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Fresno's African American Community Newspaper

Obama Healthcare Bill To Become Law



U.S. President Barack Obama smiles among guests in the audience after signing the HIRE Act. - Reuters/Jason Reed

BY DAVID ESPO WASHINGTON -

President Barack Obama's sweeping health care legislation won precious support from a longtime liberal holdout in the House on Wednesday and from

Catholic nuns representing dozens of religious orders, gaining fresh traction in the run-up to a climactic weekend vote.

"It's a good sign," said Obama, two weeks after taking personal command of a campaign to

enact legislation in what has become a virtual vote of confidence in his still-young presidency.

After days of secretive meetings, Democratic officials said they hoped to release the word-

ing of the final legislation within hours, pending final cost and deficit-reduction estimates from the Congressional Budget Office.

The long-anticipated measure **Continued on Page 8**

First Black Catholic Priest In U.S. Up For Sainthood

Cardinal will appoint commission to evaluate Rev. Augustus Tolton

The Rev. Augustus Tolton, the nation's first known black Roman Catholic priest, could become St. Augustus.

Cardinal Francis George announced Wednesday that he will appoint a commission to assemble facts about Tolton's "heroic virtues" and introduce his cause for sainthood to Rome.

He also invited anyone who can report spiritual or physical favors granted through prayer in Tolton's name to submit their testimony to the archdiocese.

"We need his prayers and his help, especially to become a more united church," George told the Catholic New World, the archdiocese's newspaper.

Tolton's rise to prominence began with his family's escape from slavery in Missouri as the Civil War began. Baptized before crossing the Mississippi River to Quincy, Ill., Tolton and his siblings became members of the Catholic Church. Years later, the parish priest

Continued on Page 8



Rev. Augustus Tolton

Obama Signs Jobs Bill

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT BEFORE SIGNING THE HIRE ACT

THE PRESIDENT:

Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat.

Well, on this beautiful morning, we are here to mark the passage of a welcome piece of legislation for our fellow Americans who are seeking work in this difficult economy. But first, let me say a few words about the latest



U.S. President Barack Obama signs the HIRE Act, a job growth initiative, in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington March 18, 2010.

- Reuters/Jim Young

development in the debate over health insurance reform. I don't know if you guys have been hearing, but there's been a big debate going on here.

This morning, a new analysis from the Congressional Budget Office concludes that the reform we seek would

bring \$1.3 trillion in deficit reduction over the next two decades. (Applause.) That makes this legislation the most significant effort to reduce deficits since the Balanced Budget Act in the 1990s. (Applause.) And this is - this is **Continued on Page 8**

Haiti Rebounds Even as Needs Grow for Rainy Season

BY HERB BOYD NNPA SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HAITI -

Hurricane-ravaged Port-au-Prince continues to rebound even as the rainy sea-

son earnestly approaches the Island of Haiti.

This week, U. S. officials are scurrying to deliver portable toilets, hurricane-resistant tents, and plastic tarps which Haitian Tourism Minister Patrick Delatour

has said he prefers for the coming torrential rains, possible hurricanes and mudslides.

Already eight people were killed over the weekend in flooding after a downpour - and the rainy season has not

fully started in earnest.

Weather is key in Haiti right now as the rainy season is set to start in early April and last for several months. The forecast for this week fluctuated between **Continued on Page 8**

Catholic Nuns Break With Bishops On Abortion, Back Obama Health Bill

WASHINGTON (AP) -

Catholic nuns are urging Congress to pass President Barack Obama's health care plan, in an unusual public break with bishops who say it would subsidize abortion.

Some 60 leaders of religious orders representing 59,000 Catholic nuns Wednesday sent lawmakers a letter urging them to pass the Senate health care bill. It contains restrictions on abortion funding that the bishops say don't go far enough.

"Despite false claims to the contrary, the Senate bill will not provide taxpayer funding for elective abortions. It will uphold long-

Continued on Page 8



Tiger Woods Returning to Golf at Masters In April



Tiger Woods

FLORIDA -

For Tiger Woods, this figures to be a Masters like no other. Woods said Tuesday he will end more than four months of seclusion and play at Augusta National in three weeks, shielded by the most secure environment in golf as he competes for the first time since a sex scandal shattered his image.

"The Masters is where I won my first major and I view this tournament with great respect," Woods said in a statement. "After a

long and necessary time away from the game, I feel like I'm ready to start my season at Augusta."

No other major championship attracts such a large television audience, and that's under normal circumstances.

Already the most popular figure in golf with his 82 worldwide victories and 14 **Continued on Page 10**

African American Unemployment Rate Shrinks

The unemployment rate among African Americans improved slightly in February, shrinking from 16.5% to 15.8% for the month, according to Labor Department statistics released Fri-

day. In contrast, the overall jobless rate remained steady at 9.7%.

Despite the contraction of the African American jobless rate, Secretary of Labor **Continued on Page 8**

Poll: Most OK with 5-day Mail Service

BY DONNA LEINWAND, USA TODAY -

A majority of Americans are willing to accept cuts in mail delivery days to preserve the U.S. Postal Service, a USA Today/Gallup

Poll found. Yet older people, who use the mail most often, are more willing than younger Americans to reduce mail service from six days to five. **Continued on Page 8**



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STRIVING FOR UNITY

“Old School Daze” Step Show

National Pan-Hellenic Council and California State University 15th annual Step Show



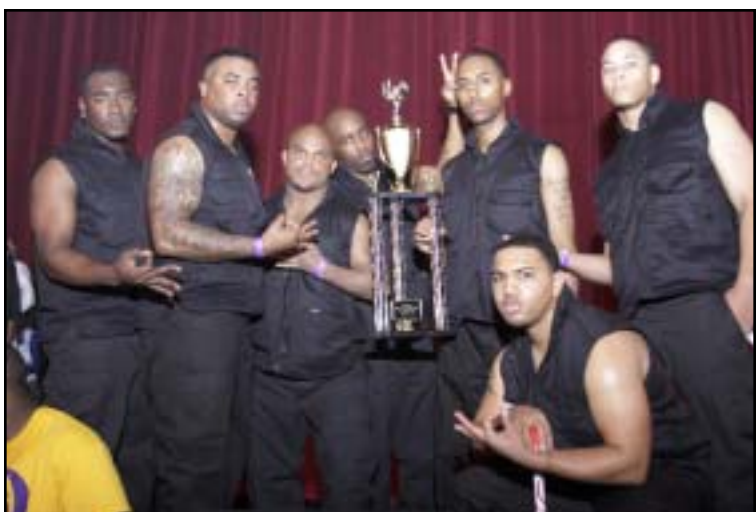
FRESNO –

The National Pan-Hellenic Council and California State University, Fresno presented it's 15th Annual Step Show at the Wilson Theater on March 6th. With host Columbus Short and Special Guest DJ Backside, the show highlighted African American fraternities and sororities of Fresno State at their best.

Over the years the show has made its mark as one of the longest, most entertaining, and largest Step Shows on the West Coast. The theme for this year's show was “Striving for Unity”: “Old School Daze” reflecting back on any time period from the late 70's leading up to the New Millennium.

The NPHC's goal is to continue its effort to provide leadership in the Fresno Community. A portion of the proceeds from the event went to supporting scholarships for students at Fresno State.

Through unity and commitment, the nine historically Black fraternities and Sororities that comprise California State University, Fresno National Pan-Hellenic Council worked diligently to make this event entertaining for the whole family.



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ONLINE DATING: Black Americans One of the Fastest-Growing Segments



HOLLYWOOD —

Is online dating capable of doing great things for the Black community?

Consider: Gallup reports that half of all Black Americans believe it's "very important" for couples to marry when they have a child — yet according to research from Packaged Facts, more than six out of ten Black Americans are unmarried, thereby making that group the most unattached in America.

