Charleston Church Massacre Draws Crowds, Raises Questions

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Charleston Church Massacre Draws Crowds, Raises Questions

By Clem Richardson

CHARLESTON, SC — Kenneth Washington was watching his TV in Cleveland Wednesday when he learned that a gunman shot up his family’s church in Charleston, South Carolina.

Hours later, he discovered that the loss struck even closer to home.

“I saw a picture of the church on TV,” Washington said. “I was born and raised here in Charleston, on Alexander Street, where my aunt, Suzie Jackson lived. Tywanza Sanders was my cousin. Ethel Lance was my cousin. So we had three in the family who were killed.”

Washington joined the throngs of onlookers Friday who braved the sweltering 97-degree heat to stand in the street outside Emanuel AME Church. They honored the fallen: Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson.

On the Cover: Thousands gathered to protest the Confederate Flag, which flew at full mast, over the South Carolina State House while the State and American flags were flown at half mast as tribute to the victims of the mass shooting. Dylann Storm Roof, the alleged shooter, had a Confederate flag on his car and was photographed waving a Stars & Bars Confederate flag. (AP file photo)
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Ethel Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel L. Simmons, and Myra Thompson.

As their evening Bible study class ended. Several people hailed Pinckney as a virtual Renaissance man; a caring, intellectual pastor first elected to the state legislature at age 23; a community leader and quiet man who, outside the pulpit, only spoke when he had something important to say.

Charleston City Councilman and mayoral candidate William Dudley Gregory (D - District 6) traces his family’s membership in Emanuel almost to the church’s founding in 1816. He now sits on Emanuel’s Board of Trustees.

“This church has produced so many great leaders, starting with Richard Allen and Denmark Vesey,” Gregory said. Vesey was a former slave and Emanuel minister who launched a failed slave revolt from the church in 1822. “It’s a church that has always been a part of the leadership of this city. That’s why it’s called Mother Emanuel.”

AME bishops assigned Pinckney to Emanuel in 2010, and “he brought to the church this young energy and vision, and put this vision with action,” Gregory said. “It was quite refreshing.”

Under Pinckney, Emanuel renovated three rundown church-owned properties and was in installing the sanctuary’s first elevator.

“So you’re talking about someone who was a visionary,” Gregory said. “Within five years we were able to complete all those projects, and from there we will start restoring the sanctuary.

“He was clearly an intellectual, well studied, well versed,” Gregory said. “I liked to call him ‘quiet fire.’ He had this knack of taking on a lot of sometimes controversial things in the church with this even keel, but still being very effective.

That’s why it’s called Mother Emanuel.

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“After the funerals, do we go back to business as usual?” Waring wondered. “My fear is we will. Out of the Walter Scott shooting, body cameras for police officers became the buzzword, the strategy.

“What’s going to come out of this?”

President Obama is right,” Waring said. “If elementary kids can be mowed down in Sandy Hook with no results; if the people out in Colorado can be mowed down in a movie theater, with no results; if people in Bible study can be mowed down, with no results, the silence is beginning to be deafening.

“If this becomes just another massacre in our rear view mirror, if nothing positive comes up to make it better, then shame on us.”

NAACP President Cornell Brooks, a fourth generation AME minister, said many other issues surround the killings.

“I am here to lend support and to make clear that we support the vigorous prosecution of this crime and the ongoing investigation of this crime to determine whether or not there are any others complicit in it.”

Noting that Dylann Storm Roof had a Confederate flag on his car, Brooks said, “We are here in a state where the capitol has a Confederate flag flying over it. Bringing down that flag will not bring about an end to racial hatred, but it would do a lot to prevent the nurturing of this kind of hatred.”

The Stars and Bars does not fly over the state capitol, per se. Thanks to a legislative compromise in 2000, a smaller Confederate flag now flutters on a pole on the statehouse lawn. Not surprisingly, at this time of high emotions, controversy surrounds even this lower-profile presence of what many consider a symbol of racial oppression.

Emanuel AME Church members included: Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel L. Simmons, and Myra Thompson.

(Left) Forming a line, Emanuel AME Church members, including Pinckney, gathered outside Emanuel AME Church following a service for their slain pastor.

(Left) Pinckney’s family and friends pay their respects during a memorial service honoring their slain pastor.

(Left) The fallen Emanuel AME Church members included: Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Cynthia Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel L. Simmons, and Myra Thompson. (AP file photo)

(Left) Members of the crowd, unable to get inside Emanuel AME Church, pay their respects.

