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A Data News Weekly Exclusive



# unCommon Construction and unCommon Goals

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# unCommon Construction

## High School Students Building Houses



Students lift 12 foot interior wall that is ready to install.

**Eric Craig**  
Multimedia Editor

One new non-profit is building houses in New Orleans by working with high school students. unCommon Construction is a startup designed to help New Orleans youth learn technical skills..

The non-profit operates by working with six different high schools around New Orleans. Each year, the organization picks 14 students from these schools to serve as apprentices to unCommon Construction. In their one semester apprenticeship, students work together to build a house. Students earn internship credit and hourly wages

for their contribution to unCommon Construction.

Students participating in the program work every Saturday throughout the academic semester, and are required to attend a two-hour training course during each school week. During the training courses, students learn about the craft of architecture and construction.

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Cover Story, Continued from previous page.



Students designed both the interior and exterior of the new project home.



It took six high school students eight weeks to build this tiny home.



Destinee Marshall, unCommon Construction builder.



On Saturday, Oct. 8, 2016, the fourteen high school students began installing exterior and interior walls to their project home.



Aaron Frumin, left, roadmaps what needs to be done by the end of the day to the apprentices.



Spencer Grant prepares wall materials for students to build for the upcoming work day.

Throughout its almost two years of operation, unCommon Construction has worked on several joint projects with independent contractors and built a tiny home with six students this last summer.

This academic school year, unCommon Construction is working with 14 students to build a 1700 square foot home by this December.

### The Start

unCommon Construction was founded by Aaron Frumin and Aron Michalski to help youth maintain engagement in high school.

In an interview with Curbed Nola, Frumin said intervention programs for high school students are necessary and few.

"We work with kids while they're still in high school so we can be an earlier intervention," Frumin said. "Eighty-one percent of dropouts say that real-world relevant learning opportunities would keep them into school," Frumin told Curbed Nola.

Instead of sitting back, Frumin said that he wants to use his talents to assist students to learn practical skills.

"We can play a critical bridge between education and employment or college and career," Frumin said. "There is a huge need for construction industry employees whether onsite, engineer, or architect. We just need more kids to pursue pathways that align with carpentry and construction."

### Building a Tiny Home

Most notably, unCommon Construction built a tiny home with six high school students this past summer. Frumin said this was a challenge that would thrust the organization forward.

"This summer we used this as an

opportunity to sharpen skills for six of our high school apprentices and develop their leadership capacity," Frumin said.

According to Frumin, the students built a 210 square foot house on a Tumbleweed trailer. The house's design was inspired by classic New Orleans architecture.

Frumin said that the project was completed in eight weeks. The organizer was thankful for the students' commitment, and material contributions from various companies.

unCommon Construction will use the tiny home as a mobile office space, where all staff members can work near any construction site where unCommon operates.

### Building a home

Currently, unCommon Construction is tackling its second independent project as the primary contractor. The organization is currently building a single-family residence at 2504 N. Prieur St.

The 1700-square-foot house is planned to have two bedrooms, a living room area, closet space and a front porch.

According to Frumin and Spencer Grant, unCommon Construction's lead builder, the 14 student apprentices designed the house as a student team. Four of the six students that worked on the tiny home last summer returned to this project.

Participating students worked with Concordia to design the house. Students took note of the neighborhoods existing architecture and applied it to their unique design, Frumin said.

This past Saturday student were installing the walls on their new project home. They expected to complete the interior and exterior wall installa-

tion by the end of the day.

Grant was proud of the students' teamwork throughout the work day.

"Today I saw a lot of teamwork, patience, lifting stuff and working together," Grant said. "The hardest part is that these walls are 12 feet tall. It's not as easy as lifting

eight-foot walls. These have some heft to them."

Destinee Marshall, a builder for unCommon Construction, and a student apprentice for the last three semesters, was happy with the progress of the house.

"Aside from seeing the progress

in building the house, I think seeing students learn how to do something and to start again is the most inspiring," Marshall said. "One of the slogans of uncommon is safety, grit and integrity. And today I saw a lot of grit, perseverance integrity in the apprentices."

