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In His Own Words

Austin Badon on Terrilyn Monette Case

By Edwin Buggage

The Terrilyn Monette’s story is one that brought people together from around the City and nation. She was a twenty-six year old Jefferson Parish Teacher from Los Angeles who was celebrating her nomination for Teacher of the Year. In early March of 2013 she mysteriously disappeared. Initial attempts at finding her car and body was unsuccessful. That was until June 8, 2013 when the car was found with the body of Ms. Monette in Bayou St. John near Harrison Avenue. While many people’s outlooks were bleak one man was determined to continue searching for her body. Today many are calling District 100 State Representative Austin Badon a hero. Data News Weekly sat down with him to discuss his involvement with the case.

Austin Badon a Politician on a Mission

Since 2003 Badon has served as a State Representative in District 100, a section of New Orleans East. Previously, he was the Chair of the Education Committee and presently he serves as the Vice Chair of the Transportation Committee. He says he got into politics to help people, and that the Terrilyn Monette case is an extension of that commitment, “I am a spiritual guy, I am a Christian and I feel we have a higher calling and that is to be a humanitarian and help other people. That is what I strive to do not just in politics, but in every aspect of my life.”

Speaking of how he became involved in the case he says, “I was just like everyone else just getting dressed one morning and I see a picture of this young lady on my TV screen and then there was a shot of her family and her mother was just agonizing over her daughter being missing.” Recounting his involvement, his facial expressions throughout our conversation goes through a range of emotions as he showed a genuine concern. “I said to myself I know that God

Cover Story

State Representative in District 100, Austin Badon was instrumental in the search and recovery of Terrilyn Monette.
Cover Story, Continued from previous page.

...has put me in this position so that I could bring more resources to the table that could be able to help this grieving family find their loved one. And it was at this point I said I had to step up and do something.”

**Determined not Discouraged**

While the case was developing and leads were scant he realized that his position merited him access to more resources that could help with the case, “As a state elected official, I have the state police, the Wildlife and Fisheries and other agencies that I could make a phone call to and get them involved. And also others would take my phone calls and letters,” says Badon.

As the legislative session began, Badon went into action looking for allies to solve this mystery. He first spoke with Robert Barham, head of the Wildlife and Fisheries and asked could his agency lend a hand in this effort. “He said anything you need.” Continuing Badon says “I met with a bunch of agents from all over the state. Later that afternoon they had boats and four wheelers, they were doing sonar work combing through City Park. I also enlisted the help of the state police that was very helpful in ruling out some scenarios. They were equipped with software that helped in the search of cars and missing persons. They activated it and that is how we knew that her car probably did not leave the New Orleans area or the Louisiana border. I also spoke to the FBI and they had an agent working the case.”

Early on there were not many breaks in the case as people came from all around to help in the search, Badon says some were becoming discouraged. It was something that made him all the more determined to find her, giving his reasons why he toiled on, “One reason is because I am a person that never gives up, and two, I had this family in California and they needed somebody here with their eyes and ears on the ground to relay information to them, so they relied on me. So I couldn’t quit the search even if I wanted to because they were relying on me.”

“Myself and Toni Enclade, Terrilyn’s mother was literally talking 3 to 4 times a day if not more. And during that time there were some of the hard conversations that we had, I remember when we pulled the 24th car out of Bayou St. John and none of those cars were hers. And I had to tell her I don’t know what we’re going to do tomorrow.”

As the case ensued he became closer to the family and knew this case needed continued attention. “It was to be solved,” as he was needed and if we wouldn’t have continued it would have just been a file sitting on someone’s desk. I wasn’t going to let this happen.

I wanted to make sure that she was treated fairly and to keep the pressure on law enforcement to keep looking and I was relentless about it. I would lose sleep thinking where we are going to go tomorrow. And it became an obsession because I had to report to the family and I could not tell them that we weren’t doing anything because it would seem like we didn’t care and that was not the case.”

