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Xavier University Inaugurates Sixth President



The official investiture for Xavier University’s new president C. Reynold Verret will take place on Friday, Feb. 26 at 10 a.m. at Xavier University’s Convocation Center.

By Tiauni Julien
Data News Weekly Contributor

Xavier University of Louisiana officially inaugurated its sixth president with a week of investiture activities that reflected the university’s traditions as a Catholic and Historically Black University. Presi-

dent C. Reynold Verret took over after Dr. Norman C. Francis lead the university for 47 years. Francis retired in May 2015 after setting a record as the longest serving president of a university in the United States. Verret, who holds a Ph.D. in Biochemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, last served as the Provost and Chief Academic Officer

at Savannah State University, another Historically Black University in, Savannah, Georgia. The official investiture for Verret takes place on Friday, Feb. 26 at 10 a.m. at Xavier University’s Convocation Center. The ceremony will be followed by an investiture luncheon at the University Center ballroom. The university cancelled its Black His-

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Dr. C. Reynold Verret takes time to visit with two Xavier students during the Students First Inaugural Event on Mon., Feb. 22.



Dr. C. Reynold Verret will be officially inaugurated Xavier University of Louisiana's sixth President with a week of investiture activities that reflected the university's traditions as a Catholic and Historically Black University.

tory Month convocation on Tues. Feb. 23 given city-wide closings because of bad weather. However, the event, titled Haitian Art and Culture, would have paid homage to Verret, who is Haitian-American. The university will carry a Haitian Art Exhibit until May in its Administration building to showcase the Haitian Revolution, through the paintings of Haitian Artist Ulrick Jean-Pierre.

"The exhibition revolution is an appropriate tribute to the inauguration of our new President Dr. Verret," said Dr. Sarah Clunis, Director of African-American and Diaspora Studies at Xavier and an Assistant Professor of Art History, who organized the exhibit. "Being that he is of Haitian descent and a successful scholar and scientist, images of Haitian heroes and the history of Haiti in general, that the cult of New

Orleans is so greatly influenced by, makes it a very appropriate exhibition."

Verret has made his time at Xavier a student-centered one. At a Students First Inaugural Event on Mon., Feb. 22, he casually greeted students with hugs, selfies and a listening air as he sought to take the university into the next phase of its growth. While Verret has an emphasis in the sciences, of which Xavier continues to send more African-American students to medical school of any university in the country, he opens to also grow other areas of the university's liberal arts core. Both alumni and the wider community will return to the City to participate in Verret's inauguration activities. The United Negro College Fund marked the university's leadership at its alumni event held at the Hyatt Regency on Fri. Feb. 19.



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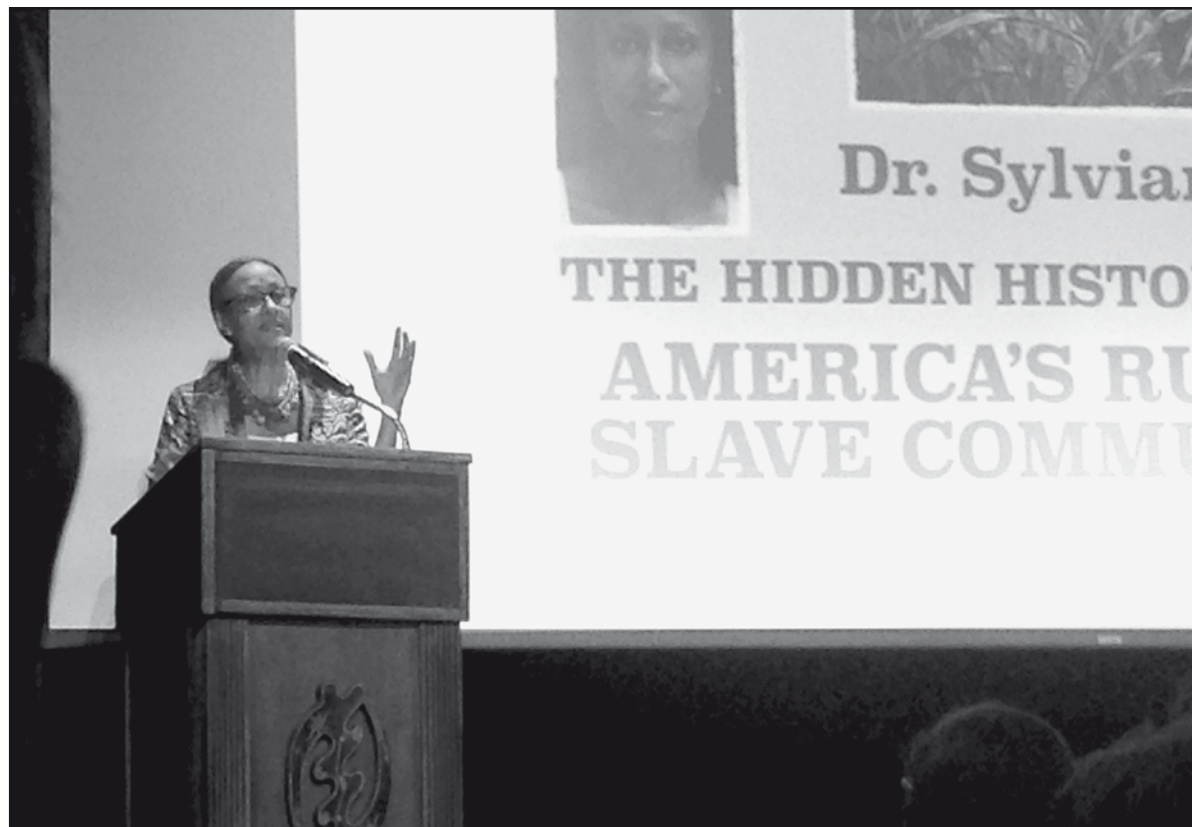
History of Maroons Reveals Black Resistance Strong from the Beginning of Slavery

