

HUMAN RELATIONS NEWS

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Quarterly Newsletter of the LOUISIANA COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS
incorporating the BATON ROUGE HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

JAN/FEB/MAR 2007

SPEAKING OUT FOR A BETTER LOUISIANA SINCE 1964

Equity!B.R. and Casey Family Contracts Terminated

At long last, LCHR has terminated its contracts with Equity!Baton Rouge and the Casey Family Programs. Equity! was funded by the Casey Family Programs, and given two years "to build within Baton Rouge a sustainable movement to create more equitable race relations." With LCHR playing the role of fiscal middleman, since it has 501C(3) status, the Casey Family Programs donated \$3,750 to Equity!Baton Rouge, matching \$3,750 which Equity! had raised from member donors. Ethyl Harris, the President of Equity!, died in January of 2005. Its Treasurer and Secretary moved out of state, and the organization folded.

Through the dogged work of Richard Haymaker and Paul Y. Burns, contacts were made to resuscitate the organization just enough to have it terminate itself. The \$3,750 grant money could be released from the bank and given to LCHR, which returned it to the Casey Family Programs on January 19, 2007.

Thus ends a chapter in the history of L.C.H.R. It is unlikely that the Board will be engaging in such contractual relations in the future. We learned our lesson the hard way, and we are pleased that no money was lost.

3RD ANNIVERSARY OF PEACE VIGIL

The L.C.H.R. had taken a strong position against the war in Iraq several years ago. Since that time, even the perpetrators of the war have had to admit that their policy of "preemptive force" has not lead to a "flowering of democracy in the Mid-East," instead creating an ever-widening abyss of violence for the Iraqi people.

There has been a Peace Vigil held in Lafayette as a public witness against the war, across from the Federal Courthouse on Lafayette St. in the downtown, between 4 and 5 p.m. each Friday afternoon. The vigil has not received a lot of attention, but in conjunction with the 3rd anniversary *The Independent* newspaper carried



a cover article recently.

The vigil was initiated by Vic and Roselyn Hummert along with the local chapter of Pax Christi-USA. Usually from 4 to 8 persons may join the line weekly. They stand together holding a large canvas banner that states "YOU SHOULD NOT KILL—WAR NEVER BRINGS PEACE." There may be a leaflet given to an occasional passerby, or waves are given the stream of cars going by. Most of these return affirmative waves or honks as they pass. In the first year of the war there were some icy stares or even obscene gestures. A number of times a man who identified himself as having relatives over in Iraq threatened and taunted the vigilers. Most now respond positively to the vigilers presence.

The Hummerts were eventually joined each week by Woody, a retired federal employee and Cajun fiddler, and Clarence, a spry World War II veteran and avid gardener. Sometimes Ro, a grandmother in her 70's, would come by, hoping her middle-aged children wouldn't find out because they would worry and fuss at her. Others would come on a more impromptu or casual basis. After the bells of St. John's Cathedral ring, the group joins in a circle for a brief prayer for peace. LCHR members and friends may consider expressing their ideals by joining this small band in the park across from the Federal Courthouse.

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RICKELS HONORED

On April 3rd, the U.L. Spring Honors Convocation was held to recognize more than 2,700 students who had a GPA of at least 3.2 for undergrad and 3.8 for graduate students. The honorees came from 41 countries and 38 states. Louisiana residents were represented from 33 parishes. All academic disciplines were included. The keynote speaker was someone very special to the U.L. community (as well as the L.C.H.R.), Dr. Pat Rickels, professor of English and Director of the Honors Program. She was feted for the 50th anniversary of service to the campus community, an amazing and unprece-

dent achievement.

Rickels, with typical modesty, attributed her longevity to the “amazing friends, mentors, companions, and students...some of the most splendid people.”

She noted that “I always had a lot of smart students, students who were well-read, and who were good writers, but they were not too sophisticated, which I always thought was a good thing. They embraced their culture and weren’t embarrassed about their pasts or their families, and that’s something really special...”

“I always thought I was put in this world to take care of students, but now the tables have turned, and they take care of me,” she said with a smile.

“They are always there for me when I need them, and you can’t ask for much more than that.

