

Newsletter of the LCHR and BRCHR

Louisiana Council on Human Relations and the
Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations

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Volme 48, 2
April, May, and June 2012

LCHR and BRCHR Joint Annual Meetings, Forum on School Bullying and Humanitarian Awards

The Louisiana Council on Human Relations and the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations held a joint annual meeting on June 30, 2012 in the Mount Pilgrim Family Life Center, 9700 Scenic Highway in Baton Rouge. The program began with a forum the topic being “Bullying: What is the Answer?” This was followed by the awarding of the Oliver/Sigur Humanitarian Awards to Ms. Marjorie Green and Lt. General Russell L. Honore’ (Retired). Business meetings were then held by both councils.

Dr. Thelma L. Deamer, President of the BRCH, presided over the program. Greetings and a statement on the problem of bullying were given by Mr. Josephus Dennis, President of the LCHR. The program chairperson was Ms. Gloria J. Hall.

Forum: “Bullying: What is the Answer?”

The topic of bullying is a timely one. The program attendance was one of the largest for the councils’ forums. The forum was in the form of a panel discussion with audience participation. There was a rich array of panelists having the backgrounds to discuss the subject from different standpoints. The moderator was Mr. Gwynn Shamlin, an I care Specialist on Bullying – East Baton Rouge Parish School System. The panel consisted of the following:

Rep. Patricia H. Smith, Proponent for Legislation on Bullying, Louisiana State Legislator; Mrs. Pamela Taylor Johnson, Division B. Judge, EBR Juvenile Court; Mr. Curtis Nelson, Section Chief for Juvenile Services, District Attorney’s Office; Ms. Erin Bendily, Duputy Superintendent for Policy and External Affairs, LA State Dept. of Education; Miss Deja Monet Stepter, 6th grade student, Author of the book Erica D. Mayfield, The Bully, from Northwestern Middle School and; Miss Paige Hudson, 12 grade student from McKinley High School.

Miss Stepter read some excerpts from her book. State Rep. Patricia Smith made note of House Bill 407 that she sponsored in the recent session of the State Legislature. The bill did not pass but another bill, known as the “Tesa Middlebrook Anti-Bullying Act”, did pass. It will take effect January 1, 2013 and is named for the 17-year-old honor student who hanged herself at school on March 2, 2012. The bullying activity that resulted in this Pointe Coupee student hanging herself was discussed by the panel and the audience.

Various remedies for bullying were proposed and discussed to include holding parents accountable. Judge Pamela Taylor Johnson discussed some things the courts can and have done but she also explained that the courts are limited in what they can do to solve the problem.

As an example of the various solutions proposed, a member of the audience suggested bringing the person who had been bullied together with the person who had been doing the bullying and having a counseling session with them, possibly with their parents present. Mr. Shamlin (a specialist on bullying) said that this is not recommended. He gave examples of cases where this concept did not work. A LCHR board member and former police captain, Mr. Anthony Navarre, gave additional examples of bringing the two sides together where it created additional problems.



Pictures From the Forum

In addition to bullying in the classroom, bullying on buses and bullying through social media were also discussed. The use of Facebook as a media for bully was especially noted with examples being given. In this regard, Mr. Nelson spoke of a bullying example where the entire group was

disciplined, not just the person who was out front.

The main conclusion was that bullying is a serious problem and despite it being a difficult problem to solve, the school system, the home and the courts must be aware of it and actively seek methods to prevent it. Two art posters were on display by students from the McKinley Middle School saying “Bullying Stops Here”. It was acknowledged that bullying often reflects problems that are occurring in the home. Considering the above analysis of the bullying problem, it is apparent that this is an area that religious institutions must also be involved in answering the question “Bullying: What is the Answer?”