Throngs of onlookers Friday braved the scorching 97-degree heat to stand in the street outside Emanuel AME Church. Roof acted alone, some say.

“Another day, another man重复ing the vision,” Waring said. “Yet he drove over 100 miles from Eastover, South Carolina to Denmark Vesey’s church to shoot the minister. He could have shot a lot of black people between here and there. He meant to come here.”

“These were all good, Christian people – not a criminal among them,” Waring said. “This shows how a community loses when something like this happens, because Christian people give back.

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Celebrating the Life of Musician, Educator
and Humanitarian Harold Battiste Jr.

Written and Researched by Edwin Buggage

The world loss a great musician, educator and humanitarian on June 19th, Harold Battiste Jr., a musical prodigy, visionary and pioneer in the world of music, who played saxophone and piano, in addition to his work as a producer, arranger, record label owner, educator and author. He was 83.

During his amazing journey in life he blazed the trail for many who came after him, with some becoming household names. Mr. Battiste then graduated from Dillard University in 1952. Later he became a music teacher in the public schools while performing in bands and serving as a talent scout for Specialty Records where he was a degree in music education from Dillard University in 1952. Later he became a music teacher in the public schools while performing in bands and serving as a talent scout for Specialty Records where he was known as Dr. John, and produced his earliest albums. He also worked with Sam Cooke on his first secular hit "You Send Me" and played piano on what became an anthem of the Civil Rights Movement "A Change Gonna Come."

Harold Battiste Jr. was born Oct. 28, 1931, in Uptown New Orleans. In the 1940’s in a segregated New Orleans his family moved into the then brand-new Magnolia Housing Development (A Housing Development for Blacks). But while segregation was the law of the land, the music that he heard from the nearby Dew Drop Inn on LaSalle Street, the famed nightclub and hotel would change his life. In his book “Unfinished Blues” he wrote of how he was drawn to the music he was hearing and where he would eventually began to play with several bands during the heyday where all the greats of Black music would come.

Mr. Battiste then graduated from Gilbert Academy High School, a Private School for African-Americans that stressed excellence; (Its location was on St. Charles Ave. where De LaSalle High School is today) one that counts, Civil Rights Leader Andrew Young as one of its graduates. He later went on to earn a degree in music education from Dillard University in 1952. Later he became a music teacher in the public schools while performing in bands and serving as a talent scout for Specialty Records where he auditioned future “Soul Queen of New Orleans” Irma Thomas.

Not only was he a great musician, he was concerned with passing on his knowledge and experiences to young people. Battiste worked for many years as director of jazz studies for the Congo Square Cultural Collective, the Louisiana State Music Commission, New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation, Louisiana Jazz Federation, the African Cultural Endowment and numerous other cultural organizations.

He has been honored by many including the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra performed a tribute concert of Mr. Battiste’s “Bravo Mr. Batt!” in addition to receiving The OffBeat Magazine’s Best of the Beale Lifetime Achievement in Music Award in 1999.

Battiste remained active in the community, and served as a board member of the Congo Square Cultural Collective, the Louisiana State Music Commission, New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation, Louisiana Jazz Federation, the African Cultural Endowment and numerous other cultural organizations. He received the Beau Arts Award, the Mayor’s Arts Award, the Governor’s Arts Lifetime Achievement Award and many others. In 1998, the City of New Orleans proclaimed his birthday as Harold Battiste Day.

Data News salutes the amazing Life of Harold Battiste Jr, as inspiration for the next generation to pursue excellence.

Data News Weekly
Newsmaker
Lionel Milton

Painting a New Picture of Reality

by: Edwin Buggage

Coming from a City that gave the world Jazz, gumbo, beignets and Who Dat; New Orleans Visual Artist Lionel Milton in his over two decades has become an artist whose work is the essence of the limitless potential that art has in bringing people together. His unique style has garnered him clients from many walks of life who clamor for one of his original creations. And while his work has been received with much acclaim and taken across the globe, at the core of his being he is a humble guy who is truly committed to inspiring young people using his art to reach them and touch their lives.

“I started out as one of the original members of YA/YA (Young Aspirations/Young Artists, Inc. provides artistic experiences and opportunities to area teens.) During that time it provided for me and many others with an opportunity to get outside of our community and see that the world was bigger than our neighborhood.

