

# THE NIGHT I CRIED FOR MY COUNTRY

Danica Daniels



Here I am again... arguing for, and defending Barack Obama's platforms; arguing against the usual Southern GOP sympathizers who look as if the anti-Christ has come every time I utter Barack Obama's name.

Every school day consists of the mighty liberal warrior (me) against the provincial southern

good ol' boy and good ol' girl ideals assaulting my belief system.

I cannot remember when the madness began.

Ahhh... It was back in the weeks before Super Tuesday. It was in January 2008, that I heard about the split of the Democratic Party between the Obama supporters and Clinton supporters (who are we kidding John Edwards never really mattered).

That night, instead of fueling my *YouTube* addiction, I felt strangely propelled to check out the issues and Google the candidates' platforms. As usual, thanks to my circuitous nature, I ended up back on *YouTube*, where I found one of Barack Obama's speeches ad-libbed into a song by Will.I.A.M. At first, it was the catchy beat that stole my attention but I decided to loop the video and took the time to listen to the words... Bam! It hit me...Hard! Hope, "Yes We Can, Change!" Chanted with a spirit that I had never heard before; and I felt the blindfold of indifference lift off my eyes.

When I listened to Hillary Clinton's speeches, I didn't feel the same spirit in her voice.

Choice time! Here is the question? Who am I primarily, an African-American, born to hardworking first-generation Americans or a woman?

My life, before I pondered this question, is lost in the months and years I spent in walking around in my

blindfold of indifference through my self-contoured hazy bubble separated from the world.

The truth of the matter is that a substantial amount of people died so that I could have a say in the affairs of my government. The first who sacrificed themselves were those crazy colonists thirsting to be independent. The colonists were followed by those insane women who called themselves feminists, and fought ferociously for women's suffrage; and last, but not least, those blacks that dared to believe that they were just as good as their white counterparts.

An hour and a half later, Obama's numbers are rising with his electoral count at 102 while poor ol' McCain is still hanging on to his 34.

"God, seriously; you're going to make me go through all of this mental stress, when I have school tomorrow? Could you speed the process up, Big Man," I say while staring at my ceiling. But God is busy, even though I know God hears my prayer, God also has to process the prayers for McCain at the same time. Two hours later, its 9:00 p.m. No, No, Lord have mercy, No! Must be my stupid contacts playing a joke on me. Obama is at 194 electoral votes while McCain is at 69. Breathe 270 votes to win. Wait, what's 270 minus 194? 76.

I can't control myself and I'm out of gummy worms... what now? Picking up my cell phone, I plan to call everyone in my phone book, including my parents who probably are thinking that being across the Atlantic, in West Africa, exempts them from my Obama - induced insanity but, oh no!

"Hello" a groggy voice that sounds like my father says.

"Dad, are you watching!" "Hi Dee, How are you?"

"I'm fine! But are you watching the election?"

"No, but we'll turn CNN on."

"Okay, call you a little later, Dad. Bye!" I practically scream!



## Message from The President

*Vivian R. Pickard*

For over thirty years, we have established a perhaps enviable record of success in recognizing indefatigable women who have continuously demonstrated stellar leadership, often during the Nation's most critical times. We are proud to have honored these extraordinary women. Recently, Dr. Regina M. Benjamin, was nominated by President Barack Obama to serve as United States Surgeon General. In 2006, Dr. Benjamin received BWA's Health Award for her efforts to provide medical care to rural citizens immobilized by two major hurricanes.

In 2001, we recognized Alexine Jackson, a BWA past president, for her commitment to service. She continues to demonstrate that commitment and to

lead as is reflected in her recent appointment as Chairman of the Board, of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

We salute Regina Benjamin and Alexine Jackson on their historic nomination and appointment, respectively, and wish them continued success!

At our upcoming 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Workshop/Luncheon, we will recognize yet another group of courageous black women whose work – individually and collectively – calls us to greater action. Dr. Dorothy I. Height, President Emerita of the National Council for Negro Women, will be given BWA's highest acclaim, the President's Award. Elsewhere in the newsletter appears brief biographical information about all the women to be honored. As you read about them, it will become evident that they have helped to challenge unequal justice and access so that citizens across the Nation can live with dignity. These women continue to inspire and mobilize others, building hope on the mighty legacies of women leaders gone before them.

## Black Women: Making News, Making History



### Former BWA Nominee Nominated to Serve as U.S. Surgeon General

On July 13, 2009, Regina M. Benjamin, M.D., was nominated by President Barack Obama to become Surgeon General of the United States. Dr. Benjamin received a B.S. degree from Xavier

University (Louisiana), attended Morehouse School of Medicine, received the M.D. degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and an M.B.A. from Tulane University.

