Voters Look for Change in 2015 Elections Run Off

John Bel Edwards
Troy Carter
John Bagneris

Newsmaker
Our Picks for the Polls

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By Eric Craig
Data News Weekly Contributor

This weekend Louisiana voters will return to the polls in what political observers say could be a referendum on Gov. Bobby Jindal’s eight years in office. While Jindal recently dropped out of the 2016 presidential race, U.S. Sen. David Vitter is hoping to maintain republican dominance in Baton Rouge. Vitter was able to narrow down his competition within the Republican primary by narrowly defeating other republicans Scott A. Angelle and Jay Dardenne. But in defying conventional wisdom he has failed to enter the runoff as the clear frontrunner against the lone Democrat, State Rep. John Bel Edwards ahead of this weekend’s runoff elections on Nov. 21. Edwards, who received roughly 40 percent of the vote during the primaries, was endorsed, by his former Republican opponent in the primary Lt. Gov Jay Dardenne on Nov. 5. Sen. Vitter came in second in the primaries with 23 percent of the vote, and has support from Louisiana House Republi-
“Edwards is conservative on some issues and moderate on other issues,” said Silas Lee, who also is a professor of public policy at Xavier University of Louisiana. “He would be able to build coalitions better that David Vitter. Vitter is not easy to work with and doesn’t have a track record of building coalitions,” Lee said.

The projections may confuse national pundits who consider Louisiana to be a solid red state. As local veteran pollster Silas Lee explained, it is also important to note that Louisiana has more registered democrats than republicans.

“There are lots of democrats that support republican candidates. But it depends on who is running. If Edwards wins, we cannot assume a state is tied to a particular party. It depends on several factors. We have to be aware that politics is something that is always linear,” he said.

The governor’s runoff may be the central focus of attention but this weekend voters will decide in other key races statewide and locally. Baton Rouge mayor Melvin “Kip” Holden and former Plaquemines Parish President Billy Nungesser are competing for Lieutenant Governor. While Attorney General James “Buddy” Caldwell will seek to hold onto his office in the runoff for Attorney General against a fellow republican U.S. Rep. Jeff Landry of Louisiana’s third congressional district. Former City Councilman Troy Carter and state Rep. Jeff Arnold will face off in this weekend, the winner of which will represent the Senate’s 7th District in the legislature. Carter appears to be the consensus candidate from a variety of supporting groups, with support coming from Mayor Landrieu and others who are actively supporting his candidacy. Data news Weekly has endorsed Troy Carter as well.

**What’s at Stake**

Many experts see Vitter’s image as damaged, particularly by Edwards’ campaign’s emphasis on Vitter as being plagued by scandals and by describing Vitter as being “Jindal on steroids.” In Edwards’ most recent ad, the candidate notes “David Vitter chose prostitutes over patriots.”

Both Vitter and Edwards agree on many issues such as pro-life legislation and protection of second amendment rights and opposition of same-sex marriages. However, the primary distinctions between the two came down to policy. On healthcare, both candidates have stark differences. Vitter does not want to expand Medicaid, but would rather find a state-specific plan. Edwards supports adding to the Medicaid budget, using federal dollars to provide healthcare to thousands of Louisiana workers.

Economic development remains one of the main deciding factors for voters this election season and the candidates have different plans to move the state forward, said Russell Frazier, an assistant professor of political science at Xavier University of Louisiana. “We need a governor that understands the dynamics of economic development. There are so many programs that you can incorporate with adequate resources,” he added. Frazier believes that a strong tax base will help enhance the state’s economic diversity and could strengthen investments in education.