Story and Photos
by **Mizani Ball**
Data News Weekly
Contributor

The lit stage lured a captivated audience who came to hear a piece of American history unveiled. Internationally acclaimed Historian and Author Sylviane Diouf read from her most recent book "Slavery Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons," as part of the Black History Month series of public lectures held at the Ashe Power House Theater, at 1731 Baronne St., on Feb. 22, at 6 pm.

Diouf, a winner of the Rosa Parks Award, is the Director of the Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of the Transatlantic Slavery at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library. The Black History Month Public Lectures were put on by the Amistad Research Center, the Xavier University and Tulane University Latin American studies partnership, Tulane University's African and African Diaspora Studies, Tulane's History Department, Tulane's Newcomb College Institute, and the New Orleans Center for the Gulf Coast South.

Diouf spoke on the importance of resistance to slavery at the lecture. Her latest book "Slavery Exiles," uncovers the untold stories of American maroons. Maroons escaped slavery and developed their own new communities in hidden locations across the Caribbean and North America. Diouf said when she started her research there were many questions that spiraled in her mind about slave resistance and how successful and sustainable it was early on. Diouf said over the



course of her research, she discovered that there had not been many books written on maroons so she decided it was important that she wrote one to tell the story of agency by enslaved people.

"I looked at marronage from the beginning, which means I started with Africans and there was marronage as soon as they arrived," Diouf said, adding that this confirmed to her that enslaved people wanted to be free from the very beginning and risked even death to return to a life of freedom.

"There was this absolute rejection of enslavement. They were ready to take enormous risk, harsh environments and unknown land to get their freedom back," Diouf explained.



Not only did the maroons have to adjust to their new environment but they also had to conceal their hiding locations for years, Diouf said. Many of the maroons that had been in hiding buried themselves underground, and lived in caves,

she found. Maroons would live in secret for years at a time, and this distinguished them from runaway slaves. Being able to stay hidden was the most challenging part of being a maroon, which is why they connected with other maroons and

created small communities "right under the slave owner's nose," Diouf told the audience.

Maroon communities emerged to become places of exchange, peace and communications, Diouf told the audience. Bound together by trust, maroons all worked together and shared rations. Having connections to slaves helped them sneak back onto plantations to get materials to ensure survival, she said.

Diouf found in her research that a group of maroons that lived in Louisiana would cut wood for a local slave owner and would receive money in return. This finding, Diouf said, suggested that some slave owners were willing to live alongside maroon communities here, at least in Louisiana. However, the mere presence of maroons would create harsh oppression and retaliation for slaves to deter them from the idea of running away.

This new form of life that maroons created for themselves was a rebellion to the harsh oppression for Blacks during slavery. The maroon's mindset to never give up even when faced with adversities is still the mindset many African-Americans hold to this day, Diouf said. This particular mindset has been the foundation of many movements from Civil Rights, to Women's Suffrage to the Black Lives Matter Movement today, she said. Although their stories had been forgotten for decades it is one of courage and resourcefulness for the hardships they endured and freedoms won, she said.