In 1990, Dr. Benjamin founded the Bayou La Batre Rural Health Clinic to serve the Gulf Coast fishing community by the same name. The small village has been devastated by Hurricanes George (1998) and Katrina (2005). She has rebuilt the clinic each time. Dr. "B," as she is affectionately called, has made house calls in her Ford pickup truck and treated patients from a FEMA trailer.

At the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual BWA Luncheon (2006) Dr. Benjamin received BWA's Health Award for "her continuing commitment to the limited resource community." The award included a grant of \$15,000 from United Health Group Foundation to help her efforts to "provide health care with dignity to all whether they can pay or not."

For more information on the Bayou La Batre Rural Health Clinic visit <http://www.bayouclinic.org/>



### BWA Board Member to Lead Susan G. Komen for the Cure®

Alexine Clement Jackson of Potomac, MD., a long-time cancer advocate and 23-year breast cancer survivor, has been named to chair the board of directors of Susan G. Komen for the Cure®, the world's largest breast cancer organization.

Jackson has been a long-time advocate and public spokesperson for cancer prevention, early detection and quality health care for all. She is a current board member and past chair of the Intercultural Cancer Council, an organization which addresses the unequal burden of cancer in racial, ethnic and other medically underserved populations.

Jackson is the immediate past president of Black Women's Agenda and in 2001 was awarded its Community Service award. She recently retired from the board of The National Museum of Women in the Arts after 12 years of service and is a recent past chair of the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region. Jackson served a five-year term as national board president of the YWCA of the USA, with which she was a member of the United States delegation to YWCA World Council meetings in Seoul, Korea, and Cairo, Egypt, and joined a 10-member World YWCA delegation for a fact-finding mission in the Middle East.

# Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc.

## “A Professional Nursing Organization”

By Mildred D. Fennal, First Vice President

Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc., a professional nursing organization, has been a partner in the Newsreel project, “*Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*”, since it was presented at the Black Women’s Agenda workshop in 2007. The presentation led to the establishment of several objectives: Becoming familiar with the project, assisting in informing the public about dates for viewing, gaining knowledge about the project, and implementing specific areas of the program through “service for humanity”. Four of the objectives have been completed and chapters of Chi Eta Phi are now selecting areas in which to concentrate their efforts.

To date, 25 percent of the chapters have visited the web site, 25 percent have ordered the DVD, and 15 percent have revisited the DVD. Four percent of the chapters have selected an area on which to

concentrate their efforts. Examples of areas of concentration selected include “When the Bough Breaks” – working with young mothers to improve outcomes of low birth weight, and “Against All Odds” – working with children to plant vegetable gardens in neighborhoods that do not have access to grocery stores and fresh vegetables.

Some of the chapters are working with the staple of the community, the church. Tau Chi Chapter (Northeast Region) presented the program to six churches and four places of employment. Chi Phi Chapter (Southeast Region) presented at two churches, one work place and one school. Two projects have been established with the churches, including the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church Project.

### The Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church’s Children’s Garden Project

**T**o combat the lack of availability of fresh vegetables for consumption in certain neighborhoods, the Chi Phi Chapter is using the church as a platform to present the subject of quality food and food security to the community. The children of Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church helped plant a vegetable garden. The goals of the garden project are to:

- Teach the children that healthy food can be planted, grown, harvested, and eaten, when it is not available at the neighborhood store (non-nutritional foods).
- Teach the children to take care of a health need while advocating for policy change (creating change through legislative action).
- Encourage the children to sell some of the produce and buy seeds for the next planting season (entrepreneurship).



# 2009-2011 Legislative Agenda Announced by BWA

BWA announces a legislative agenda for 2009-2011 focused on education, health and wellness, economic development and empowerment, and social justice. Since 1977, BWA has promoted the educational, social and economic well-being of African American women, their families and communities. With and through affiliated organizations and other groups, BWA reaches over four million women nationwide. Vice President for Legislative Affairs, Madelyn Clark-Robinson, and committee members Vanita Banks and Roxane Thomas worked together to develop the agenda, which was approved by the Board of Directors. Clark-Robinson stated: "At this historic time, with a new Administration, The Black Women's Agenda has a pivotal opportunity to make a significant impact on our communities."

Through collaborative programs and activities, BWA is committed to building bridges and hope by increasing knowledge and understanding, establishing policy and legislative priorities, increasing awareness, advocating and educating for change, and taking collective action. The committee identified several priority policy areas and related legislation, and will monitor relevant legislation and disseminate informational summaries to its affiliated organizations and constituent groups, and to the media. The priority issues, a summary description and relevant legislation follow.

