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Data Zone Page 6

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March 3 - March 9, 2018 52nd Year Volume 44 www.ladatanews.com

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LEDISI

A Phenomenal Woman



Page 2



Fashion
Try a
Shirt Dress

Page 7

42 Tribes
Big Chief John
"Twin" Ohillia



Page 5

LEDISI

The Definition of a Phenomenal Woman



New Orleans native Ledisi is a 12 time Grammy Nominee who has in her two decades career won legions of fans that include Stevie Wonder, the late great Prince and Michelle and Barack Obama where she performed at the White House eight times during his Presidency.

By Edwin Buggage
Data News Weekly Editor

The True Essence of Beauty

The late great Maya Angelou wrote a poem called Phenomenal Woman about embracing and defining beauty beyond the eye, but the depth of the soul is

what true beauty is. Ledisi is the Essence of Phenomenal womanhood, with 12 Grammy nominations, her talent is limitless, and her style, grace, and beauty are impeccable. Over her two decades career, Ledisi has come to redefine the industry with her brand of girl power as she embodies the spirit of many greats who have come before her. On this day I am meeting her as

she prepares to perform a Nina Simone Retrospective with the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra.

I have known and followed Ledisi's career for many years; seeing her grind and now with her ninth studio album "Let Love Rule" climbing the charts she has come a long way and shining as bright as her luminous smile is on this day when we meet. She is sitting

Cover Story, Continued on page 3.

INSIDE DATA	
Cover Story	2
Newsmaker	4
42 Tribes	5
Data Zone	6
Fashion	7
Commentary.	8
State & Local News . .	9
National News	11

DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.

in a restaurant dressed casually in a black t-shirt and shorts; she is a chocolate skinned delight; ebullient, effervescent and engaging as we began to talk about her life and career.

She is relaxed and glad to be back to the City of her birth, "It feels good to be home, it just feels natural and it's just what I need right now," she says of her time in the Big Easy. "I'm just loving coming home and seeing my family and friends; I also love it when I am playing with musicians here, I do not have to explain a feeling they just get it. It is that soulful thing; it is like a comfortable chair you sit in. It is something spiritual that connects people in New Orleans and I love it."

Offstage, Ledisi is undoubtedly confident but comes off as a bit shy like a cute chocolate girl next door; very soft-spoken, sweet and humble. But once she hits the stage during one of her own shows or as Nina Simone on this recent night in New Orleans, she transforms into something amazing and indescribable. She has a je ne sais quoi, that's captivating to watch as she morphs into a sexy, empowered, confident diva, with a voice and presence that leaves one spellbound.

Making History

In addition to singing the songs of Nina Simone, she played Mahalia Jackson in the movie "Selma" speaking of her approach to the performance she says, "Doing Nina takes over your whole being and your soul. You cannot fake that kind of singing and then you have to get those words out. Studying, preparing, studying her phrasing, but I am me at the same time. I have to be me, but I have to carry over the tradition with what her singing was about. Her stance on the political side, love side and being Black side all of it, so I wanted to make sure we encompassed all that when we did the show; so, preparing is basically understanding who she is, but also how did she relate to me."

Ledisi has traveled across the globe winning legions of fans that include musical greats Prince, Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, Patti LaBelle and many others. But one of her biggest fans is the Obamas, who during their time in the Oval Office invited Ledisi to perform at the White House eight times. Speaking about what it was like to be part of such a historical time and getting to meet and know the former first couple she says, "Being part of their journey has been profound. I didn't have a chance to look at it until now. Because when you're in it and you're going wow I am singing for the first African-American President and First



Ledisi as Nina Simone with the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra dazzles audience with her amazing performance. (photo by Marcus Smith)

Lady's Birthday or I am singing at the Inauguration before the Inauguration at the church," she says with excitement ringing in her voice. "They invited me to come and speak to kids, to campaign for President Obama and now I am looking at that and thinking wow I was part of history. I was part of a change in our culture a change in how we see things, so that blew me away. Today I am looking at it and looking at the pictures and saying that really happened. It's funny thinking back

about our conversations that would be about music; it was like talking to your aunt or uncle or talking to one of your good friends about just life and being a woman, the world, politics. They are regular people who love the world, but just happen to be two the most famous people in the world. And they make you forget that and that is what I enjoyed."

