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New Orleans

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News Weekly

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2018 Young Men of Illinois Annual Ball

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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New Orleans: A House Divided

Affordable Housing Crisis Threatens Future of New Orleans



Andreanecia Morris, President of the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance (GNOHA) is one of many who is on the frontlines of the fight for fair housing in New Orleans.

By Edwin Buggage
Data News Weekly Editor

A Tale of Two Cities

The City of New Orleans is celebrating its 300th Anniversary. Residents are also witnessing the end of the Landrieu Administration and the beginning of a new one with the election of its first female mayor Latoya Cantrell. While we are ushering in a newly elected leadership in the coming months; many citizens are concerned can a City move closer to solutions to the problems that plague our City; crime, poverty, educational inequality etc. While these have been on the front burner; one of the problems that are essential to the future of New Orleans that is not getting much attention is the crisis surrounding affordable housing.

In a recent survey of likely voters, it showed the need for affordable housing ranked only second to crime and public safety. The same survey results showed that 93% of respondents agree or strongly agree that access to affordable housing is important. It is something that is strangely ironic for a City that only a dozen years ago one could rent an apartment for 300 or 400 dollars a month and today that same apartment could rent for 1200 dollars or more in some cases. This burden is something that's caused many former residents to not return and conversely, caused many who have come here to leave because the City is unaffordable. And for those who live here many struggles, in some cases working multiple jobs to cover the higher cost of living in New Orleans.

Andreanecia Morris: Leading the Battle for Affordable Housing

Andreanecia Morris, President of the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance (GNOHA) is one of many who is on the frontlines of the fight for fair housing in New Orleans. She began her career working at the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO). Many locals know these as the projects that were site-based scattered throughout New Orleans built after World War II through the 1960's where working class people both Black and White lived although segregated at times. In the beginning, this affordable housing did not have the stigma that would later become associated with it as many who went on to become City and business leaders were raised in these brick structures throughout the City. "I didn't know much about them,"

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.

she says of the projects of New Orleans. Of what would become her life's work she says "I had a lot of great mentors including Kim Brown who I worked directly with her and learned how to help craft policy. I also had great teachers including the residents themselves. I understood early on that I was there to be of help to them."

Since that time Morris has spent her career working to create affordable housing in Metro New Orleans. Post Katrina, she has either directly implemented or advocated for programs that created 500 first time homebuyers, disbursed \$104.5 million soft-second subsidies for Metro New Orleans and provided support services for approximately 5,000 households—homeowners who were struggling to rebuild and renters who required wrap-around services. Morris was lead organizers for the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance (GNOHA) when it started in 2007 as the collaborative coalition of non-profit housing builders and community development corporations and, since its incorporation in 2012, Morris has served as GNOHA's Chair.

She has been working to eradicate housing discrimination in a City that's had a history of racial exclusion. And while there have been strides by some in the African-American community, there are still far too many who have been left behind in this sad tale of two cities characterized by a few that have and too many who do not have enough to survive or barely scraping by. "There is a problem with systemic racism and classism in New Orleans and unfortunately a lot of scapegoating of the victims saying it's their fault. But in truth, the system in many ways is rigged and we've got to change it. We have continued to go and speak to our elected leaders and say no longer will you ignore this issue because you are ignoring me," says Morris.

Putting Housing as Top Priority First is Key to Full Recovery for New Orleans

Morris is leading the Housing First Campaign that's goal is to secure the commitment of 80,000 registered voters to support GNOHA's advocacy efforts and the implementation of the 10-Year HousingNOLA Plan. That can ensure that City leaders will prioritize safe, affordable, healthy housing for all in New Orleans. They are asking people to sign up and get involved and support candidates and hold elected officials accountable who will help residents stay in our neighborhoods and make them better; help citizens of New Orleans live close to good jobs and use tax dollars collected to make communities strong!



Alexis Sakari is one of the young educated professionals who has decided to leave the city due to the lack of affordable housing options.



Jeffrey May pictured above is the Principal of International Development and Planning (IDP) and the Former Head of the Fair Housing Action Center in New Orleans

Speaking of the Housing First Campaign she says, "We are pushing our Housing First Campaign because every time we vote or make a decision you have to put housing first. That doesn't mean ignoring the other issues; the City Council is working to approve a Masterplan and we have made suggestions and the one we are going back and forth about is giving people a chance to live in neighborhoods that are closer to where they work that's affordable. We are in the greatest housing crisis post-Katrina as it relates to affordable housing in"

NOLA: Is It Worth the Cost

Post-Katrina the City is changing dramatically as there are limited af-

fordable housing options. It seems today things are not so easy in the Big Easy. It is a City where some, even those who are college educated in some instances are cost-burdened where more than 50 percent of their income is going towards rent or a mortgage. "61% of renters are cost-burdened in this City. Most people who come here for new jobs rent, now some may be fortunate and access money and buy. But many struggles and become disenchanted and leave," says Morris dispelling the myth that it is only rich people from out of town coming and taking over neighborhoods.

Alexis Sakari is a college educated woman in her 30's who moved to New Orleans from At-

lanta and graduated from Southern University at New Orleans with a degree in Social Work and Counseling. After years of working in her field; she found herself still having to supplement her income with work in the hospitality industry to make ends meet.