## Priority Issues

1. Promote action to ensure that every child can read at grade level by third grade
2. Continue to address the underrepresentation of women, African Americans and other minorities in science and mathematics
3. Ensure that every American citizen has access to affordable, quality, seamless, and comprehensive physical and mental health coverage and services
4. Stop the criminalization of children at increasingly younger ages and invest in prevention and early intervention
5. Promote economic development, fairness and equity

## Education

### Priority: Ensure Every Child Can Read at Grade Level by the End of Third Grade

Seven of every 10 fourth grade students in public schools across America cannot read at grade level. This includes roughly 86% of Black fourth graders,

83% of Latino fourth graders, 80% of American Indian/Alaska native fourth graders and 58% of White children – not reading at grade level. These children are at a high risk of being retained in grade and an even higher risk of dropping out of school. Students who graduate from high school earn almost three times the income of students who drop out. College graduates earn a median income of about \$41,000, about \$28,000 more than students with less than a high school diploma and \$21,000 more than those with a high school diploma. Attainment of at least a high school diploma and graduation from college are the most effective preventive strategies against poverty. Yet, the United States graduates fewer high school students than at least 24 industrialized countries. (Statistics and information from the Children's Defense Fund).

The No Child Left Behind Act (Public Law 107-110) must be reviewed to determine what is working and what parts need to be reformed in order to improve its execution and intended results.

BWA supports the adoption of high expectations and high achievement for every child in every family, school, congregation and community. We support ensuring that our schools, teachers, parents and communities have resources to provide high quality education to every child.

### Priority: Provide High Quality Infant and Early Childhood Development Programs for All

Currently, Early Head Start and Head Start cover fewer than 95% of the infants and less than 2/3 of children eligible for these two programs. Investing in high quality child development programs, especially for the most disadvantaged children, promises high, long-term returns by ensuring that every child enters school ready to learn. The results and impact of these programs are well accepted, yet they continue to be under-funded.

BWA supports additional actions to serve these children and supports providing additional funding to increase our investments in these areas. (Statistics and information from the Children's Defense Fund).

### Legislation of Interest:

- HR 555 – A universal pre-kindergarten program to ensure all children ages 3-5 have access to full-day, quality day care.

cont'd on page 8

# The Black Women's Agenda, Inc. 2009 Workshop

Into the Future...Science Technology Engineering Mathematics

September 25, 2009

9:00 – 11:30 AM

In keeping with BWA's interest in our future generations, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) remains one of our major foci. Our nation's scientists, engineers, mathematicians and technologists comprise an indispensable strategic asset. Despite decades of effort, however, this pool of talent remains about three-quarters male and four-fifths white. BWA's goal is to project a positive image of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and the need for women and minorities in these fields.

Velma J. Deleveaux, who holds a doctorate in Industrial Engineering and is a senior associate at Booz, Allen, Hamilton will serve as moderator for the 2009 workshop and will be joined by other leaders in the field.

Objectives of the workshop are to:

- Heighten awareness to this national priority; and
- Sensitize adults as to what they can do to influence and provide direction to our youth

Attending will be community leaders and presidents of the 15 national Black women's organizations (i.e., sororities, civic, community and church groups) that partner with BWA. Also encouraged and invited to attend are educators, employers, counselors, volunteers, mentors and others who work with youth.

## Speaker and Awardees for The BWA 2009 32nd Annual Workshop/Luncheon



**SPEAKER (Invited)**  
**Melody Barnes, Director of  
Domestic Policy Council**

Melody Barnes is the President's Domestic Policy Advisor and the Director of the Domestic Policy Council, which coordinates the domestic policy-making process in the White House.

Before joining the White House, Barnes served as the Senior Domestic Policy

Advisor to President Obama's campaign. Prior to joining the campaign, she was the Executive Vice President for Policy at the Center for American Progress. From 1995 to 2003, she served as Chief Counsel to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

In those capacities, and as Director of Legislative Affairs for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and assistant counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, she worked extensively on civil rights and voting rights, women's health, religious

liberties, and commercial law.

Barnes received her bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received her law degree from the University of Michigan. She began her career as an attorney with Shearman & Sterling in New York City, and is a member of both the New York State Bar Association and the District of Columbia Bar Association.



**PRESIDENT'S AWARD  
HONOREE**  
**Dr. Dorothy Irene Height,  
Chair and President  
Emerita, National Council  
of Negro Women, Inc.**

For nearly half a century, Dorothy Irene Height has given leadership to the struggle for equality and human rights for all people. Her life exemplifies her passionate commitment for a just society and her vision of a better world.

cont'd on next page

## 32 Annual Workshop Luncheon

cont'd from page 5

Dorothy Height was born in Richmond, Virginia March 24, 1912, and educated in public schools in Rankin, Pa. In 1938, Height was one of 10 American youth invited by Eleanor Roosevelt to spend a weekend at her Hyde Park NY home to plan and prepare for the World Youth Conference to be held at Vassar College.