**A Conservative Democrat**

John Bel Edwards a native from Amite, La., graduated with honors from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1988. He served eight years in the US Army 82 division airborne rangers. Later, Edwards graduated with a Law Degree from Louisiana State University in 1999. He began his political career in 2008 and currently Edwards serves as chairman of the Louisiana House Democratic Caucus and is in the Louisiana House Minority Leader. Political experts say Edwards has run his campaign as a conservative democrat. Edwards does not oppose Common Core Standards, one of the staple issues of the 2015 elections, but does believe the policies need to be heavily advised by educators. Edwards also supports state-specific Medicare expansion, something Jindal refused to do during his time in office.
Thank you Bobby Jindal!! It has been really hard for a Democrat to become governor in what is considered a red state. However after eight years with Bobby and of course David Vitter carries his own baggage and a lot of it. I truly believe that John Bel Edwards has a really good shot at winning. Edwards seems to understand the overall problem that is destroying not only Louisiana but the United States of America as well. And that is the absence of “we the people”. The Republicans and Democrats’ battle of egos in my opinion destroyed our country and the only way we can get out of this mess is to go back to basics. Our leaders should remember that they are here to serve the people and not to mislead the people. Mr. Edwards appears to understand that it takes a village and only together we can make a change.

The election on Saturday can be historic but it is necessary for us all to do our part. We have some strong candidates not only John Bel Edwards but Troy Carter running for State Senator, District 100, he has been a community activist. He has served as Legislative Aide to former State Representative Louis Charbonnet, II. I have personally known John for a very long time and know that he is committed to the welfare of our City. I know that every election we talk about the importance of voting. However, this Saturday let’s not just participate in the voting process. But how much pain we’ve felt over the last eight years by allowing Bobby Jindal to become governor twice because of a low Black voter turn-out; I guarantee you that we will have the same hell if not worse with David Vitter. That by itself should be motivation enough!!! Go Vote!!!

Troy Carter

John Bel Edwards

John Bagneris

Our Right to Vote

Data’s Endorsements

John Bel Edwards

Troy Carter

John Bagneris

Our Right to Vote

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Troy Carter
The performance by the Dance Theater of Harlem at Dillard University on November 20 in the Cook Theater on campus is sold out.

The event is part of Brain Food, the Presidential Lecture Series at Dillard that provides an eclectic array of lecturers and other guests. Lectures are a way to stimulate the intellectual discourse on the campus. These noted scholars, authors, politicians and public intellectuals expose not only the campus community to their ideas and concepts, but also the broader community in which Dillard resides. The lectures are of interest to parents, high school and college teachers, lawmakers, clergy, activists, and anyone interested in understanding contemporary issues.

Last year, American Ballet Theater soloist and author, Misty Copeland spoke to a standing-room-only audience in Lawless Memorial Chapel. This year’s lecturers have included Michael J. Morton, who spoke during National Hazing Prevention Week about his experience of being convicted of hazing offering solid advice to students who participate in fraternities and sororities. Recently, during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Karrine Steffans shared her experience in a “Violence as a Language” lecture to a full audience in Georges auditorium on Dillard’s campus.

Upcoming lecture:
The Revisus O. Oritque Jr. Lecture on Law and Society
November 23
Bryan Stevenson
Winterizing Your Plants

By LMG Calla Victoria
Data News Weekly Columnist

If you haven’t already done so, now is the time to come up with a game plan to protect your more tender plant material, which will not survive the winter in your hardiness zone. Greenhouses make over-wintering your plants a quite easy chore. Some greenhouses are quite large and expensive costing thousands of dollars, but you can find small mini greenhouses that are quite affordable, around $100 which consists of some vertical shelving and a plastic zip cover. If you are in the market for a greenhouse, please make sure that whatever you choose it has some hinged windows in the roof to let out some of the hot air. Although cold outside, on a cold bright sunny day, with the sun beaming down on that glass or plastic it is going to make it quite warm in the greenhouse; so you must to have a way to release some of that heat, or your plants can get burned. If you are fortunate enough to have a greenhouse, just pack you green-house with plants and all is well. But for everyone else, we have to get cracking.