"I taste how it tastes to be free and I didn't look back," Diouf read from her novel on the joy maroons felt to be free again.

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Anthony Mackie to MC Warren Easton Jazz Celebration Concert March 4

Fundraiser will feature the Stooges and Hot 8 Brass Bands, Warren Easton Jazz Band and Tonya Boyd-Cannon of The Voice

Warren Easton Charter High School will host a concert fundraiser on Friday, March 4, 2016, at 7pm at the Warren Easton Charter High School Auditorium, 3019 Canal St., in celebration of the Jazz Band students' upcoming trip to Cuba.

The concert will be hosted by master of ceremonies Anthony Mackie, film star and Easton alum, with special guest and Easton alum Tonya Boyd-Cannon of The Voice. The event will feature performances by The Young Pinstripes Brass Band, The Original Pinettes Brass Band, Stooges Brass Band, Hot 8 Brass Band and other and special surprise guests.

Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door; doors open at 6:30pm and the event starts at 7pm. For more information go to <http://www.cubanola.org/warreneaston> or call (504) 324-7436 or email Re-

gina_Wilkins@opsb.us. Refreshments will be sold and you must be 21 years of age to enter.

The concert will raise funds for the Easton Jazz Band's participation in a three-year music and art cultural exchange with students from the Conservatorio Esteban Salas in Santiago de Cuba, underscoring the centuries-long link between the city and the small island nation.

The initiative will be in collaboration with the CubaNOLA Arts Collective, and will culminate with the city's Tricentennial celebration in 2018.

The Easton Jazz Band students will visit Cuba this May and in July 2017 for the Festival del Caribe. The Cuban students will visit New Orleans in April 2017 and during 2018 for the Tricentennial celebration.

"Santiago de Cuba is the New Orleans of Cuba with Carnival, second-line style Conga processions, and is the birthplace of many of Cuba's most important styles of music," said Easton Board President David Garland. "As we were looking ahead to our city's Tricentennial, here is a tremendously creative



Warren Easton Alum and actor Anthony Mackie will serve as Master of Ceremonies for the Warren Easton Jazz Celebration on March 4, 2016.

will participate in this first phase of a three-year initiative between the students and faculty at both schools. Both sets of students will learn about the other city and prepare collaborative music and art projects. Each set of faculty will select sheet music and recordings of traditional New Orleans and Cuban music to exchange with the other school. The teachers will also present weekly lessons plans on the history, culture, music and art of the other city to their students via live online sessions.

"Our music students have done an amazing job with traditional New Orleans jazz, and are so excited to expand their knowledge of how that music came to be," said Easton Band Direc-

tor Asia Muhaimin. "They have been studying and rehearsing and are prepared to exchange musical styles with their Cuban counterparts to see how the musical cultures influence each other. This initiative will bring together these young people to study the rich histories of each culture."

Warren Easton students will bring all of these experience together for performances, presentations and exhibits throughout 2018 commemorating the Tricentennial of the founding of New Orleans and celebrating the city's historical, cultural and musical legacies.

Partners and sponsors include CubaNOLA Arts Collective, Barry Kern of Kern Studios, The Trombone Shorty Foundation, Life is Good, WWOZ, Cembell Industries, N.O. Music Exchange, Parkway Bakery, and the Mid-City Neighborhood Organization.

The Warren Easton Jazz Band is currently raising money to cover additional expenses for the trip. For more information go to www.cubanola.org, www.wechs.org, www.facebook.com/warreneastoncharterhigh/, or call 504.324.7436.

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A Taste of Black History through New Orleans Cuisine

Story and photos by Eric Craig

Willie Mae Scotch House, Sassafras Restaurant and Loretta's Authentic Pralines. What do these restaurants have in common? They're all Black-owned.

On Saturday, Feb. 20, 2016, the Macy's department store in the Lakeside Shopping Center in Metairie, LA. celebrated Black History Month by inviting some of New Orleans' best Black-owned restaurants to share recipes. The chefs and owners presented in front of over 80 people on the third floor of the department store.

Macy's has a history of localizing its events for its customers and communities. Margaret Long, the Store Manager, said all of the participating restaurants represent Black History very well, offering both "good food and great leadership."

The owners said they welcomed the opportunity to share their family culinary history as part of Macy's series of Black history events in February.

