

# Newsletter of the LCHR

## Louisiana Council on Human Relations

Gregory L. Richard, Interim Co-Editor  
James D. Wilson, Jr., Interim Co-Editor

Volume 44, Issue 3  
April, May, June, 2008

### **Rickels and Dennis Receive Oliver-Sigur Humanitarian Awards**

The LCHR presented its annual Oliver-Sigur Humanitarian Awards at its meeting on June 27. This year's recipients are longtime LCHR stalwarts Dr. Patricia Rickels and Mr. Joseph Dennis. In addition to their leadership roles within the LCHR, Rickels and Dennis have made significant contributions to the struggle for civil rights in their hometown of Lafayette, as well as at the Louisiana statewide level.

Rickels, originally from Wyoming, came to Louisiana in the 1950s to obtain her Ph.D. in English from LSU and resettled in Lafayette in 1957. In addition to postdoctoral work at Southern Univ., Rickels has served the Univ. of La. at Lafayette for over fifty years, teaching African American literature and folklore, as well as overseeing the University Honors program. She was a contributor to the "No Gains Without Pains" program that sought to document the Civil Rights movement in Louisiana and, along with her husband, Dr. Milton Rickels, also a longtime leader in the LCHR, were named Humanists of the Year by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities in 1990.

Dennis, born and raised in Lafayette, was a long-time supervisor in the salt mines of South Louisiana. He was a member of the United State Army during the Korean War and experienced the integration of the U.S. Armed Services under president Harry Truman. Dennis, a longtime civic leader and community activist, is the public mouthpiece of Lafayette's African American community. He has done significant work with the NAACP, the Black Alliance for Progress, the "One Man, One Vote" campaign, the fight for proportional school board representation, and most recently served on diversity and steering committees for the Univ. of La. at Lafayette.

The award is named in recognition of two seminal figures from the early days of the LCHR, Dr. James Oliver and Msgr. Alexander O. Sigur.

### **Joint Annual Meetings Held on June 27**

The Annual joint meetings of the Louisiana Council on Human Relations and the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations were held at the Catholic Life Center on the Baton Rouge campus of Southern University on June 21. The topic of this meeting was "Race, Class, Gender, and Religion: Past, Present, and Future." Keynote speakers for the event were: Dr. Toni Simms, professor of Sociology at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, who discussed the status of class in American society today; Dr. Barbara Conner, professor of Philosophy at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, who delivered an outline of the positive and negative consequences of various religions throughout history; and Maxine Crump, a former local newscaster and Baton Rouge activist, who discussed her experiences with and approaches to race and gender in society.

Two new LCHR board members were elected at the LCHR business meeting, Dr. Toni Simms and James D. Wilson, Jr. LCHR board officers for 2008-09 will be elected at the July 19 board meeting. Secretary Rickels informed the Board that Board Member Gregory Richard, interim editor of the newsletter, has to resign because he is relocating to Oxford, Miss., where he will pursue a Ph.D. in history at the Univ. of Miss. Newly elected board member James Wilson agreed to take over as interim editor of the newsletter. The Oliver-Sigur Humanitarian Awards were presented to LCHR president Joe Dennis and LCHR secretary Patricia Rickels.

The following officers were elected at the BRCHR annual meeting: Dr. Cynthia DeMarcus Manson,

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President; Rev. Glorious Wright, Vice-President; Dr. Bridget Udoh, Treasurer; Dr. Richard Haymaker, Membership Secretary; Ms. Patrice Niquille, Board Secretary. Other members were elected to the Board of Directors (year-class shown): Mrs. Gloria Hall (2011), Mrs. MiJi Thompson (2011). Remaining on the Board: Dr. Thelma L. Deamer (2010), Dr. Diana Dorroh (2009), Dr. Nathan Gottfried (2010), Dr. Laurabeth H. Hicks (2010), Ms. Valerie Jackson Jones (2010), Fr. George Lundy, Ph.D., S.J. (2010), Ms. Eileen Shieber (2010), Mr. Bobby Thompson (2010), and Ms. Marjorie Green (Immediate Past President).