A Voice that Empowers

Ledisi has had a multifaceted career as a recording artist, actress

and most recently an author in the book, "Essence Presents Ledisi... Better Than Alright: Finding Peace, Love and Power" that explores the inner depths of her life that is now impacting others, "I am grateful that people have always embraced me for being me. That first began with me being from New Orleans where we were taught we can do anything we put our minds to. My mom said, 'you can be whatever you want to be; you don't have to choose one thing whatever the job

entails you are going to get work.' The people embracing me and wanting to hear from me that blew me away that people wanted to hear me beyond singing. Now I can write and empower other women, and I realize that I was just doing that being myself."

Most recently, the Me Too Movement has given voice to women who have suffered abuse and harassment at the hands of men. It has been a rallying cry empowering women and, in some cases, causing men to speak out. Ledisi has been on the frontlines before the movement through her music and her life empowering and inspiring with her amazing gift. "I was abused when I was younger and calling it out was brave, but we should always call out things that hurt us and say that hurt me," she says with a tone of a triumphant survivor. "And at first I was afraid then I realized there were others like me I am doing the right thing. Also, it wasn't just women it was men too and people of different races and I was like wow, so me telling my story in my book writing it out was scary. I let my mom read it first and saw if she was ok and she was fine with it. She said to call it out, other women gave me courage, other men, my fan base gave me the courage to call it out. I think it's great we are finally talking about it the Me Too Movement. But you know what, the problem of abuse it's always been in our community, but we swept it under the rug, but now it's time to talk about it and it's good. I hope we have some action behind bringing it up and making it an issue."

Embracing your True Beauty

When one comes to a Ledisi's show, it is beautiful to see people of all shapes sizes and hues embrace their natural selves. In her years in the industry, she has become an icon and sex symbol that many women mimic and copy. You can see at her shows, sisters with well-coiffed locks walking with confidence and sassiness as Ledisi chimes many of her hits that includes her showstopper "Pieces of Me" where she encourages the audience to embrace their natural selves and love who they are. "The goal is to make sure women understand their power and men too. To express to the women what men, like, they don't want you to play the same sad movie. They want you to be confident and embrace yourself. Just how you got that man that is what will keep him by embracing who you are. You have to love yourself as you are and that is what my life and my career has been about, and I am glad I have been able to inspire people along the way."

Mayor Landrieu Opens Washington Avenue Crossing

By Brandon P. Brown
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Gert Town residents and Xavier University students will have a better view when crossing over Washington Avenue. The City of New Orleans' 15-year project to build a bridge that allows Xavier students to walk over Washington Avenue has officially opened.

The City held the grand opening of the bridge on Feb. 23, 2018, along with university officials. Mayor Mitch Landrieu joined Xavier President Reynold Verret, former President Norman C. Francis, Xavier Board of Trustees Head Sonia Perez, and Student Government Association President Bryan Redmond. The officials cut the ceremonial ribbon after several speeches, and then a second-line crew led officials and the public on an inaugural walk.

"It's about time," joked Xavier's retired President, Francis, to Landrieu about the long-term effort to bring the project to fruition. "We have waited a long time for this bridge to



Xavier and City Officials prepare to Cut the Ceremonial Ribbon (Photo by Brandon P. Brown)

complete and now our students can cross safely," Francis said.

The bridge began construction in 2003 under Francis' tenure as president, who appealed to the City for years to construct a safer walkway for students to cross the busy

street and canal from one side of the campus to the other. The state and City funded the entire project, which cost the City nearly \$2.9 million towards the construction of the bridge, according to Landrieu.

"This bridge was a long time

promise from the City and I am happy to be here for the opening," Landrieu said.

