

Nagin wins in New Orleans, now what?

Ray Nagin, incumbent mayor of New Orleans, defeated Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu 52 to 48 in a stunning upset in the runoff election for mayor that has pundits and politicians wondering how it happened and what happens next.

The wonder occurs because Nagin's base is related to his program. Nagin was widely expected to lose since he needed more than the 6 percent of the white vote that he won on April 22. Powerful black ministers had drifted toward Landrieu and none other than Wynton Marsalis, the popular New Orleans jazz trumpeter, had endorsed him.

But Nagin's base reversed this time from his first election when he won 80 percent of the white vote and 20 percent of the black vote to just the opposite. One reason is that for the black voter, neither Nagin nor Landrieu gave them a sharp difference in their program to restore the city, which left them free to practice the black politics that has been traditional since 1978. That also left just enough of the white vote to return to Nagin, who believed he would protect their interests against the more liberal Landrieu.

The substantial black turnout of 40 percent increased above the 31 percent in the April 22 election, also giving some indication that blacks were looking beyond Nagin, investing their faith in the restoration of the New Orleans to the city they knew and Nagin became the vehicle for such aspirations. They drove and bused into the election in large numbers and even though some of the voting precincts were changed again since the April 22 election, they were able to make the difference in this election.

A veritable army of volunteers, under the leadership of the Louisiana Voter Rights Coalition, the National Urban League, the NAACP, the National Rainbow Coalition, the National Action Network, ReBuild Hope Now and many legal civil rights organizations, came together to assist black turnout. They facilitated the movement of buses and cars into the proper polling precinct stations, provided technical assistance such as information to voters on their rights, protection of their ballot status, encouraged provisional voting and, in short, doing many of the things that together were critically important to the result.

When the history of this election is written, it should not be just about Nagin's attractiveness - also the attractiveness of Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rev. Al Sharpton, Marc Morial, and others - but about the political infrastructure that assisted in opening up the process. Their monumental efforts overcame the barriers in the voting process set up by the state and approved by the U.S. Justice Department, so that will be no legal challenge to this election is warranted.

Now that Nagin is the mayor so what? As I indicated previously, he will be in a position to spend more money than any mayor in America with the possible exception of New York City and Los Angeles. The city has been allotted a federal appropriation that contains such funds as: \$6.2 billion for housing and infrastructure repair; \$8 billion for incentives to businesses to return and repair; \$1.2 billion for hazard mitigation and other funding.

Nagin promised during the campaign to "hit the ground running" on rehabilitating the city, but after winning he has taken a more cautious approach to the neighborhood problem. The reason is that the proposals of the commission he established that called for a "smaller footprint" of the city and hinted that people would not be able to rebuild in the worst flooded areas (largely African-American) was resoundingly opposed by blacks. Now that they are his main political base, he is moving more slowly, promising that he will take 100 days, see how the rebuilding process moves and after the end of the year, make proposals for land use.

A major question in my mind is whether the power centers in the state will allow Nagin to spend the money like the citizens want. One key is that although he endorsed Rep. Bobby Jindal, a conservative Republican, Jindal was nowhere to be seen in the election celebration. Will the Republican politicians who controlled the State House keep their hands out of the large pot of New Orleans money? Will the governor attempt to control it, or the White House? The questions are posed by the state involvement in the election. And a recent example is that a local black judge voided all prosecutions that involved public defenders, since not enough are functioning and poor defendants are exposed. But the attorney general is examining a reversal of this act.

So, the election in New Orleans is over, now the battle for black self-determination begins all over again.

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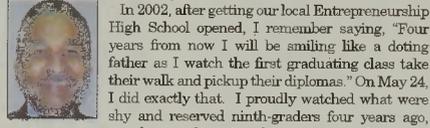


RON WALTERS

Building generation of entrepreneurs

Are you ready for some good news? Lord knows we need some. The world is going who knows where, with black people at the head of the line.

