

HUMAN RELATIONS NEWS

Jan/Feb/Mar 2005

Vol. 41, No. 2

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Newsletter of the Louisiana Council on Human Relations

Incorporating the Baton Rouge Human Relations Council News

Winter Board Meeting

The LCHR Board of Directors met on Jan. 8th, at the Lafayette home of Dr. Patricia Rickels, along the banks of the Vermilion River.

Treasurer Paul Burns reported an outstanding balance of \$959.61 in the checking account, and \$1,723.67 in the money market certificate. This was his last report as Treasurer. He confirmed his resignation as submitted at the previous board meeting. Mr. John Mikell, of Arnaudville volunteered to serve as his replacement, and he was unanimously elected by the assembled board. A motion of the Board was passed adding him to the list of those designated with check-signing privileges. LCHR can move confidently forward knowing that our meager resources will be wisely shepherded and accounted for, without interruption.

Personal experience of "Brown vs. Board of Education" was selected as the discussion topic for the Saturday April 9th Board meeting, to be held at 10 a.m. at the home of Paul Y. Burns. He lives at 2137 Cedardale Ave. in Baton Rouge. Directions will be sent out one week prior to the meeting to all Board members. This is a "Brown Bag" luncheon event.

Plans were formulated at the winter meeting for the 2005 Annual

Meeting. The date was set tentatively for Saturday, June 11th, at a location to be announced, following further investigation. The theme was to relate to the topic of Multi-culturalism, as it applies to Louisiana. A rapidly developing reality in Louisiana, and the entire South, is that the formerly rigid socio-cultural divide between White and Black has been replaced by a more varied ethnic collage, encompassing not only African-American and Euro-American but various Asian and Hispanic socio-cultural groupings as well. We hope to get a window into these current cultural interchanges and demographic realities, at the up-coming Annual Meeting on Sat. June 11th. Mark your calendars!



Capital Punishment Update

Sr. Helen Prejean, New Orleans nun and author in 1993 of *Dead Man Walking*, has written a new book, *The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions*. She tells about two inmates, wrongfully convicted and executed, whom she came to know as a spiritual advisor. The second part of the book describes "the machinery of death", the outrageous, but legal process of the death penalty, heavily weighted against the poor and minority defendants. Sr. Prejean relates appalling injustices, such as unreasonable procedural rules, racial bias, prosecutorial and judicial misconduct, arbitrariness in sentencing, politicized pardon boards, and a pathetic public defender system.

LCHR has long opposed the death penalty. Its position paper, adopted in 1989,

Capital Punishment, cont.

attacks capital punishment on the grounds of its discrimination against minorities and the poor, and the impossibility of redressing mistakes, but mainly because the “death penalty is morally wrong”. Capital punishment is legalized murder.

Despite thorough documentation and the highly moral thrust of her arguments, Sr. Helen has her critics. Two of them have attempted to rebut her arguments and defend the death penalty in another recent book, *Victims of Dead Man Walking*, authored by Michael Varnado and Daniel P. Smith.

The Exonerated is a play which examines the American justice system through the true stories of six former death row inmates, all proven innocent after years of incarceration on Death Row. The ward-winning drama, which premiered Off-Broadway in 2002, was shown at LSU’s Swine Palace Theater, from Feb. 18th through March 13th. Following the Feb. 27th performance, there was an informative discussion of the death penalty by a panel of Baton Rouge religious leaders and London-based actress Christine St. John.

The U.S. is becoming increasingly isolated in its use of capital punishment. Last Oct. 2nd the World Congress Against the Death Penalty met in Montreal, Canada. The nation of Turkey recently abolished the death penalty. This past December the Kansas Supreme Court struck down that state’s death penalty.

Although Louisiana’s last execution was in 2002, the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola is building a larger Death Row and Execution House, with 160 cells.



Civil Liberties for U.S. Muslims

A national study has found that 44 % of those surveyed by the Media and Society Research Group of Cornell University, said they believe the U.S. government should curtail civil liberties for Muslim Americans in some way. This percentage is alarmingly high, because a citizen’s religion should in no way affect constitutional rights, and Americans should have great respect for our Constitution’s protection of the civil liberties of all citizens and the concept of religious liberty. L.C.H.R. and B.R.C.H.R. are non-sectarian organizations, which have, on their boards, members who are Muslim, Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, Unitarian, and of no particular religion.

