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Russell Westbrook Has Found His Groove with the Houston Rockets

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SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
Matthew 22:37-39 (KJV)



When Did You Know?

Community Leaders and Residents Demand Answers and Justice for Environmental Hazards that Have Created Cancer Clusters and Devastated Black Communities across Houston



Sen. Borris Miles held a press conference, along with Mayor Sylvester Turner, Rep. Harold Dutton, Houston Health Department, representatives from TCEQ and Texas Department of State Health Services, residents, community leaders, elected officials and many others to address environmental hazard

BY JEFFREY L. BONEY
Associate Editor

At what point do you know that your actions may be creating an environmental hazard and even contributing to health challenges and loss of life?

When would you know? Would it be after residents complained that something was wrong or would it be when you are slapped on the wrist by regulators and told that you were wrong?

In the case involving Union Pacific and the people in the Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens areas, the latter may very well be the appropriate answer.

Residents have complained for years, but many residents have said that their pleadings fell on deaf ears and nothing was ever done to address their concerns, until now.

This past Monday, State Senator Borris Miles held a press conference, along with Mayor Sylvester Turner, Rep. Harold Dutton, the Houston Health Department, representatives from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and Texas Department of State Health Services, residents, community leaders, elected officials and many others, regarding the Union Pacific site that has generated a lot of buzz recently.

A recent new study that was completed by the Texas Department of State Health Services that found elevated rates of esophagus, larynx and lung cancers in those communities, compared to normal rates. Many other community meetings have been held on the issue, including a community meeting held by U.S. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and attorney and environmental activist Erin Brockovich. However,

SEE CANCER 4A

Coronavirus Outbreak: Not a Time for Hysteria or Propaganda



Getty Images

BY JEFFREY L. BONEY
Associate Editor

U.S. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, who serves as a senior member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, is calling on the community and the nation to stay prepared and avoid panicking in response to the Coronavirus outbreak that has been widely reported.

"This is not a time for hysteria or propaganda, but rather a time for facts and action," said Congresswoman Jackson Lee. "We must be certain to utilize all information and federal resources available to ensure that efforts to stem the spread of this virus is successful. My office will continue to monitor all the efforts to contain and cure this virus by working with local, state, and federal officials."

On January 30, 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of a "public health emergency from the outbreak of the Coronavirus," and has sounded the alarm worldwide.

As the declaration came forth, the Coronavirus outbreak had already infected popu-

lations around the world, causing 77,042 cases in China and 2,445 deaths; 858 cases in South Korea and 8 deaths; 634 cases on the Diamond Princess Cruise Ship and 2 deaths; 143 cases in Italy and 4 deaths; 159 cases in Japan and 1 death; and 35 cases reported in the United States, with the first death just reported, among others.

"This is not just a health crisis but also an economic crisis which has caused a decline in markets around the world including our won here in the United States," Congresswoman Jackson Lee stated. "I have formally requested the President of the United States by letter to immediately suspend any health-related cuts that impact efforts to contain and treat the coronavirus, including the \$3.3 billion in cuts to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the discretionary budget cuts for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of nearly 19 percent at \$678 million, severely threatening the CDC's ability to respond to this and other epidemics in the future. Additionally, I am requesting the President to suspend cuts in

SEE CORONAVIRUS 4A

AJ McQUEEN TURNS WATER INTO RHYMES



RAPPER AND ENTREPRENEUR CREATES "HYDRATE HILL" - A BLACK-OWNED ALKALINE WATER COMPANY

AJ McQueen

BY CHELSEA LENORA WHITE
Entertainment Editor

Houston came to know AJ McQueen as a soulful emcee from St. Louis, Missouri. His undeniable lyricism, consciousness and real testimony as a reformed gang member has landed him on BET's *106 & Park*, the Northern Lights Tour, SXSW Music Conference and the *Sway In The Morning* SiriusXM radio show. McQueen was recognized by President Barack Obama in receiving the White House Service Achievement Award for his service to his community and his positive music. He also founded his nonprofit performing arts and literacy company, Writer's Block Inc., in which he was awarded the Top 30 under 30 Entrepreneur

SEE MCQUEEN 2B



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CANCER CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

this is the first time that it appears Union Pacific is taking ownership of the issue and is seemingly planning to do something to address the longstanding problems that have impacted so many Black residents in those areas.



Mayor Sylvester Turner consoles resident dealing with environmental hazard

lives lost, or heal those who are still fighting for tomorrow, this is the first step of ridding our community of this environmental hazard.”

Mayor Turner pointed out that the city of Houston first became involved in this issue when the Houston Health Department participated in an April community meeting with Impact, a community group in the Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens community.