This is the story of many who come to the City both Black and White; who love the culture and lifestyle but cannot live off an economy where well-paying jobs are scarce and affordable housing today is even scarcer. So, after a decade in New Orleans Alexis decided she would leave the City because it was unaffordable and lacked opportunities. "I love the City, its culture, and the people, but coming from Atlanta, where jobs and affordable housing and quality schools are everywhere and because I want to start a family I've decided to leave New Orleans."

Building a City for All the People

Even before Katrina, there were plans on the table by some who wished to make New Orleans wealthier and whiter. Much of this is evidenced by the mismatch in the building of new residential structures many of which are luxury, above market rate and not affordable. Also, this City, where there are not many high paying jobs is second only to San Francisco in most cost-burdened cities as it relates to housing.

Some would say if a City was a body then New Orleans is in critical condition when it comes to many things. And housing is key; because if people do not have safe affordable decent places to live how can it prosper? Jeffrey May is the Principal of International Development and Planning (IDP) and the Former Head of the Fair Housing Action Center in New Orleans. He works across the country working in communities helping cities craft policies that prioritize resources that help build better communities for all its citizens. "Yes, like many other cities across the nation and world for that matter, the City of New Orleans is in an affordable housing crisis. This has been a longstanding issue in the City. However, in recent years, it has been primarily caused and exacerbated by low livable wages, housing discrimination, an aging housing stock and other factors," says May.

"To first address this problem, job creators: the private sectors and government officials need to understand the inextricable connection they have with low-income and middle-income households in who produce and purchase their goods and services. Townships, coun-

ties, cities, and states need to view themselves as a living organism or system. If one part of the organism or system is sick the whole will not function properly and can lead to entropy eventually killing itself."

"Second, it needs to analyze its anatomy to determine where its greatest disparities, challenges, or impediments exist; and how has it invested public and private dollars. With a focus on examining areas identified under the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Rule, Racially and Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty, cities, and states can undertake this examination every five years by completing an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI) or as stated under the AFFH Rule Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH). Any public and/or private initiatives that reinforce production and compliance with these guiding documents should be extolled. A best practice example is the work done by HousingNOLA's Executive Director, Ms. Andreanecia M. Morris and the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance. The coalition has drafted a document and community engagement approach that supports, complements and builds upon this AI/AFH study in it the HousingNOLA 10-year Strategy and Implementation Plan to address Affordable Housing in New Orleans."

A New Orleans Without Those That Makes It Special?

Can the City move towards solutions to the affordable housing problem? Moving forward this will have to become a top priority if New Orleans is to survive because the direction it is going in as far as the lack of affordable housing is unsustainable. And if New Orleans will continue to be the great historic City it's been for the last 300 years it must address this issue, or it will become something unrecognizable with those who have shaped the culture of it absent.

We must ask ourselves where will the next Satchmo, Wynton Marsalis, Bo Diddley, Monk Boudreaux, Tootie Montana, Irma Thomas, The Neville Family, Trombone Shorty, Lil Wayne, Kermit Ruffins or any of our culture bearers come from if they are no places for them to live and nurture our history and preserve our cultural heritage. We must ask ourselves is it worth it to build luxury apartments and unaffordable housing at the expense of losing the soul and heartbeat of our City; the everyday people, the hospitality, the food, the families, and the love of people that's the ingredients in the gumbo that define who we are and that keep people coming back to the City.

Activists Talk Empowerment and Intersection of Social Justic Movements

Story and Photos By Junine Goodison

Data News Weekly Contributor
Two dynamic women shared their views on the importance of developing and centering cultural narratives in socio-political activism at the Conversations in Color Event at the Amistad Research Center on Jan. 22, 2018. Alicia Garza, the Co-Founder of Black Lives Matter joined Award-Winning Author Elizabeth Alexander at Tulane University in New Orleans, where they examined the imperatives of social change and its impacts on society.

The event, which was part of the sixth year of the Audre Lorde Series, sought to examine the intersection of race, gender, politics, art and history, according to Red Tremmel, the Director of Tulane's Office of Gender and Sexual Diver-