The solution may well lie in online dating, where African-Americans now constitute one of the fastest-growing segments of that market.

A passionate exponent of the belief that meaningful, lasting relationships are essential for building strong African-American families, Ron Worthy, Executive Di-

rector of BlackPeopleMeet.com — the nation's leading online dating site for Black singles — sees a tight connection between online dating and the integrity of the family.

A pioneer in Internet dating sites that serve the Black community, Worthy is available immediately to offer guidance and perspective to the emergence of online dating for targeted communities, citing the experiences of thousands of African-Americans who have found kinship at the site in their search for companionship, love and marriage.

BlackPeopleMeet.com is operated by People Media (www.PeopleMedia.com), the No. 1 provider of targeted online dating communities. Launched in 2002, BlackPeopleMeet has helped introduce tens of

thousands of couples, with a majority of members ages 35-45. Every month, the site reaches 4 percent of the total Black population in the United States.

"In an ever more wired society, online dating has become recognized as one of the most effective ways for people to meet, and Black singles are one of the fastest growing populations within this trend," said Worthy. "As this population migrates from urban centers to suburban settings, an online community acts as a common meeting ground, a place to gather and find each other. Compared to traditional methods of meeting other singles, online dating offers the greatest pool of potential relationship partners, and it's certainly the most affordable option in today's difficult economy."

ON THE VERGE

*FIONA
is the little
R&B star
who could
and did*

FROM USA TODAY



Not-so-overnight success: The accolades that have poured in for Melanie Fiona since the release last fall of her debut album, *The Bridge* (248,000 copies sold), only seem to have arrived in a rush. The Canadian singer/songwriter spent years trying to get traction in an industry that couldn't pigeonhole her sassy, retro-flavored soul. Her No. 1 R&B hit, *It Kills Me*, an emotional, true-to-life song about clinging to a toxic love affair, earned her a Grammy nomination for best female R&B vocal, a spot in the *We Are the World: 25 for Haiti* ensemble and an opening slot on Alicia Keys' *The Freedom* tour, which stops tonight at Madison Square Garden.

Her drive to succeed: "I always felt my story was like *The Little Engine That Could*," Fiona says. When she found out she was up for a Grammy, "it felt like after all the nights, all the fights, all the struggles, all the singing in my hairbrush as a little girl — this moment makes it completely worth it."

Born to sing: Fiona, 26, was born in Toronto to Guyanese immigrants with a love of music. Her father was a guitarist in a soul/reggae band, and her mother liked to sing. As a baby, "I couldn't go to sleep without music in my crib. My mom would have to blast the speakers, so they kind of knew that music was going to be a very big part of my life."

Getting her feet wet: While in high school, Fiona began dabbling in the Toronto music scene. Her first record was the island-influenced *Somebody Come Get Me* (released under the name Syren Hall), which wound up on the *Reggae Gold 2008* compilation. But by that time, she had been discovered by *The Bridge* co-executive producer Carmen Murray, who brought her to Los

Angeles to record in 2007.

A label to call home: Her demo attracted the attention of several labels, but she signed with Steve Rifkind's SRC/Universal Motown because of his willingness to let her be herself. "Other labels loved me but wanted to take me in XYZ direction. I had to choose between who I really was and who somebody else wanted me to be."

Finding her muse: Though she has been writing her own songs for years (she also co-authored *Dem Haters* for Rihanna), being introduced to Andrea Martin — who has written hits for Toni Braxton, Monica, *En Vogue* and Leona Lewis — took her to a higher level. "I really learned about the art form. It was one of the best things that could have happened to me."

Emotional connection: She knows she's not the first person caught in a relationship that's no good but can't be let go. "*It Kills Me* was my vessel to express all the pain," she says. "When we recorded it, all of my team who heard me sing that song were like, 'What are you going through?'"

Kanye calls: Before *The Bridge*'s release, Kanye West invited her to open on the European leg of his *Glow in the Dark* tour. "He was by the stage watching and, of course, our equipment failed," she says. "I'm thinking I'm going to get kicked off the tour. But he pulled me aside and said, 'You're great, you've got it.' Watching him keep the crowd's attention taught me a lot about the energy you need to have for people to remember your show."

More 'Freedom': "With Kanye, I had 10 minutes. Now (on Keys' tour), I have more like 30-35 minutes. The tour is very much geared toward women. Alicia's fans are going want

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Black People Must Leave, New Jersey Walmart Announcer Says

NEW JERSEY —

An announcement at a Walmart store in New Jersey ordering black people to leave brought chagrin and apologies Wednesday from leaders of the company, which has built a fragile trust among minority communities.

A male voice came over the public-address system Sunday evening at a store in Washington Township in southern New Jersey and calmly announced: "Attention Walmart customers: All black people leave the store now."

Shoppers in the store at the time said a manager quickly got on the public address system and apologized for the remark. And while it wasn't clear whether a rogue patron or an employee was responsible for the comment, many customers expressed their anger to store management.

"I want to know why such

statements are being made, because it flies in the face of what we teach our children about tolerance for all," said Sheila Ellington, of Monroe. She and her friend, Patricia Covington, were in the store at the time and have said they now plan to boycott the retailer.

Officials with Wal-Mart Stores Inc., based in Bentonville, Ark., said that the announcement was "unacceptable" and that they're trying to determine who made it — whether an employee or a rogue patron — and how it happened.

"We are just as appalled by this incident as our customers," the company said in a statement Wednesday. "Whoever did this is just wrong and acted in an inappropriate manner. Clearly, this is completely unacceptable to us and to our customers."

This is not the first time the retailer has faced such

problems.

There have been several past instances of black customers claiming they were treated unfairly at Walmart stores, and the company faced lawsuits alleging that women were passed over in favor of men for pay raises and promotions.

However, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has said the company has worked hard in recent years to show it cares about diversity.

Bill Mitchell, a former Walmart employee who shopping Wednesday at the store, said that he was saddened to hear about the announcement but that "as a black man, I've heard worse things."

As she left the store Wednesday, customer Sharon Osbourne of Williamstown called the announcement "appalling, stupid and sad."

Michael Jordan To Be Approved as a NBA Owner

The NBA has signed off on Michael Jordan's bid to buy the Charlotte Bobcats, and commissioner David Stern expects the league's board of governors to approve the \$275 million purchase by the end of this week.



In an interview with The Associated Press on Friday, Stern said he expects the vote to pass "very easily." Jordan will become the first ex-player to own an NBA team and the second black majority owner. He'll replace the first, Bob Johnson, who has lost tens of millions of dollars annually.

"He considers himself a North Carolina native and he's quite anxious to make this team into an important part of the community," Stern said. "I think he has the capacity and the will to do that. I think he's the right majority owner at the right time."

Stern said the league updated its background and financial checks on Jordan and found nothing to stop the deal. Stern said the six-time NBA champion is the sole investor in the ownership group for now, but expects him to try to find local partners.

Jordan is putting up all the cash in the deal, which is for less than the \$300 million Johnson paid for the expansion franchise that began play in the 2004-05 season.

"I think it's fair to say he can afford it," Stern said.

The deal includes taking on more than \$150 million in debt, covering future losses and putting millions more in capital to make improvements. The Bobcats are expected to lose about \$30 mil-

lion this season.

"There is going to be assumptions of debt, other obligations and infusions of cash to make sure the team can compete and continue this turnaround," Stern said.

Jordan has declined interview requests, saying through a team spokesman he'll speak once he's approved as owner.

The 47-year-old NBA superstar has been a part-owner of the Bobcats and has had the final say on all basketball decisions since 2006. It was a return home for Jordan, who grew up in Wilmington, N.C., and led North Carolina to the national championship before winning five league MVP awards with the Chicago Bulls.

