



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

April 1, 2021

The Honorable Cristina Garcia  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 2013  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 5094  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Garcia and Senator Skinner:

I am writing in response to your letter to Assembly Member Salas expressing support for a Joint Legislative Audit Committee audit of the Metropolitan Water District following concerns about past instances of sexual harassment, discrimination, and other misconduct.

I appreciate your advocacy on workplace safety and your concern for the employees of Metropolitan, who are responsible for ensuring the reliable delivery of water to Southern California. Like you, I take the allegations raised at our board meetings and featured in several Los Angeles Times articles very seriously. There is no place for harassment, discrimination and misconduct in our offices and field locations, and Metropolitan's Board of Directors is unequivocally committed to making the changes required to ensure that every employee feels safe, valued, and supported. Further, Metropolitan is always open to hearing the comments and concerns from our employees and I stand firm in condemning all forms of retaliation in response to anyone who speaks out.

I am proud that a vast majority of employees and managers uphold our values and stand for what's right. Those who choose not to uphold these values must be held accountable. And as Metropolitan's leaders, we also must ensure our policies and procedures reflect that priority.

For this reason, our Board of Directors last fall directed our independent Ethics Officer to engage an external law firm to conduct an independent review to investigate allegations of systemic Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) related discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and related concerns.

The Shaw Law Group, a well-respected, women-owned law firm, has been contracted to conduct that review, which includes a confidential climate assessment to assess Metropolitan's workplace culture. Approximately 1,400 of our 1,800 employees responded to the survey, and an additional 125 employees requested to meet with the Shaw Law Group to provide additional information. We look forward to the firm's recommendations following the review's completion and stand

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ready to take immediate action to ensure a safer and more inclusive workplace for every employee.

This does not mean that we are standing by idly as the review is being conducted. I have directed staff to develop a robust campaign aimed at raising awareness of the rights employees have when it comes to issues of discrimination and harassment, and how to take action to defend those rights should it become necessary.

Protecting and supporting all of our employees will continue to be my highest priority as Metropolitan's chairwoman. I will not rest until each one of the 1,800 employees of Metropolitan is treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve.

Enclosed is a document that outlines some of our current actions. Moving forward, I intend to update you on our progress in addressing these issues. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at (213) 217-7727.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gloria Gray". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gloria D. Gray  
Chairwoman of the Board



## Metropolitan's Board Responds to Allegations of Discrimination, Safety Issues and Harassment in the Workplace

*“Under my leadership, Metropolitan’s Board has been unequivocal that we will not tolerate sexual harassment, discrimination, retaliation and other forms of misconduct towards or among our employees. If it is found that our practices and policies have fallen short of this goal, we are prepared to act swiftly and decisively.*

*- Chairwoman Gloria D. Gray*

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  - Conducted over 50 hours of interviews and reviewed documents regarding policies and prior investigations of EEO complaints
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  - Begun interviews with more than 125 employees who requested to speak to the firm and additional interviews with other staff and management
- Metropolitan is developing a new education campaign aimed at **raising awareness of the rights employees have** when it comes to issues of discrimination and harassment, and how to take action to defend those rights should it become necessary.
- A February 23, 2021 letter was sent to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee pledging Metropolitan’s **support and full cooperation** with an audit should the State deem it necessary.
- Metropolitan’s **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council** was created in 2020. The Chairwoman and executive management attend meetings of the Council, which is comprised of leadership from employee resource groups and employee bargaining units. Actions of the Council so far include:
  - Providing mandatory training on unconscious bias to supplement existing mandatory training on sexual harassment prevention and other workplace conduct
  - Retaining the services of an independent Diversity, Equity and Inclusion consulting firm to perform a thorough culture assessment and provide a roadmap for improvement
  - Taking steps for greater diversity, equity and inclusion in Metropolitan’s business practices to improve opportunities for underserved and underrepresented communities
- To ensure **greater transparency** as employee issues are being reviewed, a new [web page](#) on Metropolitan’s website provides resources and documents related to the independent review.
- Metropolitan has **fully cooperated** with the Los Angeles Times in response to Public Records Act requests for information about employee issues and District responses.



March 23, 2021

The Honorable Rudy Salas, Chair  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee  
1020 N Street, Room 107  
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Dear Assemblymember Salas:

On behalf of the California Legislative Women's Caucus, we are writing to respectfully express our support for the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) swiftly approving a comprehensive and timely audit of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) based on the growing evidence of widespread harassment of women in their ranks and misconduct and/or neglect on the part of management to address this problem.