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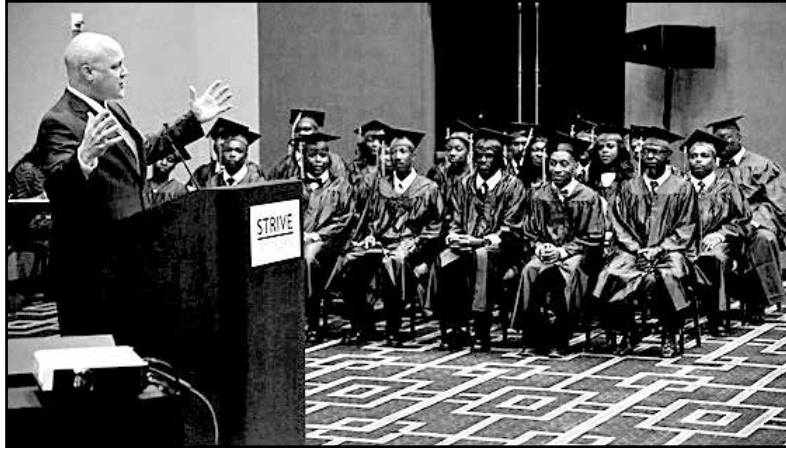


# City Hosts Tenth STRIVE NOLA Graduation

## Data News Staff Edited Report

NEW ORLEANS — On Monday, Oct. 10, 2016 the City of New Orleans hosted the Tenth STRIVE New Orleans (STRIVE NOLA) Graduation Ceremony. Launched in March 2015, STRIVE NOLA connects disadvantaged jobseekers to employment opportunities by providing workforce case management, foundational skills training and supportive services.

“STRIVE NOLA takes our Economic Opportunity Strategy to the next level, preparing our men and women of New Orleans with the tools they need to be ready for work,” Mayor Mitch Landrieu said. “Every day, we are working to change the lives of our disadvan-



Mayor Mitch Landrieu speaks to the new NOLA Strive graduates.

tagged residents and we will not stop until every New Orleanian has a pathway to prosperity.”

STRIVE NOLA is in line with Mayor Landrieu’s Economic Opportunity Strategy – a com-

prehensive effort to connect disadvantaged jobseekers and businesses to new opportunities by working to ensure that every resident can take part in the City’s economic growth through

partnerships with local training providers, social service agencies and community advocates.

“We remain committed to investing in our disadvantaged jobseekers through STRIVE NOLA,” said Judy Reese Morse, Deputy Mayor for Citywide Initiatives. “With our committed partners, we are creating endless possibilities for the men and women of New Orleans.”

STRIVE NOLA prepares and connects local jobseekers, specifically African-American males, to career pathways through local anchor institutions. During the four-week job readiness training program, participants arrive to work daily dressed professionally from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Last month, the City announced that the African-American male non-

employment rate is down from 52 percent to 44 percent.

“STRIVE NOLA is a key workforce development initiative for the City,” said Ashleigh Gardere, Senior Advisor for Economic Opportunity and Executive Director of the Network for Economic Opportunity. “We look forward to continue creating career pathways for our disadvantaged jobseekers ensuring every resident can take part in the City’s growing prosperity.”

The STRIVE employment model ensures that every client is not only ready to find a job, but also ready to keep it through five components: CORE Attitudinal and Job Readiness, Skills Training, Workforce Case Management, Job Placement, and Job Retention and Ongoing Follow-up.

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Tuesday, November 8

# NORDC to Host Halloween Activities for Youth, Teens and Families

*'Thriller' Flash Mob, Halloween Spooktacular, Teen Council Halloween Dance*

## Data News Staff Edited Report

The New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC) invites residents to join in fun and safe Halloween activities for the month of October. Participation is free and open to the public.

On Monday, Oct. 31st at noon, NORDC's Fit NOLA Parks Program will host a "Thriller" Flash Mob in front of City Hall, 1300 Perdido Street. Led by Loyola Dance Instructor Kenneth "Kynt" Bryan, the dance pays tribute to Michael Jackson's iconic 1983 video.

To learn the dance, the public can either view the dance tutorial online or attend any of the following 20 to 30-minute practice sessions:

## Before all Movies in the Park events in October

Every Wednesday from 6:30



p.m. until 7:30 p.m. at Lyons Rec Center, 624 Louisiana Ave., through October 26th.

## NORDC Halloween Spooktacular

Residents are invited to the NORDC Halloween Spooktacular on Monday, Oct. 31st from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Events will be held at ten NORDC recreation centers across

the City. Each location will offer treats and youth activities including dancing, games, costume contests and photo booths. Admission is free and open to the public.