For thirty-three years, Height served on the staff of the National Board of the YWCA of the USA. Height was also elected National President of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in 1947 and served until 1956. In 1957, Height was elected fourth National President of NCNW and served until 1998 when she became Chair and President Emerita.

Dr. Height also established the Black Family Reunion Celebration in 1986 to reinforce the historic strengths and traditional values of the Black family.

Dorothy I. Height has received thirty-six Honorary Doctorate Degrees and has received numerous awards and citations including the: NAACP - Spingarn Medal, National Women's Hall of Fame, Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor.



### HEALTH AWARD HONOREE

**Andrea Roane, Co-anchor  
9 News  
Now-W\*USA 9**

Andrea Roane is now in her 26th year with W\*USA 9, and currently co-anchors 9 NEWS NOW from 5-7am and 9-10am with Mike Walter.

Andrea is honored to have been recently selected as a distinguished annual honoree by the ASAE & The Center for Association Leadership's Greater Washington Network, which recognized Andrea's outstanding work within the community and the region as a "leader and trailblazer deserving of recognition."

During her career, Andrea has covered a wealth of hard news stories, from politics, the arts, education and sports to women's health issues. She has interviewed newsmakers, entertainers, and politicians including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Hillary Rodham Clinton, former Defense Secretary William Cohen, David Rockefeller, Michael J. Fox, Danny Glover, Magic Johnson and author Mary Higgins Clarke. She covered the 1996 Republican and Democratic conventions and the 1988 GOP convention.

Andrea initiated an innovative Washington, DC breast cancer awareness program, Buddy Check 9. Since its inception in 1993, thousands of Washington-area women and men have signed on to the program.

Andrea co-chairs the Kennedy Center Community and Friends Board and is a board member of the National Museum of Women In The Arts. She is also a member of the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation Board; the Howard University Hospital Cancer Advisory Board; the National Catholic Education Association Board and a Trustee of the Catholic University of America. She is a lifetime member of both the NAACP and the National Council of Negro Women.



### EDUCATION AWARD HONOREE

**Dr. Marcia V. Keizs,  
President of York College/  
City University of New  
York**

Dr. Marcia V. Keizs, a native of Kingston, Jamaica, attended the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada and Teachers College, Columbia University

and holds a certificate in Educational Management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Dr. Keizs has over 30 years of experience in the CUNY system as both an administrator and a professor. Effective February 14, 2005, Dr. Keizs became the sixth president of York College in Jamaica, Queens.

Under Dr. Keizs' leadership, York College has strengthened its academic programs, raised its admissions standards, boosted its student recruitment and retention and raised its faculty grants by 80 percent. The Performing Arts Center, with two theaters seating 1500 and 200 seats respectively, produces an annual performing arts series that has garnered broad praise for its innovative programming with noted local, national and international performers.

Dr. Keizs was recently nominated to a new State Commission on Higher Education by State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith and was appointed by former Gov. Eliot Spitzer. She has served on the boards of the National Council on Black American Affairs (Northeast), Teachers College Alumni Council, Morris Heights Health Center in the Bronx and the Association of Black Women in Higher Education. Dr. Keizs is the founding editor of the

cont'd on next page

# 32 Annual Workshop Luncheon

cont'd from page 6

New York Carib News and has published articles in her area of specialty, Afro American literature.



## **ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS AWARD HONOREE**

**Shirley Sherrod, State of Georgia Director, Federation of Southern Cooperatives**

Shirley Sherrod has worked for more than 17 years as Georgia Director of the

Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund. As Georgia Director, Shirley is responsible for implementation of the USDA sponsored Outreach and Technical Project. Due to the success of the project, Georgia was among six states to show an increase in the number of African American farmers and farm land ownership in 1997. Shirley is actively involved in projects involving rural women, especially in the area of economic development.

Mrs. Sherrod is a former Kellogg Foundation Fellow, and has spent her adult life ensuring that small and socially disadvantaged black farmers in the South not only were able to keep their land, but were able to farm it profitably. Recently through her efforts, several members of the Federation received the hard-earned USDA Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices certification, a first for Georgia. There are now only about 12 black farmers in the nation who have earned this certification.

She is a graduate of a historically black university, and has traveled around the world at the request of international agencies to assist with small farm efforts in developing countries.

Shirley has received many awards, including a Kellogg National Fellowship and is a much sought after resource for grassroots, land-based organizations throughout the southeast.



