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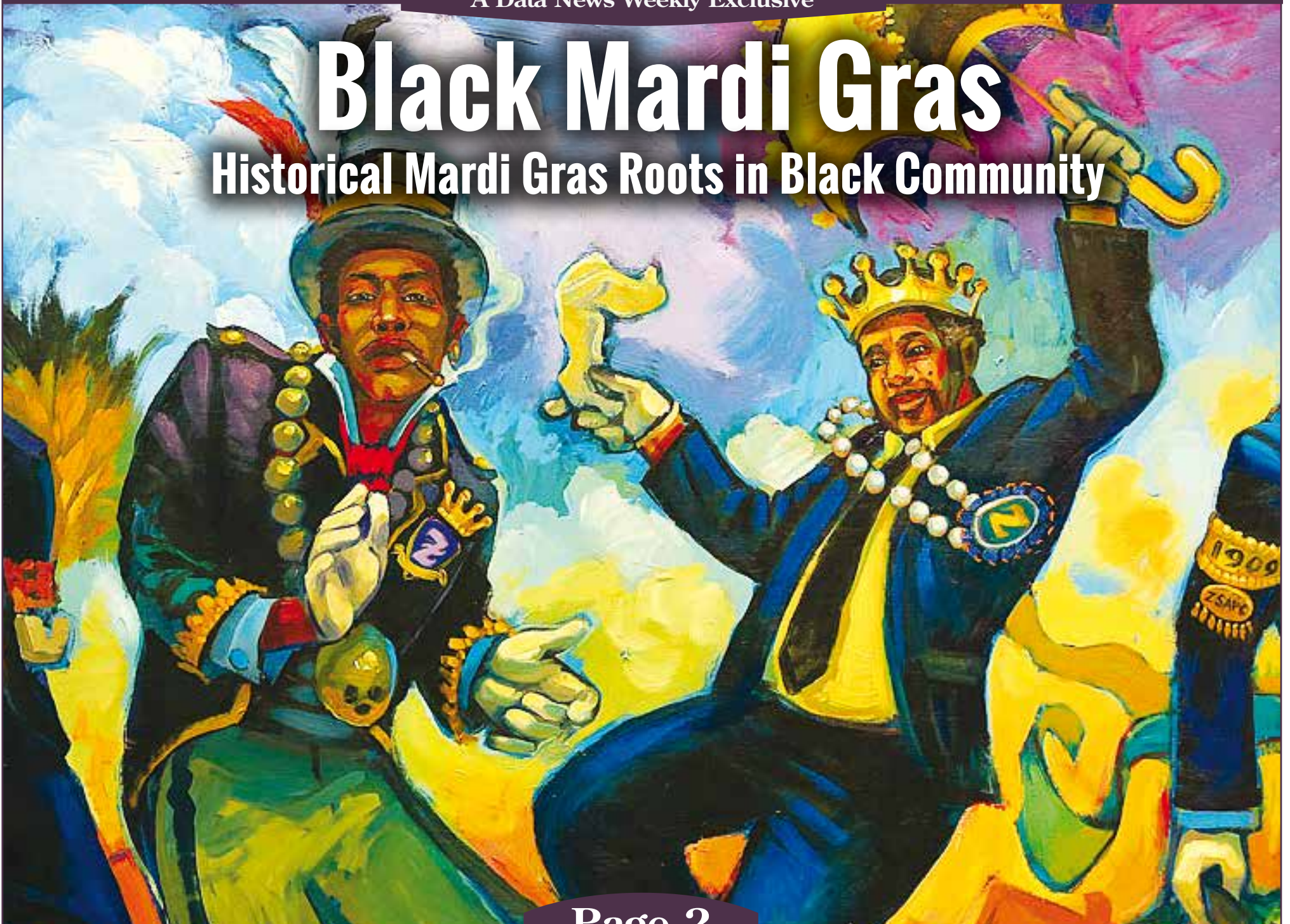
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March 1 - March 7, 2014 48th Year Volume 44 www.ladatanews.com

A Data News Weekly Exclusive

Black Mardi Gras

Historical Mardi Gras Roots in Black Community



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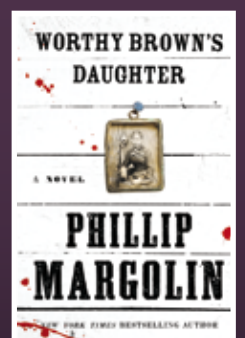