The deal means the end of a money-losing run for Johnson, the founder of Black Entertainment Television who saw the value of the team decline. The Bobcats have struggled to sell tickets and secure sponsorships since the NBA returned to Charlotte following the Hornets' departure to New Orleans in 2002.

3 LA Teachers Removed Over Choice of Black Heroes

LOS ANGELES —

Three Los Angeles elementary school teachers accused of giving children portraits of O.J. Simpson, Dennis Rodman and RuPaul to carry in a Black History Month parade have been removed from their classrooms, a school district spokeswoman said Wednesday.

Children from other classes at the school displayed photos of more appropriate black role models, such as Nelson Mandela, Harriet Tubman and President Barack Obama, Los Angeles Unified School District spokeswoman Gayle Pollard-Terry said.

The incident occurred Friday at Wadsworth Avenue Elementary School in South Los Angeles, where the student body is more than 90 percent Latino.

District Superintendent Ramon Cortines placed the teachers — all white men who teach first, second and fourth grades — on administrative leave on Tuesday while an investigation is conducted, Pollard-Terry said.

"The superintendent will not let anyone make a mockery out of Black History Month," she said.

The issue was brought to district officials' attention by the Los Angeles chapter

of the NAACP after the organization received a complaint early Monday, chapter President Leon Jenkins said.

Jenkins said he felt the teachers acted in concert to mock black heroes and children's innocence.

"These are not the people we want our young people to emulate or believe these people represent the best of the African-American community," Jenkins said. "It's hard for the NAACP to believe this was a mistake."

Simpson, a former NFL star, is serving a nine-year prison sentence for robbery and kidnapping. He was famously acquitted in 1995 of murdering his ex-wife and her friend.

RuPaul is a drag queen performer. Rodman, a former NBA star, has gained notoriety for bad boy behavior on and off the basketball court.

Some parents at the school on Wednesday said

the issue was overblown.

Sharon Tinson, who has two daughters at the school and attended Friday's celebration, said she had been surprised to see Simpson displayed in the parade. But she noted that Simpson, like Rodman, was a great athlete before falling from grace. RuPaul simply has an alternative lifestyle, she added.

She noted the event also included a tribute to pop singer Michael Jackson, who has also had a checkered career.

"I kind of laughed at it," Tinson said. "I wasn't offended."

Gabriel Blackson, whose son attends the school, said he also took a larger view of the ruckus.

"These guys were heroes before. People make mistakes," he said. "I think they show kids they can be somebody, to push them to be somebody."

Jenkins said he is calling for the teachers to be fired.

Wachovia to Settle Money Laundering Case for \$160m

FLORIDA —

Banking giant Wachovia has agreed to pay \$160 million to settle a federal investigation into laundering of drug money through Mexican exchange houses.

Banking giant Wachovia has agreed to pay \$160 million to settle a federal investigation into laundering of drug money through Mexican exchange houses.

The agreement unveiled Wednesday in Miami calls for Wachovia to also institute better money-laundering controls. In return, the

bank and its executives will avoid any criminal prosecution.

The Mexican exchanges are used by immigrants to send money home. Prosecutors say they are also used by drug traffickers to transfer illicit cash.

Wachovia is a unit of San Francisco-based Wells Fargo. The parent company's officials say they knew about the investigation before buying Wachovia in 2008 and set aside reserves that will pay for the settlement.

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Civil Rights Activists Seek Federal Probe of Torrance Police

At a protest Sunday they called for an investigation into allegations of harassment and racial profiling after a black minister was stopped in March during a search for robbery suspects.

Civil rights activists Sunday called for a federal investigation into allegations of harassment and racial profiling by the Torrance Police Department, following the traffic stop of an African American pastor in early March.

"What we want is a full federal Justice Department probe of Torrance and its treatment of African Americans and Latinos," said Earl Ofari Hutchinson, president of the Los Angeles Urban Policy Roundtable, during a small but sometimes tense protest in the neighborhood where Pastor Robert Taylor was pulled over while driving with his 15-year-old daughter, and subsequently searched.

As Hutchinson, Taylor and others voiced displeasure with the police during a demonstration, about 15 police supporters staged a counter-protest across the street. At times the dueling protests grew heated.

Taylor has filed a complaint with the Torrance Police Department, which has launched an internal investigation, according to spokesman Jeremiah Hart. "The city of Torrance is a multi-cultural city," Hart said. "We celebrate that. We do not practice racial profiling . . . do not tolerate racial profiling."

Taylor was pulled over March 4 on Yukon Avenue in a residential neighborhood, after picking up his daughter from school, according to Taylor and police.

Taylor, 62, pastor of Doors to Heaven Global Ministries

in Inglewood, lives in the neighborhood where he was stopped. He said the officers told him they had done a background check on his license plate and found multiple arrest warrants. The officers then asked him to step out of his white Ford Thunderbird, demanded that he hold his hands in the air and then proceeded to frisk him in front of his frightened daughter and several onlookers, Taylor said.

Officers eventually showed Taylor a laptop with a list of four wanted men named Robert Taylor. None was the pastor's age, Taylor said.

The officers, identified by Torrance police as Brent Clissold and Dusty Garver, allowed Taylor to leave.

Hart, the police spokesman, later said the officers pulled Taylor over because they believed he fit the description of a suspect in a series of recent area crimes, including one in which two people allegedly kidnapped a woman from a department store parking lot, stealing \$142,000 in jewelry from her home and at least \$3,500 cash. Surveillance photos obtained by the police, as well as the woman's account, indicate the suspects were a black man in his 30s, dressed in a shirt and tie, and a woman who appeared to be in her 40s. The pair drove a white Ford Thunderbird with tinted windows. Taylor said he was wearing a suit when he was pulled over.

On Sunday, Taylor stood in front of his white Thunderbird and pointed out differences between his car and the one shown in a Torrance Police Department photo. His car has a rear spoiler and all four of its hubcaps.

which is missing a hubcap. Taylor, 62, wondered why he had been frisked when he and his teen daughter clearly were not the same age as the suspects.

"This was a totally degrading and traumatizing experience for me," Taylor said. "This means that any black male driving a car that looks like a suspect's car can just be pulled over, taken from the car, searched in front of everyone. That's profiling. That's harassment. . . . They were even talking about putting handcuffs on me."

The Torrance Police Department is no stranger to allegations of civil rights abuse or to unfavorable court judgments. In 2000, a federal appeals court upheld a \$245,000 racial-discrimination verdict against two Torrance police officers. The case involved a traffic stop in which officers stopped three young men, two of them African American, pointed guns at them and squeezed their genitals while frisking them.

In 1995, three Latino men were awarded a settlement after a federal jury found Torrance Officer Martin Dempsey had violated the men's civil rights during a traffic stop. Two years later, one of the men, Luiz Ortiz, was awarded a second settlement after he alleged that Dempsey had threatened him in 1996 at a Torrance shopping center.

A 1988 case involving claims of police brutality ended in a \$105,000 settlement after video emerged showing one of the men being choked and beaten unconscious.

Hutchinson and Taylor said Sunday that African Americans and Latinos remain targets in Torrance.