## NORDC Halloween Spooktacular locations are:

**Annunciation Center,**  
800 Race Street

**Cut-Off Rec Center,**  
6600 Belgrade St.

**Behrman Rec Center,**  
2529 General Meyer Ave.

**Joe W. Brown Rec Center,**  
5601 Read Blvd.

**Lyons Rec Center,**  
624 Louisiana Ave.

**Rosenwald Center,**  
1120 S. Broad St.

**Sanchez Multi-Purpose Center,** 1616 Caffin Ave.

**Stallings St. Claude Rec Center,** 4300 St. Claude Ave.

**St. Bernard Rec Center,** 1500 Lafreniere St.

**Treme' Rec Center,**  
900 N. Villere St.

## NORDC Teen Council Halloween Dance

On Saturday, Oct. 29th from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., the NORDC Teen Council will host a Teen Dance at the Gernon Brown Rec Center, 1001 Harrison Ave. Activities include a DJ, costume contest, photo booth, gift card raffles and lots of candy. Admission is free and open to teens ages 13-17.

## More GCAC Weekly Honors for XULA's August and Price



Christopher August - Men's Cross Country

Taylor Price - Women's Cross Country

## Data News Staff Edited Report

NEW ORLEANS — Xavier University of Louisiana's Christopher August and Taylor Price remain the standard-bearers for Gulf Coast Athletic Conference Cross Country in 2016. The Houston-area student-athletes are repeat choices as GCAC Runners of the Week.

August and Price have combined to win 7-of-8 possible conference

awards this season — August four times and Price three.

August, a senior from Spring, Texas, and a graduate of Klein Collins High School, ran 8,000 meters in 28 minutes, 28.80 seconds to finish 23rd out of 93 non-NCAA Division I runners in the Watson Ford Invitational at Clinton, Miss. August also was faster than 24 of the 27 NCAA DI men. August was XULA's fastest finisher for the ninth consecutive meet — that streak began at

the start of the 2015 season.

Price, a freshman from Missouri City, Texas, and a graduate of Ridge Point High School, ran the Watson Ford 6K in 25:42.23 to place 30th out of 81 non-DI women. Price was faster than 33 of the 34 NCAA DI finishers.

The Gold Rush and Gold Nuggets will compete Friday in the Crimson Classic at Tuscaloosa, Ala. The men's 8K will start at 9 a.m., followed by the women 6K at 9:45.



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# UNCF Walk

Harvey Brown  
Photographer

On Saturday, Oct. 8, 2016, The United Negro College Fund celebrated its 29th Annual UNCF Walk. Xavier, Dillard and SUNO students, faculty and staff participated in a three-mile walk to support funding for students attending HBCUs.




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# Gentilly Festival 2016

**Eric Craig**  
Multimedia Editor  
Photos by Eric Craig and  
Edwin Buggage.

Rafters were shaking in Gentilly this past weekend. Between Oct. 7-9, 2016, the 2016 Gentilly Festival took place at Pontchartrain Park. Several artist played at both the Capital one sponsored stage and the Gospel tent. The festival had several local food, activity and community vendors.



## Notable Quotable by Donald Trump



“There’s no such thing as racism anymore. We’ve had a Black president so it’s not a question anymore. Are they saying Black lives should matter more than White lives or Asian lives? If Black lives don’t matter, then go back to Africa? We’ll see how much they matter there.”

Do you really want him to be your next president?

General Elections are Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2016. Go Vote!



# A Mockery of Democracy 2

## *The Trump Card and the Search for Common Sense*



By Edwin Buggage  
Data News Weekly Editor

### Common Sense and the Founding of a Nation

As I witness what is happening in this Presidential cycle something that is the equivalent of a reality show chaos gone amuck; it is sad to say as I stated in part 1 of this series that in this election we are witnessing a mockery of Democracy. In many instances it has been a back and forth of salacious and scandalous allegations being hurled from by both sides; in addition

to a fact free zone as presented by the Trump campaign. Today I, as many Americans am shaking my head saying it is truly a sad day for this country as the world watches the decline of the political process and discourse of our great republic. This is something that takes me back to the founding of our nation and a powerful pamphlet that raised the consciousness of a people called "Common Sense" by Thomas Paine, and is something I feel is sorely needed and can redeem America and restore Democracy.

"Common Sense", published in January of 1776 is lesser known than the Declaration of Independence published the same year on July 4, 1776. Throughout the pages of Paine's work, he challenges the authority of the British Government and the Royal Monarchy. The plain language that Paine used spoke to the common people of America and

was the first work to openly ask for independence from Great Britain. This became a sensation reaching many people and was being read in taverns and among citizens longing for change.