## **LCHR Position Paper on “Institutional Racism” Released**

The final draft of the Louisiana Council on Human Relations position paper on Institutional Racism was approved at the April Board of Directors meeting and distributed at the annual meeting. The primary author of the paper is board member Professor Bradley Pollock and the co-editors of the paper are president Joe Dennis and secretary Patricia Rickels. Copies of the position paper can be obtained from secretary Rickels and are to be posted on the LCHR website.

## **Extraordinary Death Penalty Case Examined in New Book**

The extraordinary story of the botched 1946 execution of Louisiana teenager Willie Francis is told in a new book: *The Execution of Willie Francis: Race, Murder, and the Search for Justice in the American South* by Gilbert King. Francis, convicted of killing a prominent St. Martinville pharmacist, survived the state's first attempt to execute him, only to be informed that the state would try to kill him again in six days. Americans of all colors and classes were transfixed by the fate of this young man and the country was forced to ask questions about capital punishment that remain unresolved today.

**Stories or ideas for the newsletter  
may be sent to the editor at:**

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## **Noose Ban Becomes Law**

Trying to intimidate someone with a hangman's noose, a symbol of racial lynchings in the Old South, will now be a crime in Louisiana as Gov. Bobby Jindal signed House Bill 726 into law. The legislation, which is modeled after an existing law outlawing cross burning, was unanimously passed by the House and Senate.

The new law, which was sponsored by Rep. Rickey Hardy, D-Lafayette, makes it a crime for a person to place a hangman's noose, or a picture of one, on another person's property or on public property with "the intent to intimidate." Conviction could bring fines up to \$5,000 and up to a year in prison.

In 2006 three white students were suspended from Jena High School in central Louisiana after nooses were found hanging from a tree on campus. The local district attorney said there was no state law under which the three could be prosecuted.

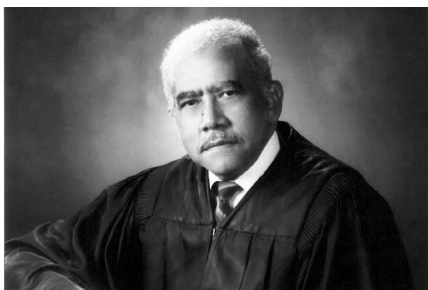
The Jena case gained national attention when, a few months after the nooses were placed in the tree, six black students were arrested in the beating of a white student at Jena High School.

That incident became one of the focal points of a civil rights march that drew some 20,000 demonstrators to Jena last September. After the demonstration, an 18-year-old man from nearby Colfax was arrested for driving past some of the marchers with a noose tied to the back of the truck. He eventually pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor federal hate crime.

In May, the state of New York outlawed the display of a noose as a threat, following several high-profile cases involving the symbol: Nooses were found last year on a black professor's door at Columbia University, outside a post office near the site of the Sept. 11 attacks in Manhattan, and on Long Island. They also have shown up in a black Coast Guard cadet's bag aboard a cutter and on a Maryland college campus.

Connecticut passed a bill this year making noose displays a misdemeanor unless property is damaged, which would be a felony.

## Two Prominent Civil Rights Figures Pass Away



### **Revius O. Ortique (1924-2008)**

Justice Revius O. Ortique, the first African American ever elected to the Louisiana State Supreme Court, passed away on June 22, 2008 at the age of 84.

He earned his bachelor's degree from Dillard University of New Orleans, his masters from Indiana University, and his law degree from the Southern University Law Center in 1956.

Ortique began his own private law practice in 1956, working on any type of case but focusing primarily on estate cases. His practice became one of the largest estate practices in the State of Louisiana. As the President of the Community Relations Council, Ortique served as "chief negotiator" for the peaceful desegregation of lunch counters, hotels and other public facilities in New Orleans.