**Finding Terrilyn in His Own Words**

After the legislative session ended, at his home in New Orleans East Badon met with Slidell Police Officer and diver Mark Michauid for a strategy session on June 7th to go out again in search of the missing vehicle and Monette’s body. Recounting the day they found the body he says, “The next day he launched the boat and turned on the sonar and as he’s driving down the bridge going near the bridge on Harrison is when he gets a signal so he marks the target, we continue driving towards Filmore to pick up her mother Toni Enclade, and she’s there with other family members. We put her on the boat, so she would know what we were looking at on the monitor. Mark took the boat and there was a vehicle under the water on Filmore and she got a chance to see how it works and what we were doing. We then let her off the boat and she was very gracious and now she understood what we were doing in the search for her daughter.”

Continuing he says, “I left to run an errand and Mark continued to look for targets. Then he called me and said he wanted to go the first target on Harrison Avenue because it’s on the same side of the bridge that if she was crossing it’s with traffic not against traffic. I want to go over there do you want me to dive on it? I said fine, as I was heading back he called me and he says Austin I think we got it. I said you think you got what? He said I think we found her car and I sped up getting to the car. He said we found the car. So he gets into the boat he comes over to me and says he found the car and I was in disbelief because I was into this so much and now we have reached our goal. I said we have to make sure that’s her car down there, so I said what’s the make and model of the car and I asked him what’s the license plate, I asked are you sure? I have to be sure this is the car. He then said it is the car and she’s in the car. And when he said that to me it was a rough moment, I knew what he was telling me. And I had to take a couple of minutes for myself, I think it hit me and I was thinking of how long we have been working at this. And I remembered the first car we pulled out was a black sedan and I thought how lucky we may have been getting it out on the first try but it wasn’t her car. We pulled 24 cars out the Bayou and we finally got our target.”

Recalling this emotional moment as his voice slightly quavered, “After I composed myself I called her mother and she was in the vicinity and I said Toni, I am fairly certain we found your daughter’s car and I am at Harrison Avenue and Bayou St. John, but I could not initially bring myself to tell her that her daughter was in the car. Then, I said what I am trying to say is your daughter is not with us anymore, and I could hear her cries of pain instantly, and I then spoke with her sister Kandice, and I said we are fairly certain that we have found Terrilyn’s car and it is not the outcome we all hoped for. And that’s when she started to cry and I told them where we were so that they could come over.”

Cover Story, Continued on page 4.

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RAW Talent At The Eiffel Society

Photos by Glenn Summers

RAW, a national collective of “natural born artists” and indie arts organization “for artists, by artists,” hosted the New Orleans Edition of their Kaleidoscope series on Thursday, June 13, at the Eiffel Society, bringing an art, music, fashion, photography, beauty and performance showcase featuring local talent out in “the RAW.”

New Orleans Kaleidoscope Master of Ceremonies, Comedian Corey Mack hosted, with RAW DJ, Dixxy/Deity on the turntables. The event featured live musical performances from Eugene, Cireedom, Shay Briggs and Stefan. A trapeze performance by Summer Baldwin and dance performance by Katy. Strolling fashion and accessories by Donna Guidry, Naomi Celestin of ReStrung Jewelry and a runway show by Emily Riché (a NOLA Fashion Week veteran) provided fashion flair to the gathering. RAW visual art installations by Bellavia, Sylvia T., Becky Fos, Charlo Charlie and Patrick Tieck and Charlie Vaughn Jr. aka Uptownz Illest were featured at the event.
Friends held a surprise 40th surprise birthday party for Natasha Schexnayder at the Caribbean Palace on June 1st. The guest of honor was surely surprised at her friends and family’s big reveal, and they danced the night away. Happy Birthday Natasha!
Trial to Secure Justice for Trayvon Martin Begins

Marc Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

“I believe that’s Trayvon Martin, that’s my baby’s voice. Every mother knows their child, and that’s his voice.” Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin

NEW YORK, NY - On Monday of this week, the trial of George Zimmerman, charged in the second-degree murder of Trayvon Martin, finally got underway. The surface facts of the case are not in dispute. On February 26, 2012, Zimmerman, in his role as a neighborhood watch volunteer, followed, shot and killed the unarmed 17-year-old Martin who was walking back to a home in a Sanford, Florida gated community after buying a bag of skittles and a bottle of ice tea from a nearby convenience store. Everything else about this case is complicated by the issues of race, the unsuccessful attempt by Zimmerman’s defense to put Trayvon’s background on trial and Zimmerman’s claim of self-defense that is rooted in Florida’s questionable Stand-Your-Ground law. Widespread public attention generated by the case will also likely complicate and prolong the selection of an impartial jury.