On the website History.com it states, "Originally published anonymously, Common Sense advocated independence for the American colonies from Britain and is considered one of the most influential pamphlets in American history. Credited with uniting average citizens and political leaders behind the idea of independence, Common Sense played a remarkable role in transforming a colonial squabble into the American Revolution."

The Trump Card and Changing the Game of Political Discourse

I use this premise to examine how Common Sense set in motion a movement towards the independence of a nation and voiced the

longings of average citizens helping to advance political discourse. Today, I argue the same phenomenon is occurring as Donald Trump, a television personality that is one step away from the oval office. But as opposed to a pamphlet, he is using a different form of text to engage the average citizens, take on his critics and earn media coverage for his campaign. Trump and his team are using Twitter in a way that is changing the rules of political discourse.

While the Trump Campaign has been maligned across the political spectrum and by the mainstream media for turning the Presidential selection process into a PT. Barnum Circus like spectacle, he continues to connect with a segment of American Voters. As the pamphlet Common Sense connected with the common man; Donald Trump is using Twitter to reach today's citizens

who feel disaffected by the direction of the country and also taking on his political opponents.

### Media, Democracy and the Rise of Demagoguery in American Politics

I would argue that while he's being castigated by the mainstream media and political establishment of both parties his words echo what many in America are feeling. But it is sad as many of his supporters may feel anxiety of a country that is changing and what they feel is apathy of the political establishment that they turn a mean spirited demagogue as their voice of reason. I would contend this downward spiral and division in our political discourse is in part caused by citizenry that reads less than relies on talk radio, television and Twitter to

Commentary,  
Continued on page 9.

# Republicans are Willing to Dance with the Devil to Win the White House



Julianne Malveaux  
NNPA Columnist

Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-Wisc.) is anticipating a Trump win in November. Or, at least, he is preparing for it. He says that if Republicans hold sway in the White House, the House and the Senate, he plans to use budget reconciliation to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (also known as Obamacare) and give tax cuts to the wealthy. Ryan says he will not even attempt any bipartisanship, as he shoves his regressive agenda down the throats of our people. Instead, he says that he can make it work, especially if he has a Trump White House.

This is, perhaps, why Republicans who appear to have at least a little bit of good sense are going for Trump's nonsense. They know that Mr. Trump, with his head in the cloud and his rhetoric in the gutter, will let them get away with anything they want. He will agree to their tax cuts, because they coincide with his agenda to reward the wealthy. Trump will go along with cuts to Obamacare, because he wasn't loving it in the first place. He will let conservative Republicans hold sway, especially if they reward him with their votes in November.

Paul Ryan calls his plan a "Better Way" policy agenda. It is an aggressive move that assumes that Republicans will control both the House and the Senate. They might not—if people vote, and vote down ballot, there is a real chance that Democrats can control the Senate. The House is a much bigger challenge, and it is likely that Republicans will continue to hold sway in the house. But there are too many folks who say they won't vote, and their votes could make a

real difference. In Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan and Florida (among other states), those who choose to refrain from voting are really voting for a Trump-Ryan agenda.

The attack on Obamacare is especially problematic. While the President's Affordable Care Act is clearly flawed, it expanded health insurance for more than 20 million people. It isn't the desired single payer care, but it provides opportunity and takes the first step in expanding the social contract since the Roosevelt years. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) can be used as a foundation to expand health insurance coverage and, in my mind, get us closer to the ultimate goal of a single-payer system. But legislators rejected the single-payer plan that Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Ma) proposed for decades. The Affordable Care Act is a compromise. We need to move forward in improving the ACA, not backward in repealing it. Trump and Ryan would restrict access to health care instead of expanding it.

According to Politico, Paul Ryan

thinks that a divided government contributes to gridlock. He'd be happy if the presidency, the House of Representatives, and the United States Senate were all controlled by Republicans. What about the rest of us? Does he see our voice in this? Not according to Ryan. He tells Politico "I'm tired of divided government. It doesn't work very well." He seems to ignore the fact that there are legitimate differences among legislators and that these differences need to be worked out. He is uninterested in compromise. Instead, he wants to shove his position down the throats of other people.

Paul Ryan has explicitly called Donald Trump a racist. He has eschewed many of his policies. Other Republicans have been openly repulsed by their bellicose standard bearer and disturbed by his racist bluster and his wacky rhetoric, but they have thrown their discernment to the wind, embracing the man they have described as a rabid racist, because they prefer him to an embrace of integrity.