(from *The Advertiser* 4/4/07)

NAVARRE HONORED

The Citizens Action Council, under the tireless leadership of Joe Dennis, recently held their

9th Annual Awards Banquet, at the Heymann Park Recreation Center. Each year students are honored for Perfect Attendance, Most Improved, and Honor Roll membership. Nine students are chosen randomly from a list submitted by teachers, representing elementary, middle and high school levels.

Honored as Citizen of the Year was Ms. Gloria Linton, for educational activism and leading the effort to restore the landmark Holy Rosary Institute. The Community Service award went to long-time L.C.H.R. Board member Anthony Navarre, in recognition of his volunteer efforts on behalf of the indigent and homeless in the community. He has been a long-time volunteer with St. Joseph Diner and Shelter, and St. Paul’s Catholic Church, all located just north of the downtown. In the aftermath of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina he was tireless in organizing efforts to provide for basic food and shelter needs of the evacuees.



ACLU Concerns About N.O. P.D.

The Louisiana branch of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is seeking information to confirm if the New Orleans Police Department is fulfilling its promise to refrain from racial profiling and use of the minimum force necessary to arrest and control suspects taken into custody. A suit was filed last October against the Chief to get compliance. Executive Director Joe Cook reported in the newsletter “Louisiana Liberties” that his office was reviewing excessive force complaints, police reports, and cases under investigation. Cook reminded his readers that “a free and democratic nation demands that the rule of law apply to all its inhabitants, especially the police, who have the power to take away life and liberty.” The ACLU may be contacted at P.O. Box 56157, New Orleans, LA 70156 or toll-free 1-866-522-0617. See the website at www.laaclu.org

The ACLU has been accused of opposing religion. This is not accurate. They uphold the separation of church and state and First Amendment rights for all speech, whether religious or not. Late last year they defended the free speech rights of a conservative Christian, Edwin Crayton, in Natchitoches, LA. He had been standing in front of the lo-

cal Wal-Mart, with a sign, denouncing Wal-Mart’s alleged position on same-sex marriage. He was declared in violation of a city ordinance and forced to vacate a public sidewalk. The ACLU’s suit claimed that the City of Natchitoches had effectively censored Crayton, and this claim was upheld by the Court, which found in Crayton’s favor that his free speech rights were violated by the City Code.

The ACLU had challenged a similar ordinance in New Iberia in 2002. It has been said that if this country did not already have the ACLU to help maintain the constitutional rights of all citizens, it would have to be invented. It operates on the principle that while it may passionately disagree with some viewpoints and opinions, it even more passionately will defend the right to hold and express those viewpoints. (courtesy of P. Y. Burns)

HERITAGE BAND WINS TOP HONORS

Several years ago, J’Nelle Chargois, LCHR Board member, took on the daunting project of starting a marching band for young people in the community who may not be able to afford the costs associated with band membership in the public schools. Her hard work has paid off; the Heritage Community Marching Band recently won top honors at the National Martin L. King Jr. Showband competition. Chargois notes that musical education improves test scores and helps prepare the members for college.. (*The Advertiser*, 2/10/07)

REMEMBERING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BY DR. BARBARA J. CONNER

(ed. note: In the last issue of the Human Relations News, we remembered the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. around the time of his birthday. This month we remember his martyrdom on April 4, 1968 by reprinting an article on the King legacy which was published on the website of The Advertiser.)

In April of 1967 just a year before his death, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the majestic Riverside Church on the bank of the Hudson River in Manhattan, announced to the crowded church and to the world, "War is not the answer."

In his speeches and writings, Dr. King drew on wisdom found in countless years in many places and times, the power of non-violence. From Tibet to Assisi, Italy, to Pennsylvania, communities have thrived that were based on a conviction and steady discipline of avoiding violence and violent response. Many groups and individuals have dedicated themselves to the gentler way.

Jesus Christ was a pacifist. The refusal of Jesus to take up arms against the Romans was one reason Judas Iscariot betrayed Him. The Prince of Peace taught forgiveness, kindness, and healing.

Before he went to Montgomery, Dr. Martin Luther King earned his Ph.D. degree in Theology from Boston university. Dr. King was well-versed in the literature of non-violence. In the New Testament, we find the words of Christ, "Those who live by the sword, die by the sword," and "Resist not

evil." The teachings of Jesus are reaffirmed in the Epistles of St. Paul. As much as possible, Christians avoided military service for over three hundred years.