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Black Mardi Gras Traditions Lives On



The 2014 Official Zulu poster was done by renowned New Orleans Artist Terrance Osborne speaking of how the culture of New Orleans inspires his work he says, ““When I created this piece I remember the way people dance in our community, it was a natural dance everyone understood, but I didn’t realize it was so unique until I saw outside the community that everyone didn’t do what we did, but I feel it is great. In my work I have been able to give a window to people to see our great cultural traditions.” To view the entire 2014 Zulu poster, visit www.ladatanews.com. Photo Credit: Seth Osborne

By Edwin Buggage

Mardi Gras and African-American Traditions

It is that time again where people from around the world converge on the Big Easy for the biggest street party in the world. Mardi Gras is a time of year where

the City becomes engulfed in the spirit of parades, balls and revelry. While New Orleans has a rich history and a gumbo of people have contributed to it. It is undeniable that the African-American population is the roux that gives the City its unique flavor.

Zulu is a social aid and pleasure club that’s been around for over a century, where their parade and ball have become a must see. In addition to their coconuts

their annual poster has become a collector’s item. This year the poster is called “Doing Footwork” done by renowned New Orleans Artist Terrance Osborne. Speaking of the poster he says, “It is part of a series of pieces I’ve done, last year for the poster I did “Good Morning Zulu” and it was more animated, but in “Doing Footwork” it is more realistic and my hope is that people can look at it and find themselves in it.”

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

P.O. Box 57347, New Orleans, LA 70157-7347 | Phone: (504) 821-7421 | Fax: (504) 821-7622
editorial: datanewseditor@bellsouth.net | advertising: datanewsad@bellsouth.net

Terry B. Jones
CEO/Publisher
Glenn Jones
VP Advertising
& Marketing
Edwin Buggage
Editor
Cheryl Mainor
Managing Editor
Calla Victoria
Executive Assistant
June Hazeur
Accounting

Contributors
Edwin Buggage
George Curry
Terry Jones
Julianne Malveaux
Seth Osborne
The Bookworm Sez
Art Direction & Production
MainorMedia.com
Editorial Submissions
datanewseditor@bellsouth.net
Advertising Inquiries
datanewsad@bellsouth.net

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One of the first women's organizations to mask and perform during Mardi Gras, the Million Dollar Baby Dolls redefined the New Orleans carnival tradition. Photo Credit: Getty Images



Oshun 2014 Queen Laquina Ladmirault-Brown says this is a dream come true, "Since I was a little girl I would dream about this day but when I was young it was something that seemed out of our reach as African-Americans but today that is not the case."



The Mardi Gras Indians is a centuries old tradition dating back to the 1700's is an important part of the black New Orleans culture that continues into today. Photo Credit: houseofdanceandfeathers.org

Looking back at his youth growing up in New Orleans Tremé neighborhood as the inspiration for the poster he says, "When I created this piece I remember the way people dance in our community, it was a natural dance everyone understood, but I didn't realize it was so unique until I saw outside the community that everyone didn't do what we did, but I feel it is great. In my work I have been able to give a window to people to see our great cultural traditions." Continuing he says, "I was always fascinated by the flambeaux carriers, and also the Mardi Gras Indians with their colorful costumes. What it takes to create their suits is incredible and as an artist I am amazed at what they do."

New Traditions Renew the Spirit of Mardi Gras

For a long time Zulu was the only African-American Krewe that

paraded during Mardi Gras, but today there are many others who either are holding balls or parading. One is called Oshun; it started out in 1997 as an all-female club, but now has both male and female members. The Queen this year is Laquina Ladmirault-Brown and her husband Christopher Brown Sr. is King. Elated about her reign this year she says it has been a lifelong dream, "Since I was a little girl I would dream about this day but when I was young it was something that seemed out of our reach as African-Americans but today that is not the case."

As the parade rolled down the streets of uptown she says it was great to be part of something that shows African-American girls that their dreams can come true. Also she feels that for African-American parade goes African-American Krewe may throw more things their way and additionally serve as an inspiration and show that

Blacks are an integral part of the Mardi Gras tradition. Reflecting on the important role her family and friends throughout this experience she says, "It was breathtaking and amazing being in the parade, I felt like a part of something that was amazing and incredible. It has been a great experience and I couldn't have done it without my husband and my family and friends by my side. It was great to share that with the people who are important in my life and inspire our City to build on top of our history with new traditions."