That kind of exposure at a young age allowed me to grow in so many ways and I just wanted to pass this onto others,” says Milton of the work he does teaching art lessons and the many workshops he does with young people.

Lionel’s story began as a young man who is from the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans and his life is the embodiment of the words of the late Rapper/Actor Tupac Shakur’s poem “The Rose that Grew From Concrete.” From his humble beginnings he’s used his gift as an artist to attract the attention of buyers from all over the world in addition to attracting media companies such as MTV and BET to use several of his original pieces for their television programming décor. Additionally, national consumer brands such as Disney, Target, Budweiser and Atronic have employed his designs for children’s clothing and bedding, character development and promotional materials. He’s also created posters for the Voodoo Music and Essence Music Festival among many others in his two decade career as an artist.

This New Orleans native is a well-known ambassador for his City and especially the Lower 9. He has worked with Actor/Humanitarian Brad Pitt’s Make it Right Foundation, who commissioned Lionel to create the merchandising artwork for the “Pink Project” with the proceeds going to the future rebuilding of homes in the Lower Ninth Ward.

“Rebuilding the City and particularly the Lower Nine is something that is near and dear to my heart. There is so much history back there and so many great people whose lives changed forever when the levees breached destroying so much of what I knew as my world during my early life,” says Milton. “But in my art I am always inspired by the people who helped shape who I am and it will always come through in my work, how I speak and who I am. And regardless of where I am I will always represent my City and the Lower 9 and it is my goal to see it rebuilt and repopulated. It is a part of the City that cannot be forgotten and be simply remembered as ground zero for Hurricane Katrina.”

He is an advocate of education and new technology and is using his art to encourage reading. He has an app available on iTunes called the ABC’s Learning Trailblazer and the educational programming décor. And while his work has been received with much acclaim and taken across the globe, at the core of his being he is a humble guy who is truly committed to inspiring young people using his art to reach them and touch their lives.

“There are so many things that are happening in racial relations today that has created a powder keg that is exploding all over the country. Milton feels that educating people about the greatness of African-Americans contributions to this country’s past and present can help shape the future where ignorance can fall by the wayside and all people can work better to heal the historical scourge of racism in America. He is using his art to bring people together for what it is; one colorful family of humanity.

“I think it’s critical to our community to always give back. We should try to break the chain of negative stereotypes and piece together a chain of our true legacy of a great people. Never forget places like Black Wall Street in Tulsa Ok in 1921. That story can inspire greatness! So I continue to stay in the trenches so maybe one day some generation after will remember the positive contributions we have given through art and creativity.”
Photos by Bernie Saul

The City of New Orleans turned out to honor the legacy of Dr. Norman C. Francis on Saturday June 4th. Proceeds from the event will help fund the Norman C. Francis Endowed Scholarship Fund, giving many future generations of students the opportunity to attend Xavier University of Louisiana.

Left to Right – Moon Landrieu, former Governor of Louisiana, Dr. Norman Francis, former President of Xavier University, Lolis Elie, Civil Rights Attorney and Pascal Calogero, former Louisiana Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

Vocalist Wanda Rouzan performs

Vocalist Irma Thomas performs

Alexis Herman - Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation and currently a member of the Board of Trustee at Xavier University and graduate of Xavier’s Class of 1969.

Dr. Norman Francis, former President of Xavier University

Guitarist – George Porter, Jr. performs

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General Motors Hosts Event to Celebrate The Black Press’ 75th Anniversary

Ed Welburn, Vice-President of Global Design, welcomed NNPA Leadership and members during a reception held inside GM World Headquarters in Detroit, Michigan. Chevrolet sponsored the event in celebration and honor of NNPA’s 75th Anniversary.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., NNPA President & CEO; Laura Hernandez-Romine, Marketing Diversity Manager, Global Marketing Services; Ed Welburn, Vice-President, Global Design; Crystal Windham, Director of Design, Global Chevrolet; and Cloves C. Campbell, NNPA Arizona Informant Chair.

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If you would like to have your events included in Data’s List of Events for ESSENCE, please send the list to datanewsad@bellsouth.net or call (504) 821-7421
Whites Still Live in ‘State of Denial’ or Race

By JoAnn Watson
Guest Columnist

This week, we mark the 150th Anniversary of the Juneteenth Observance in The United States of America; with June 19, 1865 as the date that many Africans who were held as Slaves in Texas were finally accessed to freedom, more than two and-a-half years after The Emancipation Proclamation was the law of the land.