Commuter students who live off campus and park in the Convocation Center's parking lot will be the main users of the bridge, most of whom are

pharmacy students. Marie Fletcher, a second-year pharmacy student said she did not always feel safe crossing the busy street but is delighted for the bridge's completion.

"The bridge will be much safer for students, especially those who need to cross when it is dark," Fletcher said.

The bridge is not exclusively for Xavier students, it is also for the general public use of commuters and residents of the surrounding community. Perez, Xavier's Board of Trustees Head said the bridge is an opportunity for Gert Town and Xavier to strengthen their connection.

"This is a bridge of opportunity for Xavier and the community to grow closer to one another," Perez said.

The student government shares the same outlook towards the bridge as Perez. It is seen as an opportunity for community growth and cohesion. "This crosswalk will bridge the gap between the university and the community," said Redmond, Xavier's Student Government President.

Delgado Hosts Black Masking Culture Exhibit and Lecture

By Glenn Jones
Data News Weekly
Contributor

February 22nd, 2018, history was made. For the first time in New Orleans' higher learning history, a Black Masking Cultural art exhibition was held. Delgado Community College will not only be written in the history books as the first forward-thinking institution in New Orleans to hold a Black Masking art exhibition and lecture series but also as the first college to facilitate the bond between NOLA scholars, Black Masking Culture, and 3D Technology. Weeks prior to the opening of the exhibition, Delgado opened the Chevron FabLab to 25 middle school scholars from St. Mary's who learned the basics of 3D design from FabLab-Pro Sam Provenza and went on a Black Masking cultural exploration with lead curator Glenn Jones



from B-Nola. The students delved into the significance of their local native traditions and discussed ways in which to leverage 3D



Pictured left to right are Arnel Cosey, Ph.D., Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs and Executive Dean, Delgado Community College, Lauren Bugg, Chevron Public Affairs Representative, Glenn Jones CEO, Bnola.love, Shaka, and Naimah Zulu owners Golden Feather Gallery and Lauren King, Senior Workforce Development Director, Delgado Community College.

technology and create products that youth in New Orleans identify with. The end result of that creative powwow was a 3D col-

lector's edition figurine of Big Chief Shaka Zulu of the Golden Feather Tribe. New Orleans natives of all ages gathered in awe.

Stay tuned for the bNola.love Black Masking podcast hosted by St. Mary's School scholars with the gift of journalism.

Big Chief John "Twin" Ohillia Red Cheyenne Tribe

By: Glenn Jones
Data News Weekly
Contributor

TRIBAL TIMELINE

2016 - Present – Big Chief John
"Twin" Ohillia

At the age of fifteen, Big Chief John "Twin" Ohillia started following the Comanche Hunters and fell in love with the Black Masking Culture. When Chief Ohillia's cousin Big Chief Bo of the Young Cheyenne came on the scene, John started following him holding his stick, wings, and hat while his twin brother, Jonathan Ohillia, played drums. Chief John says, "I never stopped after that the needle started to roll". At that point, Chief was ready. He sat down with Big Chief Bo to speak about him and his brother masking under Young Cheyenne. Originally, they were going to run Chief Scout, but Ferdinand Beaguard stepped in and said they were going to run Flag Boy. In 2002, Johns' twin brother Jonathan Ohillia masked as Flag Boy. After that John was ready to start sewing for himself, but then Katrina hit. As soon as they returned to New Orleans, he started sewing again. As Chief John says when he started sewing again it was "All hell, tell the Captain, I had to do something". John started running Flag Boy and fell deeper in love with this culture before evolving into Big Chief of the Red Cheyenne.

Q) After Katrina you were in St. Francisville, was Black Masking Culture calling you?

A) I wanted to get back to New Orleans and find me an artist, I had to get things drawn up. I mean, I couldn't stay away. It was just calling me, the culture in New Orleans alone is there, so I was ready for it.

Q) How does your family tribe look so unified from the Spy Boy to the Chief?

A) It's not just the Chiefs that



Big Chief John "Twin" Ohillia - Red Cheyenne Tribe

have ideas. From the front to the back if you put everybody's ideas into one that is how you're going to look. The Chief might have better ideas than the Spy, the Spy may have better ideas than the Chief but if y'all could sit down and come to the roundtable and put the ideas together, man that's one hell of a gang.

