

OPINION

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Hope Floods My Soul

BY SUNSHINE DIXON
This trip has made my love for New Orleans Rise up like the mighty waters and flood my soul with hope.

You see
We saw the headlines ...Amazed
Sat staring at the television for days
As 'Help me' 'Diabetic here' signs waved
But higher powers seemed unfazed
And can you tell me WHY during the flood the ninth ward bridge was RAISED?

When the worst was over by all accounts
Still seemed like no one came to help out
We saw huge traffic lines but even cars didn't get far
And if you had just a bus pass, and tennis shoes
Well baby you really had the blues

In a dome
Away from home
Those waiting out the storm...were soon overcome
By lack of food and too much heat
Folks were running out of food to eat

And the chants
The tears
The rants
The cheers
All seemed to fall on deaf ears

One t-shirt read
Been let down
By Mr. Michael FEMA Brown

This trip has made my love for New Orleans
Rise up like the mighty waters and flood my soul with hope

You see when the levees broke
It released tears I didn't know I had
I sat paralyzed by the pain I'd witnessed

I mean
Who could imagine HOPE
being dried up
by TOOMUCH WATER?

Honestly unbelief sat beneath the grief
And tides of anger rushed in like water
A little on the floor
Then coming through the back door
And



Sunshine Dixon of Portland and Gov. Ted Kulongoski join a group of Portland leaders who went to New Orleans on a "Flight of Friendship" goodwill mission

BAM up the stairs in full stride
Fleeing for life to the attic
With an ax and a pick
Cut holes through rooftops
Waving sheets for someone to stop
All the time
Hoping the water would stop its climb

Then time and Rita passed by

It's been over 500 sunrises since the devastation
Now we're focused on
Relief Recovery and Restoration
Relief Recovery and Restoration
The next stop and our final destination

To get there will take a village and then some
Combining our united wisdom
Creating solutions and working together
Some say it will all work out for the better
And speaking of WORK
There are some She-ros I met
There's no way
I will ever forget

Starting with our Lower Ninth Ward
Powerhouse Sister
Named Trisha

In order to get King School on track
Dr Hicks and 95% of the teachers came back.

With a team of just three to process them in
NENA hopes 8000 will come back again
Tracking neighbors by colored push pins

Red-SOLD Yellow-ONHOLD
White - Trailing right and working through the night
And
Green - green like the grass is a hopeful sign
That it's gonna be tough but we're gonna be fine

The levee broke in three places
Bringing on these phases
Close to 1600 died first
Thousands of others were dying of thirst
And though the lower ninth ward seems desolate and flat
There are thousands of residents dying to get back

And that's the thing I have to say
They may have waded in the water
but they're coming back to stay

Another group who suffered great loss
was the Association from Holy Cross
Pam with Sustainable Restoration sees District 8
As a shining example to the rest of the state

And need I say more about programs galore,
diversity restored, in fact "insured" in Broadmoor.
Little did I know before coming this way
that I would meet so many She-ros in just one day
La Toya the president,
longtime Broadmoor resident
her passion was evident

I can't leave out the magnificent men
Pastor Bruce, Pastor Gilbert,
Charles, Darryl and Hal
Let's get back to the ladies now

Deborah first lady,
all the members of H.I.V.
Linda at Steamboat,
Mignon I adore
and the whole wonderful team of MercyCorps.

This trip made my love for New Orleans
rise up like the mighty waters and flood my soul with hope.

I'm just one voice from our one hundred and ten
who believes New Orleans will thrive again.

Lesson from Virginia Tech: Gun deaths too common for many of our youth

BY MARC H. MORIAL

Ryan Clark, the 22-year-old residential adviser from Martinez, Ga., and senior with a triple major in psychology, biology and English, had great expectations of his future after graduating from Virginia Tech. He had already finished his coursework in December but was intent on crossing the graduation stage in May for all his family and numerous friends to see.



Clark, otherwise known as Stack to his friends, had set his sights high after graduation - with hopes of earning a Ph. D in psychology with a focus

in neuroscience. It is ironic given that his dreams were cut short by a mentally ill loner by the name of Seung-Hui Cho, whose deadly shooting spree claimed 32 lives, including that of Clark who stumbled across the shooter in his own efforts to assist one of his residents - 19-year-old Emily Hilscher - the massacre's first victim.

Clark lost his life rushing to the aid of another student, which did not come as a huge surprise to

those who knew him. A member of Virginia Tech's Marching Virginians band for five years, he spent his summers as a counselor at a camp for disabled kids.

In some ways, Ryan Clark, a young black man who appeared to be defying the less-than-spectacular odds faced by a large percentage and on the fast track to prosperity and prominence, died much the way young black men living in the inner cities - by gunshot wound.

As the fallout from the Virginia Tech tragedy begins to clear, we must remember that the same kind of wanton violence that put Blacksburg, Virginia on the world's radar screen happens everyday - albeit on a smaller scale in terms of victim count -- in the streets of our nation's urban areas.

According to the National Urban League's The State of Black America 2007, black men are nine times more likely to be murdered by firearms than white men. Those between the ages of 15 to 24 years old are nearly six times more likely to die by gunshot wound - whether accidentally or purposefully - than their white counterparts.

The bottom line is that black men are still making up a disproportionate percentage of murder victims in America - regardless of where they live and the extent of gun control employed.

But, what makes Clark's case rare for a black man is that he died at the hands of a man who was not of his own race.

According to the Bureau of Justice's 1976 to 2004 assessment, an average 94 percent of black murders were committed by blacks. For whites, 86 percent of white

murders came at the hands of other whites.

In The State of Black America 2007, we concluded that blacks held two-thirds the status of whites in the area of social justice, which consists of two categories - equality before the law (which makes up 80 percent of the social justice index) and victimization and mental anguish (which makes up 20 percent).

Some of the responsibility for our victimization ultimately comes back to the African-American community.

We cannot fully blame social, economic and political disparities within our country for the violence we inflict upon ourselves. We must address the issue of our young men dying way too young from the inside as well as from the outside.

Whether they live on a college campus or in the inner cities, whether they are murdered by a drug dealer of their own race or a madman of another race, our community's future leaders don't deserve to die so senselessly so early in life.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

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