Tragically, just as June 19th, 1865 showcased the raw reality that many Americans did not accept The Emancipation Proclamation, the Confederate defeat, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments nor the create that “All men are created equal”; so will June 17, 2015 forever be remembered as the date when horror assassinations were triggered during Bible study in the oldest Black Church in the South, not just by the toxicity of ‘one lone gunman’; but by a culture of venomous racial hatred that has contaminated the moral underbelly of far too many in the USA.

Our Nation can not continue ‘business as usual’. The Charleston, South Carolina Black Church murders offer an opportunity for many Americans who have turned a blind eye to white supremacist groups, and home-grown domestic terrorist, to Officially raise the banner that All human rights and All human lives must be respected! All Americans who honor Democracy and the US Constitution should raise their voices to demand that policies & programs which combat racism in America be prioritized by law enforcers, political leaders, business leaders, faith leaders, civic leaders and higher education leaders of All Backgrounds; and-most importantly-in our own homes-with our own families.

Thank God for the glimmers of hope that have emerged. We honor the courageous woman who recognized the suspect-and his car-from news reports, subsequently alerting authorities and even following his vehicle on the highway until he was apprehended. We salute the suspect’s sister, who alerted of officials regarding his identity after video images were televised.

Of course, We honor the Be-loved Honorable Pastor and State Senator, Rev. Clementa Pinckney & all of the faithful Bible-study congregants of this historic church which was built by the Iconic Revolutionary, Denmark Vesey, and other African Descendants who fought to be free and who fought for the right to worship in a distinguished Sanctuary fashioned by their own hands. We honor Thousands who have attended memorial services and prayer gatherings which have been convened in Charleston, SC (and elsewhere), which have been populated by Americans of every race, age and faith-tradition, praying together, grieving together and healing together. Thus, a visible demonstration of diverse, united ‘We The People’ collaboration has emerged in the post-mortem of the murders at Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church.

All Americans should disallow a confederate culture ‘hiding in plain sight’ in our neighborhoods, within our families or in our homes. Racial hatred and violence must not be allowed to foster unchecked and unchallenged anywhere in the USA or the world.

May the Massacre at ‘Mother’ Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, which senselessly took away so many innocent lives (during Bible Study for Heaven’s sake) give birth to a new consciousness -which does not deny-but confronts racist hate groups & white supremacists as un-American, un-Democratic and unGodly with a supporting cast of drum majors for Justice (representing all hues) who demand Peace, freedom and dignity for all peoplefor all time!

Wake Up America!

George C. Curry
NNPA

Former U.S. Senator Bill Bradley is fond of saying, “Slavery was America’s original sin, and racism remains its unresolved dilemma.”

But the unwillingness to face up to the raw racism that led to the murder of nine African Americans attending Bible study at a church in Charleston, S.C. proves that the problem is more than just an unresolved dilemma. Judging by public opinion polls, most Whites live year-round in the 51st state—the state of denial.

First, let’s deal with the facts. Around 9 p.m. on June 17, Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old avowed White supremacist, entered Emanual AME Church in Charleston and murdered nine, unarmed African Americans, ranging from 26 to 87 years old. Each victim was shot multiple times.

We have the murderer’s own words that his goal was to “start a race war,” according to law enforcement officials who took Roof into custody.

Rather than address obvious racism, our non-friends on Fox & Friends and other Fox network programs attempted to make the massacre about religion, gun control and anything other than the actual culprit—racism.

Fox & Friends host Steve Doocy referenced “hostility toward Christians.” That theme was echoed by Bishop E.W. Jackson when he noted that “we don’t know why he went into a church, but he didn’t choose a bar or a basketball court.” Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani also postulated that “maybe he hates Christian churches.”

But we aren’t talking about any Christian church. We are talking about a historic Black church that had been carefully targeted by the shooter.

Within minutes after his name was made public, Dylann Roof’s White supremacy views became widely known. A photo on his Facebook page showed him wearing patches with the flags of White minority-ruled South Africa during the apartheid era and Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Both flags are popular symbols associated with White supremacists in the U.S.

Another photo posted on Facebook by one of Roof’s friends showed him leaning against an automobile sporting the license plate, “Confederate States of America.”

Several days after the rampage, Roof’s racist manifesto was discovered. In it, he said:

“Anyone who thinks that White and black people look as different as we do on the outside, but are somehow magically the same on the inside, is delusional. How could our faces, skin, hair, and body structure all be different, but our brains be exactly the same? This is the nonsense we are led to believe. Negroes have lower Iq’s, lower impulse control, and higher testosterone levels in generals. These three things alone are a recipe for violent behavior....”