Q) If everyone shared the mentality of sticking together, do you believe it could take Black Masking Culture around the world?

A) If you stick together you could move it, you could make that move. Don't get me wrong everybody sticks together. It's just you from one ward and they're from another ward. But they stick together, and we stick together as one unit. There is no doubt about that. All the Chiefs get together and do what they need to do for each other.

Q) How would you describe the Spirit of your Tribe?

A) Our Spirit is family oriented. We come together as one, it's no different than this one (immediate family). There's no division in this gang. We hustle and bustle together. We bead

together, we sew together, we rock together, we leave together, and you're never gonna catch us alone.

Q) We know your brother started following Indians playing the drums, what does the music of this culture do to you?

A) It's a wonderful feeling to sing and you hear the drums and you sit back and just listen. When it's that time to come out you just let it flow. Just to hear them drums play, the congos going, the tambourines going, cowbells going, man them drum beats ain't nothing nice!

Q) What is your advice to anyone that wants to learn more about this culture?

A) If you really want to know something and they really want to teach something to somebody, get one of the Chiefs to go in there and talk to them. Learn the history and get the background. Don't just jump in this and think, "I know this so I'm gonna go tell somebody else this story". Learn the background and learn the history.

Q) How would you describe this culture to people outside New Orleans?

A) There's a long history behind

this from the beadwork to what we stand for. We don't just come from picking up a needle and sitting down thinking about why we're in this. We come from what the slaves went through and how they fought and how we fought for a long situation with this. It comes from the background of us hiding the slaves and everything else, it's not just the beadwork.

Q) What are some of the responsibilities that come with being Chief?

A) Let's say you have twenty people in your tribe, you've got to put up with twenty different attitudes. You have to deal with those attitudes on the street. You have a responsibility to the kids, the adults, and the spectators. You've got to control every mountain that's in your gang. You've got to control every mouth, and sometimes it doesn't work. You've got to control that for your gang to be successful. You've got to know who's not feeling good and who doesn't want to do this or that. It's a lot of headaches but you've got to learn how to deal with it. You can't just look out for yourself anymore. You've got to teach them what to do because one day I might not be here anymore.

Q) What do you want your legacy to be and how do you want your tribe remembered in 300 years?

A) I want to be remembered as a responsible good role model that did his job as a Chief, knowing that my gang can carry on without me. I want my tribe to be as beautiful as possible and I want them to make a mark on the City that no one else ever did. I want it to be, when they walk out the door, everyone knows, that's Red Cheyenne.

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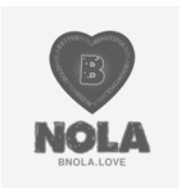
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Xavier Students Show Up in a Big Way to Make Things Greener

Photos By Junie Goodison
Data News Weekly Contributor

Who says that the young people can't make a difference. Here are some additional highlights from The Green Light New Orleans Project and the Xavier University student volunteers who showed up to assist in planting gardens in the Westbend Community in Algiers. It's wonderful to have that kind of community concern and support from our young people, we salute you Students of Xavier!



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EDNA KARR



The Age of the Shirt Dress



Delaney George
Columnist

Is it a shirt? Is it a dress? Fashion can be confusing, but it sure is innovative. In today's fashion world, people are becoming more and more creative with how they dress themselves. A belt can become a necklace, a hoodie can become a two-piece set, and now a shirt can become a dress.

Oversized clothing used to be something you'd return or give away, but the shirt/dress trick has most women reconsidering that shirt that might be two sizes too big. For example, oversized tees, sweaters, flannels, and jackets have the potential to become a hot ensemble with the comfortable feel of a nightgown. Shirt-dresses typically fit loose and have been altered to be long yet still hold a complementing shape.

The shirt-dress is the perfect outfit for the woman who wants to be stylish and glam, without the uncomfortable tight-fitting mini dress. An easy way to create your own shirt dress is to go in a man's closet and find a loose-fitting item for your shape. You can either use a belt around the waist to accentuate your frame or let it hang and show off your legs. No matter what, your shirt-dress is where fashion meets comfort.