Dr. King was also familiar with the teachings of Gandhi, a Hindu, who called his government to follow religious principles of the highest nature. Tragically killed in 1947, Gandhi brought to the attention of Western Civilization values found in the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount.

Connecting Dr. King with Gandhi was Bayard Rustin, a gay, black Quaker and Conscientious Objector, who served in prison during World War II. Rustin studied in India with the Gandhi movement, and in Montgomery introduced King to Gandhian applications of the principles of non-violence to political struggle. Bayard Rustin is credited with being "the one who organized the March on Washington," meaning he had the friends and networks and energy to bring that many people together at one time and place, on behalf of Dr. King and the Cause.

In France, far removed from discussions of theology, Jean-Paul Sartre, the Existentialist and atheist, wrote a play for the stage of Paris during the War in Vietnam. His play brought to a modern setting the earliest Greek tragedy, *Antigone*, the ancient story of a brave woman who stood up to a king and his law. The play affirmed that

there are principles of a higher level than any single government.

Although Sartre's religious ideas differed radically from those of Dr. King, the common ground of discussing, at roughly the same time, the avoidance of violence, demonstrates that the principle reaches People of Faith and People of Conscience of all kinds.

Accordingly, to register a claim of Conscientious Objection with the Department of Defense, proving a religious basis for refusal to take human life is not necessary. What is needed is a deep, core, personal conviction that has been recorded and demonstrated in a clear and convincing way for a suitable period of time by the person seeking Conscientious Objector status.

Today, the draft is being discussed. Many websites discuss the role of the draft, as well as the rights of those those who choose to serve. For example, girights.org is a good place to begin. If the draft were to be reinstated, one would want a record of one's thoughts and feelings beforehand, whatever one's decisions might be. Each individual must decide where the line falls between aggression and defense. Women should also consider these matters, as many feel that if there were to be a draft, it would not be gender-exclusive.

It is important to remember that those who refuse service in war do and should support the health and well-being of those who choose

to fight and their families. Promised benefits from the government should be fulfilled. Adequate physical and psychological medical care must be given.

Yet, we cannot restrict our study of non-violence to wars abroad. Here in the U.S., we have some of the highest levels of gun violence of any place in the world. Here in Louisiana, we lead the way. Is it a coincidence that Louisiana also has the highest per capita of gun ownership? Guns don't cause violence, but they sure do make it easier to hurt more people more seriously. The presence of a gun makes a violent act far riskier. Surely, we should have concern and involvement in lowering family violence, just as we do in mitigating the harsh impact of war.

Each of us learns in our daily lives that "A cheerful answer turneth away wrath" as Proverbs says. From our closet relationships, to crime in our communities, to wars in foreign lands, we all have a grave interest in creating harmony. Peace is a daily effort and achievement.

Dr. Martin Luther King had more effect on the Western Hemisphere in the Twentieth Century than any other philosopher. He held no elective office. He did not have money, social prestige, or political power. His only way to change the world was through the influence of his words (and deeds). This is what philosophers everywhere seek to do: influence others, usually with words; to seek reason, rhetoric dialogue, as well as truth and valid conclusions. Dr. King used words alone to influence others. He saved this great country from an even more violent racial divide, and encouraged all of us to seek a higher ground. (cont. on p.4)

Conner on King, continued

We are all grateful for the extended lessons in non-violent action given to us by the words and life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In our personal lives, every day, we have the chance and the choice to follow in his footsteps and seek the gentler path. His words remind us that in government, each of our political parties must continue to protect and support People of Conscience and Freedom of Religion.

Barbara J. Conner
Lafayette, LA

Joseph M. Raya 1919-2005

We probably are not aware how widespread the influence of Dr. Martin Luther King has been on nonviolent movements for social change around the world. By a providential coincidence an Arab-American priest happened to be serving as a pastor in Birmingham during the period when Martin Luther King was a pastor there. This priest came to know and admire King and what he stood for, the Christian message that we are all loved by God without regard to our race, religion, or any other such characteristic, and we therefore must strive to be God-like in how we treat each other. Years later, that priest became an Archbishop in Israel. There he applied the principles of nonviolent action pioneered by Dr. King, to lead a movement for justice. That movement brought together Jews, Christians, and Muslims in a land where they are bitterly divided, in a way which probably had never been seen before, nor since.