As of this writing, Judge Debra Nelson has yet to rule on whether testimony from voice analysis experts can be used to argue whose voice - Trayvon’s or Zimmerman’s - is heard screaming for help just before the sound of a gunshot on a taped 911 call. This is a crucial point that could buttress Zimmerman’s claim of self-defense or the prosecution’s contention that Zimmerman was the aggressor. It should be noted that Trayvon’s mother, Sybrina Fulton, has heard the tape and has no doubt that the screaming voice is that of her son. As a lawyer, I appreciate the role of experts in trials, but as a parent, I agree with Sybrina Fulton that in this case there is no more reliable expert than the mother of the victim.

Prior to the start of the trial, Judge Nelson ruled against the defense’s attempt to introduce as evidence, Trayvon’s school records, past history of fighting or photos and text messages on his cell phone. The judge rightfully decided that none of this has anything to do with why Zimmerman shot Trayvon.

It should also be noted that Zimmerman, a white Hispanic, was a particularly zealous neighborhood watch volunteer. In the months leading up to that fateful February day, he had made dozens of 911 calls. In a number of those calls, he reported spotting “suspicious” persons in the neighborhood, almost all of whom were black. In his confrontation with Trayvon Martin, not only did Zimmerman disregard the police dispatcher’s order not to follow the so-called suspicious person, he violated local neighborhood watch rules against carrying a weapon and making pursuit.

We will leave it up to a jury to

Morial, Continued on next page.

Pipeline to the People

The Case for Trayvon Martin and the American Justice System

Question: What are your thoughts on the beginning of Trayvon Martin trial and how do you feel about the American Criminal Justice System?

By Corey Anderson
Data News Weekly Columnist

It’s been a little over a year and the Trayvon Martin case is finally beginning. However, listening to peers and other citizens, the feeling in the air is far from relief. After collecting money for defense via the Internet, changing his story a couple of times, and showing little to no remorse, George Zimmerman is now being tried for the death of a young Black man. Even after new and somewhat compelling evidence surfaced, the justice that everyone has been searching for today is only a possibility in the future. With so many variables and changes to the case, the American people are starting to ask questions that they want the answers to. Who is really dragging this case out? Is it the legal system? Is Zimmerman buying time? What role do the judges have in this case? We, at Data Weekly, had a question of our own...

Byron Adams
"I feel that the American Justice System has way too many holes to the point that a person can kill a young Black man and still have a sense of freedom. The defense in the case of George Zimmerman’s reasons for murdering a young Black man with no weapon is so far fetched that it angers me. The Criminal Justice System in my opinion is becoming an uneven playing field for minorities but all legal loop holes become available for cases such as Casey Anthony...George Zimmerman...all the way to Emmett Till."

Kèlan Hayden
"The American Criminal Justice System is definitely flawed. In the beginning of the trial, George Zimmerman was released on bail, when other people who have committed lesser crimes have been immediately incarcerated. Regardless of his occupation, all of the facts should have been on the table before letting him go to walk the streets freely. Certain people’s situations are handled differently, when in reality no matter what their place in society, the crimes committed are still the same."

Michael Winn, Jr.
"In the Trayvon Martin situation...no one knows the true details of what happened so I will not speculate but I can say that all to often a scenario involving a young African-American male involved in criminal behavior presents itself and it saddens me that a hooded plus dark skin equals trouble. My prayer is that justice is served in this case. Justice in my view starts with searching for solutions to problems and actively pursuing them. Whether we are speaking of drugs, crime, or inequalities. It is important to seek ways to stop problems before they spiral into murder, drugs, etc. In order to more aggressively address the problems found with African-American males. I think a more proactive approach into the underlying problems associated with African-American males would help to address problems. The American Criminal Justice System is the system we have and while it is not perfect we as individual must take more personal accountability for ourselves and the ones around us to reverse the trends of incarceration in America."
Chill Your Summer Bill with Entergy’s Hot Weather Tips and Programs

Summer in the South means family gatherings, evening cookouts and scorching high temperatures. Before those temperatures become unbearable, Entergy New Orleans and Entergy Louisiana want to encourage customers to consider taking simple steps to help lower their energy usage.

