 66,372 before Katrina. The latest figures are 32,149 — a 52 percent reduction.

Public transit numbers are down 75 percent since Katrina. Prior to Katrina there were frequently over 3

million rides per month. In January 2008, there were 732,000 rides. The Regional Transit Authority says the reduction reflects that New Orleans has far fewer poorer, transit-dependent residents.

Figures from the Louisiana Department of Social Services show the number of families receiving food stamps in New Orleans has dropped from 46,551 in June of 2005 to 22,768 in January 2008. Welfare numbers are also down. The Louisiana Families Independence Temporary Assistance Program was down from 5,764 recipients (mostly children) in July 2005 to 1,412 in the latest report.

While there are no precise figures on the racial breakdown of the poor and working people still displaced, indications strongly suggest they are overwhelmingly African-American. The Black population of New Orleans has plummeted by 57 percent, while the city's Black (See Katrina, Page 10)

Staten Island police facing felony for hurting teenager

By Saeed Shabazz
Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA) — They finally faced the press. And the two Staten Island police officers who on Halloween night decided to take a 14-year-old for a ride to teach him a lesson, remained silent.

His crime had been throwing eggs at cars. Thomas Eliassen, 28, and Richard Danese, 29, both residents of Staten Island and on the force since 2004, have been charged with unlawful imprisonment in the first-degree, a Class E felony which carries a maximum of four years in jail.

The officers, who originally faced a misdemeanor count of unlawful imprisonment, reportedly handcuffed Rayshawn Moreno placed him in the back seat of their patrol car and drove him to a nearby wooded area where they left him stripped to his underwear.

The young man has said the officers called him "nigger" and kicked him. He found his way to a strip mall, where he asked a security guard to call his parents.

"My son had his dignity stripped from him," stated Rayshawn's mother, Telisha Hazel, during a press conference after the arraignments.

In all, there were 33 counts in the indictment, which was opened in the Supreme Court located in St. George before Justice Leonard P. Rienza. In referring to the officers alleged indiscretions, someone used the phrase "a laundry list" of felonies, misdemeanors and police department violations.

Most of the charges stem from the allegations the two tried to cover their tracks after the fact by falsifying a slew of department records.

District Attorney Daniel Donovan: "In

the course of our investigation, sufficient evidence was uncovered to allege the defendants repeatedly attempted to cover up their actions," said the district attorney.

The DA also mentioned in his statement that the cops forgot to fill out the "Juvenile Report" and the "Stop & Frisk Report".

Danese was also later arrested in a Brooklyn station house last month after it was discovered he used a sergeant's password to login to a site which contained information about the father of the 14-year-old victim.

"These cops are no good," James Hazel, Rayshawn's father told reporters during the press conference. "They talk about going back to their jobs after what they have done."

James Hazel added, "Racism exists in New York to the fullest extent."

He was angered by the fact the officers would not be charged with kidnapping his son.

During their press conference, the two officers, speaking through attorneys, said they wanted to return to the 120 Pct. after their trial. "This is a highly political indictment," charged Eliassen's lawyer, John Patten. "You can't play with people's lives."

Jason Leventhal, the Hazel family's attorney, blasted the district attorney, charging he was in fact playing politics with an agenda that gave the cops "a free pass."

"The DA pulled the ultimate snow-job, by going for the unlawful imprisonment, which is a defensible crime, but did not present to the grand jury a charge of kidnap or the hate crime issue," Leventhal told the press.

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