Blanco Gives Pardon

Governor Kathleen Blanco’s first pardon of her term as the state’s chief executive, was done in conjunction with the celebration of the Birthday of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Rev. Betty Claiborne of Baton Rouge was arrested in 1963 for violating a law upholding racial segregation. It took 24 years and the election of a woman governor, to right this wrong. Rev. Claiborne ministers to incarcerated women.

SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The banking company which has acquired banking giant, Bank One, as well as Citizens Bank and Canal Bank in New Orleans, J.P. Morgan/Chase, has established a \$5 million college scholarship fund in Louisiana. The two New Orleans banks had accepted slaves as collateral on loans from plantation owners in the 1800’s. In January J.P. Morgan/ Chase apologized to its employees for these historical wrongs, which contributed to the institutionalization of slavery at that time. We also should be aware of how profiting from human suffering continues in our day.

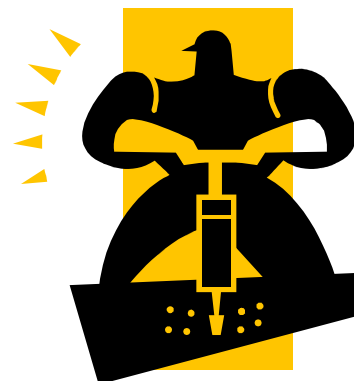
MALCOLM X LEGACY

He was one of the most charismatic figures of the civil rights movement era. Malcolm X rose from obscurity as an ex-convict, who abandoned his “slave name” and became a firebrand preacher of the Nation of Islam, who met a violent death 40 years ago this Feb. 21st, at age 39.

Four decades after his death Malcolm X continues to be an inspiration, and a movement is underway to re-examine and preserve his legacy.

In breaking with the sectarian and separatist Nation of Islam, and converting to orthodox Islam, Malcolm broadened his message to one of human rights in the context of the post-colonial aspirations of peoples of color world-wide.

“It is our responsibility to make sure that we do preserve and document our history to empower future generations” said Ilyasah Shabazz, one of his six daughters. The Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, site of the assassination, and derelict for many years, is being turned into the Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Education Center. It is slated to officially open on May 19th, on what would have been Malcolm’s 80th birthday. A treasure trove of his papers was recently rescued and is now held by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and is on display at the new Memorial. Manning Marable, professor at Columbia University, is working on a new biography of Malcolm X, which makes use of the newly available material, and says it will dispel previous errors and make his legacy better understood. (from *The Advertiser* 2-21-05)



Diversity at U.L.L.

Next semester the University of Louisiana will have a new Director of Campus Diversity, focused on bolstering the number of minorities working and learning on campus. The position was formerly classified as the Director of Minority Affairs. Dr. Kathleen Sparrow served in this capacity until this past year, when she became the head of the Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology. Dr. Sparrow(or Handy, as she is now called) has also served on the LCHR Board.

The selection committee is in the final process of making a selection for the position. One of the priorities of the director will be increasing the number of African-American faculty and students on the campus, says Dr. Ray Authement, university president. As the university moves toward selective admissions in the fall, a more concentrated effort will be made to attract more African-American students to the campus.

About 16 percent of full-time faculty are minorities. Nearly 18 percent of students on campus are black, and this year more than 19 percent of incoming freshmen were black. There is concern that more local African-American students are going to other schools. More than 25 percent of students over-all, were classified as minority.

The office, formerly known as the Office of Minority Affairs was created in the early 90's. According to DeWayne Bowie, U.L. Registrar, and president of the Black faculty and staff caucus, the office will be of service in advocating for all students who are in any disadvantage in their engagement on campus. He listed those students who may feel underrepresented as students with

disabilities, international students, gay and lesbian students, racial minority students, and even gender. "It's a wide spectrum and we wanted a name that represents inclusiveness", said Bowie. (*The Advertiser 2-23-05*)

DeBose Competition 30th Anniversary

Southern University has hosted the *Tourgee DeBose National Piano Competition* for 30 years in Baton Rouge. The festival was named in honor of a long-time faculty member and chairman of the Southern University Piano Department and of the S.U. Division of Music. Professor Dubose was a pioneer exponent of African-American involvement in the world of classical piano, and was contemporaneous with those better known exponents of vocal arts, Roland Hayes and Marian Anderson.