“By following these hot weather tips and lowering energy usage, customers can save money and stay cool,” said Melonie Stewart, customer service director for Entergy New Orleans.

Stewart’s energy-saving summer tips include:

- Setting your thermostat to 78 or the highest comfortable temperature. Each degree cooler than 78 can increase your bill by as much as 3 percent.

- Keeping the cool air in your home circulating with ceiling, oscillating or box fans. The average ceiling fan makes a room feel 7 degrees cooler.

- Using kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans to remove excess heat and humidity caused by cooking, laundering and bathing.

- Avoiding using the stove if possible and grilling outside instead.

- Making plans to use dishwashers, washing machines and dryers - which add heat and moisture to your home - during the coolest part of the day.

- Not blocking air vents with curtains, shades or furniture.

- Turning off unnecessary lights during hot weather and consider switching to cooler, energy-efficient fluorescent bulbs where light is needed.

“In addition to the energy-saving tips, Save Me Money Do-it-Yourself videos are also available online at entergy.com/savemoney,” Stewart said. “The videos demonstrate installing a programmable thermostat, caulking windows and doors, changing air filters and installing insulation, among others.”

Customers can also manage their energy accounts by signing up for level billing. Level billing takes the surprise out of monthly energy bills by averaging 12 months of previous usage. To evaluate what bill payment options are best for you, Entergy Louisiana customers can visit www.entergy-louisiana.com/your_home/mypaymentoptions/ and Entergy New Orleans customers can visit http://www.entergy-neworleans.com/your_home/mypaymentoptions/.

**Morial**/ Continued from previous page.

decide whether George Zimmerman is guilty of second-degree murder in the killing of Trayvon Martin. But, as champions of civil rights and equal justice under the law, we believe this case will shed needed light on the issues of racial profiling and the stereotyping of young black males. We also join Trayvon’s parents, Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin, in calling for a repeal of Florida’s troubling Stand Your Ground law which states that anyone in fear of his or her life could be justified in using lethal force against a potential or perceived attacker. We will be closely following the case and will keep you abreast of developments.

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Small Business Instant Savings at Greater New Orleans Sam’s Clubs

Sam’s Club offers members up to $2,500 in savings on small business merchandise.

Greater New Orleans area Sam’s Clubs will offer exclusive additional savings for small businesses from June 17 through 23 as part of the Business Savings Expo, an event that includes savings of up to $2,500 on more than 100 items. Although the items are targeted to help small business owners save more, anyone with a Sam’s Club membership can purchase the highlighted merchandise during the week-long Instant Savings celebration.

These exclusive savings will be instantly added to all member cards on June 17. With no coupons to clip and no rebate forms to complete and mail, Sam’s Club members will receive these small business offers instantly upon checkout. New members will qualify immediately for these additional savings.

“Sam’s Club wants to provide local business owners with the products they need to run their business in a cost-effective way,” said Michael Mainer, Mid-South Region general manager at Sam’s Club. “At Sam’s Club we work hard to serve small business members, because we know that they are the foundation of our country. By offering savings in addition to our everyday low prices we hope that Sam’s Club can contribute to increased small business success.”

Small Business Savings

Sam’s Club serves an estimated 600,000 Business Members daily in 620 club locations across the U.S., providing low prices, a convenient shopping experience and easier access to capital through an SBA Loan program, credit options and merchant payment processing support. Last year, Sam’s Club and the Sam’s Club Giving Program provided grants and donations of more than $600,000 to national non-profit SCORE to offer supplies and training to 102 U.S. small businesses.

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Urban League of Greater New Orleans Celebrates 75 Years at Annual Gala June 29th

Mr. Calvin Moret, last surviving Tuskegee Airman from New Orleans is Honoree

The Urban League of Greater New Orleans will celebrate 75 years of service to the Greater New Orleans community at its Annual Gala June 29th. The cosmopolitan event will take place at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans, 601 Loyola Avenue, Celestin Ballroom, 3rd floor, beginning at 8 p.m. Proceeds from the Gala provide operating funds to support programs of the League’s three Centers of Excellence.