According to a recent Los Angeles Times investigative report, almost half of the female apprentices (four out of nine) hired between 2003 and 2019 and a third of women (six out of 18) working in trades positions between 2005 and 2019 have filed formal equal employment opportunity complaints with the district.<sup>1</sup> Those numbers indicate this is not a case of where there is smoke, there is fire. Most of these allegations have been substantiated and the fire is raging. This is about how MWD attends to these complaints and what system, structure and processes are in place to make sure that they are acknowledged appropriately, dealt with fairly and transparently, and resolved without retaliation. A culture of looking the other way is absolutely not, and should never have been, acceptable.

MWD self-promotes that "water planning requires adapting to everchanging circumstances as well as an understanding of history." This holds true of employee relations as well and yet, from all outward appearances and reporting, MWD has fallen far short of evolving, far short of promoting and insisting on a 21st century workplace for their dedicated employees. In such a critical industry, with so many essential workers who we purport to support and hold dear, this can not be allowed to continue. MWD must mitigate a culture lenient towards sexual harassment and discrimination and institute fair adjudication of reported complaints.

The MWD employees speaking out about the harassment they have endured and the MWD Board members calling for an independent investigation have done so

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<sup>1</sup> Elmahrek, A. (2021, February 12). 'They thought I was so low': Women say they were harassed, bullied, ignored at powerful water agency. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-12/mwd-accused-sexual-harassment-abuse-against-women>

at great personal risk and with great mettle. They have roundly faced retaliation for these actions. We must have the courage to offer them the small measure of having the entity that originally created MWD step forward and call for an examination of its systemic challenges, offering a path forward toward meaningful reforms.

The Women's Caucus is fiercely committed to harassment-free, discrimination-free and retaliation-free workplaces for ALL women and ALL employees. Legislative leadership and the Women's Caucus has done the hard work over several years to clean our own house with the creation of the Legislature's Workplace Conduct Unit. We know it can be challenging but we also know it can be done. We expect others, in government and in all industries, to do the same.

For these reasons, the California Legislative Women's Caucus fully supports the expeditious approval of a JLAC recommendation for a full and thorough state audit into the related practices and protocols of the Metropolitan Water District.

Sincerely,



Cristina Garcia, Chair  
Assemblywoman, 58th District



Nancy Skinner, Vice Chair  
State Senator, 9th District



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

*Office of the Board of Directors*

April 8, 2021

Mr. Mikke Pierson, Mayor  
The Honorable Members of the City Council  
23825 Stuart Ranch Road  
Malibu, CA 90265

RE: Item 7.B. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (April 12, 2021)

I want to take this opportunity to provide you with additional information and my direct input as the Malibu City Council considers submitting a letter to the California State Assembly Joint Legislative Audit Committee related to the Metropolitan Water District. First and foremost, I want to reassure you that, as Chairwoman of the Board, I have no tolerance for sexual harassment or discrimination in any form, which is why I have been adamant about my commitment to enforcing Metropolitan's policies prohibiting sexual harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.

Under my leadership, Metropolitan's Board and executive management are fully committed to taking all steps necessary to foster and ensure a workplace that values equity, inclusion, and diversity – both in policy and in practice. We are advancing several efforts to assess Metropolitan's cultural climate, open lines of communication, and promote transparency in our actions and help us all recognize our own biases and perceptions, so we are receptive, tolerant, and supportive of each other's ideas.

To further our progress in the area of equal opportunity, Metropolitan created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council (DE&I) in July 2020. This employee-led group is working to advance a more inclusive culture and work environment for all Metropolitan employees.

In November 2020, our Board unanimously directed our independent Ethics Officer to engage an external firm to conduct an objective review due to concerns raised about harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. In taking that action, the full Board unanimously made clear that we take these matters very seriously and will work together in our resolve to respond to employee complaints about sexual harassment and other misconduct in our workforce. The independent review will go beyond the public comments made by our employees and provide the Board with the facts and circumstances surrounding their experiences in the workplace. In

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April 8, 2021

addition, the review will help ensure any further appropriate actions are taken so that employees in the skilled trades and throughout the district are treated professionally and with respect.

The Shaw Law Group, a certified women-owned business enterprise with extensive expertise in EEO issues, is performing this thorough review to determine whether there are any systemic issues of discrimination, harassment or retaliation, and includes a climate assessment of Metropolitan's workplace culture. If this review identifies our procedures or actions have fallen short of our ethics and core values, you can be assured our Board and management will take immediate and decisive action to resolve those issues. Our employees and the customers we serve deserve no less.