"I appreciated the love, I saw that we have some of our regular customers, and maybe some new customers," said Kerry Stuart, owner of Willie Mae's Scotch House.

The chefs also said that their restaurants, both through their food and business operations, played an important role in Black history in New Orleans.

"We make Jambalaya and bread pudding. That's something traditional, especially in New Orleans," said Cory Duckworth, owner of Sassafras Restaurant. "We want them to have an idea about the type of cuisine we do here."

Loretta's pralines are a family tradition that has been passed down for generations, including to the current sons of Loretta Harrison, the owner.

"It was Black history month so we have to represent. My recipe comes from a Black family, and it's to be passed on by other Blacks so we are heirs to this," said Loretta Harrison, owner of Loretta's Authentic Pralines. "In Black History, when something belongs to you, you take advantage of that and pass it on to the next generation," she added.



Macy's Store Manager Margaret Long and Macy's Stylist Lois Hazeur pose with one of Loretta's Authentic Pralines.



Loretta Harrison sets pralines on a mat during her demonstration.



Loretta Harrison sets with extreme precision



Loretta Harrison thanks her demonstration helper Yolanda Keeler, who was asked to help Loretta minutes before the presentation.



Tracy Dundas, a Macy's Fashion Specialist, curated the Black History event.



Loretta has used the same pot for making pralines for most of her career. She used this pot to make 1500 pralines at the Jazz Heritage & Jazz festival 36 years ago.



Loretta brought pre-made pralines for the audience to sample. She mentioned the first praline was made in 1598 by a Black slave.



Loretta demonstrates how to make pralines without revealing her secret candy recipe.



The Audience samples Loretta's praline shoe.



Loretta explains that the Praline shoes is one of New Orleans' oldest pastry.



Fried and Grilled chicken salads prepared by Kerry Stuart, owner of Willie Mae Scotch House



Cory Duckworth's Old Treme Jambalaya samples.



Macy's Black History Month audience awaits Loretta's authentic pralines presentation.



Cory Duckworth explains that his favorite thing to do right now is to smoke meats.



The Washboard Jazz Trio performed "a song about donuts" during the intermission of the program.



Audiences were offered samples of Old Treme Jambalaya.



Irma Duckworth and Cory Duckworth worked together to prepare Old Treme Jambalaya and shrimp and smoke sausage, and New Orleans style bread pudding.

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

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Does Any Presidential Candidate “Deserve” the Black Vote?



Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

Michelle Alexander, the brilliant author of *The New Jim Crow*, writes in *The Nation* – that Hillary Clinton does not “deserve” the Black vote. She makes a strong case. She reminds us that the Bill Clinton administration yielded a draconian crime bill and welfare “deform” (I call it “deform” instead of reform because the Clinton changes made

a bad system worse) that demonized poor women. While Bill and Hillary Clinton are two different people, Alexander uses Hillary quotes to illustrate the ways she supported her husband’s policies.

Michelle Alexander is right to say that Hillary does not deserve the Black vote. She declines to endorse Bernie Sanders, though, describing him as “the lesser of two evils.” To his credit, says Alexander, Sanders opposed welfare reform and has been a far more vocal and aggressive critic of banks than Hillary. But Alexander says he still doesn’t get “it” around issues of racial justice, and notes that both he and Hillary supported the Iraq war.

I’m intrigued by the concept of “deserving” a vote. From my perspective Bernie doesn’t deserve it,

Hillary doesn’t deserve it, and none of the motley crew of Republican candidates deserve it. No Democrat or Republican has ever deserved the Black vote. The dictionary defines deserve as, “to do something or have or show qualities worthy of (reward or punishment).” To say someone “deserves” the Black vote, suggests that someone is entitled to it or has a right to it. I don’t think any candidate has a right to the Black vote. Frankly, with the possible exception of Lyndon Johnson in 1964 (after the passage of the Civil Rights Act) and Rev. Jesse Jackson (after his history of activism) I don’t think any Democrat (or Republican) for that matter. What has either Hillary or Bernie done to “deserve” the Black vote?