Over the years the festival has provided opportunity to African-American music students and showcased outstanding African-American pianists. The late Natalie Hinderas was one of the first such pianists to be honored.

As the fame of the competition has spread, it has become a noted venue for aspiring pianists of all races and ethnicities. The scope of the Festival has become more inclusive in reaching across divisions of classical, popular, and folk arts. The Festival events this year include the Neal Family Blues Band, noted poet Nikki Giovanni, displays of the sculpture of the late Frank Hayden, and jazz and Gospel evenings. Events are held over the first two weekends of April, culminating with the joint recital on Sunday evening, April 10th by Drs. Charles Petaway and Dr. William Chapman Nyaho. The festival website is: www.debosenationalpianocompetition.org



Mink Finally gets Phone

The small town of Mink, located deep in the Kisatchie National Forest in southern Natchitoches Parish, has never been regarded as deserving of phone service, at least not only very recently. Gov. Kathleen Blanco was finally able to call one of these residents, long left out of service, and the line was busy when she called. When she spoke with 89-year-old Alice Bolton, she said that she hoped the telemarketers had not gotten to her before she did.

Gov. Blanco thanked Public Service Commissioner Foster Campbell for his work in pressuring BellSouth to extend service to Mink, and to the tiny communities of Shaw and Black Hawk in southern Concordia Parish, near the Mississippi River. Gov. Blanco also commended Campbell for his work in establishing the "Do Not Call" program in Louisiana, to stop the invasive use of phone lines by telemarketers.

Now, when we are debating public provision of high-speed fiber optic service, it is rather amazing that there are still some rural residents, who up to now, have never been able to receive telephone service to their remote communities. Although the phone company may find it profitable to run phone lines to these areas, this should be more than off-set by their profits in urban areas. Since they are a regulated utility, it is amazing there has not been insistence on the part of officials sooner, that they provide service to these poor rural residents.

Remembering the Internment of WWII

Mr. Fred Korematsu, who became a symbol of civil rights for challenging the World War II internment orders that sent 120,000 Japanese-Americans to government internment camps, has died at 86.

His attorney, Dale Minami, said "He was like our Rosa Parks. He took an unpopular stand at a critical point in our history." After finally getting his conviction overturned in the early 1980's for opposing internment orders during the war, Korematsu helped win a national apology and reparations for internment camp survivors and their families in 1988.

He was honored by President Clinton in 1998 and the highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, was bestowed upon him. At that time Clinton said, "In the long history of our country's constant search for justice, some names of ordinary citizens stand for millions of souls—Plessy, Brown, Parks. To that distinguished list today we add the name of Fred Korematsu."

Korematsu was a 23-year old welder, born in the U.S. to immigrant parents, when military officials ordered all Japanese-Americans on the West Coast to report to remote and dismal internment camps.

Nearly all complied, including Korematsu's family and friends, who urged him to not

resist the order; but he refused.

"All of them turned their backs on me at that time, because they thought I was a troublemaker", he recalled. "I thought what the military was doing was unconstitutional. I was really upset because I was branded as an enemy alien, when I'm an American."

He was arrested, convicted of violating the order, and sent to an internment camp in Utah. The Supreme Court upheld his conviction in December 1944, agreeing with the government that it was justified by the need to combat sabotage and espionage.

Current legal scholars almost universally regard the ruling as one of the worst in the court's history. But it was not repudiated until the early 1980s, when Japanese-American lawyers and civil rights advocates unearthed new evidence that undermined the internment order. Korematsu's conviction was overturned in '83.

For almost 40 years, Korematsu did not talk about his experiences, and even his daughter had to learn about it in a college textbook. His lawyer said, "He had quiet courage...He did things because he thought they were right. He just thought this was wrong." (*The Advertiser* 4-1-05)

Eds. Note: As the story of Mr. Fred Korematsu is not well known, his passing is worth noting. Particularly, since the protections of the Constitution have been loosened by the Patriot Act, and manipulation of fears about those who may be different and may be construed as threatening, is with us again. Note the item on the alarming disregard for civil liberties of many toward Muslim-Americans, as noted on page 2. The internment of the 40s was a grave injustice, and it could happen again, if we are not vigilant of the rights of all people under the protection of the law.