## **BRIGHT FUTURE AWARD HONOREE**

**Alexandra Sutton**

Alexandra E. Sutton was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, by her mother Esperance Sutton, father Wendell Sutton, wonderful grandmother Essie Sutton, and loving brothers David and Jason Sutton. She attended The

Bryn Mawr School for high school and middle school, graduating in 2003. Although Alexandra had shown a love of nature since she was a child, at Bryn Mawr, she truly began to refine her interest in biology and environmental science, becoming an active member of Students for Environmental Action.

At present, Alexandra is preparing to begin her Ph.D. work at Colorado State University in September of 2009, and has already received fellowships from the USDA's Agricultural-Ecological Research Program and the National Science Foundation's Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP). She continues to split her time between volunteering in her community, keeping close ties to her family, keeping tabs on her mischievous dog Fish, and furthering her education. She celebrates the experiences and opportunities she has had, and the unflinching generosity of the people who have brought them to her. She looks forward now to the wonderful future.

## **SPECIAL APRECIATION!**

Special thanks to Dr. Carolyn Rudd, President CRP, Inc. who adopted BWA earlier during the year, and helped with our luncheon and marketing activities. CRP has assisted with contract negotiations with the Grand Hyatt Hotel and worked with us through the Foundation Center to identify grant opportunities for organizational capacity building arena. CRP has also assisted with the review of grant documents that have been funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, printing of brochures and other activities. CRP also continues to provide support during the planning for the 2009 Annual Workshop/Luncheon. Our thanks also to Ms. Ricki Peltzer, owner, "Upstairs on 7<sup>th</sup>", an upscale boutique located in downtown Washington, D.C.. BWA was honored to participate in a fundraiser sponsored by the boutique. Ms. Peltzer's pride and joy has been to adopt a nonprofit organization monthly and hold a fundraiser. For every dollar spent in the boutique on the night of the sponsorship, the nonprofit receives 10%. BWA received a monetary contribution and was highly honored to have been selected as the May, 2009 nonprofit organization. Ms. Pelzer also invited artist friends from Gallery 7 and all were on hand to provide support. Our hats off to her and her artist friends for adopting The Black Women's Agenda, Inc. in May.

CRP, Inc., a management consulting firm, specializes in educational consulting, conferences and meetings and is located at 1400 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. Upstairs on 7th specializes in jewelry, upscale clothing, shoes and jackets. Visit vendors when you are in the Washington metropolitan area.

# 2009-2011 Legislative Agenda

cont'd from page 4

## Priority: Science and Mathematics Education

Through its national and regional workshops, BWA has been a leader in advocating the importance of informing the community about this issue and encouraging women and girls to pursue education in mathematics and science. In his recent speech on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the 2009 economic stimulus package), President Barack Obama spoke to the need for increased funding for education in science and mathematics. This issue is detailed in *The Quiet Crisis: Falling Short in Producing American Scientific and Technical Talent, and the Perfect Storm*, a report and speech by Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson, president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

## Health Care

### Priority: Ensure Every American Citizen and Child Access to Affordable, Quality, Seamless, and Comprehensive Physical and Mental Health Coverage and Services

Nearly 47 million Americans (16% of our population) were without health insurance in 2005, the last year for which data is available. Nearly 90 million people under the age of 65 spent a portion of either 2006 or 2007 without health coverage. Over 8 in 10 uninsured adults and children come from working families. In 2005 nearly 15% of employees had no employer-sponsored health coverage available to them through their own job or through the job of a family member. Nearly 40 percent of the uninsured population resides in households that earn \$50,000 or more, indicating that a growing number of middle-income families cannot afford health insurance even when coverage is offered by their employers. A third of firms in the USA did not offer coverage in 2006. Nearly 3 in 10 middle-income adults had serious struggles affording health and medical care. Four in 10 adults report going without or postponing health care because of cost.

About 28,000 infants in the United States die before their first birthday because of gaps in access to pre-natal and infant health care and coverage. We rank among the worst nations in infant mortality. Major disparities in health coverage and access to services exist by socio-economic status, race/ethnicity and residential neighborhood.

BWA supports every American having health care coverage and access to quality health services. (Statistics and information from the National Coalition on Health Care)

## Legislation of Interest:

- HR 1688 – The All Healthy Children Act of 2009, amends the Social Security Act to provide health insurance for children and pregnant women under Medicaid and SCHIP (State Child Health Insurance Program) into a new All Healthy Children program.
- HR 676 – Medicare for All, proposes a universal, single-payer, not-for-profit health care system that would provide health care that is both accessible and affordable to all—adults and children.
- HR 6800 – the MEDS Act, provides a fully paid prescription drug benefit, under Medicare, for all seniors, and a simplified prescription program for all Medicare beneficiaries.
- The Family Smoking Prevention and Control Act (Public Law 111-31) was signed by President Obama on June 22, 2009. It was supported by over 700 public health and community groups and seeks to reduce smoking by our nation's youth.