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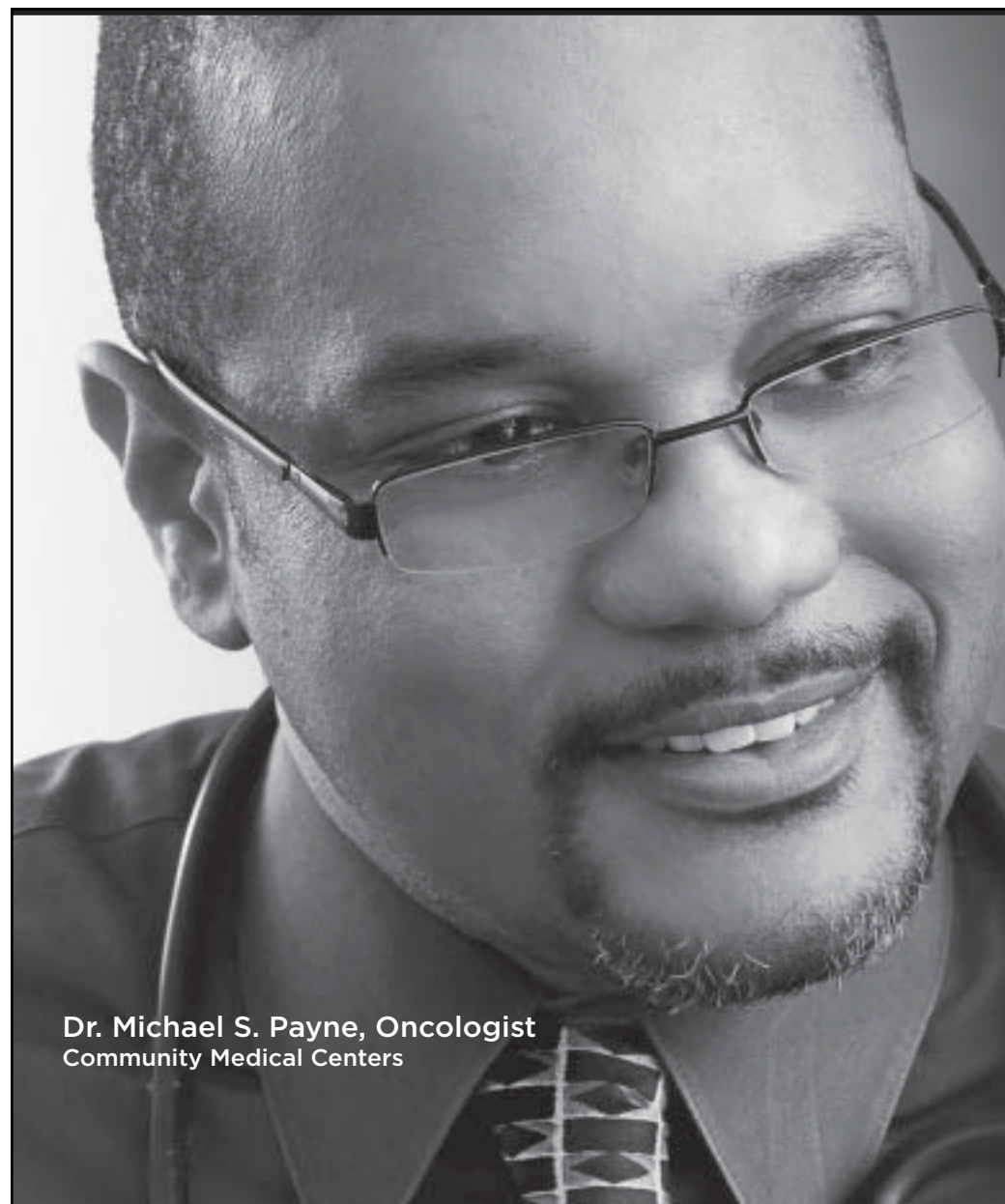


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7 WAYS TO BEAT DEPRESSION FOR SENIORS



Roughly a quarter of people age 65 or older suffer from depression. More than half of doctor's visits by the elderly involve complaints of emotional distress. Twenty percent of suicides in this country are committed by seniors, with the highest success rate belonging to older, white men. According to a recent report in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, depression is one of the major causes of decline in the health-related quality of life for senior citizens.

Why all the depression? Rafi Kevorkian, M.D. calls them the five D's: disability, decline, diminished quality of life, demand on caregivers, and dementia. To combat senior depression, then, requires coming up with creative methods to counter the five D's. Here are 12 strategies to do just that, to help people break free from the prison of depression and anxiety in their senior years.

1. Separate the illness from depression.

Depression in seniors is more complicated to identify and treat than that of younger folks because of all the other illnesses involved. For example, Parkinson's disease directly affects brain chemistry and can exacerbate depressive symptoms. Estimates show that 25 percent of cancer patients are depressed and as many as 50 percent of stroke patients suffer from depression.

Karen Swartz, M.D., Director of Clinical Programs at Johns Hopkins, maintains that patients with co-existing depression and chronic illnesses tend to focus more on the physical ailment, and therefore delay or impede full recovery from a mood disorder. Her advice? "Treat both the depression and the chronic illness simultaneously, setting aggressive treatment goals for both.... Do not settle for substandard treatment results—if one or both conditions is/are not responding to treatment, intensify or switch approaches." Also be sure there is cooperation and clear communication between your doctor and your mental health provider.

2. Watch the drinks.

Did you think teenagers were most at risk for substance abuse? Actually, alcohol and drug abuse are very prevalent among people over age 60, affecting 17 percent of older adults. It's not uncommon for seniors to self-medicate with alcohol and drugs as a way of coping with their loneliness or dealing with chronic pain. Hell, I can't say I blame them.

But it's bad, bad news. For one, alcohol is a depressive and is going to depress you even more (once you come down from the buzz of course). Popping sedatives can be lethal, especially when taken in combination with alcohol. Alcohol and drugs can also interfere with the effects of medications taken for diabetes, heart disease, and other common conditions among seniors. And finally, substance abuse increases the risk of suicide, especially in older men.

In other words, pour with caution.

3. Try Tai Chi.

Because disability and diminished quality of life are two of the D's of senior depression, older people would be smart to invest in some fall insurance—to do whatever they can to prevent falls. The fear of falling is legitimate among the elderly because approximately 33 percent of Americans ages 65 or older fall at least once a year. And when you consider the rates of osteoporosis, arthritis, and weak cardiopulmonary systems among elderly, healing from a fracture isn't so easy.

Therefore, take up an exercise program like Tai Chi, a martial art that teaches agility, slow movement, and coordination between body and mind. Tai Chi has been proven to prevent falls among seniors because it builds balance, core strength, and confidence. Strength training

with either free weights or resistance rubber bands is also beneficial. And yoga, too.

4. Treat any insomnia.

Here's an interesting trivia fact from David N. Neubauer, M.D., author of "Understanding Sleeplessness: Perspectives on Insomnia": "As we age, we typically spend less time in the deepest levels of non-REM sleep (Stage 3 and Stage 4) and more time in the lighter levels. Consequently, older people often suffer from fragmented sleep, waking up more often during the night and early in the morning. In response to these changing sleep patterns, many [older] people develop poor sleep habits that compound the problem."

Dr. Neubauer reports that 80 percent of people who are depressed experience sleeplessness, and that the more depressed someone is, the more likely it is that he or she will have sleep problems. And vice versa! So absolutely essential to a senior's depression treatment is addressing any sleep problems and to practice good sleep hygiene: like going to bed at the same time every night, waking at the same time in the morning, and cutting down on or eliminating caffeine.

5. Distinguish grief from depression.

By the age of 65, half of American women will be widows. And in 10 to 15 percent of spouses, the loss of their loved one leads to chronic depression. The questions is: what's normal grief and what's depression? Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D., Professor of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, distinguishes the two in this way: "The sadness of grief usually comes in waves, with varying degrees of intensity and bouts of crying, and feelings of intense sadness, guilt, anger, irritability, or loneliness. A person experiencing grief, however, can enjoy some of life's activities. Grief is generally time limited and resolves on its own. Depression is a more persistent and unremitting sadness."

In other words, a depressed person is unable to enjoy life activities, merely slogging through life. She may also start to abuse alcohol or other drugs, experience difficulty eating (or overeating), and suffer from sleep disturbances.