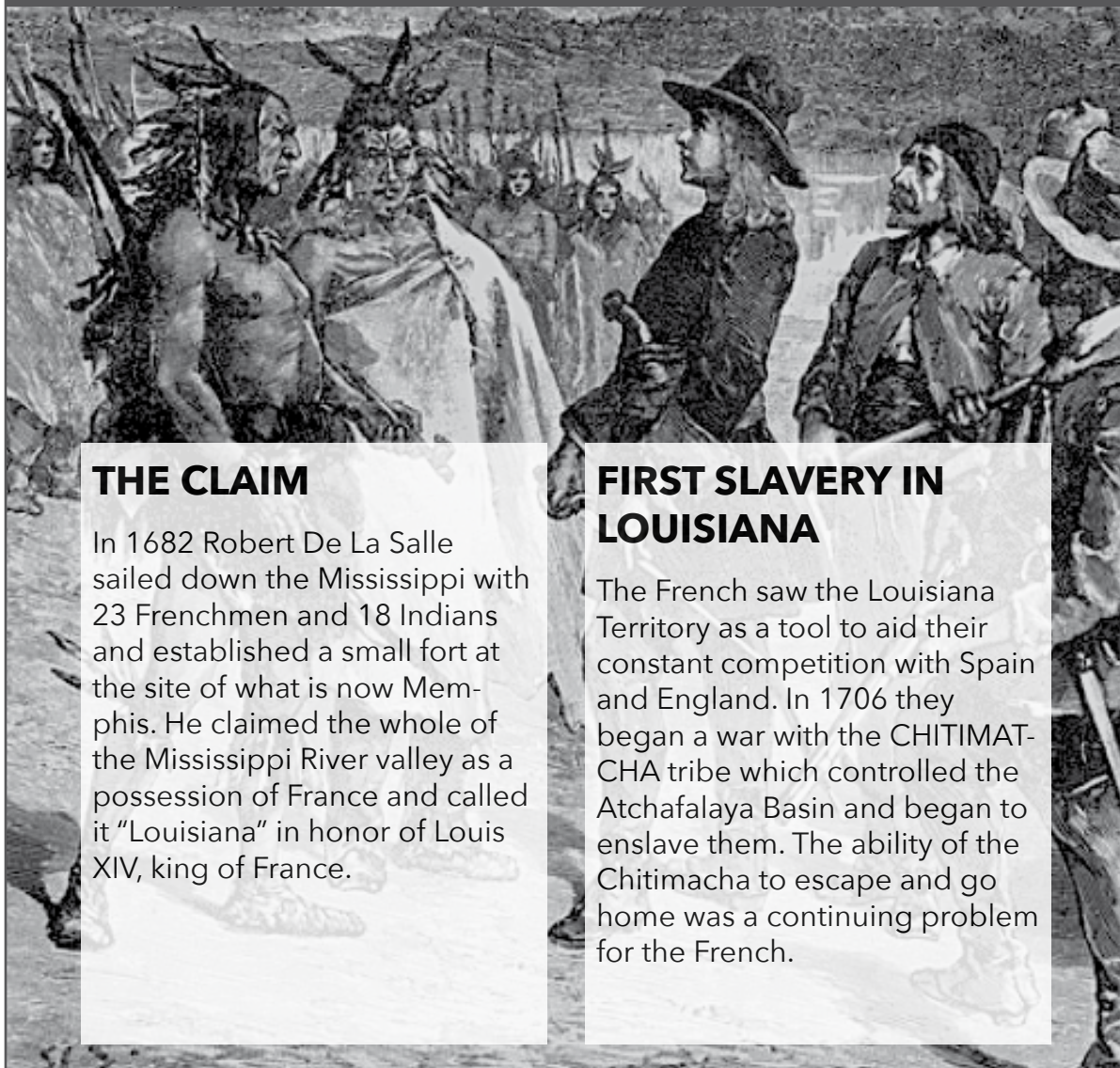


Black Lives Matter Co-Founder Alicia Garza (left) talks social justice movements with Poet and Author Elizabeth Alexander (right) at Conversation on Color Event at the Amistad Research Center on Jan. 22, 2018.



Elizabeth Alexander (left) with Alicia Garza.

Cumulus Radio and Data News Weekly Present TRI-CENTENNIAL BLACK FACTS



THE CLAIM

In 1682 Robert De La Salle sailed down the Mississippi with 23 Frenchmen and 18 Indians and established a small fort at the site of what is now Memphis. He claimed the whole of the Mississippi River valley as a possession of France and called it "Louisiana" in honor of Louis XIV, king of France.

FIRST SLAVERY IN LOUISIANA

The French saw the Louisiana Territory as a tool to aid their constant competition with Spain and England. In 1706 they began a war with the CHITIMAT-CHA tribe which controlled the Atchafalaya Basin and began to enslave them. The ability of the Chitimacha to escape and go home was a continuing problem for the French.

sity. While the death of Trayvon Martin kicked off social justice activism in the last decade, it's called on everyone to re-examine the issues of race, gender and class, the presenters shared.

"I coined the Black Lives Matter phrase as a result of wanting every American to write a love letter to Black people," said Garza, who is also Special Projects Director for the National Domestic Workers Alliance. Garza said she and her Black Lives Matter Co-Founders Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, received criticism from White people that the phrase should be "Black Lives Matters."

"Movements are patch work quilts and everybody who becomes a part of that has their own unique entry point and the paths for all of us is how do we learn to listen to those stories and not put them in hierarchies, not make one better than the other," Garza explained.

The social structure today places one group above the other, said Alexander, a Pulitzer Prize Finalist who read one of her original poems: "Praise Song for the Day," for the 2008 Inauguration for President Barack Obama. If more groups came together and make their voices heard, Alexander said she believes that what seems impossible can occur.

"Always raise your voice because you never know who's listening,"

said Alexander, who studied Black literature and became a poet interested in the lives and inner workings of Black women.

"Your silence will not protect you. What does it mean to take the knowledge as our full self and use that as fossil fuel to take us to the next place," Alexander said?

She shared how her grandmother told her that if there was ever racial tension or if someone hurt her feelings to consider Audre Lorde's words: "not to metabolize anger." Alexander said this influenced her to keep dreaming about how political power will look like for Black people.

Both Garza and Alexander said that addressing the issues that people of color face requires self-determination. Creativity comes out of oppression, Alexander told the audience. "It has to be that powerful to overwrite the noise to describe us as unworthy and that seeks to annihilate us," she said.

For Garza, Black resilience started long before the Black Lives Matter Movement. She said she was inspired by New Orleans long before the movement she co-founded took off in 2013.

"Katrina started the movement, I saw Black people on their roofs, and no-one was coming," Garza said. Garza also thought about who was going to save her. "No-one," she said.