Attached please find a summary of some of our current actions. I hope this additional information is helpful to demonstrate that Metropolitan is invested in creating a workplace where every employee is treated with respect and dignity. If you have any additional questions, please contact me at 213-217-7727.

Sincerely,



Gloria D. Gray  
Chairwoman of the Board

cc: Metropolitan Water District Board of Directors  
Jeffrey Kightlinger, General Manager  
Abel Salinas, Ethics Officer  
Marcia Scully, General Counsel



## Metropolitan's Board Responds to Allegations of Discrimination, Safety Issues and Harassment in the Workplace

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*- Chairwoman Gloria D. Gray*

- The Board responded to employee comments alleging systemic harassment by authorizing Metropolitan’s Ethics Officer in November 2020 to enter into a contract with Shaw Law Group, a certified women-owned business enterprise with extensive expertise in EEO issues. The firm is currently conducting **an independent and thorough review** of allegations of systemic Equal Employment Opportunity-related discrimination, harassment, retaliation and related concerns. To date the firm has:
  - Conducted over 50 hours of interviews and reviewed documents regarding policies and prior investigations of EEO complaints
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  - Begun interviews with more than 125 employees who requested to speak to the firm and additional interviews with other staff and management
- Metropolitan is developing a new education campaign aimed at **raising awareness of the rights employees have** when it comes to issues of discrimination and harassment, and how to take action to defend those rights should it become necessary.
- A February 23, 2021 letter was sent to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee pledging Metropolitan’s **support and full cooperation** with an audit should the State deem it necessary.
- Metropolitan’s **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council** was created in 2020. The Chairwoman and executive management attend meetings of the Council, which is comprised of leadership from employee resource groups and employee bargaining units. Actions of the Council so far include:
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- To ensure **greater transparency** as employee issues are being reviewed, a new [web page](#) on Metropolitan’s website provides resources and documents related to the independent review.
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THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

April 8, 2021

*Office of the Board of Directors*

The Honorable City Council  
City of Culver City  
9770 Culver Blvd.  
Culver City, CA 90232

RE: Item A-4. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (April 12, 2021)

I want to take this opportunity to provide you with additional information and my direct input as the City Council considers a resolution requesting a state audit of the Metropolitan Water District. First and foremost, I want to reassure you that, as Chairwoman of the Board, I have no tolerance for sexual harassment or discrimination in any form, which is why I have been adamant about my commitment to enforcing Metropolitan's policies prohibiting sexual harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.

Under my leadership, Metropolitan's Board and executive management are fully committed to taking all steps necessary to foster and ensure a workplace that values equity, inclusion, and diversity – both in policy and in practice. We are advancing several efforts to assess Metropolitan's cultural climate, open lines of communication, and promote transparency in our actions and help us all recognize our own biases and perceptions, so we are receptive, tolerant, and supportive of each other's ideas.

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cc: Metropolitan Water District Board of Directors  
Jeffrey Kightlinger, General Manager  
Abel Salinas, Ethics Officer  
Marcia Scully, General Counsel



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THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

*Office of the Board of Directors*

April 8, 2021

**VIA EMAIL**

Mrs. Dawn Roth Lindell  
General Manger  
Department of Water & Power  
City of Burbank  
164 West Magnolia Blvd.  
Burbank, CA 91502

Dear Ms. Lindell,

I want to thank you for your letter expressing concern on behalf of Burbank Water & Power about recent employee complaints of harassment and other misconduct at Metropolitan. And thank you for taking my call as well. I appreciated our conversation and the confidence you expressed in me and Metropolitan's Board of Directors, and specifically Director Marsha Ramos, as we work to fully address these concerns. I, too, value the input and counsel of Director Ramos and recognize the important role she plays as the Chair of our Audit and Ethics Committee.

I want to assure you that Metropolitan's Board and management take these allegations very seriously. There is no place for harassment, discrimination and misconduct in our offices and field locations, and Metropolitan's Board is unequivocally committed to making the changes required to ensure that every employee feels safe, valued, and supported. Further, Metropolitan is always open to hearing the comments and concerns from our employees, and I stand firm in condemning all forms of retaliation in response to anyone who speaks out.

I am proud of the vast majority of employees and managers who uphold our values and stand for what's right. Those who choose not to uphold these values must be held accountable. And as Metropolitan's leaders, we also must ensure our policies and procedures reflect that priority.