“It is unacceptable that families in this neighborhood, and especially those with a cancer diagnosis in this neighborhood, may have been exposed to creosote over four decades,” said Mayor Turner. “It is significant that for the first time we are hearing that the TCEQ has given Union Pacific an August 31, 2020 deadline to submit its revised permit application and cleanup plan of the Wood Preserving Works site in Houston. This does not mean the work is over. Far from it. The city will continue to monitor the health concerns in this community and stay on top of the cleanup process.”

Mayor Turner explained that the Houston Health Department learned of the community’s frustration and concerns about the safety of its water at the community meetings, and following those meetings the City conducted environmental sampling, where test results showed the drinking water was safe, but the surface water results that indicated there was contamination required further investigation. The Houston Health Department then contacted the state about the results of a cancer cluster analysis that was requested in April. According to Mayor Turner, once they were provided the report, it became evident it had not been shared with the entire community, which is why they met with Impact to make sure the community was made aware of the results. The Houston Health Department, in partnership with Impact, conducted a door-to-door health survey of families in the 110 homes over the groundwater contamination plume to document and understand what the community is experiencing. A total of 30 households participated in the survey. Of those surveyed, 43 percent, or 13 families, self-reported a cancer diagnosis. The percentage is relatively high for the neighborhood since the average cancer diagnosis for Houston is 6.1 percent. Most received a cancer diagnosis after 2003.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) define a cancer cluster as a greater than expected number of cancer cases that occurs within a group of people in a geographic area over a defined period of time.

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, creosote is derived from the distillation of tar from wood or coal and is used as a wood preservative. These treated wood products are used in outdoor settings such as in railroad ties and utility poles.

Union Pacific has owned the Englewood Rail Yard in the area since they acquired Southern Pacific Rail back in 1996, which was well over a decade after the use of creosote ceased. Union Pacific clearly knew that the area was severely contaminated, in that they began sending letters to residents in 2014, informing them that their homes were in the contaminated area.

It is the creosote in those railroad ties at the rail yard owned by Union Pacific that is the center of the problem that has plagued the Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens residents, and has created a Cancer Cluster that has undoubtedly impacted the health and lives of those residents, both past and present for decades.

Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan recently secured the approval of the Texas Department of Health and Human Services to take the next step in determining if creosote contamination in northeast Houston has caused cancer among residents there. Texas Health Commissioner Dr. John Hellerstedt told Ryan that the agency was moving forward with a feasibility study to determine if an epidemiological review of the associations between specific cancers and environmental contaminants should be conducted.

In his January 15 letter to Dr. Hellerstedt, County Attorney Ryan explained that Harris County had recently become aware of a cancer cluster study conducted by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) that examined the occurrence of cancer in areas of Houston, including the Greater Fifth Ward, Denver Harbor, Trinity Gardens, and Kashmere Gardens, four of Houston and Harris County’s most historic and underserved communities.

That study found an increase in the rates of lung, esophagus, and larynx cancers in those communities between 2000 and 2016. Hellerstedt told Ryan that they will put together a panel of experts in epidemiology, oncology, and toxicology and will include a citizen to represent the affected communities. The first meeting will take place within the next ten weeks to discuss the feasibility of an epidemiological study of the association between the creosote and cancers in the communities. If that group determines the study to be feasible, then it will outline the design of the study and resources needed.

“Directly in the middle of the cancer cluster is a former wood treatment facility currently owned by the Union Pacific Railroad Company which used chemicals, such as creosote, a known carcinogen,” said County Attorney Ryan. “This property is plagued by soil and groundwater contamination, which includes a contaminated groundwater plume that extends into the adjacent residential properties. We are concerned that the plume is not stable nor is it properly delineated.”

Harris County Commissioners Court in December approved a request from Ryan to hire an expert to investigate the Union Pacific site and to file a lawsuit if necessary to ensure the safety of the community.

“This site poses a potential threat to the environment, health, and welfare of the people of Harris County,” said Ryan. “We will do everything necessary to protect our residents and this study is the first step forward. I am grateful to Dr. Hellerstedt for reviewing this critical matter.”

The Houston Forward Times will continue to monitor this important matter involving the residents of Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens, who have battled for decades to address this all-important issue involving the serious environmental hazards that have devastated their areas.

CLASSIFIEDS

LEGAL NOTICE for RFP 20-18

The Houston Housing Authority (“HHA”), is soliciting sealed proposals for its Project Based Voucher Program in accordance with the requirements and the terms and conditions specified in Request for Proposal (RFP) 20-18.