6. Carry some photos.

Here's a simple way you can buffer yourself from the beast of depression: carry photos of your loved ones and friends in your wallet. Yep! A new study by UCLA psychologists found that by simply looking at a photograph of their significant others, a group of women reported less pain to the heat stimuli to their forearms than when they looked at pictures of an object or a stranger. Says study co-author Naomi Eisenberger: "The mere reminder of one's partner through a simple photograph was capable of reducing pain. The study fits with other work emphasizing the importance of social support for physical and mental health."

7. Make new friends.

Even better than photos are actual people! Countless studies have demonstrated that people with strong social networks are more resilient to depression and anxiety, especially in their senior years. And since losing friends and family is part of growing older, it is especially important for seniors to make an effort to meet new people. In my piece "13 Ways to Make Friends," I offer a few suggestions: trying out a book club, volunteering, taking a night class, and connecting with your alumni association. Psych Central's John Groh proposes 10 more in his "10 More Ways to Make Friends," such as joining a bowling league, getting involved in your church, or making a local restaurant or coffee shop your place to hang out.

Black Patients Get Fewer Heart Protecting Drugs

NEW YORK (REUTERS HEALTH) —

Even within the Veterans Affairs health system, where everyone should have the same access to care, African Americans are less likely than their white counterparts to be prescribed heart-protecting medications or undergo bypass surgery to treat blocked heart arteries, a new study finds.

The findings, based on data for nearly 475,000 VA patients, found that African Americans had lower rates of prescriptions for cholesterol-lowering statins, as well as ACE inhibitors and beta-blockers used to treat high blood pressure and certain heart problems. They were, however, more likely than white patients to be on aspirin.

At the same time, black patients were less likely than whites to have undergone coronary bypass surgery. The procedure is performed to reroute blood flow around heart-artery blockages, with the goal of relieving serious chest pain known as angina, and reducing the risk of heart attack.

Researchers say these racial gaps in drug prescriptions and bypass may help explain why heart disease deaths are not declining as rapidly among African Americans compared with other racial groups in the U.S.

"It's likely this may be a result of the lesser use of these strategies," lead researcher Dr. Jawahar L. Mehta, of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock, said in an interview.

The U.S. has seen an overall drop in heart disease deaths in recent decades, but African Americans remain at greater risk. In 2006, the heart disease death rate among white men was 245 per 100,000 men, while there were 321 deaths per 100,000 black men, according to figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Among women, there were 159 deaths per 100,000 white women, and 212 for every 100,000 black women.

Past studies have shown that African Americans receive fewer prescriptions for drugs that can lower the risk of heart disease or help treat it. One likely reason, researchers have speculated, is unequal access healthcare.

But the current study shows that racial disparities persist even in a large group of Americans with the same access to care. "It's discon-

cerning that this is happening in the VA population," Mehta said.

The findings, published in the American Journal of Cardiology, are based on VA records for 117,071 African-American and 357,494 white patients, mostly men.

Overall, 30 percent of white patients were on a statin, versus 20.5 percent of black patients. About 25 percent of whites were using beta-blockers, compared with 20 percent of African Americans, while 30 percent of whites and 28 percent of blacks were using ACE inhibitors.

This was despite the fact that about 44 percent of both black and white patients had high blood pressure. Similarly, nearly 7 percent of African Americans had angina, compared with almost 6 percent of their white counterparts. Just under 1 percent of patients in both racial groups had a history of heart attack.

When Mehta's team accounted for a variety of factors — including patients' ages, incomes, smoking habits and diabetes diagnoses — African-American race itself was still linked to a lower likelihood of various treatments.

African Americans were 46 percent less likely to be on a statin, one-quarter less likely to be on a beta-blocker and 6 percent less likely to be on an ACE inhibitor. The exception was aspirin, which African Americans were 31 percent more likely to be taking.

When it came to bypass surgery, 0.4 percent of black patients had had the procedure, versus 1.2 percent of white patients.

The reasons for the disparities are not clear. But Mehta speculated that socioeconomic is involved, even though patients had equal access to care. Lower-income patients may, for instance, be less aware of their heart disease risks and less assertive when it comes to talking with their doctors.

Mehta said it is important for African Americans to be aware of their relatively greater heart risks, and advised that they "not hesitate" to ask their doctors about their risk factors and how to manage them.

Lower prescription and bypass rates could also reflect a bias on the part of doctors, Mehta said. "But that is speculation," he added. "We don't have objective data to show that."

SOURCE: American Journal of Cardiology, online February 16, 2010.

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Obama Healthcare Bill To Become Law...

► **Continued from Page 1** is actually the second of two bills that Obama hopes lawmakers will send him in coming days, more than a year after he urged Congress to remake the nation's health care system. The first cleared the Senate late last year but went no further because House Democrats demanded significant changes - the very types of revisions now being packaged into the second bill.

Together, the measures are designed to extend coverage to more than 30 million who now lack it and ban the insurance industry from denying coverage on the basis of pre-existing medical conditions. Obama also has asked lawmakers to slow the growth of medical spending generally, a far more difficult goal to achieve.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich's announcement in the Capitol made him the first Democrat to declare he would vote in favor of the legislation after voting

against an earlier version, and he stressed he was still dissatisfied with key parts.

"I know I have to make a decision, not on the bill as I would like to see it but as it is," said the Ohio lawmaker, who twice ran for president advocating national health care. "If my vote is to be counted, let it now count for passage of the bill, hopefully in the direction of comprehensive health care reform."

Referring to the political struggle under way, Kucinich said, "You do have to be very careful that the potential of President Obama's presidency not be destroyed by this debate. Even though I have many differences with him on policy, there's something much bigger at stake here for America."

Obama lobbied Kucinich heavily for his vote, including aboard Air Force One earlier in the week on a trip to northeastern Ohio for a presidential speech.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said Kucinich's switch was important not only for itself, "but also on the outside," with liberal groups still unhappy the bill doesn't create a government-run insurance option.

Republicans are opposed to the legislation, arguing it still amounts to a government takeover of health care, largely paid for through higher taxes and deep cuts in Medicare that will harm seniors. In recent days, they have also turned their criticism on Pelosi, who says the House may approve the Senate-passed bill without casting a separate vote on it. Instead, under a rule that would itself be subject to a vote, it would be considered passed automatically if the second fix-it bill passed.

This approach has been used numerous times in recent years by both political parties, but Republicans added it to their list of grievances as they sought to

send Obama's top domestic priority down to defeat.

"The only way to stop this madness is for a few courageous Democrats to step forward and stop it," said Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Senate GOP leader.

"Historians will remember this as a new low in this debate, the week that America was introduced to the scheme-and-deem approach to legislating. They'll remember this as the week that Congress tried to pull the wool over the eyes of the public in order to get around their will."

Without disclosing details, Democrats say the fix-it bill would add funds to federal subsidies designed to make health care more affordable for the working poor and middle class, to benefit states that already meet standards the bill sets for health care for the poor and to gradually close a gap in Medicare prescription drug coverage known as the doughnut hole.

Obama Signs Jobs Bill...

► **Continued from Page 1** but one virtue of a reform that will bring new accountability to the insurance industry and greater economic security to all Americans. So I urge every member of Congress to consider this as they prepare for their important vote this weekend.

And I want to welcome all the members of Congress who are here, those who are on stage - Madam Speaker, Majority Leader Reid - as well as some of my Cabinet members who are here.

In a few moments, I'll sign what's called the HIRE Act - a jobs bill that will encourage businesses to hire and help put Americans back to work. And I'd like to say a few words about what this jobs bill will mean for workers, for businesses, and for America's economic recovery.

There are a number of ways to look at an economic recovery. Through the eyes of an economist, you look at the different stages of recovery. You look at whether an economy has begun to grow; at whether businesses have begun to hire temporary workers or increase the hours of existing workers. You look at whether businesses, small and large, have begun to hire full-time employees again.