## Juvenile Justice

### Priority: Stop the Criminalization of Children at Increasingly Younger Ages and Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention

Thousands of children and youth have been channeled into arrests, convictions and incarceration at a disturbing rate. For those born in 2001, a male of African descent has a 1 in 3 chance of going to prison in his lifetime. A Latino child has a 1 in 6 chance and a male of European descent has a 1 in 17 chance of spending time in prison. The degree to which children *do not* have access to quality early childhood development programs, upper grade quality education and to health care, *increases* their likelihood of being arrested and imprisoned. Other factors such as overburdened and ineffective child welfare and juvenile justice systems leave children and teens vulnerable to life outcomes that include prison.

Easy access to guns has increased violence and deaths among children and teens. Since 1979, more than 100,000 children and teens have been killed by guns. Developing skills in resolving disagreements and conflict verbally and without violence must be a top priority in protecting children from guns.

The increasing privatization and profitability of our juvenile and adult detention facilities have resulted in over \$65 billion being spent on corrections each year. There is very little incentive to dismantle this for-profit justice system.

Racial and class disparities continue to need to be reduced and eliminated in our justice system whether it is access to early intervention strategies and

cont'd on page 10



# The Night I Cried For My Country

cont'd from page 1

The numbers keep rolling Obama with 207 and McCain 89.

Breathe, Danica!

Millions of thoughts speed down the autobahn of my mind and it is just way too much to handle.

McCain at 135 votes now. It is up to the Western states now. Holding my chest so my heart won't pound out of my body, Ten minutes until the polls on the West coast close. I blink and when I open my eyes a minute is left. My heart is beating like it would be in the last seconds of a soccer or basketball game, when victory is so close and adrenaline takes over your body and you're no longer in control. Thirty-four seconds more and then I will know how this race will finish.

Counting 24 more seconds, 16 seconds, 10 seconds, 5 seconds, 4 seconds, 3 seconds, 2 seconds, 1 more second.

The CNN announcer says, "We can now project Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States of America."

Where's the remote? Quickly, I switch to FOX News and they make the same announcement. So does CBS, NBC and ABC.

My schizophrenic pacing begins. I don't know how to handle these emotions. There are people all over the world rejoicing. But I will not cry. While I am trying to keep the sangfroid of a Buddhist monk, the phone starts ringing.

"Hello" I say in a shaky voice.

My cousin Zoe answers "Hey Dee, Are you watching? Isn't it amazing he won?"

I do not know how to control it anymore so, I let the rain pour. I can't utter a word; I put the phone down hoping she would understand.

I run upstairs to get my aunt and my grandma and we are all crying. Salty tears are washing away the atrocities of the past and cleansing my body of any act of racial or moral injustice reverberating in my memory.

My parents! I have to call them.

"Hello Dee," answers my mom.

"Mommie" I say through the gallons of salt water falling from my eyes. "He did it, Mom! He did it. No one thought he could. Mom! I hoped and I prayed but I didn't think I would see it."

She soothes me and tells me to calm down before I make myself sick and she passes the phone to my dad.

The tears start all over.

"Dad, I never thought I would be alive to see this and here I am. What force, what majesty has the power to do such a thing, but God?"

He did his best to calm me down and I say "Goodnight" (or rather good morning, since it is 4 a.m. in West Africa).

I pray and ask God what I did to deserve such a moment in my lifetime? I don't know the answer but I thank God. As the slaves had done, in the darkest hours from the bottom of the slave ship until the Bells of Freedom rang, over every mountain top and valley low. The water from my salty tears dissolved away leaving spots of salt on the counter, just like the national troubles facing the United States will surely melt away, leaving the hope of a new tomorrow.

November, the fourth, two thousand and eight; the night I cried for my country because for the first time, I felt my tears were not in vain.

Up these stairs in Barks Hall at Hammond school, another morning but this morning I hold my head a little higher and walk just a little faster, not letting my lassitude slow me down.

As I burst through the heavy metal door, Robert Killifer is the first to greet me, with the words I thought only I was thinking, "We did it!"

Smiling, I reply, "Yes we did!"

I will let the McCain supporters have their moment to overcome their candidate's defeat and refuse to let any bitterness infringe on this moment for me. I won't speak out when they inveigh against the President-Elect with their crude angry remarks. Only a few people at Hammond would understand how personal this was.

This country has so many opportunities that are taken for granted each day.

This country accepted my parents when they had nothing to offer; they were just two Liberians stuck in a war-torn country that was vibrating with eruptions of violence. Neither of them were American citizens so, the U.S. government wasn't concerned with their safety. They were a young married couple who possessed only the clothes they wore on their backs; their faith in God; and an eighteen-month-old baby girl who happened to be an American citizen. That was enough to get them airlifted to safety.