For more information on shirt-dresses email delinke@yahoo.com or direct message @Delannii on Instagram.



Above. Oversized sleek black blouse with hanging strings worn as a stylish colorful dress. +++ Top Right. Red sweater with a low shoulder and pearl designs worn as a sexy loose dress. +++ At Right. Two-toned oversized jean shirt with waist belt worn as a dress.



(All Photos by Bosslady2.5 on Instagram)

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

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American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten on Arming Teachers



Randi Weingarten
President, AFT

the expertise needed to be, sharp shooters; no amount of training can prepare an armed teacher to go up against an AR-15.

"One would have thought, after the president's listening session, that he wouldn't have put the agenda of gun manufacturers and the National Rifle Association over our students, educators and schools. The tweets today applauding the NRA, and ignoring educators and the students themselves, were despicable and diversionary. Teachers and school staff need to ensure schools are safe sanctuaries and not armed fortresses.

"Trump wants to spend money on bonuses for armed teachers yet has cut summer school and after-school programs, and he argues we

“Trump wants to spend money on bonuses for armed teachers yet has cut summer school and after-school programs, and he argues we can't afford to pay for school safety programs, school nurses and counselors, and other programs that help kids.”

can't afford to pay for school safety programs, school nurses and counselors, and other programs that help kids.

"How would arming teachers even work? Would kindergarten teachers be carrying guns in holsters? Is every classroom now going to have a gun closet? Will it be locked? When you have seconds to act when you hear the code for an active shooter, is a teacher supposed to use those seconds getting her gun instead of getting her students to safety? Anyone who pushes arming teachers doesn't understand teachers and doesn't understand our schools. Adding more guns to schools may create an illusion of safety, but in reality it would make our classrooms less safe."

Statement of AFT President Randi Weingarten on President Trump's proposals to arm teachers:

"I spoke to 60,000 educators last night in a telephone town hall. The response was universal, even from educators who are gun owners: Teachers don't want to be armed, we want to teach. We don't want to be, and would never have

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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Celebrating Black Beauty through Art

By La'Shance Perry
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Local experts and artists addressed the topic of Black self-love as part of "Queen: A Symposium on Black Beauty," on Feb. 22, 2018, that featured the artistic works from the exhibition "Queen: From the Collection of CCH Pounder." The artist Carol Christine Hilaria Pounder (CCH Pounder) is also an Emmy-Winning Actress, known for her roles in Avatar, Sons of Anarchy, Law & Order, ER, and the X-Files. The symposium held on Xavier University's Campus featured a round-table discussion on Black Beauty, showcased vendors that promoted self-care, retail, ethnic care products and artwork, and included a symbolic performance by Artist, Satch Hoyt. The event's organizers: Prospect 4 New Orleans, Xavier's Art Department, and Xavier's Division of Fine Arts and Humanities said they wanted a Black History Month event that represented Black Beauty and art that engaged the community.



Women comb their natural hair during artist Satch Hoyt's performance called "Hair Combing Cycle" (Photo by La' Shance Perry)

"Representation is key. That's why an exhibition like that can be so empowering and so radical even though it is just images," said Sarah Clunis, an Assistant Professor of Art History at Xavier. "This is an educational thing, but it has all of

the different elements to engage people," Clunis said.

Pounder's Exhibition features African American artists including her own and art from her collection from the African Diaspora. "Queen: from the Collection of

CCH Pounder" is on public display in Xavier's Administration Building until March 22, 2018.

Clunis, who is the Director of Xavier University's Art Gallery, said she orchestrated the featured exhibit and the symposium because students would tell her that they don't feel pretty as Black women. This motivated her to showcase Black Beauty through this exhibit and performance.

"Part of what made me want to do this is because students have, over time, told me that they don't feel beautiful," Clunis said.