That's how economists measure a recovery - and by those measures, we are beginning to move in the right direction. But through the eyes of most Americans, recovery is about something more fundamental: Do I have a decent job? Can I provide for my family? Do I feel a sense of financial security?

The great recession that we've just gone through took a terrible toll on the middle class and on our economy as a whole. For every one of the over 8 million people who lost their jobs in recent years, there's a story of struggle - of a family that's forced to choose between paying their electricity bill or the car insurance or the daughter's college tuition; of weddings and vacations and retire-

ments that have been postponed.

So here's the good news: A consensus is forming that, partly because of the necessary - and often unpopular - measures we took over the past year, our economy is now growing again and we may soon be adding jobs instead of losing them. The jobs bill I'm signing today is intended to help accelerate that process.

I'm signing it mindful that, as I've said before, the solution to our economic problems will not come from government alone. Government can't create all the jobs we need or can it repair all the damage that's been done by this recession.

But what we can do is promote a strong, dynamic private sector - the true engine of job creation in our economy. We can help to provide an impetus for America's businesses to start hiring again. We can nurture the conditions that allow companies to succeed and to grow.

And that's exactly what this jobs bill will help us do. Now, make no mistake: While this jobs bill is absolutely necessary, it's by no means enough. There's a lot more that we're going to need to do to spur hiring in the private sector and bring about full economic recovery - from helping creditworthy small businesses to get loans that they need to expand, to offering incentives to make homes and businesses more energy efficient, to investing in infrastructure so we can put Americans to work doing the work that America needs done.

Nevertheless, this jobs bill will make a difference in several important ways. First, we will forgive payroll taxes for businesses that hire someone who's been out of work at least two months. That's a tax benefit that will apply to unemployed workers hired between last month and the end of this year. So this tax cut says to employers: If you hire a worker who's unemployed, you

won't have to pay payroll taxes on that worker for the rest of the year. And businesses that move quickly to hire today will get a bigger tax credit than businesses that wait until later this year.

This tax cut will be particularly helpful to small business owners. Many of them are on the fence right now about whether to bring in that extra worker or two, or whether they should hire anyone at all. And this jobs bill should help make their decision that much easier. And by the way, I'd like to note that part of what health insurance reform would do is to provide tax credits for over 4 million small businesses so they don't have to choose between hiring workers and offering coverage.

The second thing this bill does is to encourage small businesses to grow and to hire by permitting them to write off investments they make in equipment this year. These kinds of expenses typically take years to depreciate, but under this law, businesses will be able to invest up to \$250,000, let's say, in a piece of factory equipment, and write it off right away. Put simply, we'll give businesses an incentive to invest in their own future - and to do it today.

Third, we'll reform municipal bonds to encourage job creation by expanding investment in schools and clean energy projects. Say a town wants to put people to work rebuilding a crumbling elementary school or putting up wind turbines. With this law, we'll make it easier for them to raise the money they need to do what they want to do by using a model that we've called Build America Bonds - one of the most successful programs in the Recovery Act. We'll give Americans a better chance to invest in the future of their communities and of the country.

And finally, this jobs bill will maintain crucial investments in our roads and our bridges as we head into the

spring and summer months, when construction jobs are picking up.

I want to commend all the members of Congress, and their leadership is what made this bill possible. Many of them are here today. I'm also gratified that over a dozen Republicans agreed that the need for this jobs bill was urgent, and that they were willing to break out of the partisan morass to help us take this forward step for the American people. I hope this is a prelude to further cooperation in the days and months to come, as we continue to work on digging our way out of the recession and rebuilding our economy in a way that works for all Americans and not just some Americans.

After all, the jobs bill I'm signing today - and our broader efforts to achieve a recovery - aren't about politics. They're not about Democrat versus Republican. This isn't a game that we're playing here. They're about the people in this country who are out of work and looking for a job; they're about all the Americans - of every race and region and age - who've shared their stories with me over the last year.

The single mother who's told me she's filled out hundreds of job applications and been on dozens of interviews, but still hasn't found a job. The father whose son told me he started working when he was a teenager, and recently found himself out of a job for the very first time in his life. The children who write to me - they're worried about their moms and their dads, worried about what the future holds for their families.

That's who I'm thinking about every morning when I enter into the Oval Office. That's who I'm signing this bill for. And that's who I'm going to continue to fight for so long as I am President of the United States.

So with that, let me sign this bill and let's get to work. (Applause).

Nuns Back Obama Health Bill...

► **Continued from Page 1** standing conscience protections and it will make historic new investments - \$250 million - in support of pregnant women," wrote the nuns, in a letter released by Network, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby. "This is the REAL pro-life stance, and we as Catholics are all for it."

The endorsement reflected a division within the church. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops opposes the Senate-passed legislation, contending it would, in fact, permit the use of federal funds for elective abortions.

The abortion issue has long split Democrats, 40 of whom voted for an earlier House bill only after it was changed at the last minute to stiffen restrictions on the availability of abortions under a new insurance marketplace that would be established under the bill.

Rep. Bart Stupak of Michigan, a leader of the anti-abortion Democrats, has said at least a dozen of the 40 intend to oppose the bill - and Rep. Steven Driehaus of Ohio announced through an aide he intends to be among them. The first-term lawmaker faces a difficult re-election race next fall against the man he defeated in 2008.

So far, three of the 40, Reps. Dale Kildee of Michigan; James Oberstar of Minnesota and Richard Neal of Massachusetts, have said they intend to support the legislation in the next vote.

The original House bill banned health plans receiving government subsidies from covering abortion, except in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother. Women who wanted insurance coverage for abortion would have to buy a separate policy.

Black Catholic Priest Up For Sainthood...

► **Continued from Page 1** there encouraged him to join the priesthood.

Because no American seminary would admit a black man, Tolton traveled to Rome to be ordained.

His aspiration to become a missionary in Africa was thwarted when the Vatican sent him back to Quincy. There, he oversaw an integrated congregation, despite opposition from the town's white priests.

The archbishop eventually assigned Tolton to Chicago to start a mission for African-Americans in the basement of another parish.

That mission became St. Monica's on the South Side, the city's first black parish, which was dedicated in 1894. Tolton raised

money for the parish building and oversaw its design before dying of a heart stroke in 1897 at age 43. The parish consolidated with St. Elizabeth in 1924.

Vanessa White, director of the Tolton Center for African-American Catholics at Catholic Theological Union, said Tolton's story resembles the lives of many saints in the Catholic Church.

"Many of them did not have an easy road, and neither did he," said White, who will lead a pilgrimage from Chicago to Quincy in honor of Tolton April 30-May 2. "To think that every seminary in the U.S. was closed to him ... but that did not stand in the way of him being able to fulfill his call."

Unemployment Rate Shrinks...

► **Continued from Page 1** Hilda Solis says there is still much work to be done.

"There is an extremely high number of unemployment in the African American community," she said. "We want to work with Congress to make sure that more money is available to programs such as Pathways Out of Poverty, which targets high unemployment areas through unique job training opportunities such as retrofitting or weatherizing."

Overall 36,000 jobs were vaporized last month, leaving 14.9 mil-

lion people out of work. The U.S. economy has lost some 8.4 million jobs since the recession began in December 2007. The latest job cuts continued across the employment spectrum. Construction jobs fell by 64,000 and information industry jobs dropped by 18,000, while temporary help services added 48,000 jobs. Healthcare continues to trend upward. Manufacturing and retail trade employment remained unchanged. Severe winter weather in parts of the country may have affected payroll employment and hours.

Poll: Most OK with 5day Mail Service...