Between 1965 and 1967, Ortique served as the president of the National Bar Association. In 1970, after the National Guard shot to death four students and wounded four others who were protesting the war in Southeast Asia, then-President Richard Nixon appointed Ortique to the President's Commission on Campus Unrest. Four years later, Nixon named Ortique to the newly created Legal Services Corporation, designed to guarantee equal access to the criminal justice system by providing legal assistance to poor defendants.

In 1992, Ortique was elected to the Louisiana Supreme Court; he retired two years later. He was named an alternate to the United Nations General Assembly by President Clinton in 1999.

### **Murphy Bell (1921-2008)**

Murphy Bell died on Wednesday, June 11, 2008 at the age of 87.

Born in 1921, he attended Perkins Elementary and McKinley High School in Baton Rouge. He earned his undergraduate degree from Southern University in 1946 after serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

Graduating from the Southern Law Center in 1957, he became active in civil rights litigation, focusing especially on the desegregation of Louisiana's public schools and defending other members of the Louisiana Civil Rights movement.

Southern Law Center Chancellor Freddie Pitcher Jr. lauded Bell for his dogged defense of civil rights leaders.

Bell defended Emmit J. Douglas, a former state NAACP president who was arrested in 1970 after attempting to eat in an all-white establishment in Baton Rouge.

Bell began representing black plaintiffs in the East Baton Rouge School Board desegregation case in 1969, thirteen years after the case was filed.

During his long career, he served as president of the Baton Rouge chapter of the NAACP, a member of the state Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and director of the Parish Office of Public Defender.

"As a criminal lawyer he was very tenacious," Pitcher said. "He was involved in some controversial cases early on but he never backed away from a challenge

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### YWCA Racial Justice Awards

The recipients of the 15th annual YWCA Racial Justice Award are William Winters III and City Court Judge Trudy M. White. The prestigious award recognizes exceptional and creative contributions toward the elimination of racism.

William Winters served on the Unitarian Church's advocacy staff as part of the Hurricane Recovery Project, where he focused on affordable housing in the context of race and class. He also was one of the earliest organizers of a local effort working to see justice done in the Jena 6 case. The group maintained its own Web site updated regularly with information, news and advocacy resources; and arranged for several buses to take Baton Rouge area residents to Jena on Sept. 20. Winters also has served as a volunteer facilitator for the YWCA's Dialogue on Race.

Judge Trudy White spearheaded the research, writing and production of "Baton Rouge's Troubled Waters: Brooks Park and Beyond," a historical documentary recently produced by LPB. The documentary chronicles the spirit, culture and self-sufficiency of the South Baton Rouge segregated community at a time when African Americans had separate schools, movie theaters and restaurants. The program also highlights the impact of *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Davis v. East Baton Rouge Parish School Board*, the nation's longest-running desegregation case. It is an educational tool to facilitate discussions on race, sex and class.

The YWCA Racial Justice Award has been given in past years to the late Rupert Richardson, Rabbi Barry Weinstein, the late Rev. Jimmy Stovall, Victor Bussie, the Town Meeting Committee, the late state Sen. J.D. DeBlieux, 100 Black Men, Jan Bernard, B.K. Agnihotri, the late Ethel Harris, Jill Craft, the Rev. Jeff Day, Sister Kathleen Bahlinger, CSJ, the late Bill Dickerson, Maxine Crump, Nancy Miller, Swine Palace Productions, Rachel Emanuel and City Constable Reginald R. Brown Sr.

### Brotherhood and Sisterhood Awards

Louisiana natives Ernest Gaines and Mary Ann Sternberg will receive the Greater Baton Rouge Brotherhood and Sisterhood Award at the 46th Annual Brotherhood and Sisterhood Awards Banquet on Aug. 7. The writers are being honored for their work to promote justice and harmony through their artistic talent and public service.