Born in 1916 in Zahle, Lebanon, Joseph Raya was educated for the Melkite Catholic priesthood and ordained in

Remembering Archbishop Joseph Raya

1941. The Melkite Greek-Catholic Church resulted from a split in the Greek Orthodox Church in the Middle East in 1724, which affiliated itself with the Roman Catholic Church, but retained its own hierarchy and Byzantine liturgical traditions

In 1948 Fr. Raya was teaching French literature in Cairo but was expelled by order of King Farouk for defending the rights of women to receive education. He emigrated to the United States and in 1952 he was appointed pastor of St. George Church in Birmingham.

Fr. Raya was a brilliant liturgist and linguist and much of his attention in the 1950's was focused on liturgical reform. He made the first translation of Byzantine liturgies from Greek and Arabic into English. This translation was a great success and has remained in usage to this day. As fewer of his congregation spoke Arabic he felt it was necessary to keep the liturgy in the vernacular as was the Eastern custom. However, forces in the Roman Curia, determined to keep Latin as the language of the Roman Mass, were afraid this would set a precedent that would spread to the Roman Church, and they attempted to suppress his efforts. Pope John XXIII intervened on his behalf and Fr. Raya was called away to Rome for Vatican Council II, at which the Melkite hierarchy had had a very active presence.

Although embroiled in these efforts at Church renewal and reform, Fr. Raya became attuned to the social situation in which he found himself in the American South. He was appalled and saddened by the bigotry and oppression of Black people. He and his people were looked on with suspicion, and he was disturbed that in trying to fit in, some of his parishioners were adopting some of the same

bigoted attitudes of their WASP neighbors. He tried to set an example of treating Black people with respect and dignity, and opened the first Byzantine Catholic Mission for Afro-Americans in the U.S. The climate of hate and fear was such that this was enough for him to be threatened and beaten several times by KKK members.

Fr. Joseph was humbled by the courageous and nonviolent message of King to counter hatred with love. He became a friend of King and he joined in support of the Civil Rights movement, partaking in a number of the marches, including the March on Selma. He quietly absorbed the lessons of Non-violence which King taught and held them his heart.

In line with his interest in ecumenical and inter-faith relations, Fr. Raya found that his Arab-American parishioners and the Jewish community have much in common in the American South, and were often associated in business. He would speak at the local synagogues and invite Jews to programs at his parish. He became a founding member of the Jewish Community Center of Birmingham. Perhaps this may have been one reason he was tapped by Patriarch Maximos V Hakim to become the new Archbishop of the see of Akka, Haifa, Nazareth, and all Galilee, in Israel, in 1968.

In Israel, the new Archbishop shepherded what was the largest Christian flock in the country.

However, they were a poor and struggling minority, lacking in civil rights, and their situation, in some respects was not unlike that of African-Americans in Alabama. He found the government to be lacking in regard for their welfare and rights, and he challenged the PM and Knesset to revise such discriminatory practices as separate identity cards and a law requiring a permit for any more than 10 Arabs to gather together.

It was his championing of the villages of Ikrit and Berem in which his leadership came to the fore, and garnered national and international attention. These Arab Christian villages had been asked to leave their homes in 1948 but told they could return in 15 days. After three years they still had not returned, but the Supreme Court of Israel ruled that they should. However, the Army overruled this and blew up all the houses in the two villages. The villagers were dispersed within Israel. Losing their lands and houses, they were doomed to lives of poverty and deprivation. However, they continued to sneak back to hold events in the ruins of the two churches.

Archbishop Raya felt that this was an injustice that could no longer be allowed to continue, and he boldly demanded that the government of Prime Minister Golda Meir allow the displaced villagers to return to their destroyed villages and rebuild. He began a campaign of nonviolent action which galvanized a large cross-section of Israelis. *(to be concluded next issue)*

HUMAN RELATIONS NEWS

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Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations

No. 2

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ANNUAL POWELL-REZNIKOFF AWARDS GIVEN

The Baton Rouge Council's Annual Humanitarian Award was recently presented to the Rev. Betty B. Claiborne and the Rev. Randy K. Nichols. This award has been given for 28 years and is named in honor of Fr. Elmer Powell and Rabbi Marvin Reznikoff. Both of these clergymen are long deceased and had made significant contributions to human relations in the Baton Rouge community in the 1960's and 70's.