As we count down to the November 8 election, people are coming forward to say they are either undecided, conflicted, or would rather vote for a third party candidate, because they can't tolerate Clinton Trump. The bottom line is that either Clinton or Trump will win the Presidency. Really. Those Republicans who support Trump are openly supporting evil. They will dance with the devil to their detriment.

African Americans, especially, need to look at what Trump has promised. He has promised discrimination. He has described our lives as hell. He has been a bully and a documented discriminator. He has been too much. He should be enough to repel us. Paul Ryan has called Trump a racist, but he is willing to dance with the devil because it serves his purposes. What about you?

Julianne Malveaux is an author and economist. Her latest book "Are We Better Off? Race, Obama and Public Policy" is available via [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) for booking, wholesale inquiries or for more info visit [www.juliannealveaux.com](http://www.juliannealveaux.com)



Spiritually Speaking...

# 911 According to Who



**James A. Washington**  
NNPA News Wire  
Columnist

Patience and prayer have been occupying a lot of my thought time lately. And I am reminded of something Pastor Frederick Douglass Haynes III of Friendship West Baptist Church (Dallas, Texas where I got saved) once said. "There is no such thing as an emergency in eternity." This, I have written about before but as I said I have reasons to repeat myself today, right now. You guys know about my fascination with man's time vs. God's time. It appears that we want God's time to be reconciled with our own concept

of time. God do it now. I need you yesterday. Prayer, I now believe, is the mechanism by which we can understand in some small way how God's time works. In today's world, obviously, we all have a tendency to want what we want when we want it, including things we pray for. We want to be delivered from, sent to, rescued from or have our immediate problem solved immediately. We do this as if God operated on our individual timetable and, some of us actually question His judgment when He takes too long or has the gall not to answer our super intense prayers right now.

Prayer itself is even evaluated by some of us based on how long it takes God to answer as determined by our body clocks. Many of us treat this as if God was on 24 hour call just waiting on our tweet. Hopefully, I've come to understand that through prayer, legitimate belief in God's power, that eventually

you will get your answer. It will be the right one and it will be right on time. Think about it. How often can you look back over your own life and thank God that you didn't get something or someone that you begged and pleaded for? Was it a job? Maybe a potential spouse or man or some woman you couldn't live without?

Now through the blessing of hindsight, the best thing that could have happened is that it didn't happen. How often would you say that had you gotten what you prayed for when you prayed for it, now, with certainty, it would have been, 'can we say a disaster?' For me, it is a matter of faith that through prayer the Lord will bless you with what you need, when and only when, He knows you can handle or, appreciate it. We've all heard the saying that God will not put more on us than we can handle. I personally know and can testify that that was

not my belief. Quite a few times I've known for a fact that I could not make it another day. I've known many occasions that I couldn't go another further, only to find that by the grace of God when the sun came up the very next day, so did I. How about you? It's at these times you begin to realize that the key is to leave it after you've placed it in the hands of God. Let go and let Him. Jesus did the dirty work. Now all you have to do is remember why. "He said to them, 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you'..." Acts 1:7-8. This power, I feel, is evident when patience and prayer come together and reveal to you that there is a divine reason for you to experience whatever it is that you go through during your time here on earth.

Without trials and tribulations,

there is no experience and without experience, there is no wisdom, let alone testimony. Unless you submit to the will of God, there is no personal salvation. Without salvation, prayer cannot and will not be answered. So, when you want God to hurry up because you're about to lose your mind up in here, that's proof you're not ready. My own testimony tells me that until I could and did give it all up, I couldn't appreciate anything He might have had for me. Like Abraham, it is only with total belief that the ram shows up in the bush.

May you always find your ram and may God bless and keep you always.

James

James A. Washington is the Publisher of The Dallas Weekly Newspaper. He can be reached at [jaws@dallasweekly.com](mailto:jaws@dallasweekly.com)

## Commentary, Continued from page 8.

gain insight on the issues affecting their lives.