I have heard many suggestions and tried a lot of way to protect my plants. The fact is you can use any old blanket or plastic tarps to cover your plants on cold nights. However once the sun comes out you are supposed to uncover the plants so that they get some sun. Or if you use plastic to cover the plants, you want to remove the plastic during the day so that the plants do not burn up under the plastic. This all gets to be quite arduous and annoying after a while, so you finally give up and say whatever! Please don’t go away frustrated because there is an easier way. The most effective way that I have found to cover plants is by using “row cloth,” sometimes referred to as strawberry cloth because it is what strawberry farmers use to cover their crops. What makes this cloth my best choice is because not only does it protect plants from frigid temperatures as all covers do, but it also lets light as well as moisture through to nourish your plants. Most other covers only provide warmth for the plant but do not allow the sun in, which plants need for photosynthesis; or water that plants need for nourishment. Therefore when you uncover your plants after the threat of a freeze is gone, the plants look pale and sickly and it takes a while for them to look healthy again. But with the row cloths, the plants are protected yet still get all of the light and nourishment they need. Therefore once you cover your plants with row cloth, they can stay covered throughout the entire winter, even if you get a few warm days. Whatever you choose to use to protect your plants:

a. Make sure that you create some kind of teepee effect so the cloth covering your plants does not touch the plant’s foliage.

b. Make sure the cover goes all the way to the ground. You can even put a few boards or bricks on the edges of the cloth so that it does not lift up and let cold air in under the cover.

For your other trees and shrubs that can withstand the cold weather, apply an extra layer of mulch to insulate their root systems. Also, before a freeze give your garden (except for succulents) a good drink of water. I know this sounds crazy but the soil will trap the heat better wet than when it is dry, and evaporate slowly which warms the air around the plants.

Finally bring in your potted plants and put them indoors, in a garage, or somewhere where they will be protected. Many plants like plumeria go dormant during the winter, so just put them in a corner somewhere and leave them until the spring. Plumerias are the trees whose blooms are used to make Hawaiian leis, so they are very tropical. If your plumeria is large and planted in the ground you can do one of two things. You can dig up the plant and take it inside, or you can use pipe insulation to cover the trunk of your plant and the branches, then use row covers to protect the foliage. At the New Orleans Botanical Garden in New Orleans, they dig up all of their plumerias and stand them upright in a corner of the greenhouse and leave them until spring. I hope this information has been helpful, and now you have some choices to make, but don’t take too long thinking about it.

Check out my “Gardening Tip of the Week” and the full article at www.thegardendiva.com

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

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

Holiday Time = Movie Time

By Data Chatta

Blockbusters and long awaited releases are coming soon!

It’s almost that time of year. Black Friday, Christmas trees, boxes, packages, ribbons and bows, and oh of course, Movies! Holiday time is when some of the year’s most celebrated and long awaited movies hit the big screens. For fans, old and young, the holiday movie time is the best part of the year. Here are just some of the features coming soon to a theater near you.

Star Wars VII The Force Awakens
Thirty years after defeating the Galactic Empire, Han Solo (Harrison Ford) and his allies face a new threat from the evil Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) and his army of Stormtroopers. YES! This movie brings back our old favorites, OG Han Solo, OG Luke Skywalker, OG Princess Leah and let’s not forget OG Chewbaka! While we won’t be seeing OG Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams), we will be introduced to a new ‘Intergalactic Brotha’ John Boyega who will play Finn. We don’t know yet exactly who Finn is, but the dude wields a light saber so he can’t be too shabby. Go see this one, and may the force still be with you.

In Movie Theaters: Friday, December 18, 2015

Sisters
If you love Tina Fey and Amy Poehler and that SNL type of comedy, then you are going to love this one. Sisters, follows two disconnected sisters summoned home to clean out their childhood bedroom before their parents sell the family house. Looking to recapture their glory days, they throw one final high-school-style party for their classmates, which turns into the cathartic

Movies/Continued on page 9.

Please VOTE — John Bel Edwards #5
Election Day, Saturday, November 21, 2015

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Reflections from Paris
Triumph over Terror

By Edwin Buggage
Editor, Data News Weekly

I must admit that while in my career as a journalist I have written thousands of articles, this is one that is extremely tough. My mind is in an utter state of confusion and uncertainty. After living through and covering our City post-Katrina I thought I’d seen it all. But coming to Paris, I never expected to live in a city that would become the site of a major terror attack.