The "Rebirthing" of a City

Rebirth has been around for over three decades. Their brand of Brass Band music have gained them legions of fans across the globe, their hard work dedication and determination garnered them music's highest honor with them receiving a Grammy Award in 2012. Phil Frazier, the band's founder

says they are ambassadors of Mardi Gras year round playing the music that Terrence Osborne's "Doing Footwork" displays. "We are Black Mardi Gras every day, because we bring the music that is our culture to people around the world, with our shows giving them a taste of our Black traditions in New Orleans."

New Orleans is a City that celebrates life, it seems like every second, minute and hour on any given day there is a festival or occasion for celebration and in Black New Orleans traditions are a major part of that. Whether it is any festival many of the performers, artists etc. are Black New Orleanians. In the Black community "Under the Bridge" means something special for African-Americans as the historic meeting place for Blacks during the days of segregation on Mardi Gras Day. On Orleans and North Claiborne where Zulu ends its parade, people gather in a celebration of Black New Orleans complete with second lining, brass bands, live entertainment and the Mardi Gras Indians. Phil Frazier recalls these traditions as an important part of his life and

how he came to creating a band to celebrate local traditional music. "I grew up inside this culture and it's as natural as breathing to me, so I feel good that for 31 years we have been able to expose people from all over the world to our City and our culture."



The Future of Black Traditions in the "New" New Orleans


After Hurricane Katrina the City lost some of its Black population, but the traditions continue and its future has taken on a different meaning for some. Laquina Brown now uses this time to reunite with friends and family passing on the traditions to the next generation. "Katrina took so much from us, because we always got together, so now we get together and reminisce about the times we were growing up and tell our kids about the good times we had. And every year we try to make it better and better so that our kids would have something to pass down to their children."

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Soul fest

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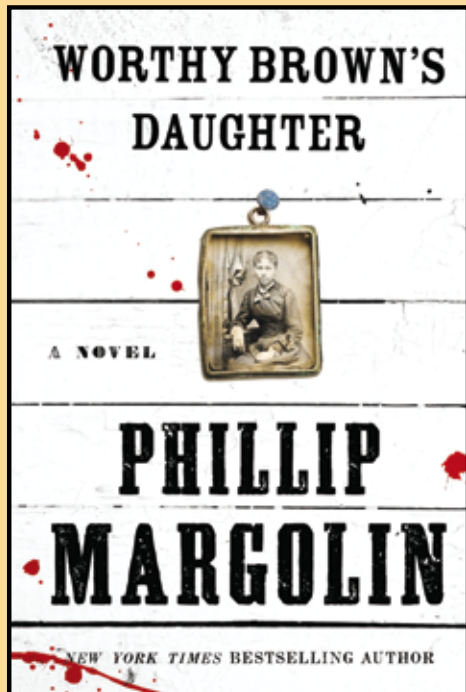
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Worthy Brown's Daughter



"Worthy Brown's Daughter"
by Phillip Margolin
c.2014, Harper
\$26.99 / \$33.50 Canada
352 pages

You know your rights!

Or, well, at least you're pretty sure you do. Laws can change quickly and they're often up for interpretation. Sometimes, there's a gray area, too, and...

So you know your rights. But how to enforce them is perhaps another matter - especially if you'd once been a slave. In the new novel "Worthy Brown's Daughter" by Phillip Margolin, that's one man's struggle.

Facing a noose-waving lynch mob would terrify anyone.

Matthew Penny knew that to be a fact: as a lawyer, he'd seen many men strung up and his new client, a traveling salesman, was meant to be next. Penny was sure the man wasn't guilty, though, but it was 1860 on the frontier, corruption was common, and the man's beautiful, exotic accuser seemed to have the judge under her spell.

And as it turned out, the salesman was convicted and harshly punished but things could have been worse. He would've hung, were it not for the quiet black man who approached Penny and whispered that the trial was rigged.

Weeks later, in Penny's Portland office, it was time to pay for that information.

Worthy Brown had once been a slave in Savannah, and had traveled west with his owner, Caleb Barbour, who was escaping debt. But slavery was illegal in Oregon and Brown was now a free man, though Barbour still held Brown's only child, Roxanne. The law was on Brown's side but Barbour was smart, and well-connected.

Brown needed Penny's help.

Penny understood loss all too well. Traveling westbound two years prior,

his beloved wife had drowned during a river crossing, and he sorely missed her. He knew Rachel would want him happy - but what would she say about his growing romance with the daughter of Portland's wealthiest citizen?

