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The new Black view

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Grave indifference: City and NYPD berated for nonchalance over shootings near school

By **NAYABA ARINDE**
Amsterdam News Staff

"It's like the War of the Worlds," said eight-year-old Amari Smith, as he addressed a public meeting about a recent rash of shootings around Bedford-Stuyvesant's Public School 21.

While the school bears the name of Crispus Attucks, the first man killed in the Boston Massacre in 1775, parents, residents and students want this to be the only Black fatality linked with P.S. 21.

"Powerful lobbies in this state and city keep guns in this community," said Brooklyn Assemblywoman Annette Robinson. "We have to go to City Hall and demand what we want. We're not lobbying for what we need," she said at Friday's public forum.

On Wednesday, March 1 at approximately 1:50 p.m. a firefright erupted between at least three young Black men around Bainbridge Street and Patchen Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant, in the 81st Precinct. As police officers came up on the three men, they were allegedly fired upon by the suspects. The cops were not hit, and according to the police department, they did not return fire. They gave chase to the fleeing suspects, capturing a 17- and an 18-year-old, while one suspect remains at large.

Reportedly a loaded semi-automatic handgun was recovered and the investigation is ongoing.

Under the leadership of former principal and current vice chancellor of the Board of Regents, Adelaide Sanford, P.S. 21 was known for achieving the highest reading scores of any urban school in New York State.

It is a school with a strong history and an African-centered curriculum established by Sanford.

Ducking bullets should not be part of any extra curricular activity, and while no one was hurt in last week's shooting, the children had to be kept inside while police sought out the perpetrators.

An emergency meeting was immediately called for that evening at the school.

"My students want to feel safe coming to and leaving school," Principal Harold Anderson told the Amsterdam News. "There's a police presence, but
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VISIONARY PASSES

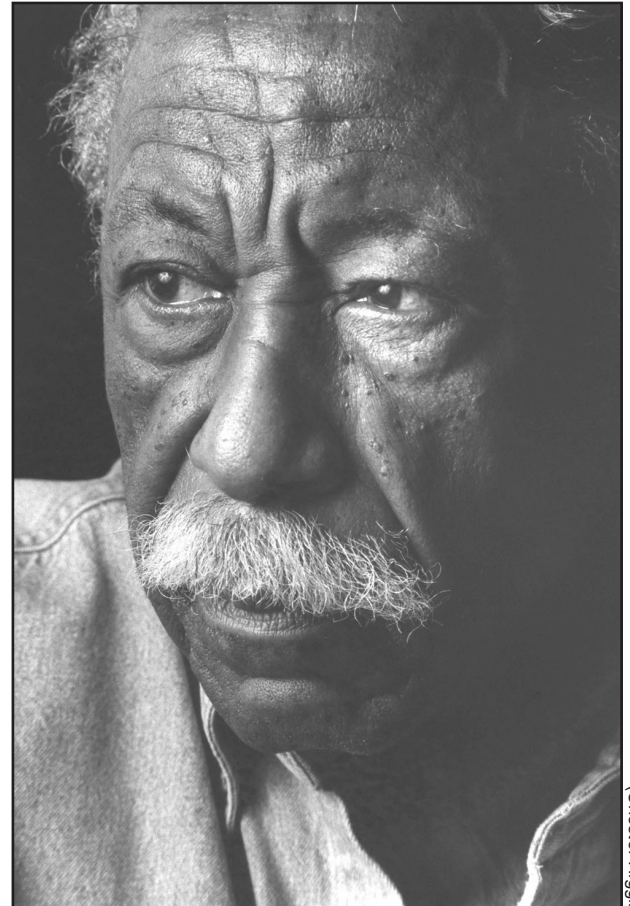
Gordon Parks dead at 93

By **HERB BOYD**
Special to the AmNews

Toward the close of his recently published memoir, "A Hungry Heart," Gordon Parks wrote: "I have not allowed nonsense to gobble up my time. But I've often felt as though I tumbled upward out of darkness. At other times I've felt like a fine horse galloping through the wind." And Parks' fine gallop through a splendid life where he excelled as a photographer, painter, writer, composer, and filmmaker came to an end Tuesday at his home in New York City. He was 93.

According to his daughter, Toni, Parks had been ill for some time and had been undergoing radiation treatment for cancer. "He left us at 4:15pm," Ms. Parks said. "We haven't completed all the funeral arrangements, but his body is at Campbell's."