Interested parties who wish to respond to this solicitation must submit the required documents in a sealed envelope by 4 P.M. Central Standard Time (CST) March 18, 2020 to the Houston Housing Authority Attn: Kevin M. Coleman, MS, C.P.M., Subject: RFP 20-18 Project Based Voucher DO NOT OPEN 2640 Fountain View Drive Houston, Texas 77057.

RFP 20-18 can be obtained by going to the doing business with HHA section of HHA’s website at www.housingforhouston.com, or by sending an e-mail to HHA’s Procurement Dept. at Purchasing@housingforhouston.com with RFP 20-18 in the subject line.

A Fair and Equal Employment Opportunity Agency. For assistance: Individuals with disabilities may contact the 504/ADA Administrator at 713-260-0528, TTY 713-260-0574 or 504ADA@housingforhouston.com

HELP WANTED

Worship Music Leader. Serve as the main worship leader; Edit and arrange worship music; Audition and select performers for musical presentations; Meet with soloists and instrumentalists to prepare for rehearsals and performances; Train worship team members to sing in the various musical parts; Develop a music program to engage children and youth in worship through music. Requires Bachelor’s degree in Music (Foreign Diploma OK). Send Resume: 8001 S. Kirkwood Road, Ste. A & B, Houston, TX 77072 (job site).

LEGAL NOTICE for IFB 20-11

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA), is soliciting sealed bids with the intent to establish a contract for the replacement of appliances located at Kelly Village Apartments, in accordance with the requirements, and terms and conditions specified in IFB 20-11 Kelly Village Apartment Appliance Replacement Project.

Interested parties are highly encouraged (but not required), to attend a pre-bid conference scheduled for 10 A.M. Central Standard Time (CST) March 12, 2020 at Kelly Village, 3118 Green Street, Houston, Texas 77020.

Interested parties are highly encouraged (but not required), to attend a pre-bid conference scheduled for 10 A.M. Central Standard Time (CST) March 12, 2020 at Kelly Village, 3118 Green Street, Houston, Texas 77020.

IFB 20-11 can be obtained by going to the doing business with HHA section of HHA’s website at www.housingforhouston.com, or by sending an e-mail to HHA’s Procurement Dept. at Purchasing@housingforhouston.com with IFB 20-11 in the subject line.

A Fair and Equal Employment Opportunity Agency. For assistance: Individuals with disabilities may contact the 504/ADA Administrator at 713-260-0528, TTY 713-260-0574 or 504ADA@housingforhouston.com

LEGAL NOTICE for IFB 20-13

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA), is soliciting sealed bids with the intent to establish a contract for the replacement of existing roofs at Kelly Village Apartments, in accordance with the requirements, and terms and conditions specified in IFB 20-13 Kelly Village Roof Replacement Project.

Interested parties are highly encouraged (but not required), to attend a pre-bid conference scheduled for 10 A.M. Central Standard Time (CST) March 5, 2020 at Kelly Village, 3118 Green Street, Houston, Texas 77020.

Interested parties who wish to respond to this solicitation must submit the required documents in a sealed envelope by 4 P.M. CST, March 31, 2020 to the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) Attn: Austin Y. Crotts, MA, Subject: IFB 20-13 Kelly Village Roof Replacement Project - DO NOT OPEN 2640 Fountain View Drive Houston, Texas 77057.

IFB 20-13 can be obtained by going to the doing business with HHA section of HHA’s website at www.housingforhouston.com, or by sending an e-mail to HHA’s Procurement Dept. at Purchasing@housingforhouston.com with IFB 20-13 in the subject line.

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SOLICITATION FOR BIDS

SOLICITATION FOR BIDS: HORIZON INTERNATIONAL GROUP, LLC IS REQUESTING SEALED PROPOSALS FOR THE ITRP ENABLING UTILITIES – HIA #3 WATER PLANT; LOCATED AT IAH AIRPORT. THE FOLLOWING TRADE PACKAGES WILL AVAILABLE FOR BID: CLEAR & GRUB, EARTHWORK, SITE UTILITIES, BUILDING FOUNDATION, CONCRETE FLAT WORK, ALUMINUM RAILINGS, PLUMBING, MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL, PRE-CAST CONCRETE BUILDING, PRE-STRESS CONCRETE STORAGE TANKS, SITE MANAGEMENT & CONTROLS, WATER WELLS, SWPPP, DOORS FRAMES HARDWARE, ACOUSTICAL CEILING, INSTRUMENTATION & CONTROLS. BID DOCUMENTS WILL BE AVAILABLE STARTING FEB. 25TH, 2020 AND BIDS WILL BE RECEIVED ELECTRONICALLY TO CHRIS JAY AT CJAY@HGIUSA.COM UNTIL 3/13/2020 AT 2:00 PM. VISIT WWW.ITRP-SUBPORTAL.COM, WWW.HGIUSA.COM TO REQUEST ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO BID DOCUMENTS AND FOR PRE-BID/SITE VISIT DATES. MWSBE PARTICIPATION IS A REQUIREMENT. CONTACT CHRIS JAY AT CJAY@HGIUSA.COM OR 713-660-8282 OR OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.ITRP-SUBPORTAL.COM FOR ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THE BID. HORIZON INTERNATIONAL GROUP, LLC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS OR RESPONSES