No candidate should claim the

sentimental right to the Black vote either, and I think, in some ways that is what Hillary Clinton is attempting. As Michelle Alexander correctly points out in her article, some African Americans are almost irrationally loyal to the Clintons. Many other African Americans, though, have a measured view of the Clinton years, celebrating historic appointments, like that of Alexis Herman as Secretary of Labor, condemning the ways that Lani Guinier and Jocelyn Elders were abandoned by the Clintons, and balancing policy failures like welfare reform with some policy successes. Hillary Clinton’s stand-alone record includes a sensitivity to diversity that Sanders lacks. As a Senator and as Secretary of State, she had staffs that were very inclusive, with

several African American women, in particular, serving in leadership roles in the State Department. Her record shows that, as President, she would continue her commitment to diversity and that we might finally have a cabinet that “looks like America”. Does her commitment to diversity alone make her entitled to the Black vote?

The Black vote should be earned, not bequeathed. But too many African Americans seem to think that voting is the most, not the least, they can do. We must vote for politicians based on their track record and also on their promises. But then we must hold them accountable so that they keep their promises. We didn’t do it with Clinton in 1996 when we

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Blackonomics

Hillary and Bernie Discover and Re-Discover Black People



By James Clingman
NNPA News Wire
Columnist

One thing is for sure; Black folks are enjoying this latest political mating dance with Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton. Sanders is discovering Black people in South Carolina and Georgia, and Clinton has reopened the “leading Blacks” vault to rediscover their loyalty and willingness to present her to the Black electorate one mo’ time, y’all.

Sanders, after years without doing anything specific for the 1 percent Black population of his state, much less for Black people in general, has now discovered, and some would say rediscovered his love and concern for us. In the vast majority of cases it is really a case of Black people discovering Sanders, because most Blacks knew absolutely

nothing about him prior to a few months ago, but for Ed Schultz and Black folks’ penchant for watching MSNBC. Sanders started out by traipsing up to Harlem, cameras in tow of course, to sip tea with Sharpton at a Black restaurant. I am sure that boosted his “street cred” bona fides with Black voters.

Uncle Bernie then goes to MLK’s alma mater, Morehouse, and tells thousands of Black folks how much he loves them now and how much he will do for them—now. It’s almost like he is waking up from his five-decade “I marched with MLK” respite and discovering that Black people exist and, yes, they are important to court because he cannot win without them. He is pulling out all the condescending platitudes to get the Black vote, and Black folks are lovin’ it.

Hillary, far more knowledgeable and adept at getting Black voters, reached into her bag of politricks and pulled out an old, tried-and-true, sleight of hand tactic. She met with the Great Triumvirate of Black “civil rights” leaders, folks who will hurt you if you get between them and a news camera, to sub-

liminally suggest she is “down with the bruthas.” Sitting at a table with Morial, Sharpton, and a guy Black folks have yet to discover, Cornell Brooks, was her springboard to vie for the Black vote.

Mama Hillary called on old stand-by, John Lewis, to tell Black folks that Sanders has no street cred, because Lewis “never met him” back in the days of fire-hoses, dogs, and Billy clubs. (Maybe Lewis had a concussion back then and simply forgot.) Hillary then got members of the Black Caucus to endorse her, a monumental victory that will surely bring home the ultimate victory. After all, we cast from 93 percent – 95 percent of our precious votes for Barack in both elections, and he won; why not the same thing this year for Clinton?

Black folks are discovering and being discovered by Bernie; we are also being rediscovered by Hillary. And while we are making political campaign ads, going to rallies and cheering for the Democratic candidates, as Gil Scott-Heron said in reference to Richard Nixon and the Republicans, “All is calm and quiet

along the white sands of San Clemente.” In today’s political world that simply points to the Republicans continued strategy of ignoring Black people by saying absolutely nothing on our behalf or in support of issues that specifically pertain to Black voters. But why should they? We are “all in” for the Dems.

Hype is meaningless unless it is accompanied by real accountability and substantive results. If the Black vote is so important and so precious, as we like to say, then why is it literally given away for a song and a dance or a rousing speech? Saying how bad it is for Black people is not doing something about it. Glad-handing and hobnobbing with two or three leading Blacks is not doing anything to elevate Black people to a state of economic empowerment—and not even political empowerment. Feeling our pain and walking in the streets with us does nothing to alleviate that pain or stop the injustices we suffer.

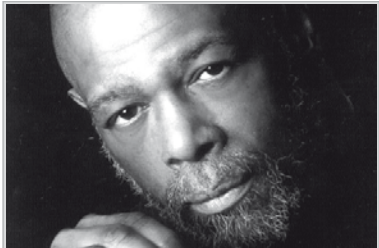
It is embarrassing to see our people fawning over folks who, when they get what they want from us, will return to the political status quo. If that were not true,

we would have seen huge benefits by now. It’s always, “this time it will be different,” when it comes to Black voters.