It might have been the fact that he was born dead that Parks refers to "tumbling upward out of darkness." That he was born dead is a story that Parks often recalled. "A young white doctor plunged my blood-soaked remains into a tub of icy water and miraculously gave me life," Parks wrote.
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GORDON PARKS, 1912-2006

(Chester Higgins photo)

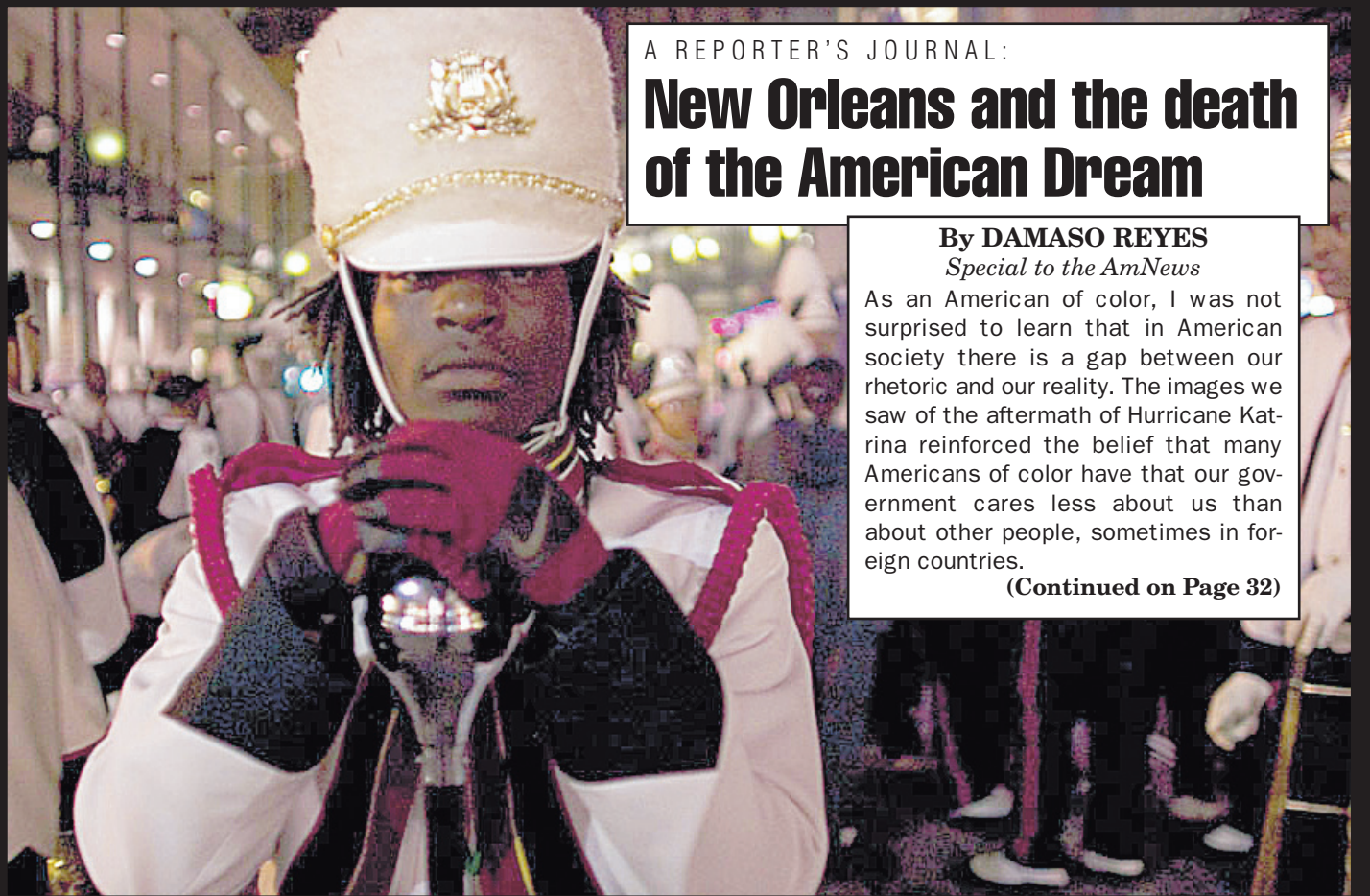
A REPORTER'S JOURNAL:

New Orleans and the death of the American Dream

By **DAMASO REYES**
Special to the AmNews

As an American of color, I was not surprised to learn that in American society there is a gap between our rhetoric and our reality. The images we saw of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina reinforced the belief that many Americans of color have that our government cares less about us than about other people, sometimes in foreign countries.