One of the highlights of the night was London-born Artist, Hoyt's performance called "Hair Combing Cycle." The performance featured Black women, dressed in white, of all different backgrounds combing their hair rhythmically to create a song. The performers used hair picks that were red, yellow, and green that represent liberation colors. Hoyt, who is of British and Jamaican background, said that this performance is a tribute to the first slave rebellion in Georgetown

and that he wanted people to take away from his performance "pain and unity." Hoyt has used combs throughout his career. This is the first experience dedicated to the significance of combs with Black hair and history.

"Many of our women and activists have portals and vessels that carry these codes, and codes were passed down by the act of combing. This particular performance was about the 'detanglement' of colonial parities," said Hoyt, who resides and works in Berlin, Germany.

One of the performers and first-year student Naiya Ray said she felt that it was a liberating experience. "I just want other students to appreciate all cultures, not just the Black community but African communities as well," Ray said.

Vendors sold products such as natural hair and skin care products, clothing, jewelry and art that all represented the Black community and African culture.

"Each [vendor] is different and celebrates different African cultures and that's what the performance did," Ray said.

Renowned Fiber Artist Talks Essence of African-American Material Culture

By Temitayo Odulaja
Data News Weekly
Contributor

The traditions and culture she received as a child is what shaped her as a designer and artist. Cultural Activist Xenobia Bailey spoke on the "Aesthetic of Funk" to wrap up a three-day H.B.C.U. Material Culture Conference titled "Building Cultural Economies." Bailey delivered her address to scholars from across the country as part of the Dillard University Ray Charles Program in African-American Material Culture in the university's George's Auditorium on Saturday, Feb. 24th. The event's organizers said the program sought to go beyond just looking at food and music to look at other forms of material culture that is unique to African-Americans.

"My mother used to braid my hair every morning," said Bailey, a

Fiber Artist, whose designs for crocheted-African-styled hats have been featured in commercials and even on The Cosby Show.

She told the audience that growing up, she did not have the luxury of today's technology, one of which was thermostats. Her household relied on cooking stoves to warm the entire house during the winter, in the frigid region of Seattle, Wash.

She shared with the audience that she believed that the evolution of African-American Culture stemmed from the hostile conditions of the Black experience in the U.S. Black people in America had neither the machines nor materials, conducive to healthy living. So, they had to improvise and modify the resources they had to sustain themselves as a race.

"You have to be radical in order to survive, you have to struggle for



Acclaimed Designer and Fiber Artist Xenobia Bailey spoke as the Keynote Speaker for the H.B.C.U. Material Culture Conference at Dillard University on Feb. 24th. (Photos by Temitayo Odulaja)

your life," Bailey said.

One such innovation included the use of newspapers to seal holes in the walls of homes to prevent the inflow of cold draught. Additionally, such methods developed into an artistic style of collage-like patterns and are applied by contemporary artists, she shared. Also, African-Americans invented quilts from recycled newspapers to keep warm at night – of which later evolved into an artistic technique. Regarding the level of resourcefulness 19th-Century African-Americans achieved, she felt that today's artisans do not approach such remarkable feats, given that Black Ancestors had no choice but to be inventive.

"Today's African-American Artists cannot match the works of these artists," Bailey said, adding that African-American Ancestors

Fiber Artist, Continued
on page 11.



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Making the City Green, One Plot at a Time

By Junie Goodison
Data News Weekly
Contributor

The Green Light New Orleans Project partnered with university student volunteers on Feb. 24th to assist in the Westbend Community in Algiers, to plant gardens. The goal of this project improves the New Orleans Community by offsetting carbon emissions and making homes more environmentally-friendly through a number of activities. One of them includes building backyard vegetable gardens, an activity that unifies residents through voluntary work and interaction. The Green Light Gardens New Orleans began in 2006 to encourage sustainable rebuilding in the City after Hurricane Katrina.

"We enjoy doing this, it is fun because it's a bunch of individual actions to create a massive movement," said Amélia Desormeaux, a Coordinator for the Green Light New Orleans Project.

"We meet so many different community members one on one. One small action, with so many people, creates a big change," Desormeaux said.