Sex Discrimination Ruling by Supreme Court

A closely divided Supreme Court ruled that a teacher or coach who claims sexual discrimination on behalf of others is protected from firing under the same landmark law that greatly expanded athletic opportunities for women.

The 5-4 decision expands the scope of the Title IX gender equity law, to protect whistle-blowers, as well as direct victims. It means that school officials, regardless of their gender, may sue when they suffer retaliation for complaining about discrimination.

The ruling was cheered by women's advocates, who said the protection would encourage reports of bias that otherwise would never be made. School boards decried it as unfairly exposing them to a new wave of lawsuits.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, writing for the majority, said Alabama high school girls basketball coach Roderick Jackson, was entitled to pursue a Title IX lawsuit, after he was fired for complaining that the boys team received better treatment. "Teachers and coaches such as Jackson are often in the best position to vindicate the rights of their students because they are better able to identify discrimination and bring it to the attention of administrators," wrote O'Connor. "Without protection from retaliation, individuals who witness discrimination would likely not report it," she said.

The dissent was written by Justice Clarence Thomas, who decried the ruling as defying the language of the statute, which requires that a (cont. on next page)

Sex Discrimination, cont.

lawsuit filed under Title IX be for “sex discrimination.” Justice Thomas wrote that “A claim of retaliation is not a claim of discrimination on the basis of sex....The question before us is only whether Title IX prohibits retaliation.” He was joined in the dissent by Justices Rehnquist, Scalia, and Kennedy.

Coach Jackson lost his job after he complained to school officials that his women’s team should have a regulation-size gym with rims that weren’t bent, just as the boys team had. He stated, following the ruling, “This is a clear message that across the country a person can come forward—whether they are a teacher, an administrator, or coach—and speak on behalf of others, without fear of retaliation.” (from *The Advertiser* 3-30-05)

Hate Group Returns

The Rev. Fred of the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas, has returned to Louisiana. He and his congregation have a ministry of traveling around the country to express condemnation and hate toward gay and lesbians. Last year they were in Lafayette to demonstrate against the efforts of Ms. Sharon Huff, a lesbian mother, to obtain redress when a teacher at Gallet Elementary disciplined her son when he referred to his mother as being “gay” in the classroom. The teacher was backed up by the superintendent and school board. As was noted in the last issue of this newsletter, the teacher has since filed a civil suit against Ms. Huff.

According to Shirley Roper-Phelps, one of 13 children of Rev. Phelps and the church’s attorney, about a dozen protesters will carry signs condemning homo-

sexuality as being from the devil.

Local religious and campus leaders have stated they would stand by members of the Gay-Straight Alliance in upholding their right to gather on campus, and would ignore the anti-gay protestors. (from *The Advertiser*, 3-27-05).

Ed. Note: Rev. Phelps, has a right go around the country and protest. However, communities must reject his toxic message, and instead promote understanding and protection of the rights of all. The Nicholls State community is to be commended for responding appropriately to those who foment disrespect and hate.

Court Reinstates Ban

The Louisiana Supreme Court reinstated the anti-gay marriage amendment that was approved by 79% of voters last September. Following passage a suit disputing the legality of the Amendment was heard, and it was ruled by Judge Morvant of Baton Rouge, that the amendment also interfered with recognizing any legal status for common-law relationships, domestic partnerships, and civil unions between both gay and heterosexual couples.

Without dissent, the high court reversed Morvant’s ruling, which struck down the amendment on the grounds that it violated another provision of the state constitution—that amendments cover only one legal issue. The high court declared that the amendment would stand but would not be construed as interfering with property rights, contracts, wills, and other matters between same or opposite sex but un-married couples.

Randy Evans, attorney for the Forum for Equality, which opposed the amendment, called the decision a victory. He said opponents never claimed that the suit was aimed at allowing same-sex couples to marry, but to protect those rights as they now stand from being eroded by the vague and sweeping language of the amendment.