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(Damaso Reyes photo)

JOBHOLDING BARRIER: FELONY CONVICTIONS

Urban Agenda by *David R. Jones*

Community Service Society of New York President

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New Orleans

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The lessons seemed so clear and the hand-wringing so intense that I believed that if we as a society could not make up for our failure to help the people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast at least we would ensure that they could return to somewhat normal lives. After spending nearly two weeks in New Orleans six months after the storm, I have come to the conclusion that we have not only abandoned the people here, we have killed what was left of the American Dream.

Touring the 9th ward, New Orleans East, and the many other devastated areas in this city provides a true assessment

of how much America cares about this city and its people. Ruin is everywhere; the destruction, as one New Orleanian I met this week put it, is like "Hiroshima and Nagasaki." What is important to understand is that this is not an exaggeration made in service of some less extreme version of the truth. For miles in every direction, destroyed homes lie in the middle of streets, and once vibrant communities of color have been literally wiped off the map, never to return.

Within three months of September 11th, the rubble was cleared from Ground Zero in New York. Six months after the

worst natural disaster in American history some of the street lights in New Orleans still don't work and many of its streets are impassible.

What message does this inaction send to the people of New Orleans, many of whom simply had the misfortune to live where they did? Why are we not pledging to rebuild this city but instead questioning the wisdom of putting people in a flood zone when those questions are never asked in Florida, with its hurricane zones, or California, which is hit time and again by earthquakes?

What a visitor sees in the 9th ward goes beyond destroyed lives, homes and communities. It is the manifestation of a society which has refused to deal with its history, refused to

acknowledge the lingering effects of racism and segregation which was the law of the land for all of American history save the last forty years. Would there still be rubble in Hollywood six months after an earthquake? Would Chicago's lakefront still appear to be a war zone half a year after Lake Michigan breaks its banks? We all know the answer would be a resounding no.

But six months after families rich and poor, Black and white, were forced to seek higher ground, those who have the desire and means to rebuild have come back to neighborhoods which have no electricity, where the houses next door and across the street and down the block still closely resemble crushed matchsticks.

American society encourages us to own homes and build businesses, but why should we if we can't count on help to get back on our feet if the unforeseeable happens, if life spins out of control? What the aftermath of Katrina has shown is that the American Dream is just that for most of us, a dream and one that even if we are lucky enough to somehow achieve, may be ripped away because of a storm, flood, or terrorist attack.

Walking through the lower 9th ward, one can only ask, what happened to the help that was promised? What happened to the guilt we all felt for those people whose lives were turned upside down? What happened to never again?

What happened to the American Dream?

Shooting

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there's still violence. We need to find another way to reach out to our teenagers. The gangs, the pimps and the drug dealers are all getting better at how they recruit our kids. We need to get better at keeping our kids away from them. There needs to be concerted adult intervention."

Police Commissioner Ray Kelly did not respond to Amsterdam News phone calls or a written request for comments about his plan to address the issue of shootings around the school.

Alicia Maxey from the Department of Education told the Amsterdam News that the shooting last week occurred away from the school and that "the Department of Education has nothing to do with this, you need to contact the NYPD."

Det. Dennis Laffin from the police press department told the paper that while the NYPD does not have a defined plan to deal with this particular precinct, that would be up to the commanding officer of the 81st Precinct, from whom there was no response by press time.

Requesting additional resources would be up to Deputy Inspector Browder, he said, and CompStat would "reassign or reallocate resources" as determined by his discretion.

"I believe in feeding the hungrier children first, and our children are starving," said Linda Sanders-Peay, the parent coordinator at P.S. 21. She told the meeting, "They are starving for positive recreation. They have no outlets."

Cong. Ed Towns, Councilwoman Darlene Mealy, and Brooklyn-based police brass sat on the dais and offered commentary and analysis.

"As men we influence these children. We need to police ourselves," parent Daryl Marsh told the audience.

Chief Mike Marino suggested that people should consider joining the uniformed, unarmed volunteer auxiliary police, which gives the "perception that there is a lot more police around."

The gun problem goes way "beyond our community," declared Robinson. The N.R.A., she said, is ensuring that laws that could stem the free flow of guns into the inner cities are thwarted at every turn because, "If you can track guns, you can track guns back to the manufacturers." The state and federal government could work towards holding these industry profiteers accountable for the increasing gun crime which stats show are up in this city. They choose not to.

"It's all political," said Robinson. New York has a state government "which refuses to obey the law" regarding the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, and the millions the legislature has been court-ordered to give to the public school system. The state and city is also "not providing services, [and the community] is not receiving funds that it needs for programs. So the safety net is removed."

There are not enough centers to keep the youth off the streets, she said. All the legislation coming down from Albany is "an attempt to criminalize them. We have to be political in our community to see who we are going to vote for. We have to participate."