The Oliver/Sigur Humanitarian Awards

The Presentation of Humanitarian Awards is a traditional part of the Annual Meeting. Two awards are made in honor of Dr. James Oliver and Msgr. Alexander O. Sigur, both of whom were involved with the LCHR in its early decades of inception. They made significant contributions to human relations in Louisiana. Dr. Oliver was known as the father of computing at the University of Lafayette, establishing the first computer science program in the country. Msgr. Sigur was a beloved pastor who served in the Diocese of Lafayette. The two humanitarians who were recognized this year were Ms. Majorie Green and Lt. General Russell L. Honore’ (Retired).

Ms. Green has distinguished herself as a true humanitarian. She has a BA degree from Southern University, a M.Ed. degree from LSU, and professional certifications in Administration/Supervision and Visual Impairment. She worked as a teacher and as an administrator in East Baton Rouge Parish for 30 years. As examples of her humanitarian work, she is past president and the first

African-American to hold the position-Inter-Civic Council of Baton Rouge and for the Baton Rouge (Downtown) Kiwanis. She has served as president of the board of the YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge, of WIN (Working Interface Network), and the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations. She has served as committee chair of the Women's Community Rehabilitation Center and of UpLIFTD GY Non-Violence Committee. She is presently on the board of the LCHR, is a member of the American Association of University Women, of the YWCA, the National Association of University Women, the Baton Rouge Coalition of 100 Black Women, the NAACP, and Church Women United. She is a past board member of CAWSC.



Ms. Majorie Green

Concerning General Honore', most of the following biographical information can be found on the Internet in the Wikipedia free encyclopedia.

Russel L. Honore' was born in 1947. A native of Lakeland in Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana, and youngest of 12 children, Honore' earned a Bachelor of Science degree

in Vocational Agriculture from Southern University and A&M College in 1971. He also holds a Master of Arts in Human Resources from Troy State University. Honore' has received an Honorary Doctorate in Public Administration from Southern University and A&M College and has received several additional honorary doctorates from various colleges and universities. He received leadership development training from the International Civilian Center for Creative Leadership.

Honore' is a retired Lieutenant General who served as the 33rd commanding general of the U.S. First Army at Fort Gillem, Georgia. He is best known for serving as commander of Joint Task Force Katrina responsible for coordinating military relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina-affected areas across the Gulf Coast and as the 2nd Infantry Division Commander while stationed in Korea. He served until his retirement from the Army on January 11, 2008. Honore' is sometimes known as "The Ragin' Cajun" although he is actually of Louisiana Creole background.

Prior to his appointment on July 15, 2004, Honore' served in a variety of command and staff positions in Korea and Germany. He served as Commanding General, 2nd Infantry Division in South Korea; Vice Director for Operations, J-3, The Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.; Deputy Commanding General and Assistant Commandant, United States Army Infantry Center and School, Fort Benning, Georgia; and Assistant Division Commander, Maneuver/Support, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas. Most recently, Honore' served as Commander, Standing Joint Force Headquarters – Homeland Security, U.S. Northern Command.

His awards includes the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Army Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense

Superior Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal (two Bronze Service Stars), the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (four Oak Leaf Clusters), the Bronze Star Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (three Oak Leaf Clusters), the Army Commendation Medal (three Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Achievement Medal Joint Meritorious Unit Award, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Southwest Asia Service Medal (one Bronze Service Star), Global War on Terror Service Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon (4), the Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi), the Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait), the Expert Infantryman Badge, the Parachutist Badge, and the Joint Staff Identification Badge.



Lieutenant General Russel L. Honoré

General Honoré is especially being recognized for the humanitarian display during Hurricane Katrina and Rita. On August 31, 2005, Honoré was designated commander of Joint Task Force Katrina responsible for coordinating military relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina-affected areas across the

Gulf Coast. Honoré's arrival in New Orleans came after what was widely believed to be a poor performance by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and its director Michael D. Brown. He gained media celebrity and accolades for his apparent turning around of the situation in the city as well as his gruff management style which contrasted with what many felt were the empty platitudes of civilian officials. His relief efforts continued for Hurricane Rita.