CORONAVIRUS CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

both the Medicare and Medicaid programs.”

In her role on the House Committee on Homeland Security, which is responsible for the domestic health security of our nation and the Budget Committee, Congresswoman Jackson Lee states that it is important to be sure the public has all of the facts regarding the Coronavirus and wants the public to know that everything in their power is being done to protect the American public, including providing the necessary resources to the CDC, the NIH and to the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Coronaviruses make up a large family of viruses that can infect birds and mammals—including humans. While some coronaviruses have caused devastating epidemics, others cause mild to moderate respiratory infections, like the common cold. The Coronavirus can be transmitted between people through coughs or sneezes. But it can be contained and treated given the proper resources and attention by our health and medical professionals.

Congresswoman Jackson Lee stated that it is imperative that the Administration initiates the following action plan:

- ENHANCE PRODUCTION OF N-95 MASKS
- INFORM STATE HEALTH AGENCIES AND ALL FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CLINICS TO TEST ALL PATIENTS PRESENTING WITH FLU LIKE SYMPTOMS FOR THE CORONAVIRUS

HELP WANTED

TECHNOLOGY

Micro Focus LLC is accepting resumes for the position of Technical Solutions Consultant in Houston, TX (Ref. # 3498091). Apply developed subject matter knowledge for Vertica Software Product to solve business systems and application problems for customers, onsite engineering personnel, and authorized Service Providers on standard, specialized or complex systems. Resolve technical and software issues from incoming internal or external businesses and end user’s contacts. Telecommuting Permitted. Mail resume to Micro Focus LLC, Attn: Jim Brooking, 6810 Thomas Drive, North Highlands, CA 95660. Resume must include Ref. #, full name, email address & mailing address. No phone calls. Must be legally authorized to work in U.S. without sponsorship. EOE.

LEGAL NOTICE for RFP 20-14

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA), is soliciting sealed proposals with the intent to establish a contract for a Construction Manager as Advisor, in accordance with the requirements and terms and conditions specified in RFP 20-14 Construction Manager as Advisor.

Interested parties who wish to respond to this solicitation must submit the required documents in a sealed envelope by 4 P.M. Central Standard Time March 20, 2020 to the Houston Housing Authority Attn: Austin Y. Crotts, MA, Subject: RFP 20-14 Construction Manager as Advisor - DO NOT OPEN 2640 Fountain View Drive Houston, Texas 77057.

RFP 20-14 can be obtained by going to the doing business with HHA section of HHA’s website at www.housingforhouston.com, or by sending an e-mail to HHA’s Procurement Dept. at Purchasing@housingforhouston.com with RFP 20-14 in the subject line.

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LEGAL NOTICE for IFB 19-33

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA), is soliciting sealed bids with the intent to establish a contract for the replacement of appliances located at Cuney Homes, in accordance with the requirements, and terms and conditions specified in IFB 19-33 Cuney Homes Appliance Replacement Project.

Interested parties are highly encouraged (but not required), to attend a pre-bid conference scheduled for 10 A.M. Central Standard Time (CST) March 11, 2020 at Cuney Homes, 3260 Truxillo Street, Houston, Texas 77002.

Interested parties who wish to respond to this solicitation must submit the required documents in a sealed envelope by 4 P.M. CST, April 3, 2020 to the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) Attn: Austin Y. Crotts, MA, Subject: IFB 19-33 Cuney Homes Appliance Replacement Project - DO NOT OPEN 2640 Fountain View Drive Houston, Texas 77057.

IFB 19-33 can be obtained by going to the doing business with HHA section of HHA’s website at www.housingforhouston.com, or by sending an e-mail to HHA’s Procurement Dept. at Purchasing@housingforhouston.com with IFB 19-33 in the subject line.

A Fair and Equal Employment Opportunity Agency. For assistance: Individuals with disabilities may contact the 504/ADA Administrator at 713-260-0528, TTY 713-260-0574 or 504ADA@housingforhouston.com

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