That vexed him greatly, but there wasn't time to dwell on it. Saving Brown's daughter from her captor was more important. And since Barbour had started collecting supporters, there was no chance for error on Penny's part...

Good and bad. That's this book.

Author Phillip Margolin admits that he took license with history in order to write "Worthy Brown's Daughter" and, indeed, the premise of this novel bears rather small resemblance to the true events it's "loosely" based upon. The real-life tale of "several" unlawfully-held former slave children is surely one of fascination and outrage - but here, it's watered down by fiction that mostly seems to get in the way, and that turns what might've been a stellar novel into just another courtroom drama.

And yet - there's Worthy Brown.

Margolin makes his title character someone who's steadfast and solid, someone you desperately want to win. Brown is just one man in this well-populated story, but his presence alone will keep your nose buried in this book.

Overall, I think that if you're looking for historical accuracy, you'll be happier looking elsewhere. This ain't what you want. But if you need a decent enough novel to pass the time and you think "Worthy Brown's Daughter" is it... you might be right.

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Femme Fatale's Inaugural Gala Event

Photos by Terry Jones

The Mystic Krewe of Femme Fatale is a newly formed female organization that was organized to offer women the opportunity to promote New Orleans cultural in a variety of aspects. Their first Annual Gala was held Saturday, February 22, 2014, LACE, The Grand Ballroom. The ladies came out in grand style in amazing costumes.



Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events

"Run, Jesse, Run" – 30 Years Later



George C. Curry
NNPA

The recent Wall Street Project conference in New York City was old home week for many of us who were involved with Jesse Jackson's first presidential campaign in 1984. There was Frank Watkins, the former candidate's longtime press secretary and the driving force behind Jackson's decision to run. Also present were Emma Chappell, the campaign's national treasurer; Rev. Herb Daughtry, senior pastor of The House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn and an early supporter; economist Julianne Malveaux, who worked in Jackson's presidential campaigns and four key parts of the

1984 rainbow – Jim Zogby, Butch Wing, Steve Cobble and Robert Borosage. Former Louisiana Congressman Cleo Fields shared memories as did former New York City Mayor David Dinkins.

I was asked to moderate a discussion about the impact of the 1984 campaign on the nation and, yes, an African American now sitting in the White House. I covered Jackson's first presidential run while working for the Chicago Tribune. I knew most of the major players, but it wasn't until we sat down as a group with Jesse Jackson that we had collectively reflected on the historic events of three decades ago.

Cleo Fields recounted what the campaign meant to him in deeply personal terms.

"When I was in the fifth grade, I was going through a lot of depression," Fields said. "The first day of school you had to state your name and what you wanted to be in the future. At the time, I wanted to be a police officer, but everyone before

me had said doctor, lawyer or engineer. My mom had 10 children, my daddy had died and I had hand-me-downs.

"I stood up – I wanted to say something bigger than everyone else – so I said, 'My name is Cleo Fields and I want to be (and the only thing I could think of was president) president of the United States of America.' Everybody laughed, including the teacher. I didn't want to go back to school because they thought it was a big joke and I was depressed about it."

Two years later, Fields was present in the audience when Jackson asked students to repeat his trademark "I am Somebody" exhortation.

"It was at that moment that I started believing I can be anything I wanted to be," Fields said. "I became a state senator at the age of 23. And that was because of Jesse Jackson. And a congressman at the age of 28. I became the Democratic nominee for governor at the age of

33. And that's only because of the inspiration from Rev. Jesse Jackson and I just want to say thank you."

While working as a student organizer for Jackson, Fields was invited to join Jackson's national staff.

Jackson's presidential runs also represented a breakthrough for James J. Zogby, an Arab-American.

"For me and my community, what was historic about this was it brought together two parts of my life," he said. "I had always been involved in civil rights and anti-war work. But when you became an Arab, when you put on the Arab hat, then allies you had in those movements wouldn't talk to you anymore."

Zogby told of politicians, including former Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode, returning campaign contributions donated by Arab-American groups.

"He [Jackson] said, 'Our time has come.' It was my community's time, too. We felt welcome and included for the first time in an Amer-

ican political campaign."

David Dinkins, New York City's first Black mayor, said he would not have been elected without the '84 presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson. He said, "I know what Jesse did for me."

Frank Watkins, the former press secretary, had urged Jackson to run for president against Jimmy Carter in 1979, but Jackson declined. But this time around, Jackson was willing to listen.