Toward the end, he wrote:

“I chose Charleston because it is most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country. We have no skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me.”

Some conservatives tried to make the shootings a gun issue. After several Fox personalities suggested that ministers arm themselves, Steve Doocy chimed in, “If somebody was there, they would have had the opportunity to pull out their weapon and take [the shooter] out.”

But it’s not that simple. “Fox & Friends used a mass shooting at a South Carolina church to basically promote the carrying of guns as a solution to prevent such attacks—even though research indicates that civilians are more likely to harm themselves or someone else than stop a criminal when they have a gun, and there is ‘no evidence; that arming civilians stops mass shootings,” observed mediamatters.org.

After conducting a 5-month investigation, Mother Jones magazine concluded: “In the wake of the massacres this year at a Colorado movie theater, a Sikh temple in Wisconsin, and Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, we set out to track mass shootings in the United States over the last 30 years. “We identified and analyzed 62 of them, and one striking pattern in the data is this: In not a single case was the killing stopped by a civilian using a gun. And in other recent (but less lethal) rampages in which armed civilians attempted to intervene, those civilians not only failed to stop the shooter but also were gravely wounded or killed. Moreover, we found that the rate of mass shootings has increased in recent years—at a time when America has been flooded with millions of additional firearms and a barrage of new laws has made it easier than ever to carry them in public places, including bars, parks, and schools.”

Clearly, the rampage in Charleston, S.C. was not about attacking Christianity or the need for more guns. It was about racism—an issue this country has always been reluctant to address.


By JoAnn Watson
Guest Columnist

This week, we mark the 150th Anniversary of the Juneteenth Observance in The United States of America; with June 19, 1865 as the date that many Africans who were held as Slaves in Texas were finally accessed to freedom, more than two and-a-half years after The Emancipation Proclamation was the law of the land.

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Lionel “Beaver” Smith Named “Top Producer” by NY Life.

Lionel “Beaver” Smith was recently honored as one of New York Life’s leading producers, earning an invitation to the company’s 2015 Life Summit, held in Las Vegas in February. Of the company’s more than 12,000 agents and financial service professionals nationwide, Mr. Smith was one of only 400 who received this recognition. The meeting provided these leading professionals with the opportunity to learn about new solutions to clients’ protection, wealth accumulation, and retirement and estate planning needs, as well as to share best practices with other top producers. Congratulations to Mr. Smith.

USPS is Deferring All Activities in Louisiana Until 2016
Including Consolidation of the New Orleans Processing & Distribution Center

Washington, DC – The United States Postal Service (USPS) has decided to defer plant consolidations in Louisiana that were scheduled to take place this summer. In a letter sent to Postmaster General Megan Brennan earlier this month, Rep. Richmond (LA-02) expressed his disappointment in the United States Postal Service (USPS) for their failure to provide clear and coherent data justifying the decision to consolidate processing activities at the New Orleans Processing and Distribution Center to the Baton Rouge facility. A move that would have eliminated hundreds of jobs and stagnated mail service in New Orleans: “I am pleased with USPS’s decision to defer consolidations in Louisiana,” said Rep. Richmond. “Consolidating the New Orleans Processing Center hurts small business, delays service to households, and would put hundreds of hard working people out of work. At no point did USPS provide any credible justification for making this move and their decision to defer proves that to be the case.” “I will continue to hold USPS accountable until we find a permanent solution that both protects jobs and provides the most efficient service to households and businesses throughout the 2nd District.”

DIBIA Dream to Host Annual Essence of Sports Clinic

New Orleans, LA – DIBIA Dream will host its annual Essence of Sports Clinic from 9 a.m.-12:00 p.m., June 29, 2015 – July 2, 2015 at Isidore Newman High School. The clinic is designed for girls and boys of all skill levels, ages 7-16. The Clinic is FREE of cost.

The Dream Essence of Sports Clinic is the perfect blend of sports, educational development, life skills emphasis, and physical fitness. Attendees will be inspired to pursue their DREAMS as they leave with a renewed confidence to excel academically, socially, and athletically. Dream Essence of Sports Clinic includes: Educational and Life Skills Interactive Workshops; Innovative and Intense Basketball Drills; STEM projects facilitated by STEM NOLA; Special Celebrity Guest Speakers; and an Exclusive Dream t-shirt. Hydration will be provided. Brandon Okpalobi, New Orleans native, founder of Dream and former St. Augustine basketball player, will facilitate the clinic’s innovative athletic activities, along with other skilled coaches and former St. Augustine players.