Big Chief Thomas C. "Bo" Dean III, Young Cheyenne Tribe

By: Glenn Jones
Data News Weekly
Contributor

TRIBAL TIMELINE:

2000 – 2018 -

Big Chief Thomas "Bo" Dean

1997-2000 -

Big Chief Ferdinand "Pops" Bigard

Chiefs Last Stand

As we strolled the hallowed road approaching the 2400 block of North Villere Chief Bo articulated the historical value that this area has for his family and this inimitable culture. Growing up in the 8th Ward that is sandwiched between the huge 7th and 9th Wards, Chief Bo spoke of his roots and family lineage in the 8th Ward that stretches into the 7th and 9th Ward.

Big Chief Bo's deep family roots in the Black Masking Culture (Mardi Gras Indians) doesn't originate with Young Cheyenne, but in the Seminoles with his great-uncle Second Chief Sylverian Bigard brother of the legendary Ferdinand Bigard. Chief learned to design and the history of this culture from his grandfather Ferdinand Bigard who designed many of the suits of the legendary Flag Boy of the White Eagle Tribe, then Big Chief Joe (Joseph Adams) Pete. Chief refers to Big Chief Joe Pete as Uncle Pete and credits him as his mentor in Black Masking Culture. Saying "All the way through my teenage years I was under an apprenticeship under Joe Pete. That's where I learned how to construct a costume properly, how to decorate a costume and how to be the best dressed. Big Chief Joe Pete was never second best he was always the best dressed."

When Chief Bo came back from the Air Force in 1991 he became Flag Boy for four years for Chief Joe Pete of the Semi-



Big Chief Thomas C. "Bo" Dean III, Young Cheyenne Tribe

noles. Six years later after Big Chief Joe Pete passed away and the reigns of the Chief had passed down twice more to the present day Big Chief Kietho. Masking then as Flag Boy "Bo" got the tap on the shoulders from his late Grandfather Ferdinand saying, "it's time for you to step up". Big Chief Regal Black handed the Cheyenne Tribe down to Big Chief Ferdinand Bigard who was now calling his Grandson Bo to take over the Cheyenne Tribe. Chief Bo renamed them the Young Cheyenne for two reasons: one, to keep down confusion with similarly named tribes, and two because at the time he was the youngest Chief on the streets at the age of 23. Serendipitously, the same momentous year Chief Bo had twins Thomas IV and Tony, who are currently Spy Boys for the Red Cheyenne Tribe. In 2000, Ferdinand "Pops" Bigard ceremoniously came back as Council Chief to mask one last time and walk the streets with his Grandson Bo, commemorating his first year as Big Chief.

Cheyenne Reunion – 4 Generation Indian Heritage – Tricentennial NOLA

The Young Cheyenne Tribe's name has been in limbo for the last 5 years. Chief sons have been masking with the Red Cheyenne which came out of the Young Cheyenne under Big Chief John "Twin" Ohillia (cousin to Chief Bo). Chief Bo is encouraged by his sons wanting to bring their father out and mask with him since they were 5 years old the last time. That reality, coupled with Chiefs feeling about the Tribe name being in limbo, he decided to come back for what he calls, "My last stand". This will be no small stand! Combining the Red Cheyenne and erecting the Young Cheyenne with past members, collectively they will be 10 – 20 Indians deep, all color coordinated by their bloodline family.

Q) What role does your historical lineage play in present-day Black Masking?

A) I come from generations of Mardi Gras Indians like my grandfather, my grandfa-

ther's brother, and my Uncle Joe P. The difference with me is, the generations of Mardi Gras Indians in my tribe, they weren't average, they were all the top echelon of the culture as it applies to costuming, taking it seriously, and being true to the game. Literally, everything that I do is focused and dedicated to the elders and what they've trained me to be. The level of costuming that I bring on the street is because I refuse to be the one to damage the family legacy.

Q) This 300-Year Anniversary of the City, what is special about this Mardi Gras?

A) The Cheyenne Reunion. For me just to have my sons with the interest of being a part of this culture is overwhelming for me. This year the real reason I've decided to do the Cheyenne Reunion is the fact that I want everyone to see the embedded culture in the family lineage. My sons are masking with my nephew who is their Chief of the Red Cheyenne. So, this year when we hit the street we're going to have four generations represented in our tribe. This year I'm going to be the Big Chief Elder because I am the Elder Chief in the family and this is my last stand.

Q) How do the specific type feathers on a suit affect the time a tribe comes out?

A) If you come outside before daytime with eagle feathers you have no risk of damaging the feathers because of their stiffness. When you have Ostrich Plumes on because of the morning dew and moisture in the air before the sun rises the feathers will clench up because they have long hairs and can't be exposed to moisture like that. Whereas an eagle feather is stiff with firm quills.

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Young Men of Illinois Ball 2018

Photos by Bernie Saul

On Jan 27, 2018, the Young Men of Illinois Inc. held its 82nd Annual Carnival ball.

Reigning over the Carnival Ball as Queen was Miss Taylor Nicole Vigee, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Courtney Vigee.

Debutantes in the court were Misses Elington Dominique Bocage, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David Gerald Bocage; Kennedy Eve Byers, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Anthony Byers; Taylor Kennedy Collins, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Anthony Collins; Shalayé Armani Lawrence, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Joseph Lawrence; Kennedy Brooke Pankey, daughter of Mr. Peter Cory Pankey and Ms. Erika Melissa McConduit; Chrysta Jeneé Porter, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Christopher J. Porter; and Jade Marie Watson, daughter of Mr. Troy A. Watson and Ms. Shawann Williams Watson.