One practical question to ask candidates who are running around our neighborhoods, churches, and college campuses seeking our votes: “How much campaign money have you spent with Black-owned media, i.e. newspapers, radio?” That’s just one of many acts of reciprocity and the bare minimum of what we should demand. If they do as the current POTUS did in 2012, spend one-tenth of 1 percent with Black media, don’t support them until they increase that amount, and then move on to the next demand. Stop allowing them to use and insult you, and stop slobbering over this latest discovery process; Black people have been in this country since the show started.

James Clingman is the nation’s most prolific writer on economic empowerment for Black people. His latest book, *Black Dollars Matter!* Teach your dollars how to make more sense, is available on his website, Blackonomics.com.

Born Again, Really?



James Washington
Guest Columnist

From time to time, I rethink or feel a little déjà vu regarding the subject of “born again,” particularly my own. I am reminded at times about how that phrase gets associated with everything but its biblical intent. It is my opinion and referencing my personal history that I suggest to you that I could not and certainly not willingly, fit

into the category of a “born again Christian.” At the time I could not subscribe to what my definition of that meant. Today, a born again Christian is an enigma more closely associated with a holier-than-thou religious zealot with a rather conservative political agenda, as opposed to simply a true believer (my term). Then something happened on the way to the ranch and yep, I got saved.

Then I began to understand those things about faith that would indicate a new me. Now, I can easily profess a clearer understanding of this born again thing. Quite to my surprise, born again defines me pretty well, biblically speaking that is. “Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the king-

dom of God unless he is born of water and spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh but spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying you must be born again.” John 3:5-7. Rather than think born again is some kind of right wing conservative political movement, this passage lets us know that being born again relates to an awakening in each and every one of us to the real presence of the Holy Spirit in our everyday lives. It just makes sense to me because you do begin see yourself as a new creature operating with a new lease on life (and it is a lease). I defy anyone who comes this way not to see life itself from a new, renewed perspective. “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so

that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart. For you have been born again, not perishable seed, but imperishable (seed), through the living and enduring Word of God.” Peter 1: 22-23.

My bible explains it to me this way. This imperishable seed, the seed of the Word of God, planted and accepted in a person’s soul, is eternal because God’s Word is eternal. By becoming good soil, by being spiritually involved in the whole process of your own salvation, a new eternal life is born. Therefore, the life you live, once you’ve acknowledged your faith, is a new life given in the service of the Almighty, hence “born again.” Personally, my rebirth has been and

continues to be, remarkable if, to nobody else but me. I cannot view myself as the same person I once was. Those who were around me then and are around me now might agree that there is a discernible difference. See me? See my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Talk to me, hear Him. Understand me? Understand my faith walk in the name of the Almighty. Believe me. I know I have a long ways to go. But I know I’m travelling these days in the right direction, one foot in front of the other; blessed in the knowledge of the truth, free in the hope of the same for you.

May God bless and keep you always, James
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City Announces Sale of Blighted Lake Terrace Shopping Center

Property under new ownership, setting stage for commercial redevelopment.

The City of New Orleans announced that the former Lake Terrace Shopping Center at 1532 Robert E. Lee Blvd. in the Gentilly neighborhood will be redeveloped by local developer Kenneth Lobell. Since it was flooded during Hurricane Katrina, this private property has sat blighted and vacant. For the last year several years, the City has aggressively pursued action against the property's former owner, DMK Acquisitions and Properties LLC (DMK), to force redevelopment of this commercial property.

As a condition of the purchase



from DMK, the City of New Orleans will receive \$100,000 to clear the title of all code enforcement liens and fines imposed against DMK. This represents the largest single code enforcement fine paid to-date to the City of New Orleans.

Lobell's agreement with the City requires him to apply for a demolition permit within seven days of purchase and the property must be demolished within 60 days of the receipt of a demolition permit from the City. Within six months of demolishing the existing buildings on the property, Lobell is required to begin construction on a new commercial development. The newly built commercial shopping center will include a First NBC Bank branch and approximately 6,500

square feet of general retail space.

"Returning the former Lake Terrace Shopping Center to commerce has been a priority for my administration since taking office," said Mayor Mitch Landrieu. "For far too long, this private property has sat blighted because its owner refused to take responsibility for it. But after years of hard work and persistence, today is a new day. By successfully negotiating its transfer, this property can now be redeveloped and returned to commerce to the ben-

efit of Gentilly residents and all of New Orleans."