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Mrs. Dawn Roth Lindell

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April 8, 2021

This does not mean that we are standing by idly as the review is being conducted. I have directed staff to develop a new education campaign aimed at raising awareness of the rights employees have when it comes to issues of discrimination and harassment, and how to take action to defend those rights should it become necessary. The attached document outlines some of our current actions. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at (213) 217- 7727.

Sincerely,

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Gloria D. Gray

Chairwoman of the Board

Cc: Director Marsha Ramos  
General Manager Jeff Kightlinger



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**WATER AND  
POWER**



March 9, 2021

Gloria D. Gray, Chairwoman  
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California  
P.O. Box 54153  
Los Angeles, CA 90054-0153

Dear Chairwoman Gray,

Burbank Water and Power wishes to acknowledge and express our concern regarding the harassment and retaliation claims that have been made by employees of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. These serious issues require a vigorous pursuit of the truth through an independent and transparent process above reproach.

We have confidence in Metropolitan's Board with subject matter experts who will get to the heart and truth of the matters with which it has been presented and that all aspects of the investigation will be carried out expeditiously and without prejudice.

Marsha Ramos represents Burbank on Metropolitan's Board, and we have been briefed about the process that the Board has directed. In addition to an independent review of the harassment cases and allegations, the organizational culture must be assessed and changes made to fully incorporate equity, inclusion and accountability. We are confident that Ms. Ramos will work with her colleagues to drive the necessary changes in her role as Chair of the Ethics Committee.

Burbank Water and Power is also proud to be served by Metropolitan and as one of its founding members we have enjoyed a rich and productive history together. We look forward to building on that history, through continuous reflection and improvement, to ensure that all who work with and for the District are free to pursue their dreams.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Dawn Roth Lindell'.

Dawn Roth Lindell  
General Manager  
Burbank Water and Power

cc: Jeff Kightlinger, General Manager, MWDSC  
Marsha Ramos, Ethics Committee Chairwoman

# Inglewood resident Assata Gaines earns NYU Scholarship

*Defying massive odds hard work pays off for aspiring dancer*

By Kenneth Miller, Publisher

Since she was four years old all Assata Gaines has aspired to be was a dancer.

Born in Lancaster and having spent time growing up in Gary, Indiana, young Assata maintained a laser focus that ultimately has paid enormous dividends with a full ride scholarship to prestigious New York University (NYU) Tisch School of Arts.

The acceptance percentage for NYU is just south of 16 percent which makes Assata's achievement all the more remarkable.

NYU has produced the likes of acclaimed director Spike Lee and actress Regina Hall just to name a couple.

Tisch School of the Arts is considered one of the top programs in the world. There just isn't any other school like it on planet earth.

Founded in 1965, Tisch has emerged as the nation's preeminent center for the study of performing, cinematic and emerging media arts over the past decades.

Assata's family has resided in multiple locations throughout her 17-years of life.

In addition to living in Gary, The Gaines have also lived in the mid-city region of Los Angeles where Assata attended Larchmont Middle School.

Since 2015, the family has made Inglewood their home.

Alan and Carla Gaines are beyond ecstatic of their daughter accomplishments.

"As an African American mother to know that your daughter got into such a prestigious school means the world," Carla told Inglewood Today. "Just the pursuit of it all despite all the negative you see on the news. I am extremely proud."

Alan had been wrongly terminated from his job and for 18 months Carla was the lone bread winner in the family with four children.

The determined Assata would wake up each morning during the COVID-19 pandemic and study master dance classes on YouTube at 5 a.m., then later in the day go to the

park and run for 30 minutes.