Princesses on the court were Misses Jayla Nicole Astorga, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jason Henry Rhodes Astorga; Gabrielle Marie Johnson, daughter of Mr. Garron and Mrs. Tonya Johnson; Madison Victoria Vidal, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cory J. Vidal; Aubry Celeste Chester, daughter of Mr. Treavor Snipes and Ms. Shellond Chester; Zoe Jewel Jacques, daughter of Ms. Jasminne Monique Navarre; Hope Christine Singleton, daughter of Cmdr. Damon I. Singleton and Dr. Tami Chrisentery Singleton; Kimberly Reese Buckner, daughter of Mr. Omar Buckner and Mrs. Kimberly R. Buckner; Lea Gabrielle McGeathy, daughter of Dr. Norman L. McGeathy and Dr. Brigitte J. McGeathy; Chandler Elizabeth Robinson, daughter of Mr. Kenneth Robinson Jr. and Ms. Dominique M. Robinson; Addison Morgan Roussell, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Adam A. Roussell; and Lydia Simonne Brown, daughter of Mr. Raymond A. and Dr. Kefla G. Brown.

Pages to the queen included: Lily Rose McBride, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David L. McBride; Alysia Faye Raymond, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Atari Levar Raymond; and Marselle Angelina Watts, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael E. Watts.

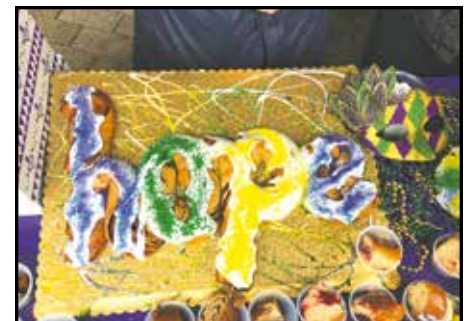
President of the organization is Dr. Terrence M. Augillard; Messrs. Clinton T. Smith Jr. is Vice President, William D. Aaron Jr. is the Financial Secretary, Omar K. Mason is Recording Secretary and Cardell Ross Jr. is the Treasurer. Messrs. Lawrence R. Robinson is Director of Social Affairs, John R. Murchison is Assistant Director of Social Affairs, Craig B. Mitchell is Sergeant-at-Arms, Milton M. Brown is the Chaplain, Dr. John E. Wilson is the Keeper of Records and Seals, Wayne J. Encalarde Jr. is Director of Publicity and Marion D. Floyd is Parliamentarian.



Scenes from the King Cake Festival

Photos by Amyre Brandom-Skinner
Data News Weekly Contributor

You know it's almost Mardi Gras time when you see King Cakes. This year's King Cake Festival didn't disappoint. Besides a great deal of competition for the best King Cake, many other food vendors were all on hand to showcase the best flavors New Orleans has to offer. Proof positive, that hands down, New Orleans is the place to be if you want to experience real flavor and real fun. Of course, Data was there!!!



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Stop Hoping that the Republicans Will Get Sick of Trump. They Won't.



Bill Fletcher, Jr.
NNPA Columnist

After every Trump outrage, we go through a similar routine. Trump says or does something that most sane people believe to be over the top; he is roundly condemned; some Republicans shake their heads; masses of people ask that something be done...and then it all fades into the next news cycle.

What was different in connection with Trump's recent alleged remarks against Africa, Haiti and Latin America—the notorious “s-thole remarks”—was that some Republicans who were in the room at the time of the alleged remarks first played dumb and then claimed that the remarks had not been verbalized. At that point, there was laughter in the audience.

Yet, in talk show after talk show there is a question that keeps getting asked: why isn't something being done about this situation? Why can't Trump be brought back to the standard of a respectable politician? The answer is not very difficult, but has several parts. Here goes.

First, he is not now nor has he ever been a “respectable” politician. Whether as a reality show celebrity

or candidate for office or now as President, he has insisted on being provocative. He believes in stirring things up. It is this modus operandi that inspired his right-wing populist base. They were not looking for what they believed as more of the same. On top of that it remains far from clear that Trump would understand how to be a respectable politician in either case. It seems to run against his nature.

Second, who will do anything about Trump? The Republicans control both houses of Congress, the White House and the U.S. Supreme Court. They look at Trump as a blunt force object that serves the interests of their agenda. Many of them may be personally uncomfortable with him, but they know that if they move to take him down,

they may provide momentum for the Democrats. They would rather that the United States become and remain a global laughingstock, than lose the political edge.

Third, the so-called moderate Republicans who are deeply uncomfortable with the crudeness of Trump worry that they will be challenged in Republican primaries by the extreme Right should they move against Trump. Perhaps they wonder and hope that there will be deeper revelations in the Mueller investigation of alleged Trump/Russia ties, but for now they will do nothing.

Thus, holding Trump accountable is a matter of political power. It is not a matter of morality and good will. If those who see the Trump regime as a threat to humanity do

not engage in mass political action, including, but not limited to, electoral politics, the situation will go from bad to worse. By worse, I mean growing authoritarianism. And here we must all be clear that Trump's infatuation with authoritarianism is not a simple rhetorical device to increase the ratings. It seems to reflect the centerpiece of his worldview: Life is about Trump; Trump is the savior of the U.S.; Trump's ideas are the greatest that humankind has every experienced. Those who get in the way of Trump's truth, therefore, are enemies who must be removed.

