

Wendell Pierce
Award Winning Actor and President of the Pontchartrain Park Community Development Corp.



Wendell Pierce was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he began his training as an actor at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA). As a young actor, Wendell appeared in *The Winter's Tale* at the Tulane Shakespeare Festival while producing and hosting *Think About It*, a youth themed talk show, for the local NBC affiliate station. Wendell also hosted a weekly jazz show on WYLD RADIO FM 98 called *Extensions from Congo Square*. He ended his high school career as one of 20 Presidential Scholars in the Arts, receiving his medallion in a White House ceremony. After leaving New Orleans, Wendell trained at the Juilliard School receiving his BFA in 1985.

Wendell has made his living as a full-time actor and has had roles in a vast array of screen films, television dramas and movies, and on stage. He is a three-time NAACP Image Award Nominee for best actor in a television drama for his portrayal of Detective “Bunk” Moreland on HBO’s critically acclaimed police drama *The Wire*, and he was awarded the 2008 Image Award for best actor in a television movie for HBO’s *Life Support*. This year Wendell was awarded an OBIE (Off Broadway Theater Award) for Sustained Excellence of Performance. Currently, Wendell has a key role in the new HBO series, *Treme*, which is set and filmed in his home town of New Orleans. The show chronicles the re-building of the city, post-Katrina, through the eyes of local musicians.

Coinciding with his acting career, Wendell has embarked on a path to rebuild the neighborhood he grew up in, Pontchartrain Park, which was devastated by the flooding that followed Hurricane Katrina. In 2008 he formed the Pontchartrain Park Community Development Corporation (PPCDC) and serves as its President. Wendell is committed to rebuilding a sustainable community with single-family, affordable, LEED certified, energy efficient green homes that will preserve the character of the community and help longtime residents return to their neighborhood from exile. The Pontchartrain Park project is one of the largest, affordable, single-family, energy efficient developments in New Orleans.

LaToya Cantrell
President of the Broadmoor Improvement Association and Broadmoor
Community Development Corp.



LaToya Cantrell is a resident of the Broadmoor neighborhood in New Orleans and holds a standing seat as Board President of both the Broadmoor Improvement Association (BIA) and the Broadmoor Community Development Corporation. She has provided outstanding leadership in shaping and directing the

organizations' mission and goals. Ms. Cantrell earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Political Justice from Xavier University. She has garnered extensive experience as Broadmoor's leader in the redevelopment process. She also brings over 10 years experience in non-profit management, community outreach, and program development. In addition to her duties as president of the neighborhood association, Ms. Cantrell formerly held the position of Manager of the Greater New Orleans Education, managing an annual budget of 1.3+ million, acting as lead research assistant in the development of a five year strategic plan for reform in the New Orleans public schools, working with the media to develop print and radio ads, instituting a volunteer recruitment database for the New Orleans Public School District and coordinating community forums and fundraising.

The Broadmoor Improvement Association has worked tirelessly to create and implement a comprehensive recovery plan for the Broadmoor neighborhood in New Orleans. Since the adoption of the BIA plan in 2006, the organization has renovated, expanded and re-opened Wilson Charter School, received a \$2 million Carnegie Corporation grant for rebuilding the neighborhood's Rosa F. Keller Library and Community Center, and partnered with the Archdiocese of New Orleans to renovate the former St. Matthias School building as a Fine Arts and Wellness Center. The Broadmoor Development Corporation has rehabilitated 159 Broadmoor homes, granted over \$75,000 in furniture, appliances and utility costs for residents, and assisted over 450 residents in Case Management, addressing issues relative to social services, housing, healthcare, education, job placement, and emergency preparedness.