The event was held at the Wesley Foundation Campus Ministry on the campus of Southern University. A delicious chicken dinner was served, and the turn-out was gratifying. The theme of the evening was "Change in Human Relations is Driven by the Soul Within." The dinner speaker was the dynamic Eric Lewis, of the Black Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce.

Rev.'s Claiborne and Nichols join an illustrious band of past recipients of the award, many of whom have also been drawn from among the ranks of the clergy. Rev. Betty Claiborne is a spirit-filled Evangelist and committed community activist. Rev. Nichols was for many years a campus minister at L.S.U. but is now an advocate and activist on behalf of the homeless population of East Baton Rouge Parish.

BUS SERVICE FORUM SPONSORED

The Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations sponsored a forum, "**Public Transit Solutions: Get Behind CATS and Board the Bus.**"

It was held on March 1 at the Unitarian Church on Goodwood Blvd. The forum addressed several issues concerning the Capital Area Transit System (CATS), including the desirability of having a stable funding source and increased ridership. Co-sponsors included the Working Interfaith Network, the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, the Community Association for the Welfare of Children, National Association of University Women, and the National Coalition of 100 Black Men. Panel speakers included

Steven Grissom and Jermaine Watson of the B.R. Area Chamber; Eric Lewis of the B.R. Black Chamber; CATS Interim CEO John Denman; Jimmy Morgan, representing disabled riders; Lillie Chambers, Gr. King David Baptist Church; and Alfred Williams of the EBR Parish Mayor's Office.

Mayor-President Kip Holden announced on Feb. 27 that a grant of \$600,000 had been promised from the federal Transit Authority to help the para-transit program for the disabled. Congress waived the usual 20 percent match. Holden said that CATS submitted a grant request to the FTA to buy several specially equipped vans to transport disabled persons. R.J. Goebel, planning director of Capital Regional Planning Commission, said that \$1.1

Exhibit on Public Transit & Civil Rights

An exhibit on "**The World Will Move: Civil Rights and Public Transportation in Louisiana 1860's-1950's**" is currently on view at the Scotlandville Branch of the Public Library, 7333 Scenic Hwy. But hurry! It will be coming down after April 20th. After that, check with the Library, as it may be moved to another branch site. The exhibit documents the long struggle for equality in public conveyances, up to the time of the B.R. and Montgomery bus boycotts.



million in federal grants may become available to CATS.

Transportation issues are of concern to mental health patients because of para-transit cuts. Marjorie Green, Pres. of the B.R.C.H.R., represents the Council on the Capital Area Human Service District Mental Health Advisory Board. It meets every other month at its facility on Government St. Its mission is to support the state's mental health system and assure that services are delivered appropriately, regardless of race and economic background.

DANCERS CREATE TRIBUTE TO B.R. BUS BOYCOTT

In February, celebrating Black History Month, the Mid-City Dance Project presented *The Fading Line: A Commemoration of the 1953 Baton Rouge Bus Boycott*. It was held at the BREC Theater in Independence Park. The Baton Rouge Bus Boycott was the first successful boycott of its kind in U.S. history, and therefore the most influential precedent for the more widely heralded Montgomery, AL Bus Boycott of 1955-56.

The scenic order of the program included I. Getting on the Bus, II. Chapel Scene, III. City Council Meeting, IV. Free Ride System, V. Memorial Stadium Rally (where *Lift Every Voice and Sing* was sung), VI. The Legacy of the Boycott.

The brochure had a note of thanks to some of the activists of 1953, including Rev. T.J. Jemison, Mr. Johnnie Jones, Sr, and Mr. Willis V. Reed. Jones and Reed have been recipients of the BRCHR's Powell-Reznikoff Humanitarian Award in years past. The LSU-Community/University Partnership participated in the dance project. Admission was free, but donations of canned goods for the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank were accepted at the door.



given to Marjorie based on her contributions to enhancement of diversity and harmony in the community, and the effectiveness of her efforts in the community. Ms. Green has held offices as President of the Civic Council of Baton Rouge, Downtown Kivwanis (first African-American to hold these offices), YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge, Working Interfaith Network, as well as serving as President of the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations. She has been a Board or committee member in other organizations: Women's Community Rehabilitation Center, Capital Area Human Services District Advisory Board, Louisiana-based vocational training and job-placement agency, GY Non-Violence Committee, Juneteenth Celebration, Community Association for the Welfare of School Children, and Adult Literacy. She has been a trailblazer for her race, for children, and for the disabled, and this recognition was justly merited.