District D Councilmember Jared C. Brossett said, "One of my top priorities since taking office as District D Councilmember has been to make sure the Lake Terrace Shopping Center site returns to the community hub that is once was and soon will be again. I'm very pleased with today's sale of Lake Terrace Shopping Center. After years of legal delay and thanks to the hard work of Code Enforcement, the Law Department and my office, the residents of this area will finally once again be riding to Paris and Robert E. Lee to shop and conduct business. Now today, we can move forward with economic development opportunities that will spur growth and a new vibrant corridor for the community. I thank Mayor Landrieu and his team for their partnership working together to get us here today. I also have to thank the constituents of Oak Park, Vista Park and Lake Terrace for their patience and constant advocacy over the years. Our work continues!"



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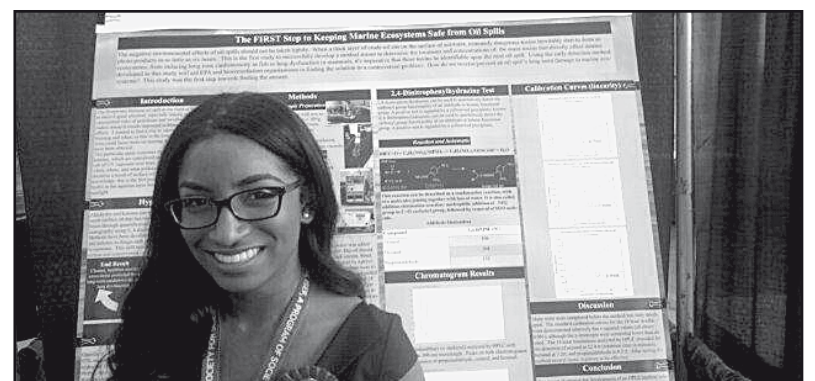
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Lusher Charter School Senior Keiana Cavé Chosen to Participate in Black History Month 2016 /STEM Event

Teen to travel to live webinar in Washington, DC

Lusher Charter School senior Keiana Cavé has been invited to participate in a live webinar on Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2016 at 1pm CST, titled "2016 Black History Month: The Next Generation of Youth Entrepreneurs in STEM Innovation." Keiana will travel to Washington, D.C. to participate in the webinar, which will showcase two young innovators as they share their motivation to spearhead STEM discoveries for their generation. Keiana will share her unique experiences as they relate to STEM innovation and outline prescriptions for increasing pathways to success for young African-Americans and other people of color.

"When I received the call to participate in the webinar, it was completely unexpected," Cavé says, "I'm the only high school student among the people they chose to



participate. I'm very excited to be able to promote STEM during Black History Month."

"We are very proud of Keiana and her accomplishments in science and engineering," says Lusher CEO Kathy Riedlinger. "She has proven to be a national leader in high school STEM, putting into practice the work she's mastered in Lusher's engineering program through Project Lead the Way."

Keiana received 2nd place in the 2015 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair for her earth and environmental sciences project. As

a result of the work she presented at that fair, the MIT Lincoln Laboratory science lab discovered an asteroid and NASA named it for her.

The webinar will take place Wednesday, Feb. 24 at 1pm (central time) at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The event will also be livestreamed on Facebook Live. For more information, go to www.mbda.gov.

To register for the webinar: <http://www.mbda.gov/main/register-next-generation-youth-entrepreneurs-stem-innovation-webinar>

The Hollywood Diversity Fix

By Ronda Racha Penrice
Urban News Service

There's nothing new about #OscarsSoWhite. Once upon a time, Hollywood's diversity battle stretched as far as The White House.

For the second year in a row, there are no people of color nominated for Oscars in any acting category. In protest, a social-media storm erupted, as did a black-celebrity-endorsed boycott.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences — led by Cheryl Boone Isaacs, its first African-American president — responded with plans to diversify the Oscar-bestowing organization's membership by 2020.

This self-correction is a departure from March 1969 when Clifford Alexander, President Lyndon Johnson's head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), led hearings on Hollywood's hiring practices.

Back then, Sidney Poitier was a rare bright spot. With the 1963 film *Lilies of the Field*, he became the first black performer to win the Best Actor Oscar. And, in 1967, he starred in three major films: *To Sir, with Love* and multiple-Oscar nominees *In the Heat of the Night* and the interracial love story, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*.