Denise Thornton
President & Founder of the Beacon of Hope Resource Centers



On February 14, 2006, Denise & Doug Thornton opened their partially rebuilt home in Lakeview as a respite for weary neighbors returning after Katrina. Their flooded home became the place where people could connect with each other, get moral support, hot meals, first aid, internet connection, telephone service, quality contractor referrals, etc. It also became a place where they could find reliable information and advice on topics important to the rebuilding of their homes and their neighborhood such as power restoration, access to healthcare, FEMA and private insurance claims, reliable contractors, or mold remediation. The Beacon of Hope model evolved, an organization was established and community leaders emerged as a result. Today there are 16 Beacons, or resource centers, serving 22 neighborhoods throughout the New Orleans area. The Beacon of Hope has also become a nationally recognized model of resident-driven mapping, community activism, and policy development with affiliates in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and Bridge City, Texas. Since its inception, the Beacon of Hope has trained over 750 resident volunteers, replanted over 20 miles of green space, restored 8 parks and play grounds, assisted over 1,700 residents with small construction projects and hosted over 28,000 visiting volunteers in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

Vera B. Triplett Ph.D., LPC, RPT

President of the Gentilly Civic Improvement Assoc. and COO of Capital One-UNO Charter Schools



Dr. Vera B. Triplett is currently the Chief Operations Officer for the Capital One UNO Charter Schools Network. In this capacity she oversees the operations of four charter schools, over 300 employees and 1600 students. Dr. Triplett's background includes state and national experience in child and adult mental health, K-12 education and juvenile justice reform. She has served as the Clinical Director of the New Orleans Child Advocacy Center, a Professor of Counseling and Human Development at Our Lady of Holy Cross College, Clinical Counselor for the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana and the Youth Empowerment Project and Clinical Director of the Thomas E. Chambers Counseling and Training Center. Dr. Triplett spearheaded and implemented a project for children in the aftermath of Katrina called "The smallest survivors",

in which she provided individual and group play therapy for kids who lost their homes and had to relocate as a result of the disaster. Additionally, she is a founding member of the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association of which she was vice president in 2006 and president in 2010. Dr. Triplett served as the community support organization chair for the Unified New Orleans Planning Process (UNOP) and continues to play an instrumental role in the citizens participation process. Dr. Triplett is a lifelong resident of New Orleans and was educated in the public school system throughout her K-12 academic life. She holds a Bachelors Degree in Education from Southern University at New Orleans, a Masters Degree in School and Community Counseling from the University of New Orleans and a PhD in Counselor Education from the University of New Orleans. Since Katrina, the Gentilly Civic Improvement Assoc. has successfully contacted former residents and connected them to the resources that they need to return to the neighborhood and their homes. Right now the Association is working on various projects from very basic quality of life issues, to engaging its residents in the citizen participation process and developing their local business corridor and merchants.

Father Vien The Nguyen **Chair of the Mary Queen of Viet Nam CDC in East New Orleans**



Pre-Katrina New Orleans East was an enclave of Vietnamese Americans, predominantly Catholics, who came to the area after the war in 1975. In the aftermath of Katrina, this quiet and under-the-radar community was forced to fight against a master plan that would have turned most of New Orleans East into green space and a toxic landfill. As pastor of the local parish, Fr. Vien Nguyen led the community's efforts in this fight. He also established and is the Chair of the Mary Queen of Viet Nam Community Development Corporation (MQVNCDC) which endeavors to create an ideal community called Viet Village as a contribution to the colorful ethnic diversity in New Orleans. Because of his unrelenting efforts and the unprecedented community effort, Viet Village now has a cultural center, a community health center, a retirement community, an urban farm with a farmer's market, a charter school, and a shopping mall.

In the post-Katrina environment, Mary Queen of Viet Nam Church has expanded its services and now serves Asians, Latinos, African Americans, and other residents in the Eastern edge of New Orleans. Since the April BP oil spill disaster in the gulf, the MQVNCDC has again been at the forefront assisting the large population of Asian American fishermen, oystermen, shrimpers and others who make their livelihood on the Gulf. In addition, MQVNCDC is working with several federal and state and private agencies such as the Catholic Relief Charities to work on skills diversification and job creation for the displaced fishermen.