



**National  
Urban League**

**To Be Equal #6  
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Super Bowl Comes Back to Comeback City**

Marc H. Morial  
President and CEO  
National Urban League

*"It's clear this city is back bigger and better than ever."* NFL Commissioner, Roger Goodell

While more than 100 million people watched Sunday's Super Bowl match-up between the Baltimore Ravens and San Francisco 49'ers, I was just as riveted by the remarkable performance of this year's Super Bowl host city, my hometown of New Orleans. Only seven years after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and two years after the worst oil spill in American history, New Orleans under the leadership of Mayor Mitch Landrieu hosted the Super Bowl for the 10<sup>th</sup> time, a league-leading record it shares with Miami. But the real stars of Super Bowl XLVII were the people of New Orleans, their unshakeable resilience and their unrivalled celebration of diversity through the City's rich gumbo of culture and music.

The city's recovery has not fully made it over the goal line, as evidenced by persistent pockets of extreme poverty and hurricane damage still prevalent in the city's Lower Ninth Ward, but progress is undeniably on the march in New Orleans. Employment is up. School reform is showing positive results. And according to the U.S. Census Bureau, New Orleans was America's fastest growing big city between 2010 and 2011. This year's Super Bowl boosted the economy of the city and state by an estimated \$430 million. And through the efforts of the NFL's Emerging Business Program, some 275 local minority and women-owned businesses got a piece of the action.

The NFL and New Orleans also teamed up to showcase their shared commitment to ensuring that the City's recovery leaves no one behind. On the Friday before the big game, the NFL and a non-profit group called Rebuilding Together, organized NFL players and other volunteers to renovate 10 homes for veterans, teachers and other community residents who have been struggling to rebuild since Katrina. And on Saturday, the National Urban League of Greater New Orleans Young Professionals, the city's host committee, and others participated in the NFL's annual Super Saturday of Service. This year, volunteers helped renovate a number of local playgrounds and facilities, including the City's Youth Education Town, (YET Center), the South Broad Street educational and recreational safe haven for at-risk youth, which opened in 2000 with a million dollar grant from the NFL.

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There were many human-interest stories connected to this year's big game, including the fact that the two head coaches, John and Jim Harbaugh, became the first brothers to coach against each other in a Super Bowl. Ray Lewis played his last game after 17 stellar seasons with the Baltimore Ravens. And 49er's quarterback, Colin Kaepernick, became only the fourth African American quarterback to start a Super Bowl (Doug Williams, Steve McNair and Donovan McNabb were the others). But for me, the star of the game was New Orleans where the American Dream is always the real grand marshal of the city's endless procession of carnivals, parades and Super Bowls. While the NFL and New Orleans continue to display a measure of diversity neither complete nor perfect, America should look to their example and strive to emulate their "Super" efforts.

By the way, congratulations to the winners of Super Bowl XLVII, the Baltimore Ravens, who won by a score of 34-31.

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