When I think of Paris, I must say, it is an amazing city that people from around the world come to visit. I am happy that I have been fortunate enough for the last few months to call it home. In my time here I have come to love it for it reminds me so much of New Orleans with its architecture, history and way of life that is akin to my native City. But on the night of Friday November 13th a reign of terror took place which has changed my perspective and many others of the city that for now I call home. Six different attacks took place that left 129 people dead and hundreds more injured. This being the worse killing in Paris since World War II, but most of all it left a great world city and its people in a state of uncertainty of what is to come. The night of the attacks I found myself receiving numerous phone calls from friends and family in a panic checking to see if I was okay. I also spoke to Trombone Shorty who was scheduled to perform in Paris the following Monday. I was looking forward to seeing him for a slice of home away from home as I did when Jason Marsalis came to town. As I sat there looking at the horrific images on television and taking calls I could not help but look back to the chaos and uncertainty of the days following Hurricane Katrina. And admittedly, I began to feel a bit of fear and anxiety about what was happening in Paris. I remember walking on to the street the next day and expectedly the usual joie de vivre that is a part of the French way of life, like people walking, smiling and sitting outside at restaurants was not present. It seemed a dark cloud hung over the people and rightfully so. The city as well as the entire country is now under a state of emergency. The streets, where life is lived in Paris, where a relaxed vibe is usually the case, now feels tense as the presence of the police and military personnel are all over the city.

Since this has happened, I have talked to both French people and expats like myself and found myself tearing up listening to horrific stories of some who were near the shooting that night or just listening to people who are sincerely scared because they do not know what tomorrow is going to bring. It is really a sad and confusing time for many people in France, myself included.

To Be Equal

The Higher Education Act
50 Years of Making College Achievable

Marc Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

There is good news coming from the halls and classrooms of our nation’s high schools.

High school graduation rates are on the rise, which means the dropout rate has fallen and continues to fall. For the first time since states began uniformly calculating graduation rates in 2008, the nation’s overall graduation rate reached a high of 81 percent for the 2012-2013 school year. While deep achievement gaps remain the norm, preliminary data from the Department of Education for the 2013-2014 school year also reveals a narrowing of the graduation gap between white students and students from low-income families, students of color, students with disabilities and English language learners. As we usher greater numbers of high school graduates into the workforce, are we prepared to ensure that—for those who want it, but cannot afford it—their journey in education does not end on a high school graduation stage?

Today’s technology-fueled, fast-paced, global economy was not our nation’s reality when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Higher Education Act of 1965 into law half a century ago, but even then, Johnson had the foresight to recognize the value of a post-secondary education, understanding that our nation would ultimately, “reap the rewards of their wiser citizenship and their greater productivity for decades to come.” In its 50 years of existence, the HEA has offered financial aid, grants, federally guaranteed loans and work opportunities to millions of high school graduates. It has opened the once closed doors to higher education to low-income families, making college affordable for millions of families who could not afford the necessity.

“This act means the path of knowledge is open to all that have the determination to walk it. It means a way to deeper personal fulfillment, greater personal productivity, and increased personal reward...It means that a high school senior anywhere in this great land of ours can apply to any college or any university in any of the 50 States and not be turned away because his family is poor...So to thousands of young people education will be available. And it is a truism that education is no longer a luxury. Education in this day and age is a necessity.”

– President Lyndon B. Johnson, Remarks on Signing the Higher Education Act of 1965, November 8, 1965

To continue reading, please visit www.ladatanews.com and see page 10.
ing his terms as governor. Edwards also notes that he believes in equal pay for women.

“Edwards is conservative on some issues and moderate on other issues,” said Silas Lee, who also is a professor of public policy at Xavier University of Louisiana. “He would be able to build coalitions better that David Vitter. Vitter is not easy to work with and doesn’t have a track record of building coalitions,” Lee said.

In retrospect, Edwards can reverse a lot of what Jindal has done in his term. “Jindal changed the mindset of governing,” Lee said. “Where he didn’t believe in a progressive agenda and was tied more to an ideology that led to actions [that were not] in the interest of the state,” he added. He explained that Jindal’s approach to governing lacked inclusion or balance.