"I wrote a memo outlining the reasons for Rev. Jackson to run: increase voter registration, to increase political awareness of people and to galvanize the Black community to get more involved in politics," Watkins remembered of his 1982 document. "I didn't necessarily think that we would win, but I tried to put together a strategy where we could win."

Jackson said a number of Black leaders were urged to run before

Run, Jesse, Run,
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Blacks Have More Reasons to be Fearful than Whites



Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

In the years after enslavement, Southern Whites did all they could to return to a manner of slavery. No White "owned" a Black person, but many Whites behaved as if they did. Theoretically, Blacks were free to come and go as they pleased, but if they went to the wrong store, sat in the wrong part of the bus, or failed to yield narrow sidewalks to Whites, they could expect a physical confrontation. All a White woman had to do was cry "rape" for a Black man (and usually the wrong man) was beaten or lynched. Whites expected deference from Black people, and when they didn't

get it, they demanded it with physical threats or worse.

In the months after World War II, 12 million soldiers returned home. Seven percent of them – nearly 800,000 Black soldiers – got something less than a hero's welcome. Indeed, thousands of Black World War II veterans were beaten, often because these men wanted the same rights at home that they fought for abroad. Their sense of dignity and equality seemed to embolden the Ku Klux Klan, which was responsible for soldiers in uniform being pulled off busses, beaten and shot. In some cases, these soldiers had their eyes gouged out; in some cases they were castrated, tortured and lynched.

Whites engaged in the writing of Jim Crow laws that were imposed on Blacks such as vagrancy laws that made it possible to jail a Black man because he had no money. These unequal laws made it as easy to find a nearly free labor market as it had in slavery. There was no relief from this unfairness until the

late 1960s and early 1970s. And Whites attempting to reinforce the myth of White superiority by reinstituting the practice of deference found a Black population less ready to defer, more willing to engage the courts (and in some cases the streets) in a quest for equality.

When the myth of White superiority does not work, too many Whites hide behind their so-called fear as a way force deference or provide penalties for those who will not engage in White people's fantasies. If Michael Dunn were so afraid of Jordan Davis and his friends, why did he get out of his car and confront them about their loud music?

None of us of a certain age loves loud music, but most of us know how to close a window and tolerate it for a moment or two. Dunn says he was afraid of teens playing "thug" music. Those teens might well have been afraid of him, just as the World War II veterans had been afraid of the KKK. Jordan Davis and his friends might have been as frightened as former slaves were,

when they refused to cross the sidewalk into the streets so that Whites could go first. Some of these Black folks ignored their fear and attempted to exercise their citizenship rights. Some were lynched because they would not defer to outmoded customs.

Gary Pearl could be Michael Dunn's evil twin, with a pecuniary twist. In 1983, Pearl left his job as a city sanitation supervisor in Louisville, Kentucky because he says he had a nervous breakdown, which he attributed to having to work with Black people. A psychiatrist testified that Pearl was suffered from paranoid schizophrenia; judge ordered that he be paid \$231 per week. The state appealed the award, it was eventually overturned, and Gary Pearl returned to the obscurity he had before the "fear" defense.

What would happen if every Black person fearing White people got to file for unemployment compensation, or carry a gun around to assuage himself of his safety? Would a jury be as lenient toward

that Black man as they were with Michael Dunn? Would they acquit just like the jury acquitted the men who killed Medgar Evers (it took decades for a jury to finally do the right thing). A hard read of history suggests that Blacks have more to fear from Whites than the other way around, but it is Whites, rationalizing their fear, who get to shoot without justification.

A thorough read of history, however, would remind us of the Dred Scott case where the Supreme Court ruled that Black people have no rights that Whites are bound to respect. Clearly, Michael Dunn, George Zimmerman and the others who have Klan sensibilities and invisible hoods, believe a 19th century Supreme Court ruling instead of 21st century realities. For folks like Dunn and Zimmerman, however, the 19th century is not very different than the 21st.

Julianne Malveaux is a Washington, D.C.-based economist and writer. She is President Emerita of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, N.C.

New Jazz Market Breaks Ground

Facility to Provide Music Education, Live Jazz Performances and a New Orleans Jazz Archive

The New Orleans Jazz Orchestra (NOJO) hosted two groundbreaking events on Tuesday, Feb. 25, to celebrate their new building project, The New Orleans Jazz Market.