IN BRIEF

EBR PARISH LIBRARY has many branches, but just in case you need some help in finding the book or DVD you want to borrow, if you have computer access to the internet, try the library website:

www.ebr.lib.la.us

CHILDREN'S COALITION...Marjorie Green and Phil Woodland have attended sub-committee meetings leading up to the state rally at the Capitol sometime this spring. This is a continuation of the community plan for children 2006-2011. Visit the B.R. Council's website from time to time to find out a definite rally date

www.brchr.org

ISTROUMA HIGH SCHOOL...It was reported to the Board of Directors of BRCHR in January that the Council's "adopted" school is working on eradicating the inefficiency of low scores at that school.

LOUISIANA SPEAKS INITIATIVE...is a long term planning process of the LA Recovery Administration, supported with private funds, in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It works toward sustainable, long-term vision (50 yrs.) for South Louisiana. More info: 1-888-752-620 www.LouisianaSpeaks.

The Big Read: One Book/One Community

There is a new human relations program being sponsored this year by the E.B.R. Parish Library and the B. R. Area Chamber, with support from ExxonMobil, the Commercial Properties Development Corporation, the B.R. Area Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The entire Baton Rouge community is asked in 2007 to read and discuss the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a novel by Harper Lee. It is probably familiar to many through the movie based upon it starring Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch, an attorney in the racially-

segregated South.

On January 18 there was a presentation of the movie here in Baton Rouge, with panelists providing commentary following the showing. Among the panelists were members of the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations: The Rev. Mary Moody, Dr. Huel Perkins, and Mrs. Roberta Madden.

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment of the Arts, in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services & Arts Midwest. More information is available online at www.readonebook.org

HONOR BESTOWED ON MARJORIE GREEN

On February 17th, the Cox Communications/100 Black Men **Portraits of Car-ing Award** was present to Ms. Marjorie Green at the SMG Baton Rouge River Center. The award was



CECIL PICARD

State Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard succumbed to the ravages of A.L.S. (Lou Gehrig's Disease) on Feb. 15, 2007, at age 69. He is remembered as a man who dedicated his life to educating the children of Louisiana. His funeral was held in the little town of Maurice, located near the border of Lafayette and Vermilion Parishes. This is where Cecil Picard grew up, as the son of a high school principal, and where he began his teaching career. He continued to reside there as he served in the State Capitol as a Rep. and Senator for 20 years. There he was noted as a lawmaker who was tireless in promoting education, authoring over 50 pieces of legislation designed to improve education in the state. Picard was then tapped for the Superintendent of Education position and served for the past ten years under two administrations.

He was diagnosed with A.L.S. in May of 2005. With the help of experimental drugs, he was able to continue working through November, and then for some time at home. Hundreds of people came from across the state, to bid farewell to him. The church was packed and the services were transmitted by closed circuit to hundreds who had to be accommodated in the local elementary school.

Cecil Picard was disturbed by the numbers of children growing up in dire poverty. In order for these children not to start school already behind he stressed early intervention. The LA4 pre-school program was his proudest accomplishment as State Superintendent.

TWO LOUISIANA LEGENDS ARE LAID TO REST



During his tenure, Picard also transformed Louisiana from one of the worst performing states academically to one that is now ahead of many others on a number of important indicators. His final years were occupied with helping school systems affected by Katrina and Rita in their recovery efforts.

His sons issued a statement at his death giving tribute to him for how "he taught us to believe success was possible... Not a single day did he bemoan his undeserved fate. Quite the contrary, he accepted his condition with peace, and deepened his relationship with God." (from *The Advertiser* 2-18-07 and 2-20-07)

EDDIE ROBINSON, SR.

At the insistence of Gov. Kathleen Blanco, the body of Coach Eddie Robinson, was laid in state in the Capitol Building. Thousands of mourners paid their respects to this giant of the game of football. The beloved coach of the Grambling State University Tigers was a football legend who held a record in the number of career wins. He also was a warm human being who inspired his players with his love for the game and for them. "One of his former students stated that "he was just the most positive person I've ever been around. He didn't believe in excuses. When you were around him, you were just uplifted."