The Business Meetings

The annual business meeting was held by both the LCHR and the BRCH. The LCHR recognized that Mr. James Cross is now serving as the membership secretary and is coordinating the publishing of the quarterly newsletters. Dr. Paul Burns is the editor. There was a brief discussion of the recent Supreme Court decision on the Affordable Health Care act and some other current events. It was noted that a letter requesting the payment of dues for this year was recently sent and that there has been good response to that request. Board members who were nominated at the previous meeting were approved. Mr. Josephus Dennis will continue to serve as president. The next regular meeting was scheduled for July 21, 2012 at the home of Mr. Dennis in Lafayette.

This was followed by the business meeting of the BRCHR. The president, Dr. Thelma Deamer, presented her annual report. It was noted that the Powell-Reznikoff Award program was a major success, being well attended. The board members for the coming year that were nominated at the previous meeting were approved. Dr. Deamer will continue serving as president. The next board meeting will be held in August, the date to be announced.

Some Comments on the Affordable Health Care Act – Beyond Politics by James E. Cross

The last part of the above title says “Beyond Politics”. You may already be thinking, and

perhaps rightly so, that it is impossible to give any comments on health care without being political. If you detect somewhat of a political viewpoint in what is expressed here, do not be surprised and if you have a different viewpoint, that is OK.

Health care is a big business. Consider the following: “We spend twice as much per capita than the average of the other 25 wealthiest OECD countries – our financially motivated healthcare system is 17% of our GNP while the nation coming in 2nd pays 11-12%, we have worse life expectancy and infant mortality than any of them, we are 37th in quality of care, and are the only country of that group without universal access to care). This quote is from the web site: <http://my.firedoglake.com/papau/2012/01/23/health-exchanges-prof-grubers-health-care-reform-a-book-review/>

In recognizing that health care is a big business, the idea of “follow the money” might be factored in when analyzing anyone’s viewpoint on this subject. On March 24, 2012, Fareed Zakaria presented a program on CNN with some interesting comments on “How to Save Health Care”. He had previously given a short presentation outlining his solution on “How to Fix U.S. Health Care” saying that health care is a very weird field. The challenge is not an easy one; that of expanding health care to those that don’t have it, improving care, and lowering the cost. The following is a quote from the presentation by Dr. Zakaria during his presentation: “America’s health care system is really a mess. It is partly free enterprise, partly state-subsidized and overall highly inefficient in delivering quality care at a reasonable price. I am a big fan of the free market. I think it has an almost magical ability to allocate resources and generate growth. But precisely because it is so powerful, in places where it doesn’t work well, it can cause huge distortions. The Nobel Prize-winning economist, Kenneth Arrow, outlined in the 1960s why markets don’t work well when it comes to health care. He explained that people don’t know when they will need health care and that when they do need it, the cost is often prohibitive. This means you need some kind of insurance or a government-run system. Now, if we decided as a society that it is OK that when people suddenly discover they need health care, they can only get it if they can pay for it - that would work, but it would mean that the vast majority of Americans wouldn’t be able to pay for a triple bypass or a hip replacement when they would need it.”

It has been shown that five percent of the patients account for fifty percent of the cost. The goal of capitalism is to maximize profit. To do this, insurance

companies’ tendency is to recruit healthy patients that don’t need care and to drop the sick patients who will cost them money. Nearly all the countries that have universal coverage have found it necessary to include the equivalent of an individual mandate (similar to that of “Obama Care”) in order to spread the cost or risk. Also, other countries have a board of some type to designate what is covered by insurance and what is not covered (as is proposed in “Obama Care”).

As was stated, compared to many other countries, our health care system is a mess. We need our government officials to work together to fix it. With Louisiana planning to opt out of the Affordable Health Care system, there is a lot of curiosity as to what will be proposed to replace it. Will it provide universal health care coverage?

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