The new market will be housed at the intersection of Oretha Castle Haley and Martin Luther King Boulevards in Central City in the former Gators Department Store building. The Jazz Market will feature music education experiences for all ages, a New Orleans Jazz Archive, tributes to current and past Jazz Masters, and performances by Irvin Mayfield, NOJO and other renowned musicians.

Partners for the project include Community Development Capital, Goldman Sachs, Louisiana Economic Development, the New Or-



leans Redevelopment Authority, Prudential, Redmellon Restoration and Development, and the State of Louisiana.

The Groundbreaking celebration hosted by Councilmember LaToya Cantrell and NOJO Board Chairman Ron Forman; event fea-

tured musical performances by NOJO's Artistic Director Irvin Mayfield, Honorary NOJO Board Chair and legendary vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater, and Jazz patriarch and pianist Ellis Marsalis. Marsalis and 102-year-old Lionel Ferbos – the oldest working trumpet player in the world – became the first inductees into The Jazz Market's Walk of Fame during the festivities. Speakers included Charles Brown, New Orleans Public Library; Jim Singleton, New Orleans Redevelopment Authority; Margaret Anadu, Goldman Sachs; Neal Morris, Redmellon Restoration and Development; Ronald Markham, NOJO; Scott Hutcheson, City of New Orleans; and Steve Perry, New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The Presentation & Town Hall meeting hosted at Ashe Cultural Arts Center by Councilmember Cantrell and Chairman Forman featured a presentation led by Ronald Markham and Neal Morris about NOJO's plans for the Jazz Market.

Cover Story/ Continued from page 3.

New Orleans is a City that is a Gumbo and as stated earlier it is the African-American people and culture that gives it its "Je na sais quoi." It is the special quality of this experience that has given New Orleans its distinct character. And it is something that has transcended its origins and has reached people around the world and become universally known how people identify what is authentically New Orleans. Speaking of his approach to his art and the African-American impact on the City he says, "I didn't think it so much about incorporating the New Orleans experience in my work in a conscious way, but this is what I knew and my work is simply a reflection of that. It is who I am and what I do is not intentional it is an extension of who I am." Continuing he says, "You can't speak about the culture of New Orleans without speaking about our large contribution to it that all people enjoy. Whether it is in the food, music, or the arts we are a large part of what makes this City special."

The City in a post-Katrina envi-

ronment is experiencing changes, as continuous indigenous culture is finding itself up against people who move into neighborhoods interrupting and challenging traditional ways of life. While most believe that change can be good in some respects, economically, educational and the like, but when it comes to traditions in art and culture it becomes problematic. With the question becoming what would the City be without those culture bearers who are the innovators and holders of long standing traditions? How important are they in our City moving forward?

Terrance Osborne takes a balanced view understanding that the City must change, but cautions against interrupting longstanding traditions and the City's unique culture, "I believe it is important for the City to grow and move forward in some respects, but at what expense if the City loses its culture and identity in the process you've gained nothing." Continuing he says, "If you take the things that make the City special and that is

the people and their traditions then although you may gain in one are the losses are more significant."

The City in what next year will be a decade since Hurricane Katrina has risen from the ashes. It continues to change and its direction is still uncertain, but Rebirth Brass Band Founder Phil Frazier feels regardless of what happens nothing will kill the spirit of Black New Orleans in continuing to shape the larger identity of the City. Reflecting on his band and what has become their larger purpose than simply playing music, but bringing people together to uplift the City. "When I started the band we were revitalizing Brass Band Music and now after Katrina our name has taken on a greater mission as inspiration for a City coming back better than ever and we are glad to be a part of a tradition that in spite of everything that's happened in our City our impact now goes far beyond New Orleans and the world can see what the Black people of New Orleans have to offer is something special that will never die."

Run, Jesse, Run/ Continued from page 6.

he made his decision to enter the contest, including former Atlanta mayors Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young. When they declined, Jackson stepped forward.

"It really was not running for office, I was running as an organization," Jackson stated. "...We kept trying to pull the party back to the moral center, which we called the Third Rail. What became clear was that civil rights, social justice, gender equality, workers' rights were not on the agenda. Somebody had to get to the stage to get the cameras to hear us. We had no platform on which to stand to make our case. In the end, that was driving the situation."

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emerge* magazine, is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA.) He is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. Curry can be reached through his Web site, www.georgecurry.com. You can also follow him at www.twitter.com/currygeorge and George E. Curry Fan Page on Facebook.

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