The challenge is now ours.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a talk show host, writer and activist. Follow him on Twitter @BillFletcherJr, Facebook and at www.billfletcherjr.com.

learn more >

BORN TO BE GREAT

By the time she's ready to attend college, the majority of all jobs will require education and training beyond high school. Jobs in healthcare, community services, and STEM will grow the fastest among occupational clusters. To be ready for these jobs of the future, students in grades K-12 need learning experiences that meet them where they are, engage them deeply, let them progress at a pace that meets their individual needs, and helps them master the skills for today and tomorrow.

The Every Student Succeeds Act empowers parents like you to make sure that the opportunity for a great education is the standard for every student. To get involved, visit www.nnpa.org/essa.

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Cumulus Partner Spotlight

Talus Knight

By Oba Lorrius
Data News Contributor

Talus Knight is the Program Director and Operations Manager for Cumulus Broadcasting New Orleans. This candid conversation with Talus was not only refreshing and enlightening but it also gave us an in-depth look into New Orleans Hip-Hop Radio Culture and the pulses of being an artist in the Big Easy.

Q) What is one of your favorite perks about working in radio?

A) What I love about radio is that we can be more clandestine. Moving in a crowd in the stealth. Being in the public ear instead of the public eye. TV had too many constraints to creativity than radio. Radio personalities have the opportunity to be more creative.

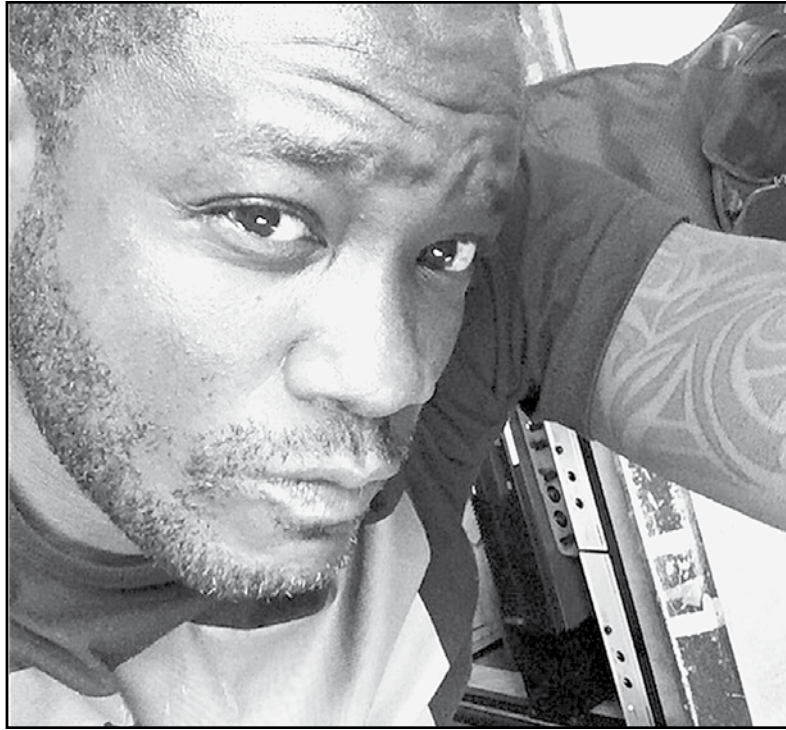
Q) What is a finished product?

A) Artists that have digital assets up, on all the platforms. I ask artists if they have a SoundCloud not only to see where they're at but to also see if I can get some analytics going. I want to see who is listening to you, and maybe some comments. I'm trying to get a gauge of who you are as an artist and are you trending or if you're on the cusp. We just can't take your word for it. In 1996 you could've gotten away with that but today I have Shazam numbers coming in every Monday that I get to look at by zip code, Neilson stats from physical sales, and the analytics on all platforms. I'm seeing who the people in New Orleans are listening to and downloading.

Talus Knight Book List: The World is Flat by Thomas L. Friedman

Q) Is it harder or easier these days for an artist to create a name for themselves?

A) This is the golden age of getting your work out there. There are so many platforms. Back in the day, a chick from Singapore wouldn't be hitting you up telling you your song is fire. She wouldn't know who the f@&\$ you are, but now you don't know, you might be poppin in



102.9's Program Director and Operations Manager Talus Knight.

Moscow before the 7th Ward.

Q) What social issues are you passionate about addressing?

A) Reading comprehension and digital literacy. I read a lot and I see what's going on state-wide not just here in New Orleans with the kids, and I would like to shine a spotlight on that and do workshops for kids that may be behind. We want them to know that just because you're behind doesn't mean you can't catch up. I think what happens is that kids get too far along in the system and already they've tuned out. I hate that one size fits all public-school system. I learned in a different manner and I didn't learn that till I went to college. I'm interested in digital literacy and awareness. A lot of kids don't have access to Wi-Fi and a lot of these platforms that are sold. Kids in the suburbs have iPads and all kinds of devices that inspire kids. I see why certain kids don't get interested in certain things; it's because they're not exposed to it and let's be honest, this is the future and you're going to have to be digitally literate.

"Artists you got to take control of your own destiny...beat the concrete up...talk to every DJ, and

you compliment that hustle with the art of digital." –Talus Knight


Q) Any words of wisdom for New Orleans youth?