“This year’s gala marks a very special milestone in our history, our Diamond Jubilee. The Urban League was created in 1938 to help improve economic and social conditions for African Americans. 75 years later, equality gaps in employment and education, which ushered in our founding, continue to impact our community at alarming rates,” said Erika McConduit, Interim President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater New Orleans. “As we re-dedicate ourselves to our mission of empowerment, we invite the entire community to join us as we celebrate this momentous occasion.” Along with celebrating their 75th anniversary, the gala will pay tribute to Mr. Calvin Moret, the last surviving Tuskegee Airman from New Orleans, whose service along with other members of the esteemed Tuskegee Airman led to desegregation of the United States Armed forces.

Individual tickets are $250. Tables may be purchased at the following levels: $2500, $5000, $7500, $10000 and $25,000. Tickets and tables are available for purchase online by visiting the Urban League’s website, www.urbanleagueneworleans.org.

For more information on the Annual Gala or to make a reservation, please contact Cathy Washington at 504.620.2332.
Glorious Palm Trees

By MG Calla Victoria
Data News Weekly Columnist

No other single plant evokes the sense of tropical islands and paradise more than a palm tree. Unlike other trees that branch out from the sides, all palm trees have what are call a terminal buds at the very top of their textured trunks and the palm fronds (branches) radiate from there. So what you see is a tall majestic ornate trunk and atop the trunk is a burst of greenery resembling a crown, hence the reason that palm trees are associated with royalty and Palm Trees (Palmaceae) have been termed the princes of the vegetable kingdom.

In ancient times, palm branches symbolized goodness and victory. They were often depicted on coins and important buildings. King Solomon had palm branches carved into the walls and doors of the temple. The fronds of Palm trees were laid before Christ during His triumphal entrance to the Holy City Jerusalem, and waved before Him. Beautiful palm trees have also inspired Dubai to the Holy City Jerusalem, and the temple. The fronds of Palm King Solomon had palm branches on coins and important buildings.

Palm trees are evergreens, mostly tropical plants in the family Palmae (also known as Arecaceae). There are over 230 genera (classifications) and 2500 species of palms and most are tree-like, with single trunks and either fan-shaped (palmate) or feather-shaped (pinnate) compound leaves. For identification purposes palm trees can be divided into two major groups: Those that have palmate or fan-shaped leaves; and those that have pinnate, or feather-shaped leaves. The palmate-leaved species are characterized by a leaf structure in which all leaf segments arise from a single point, similar to the structure of a human hand. Pinnate leaves are characterized by leaves along each side of a central axis, similar in design to that of a feather. Some palm trees are fruit-bearing like the Phoenix dactylifera, or the true date palm that gives us delicious dried fruit, and the coconut palm (also, coconut), Cocos nucifera. The term coconut can refer to the entire coconut palm, while the seed or the fruit, which, botanically, is a drupe is not a nut.

One of my favorite palms is the Canary Island Date Palm (Phoenix canariensis) also known as the Pineapple palm because of the unique pineapple shape as it is most impressive with its single, upright, thick trunk topped with a crown of 8 to 15-foot-long, stiff leaves with extremely sharp spines. As with most palms, it can grow up to very tall; fortunately it is very slow-growing and will take a considerable amount of time to reach its 50 to 60-foot-height. I can attest to this tree’s slow growth, as when I planted one in my front yard back in 2007 it just set there for about a year and a half and didn’t do a darn thing! It just sat there in the middle of the lawn just about two feet high and about one foot wide and was just happy. It really did not start doing anything until the spring of 2009, and now it is huge. The root system of palm trees is slender and does not expand therefore they will not damage concrete walkways and house foundations like oak trees. However the roots can extend out laterally as far as the leaf span of the fronds in search of water, so know that while palm trees are easy to plant they can be a nightmare to remove. Also when buying palm trees remember that what you are buying is an infant plant, so make sure that you know how tall the tree will get because some can soar up to 60 feet high.

Another one of my favorite palms is the Bismarck Palm (Bismarkia nobilis). If you are looking for drama look no further than this massive specimen. Its massive fan-shaped frond are silver and numerous, the Bismarck is definitely a show stopper. Palm trees make a great statement both indoors and outdoors. Think of palm trees to add height, color, sculptural design, and texture to any landscape.

Send me your gardening questions at sowing@thegardeningdiva.com, and check out my “Gardening Tip of the Week” at www.thegardeningdiva.com. Remember never get too busy to stop and smell the beautiful flowers!
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