Green Light New Orleans is a

grassroots environmental non-profit program which began with installing energy efficient light bulbs first and has since expanded to installing rain barrels and backyard gardens in homes across the City. The organization works with many community members and partners over the years to expand eco-efforts. They currently maintain a garden that is opened to the public in the Holly Grove Community.

"We get a group of volunteers every week and managed more than 20,000 volunteers," Desormeaux said. "Today was exciting because we were able to put in two gardens in the beautiful weather," she said.

The student volunteers from Xavier University dug a garden bed for a resident's home and after following detailed instructions from Desormeaux, they then transferred tomatoes, bell peppers, parsley, carrots, lettuce, cilantro and broccoli and arugula to the fresh soil of the garden bed.

"The Caribbean Students Association wanted to do a service that would directly impact the community, and this was a good one," said Loian Chambers, the President for Xavier's Caribbean Students Association, a Xavier student organization that volunteered with the project.



Green Light New Orleans volunteers from Xavier University planted a backyard garden for an Algiers resident for this environmentally sustainable local project. Photos by Junine Goodison

"We were able to interact with the person we built the garden for. It was my first time and I'd do it again,"

Planting the backyard garden was the first time some of the student volunteers got involved in the community for environmentally friendly initiatives. The students said they would like to do the project again because it directly impacts and provides the community with healthy food.

"It's cool to be able to go out and

help someone in the community by building them a garden that can grow vegetables," said Gamoni Fallings, a student volunteer. "I think gardens are a great way for the community to have access to naturally grown vegetables and fruits, not many communities have fresh grown veggies and fruits in their garden," Fallings said.

The backyard garden was set up that Saturday at Westbend Parkway, for resident Reshelle Johnson. This is her first garden and though she had been doing her own reading on

gardens she needed help.

"I wanted a backyard garden so that I could be more self-sufficient. Since I work at home full time," Johnson said. "I also want to spend more time outdoors. I've been reading about gardening for a couple of years now, too afraid to take the plunge, but thanks to Green Light New Orleans I am on track to have my first batch of produce in a few months," she said.

It was a pleasant experience to interact with the students on a common goal, Johnson noted. She hoped the students got as much out of the activity as she did.

"The ten volunteers were fun, they respected me, and each other. They worked quickly and shared responsibilities," Johnson said. "I pitched in when I could, they were well-prepared by the Green Light Staff. The entire experience was a joy," she said.

The project is more than transforming the City's environment but bringing the City together around sustainability.

"Volunteering unites the community because people come together and make a difference to improve the community," said Desihan Burrell, a student volunteer.

Sheriff Gusman to Host Easter Egg Hunt Saturday, March 24th



Data Staff Edited Reported Report

Sheriff Marlin N. Gusman is inviting the public to his 13th Annual Easter Egg Hunt from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, March 24th at Audubon Riverview, also known as "The Fly" area behind Audubon Zoo.

The Easter Egg Hunt, which is free and open to the public, features games, music, and food starting at

10 a.m. The Easter Egg Hunt for children ages 1-5 begins at 11 a.m. The Easter Egg Hunt for children ages 6-12 begins at 11:45 a.m. Participants can exchange the eggs they find for a gift bag filled with candy.

Children and their parents are encouraged to arrive early and register to receive same-day, free admission to the Audubon Zoo.

Jazz Trumpeter Christian Scott Showcases His "Stretch Music" at Contemporary Arts Center.

By Leland Johnson
Data News Weekly
Contributor

New Orleans native and Grammy-nominated Jazz Trumpeter Christian Scott returned home for the first time since the release of his album *The Centennial Trilogy* to perform at a three-night concert at the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans from Feb 21st-23rd. This succession of performances marked the first time Scott, who also goes by Christian Scott aTunde Adjuah, has been presented as a headlining artist at the CAC. Inviting Scott to perform at the CAC was an easy decision to make the organizers said.