Robinson grew up near Clinton, LA, as the son of a sharecropper. He went to school at Grambling and stayed there for an amazing 57 years, with winning streaks that have yet to be surpassed in college football.

In the final years of his life Coach Robinson suffered from Alzheimers' Disease. It robbed him of his memories of his illustrious career, and he finally succumbed at the age of 88.

The brand new Assembly Center at Grambling was opened several months in advance for his funeral which was attended by over 7,000, among them were former students who went on to great NFL careers. Others who gave tribute at his funeral included Sen. Mary Landrieu and Rev. Jesse Jackson. In lieu of flowers the family requested contributions to the Coach Eddie Robinson Museum which is being assembled with private funds on the campus of Grambling State University. (from *The Advertiser* 4-5-07, 4-16-07)

Equality Ride Crosses Country

SOULFORCE, an organization applying the nonviolent methods of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. to secure freedom for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people from religious and political oppression, is sponsoring the "Equality Ride." Gay and lesbian evangelical Christians are currently touring to country on two buses, going to 32 colleges which have discriminatory policies and practices toward GBLT students

and staff. They students are hoping to park by the campuses and engage in dialogue with students and administrators about the issue of discrimination. They are prepared to commit to civil disobedience if they are prevented from speaking. The colleges they are going to are associated with various religious denominations from Notre Dame in Indiana, to Brigham Young in Utah, to Bob Jones in South Carolina.

The Equality Ride's reception has for the most part been very positive. In Seattle, WA the City declared a Day in their honor. However, in some places their peaceful presence evoke responses of fear and even hate. At Dordt College in

Sioux Center, IA the bus was defaced with obscene graffiti. At Mississippi College in Clinton, MS the city police harassed the riders and told them to get out of town. However, the Mississippi ACLU came forth to defend their free speech rights. One of the riders and his mother committed civil disobedience at Brigham Young, where they were forbidden to enter the campus. Fifteen more riders were arrested at the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, KY. At Bob Jones University they were met by a counter-protest led by "Operation Save America" with signs declaring they would go to hell. (from the internet)

REPORT ON THE WINTER AND SPRING BOARD MEETINGS

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

For non-BR residents:

make check to: LCHR

**Send to: Richard Haymaker
254 Nelson Dr.
Baton Rouge, LA 70808**

For BR residents:

make check to : BRCHR

**Send to: Richard Haymaker
254 Nelson Dr.
Baton Rouge, LA 70808**

The Board of Directors met January 13 at the home of Dr. Pat Rickels in Lafayette. It was reported that our agreements with Equity!Baton Rouge and Casey Family Programs were being terminated, and Equity! is going out of existence. A motion was adopted that Board members were encouraged to write our state and federal legislators in favor of a substantial increase in the minimum wage. Dr. Rickels volunteered to contact Prof. Burk Foster, asking him to provide a response to a recent article favoring the death penalty (LCHR and Prof. Foster oppose capital punishment). Doris White volunteered to review school history books to see what information they provide about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Board agreed to support Southern Mutual Help Association's appeal for funds to continue restoration of hurricane-damaged homes. SMHA's address is 3602 Old Jeanerette Rd., New Iberia, LA 70563.

At the Board's meeting Ap. 14 at Doris White's home in Plaisance, Paul Burns resigned as Asst. Newsletter Editor, effective at the July 2007 Board meeting. The Board recommended that Dr. Holley Galland's appointment as our representative to the La. Health Care Commission be extended. The Board decided to hold LCHR's annual meeting in Lafayette on June 23. Nominations were made for the 2007 Oliver-Sigur Humanitarian Award: Hector LaSala, Lafayette; Joseph Dennis, Lafayette; Patricia Rickels, Lafayette. Dennis & Rickels declined to accept the nomination. Rickels said she would mail a request to Board members for other nominations for this award, along with nominations for LCHR Board membership. The awards are to be made and Board member elections are to occur at the June 23 annual meeting.

Burns reported that he was making a survey by mail questionnaire of possible racial discrimination by Newcomers Clubs in Louisiana.

Rickels distributed copies of a new booklet published by ULL: "An Interview with Dr. Patricia Rickels, in Commemoration of Fifty years of Service to the University of Louisiana."

Newsletter of the Louisiana Council
on Human Relations and the Baton
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