In the 21st Century Presidential Politics has been transformed from high ideals that founded this nation and widening the lanes of Democracy to a focus on the banal, trite and cult of celebrity and the marketing of those running for President in ways similar to consumer products. While not completely new we can look back at our relationship with media and witness how we evolved to this current state of our nation. We can go back to John. F. Kennedy mastering television, then Ronald Reagan becoming the first cable television President, followed by Bill Clinton the first baby boom president and first to use MTV to engage young voters and Barack Obama becoming the first African-American/ Hip-Hop and Internet Commander-in-Chief. Trump, who is a billionaire, real estate developer, media mogul and established brand is perfectly situated for how citizens and their relationship with Presidential politics have been transformed in this zeitgeist. He is an example of how these new media spaces in his case the usage of Twitter, have challenged how political discourse is performed, dis-

seminated and translated in ways that are dangerous and threatens civil society.

## Is Common Sense Possible in the Age of Twitter?

Though a pamphlet with a simple title, Common Sense is something that helped inform and ignite a revolution that formed the United States of America. It is something that's guided an imperfect union into a more perfect union. It is the thing that has widened the lanes of Democracy to many who were disenfranchised in their nations who immigrated to America seeking the promise of liberty, and those who came in chains who were also seeking justice and equality. Common Sense as a guide to political discourse is an examination and practice of the history of the United States, a noble cause of a nation seeking to build better Homo sapiens (rational, wise, intelligent humans) and to create a more civil society.

Today as we are in the 21st Century with a world that has become one of pointing, clicking, googling and guides for dummies for everything under the sun. It seems Twitter is apropos for an age where political discourse is

not about reading the entire book Common Sense, it is about getting the spark notes. And Donald Trump using Twitter to engage in political discourse is like spark notes, it has all the right themes and terms, "Make America Great Again"; "No more corruption in politics"; "Time to put someone who will be honest with the American people and stand up to the establishment for the powerless" but what is often not the case with these notes that is essential is that they are missing many details that obscures the nuances and grey areas that are an important part of the story. In politics these are the things that exist inside a discourse as was the case presented in Thomas Paine's Pamphlet Common Sense as the nation began its march towards independence and every leap forward it's made ever since. And for the U.S. to be great again Americans themselves must move beyond giving credence to demagoguery and jingoistic, sadistic rants on Twitter regardless of some semblance of truth in the words written and move into a more rational space where one can dissent with decency and common sense. Then and only then will America become great again and Democracy will prevail.

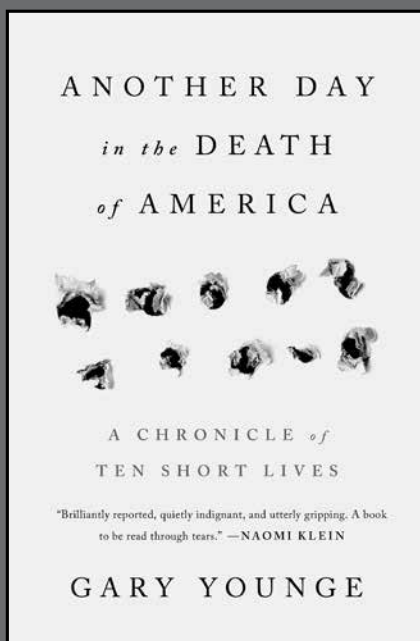
# EVEN TEXTERS AND DRIVERS HATE TEXTERS AND DRIVERS.

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# Another Day in the Death of America



"Another Day in the Death of America: A Chronicle of Ten Short Lives" by Gary Younge  
c.2016, Nation Books  
\$25.99 / \$33.99 Canada  
304 pages



Author Gary Younge (photo credit: Linda Nylind)

over "spontaneous drama." Legally blind, eighteen-year-old Pedro Dado Cortez worked for his father and dreamed of learning to drive.

Eleven-year-old Tyler Dunn was shot by a playmate, while sixteen-year-old Edwin Rajo was accidentally shot in the chest by his best friend. Samuel Brightmon was "conflict averse," Tyshon Anderson had been shot several times before, Gustin Hinnant was an honor-roll student, and Gary Anderson was killed because he wore a red hoodie.

One bullet tore apart a small town. All devastated families and friendships. Some were in areas where "Nobody knows where the next shot is coming from.... But everybody knows it's coming."

Before we get any further, there's this: British-born Author Gary Younge doesn't overtly advocate, nor does he denigrate, gun control but astute readers can catch a clue. He also writes about parenting, particularly within the Black community; about gangs; prisons; and about the NRA and its influence.

And these are interesting subjects but the real power comes in the stories he uncovers in "Another Day in the Death of America." Younge doesn't just write about the demises of the ten "kids" he found; he also helps readers understand the men they might've become and what we truly lost in losing them. That kind of unflinching journalism packs gut-punching, timely meaning, and you won't forget it.