A plaintiff in the suit, however, did not share this sentiment. Gerald Thibodeaux of Lafayette said “I think it’s really a sad day for Louisiana and the country when hatred, bigotry, and prejudice are written into the very

document that is meant to protect the rights of people, and not to take those rights away”. His partner, Mark Stanford said, “Obviously, the justices put their thumbs in the air, took the wind direction, and went that way.”

(from *The Advertiser* 1-20-05)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Advertiser editorialized on 3-24-05 that domestic violence is a serious problem which is not receiving the attention of the community that it merits. A recent rally resulting in only six demonstrators turning up. According to *The Advertiser*, “The F.B.I. says the number of women who have been murdered nationally by their intimate partners is greater than the number of soldiers killed in the Vietnam War. It is even worse here, however, than in most states. A study two years ago by the national Violence Policy Center showed that Louisiana is the fifth worst state in the frequency of men killing women....According to a study, the Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, the health care needs and costs of women who are battered are more than twice that of those never battered. Battered women are disproportionately represented among homeless and suicide victims.”

Ed. Note: The individual and social toll of this often hidden form of violence is nearly bottomless. Often children are traumatized by it, and the psychological and health effects on victims and their children stretch through the life cycle. It has got to stop!

First call for dues for fiscal year 7/1/05 –6/30/06 tax deductible dues:

- \$15 Individual**
- \$20 Family**
- \$1 Hardship**

For non-BR residents: make check to: LCHR
Send to:
Paul Y. Burns, 2137 Cedardale Ave. B.R., LA 70808

See page 8 for B.R. residents.

With Earth Day approaching, we look back on an article last Earth Day in *The Advertiser*, in which our President, **JOE DENNIS**, and some friends of LCHR were featured.

The cover article featured a picture of Joe taking part in a community clean-up project he had helped organize. The article credits him for spearheading annual clean-up days for the past eight years in the McComb-Veasey area, through the Citizens Action Council, the neighborhood action group founded by Joe. Residents are given trash bags for cleaning around homes and asked to bring broken appliances and other trash to the curb for pick-up. The removal of old tires, has had most beneficial results. Four hundred were removed the previous year. In yards, such tires serve as a breeding environment for mosquitoes, and possible spread of the mosquito-borne West Nile virus, which has state health officials worried. Such tires must be picked up by a contractor, and shredded for a recyclable use.

Now that most debris and trash has been removed, Joe is hoping that more green and flowering spaces can be developed by homeowners.

The Earth Day article also featured pictures and interviews with other environmental activists and educators.

A friend of L.C.H.R. also featured was **WILMA SUBRA** of New Iberia, an independent chemist and environmental justice advocate. She has volunteered consulting and lab testing to communities who have faced environmental dangers. She was a recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Genius Award in 1999, and worked on the notorious Love Canal case and with communities in the petrochemical corridor of our state. Her help empowered the residents of the Morgan City area to close the notorious Marine Shale hazardous waste incinerator at Amelia.

MARIE-ISABELLE PAUTZ is an activist who recently moved to New Orleans. For her, political organizing involves the development of community gardens and organic farming. She considers growing food of one's own as empowering, especially to low-income people who often spend a greater proportion of income on food which is more processed and of poorer nutritional value than what can be afforded by higher-income shoppers. Her efforts helped launch a horticultural therapy project for the poor and homeless served by Acadiana Outreach Center. She also brought environmental issues to the fore on Acadiana Open Channel programs which she hosted.

BILL FONTENOT is well-known for his weekly column on birds. He is Curator at the Acadiana Park Nature Station, located

at the end of Alexander St. on the northside of Lafayette. He was told by a professor, when a student of biology in the 1970's, that they would be managing small parcels, as there would not be that many wild spaces left. Today the 110-acre park is a wooded oasis in the midst of the sprawling metropolis of Lafayette. Fontenot says it will take very careful and smart planning to balance conservation and development. Once wild areas are gone, they can never be brought back as they were.

Also working with Fontenot at the Acadiana Nature Station is **STACY SCARCE**. She is a naturalist and environmental educator, who teaches school children when they come on outings to the Nature Station. She says, "we have discussions about pollution, over-consumption, waste, endangered species, and how we depend on plants and animals that are here. After the discussion, we go out on the trails and see all the turtles, snakes, and whatever we can find."