We have spying, lying, and conniving by our government, and nuclear conflict on the horizon, you know we need some good news. Well, you came to the right place; I have some outstanding news to share with you. It's about our young people, positive, conscious, serious young people with whom I spent time and addressed during their graduation ceremonies.



JAMES CLINGMAN

In 2002, after getting our local Entrepreneurship High School opened, I remember saying, "Four years from now I will be smiling like a dotting father as I watch the first graduating class take their walk and pick up their diplomas." On May 24, I did exactly that. I proudly watched what were shy and reserved ninth-graders four years ago, stand up and receive the recognition they truly deserve, having won local and national business plan competitions, having traveled to various cities from coast to coast, and after finishing what they

started. The Entrepreneurship High School in Cincinnati, the first of its kind, initially funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, provided the students with an opportunity not only to learn how to become business owners and managers, it also gave the students the confidence and independence they will need to navigate through this convoluted society of ours and, if need be, to rely on the job that they own rather than someone else's job, which can be taken away at a moment's notice.

Watching "my" young people as they came to the stage to receive their diplomas was one of the proudest moments of my life and something I could never fully describe. Suffice it to say that it is always good to see a concept evolve into a creation, a vision come to fruition. Even though I was the lone voice in the wilderness advocating for the development of this school and worked for a year with our team to establish it, I give much of the credit to the students.

Were it not for the students and their parents, who took the risk of coming to a new school, accepting the challenges of and entrusting their children to a nascent institution, if it were not for their sacrifices during their first couple years there, if it were not for their commitment and dedication to what we envisioned, there would not have been a school and I would not have had the pleasure of being at that graduation. So, I say, "Thank you" to the students, parents, supporters, teachers, staff, and principal of our Entrepreneurship High School. We did it!

The other pleasurable experience I want to share was at the graduation ceremonies of the SBA Academy in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Brother Kwaku Akan and his staff and volunteers rolled out the red carpet and invited me to participate in an event that was moving, enlightening, and rewarding. I was the featured speaker at their annual Malcolm X Birthday Celebration, on May 19 and the next day I addressed the graduates and the other students at the SBA Academy.

If you ever have the occasion to visit Fort Wayne, you owe it yourself, and your children, to stop by the SBA Academy, at the Weisser Park Youth Center, to see what Brother Akan has done with those very special young people who attend the Saturday African-Centered School.

I was moved on an emotional level by the maturity of the students, their knowledge of themselves and their ancestors, their knowledge of history and what it means to be African descendants. I got excited as I watched young children play "Lift Every Voice and Sing" on steel drums. I was captivated by the red, black, and green flags and the hallowed Bandera Square surrounded by books by Amos Wilson, Chancellor Williams, and many other great Black authors. I was enthralled by the huge photos of our elders looking down from the wall of the auditorium. Harriet Tubman, Marcus Garvey, Sojourner Truth, W.E.B. DuBois, Ida B. Wells, Malcolm X, and so many more heroes and she-ros were there to remind the students, and anyone entering the room, of our greatness and the shoulders upon which we stand.

The SBA Academy is a prime example of how we must take things into our own hands, as Martin Delany and Maria Stewart told us, and use the resources we have to educate our children. We must not solely rely on others to do that, it is our responsibility to provide them with African-centered information that builds Black pride in them rather than black shame, such as what many of my generation received. I still cannot believe that I would cheer for Tazwan when he yelled, and all the natives would scatter at the sound of his voice. How misguided was that?

You can be sure the youth who attend the Saturday School at SBA Academy are not being misguided. They are receiving information and inspiration that will support them as they grow and become exposed to a society that does not uplift and celebrate Blackness except on a commercialized basis. They are being taught to respect their elders in a society where that has become passé. They are developing relationships with one another that will cause them to love and respect rather than hate and distrust.

