



SAMUEL DEWITT PROCTOR CONFERENCE, INC.

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Honoring the Lost Children of Katrina A Pre-Second Anniversary Commemoration with Ambassador Andrew Young

The Greater New Orleans Clergy for Restorative Justice (GNOCRJ), New Orleans City Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference (SDPC) are working together to commemorate the lives of the “Lost Children of Katrina” on Saturday, August 18 and Sunday, August 19. “We have not finished burying our children,” said Willard-Lewis. “The nation needs to know that misery, despair and dysfunction are still alive in New Orleans. We are not yet healed and our children still suffer.” Public officials have reported that many of the thousands of lives that were lost after the levees broke may have been senior citizens and children.

“One of the greatest signs of despair for New Orleans is to know that some young girls and boys have not been laid to rest because their bodies were not found or have not been identified,” said the Rev. J.C. Profit, pastor Stronger Hope Baptist Church and a founding member of the GNOCRJ. He also reiterated, “Our heartaches worsen when we reflect on the fact that some of the sisters, brothers and classmates of those children who lost their lives when the levees broke are still living in trailers or have not been able to return to New Orleans because they are still displaced in another state.”

Nearly two years ago on August 29, 2005 after the 125 mph winds of Hurricane Katrina pounded on the weak walls of the levees in the lower Ninth Ward killing thousands of children, women and men in New Orleans, people who are still in need. “We must send out a clarion call to the nation and the world to let them know that some families have not been able to bury their children and some children who have survived do not have houses to live in and schools to attend,” said the Dr. Susan Smith, board of trustee for the SDPC.

Ambassador Andrew Young and a national delegation of dignitaries have answered the call and will join GNOCRJ, Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis in collaboration with the SDPC to honor the young lives that were lost when the levees broke in the Crescent City, now nearly two years ago. Hundreds of children died as a result of the storm according to public officials. As the second anniversary of Katrina approaches, New Orleans Clergy, Ambassador Young and Willard-Lewis will pay homage to those children, to remember their lives and their legacies.

The Rev. Leona Fisher, pastor of Morris Brown African Methodist Episcopal Church and a GNOCRJ member believes it is important to keep the focus on New Orleans’ children. “We’ve lost countless children and they’ve never been officially acknowledged,” said Fisher. “And we’ve had no justice in trying to educate and get adequate healthcare for the children who are still here. So, yes, we will honor the dead—those children who have passed on—but we also will lift in prayer those who remain behind.” Many of the children of New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast Region who survived Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are counted in the astronomical number of nine million children who do not have healthcare in America. However, the health conditions of the children in New Orleans is more acute because numerous hospitals and health services are still closed and the number of physicians, nurses and other health care providers have decreased tremendously since Hurricane Katrina pounded the shores of New Orleans.

The August 18 activities will begin with an ecumenical worship service led by the Rev. Fisher and Councilwoman Willard-Lewis at 12 noon at the St. Paul's Church of God in Christ (COGIC) located at 1020 Forstall Street in New Orleans. The Rev. Ernest Dison is the pastor of St. Paul's COGIC. At 1:30 p.m., a solemn processional will begin outside of the church and end at the Katrina Memorial that rests in the shadow of the Claiborne Bridge, where so many children, women and men stood waiting for rescue on August 29, 2005. A single, horse-drawn carriage with a child's casket will lead the procession, Ambassador Young will join the children as they march behind the casket that symbolizes the lives of their lost classmates and sisters and brothers.

At 3:00 p.m., the children will meet at the Martin Luther King School, located at 1617 Caffin Avenue to pay tribute to their lost classmates. Simultaneously, New Orleans clergy and local officials will join the Rev. Dr. Susan K. Smith, Proctor trustee and chair of the National Katrina Justice Hearings in a meeting with Ambassador Young. They will meet Ambassador Young at the site of East Jerusalem Baptist Church.

Ambassador Young will host a news conference on Sunday, August 19 to address his reflections after he has talked with the suffering children, women and men of New Orleans. Please read the media advisory for the location and details of each event on August 18 & 19 in New Orleans.

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