This country was capable of saving my family, but I would have never thought we could elect a man who is a part of a minority to lead the masses of this marvelous nation.

President Barack Obama said on election night, "Change has come to America."

But hasn't America, instead, come to change? All the way from, the long walks through the darkest and hardest moments to the patriotic marches through the shining times in our young nation's history.

cont'd on page 10

# 2009-2011 Legislative Agenda

cont'd from page 8

programs, drug counseling, length of prison sentences, lack of support after prison release, probation infractions that lead to high recidivism, or use of the death penalty. (Information from the U.S. Department of Justice).

## Legislation of interest:

- HR 3846 – Youth Prison Reduction Through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support and Education Act of 2009
- Repeal of Mandatory Drug Sentencing Laws
- Funding for the Second Chance Act, signed into law in 2008
- The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, signed into law by President Barack Obama in January 2009
- The Innocence Project – Support for U.S. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee's legislation to provide funding for DNA testing to ensure that innocent people are not wrongly convicted and subject to life sentences and death.

## Economic Development

### Priority: Promote Economic Development, Equity and Empowerment Restoring New Orleans after Katrina

There are many issues involved in the continuing

abandonment of New Orleans – from the effects of climate change to well-built public housing being torn down. Homeowner and renter recovery is a key continuing challenge facing both homeowners and renters who are still displaced or homeless because of Katrina.

## Legislation of interest:

- The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) signed by President Barack Obama on February 17, 2009 is an economic stimulus package intended to 'jump start' the U.S. economy in the wake of the global economic downturn. The measures totaling \$787 billion include federal tax relief, expansion of unemployment and other social welfare benefits, and domestic spending in education, healthcare and infrastructure, including the energy sector.
- HR 3355 – The Homeowners Defense Act, intended to ensure the availability and affordability of homeowner's insurance coverage for catastrophic events.

BWA President Vivian Picard reminds each of us that 'the price of freedom and justice is eternal vigilance. And, we can not rest until it comes.'

## The Night I Cried For My Country

cont'd from page 9

Fifty-three percent of Americans came knocking on Change's door that night. I didn't vote but I'm one of them. My country finally accepts me. Just the way I am, just the way I look. And that's why I was crying.

That night God answered my prayers and showed me that I'm an American for a reason. That night will be forever etched in my memory.

Because of that night I now can proudly say that this is the United States of America, where nothing is too hard and anything can be achieved.

This Liberian-American who considers herself a dreamer can dream again. For this is why, on that night, I cried for my country because my country opened her arms to me for the second time in my life and once again whispered promises of a better tomorrow in my ear.

*Editor's Note: This article was written by Miss Danica Daniels. Danica is 14-years-old and is the daughter of Bishop David R. and Mrs. Irene Moifoi Daniels. Danica wrote the article for her English 9 class that's taught by Mrs. Norris. Danica attends Hammond School in Columbia, South Carolina.*

## TEEN ACTIVIST

By Lynn Hobson



Prior to February 23, 2009, had you ever heard of Dillon, S.C.? On that date, the nation became aware of Dillon and 14-year old Ty'Sheoma Bethea (pronounced Ty shee Oh Mah), during President Barack Obama's inaugural State of the Union Address to

Congress that recognition came to both.

As President Obama's special guest, he mentioned a letter that Ty'Sheoma had written to members of Congress about the deteriorating state of Dillon's schools.

"I decided to write the letter because our leaders need to know the needs of rural schools in South Carolina", stated Bethea. Ty'Sheoma

cont'd on back page

## Links to Healthy Life Choices: Combating Obesity Health & Wellness Summit

By Margaret Batchelor White



The Black Women's Agenda, Inc., in collaboration with the Beverly Hills West Chapter of The Links, Inc., Association of Black Physicians, Charles R.

Drew Society, American Cancer Society, Girl Friends of Los Angeles, Denise Roberts Breast Cancer Foundation and Gwendolyn Kelly, DDS, conducted the health and wellness symposium, "Links to Healthy Life Choices: Combating Obesity Health & Wellness Summit." The successful symposium attracted more than 350 attendees and was held at Walgrove Elementary School and the Boys and Girls Club.

The program was designed to target women and children who are overweight and obese with the ultimate goal to educate and increase awareness of



associated risk factors. The documentary, "Unnatural Causes – Is Inequality Making Us Sick?" was shown. Also part of the event was an exhibit, "Children Are the Future" enhanced the setting.

The program provided health care screenings, dental examinations (gift bags were provided with tooth brushes and tooth paste), breast cancer demonstrations, clinics on nutrition, demonstrations on meal planning and preparations. Literature on these topics was distributed.