Finally, every student who graduates from the SBA Academy receives a laptop computer, now that's putting the icing on the cake, isn't it? Congratulations, SBA Academy. Thank you for a wonderful visit; I do plan to return.

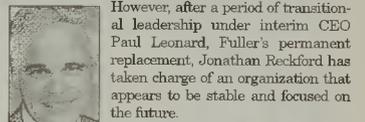
JAMES CLINGMAN, an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African American Studies department, is former editor of the Cincinnati Herald newspaper and founder of the Greater Cincinnati African American Chamber of Commerce.

Habitat's role after founder's firing

What has happened to Habitat for Humanity since the departure of its founder, Millard Fuller?

Since its founding by Fuller in 1976, Habitat has built more than 200,000 homes worldwide and engaged the efforts of hundreds of thousands of volunteers and new homeowners.

Fuller's charisma and vision were critical to Habitat's success. So when the Habitat governing board dismissed him early last year, many wondered about the organization's future.



D.G. MARTIN

However, after a period of transitional leadership under interim CEO Paul Leonard, Fuller's permanent replacement, Jonathan Reckford has taken charge of an organization that appears to be stable and focused on the future.

Leonard's new book, "Music of a Thousand Hammers: Inside Habitat for Humanity," reviews recent developments at the top level of Habitat's management, including Leonard's version of the tragic and disruptive fallout with Fuller.

He also sets out a number of tough challenges Habitat must meet, now that the crisis around Fuller's departure has passed such as finding affordable land, adapting Habitat's operations to the cultures of other countries, and managing the fund-raising competition among local Habitat organizations, national groups, and the international organization.

Leonard's concerns, however, come from someone who is optimistic and enthusiastic about Habitat's future. In fact, his book is even more of an inside look at himself than at Habitat. It is really a love story, one that tells how Paul Leonard and his wife Judy fell in love with Habitat, its mission, and its work at the local and international level.

But it was not love at first sight. In 1986, when Leonard was president of the John Crosland Company in Charlotte, he turned down an invitation to volunteer with Habitat. "I was helping to complete 300 to 400 units of affordable housing each year," he writes. His reaction to Habitat's building of one house at a time with volunteer labor was, "Maybe it will make you feel good. But you are kidding yourself if you think it will have any significant impact."

What changed Leonard from a skeptic into a Habitat activist? It takes a book to explain why Paul and Judy Leonard came to give almost every spare minute to Habitat work in the Lake Norman area and with Habitat groups and building projects across our country and on almost every continent.

Leonard credits Mooresville businessman Bob Wilson with persuading him in 1991 to open the door for Habitat to contact Centex, the homebuilding company that had acquired Crosland (and Leonard). Centex's CEO agreed to help and told Leonard to coordinate his company's efforts to sponsor 20 Habitat homes.

What hooked Leonard, however, were the experiences of actually building the homes. He says that, "more than any other person, Henry Eddy is responsible for cementing my relationship with Habitat." A retired plumber, known as the "father of Habitat in Mooresville," Eddy taught Leonard how to be a volunteer house leader.

Soon Leonard himself retired from Centex, and Eddy persuaded him to serve on a local Habitat board. At about the same time in 1995, because of his experience in finance and homebuilding, Leonard was elected to the international governing board of Habitat.

He and Judy became world travelers to attend board meetings and work on Habitat projects in other countries as well. Almost immediately, Leonard was asked to serve as Treasurer. Eventually, he became chair of the top governing board.

As chair, Leonard pushed for stronger management controls and accountability, sometimes differing with Millard Fuller, whose magnificent inspired ideas were not always grounded in business reality. Not long after Leonard completed his term as chair, the differences between Fuller and the board became irreconcilable. Leonard agreed to serve first as "manager" and then as interim CEO. Those who love Habitat and its mission of service will find "A Thousand Hammers" to be an inspirational and prophetic guide.

D.G. MARTIN is host of UNC-TV's "North Carolina Bookwatch" Sundays at 5 p.m.

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