► **Continued from Page 1** The Postal Service plans to seek approval from the Postal Regulatory Commission and the Congress to stop mail delivery on Saturdays. Federal law requires the Postal Service to deliver mail six days a week to every U.S. household.

The amount of mail sent through the Postal Service is expected to decrease sharply over the next decade as more people turn to the Internet to communicate and pay bills, Postmaster General John Potter has said. Potter says the decrease in volume, coupled with rising fuel and labor costs, will leave the Postal Service, which is not funded by taxpayers, deeply in

debt if Congress does not approve service changes.

In the telephone survey of 999 adults conducted March 16, 79% of Americans 55 and older reported they used the mail in the past two weeks to pay a bill, compared with half of those ages 18 to 34. Only 13% of those 55 and older said they had not mailed a letter or a bill during the past two weeks, compared with 37% of those ages 18 to 34.

Yet older Americans were more willing to drop a delivery day. Nearly three-quarters of those 55 and older said they would favor reducing the number of delivery days to five to solve the Postal Service's financial problems.

Haiti Rebounds Even as Needs Grow...

► **Continued from Page 1** sunny to partly cloudy; then more downpours at the end of this week. Temperatures are fluctuating between the mid 70s at night and into the 90 during the day hours.

Racing the rains, former President Bill Clinton, the United Nations Special Envoy for Haiti, on Monday convened a teleconference with United Nations officials involved in leading the emergency and humanitarian response in Haiti. According to a release that followed the conference, they assessed the relief operations, highlighted unmet needs - particularly in areas outside of Port-au-Prince and in advance of the

rainy season - and encourage closer coordination with the Government of Haiti and with each other.

It's not just the weather, but conditions potentially caused by the weather that's concerning the citizens and relief workers. Those conditions could mean the spread of disease, human waste and even human bodies, many of which did not receive proper burial in the initial aftermath of the earthquake. Nearly 200,000 were killed. Meanwhile, life in the capitol continues to struggle for normalcy.

After you get beyond the fact that Haiti, particularly Port-au-Prince, is a modern

day ruin-which is not easy when around each new corner is a more devastating scene-there is the amazing vitality, ingenuity and creativity of the Haitian people.

This ability, this undying resilience, was evident from one end of the city to another during a whirlwind visit to the city by a team of Black journalists in mid February. Here and there were welders, their torches melting torn metal; masons mending broken walls; carpenters repairing doors and roof tops; painters putting a fresh gloss on ravaged buildings; and the countless vendors setting up shop in front of totally

damaged structures.

And exactly one month after the catastrophe, the spirit of recovery was seen in the hundreds of people walking along the streets and roads, many of them dressed in white, on their way to various sites of mourning, ready to remember the dead and dying as they celebrate another day of living.

"We are determined to put our homes and our lives back together," said a young man, who stood with his mother and father outside a tent where bricks provided a makeshift foundation. "Our home was completely destroyed, so this will have to do until we can do better."

'Great Gathering' Attempts to Confront Problems of Black Males

BY PHAROH MARTIN
NNPA NATIONAL
CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – The plight of the African-American male is an issue that has been at the forefront of Black communities for generations. As one of historic cornerstones with enough reach to address this problem, three denominations of the Black church have united to proactively combat the social atrocities facing Black men in an initiative called The Male Investment Plan.

To kick off a dialog, leaders and congregations from the nation's three largest Black Methodist denominations, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) and Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Churches came together for the first time in more than 45 years. They convened at the Carolina Coliseum in Columbia, S.C. for a three-day event called the Great Gathering on March 1-3, which organizers say brought out 12,000 people.

"We tried to bring the denominations together to have a conversation as to how they might, in an intentional way, impact some of the ills that are running our communities," said Rev. Dr. Staccato Powell, chairman of the Great Gathering.

The event was headlined by speakers Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the non-profit organization the Children's Defense Fund, famed author, lecturer and professor Dr. Cornel West, and author Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu. The musical musing of gospel greets Hezekiah Walker and Marvin Sapp also highlighted the three days of speakers, prayer, and Bible study.

The three Black Methodist denominations have a collective history of over 200 years and a membership base of about seven million between them.

"Something that there is no debate about is that we have to do something to address, in an impressive way, the plight of African-American males," Powell said.

The issues include large number of Black men who are incarcerated as opposed to those attending institutions of higher learning; Black-on-Black crime; poverty; unemployment; fatherhood avoidance; and self-esteem issues.

Here are some sobering statistics on Black males:

- Only 41 percent of Black men graduate from high school in the United States, according to Schott Foundation for Public Education.
- More young Black men in the United States have done time than have served in the military or earned a college degree, according to a 2006 study cited by the New York Times.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, homicide is the leading cause of death among African-American males aged 15-34 years.

"How do we stem the tide of the constant flow of the African-American male going into the judicial system and penal institutions? How do we increase their numbers in institutions of higher learning? So it is around that one issue that we coalesced and we put in place what we call the Male Investment Plan," Powell said.



Marian Wright Edelman



Dr. Cornel West



Hezekiah Walker

The Male Investment Program targets African-American males ages 5 to 25 and helps them in different areas of their lives including economically, educationally, health-wise and spiritually.

"We can't wait until they become 12-years-old. It'll be too late. We have to start at the very outset and instill a core values system that allows them to have respect for self and for others and to recognize that it's really not a fair game," Powell said.

To meet this end, the organizers will introduce a Saturday Academy concept in various churches across the country and provide mentorship and workshops on life skills, career, emotional control, educational and spiritual enhancements.

"We will target churches across this country and put in an academy on Saturdays where we will begin to mentor African-American males and tracking them so that we can demonstrate quantitatively the diminution in the prison population and an increase in institutions of higher learning," Powell said.

Phase one of the Male Enhancement Program will begin May 2010 in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

The program will be phased in over time in 13 regions across the country.

"We're not interested in the children becoming spiritual," Powell said. "We want them to have a relationship with Jesus. There's a difference. Our aim is to get them connected with Christian principals and have a relationship to ground them. Just like the gangs recruit. We're going to have to become aggressive with our recruitment process as well."



The Rwandan Genocide in 1994 killed at least 800,000 people, and estimates of the death toll have ranged between 500,000 and 1,000,000, or as much as 20% of the total population of the country.

Rwandan President Rejects Human Rights Criticism

Rwandan President Paul Kagame hit back Monday at human rights activists who say he's behaving like an autocrat and fueling a bloody civil war in Rwanda's neighbor, Congo.

"If you are talking about people in the human rights community from outside... I have an issue with this," Kagame said, 16 years after he was hailed as a hero for ending a genocide that killed at least 800,000 people.

"You tend to make a judgment of a country, 11 million people, on what a couple of people have said and (they) don't take into account what Rwandans say."

Kagame added, "Nobody has asked the Rwandans ... it's as if they don't matter in the eyes of the human rights people. It's our own decisions in the end."

He said everyone in Rwanda has to play by the rules and be accountable.

"There has to be leadership to make things move in the right direction," Kagame stated.

Kagame's comments came a month after the New York-based group, Human Rights Watch, said opposition activists are facing increasing threats, attacks, and harassment ahead of Rwanda's presidential election in August.

Human Rights Watch said opposition party members have suffered serious intimidation by individuals and institutions close to the government and Kagame's ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

The RPF took power in 1994 after its army swept into the capital of Kigali and overthrew the Hutu-dominated government responsible for the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Rwandans, most of them members of the minority Tutsi community.

In the aftermath of the

100-day genocide, the fastest in modern history, Kagame transformed his country, turning it into one of the fastest growing nations in Africa and – in the view of some – a model of economic and social development.

Kagame said Rwanda has made significant progress in erasing some of the scars left behind after the tragedy.

"That's why the country is stable. That's why the country is moving on. That's why the country is developing."