A) Life is a marathon. They're ruts but there's no such thing as staying in a rut. They're peaks and valleys but be patient when you're in that valley trying to get up that hill. Just know that nothing lasts forever.

Q) You've been successful in five major cities, what makes radio life in New Orleans different?

A) In the news media Black people are treated as one monolith and what I've noticed traveling and having to immerse myself in the Black culture of that City, I noticed that Black people in Cleveland aren't the same as Black people from Richmond, Virginia.

Black people from Richmond, Virginia are not the same as an hour and a half north in DC and North Carolina is not like Georgia. It's beautiful to see. Your surroundings do mold you and even though we are one we are different and special. Fast forward here, New Orleans has so many layers. I've been to so many rapid cities where it's about who's got the best car or what kind of job you've got. In New Orleans some of that is in the mix, but there's so much more. They're all kinds of music, take your pick, pick your poison. Speaking of poison, y'all like to drink and that attracts a lot of musical people. New Orleans is the perfect incubator for what you see, arts and music because it's so wide open. I like the feel that it has, it feels like the wild-west creatively down here.



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King Cake Festival Kicks-Off Mardi Gras Season While Raising Funds

By Amyre Brandom-Skinner
Data News Contributor

Foodies and festival lovers traveled from across the country to New Orleans' Champions Square to satisfy their sweet tooth cravings for the staple of the Mardi Gras Season: King Cake. It was the Fifth Annual King Cake Festival hosted by Ochsner Hospital for Children on Sunday, Jan. 28th, downtown on Poydras Street. People enjoyed the delicious dessert in a variety of forms and flavors in support of a charitable cause. Some 26 bakeries presented culinary creations as Ochsner's Department of Philanthropy raised funds to support infants in need of patient assistance.

"Often times a family shows up at the hospital with just the clothes on their back," said Maida Jones, the Director of Annual Giving at Och-



Photos by Amyre Brandom-Skinner

sner Health System. "They don't have money for food, lodging, or other essentials. All of this goes to help the families and benefit children in need whose families are unable to provide certain things for them," she said.

Festival-goers from other states showed up to support the festival and fill their King Cake craving. "I met a gentleman from a Seattle Children's Hospital," said Mark Armstrong, Executive Assistant to the Chairman of Pediatrics at Ochsner. "He saw that another pediatric hospital was promoting a festival, so he wanted to come out and support it," he said.

The family event is a now a yearly tradition, designed to attract all ages. Jeannine Mirambell and her family said the event is a fun time to jumpstart the Mardi Gras Season. "We've been bringing the whole family since the beginning. We get

to taste all of the King Cake while the kids get to run around and have a good time," Mirambell said. "We're King Cake crazy people... we eat King Cake for breakfast, lunch, and dinner during Mardi Gras," she said.

As people indulged in the sweet treat, live music performances filled the air. Solo acts, bands, and a high school pom pom team took the stage to perform for the crowd. Sugar from the King Cake and enjoyment of the entertainment moved the crowd to create a dance floor in front of the stage.

Each vendor brought cake and creativity to their booth proving that King Cake is not just a dessert. The "King Cake Burger" is a festival favorite that families often have to split for everyone to enjoy. Another crowd favorite was the "King Cake on a Stick." Children wrapped the line around Champions Park

as they encouraged their parents to stand in line for a King Cake Donut. Even vendors said they enjoyed preparing and eating their King Cake creations. "I can't wait to go take a break and eat because we have some good food out here," said Daut'e Martin, an employee with Bywater Bakery, a vendor at the festival.

"We brought our traditional King Cake bouille, chantilly, apple, praline, and strawberry," Martin said. The fresh fruit toppings and authentic flavors caused Bywater Bakery to have one of the longest lines of the festival. Staff said they welcomed the long line of King Cake lovers to their tent. "We were up last night late preparing everything for today, so I don't think we'll run out. If we do I'll be shocked," Martin said. And despite dozens of customers, the King Cake kept on rolling.

Krewe of Little Rascals Parade Entertain Children Across Louisiana

Story and Photo By Amyre Brandom-Skinner

Data News Weekly Contributor

Cloudy skies and a slight breeze made for better weather for parade-goers, in what has been a rainy start to the Mardi Gras season. Considered one of the family-friendly events of the season, the Krewe of Little Rascals Parade proceeded down the 4-mile stretch from the corner of Eldorado Street and Woodlawn Avenue to the intersection of Martin Behrman Avenue and Veterans Boulevard on Sunday, Jan. 28th in Metairie, LA. When the Krewe of Little Rascals started in 1983, its founders wanted a parade that both showcased and entertained children.

"My little sister grew up watching the Little Rascals TV show," said Tiffany Shepherd, a resident of Houma, LA. "This is my first time, but the name of the parade made me want to bring my 5-year-old son to check it out," she said.

Children between the ages of 2 to 18 attend and participate in the



parade. Middle school, high school, and community groups perform routines along the route.

"I saw the big float coming so I knew what I had to do," said Markeese Bernard, who attends Benjamin Franklin Elementary Mathematics and Science School. "I looked up and yelled: 'beads,' then



a kid on the float took a handful of them and aimed for my face," he said.

The floats and cars driving had an assortment of kid-friendly toys from Disney to Nickelodeon characters. Children raced up to the floats to catch chips, candy, and granola bars. Some of the throws included

fun pranks like fake cockroaches and Whoopee cushions along with beads and clappers.