“We are the last, if not, the second to last, [in the nation] in quality of life in education, healthcare, and infrastructure to name a few,” Lee said. “Jindal could have done more to advance the people, but he refused to do so, holding on to his political ideology,” he added.

The lack of investment during Jindal’s terms, across a range of issues in the state, continues to weigh heavily on voters minds. Charlotte Klasson, a resident of Louisiana for 11 years said she is worried about quality of life issues and how the candidates will address these during this election. “When you’re looking at a state that is ranking low in a lot categories in quality of life like health-care and higher education, there is a lot at stake to trying to improve its standing,” she said. “The fact that the Jindal administration did not do the Medicare expansion, which would have helped a lot, is a large problem that needs to be rectified,” she said.

Klasson said she felt that another Republican as governor would be an extension of the Jindal years. “We cannot have someone like David Vitter to help Louisiana to advance. He is just not going to advance it in ways that Edwards can,” she said.

Residents in the city say the state is in need of charting a new course and addressing some of the fiscal issues that have restricted growth and development. R. L. Sanchez, a resident of New Orleans for 57 years said he hopes that things turnaround in the state after the runoff. “Just getting a new direction for the state itself economically and for the lack of what’s going on for the last four years with Bobby Jindal trying to become president. We need to see some type of positive change one way or the other,” Sanchez said.

At the same time, Sanchez said he wonders how much impact either candidate can actually have on turning the state around. “I’m not sure if either candidate could do a good job,” he said. Sanchez said that he would prefer to see Edwards in office.

Voter Apathy

Across the metro area heading into this week’s runoff, residents said they were concerned about turnout in the city, a democratic stronghold.

Klasson noted the low-eligible voter turnout of Louisiana was roughly 38 percent last month. “It is imperative that women and communities of color that rely on education and healthcare standards turn out to vote. It matters for the people who care about the quality of life,” she said.

Frazier also agrees that voting is an important civic engagement exercise that is too often ignored in the city. “We live in a democracy, thus it is our civic duty to vote. If you care about maintaining our democracy, you should care about political participation,” he said.

Lee noted that it is important to vote as in any other election. He notes that the questions voters should be asking is “Would you want the candidate to control your destiny even though you have the power to make your own decision?” he said. “That’s what happens when you don’t vote. You might let someone who does not have your best interest in mind determine your destiny,” he added.

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**Chi-Raq**

Chi-Raq is a Spike Lee Joint written by Lee and Kevin Willmott. Set in Chicago, the film is a controversial look at the subject of gang violence prevalent in some neighborhoods on Chicago’s South and West Sides, which is where the movie gets its title, Chi-Raq. A mixture between Chicago and Iraq. The controversy is big on this one, between Brotha Spike and many Chicagans who think it is no small thing that Lee, a New Yorker, came in and mashed off the name used only by Gang Bangers. They don’t take to kindly to him painting their whole town with that name, but hey, he calls ‘em like he sees ‘em. We have to see what he came up with before we judge. The movie is satire, and should be good. We love Spike for his work on behalf of the NOLA with “When the Levees Broke”, so we will have to go see how he handles tragedy in the ‘Windy City’. We hope he’s as good to those brothas and sistas up there as he was here. The film btw, is based on Lysistrata, a Greek comedy by Aristophanes, but of course, we knew that, Right?

In Movie Theaters: Friday, December 18, 2015

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**Buggage Commentary**, Continued from page 8.

But what I realize is that to live in fear is like being dead, this is what I find myself talking to my friends about over here in Paris who are fearful about what happened on that horrendous night. I tell them stories of the resilience of the people of New Orleans; people, some who lost everything and came back to rebuild their lives and kept on living. That to be afraid is a real feeling of course, but do not stop living your life.