DURGA POUDEL is a soil scientist who teaches at U.L.-Lafayette. He grew up on a farm in Nepal, where rain would leave huge gullies on the farms perched on mountain slopes. While this is not the situation here in Acadiana, still, soil and water are basic to society, and both must be kept clean and healthy. Poudel has worked all over the world studying the effects of erosion. At present he is working on projects of how to improve the quality of water run-off from agricultural land.



The Baton Rouge Human Relations Council Newsletter

JAN/FEB/MAR 2005

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First Black Police Chief

Sgt. Jeffrey LeDuff, a 23-year veteran of the Baton Rouge Police Department, was appointed chief by Mayor Kip Holden in February. LeDuff has received several awards for his outstanding police work. Holden said that LeDuff can improve staff morale and implement changes which Holden has recommended in the department.

Interfaith Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

An interfaith gathering in memory of Dr. King was held at the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge on Jan. 16. Speakers from diverse religious traditions spoke, including the Rev. Jeff Day, Greater Baton Rouge Federation of Churches & Synagogues; Pastor Charles T. Smith, Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church; Rabbi Stanton M. Zamek, Beth Shalom Synagogue; Fr. Shelton Fabre, Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church; Antoinette K. Washington, Baha'i Community of Baton Rouge; Nagendra P. Shankaraman- chi, Datta Buddhist Temple; Pastor Stanley J. Eckermann, St. Paul Lutheran Church; Pastor Jennifer Jones-Bridgett, Working Interfaith Network; Edward Ott, Islamic Center of Baton Rouge; and the Rev. Steve J. Crump, Unitarian Church.

Two B.R. Attorneys Die

Longtime members of the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations Norbert C. Rayford and J.D. DeBlieux died in early March. Rayford, 77, was the first black 19th Judicial District Court commissioner and a Southern University Law School professor. Attorney DeBlieux was a Louisiana state senator, first elected in 1956. In recognition of his reputation for integrity, he was known as "the conscience of the senate." In the early 1960s when the Louisiana legislature passed a strong pro-segregation bill, he was the only one in either of the two houses to vote "no." He received several civic awards, including the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations' Humanitarian Award in 1981.

Controversy over Purple & Gold Confederate Flag

At LSU in Baton Rouge a controversy has arisen over the display of purple and gold Confederate flags. Purple and gold are the official LSU colors. Letters to the editor of The Daily Reveille cover both sides of the issue. Some see this flag as a symbol of hate; others see it as a symbol of their heritage. For good human relations, those who want to fly the flag should be considerate of the feeling of other persons; in other words, don't display this flag where it is visible to anyone to whom it is offensive.

Baton Rouge Council Events and Actions

First call for dues for fiscal year 7/1/05 –6/30/06 tax deductible dues:

- \$15 Individual**
- \$20 Family**
- \$1 Hardship**

For BR residents:
make check to: BRCHR
Send to:
R.Haymaker, 254 Nelson Dr.
B.R., LA 70808

Dues cover membership in LCHR.

See page 5 for non-BR residents.

Meeting with Congressman Richard Baker

The Baton Rouge Council took the lead in organizing a meeting of a number of organizations with Congressman Richard Baker as a citizen lobbying effort to ask that the federal budget not be balanced on the backs of the poor.

On Mar. 22, 2005, we met with the congressman for 30 minutes.

The topics included:

Affordable housing: Becky Reiner of Catholic Community Services,

Education grants: Rev. Jennifer Jones Bridgett of Working Interfaith Network,

Hunger: Rev. Randy Nichols of Bread for the World and Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless,

Medicaid and Uninsured: Rev. Jeff Day of the Greater Baton Rouge Federation of Churches and Synagogues,

Aging: Jim Bloin of the Capital Area Council on Aging,

TANIF/Poverty: Rev. Phil Woodland of the BR Council.

Our bottom line was that the budget is a moral document.

Congressman Baker was non-

committal in restoring cuts to education, TANIF and health care, housing and our other issues. He went on to describe the successes of the Carville project for youths at risk, providing vocational training and much more.

Noah's Pudding

Muslims from Turkey living in Baton Rouge invited members of the University United Methodist Church and other friends to share in their traditional "Noah's Pudding" Festival, Saturday, March 5, 7:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall of University United Church.