Tina Merriweather and her four children from New Orleans East have been coming to Krewe of Little Rascals for as long as they could remember. "My first time coming to this parade was so long ago that

there was only two of us: me and my oldest son," Merriweather said. "My kids aren't the only thing that seems to be getting older and growing... there used to be a lot of us out here but now the crowds are overwhelmingly large."

Parade-goers said they traveled far and wide to have the family Mardi Gras experience. The Krewe of Little Rascals typically has 14-20 parade floats each year. Small children sat on their parents' shoulders as the best vantage point for catching throws aimed at the crowd. Krewe floats are also specially designed for handicapped use. The parade brings out relatives, friends, and neighbors all in support of the young people they know who march in the parade.

"I didn't want to walk for hours at first but having my friends there made the time fly," said Taylor Perry, a Metairie resident. "There's not much to do if you're under 21 in New Orleans during this season. The Krewe of Little Rascals makes it, so we don't feel completely left out," he said.

NNPA Hosts 2018 State of Black America Forum at Annual Conference

Leaders in Education, Civil Rights, Religion and Housing Discuss the State of Black America at Annual NNPA Conference

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Contributor

Four, preeminent Black leaders in America today, addressed the challenges and celebrated the success stories of the African American community, during a "State of Black America" forum at the 2018 National Newspaper Publishers Association annual Mid-Winter Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Dr. Lezli Baskerville, the president and CEO of the National Association for Equal Opportunity (NAFEO), spoke passionately about the future of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), while Julius Cartwright presented a sobering, yet optimistic report from the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB).

And while Reverend Tony Lee, the pastor of Community of Hope A.M.E. Church, delivered fervent remarks about the strong state of the Black Church, it was a fiery, no-holds-barred speech from Dr. Amos C. Brown that brought the capacity crowd to its feet.

Brown, a civil rights icon, who serves as the senior pastor at the Third Baptist Church of San Francisco and president of the San Francisco Branch of the NAACP, touted the virtues of the oldest civil rights organization in America and its importance today.

In what amounted to a sermon worthy of any Sunday service, Brown said the Black Press must tell the story of African Americans.

"Let no one else tell it for us," he said, before providing a vivid picture of his foray into the Civil Rights Movement, as a teenager.

"One of the problems with the Black community, today, is that we don't have enough rituals of re-



(From left-right) Lisa Frison, the Vice-President of African-American segment strategy at Wells Fargo; Julius Cartwright, the former President of National Association of Real Estate Brokers; Dorothy Leavell, the Chairman of the NNPA; Reverend Tony Lee, the Pastor of Community of Hope A.M.E. Church; Dr. Amos Brown, the Pastor of the Third Baptist Church of San Francisco; Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., the President and CEO of the NNPA; and Dr. Lezli Baskerville, the President and CEO of NAFEO. (Freddie Allen/AMG/NNPA)

membrance," Brown said.

Referring to the current administration and its policies, Brown said, "The man is doing today what he's always done."

Brown continued: "They say to make sure, 'If you're Black you get back. If you're brown, you stick around and if you're White, you're always right. They're not any better than we are. We came from Mother Africa.'"

Baskerville, a 2014 Harvard University Advanced Leadership Fellow, said the state of HBCUs remains strong.

"From my vantage point, HBCUs in 2018 are strong and getting stronger. In fact, it's harvest time for HBCUs," Baskerville said.

Baskerville also said that the vitriol coming out of the White House and the policies that jeopardize voting and other rights are reminiscent of the time when HBCUs were born.

"The actions and words and legislation taking place will turn back the clock, if we let it happen," Baskerville warned. "But, I say it's harvest time for HBCUs, because it's the 50th anniversary of the sanitation workers march [in Memphis] and the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and we are still going strong. We are 106 strong, but if you read fake news, HBCUs are closing."

Baskerville continued: "We have lost just one [Black college] and we are still struggling to get it back. I say it's harvest time, because while HBCUs are just three percent of schools, we graduate 20 percent of African Americans across the country; Sixty-percent of African American public health professionals; 50 percent of African American public school teachers; and more than 40 percent of Black STEM professionals."

Cartwright said NAREB, the oldest group representing Black realtors (which he called "realists"), is working to help Black homebuyers.

"Most African Americans were stripped of their wealth with the housing decline when trillions of dollars were lost," he said.

According to a recent report, Cartwright said that the median net worth for Black families is less than \$2,000 while the median net worth of White families is roughly \$100,000.

Further, he said, while the median wealth of White women was about \$41,000, the median wealth for Black women was only \$5.

"Real estate is the cornerstone of wealth," Cartwright said. "That's the equity we need to pass on to the next generation."

When it comes to the Black Church, Lee cautioned African Americans not to be disillusioned about religion by megachurches and television evangelists.

Lee said the A.M.E. church is united and membership is beginning to climb; mobilization efforts like the get out to vote campaign in Alabama during the contentious Senate race between Democrat Doug Jones and Republican Roy Moore are also increasing.

Lee noted that Black Church isn't seeing the type of radical drop off in its membership that White churches are experiencing.

"Most of our churches are 200 or 300 member churches and the Black Church is doing major work in every community," said Lee. "We are mobilizing when you look at the last election, the Black Church learned a great lesson...we must get back to training our people and understanding the science of mobilization."

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