



**National
Urban League**

**To Be Equal #1
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Triumphs and Tragedies of 2012**

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"I miss you baby girl. Sweet caramel princess. African American, Puerto Rican Canadian with a wee bit of Irish...We will honor your classmates you loved so dearly too. As well as the teachers and staff. Love wins." Nelba Marquez-Greene, the mother of 6-year-old Sandy Hook victim, Ana Grace Marquez-Greene

As we come to the close of 2012, I want to take a moment to reflect on some of the major triumphs and tragedies of the past year.

First, as many of you know, the National Urban League's number one priority this year was our "Occupy the Vote" campaign, devoted to defeating the onslaught of voter ID laws and other tactics designed to suppress voter turnout among African Americans and other progressive voters. By all indications, our effort, in concert with many others across the country, was successful. On November 6th, President Obama was re-elected with overwhelming support from the very communities that were targets of the voter suppression crowd. In fact, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis, "Blacks voted at a higher rate this year than other minority groups and for the first time in history may also have voted at a higher rate than whites." Our thanks to everyone who helped us Occupy the Vote in 2012.

We also want to again extend our gratitude to all those who came to the aid of the victims of Superstorm Sandy which struck New York and the Mid-Atlantic region in October. The relief effort is progressing, but as the cold weather sets in, many remain homeless and jobless. We are pleased that on December 28th, the United States Senate approved President Obama's \$60.4 billion aid package. We urge the House of Representatives to quickly follow their lead.

Sandy was a natural disaster that claimed more than 100 lives, but this year also saw one of the most horrific man-made disasters in American history – the shooting deaths of 20 elementary school students and six others in a school in Newtown, Connecticut. While the nation is still mourning this tragedy, the National Urban League has called for a reinstatement

of the assault weapons ban, along with a comprehensive review of all gun laws to close loopholes and strengthen enforcement. We must take action now to end the scourge of gun violence in America.

Finally, this year we saw the passing of a number of notable Americans. They include:

Whitney Houston – The incomparable musical prodigy whose amazing voice and songs brought joy to the world.

Dick Clark – The long-time host of “American Bandstand,” who reigned as “America’s oldest teenager” for 82 years and gave first-time national exposure to many African American musical artists.

Neil Armstrong – The NASA astronaut who in 1969 became the first human to walk on the moon.

Sally Ride – Another NASA astronaut, who in 1983 became the first woman to fly into space.

Russell Means – The Oglala Sioux Indian who became the iconic leader of the American Indian Movement and fought tirelessly for the rights of Native Americans.

Sherman Helmsley – The spirited actor whose TV roles as George Jefferson in “All in the Family” and “The Jeffersons” kept us laughing through the 70’s and 80’s.

Ana Grace Marquez Greene and her 19 classmates at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

We pray that 2013 will be a prosperous and peaceful one for you and your family. We pledge to continue standing with you in the struggle for economic, political and social justice for all. Happy New Year!

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