For more information, contact Brandon Okpalobi at (786) 543-8826 or brandon@dibi-adream.org

Lionel “Beaver” Smith

Data News Weekly is Hiring

Editor/Reporters

About the Job
Journalists — tired of reading of layoffs, closings, the dire straights of the profession? Recent college graduates — think your job prospects are bleak? Not with us! At Data News Weekly, we are expanding! This includes starting a print newspaper/digital endeavor in one of the most dynamic and exciting cities, New Orleans.

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If interested, send your resume, cover letter and at least three clips of your work to Terry Jones Publisher, Data News Weekly, 3501 Napoleon Ave, New Orleans, LA 70125, or via email to terrybjones@bellsouth.net or call (504) 821-7421.

Sales Manager/Retail Ad Manager

About the Job
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- Team player and leader
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- Strong motivational skills
- Recruiting talent

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If you are interested in a rewarding career, email a cover letter and resume to terrybjones@bellsouth.net or mail to: Data News Weekly, c/o Terry Jones, Publisher, 3501 Napoleon Avenue, New Orleans LA 70125.
DETROIT (NNPA) – Denise Rolark Barnes, publisher of the Washington Informer, has been elected chair of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, a federation of more than 200 African American newspapers.

Rolark Barnes, succeeds Cloves C. Campbell, Jr., publisher of the Arizona Informant, who served two, 2-year terms. After graduating from Howard University with a degree in communications, Rolark Barnes enrolled in the Howard University School of Law. She served as editor of The Barrister, the law university’s student newspaper, before graduating in 1979. She is a second-generation publisher, following in the footsteps of her late father, Dr. Calvin W. Rolark.

“I am honored and proud to represent the NNPA as chairman of this historic and impactful organization,” Rolark Barnes said. “Since 1827, the Black Press has listened to and spoken for the African American community. The future looks bright for the team of publishers elected during our 75th anniversary convention in Detroit, Michigan; three of the new officers happen to be second-generation newspaper publishers. We are committed to fulfill the promises we made to our nearly 200 fellow publishers and we will work hard to propel the Black Press into dynamic 21st century media companies.”

Also elected were:
- First Vice Chair: Karen Carter Richards, publisher of the Houston Forward Times
- Second Chair: Francis Page, Jr., publisher of Houston Style
- Treasurer: Janis Ware, publisher, Atlanta Voice
- Secretary: Shannon Williams, publisher, Indianapolis Recorder

Elected as directors-at-large were Bernal Smith, publisher of the Tri-State Defender, and Larry Smith, publisher of The Community Times.
By LMG Calla Victoria

One of the members Master Gardeners of Greater New Orleans (MGGNO), Faun Fenderson, invited the membership out to tour her lovely garden in the historic Marigny section of New Orleans. This amazing garden is dense with flora and fauna, several rose bushes, citrus and other fruit trees, veggies, tropicales, succulents, and evergreen shrubs. I think that’s what impressed me most about this lush garden is the fact that most of the plant material in the entire garden is in various sized containers, and a few raised beds; as the entire floor of the garden is concrete. The containers are so tightly packed and the foliage so abundant that you really have to look to find the containers. Had we not been told that it was mostly a container garden prior to the visit, I don’t think that most would have realized the plants were in containers.

The garden is laid out like a backwards “L.” As you enter the wooden gate to the back garden, to the left is a massive LSU Purple Fig Tree (Ficus carica) creating a wonderful focal point for that part of the garden, and behind that a huge avocado tree. Because of all of the tall trees, much of the garden is in the shade and yet it is full of color, texture, and citrus trees and egg plants laden with fruit.

From the entrance gate, straight forward is the long straight pathway flanked on both sides with lavish plant material. And because of the way the foliage leans out into the path you have swerves as you walk through, thus creating the illusion of being on a winding pathway even though the walkway is straight as an arrow. Seating throughout the garden provides several places to pause and meditate in this tranquil oasis.

See all of the images on my website at www.thegardeningdiva.com. Also check out my “Gardening Tip of the Week.”

Remember, never get too busy to stop and enjoy the beautiful flowers!
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