Facilitators also provided informative booklets and pamphlets about ethnic and cultural trends in exercise and nutrition allowing open dialogue between physicians, health experts and the audience.

Dr. Margaret Batchelor-White, a member of BWA's Board of Directors, coordinated the health clinics.

### The Black Women's Agenda, Inc. 2300 M Street, N.W., Suite 800

Washington, D.C. 20037

Phone: 202-973-6477 • Fax: 202-973-6467

Email: [bwagenda@aol.com](mailto:bwagenda@aol.com) • Web: [www.blackwomensagenda.org](http://www.blackwomensagenda.org)

Vivian R. Pickard, *President*  
Patricia Hobson, *Executive Director*

*Published quarterly by The Black Women's Agenda, Inc., an organization dedicated to fostering the concerns, interests and efforts of Black women's organizations; working with individuals and organizations dedicated to taking action to end discrimination against women, particularly Black women; increasing opportunities for women in all aspects of American life; developing and furthering the potential of women, cooperating with and assisting other organizations and individuals with similar concerns and purposes; building bridges of understanding and cooperation among people of different races, creeds, colors, national origins and backgrounds.*

*Views in the B.W.A. Report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the B.W.A. If you would like to be heard in the B.W.A. Report, send your letters/articles to:*

### B.W.A. Report

Gladys Gary Vaughn, *Ph.D., Editor*

2300 M Street, N.W., Suite 800 • Washington, D.C. 20037 • [bwagenda@aol.com](mailto:bwagenda@aol.com)

While we cannot guarantee publication, articles will be used as space permits. Articles become the property of BWA and will not be returned.

## ATTENTION

BWA is a member of the National Black United Federation (NBUF). You can become a supporter of:  
**The Black Women's Agenda, Inc.**

**HOW:** By contributing through the Combined Federal Campaign. You can help BWA continue its valuable work on behalf of African-American Women and their families.

**WHEN:** When you make your annual charitable contributions, please designate the Black Women's Agenda as one of your charities.

**HOW MUCH:** Whatever the amount of your gift – it will be appreciated and well used.

OUR CAMPAIGN NUMBER IS 1175

# B.W.A. REPORT

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BLACK WOMEN'S AGENDA, INC.  
2300 M STREET, N.W., SUITE 800  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20037

Presort Standard  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Atlanta, GA 30314  
Permit No. 1006

Visit our Website  
[www.blackwomensagendainc.org](http://www.blackwomensagendainc.org)

## Teen Activist

*cont'd from page 10*

attends JV Martin Junior High School, built in 1896, where more than half of the classes are taught in trailers located on school grounds. "The school is falling completely apart. My letter to Congress talked about my school's condition and how our State Leaders need to do more".

"Her words and her story tell us that even in the most trying times, there is a determination to persevere", stated President Obama.

At the end of May, Ty'Sheoma had raised well over \$32,000 in an effort to take her entire eighth grade class to Washington, DC for four days to visit the White House and tour other historical landmarks and museums. "As long as you have possibilities, all of your dreams can come true", says Ty'Sheoma.

This summer, Ty'Sheoma and her family are launching the Ty'Sheoma Bethea Foundation in an effort to raise awareness about teen pregnancy; campaign against the high school drop-out rate; and speak to teens about the importance of not

just a high school education, but a higher education. In Dillon, South Carolina alone, 85% of the students live below the poverty line. The high school drop out rate is 60% and teen pregnancies are up 40%.

When asked what she'd like to be when she grows up, Ty'Sheoma states, "I will be the President of the United States". Now equipped with a solid blue print of how she plans to achieve her goals, Bethea will attend Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia on a full scholarship where she will major in political science.

Ty'Sheoma loves to listen to music and dance in her spare time. Her mom, Dina Leach, single parent of four, is her hero.

This summer, Ty'Sheoma is touring the country and giving motivational speeches to youth and church organizations.

To follow Ty'Sheoma Bethea and her activities visit [www.twitter.com/tysheomabethea](http://www.twitter.com/tysheomabethea).

### TO CONTRIBUTE TO BWA:

You may send a contribution to:  
**The Black Women's Agenda, Inc.**  
2300 M Street, N.W., Suite 800  
Washington, D.C. 20037  
202-973-6477  
[bwagenda@aol.com](mailto:bwagenda@aol.com)

- I read and enjoyed the BWA Report
- I attend the Annual BWA Workshop and Luncheon
- I want to be a sponsor of BWA programs

### TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP

- Individual membership \$100.00
- Sponsor \$250.00
- Group membership \$500.00
- Contribution Level of your choice
- Enclosed is a gift \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ check \_\_\_\_\_ money order

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_