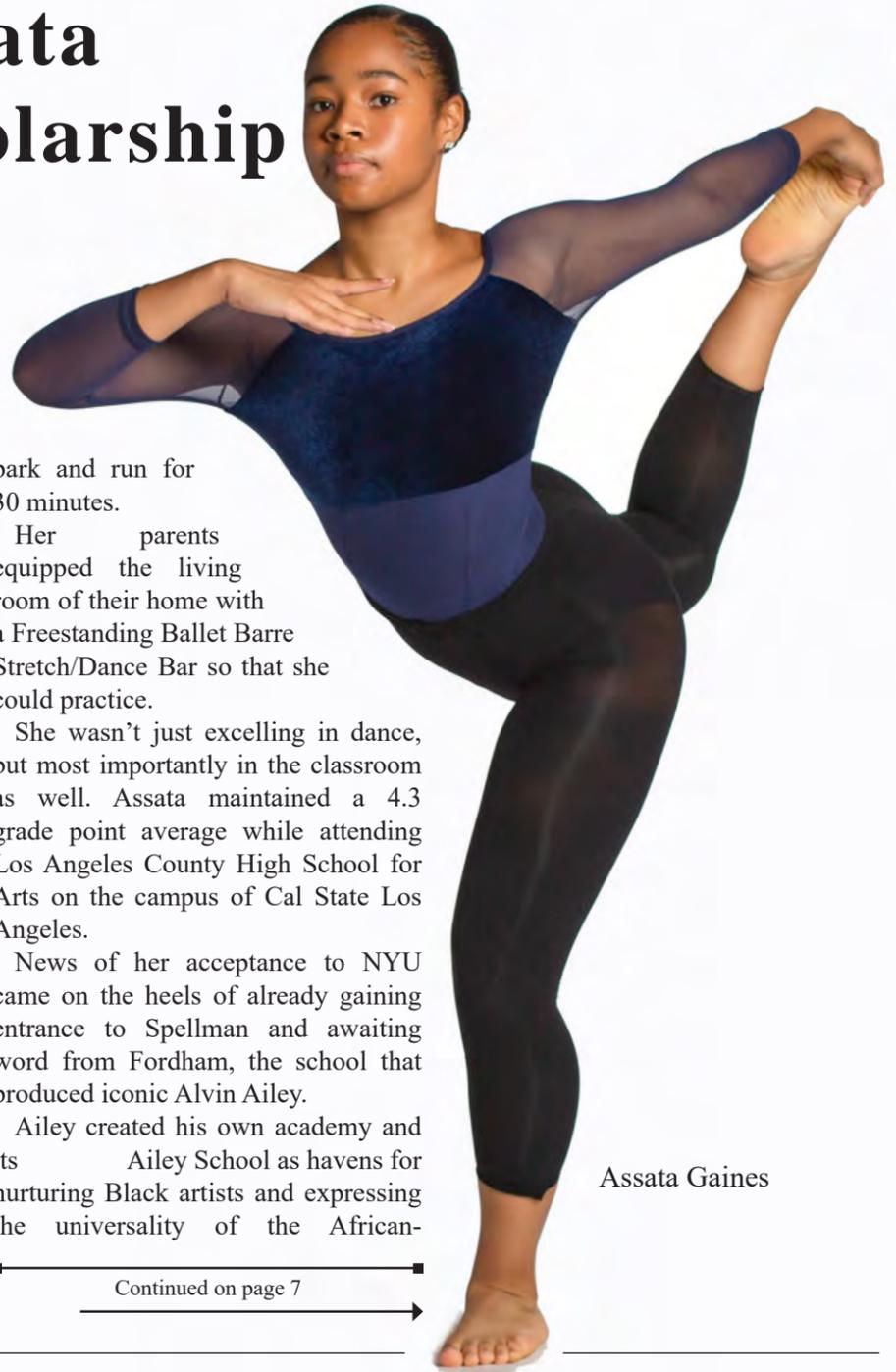
Her parents equipped the living room of their home with a Freestanding Ballet Barre Stretch/Dance Bar so that she could practice.

She wasn't just excelling in dance, but most importantly in the classroom as well. Assata maintained a 4.3 grade point average while attending Los Angeles County High School for Arts on the campus of Cal State Los Angeles.

News of her acceptance to NYU came on the heels of already gaining entrance to Spellman and awaiting word from Fordham, the school that produced iconic Alvin Ailey.

Ailey created his own academy and its Ailey School as havens for nurturing Black artists and expressing the universality of the African-

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Assata Gaines

# Diversity and Water: Representing the Community

By Gloria D. Gray

When I took my leadership position in water 15 years ago here in our community and began to meet my new peers throughout the state, I did not see a whole lot of people who looked like me, either as an African American or as a woman. I know many of you have faced this in your workplace.

As the chair of the nation's largest water district, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California – the woman of color to ever lead this district in its 90-year history – I have the opportunity to try to expand the community of those working on important water issues.

We need to encourage anyone of



any gender, color, creed or sexual preference to pursue their career dreams. And there are many good reasons to pursue a career in water. Providing safe and water day in and day out is an incredible responsibility. And we best serve our community by having a workforce that truly represents it.

Metropolitan provides more than half of Southern California's water, importing supplies from Northern California via the State Water Project and the Colorado River from our own aqueduct system.

When it comes to diversity and inclusion, we have come a long way,

Continued on page 8