TV anomalies at the time included Nichelle Nichols as Lt. Uhura on *Star Trek* (1966–1969) and Diahann Carroll starring as a widowed nurse raising her son in *Julia* (1968–1971).

Behind the scenes, people of color were scarce and the film industry, Alexander recalls, barely noticed.

"People who testified on behalf of the industry really didn't quite seem to get the point that it was important in the production of a product or in the depiction of people



that it be reflective of some sense of what the real world was like" he says.

"The kinds of artificial and direct barriers that they put up were extraordinary," says Alexander, who later became the first black Secretary of the Army. "At least, I think, what our hearings did was to point those out. We didn't have any enforcement power, but we recommended that the Justice Department bring 'pattern and practice of employment discrimination' suits against the industry.

"Unfortunately, at that point, you had Richard Nixon coming in as president and he did nothing about it. But our hearings did cause the embarrassment, which is a good factor sometimes, of the industry and therefore many of the positions were at least opened up for the first time."

Under a federal mandate, studios like Disney, Paramount and Universal — and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees union — established job-

training programs that were advertised through minority-oriented newspapers and radio stations between 1970 and 1977. However, these programs evaporated after Alexander's departure.

Pioneering film publicist Rosalind "Roz" Stevenson, whose career spanned from 1982 to 2008, didn't benefit directly from the EEOC's actions, but recalls their positive impact.

"The Writers Guild had a program called The Open Door. There was a program for accountants," Stevenson says, plus training for make-up artists, camera operators, costumers, assistant directors and more.

Hollywood even scoured historically black colleges and universities for talent, says Stevenson, who is starting a documentary on behind-the-camera players, such as her hairstylist husband, Robert, a 16-year Academy member and Emmy winner; sound mixer Willie D. Burton, a two-time Oscar winner; and Cheryal Kearney, an Emmy win-

ner and Hollywood's first black set decorator.

Those possibilities encouraged the Compton, California, native who began as an actress. "Once I landed in the publicity department, I felt that was something I could do well and be really happy doing," says Stevenson, "I learned that the studio had a program that would support me in becoming a publicist."

As a senior publicist at Universal, Stevenson, one of Hollywood's few high-ranking publicists of color, led national and local TV, radio publicity and African-American campaigns, including *Jurassic Park*, *The Best Man*, *Erin Brockovich* and *The Hurricane*, for which Denzel Washington received a Best Actor Oscar nomination.

Through RSPR — her own PR firm targeting black audiences — Stevenson boosted Ray (which scored Jamie Foxx his Best Actor Oscar), *American Gangster* and *The Pursuit of Happyness*. In all, she publicized nearly 800 films, including the *Rocky* and James Bond franchises at MGM.

Despite these successes, critics warn there is no happy ending yet.

"Hollywood is still run by white men," says Dr. Darnell Hunt, director of UCLA's Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, home of industry scorecard *The Hollywood Diversity Report*. "So, basically, you have white men making decisions about what's viable, what's bankable, what we should spend our money on, and they surround themselves with other white men. So, you get this echo chamber and very little consideration of different perspectives when decisions are made."

Until this reality changes, critics insist Hollywood will remain #OscarsSoWhite.

Commentary, Continued
from page 8.

voted for him even after welfare deform. We didn't do it with Obama in 2012, when we voted for him after a disappointing first term. African Americans, like others, must make demands of those who hold public office, or they are free to ignore us.

The challenge is that our two-party system too often fails to provide us with a satisfactory set of

alternatives to the status quo. While I was disappointed with President Obama's first term, I probably would have cut my hand off before voting for Mitt Romney. Similarly, as disappointing as Clinton's welfare deform was, another Clinton term was far preferable to a Bob Dole presidency. We too often are faced with imperfect options, and in choosing the lesser of two evils.

Michelle Alexander addresses the flaws of the two-party system

in her article, and talks about a "revolutionary movement" of people who believe that human rights and economic justice are attainable goals. There won't be a revolutionary movement before November 7, 2016. So who deserves the Black vote? The candidate who works hardest for it. The candidate who addresses the Black community most directly and with the most relevance. The candidate who not only schedules very public meet-

ings with Rev. Al Sharpton, but less-well covered meetings at a day care center, in a halfway house, in a hospital. The Black vote should not be something a candidate deserves. It should be something a candidate earns!

Julianne Malveaux is an author, economist and Founder of Economic Education. Purchase her latest book "Are We Better Off? Race, Obama and Public Policy" at www.juliannealveaux.com.

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