"Pick a different day, you get a different book," says Younge on the randomness of his research, which is perhaps the most poignant sentence you'll ever read. So pick "Another Day in the Death of America." It's no ordinary story.

By The Bookworm Sez  
Data News Weekly Columnist

**Today was an ordinary day.**

It had its ups and downs; pleasant surprises came between the mundane and the irritating and you'll look back at it tomorrow with clarity, perhaps, but its details will be sketchy in a decade. It was an ordinary day which, says Gary Younge, also means an average of seven kids in the U.S. lost their lives to a bullet. In "Another Day in the Death of America," he explains.

On November 23, 2013, most Americans were preparing for Thanksgiving. We were marking the Anniversary of JFK's Assassination and watching the weather, the news on Iraq, or the Baylor / Oklahoma State game. We were enjoying our weekend. And on that Saturday, ten random chil-

dren died of gunshot wounds in this country.

That, says Younge, has become too normal. It barely even registers anymore. For a while, there were websites that tracked this kind of thing but for the most part, the deaths of these "kids" – coincidentally, all boys on this day; seven African-Americans, one White, two Hispanic – are unmarked, except to families and locals.

The youngest, nine-year-old Jaiden Dixon, was a "giving soul" with a "valentine" he thought he might marry someday. Preparing for school on a Friday morning, he opened the door for his mother's ex-boyfriend, who shot Dixon in the face.

**Dixon died the next day.**

The girlfriend of Kenneth Miller, who was "just three days' shy of his twentieth birthday," learned of his death through Twitter. Seventeen-year-old Stanley Taylor was killed

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# Ava Duvernay Tackles Mass Incarceration and More in "The 13th"

By Dwight Brown  
NNPA News Wire Contributor

The New York Film Festival celebrated its 54th year by trying something new. For the first time in history, its Opening Night World Premiere was a documentary. Even more noteworthy, this non-fiction film is by Director Ava DuVernay (Selma) and it focuses on America's deep problem with its criminal justice/penal system and how it affects the Black community. Screening DuVernay's powerful documentary "The 13th," helped NYFF make a social/political and cultural statement that may resonate for years.

Normally, analyzing racism, inequality, involuntary servitude, prison systems and police brutality is such a vast endeavor it would take a collection of books, a string of college courses or a PBS miniseries to begin to understand such complex subjects and their many ramifications. In one hour and 40 minutes, DuVernay masterfully takes on that arduous task, shares some illuminating analysis and starts a conversation.

With photos, archival footage and interviews, she presents something akin to a condensed post-graduate course that delivers facts, figures, history, parallels, anecdotes, observations and controversial incidents that corroborate her thesis. What's on view is an equal dose of academic study, solid journalism and deep emotion that will provoke anger, sadness and hopefully motivation for change.

DuVernay's mission is aided by scholars (Henry Louis "Skip" Gates Jr.), political commentators (Van Jones), unlikely sympathiz-



Michelle Alexander, Author of "The New Jim Crow", talks about the effects of mass incarceration in "The 13th". (photos courtesy of Netflix)



Civil Rights Activist Angela Davis lends her voice to "The 13th".

ers (Newt Gingrich), iconic activists (Angela Davis) and politicians. United States Senator Cory Booker said, "We are a nation that professes freedom yet have this hyper-incarceration system that is grinding into it our most vulnerable citizenry — and is overwhelming biased to-

wards people of color."

DuVernay connects the dots from the liberation of slaves by the 13th Amendment signed on January 31, 1865, to the convict leasing that followed, then the Jim Crow system of apartheid, the FBI's war against Black activism and today's

rampant incarceration of poor, Black men. Over 100 years of systemic oppression, dehumanization and what Jelani Cobb, the director of the Institute for African-American Studies, calls "a mythology of Black criminality."

Some of what she points out has been said before, and she is reinforcing it. However, lots of the information she's bringing to light will be alarming news to most viewers i.e., did you know that the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a nonprofit organization of conservative state legislators and private sector representatives, drafts and shares model state-level legislation that legally lets businesses take advantage of free labor by prisoners?

The film is a revelation on so many levels. When it ends, the feeling of anger and sorrow is almost overwhelming. There's also a nagging feeling that you wish you had step-by-step instructions on how to help break the cycle and make a change. Even, just as a coda, a list of some actionable steps would empower viewers. It would have been helpful, if the film had mentioned the importance of voting, community activism, joining police departments to make change from within, gun control or even decriminalizing drugs. Problems, like the ones depicted in this very observant film, only get solved when someone takes a first step.