Today, several days later, people are still on high alert and this seems like this is what life in Paris is going to be like for quite some time since France President Francois Hollande called the attacks an act of war. And while the world prays for France, I ask in those prayers that you pray for peace not just in Paris but all over the world. Pray that people can find a way to co-exist and live in a world where intolerance can be replaced with bridges of understanding and the realization that our common humanity is real and that we need each other to survive.

Edwin Buggage, Editor of Data News Weekly is currently a Fellow at the American University of Paris to complete a Master’s Program in Global Communications.
A Bad Mouth Used to Speak the Word of God

By Alexia Pierre  
Data News Weekly Columnist

Darryl Manning’s main focus behind his music is to attract those he can relate to because of his past. Manning, better known as Favor, is a street veteran, who was “doing everything that the enemy had me doing.” The 34-year-old said he had a “bad mouth” that used to get him in a lot of trouble. After Katrina, while temporarily residing in Houston, Texas, his “bad mouth” got him into a life-altering situation. Favor said he had met his match and came across someone with a “bad mouth,” as well. He wasn’t able to talk himself out of what would happen next. “I was staring down the barrel of two guns.” However, the triggers weren’t pulled. “[God] had something great for him and as well, had something great in store for me,” Manning said.

“This was an eye opener for the seventh ward native. As he got older, he began to question how many near chances at death he would narrowly escape. He questioned whether he was the man that he wanted his nieces and nephews to look up to. “I had to get that word in me and get that old me out and get that new me in so the Lord could do something with it,” he said. Manning became a Christian Rapper in 2010. He juggles his time in the studio with a full time job as a maintenance supervisor at St. Joseph Apartments, an elderly community. He has been married for five years and has three kids. Manning said he enjoys blessing God’s people with the word. “Some folks just feel like well if I don’t get it from the pastor, I won’t get it at all,” Manning said. He believes most people will relate to somebody that looks and sounds like them. His mission is to “go back to the same hoods and show them that there is a way out that Jesus is the way.”

“I believe folks would receive it more because they could see somebody that was in the same situation,” he said. Manning said churches should have an open mind and stop complaining about kids on the streets abusing and selling drugs. Instead, he wants less talk from churchgoers and more compassionate action. He cares less about whether a teen’s pants are sagging low. His desire is to uplift their spirits, not their apparel. “In-vite the folks that’s going to be able to catch them and win them over in order to be saved,” Manning said. “Spread the gospel, not the gossip.”

Manning believes gospel rap is a tool that Christians should use to attract youth. His message to the youth is to not be a follower, but to love Christ, and trust in God’s hand. In his song “Mind of a Winner,” Manning says, “You want a victory, then get yourself out and take control of your life and your happiness. Be a Matador.”

Manning believes most people still do not understand how investments grow and a clear vision of their future.

You may be a Matador if...

• You’ve outsourced your finances and future happiness to someone else.
• You have little understanding of how your investments actually earn.
• Even after being burned, you’ve made few or no changes to improve your financial situation.
• You’ve settled for Wall Street’s risk and the banks’ low rates.
• I meet with people every week who have no clear plan for how to achieve their financial goals. They use hope as a strategy instead of knowledge and understanding.
• I meet people every week who have settled for what the banks will pay them instead of demanding more. I meet people every week who have the majority of their money on Wall Street with 100 percent risk exposure and no clue how their money will grow, except by luck or past performance.
• I also meet people who want more and these are the people who become my clients. They are people who are willing to dig in to learn and understand so they can dominate the money game.
• You may be a Matador if...
• You refuse to settle and accept the banks’ low interest rates.
• You’re against the Wall Street plan – put up 100 percent of the money, take on 100 percent of the risk and give brokers 23 to 64 percent of the earnings.
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• You use contracts to grow your money instead of speculation and hope.
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Become the Matador! You want a detailed understanding of the rules, an easy to follow plan, a contract on how your money will grow and a clear vision of your future.

You want control and predictability and don’t want to have to babysit your money or the money manager.

Knowledge is the greatest tool we have at our disposal. I work with nearly 500 families a year and I consistently hear stories of losing money, little to no understanding of how investments grow and no clue what they are paying in fees for inferior results.