Kagame insisted he has nothing to do with the continuing civil war in mineral-rich Congo, even though he acknowledged that Rwandan troops intervened there a decade ago in an attempt to stop rebel groups from returning to Rwanda. The war became the largest and most destructive conflict in African history, costing more than 5 million lives, as various groups and foreign



Paul Kagame

armies fought for control of Congo's land and mineral resources.

"I cannot be blamed for the problems of Congo or any other country," Kagame said. "There are the Congolese who have their own country, who are supposed to manage it, who are supposed to govern it. It has nothing to do with me."

Michelle Obama Talks Anti-Obesity To Food Giants

WASHINGTON – Michelle Obama is urging the nation's largest food companies to speed up efforts to make healthier foods and reduce marketing of unhealthy foods to children.

Mrs. Obama asked the companies, gathered at a meeting of the Grocery Manufacturers Association on Tuesday, to "step it up" and put less fat, salt and sugar in foods.

"We need you not to just tweak around the edges but entirely rethink the products you are offering, the information that you provide about these products, and how you market those products to our children," she said.

The first lady has talked to schools and nutrition groups across the country in her effort to reduce childhood obesity. This is the first time she has confronted the food companies that make the snacks and junk food that stuff grocery aisles and school vending machines.

The Grocery Manufacturers Association – which counts Kraft Foods Inc., Coca Cola Co. and General Mills Inc. among its members – invited her to speak at its science forum this week, and attendees gave her a standing ovation.

WASHINGTON –

IRS agents will be more flexible with taxpayers who have seen their incomes drop during the recession.

IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman announced Tuesday that the agency is loosening its rules for negotiating tax settlements for less than the amount owed.

The agency also plans to open about 1,000 offices on various Saturdays, beginning March 27, to give taxpayers more opportunities to work with IRS employees to resolve their tax debts.

Welcoming the first lady and embracing her campaign for healthier kids, launched last month, could have advantages. The industry is positioned to take some blows in the coming year, including a child nutrition bill about to move through Congress that could eliminate junk food in schools, digging into some companies' profits.

The Food and Drug Administration is also beginning to crack down on misleading labeling on food packages, saying some items labeled "healthy" are not, and the Senate last year mulled a tax on soda and other sweetened drinks to

health care. That tax did not make it into the health care bill, but it could be seen as an opening shot in a quietly growing effort to target food companies, especially as local, state and federal governments scrounge for revenue in a tight fiscal environment.

Mrs. Obama said she would like to see less confusing food labels and portion sizes and increased marketing for healthy foods. She urged companies not just to find creative ways to market products as healthy but to increase nutrients and reduce bad ingredients.

Those who fail to file tax returns, or who simply ignore collection notices, will not be eligible for help. Individual tax returns are due April 15.

To qualify for a tax settlement, taxpayers must file detailed financial statements, listing all their assets, liabilities and income, said Jackie Perlman, an analyst at the Tax Institute at H&R Block.

Taxpayers could be required to sell assets to help settle tax debts. Shulman cautioned that

those seeking help will have to demonstrate their inability to pay.

"You can't just call up the IRS and say, 'Hey, I lost my job. I can't pay the bills. Can you cut my taxes in half?'" Perlman said.

"Nice try," Perlman said, "but it doesn't work that way."

Shulman said new rules for negotiating tax settlements, known as offers in compromise, better reflect the economic problems many taxpayers face.

IRS agents can accept settlements only for less than the full amount owed if they determine there is little chance the taxpayer will be able to pay.

IRS To Go Easier on Tax Settlements

WASHINGTON –

The IRS expects to process 138 million individual tax returns this year.

Most will qualify for refunds, but with the economy shedding more than 8 million jobs since the start of the recession, many taxpayers will be unable to make timely payments.

Under an IRS initiative started a year ago, agents can negotiate new payment plans and postpone asset seizures for delinquent taxpayers who are financially strapped but make a good-faith effort to settle their tax debts.

Shulman cautioned that

those seeking help will have to demonstrate their inability to pay.

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Tiger Returning to Golf..

► **Continued from Page 1** majors – four of them at the Masters – Woods returns as a disgraced star who will be under the greatest scrutiny of his career.

“We’re all looking forward to having him back. We want him playing,” Jim Furyk said. “I’m sure we’re also looking forward to everything being business as usual. And it’s going to take awhile. We know that.”

Woods last competed Nov. 15 when he won the Australian Masters in Melbourne. Twelve days later, he rammed his SUV over a fire hydrant and into a tree outside his Florida home, an accident that set off sordid tales of extramarital affairs. Woods announced Dec. 11 that he would take an indefinite break to try to save his marriage.

“The major championships have always been a special focus in my career and, as a professional, I think Augusta is where I need to be, even though it’s been a while since I last played,” Woods said.

“I have undergone almost two months of inpatient therapy and I am continuing my treatment,” he said. “Although I’m returning to competition, I still have a lot of work to do in my personal life.”

Augusta National chairman Billy Payne said the club supported Woods’ decision to make his return at the Masters, adding that “we support and encourage his stated commitment to con-

tinue the significant work required to rebuild his personal and professional life.”

PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem also said he was pleased to learn of Woods’ return.

The Associated Press first reported last Thursday that Woods would not play until the Masters, despite other published stories that he would return this week at the Arnold Palmer Invitational in Orlando, Fla. There has been so much buzz that when Finchem held a teleconference Monday on an undisclosed topic, the call was loaded with media suspecting an announcement on Woods’ return. Instead, it was to announce a new title sponsor.

Small wonder that CBS Sports president Sean McManus said last week of Woods’ return to golf: “My only prediction is when he comes back, it will be, other than the Obama inauguration, one of if not the biggest media spectacle in recent memory.”

ESPN will televise the first two rounds of the Masters, and CBS Sports has the weekend. The highest TV rating for the Masters in the cable era was a 14.1 on the Sunday in 1997 when Woods, then 21, became the tournament’s youngest champion with a record 12-shot victory.

“Wow I’ve had a lot of calls today from friends who have decided to come to the Masters this year,” British Open champion Stewart

Cink said on Twitter.

“Obviously, the ratings will be off the chart,” said PGA Tour player Heath Slocum. “It will be interesting to watch – not only the reaction from him, but from the fans, the media, the players. I would venture to say he might be nervous.”

The Masters – “A tradition like no other” is a long-time CBS promo – has restrictions like no other major. Media credentials are limited even in normal circumstances, and the club has tight control over who gets in. Some fans with season badges risk losing them forever for violating rules, such as being caught with a cell phone or a camera. Among the rules: No running.

Most players expect Woods to be heckled, although not as much – if any – at the Masters.

“That’s why Augusta makes such good sense,” Furyk said. “There’s less of that than anywhere else. Everyone is afraid to lose their ticket. The etiquette and behavior is far better than anywhere else because of the fear factor.”

Still to be determined is the state of his game.

Woods left for a Mississippi clinic for therapy on Dec. 31 – the day after his 34th birthday – and returned Feb. 11 to prepare for his first public appearance at the TPC Sawgrass when he apologized for his behavior and confessed to extramarital affairs. He took no ques-

tions.

He spent another week in Arizona for family therapy, returning Feb. 27 and heading to the practice range to get back into a routine. His coach, Hank Haney, was with him at Isleworth last week.

There had been reports he would play the Tavistock Cup exhibition next week in

Orlando, followed by the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill, where he is the defending champion and a six-time winner.

“When I finally got into a position to think about competitive golf again, it became apparent to me that the Masters would be the earliest I could play,” Woods said.

Woods twice has gone to a major without having competed after a long layoff – nine weeks – and had mixed results. He missed the cut at Winged Foot for the 2006 U.S. Open after his father died, and he won the 2008 U.S. Open at Torrey Pines while playing on a shattered left knee that kept him out the rest of the year.

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