Robinson said that her grandson goes to the school. She recalled standing on Bainbridge Street and watching her own children walk to school, and standing in the doorway of the nearby Boys and Girls High School.

"We have to produce a safe corridor for our children," Robinson said. "Parents have to stand guard. We have to turn this into a safe, drug free, crime free environment in our community." Home owners and block associations have to be partners in this effort, she said.

"This is one of the premier schools in the state," she noted, hailing the A Few Good Men program. "Brothers here need to stand up and be counted. It's in our hands." They can't let the youth take over," she said, referring to the gun wielding somebodies who are shooting with abandon.

Mayoral aide Chris Coffey said that the community should engage the services of the Department of Youth and Community

Development.

He suggested that advantage be taken of city and state money for recreation centers, and pondered out loud whether there needs to be a greater police presence. He said that the mayor's office would come back with some answers within 90 days.

The folk in the auditorium shot down that notion. Sanders-Peay reminded him that school would be pretty much over by then. The crowd demanded a return within two weeks.

Coffey quickly reassessed his scheduling and offered that within four to six weeks a task force would present some solutions. Sanders-Peay told the parents that they must attend police council meetings.

"There's no gun manufacturers in the community in Brooklyn," said Councilwoman Mealy, but guns are here anyway. "If you see something, say something," she said.

Other audience members added, "If you see something, do something"

In the first week of January the Amsterdam News published a story about a stand-off between local non-students in the vicinity of P.S. 21 and Boys and Girls. A mainstream tabloid picked up the story two weeks later, and reported that mayor Michael Bloomberg assured residents and teachers that crime was down in that precinct and that their fear of being caught in crossfire should simply be abated.

Less than two months later, gunshots rang out close to the school again. A parent told the Amsterdam News that at the end of last month, shots were fired on three consecutive days, and that it went unreported.

Retiring Captain Eric Adams told the Friday meeting that his community action group, 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, is going to hold an adult-only forum so that parents can suss out "if their children are in possession of firearms." He continued that they will talk to a youth-only forum to teach them "how to safely navigate an encounter with a police officer." He concluded, "The department and the city need to give us programs, not band aids," and check

the severe budget cuts.

"The mayor takes every incident seriously and the NYPD does work with the Department of Education to make sure that resources are allocated for the safety of the residents and the students," said mayoral spokesperson Virginia Lam. She added, "Crime in this particular precinct is down 15 percent."

The Amsterdam News said that may be of little comfort in real time to concerned parents and children hoping not to get shot. Lam replied, "The mayor has made combating gun violence a priority in his second term."

Maddox

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tance, he was a nationalist, philosophically. Today, India is an emerging superpower. For nearly a century, Blacks have been pursuing integrationist designs. In mindless pursuit of integration, Blacks have become the "Untouchables" in the United States, aka "refugees."

Is it time for Blacks to either declare their own independence, embrace the colors of Marcus Garvey and write a constitution or continue to primarily seek a renewal of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to advance plantation politics? If self-appointed spokespersons have any say, man-made disasters will multiply and Blacks will be scattered on concentration camps throughout the West.

There was more to Gandhi than his claim of nonviolence. India falls within the ranks of an elite club of countries with nuclear power. The challenge of the twentieth century, for any undeveloped country, is securing nuclear power. It divides the

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Letter

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away along with the changing landscape.

We need to preserve our blocks, especially our blocks in Bed-Stuy, with a rich history of beautiful brownstones and rap lore via Biggie Smalls and Jay Z. We cannot let a few knuckle-

heads from the have-nots. In the meantime, Black leaders and preachers will continue to concoct "toys for guns" programs.

If Blacks are unable to exercise rights under the First Amendment, our lot at the bottom of the caste system will become a fixture. All slave codes specifically prohibited enslaved Africans from exercising any of the enumerated rights in the First Amendment. These rights, coupled with the right of self-defense under the Second Amendment, constitute rights of survival as human beings.

In its effort to keep its foot on our collective necks, the New York Police Department has shut down the Elks Plaza in Brooklyn. Blacks are still unable to meet without white surveillance. Thus, a new location will have to be secured to hear Dr. Julia Hare, a world-renowned educational psychologist, of San Francisco speak on "Spineless Negroes" on Wednesday, March 15 at 7:30 p.m. Updated information will be made available on www.reinstatetonmaddox.com or call 718-834-9034.

heads terrorize our beloved children and traumatize their minds, give the shorties (kids) a chance at school and life. So squash the beef! And if you need an outside mediator holla at me or we can get a mutually respected third party to intervene to stop the madness.

Thank you,
Daryl Marshall
Concerned Brooklyn parent