If you can’t understand your investments and see exactly how your money will grow, walk away. Seek first to understand your investment and then seek the gains. Otherwise, you end up settling for the gains or losses and seeking to understand what went wrong with your plan.

I recently had a doctor tell me that the financial plan I laid out for him and his wife was the first plan he could fully understand. He could do the math himself and see how his money would grow.

He and his wife were informed in writing of the fees involved in his plan and best of all, he could see that he would not have to babysit their investment. This allowed him to focus on what he does best, care for patients.

Decide today to be wealthy. Don’t settle. Don’t outsource your future and your happiness. Be a Matador and take control of your life and money. There are many door mats out there, but you don’t have to be one of them.

Stephen Gardner is author of “A Bridge Over Troubled Wall Street: How To Avoid Wall Street and Beat the Banks.” As owner and founder of the SoBe Millionaire Club at YourBridgePlan.com, he helps families get safer returns on their retirement funds, independent of Wall Street’s risks.
Hundreds Celebrate as Nation's African American Museum Nears Completion

By Savannah Harris

(NNPA Newswire) WASHINGTON, DC — Hundreds of people gathered at an inaugural event for the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture Monday night here to celebrate the completion of the museum’s exterior in a year that marks three significant moments in American history.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War and the ratification of the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery, as well as the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act—events that greatly shifted the trajectory of African Americans.

The museum’s founding director, Lonnie Bunch, launched the night of celebration, which included music, a dramatic visual arts display, remembrances and congratulations.

“Tonight we commemorate the meaning of freedom, a term that was never abstract to African Americans,” Bunch said.

African Americans’ triumphs through centuries of harsh discrimination were honored and remembered during the celebration, including the premiere of a seven-minute projection depicting over 150 years of African American progress, from Harriet Tubman to the Black Lives Matter movement.

The visual piece, “Commemorate and Celebrate Freedom” by filmmaker Stanley Nelson, bounced 3D images of the nation’s Black heroes—Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, the Rev. Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X—off the New Orleans-inspired ironwork exterior, tipping a hat to Black craftsmen of another time.

The projection ran on Tuesday (November 17) and Wednesday (November 18) evening from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

“This building is homage to the past and my future,” he said.

African Americans, citing cultural contributions like composer, pianist and band leader Duke Ellington, singer and composer Marvin Gaye and actress and singer Pearl Bailey, all of whom were born and raised in the nation’s capital.

Washington Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton called the building a “crucible of African Americans, but for the nation’s capital.”

Radio personality Joe Madison said “This is not just a museum for African Americans, but for the world.”

“From Harriet Tubman’s hymnal, a lace shawl given to her by Queen Victoria and family photographs of her funeral; a Jim Crow railroad car, Chuck Berry’s red Cadillac convertible, remnants from a slave ship found off the coast of South Africa, works of celebrated Black artists and a Tuskegee Airman training plan, a slave cabin, Emmett Till’s casket and Muhammad Ali’s protective boxing gear.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser linked the history of Black Washingtonians to the history of African Americans, citing cultural contributors like composer, pianist and band leader Duke Ellington, singer and composer Marvin Gaye and actress and singer Pearl Bailey, all of whom were born and raised in the nation’s capital.

Washington Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton called the District of Columbia, “a crucible of African American history.”

After a reading of Margaret Walker’s “For My People,” scored by Darin Atwater and performed by the Soulful Symphony, gospel singer BeBe Winans sang “America” and “Stand” alongside the symphony and a gospel choir.

Winans said seeing the exterior of the museum was a special moment for him.

“As I stood in front, I felt like I was standing in the middle of my past and my future,” he said.

Longtime activist and national radio personality Joe Madison said the museum has significance far beyond Washington.

“The message is very clear,” he said. “This is not just a museum for African Americans, but for the world, and we are part of the world.”

Lonnie Bunch, the founding director of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History and Culture welcomes guests to the museum’s special ceremony outside of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History & Culture Monday night here to celebrate the completion of the museum’s exterior in a year that marks three significant moments in American history.

By Savannah Harris

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