The evening was an outgrowth of the "Abraham Salon" sponsored by the Greater Baton Rouge Federation of Churches and Synagogues and co-sponsored by the BR Council starting two years ago.

There was a pot luck of special Turkish dishes and highlighting the traditional "Noah's Pudding" or "Asure." Asure is one of the oldest and most traditional desserts of Turkish Cuisine. 15 or more ingredients go into it.. During "asure" month the pudding is prepared in large amounts almost in every household and offered to guests .

There is a legend about the origin of this desert. When Noah's ark came to rest on Mount Ararat in northeastern Turkey, they felt that a feast of celebration was called for. But

Hate Group Comes to Baton Rouge

The National Alliance, a white-supremacy group based in West Virginia, gave a dinner in Baton Rouge March 11 for David Irving, a British historian who denies that the Holocaust happened. Concerned about the safety of the two Jewish synagogues in Baton Rouge, the E.B.R. Parish Sheriff assigned deputies and constables as a safety precaution. The National Alliance's website states that its goal is to establish a racially clean area of the earth for white people. The hate group has increased efforts in Louisiana in recent months to recruit more adherents to its despicable program. The National Alliance, perhaps America's most important neo-Nazi organization, has a magazine it calls "Resistance," a periodical which promotes white-power music.

their supplies were exhausted. However, they hunted through the ark and every little bit of food they could find, they put into the pudding and made themselves a splendid feast of Asure.

It is hoped the evening helped to tear down barriers of fear and suspicion, and build bridges of understanding and trust. There was a brief discussion of the points of similarity and difference among the three monotheistic religions claiming Abraham as father, Jewish, Christian and Muslim.

Letters to public officials

The president of the Council sent letters to the following public officials as directed by the board:

A congratulatory letter to Mayor-President Melvin "Kip" Holden;

A thank you letter to Gov. Blanco for signing Executive Order No. KBB 2004-54, State Prohibition Against Harassment and Discrimination. In particular we appreciate including "sexual orientation" along with race, color, religion, sex, national origin, political affiliation or disabilities;

An advocacy letter to Superintendent of Schools Charlotte D. Placide concerning the appointment of an educational leader that would promote the ideals of the Council. The letter was drafted by Council board member Patrice Niquille.



Stand up for Children Rally on the Capitol Steps

This is the second annual event started under Phil Woodland's leadership on the Council in a collaboration with the Children's Coalition and more than 50 organizations. Please come out and **STAND UP FOR CHILDREN** on the **CAPITOL STEPS, Tuesday, April 26, 11:00.** (For a sharp image of the above flyer, please see www.brchr.org.)

Equity! Baton Rouge

Founded about a year ago, Equity! Baton Rouge was founded to "Build Unity and Racial Justice Throughout the Baton Rouge Community." This is an outgrowth of Casey Family Foundation funded work in the community. Casey funded Equity! BR with a three-year

start-up grant.

The Louisiana Council on Human Relations is acting as fiscal agent while Equity's application for 501(c)(3) tax deductible status is pending. We have received the first check from Casey for \$3,750.00 as a pass through to Equity! BR.

Please go to brchr.org and click on "Advocacy Coalition" and then on "Roster" to find information on Equity!BR.

Powell-Reznikoff Humanitarian Awards

The 2005 awards go to two 1953 Baton Rouge Bus Boycott activists, Johnnie A. Jones, Sr., and Martha White; and to community activist Gertrude "Trudi" Meyers. Mayor-President Melvin "Kip" Holden was scheduled to be speaker. However he was unable to return from Taiwan in time for the event and his Assistant Chief Administrative

Officer, Alfred Williams, was designated as our speaker.

Radio WXOK

Our board member Rev. Glorious Wright has a weekly radio show on WXOK 1460AM on Sunday mornings at 10:00AM. Council Members Richard Haymaker and Hallique Dawson have been guests on the program in the last few weeks publicizing events and activities of the Council.

Current and historical information on our *active* Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations web site

www.brchr.org

Check the web site regularly for:

- Flyers for events**
- Archive of Newsletters**
- Announcements**
- Links to other web sites**
- The Advocacy Coalition**

**Newsletter of the Louisiana Council on Human Relations and the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations
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