"We are pleased to honor the valuable contributions and dedication to the advancement of human relations from these very prominent artists and humanitarians. Their work to promoting peace, harmony, and goodwill deserves high praise," said Ernie T. Hughes of 100 Black Men of Baton Rouge, and 2008 awards chairman.

The annual Brotherhood and Sisterhood Awards were started under the auspices of the National Conference for Community and Justice and are now being continued by the 100 Black Men of Baton Rouge. Hughes said the annual award program recognizes two individuals who have worked in their professional, philanthropic, and volunteer capacities to breakdown barriers in the community.

"Both honorees, Ernest Gaines through his poignant tales of life and struggles in the rural South and Mary Ann Sternberg through her reflections of historic Louisiana, have promoted a better understanding of the unique and sometimes complicated aspects of our community," said Hughes.

Sternberg serves as internship coordinator for the LSU Manship School of Mass Communication as well as a consultant for the school's public relations efforts on behalf of its programs. She is the author of four books, most recently *Winding Through Time: the forgotten history and present-day peril of Bayou Manchac*, and is a published freelance nonfiction writer and a public relations professional.



## **First Minority Dean of the LSU College of Business Appointed**

Eli Jones has been named as dean of the E. J. Ourso College of Business at LSU, effective July 1 pending approval by the LSU Board of Supervisors. Jones, who becomes the first minority dean of the E. J. Ourso College of Business, most recently served as a professor of marketing and associate dean for Executive Education Programs in the Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston.

Jones holds a bachelor's degree in journalism, an MBA and a Ph.D. from Texas A&M University. He has been at the University of Houston for 11 years and previously served as the executive director of the Sales Excellence Institute and the Program for Excellence in Selling.

Jones has published 30 articles in major marketing and management journals and co-authored two books: "Selling ASAP: Art, Science, Agility, Performance" and "Strategic Sales Leadership: BREAKthrough Thinking for BREAKthrough Results." He currently serves on four editorial review boards and on the board of directors of Administaff, the nation's leading professional employer organization. Jones is the chairman of the Compensation Committee.

Jones has won 10 Excellence in Teaching awards at the college, university, national and international



**Dr. Eli Jones**

levels, and he has taught sales and sales management at the undergraduate and MBA levels, and a doctoral seminar in marketing strategy at the University of Houston. He also has been a visiting professor at Vlerick School of Management in Belgium, in the MBA program at Tuck Business School at Dartmouth and in the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell. He has taught leadership, sales strategies and customer relationship management to senior- and mid-level executives in China, Dubai, France, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Trinidad, United Kingdom and in the United States.

"Although the search committee was presented with many outstanding candidates, Dr. Jones was clearly a front runner from the start," said LSU Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development Brooks Keel, who chaired the dean search committee.

### **CAHSD Addresses Transit Issues for the Mental Health Customers**

Since 2004 the BRCHR has been represented by a member on the Advisory Board of the Capital Area Service District as a community volunteer/activist. The purpose is to serve as a consultant to the CAHSD Division of Behavioral Health/Mental health Section, which includes advocacy, education, liaison, and consultation. This is in keeping with the BRCHR's mission of addressing the needs of all citizens. The Council has for years addressed issues in support of stable funding and better transportation services for the community.

The 2004-2009 CAHSD Operational Plan included Transportation as one of the eight "Community Supports and Services that Support Optimal Functioning," and the CAHSD Board noted transportation as a priority issue to address, especially after the influx of mental health citizens from the hurricane. A Spring 2006 survey of the seven parishes that CAHSD serves identified the most pressing public transportation service needs as: routes, schedules, and transfers. CATS (Capital Area Transit Service) staff member Kiran Vemuri address the issues raised in the survey at a January 2008 CAHSD meeting. The CAHSD Board voted to continue receiving CATS updates every five to six months, and to offer suggestions and assistance to CATS so that they can provide better services to mental health customers.

## **Membership Information**

**(for fiscal year beginning July 1, 2008)**

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

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

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

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

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