Dwight Brown is a film critic and travel writer. As a film critic, he regularly attends international film festivals including Cannes, Sundance, Toronto and the American Black Film Festival. Read more movie reviews by Dwight Brown here and at [DwightBrownInk.com](http://DwightBrownInk.com).

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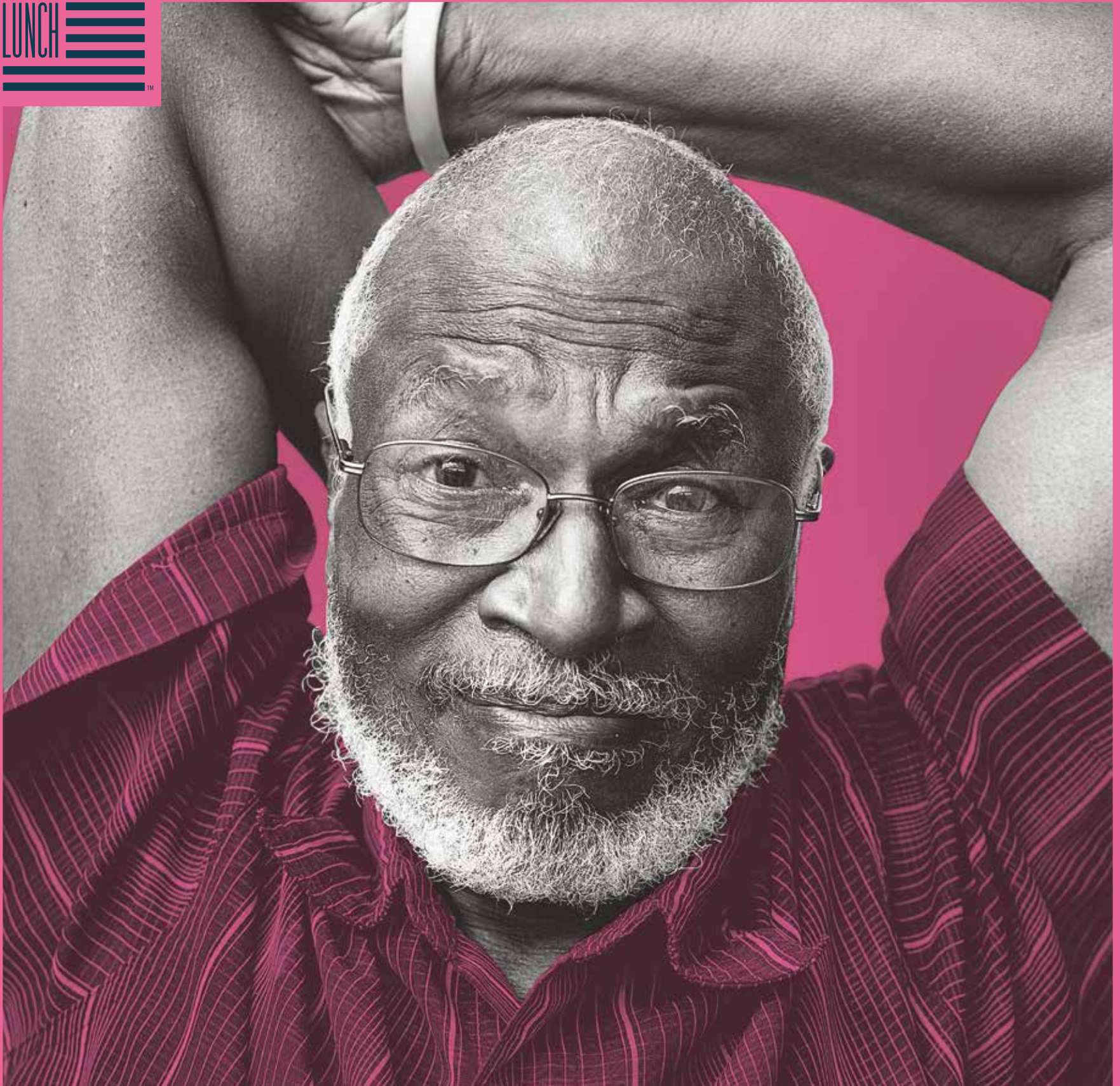
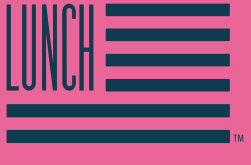
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