



**National
Urban League**

To Be Equal #31

August 1, 2012

President Obama Announces New Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans at National Urban League Conference

Marc H. Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

"For nearly a century, the National Urban League has been inspiring people of every race and every religion and every walk of life to reach for the dream that lies at the heart of our founding..." President Barack Obama

Last Wednesday, before a packed crowd at the National Urban League annual conference in New Orleans, President Barack Obama delivered a major domestic policy speech focused on creating more fairness and opportunity for middle class and working class Americans. Citing the example of New Orleans' remarkable resilience seven years after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the President urged the nation to come together to rebuild our faltering economy and ensure a quality education for all. The President's speech came on the same day that the United States Senate passed a bill to extend middle class tax cuts another year for "98% of American families and 97% of small business owners." President Obama urged the House of Representatives to follow suit and added, "They should not be holding middle-class tax cuts hostage just to get more tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires." The tax debate is a defining issue in this year's presidential campaign and will most likely be decided by the voters in November.

The President's speech dealt with many of the issues important to the National Urban League and the record 2.7 million people we served last year. One of our key empowerment goals is that "Every American child is ready for college, work and life." The President gave voice to that vision by making the point that strong communities are built on strong schools. He added, "If this country is about anything, it's about passing on even greater opportunity to the next generation."

In recent years that dream has been slipping away for millions of African Americans. While pointing to progress that has been made since he took office, the President also acknowledged that substantial obstacles to equal educational opportunity still remain. To help overcome those obstacles President Obama announced a new White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans.

31TBE 8/1/12 • 120 Wall Street • New York, NY 10005 • (212) 558-5300 • WWW.NUL.ORG



His executive order, signed the next day, recognizes that “African Americans lack equal access to highly effective teachers and principals, safe schools, and challenging college-preparatory classes.” It points out the wide disparity in student achievement between African Americans and their peers in this country. And it recognizes the lower rate of graduation and higher rate of incarceration for black males.

The stated goal of the new initiative is to help expand educational opportunities, improve educational outcomes, and deliver a complete and competitive education for all African Americans. We pledge to work with the Administration and the Department of Education to make real progress. This unprecedented focus on African American education is much needed and supports a National Urban League empowerment goal that is critical to the future of our youth, our communities and our nation.

This year’s annual conference was hotter than a New Orleans summer. Our “Occupy the Vote” theme reminded the nation that while the National Urban League does not endorse candidates, we endorse democracy. That means opposing those who would deny anyone the right to vote and urging everyone to get to the polls this November.

For more conference highlights visit www.nul.org.

###