"Christian is a NOLA native and NOCCA Alumni," said William Bowling, the Performing Arts Manager at the CAC. "His family has performed on our stages. His



From left, Lawrence Fields (piano), Christian Scott (trumpet), Stephen J. Gladney (saxophone), and Max Morgan (Bass) perform stretch music at the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans on Feb. 23rd. (Photo by Leland Johnson)

history is here. He's one of the best Contemporary Jazz Musicians alive, so it seems fitting with our mission that he be presented here," Bowling said.

Along with Scott were fellow musicians Weedie Braimah on percussion, Lawrence Fields on piano, Stephen Gladney on saxophone, Max Morgan on bass, and Kojo Odu Roney on drums.

"This was my first time seeing Christian Scott," said Paulina Greer,

a Chicago native. "I've never seen someone as composed as him as a musician."

The band soothed the crowd with a dazzling dose of Scott's popularized and very own stretch music, a form of jazz that he pioneered which unhinges the basic foundations of jazz music to incorporate all musical forms and ideas into one. This jazz style was the central focus

Trumpeter, Continued on page 11.

Did Prosecutors Destroy Evidence in the Cosby Sexual Assault Case?

Bill Cosby's Lawyers Want Criminal Case Dismissed

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Contributor

As Montgomery County prosecutors continue to pursue a verdict in the Bill Cosby sexual assault case involving former Temple University employee Andrea Constand, lawyers for the entertainer have filed several motions, including two arguing that the case against him should be dismissed.

And, while such motions are considered procedural and are rarely granted, the "Uptown Saturday Night" star has presented a compelling case for dismissal.

According to court documents filed by Cosby's lawyers, the court should dismiss all charges against Cosby because, by Montgomery County, Pennsylvania prosecutors' own admission, they have not only failed to disclose evidence but have also destroyed exculpatory evidence.

"Specifically, the prosecution recently disclosed for the first time that, prior to the first trial, in this case, a prosecutor and two detectives interviewed a critical witness, Marguerite Jackson who told them that in 2003 or 2004, the complaining witness, Andrea Constand, a co-worker, and friend, had told her that she had not been sexually as-



Bill Cosby's lawyers want the judge in his sexual abuse trial to dismiss the case. (POOL PHOTO)

saulted, but she could say that she had, file charges, and get money," the bombshell filing said.

It continued: "Yet, the prosecution failed to disclose to the defense that they met with [Jackson] and that they destroyed the notes of their meeting."

Cosby spokesman Andrew Wyatt released the court documents to the NNPA Newswire on Thursday, January 25th.

Neither Cosby's attorneys nor prosecutors offered comment on Thursday.

Cosby's team also argued that it's reasonable to infer that the pros-

ecution allowed Constand to testify falsely at the first trial that she did not know or remember Jackson.

Also, based on a Jan. 17, 2018 telephone conference call with the court, Assistant District Attorney Stewart Ryan admitted that he and two detectives spoke with Jackson and learned that Constand and Jackson worked together, had been friends, and had shared hotel rooms on multiple occasions.

Despite their knowledge of the relationship, Cosby lawyers alleged that prosecutors stood silent while Constand testified under oath that she didn't know Jackson, and they

persuaded the court to bar the defense from exploring the topic with Constand through cross-examination.

Judge Steven O'Neill also denied Cosby's lawyers' motion to call Jackson as a witness.

"The cumulative effect of the wrongdoing in this case and the politically and emotionally charged context of this case elevates the misconduct to a level of a constitutional violation and prosecutorial overreach depriving Cosby of any meaningful right to a fair trial," Cosby's attorneys wrote Thursday. "Such misconduct warrants dismissal of the charges."

In another motion, Cosby's attorneys argued that prosecutors also have failed to prove that they brought the case within the 12-year statute of limitation and there's no way to prove it because they admittedly are unsure of the timeline.

Constand alleged that Cosby assaulted her in early 2004—though previously she admitted their encounter could have been in 2003. Prosecutors didn't file charges until 2015.

It's unclear when O'Neill will issue a ruling on the motions.

Jury selection has been scheduled for March and the trial is expected to begin in April.

Trumpeter, Continued
from page 10.

of the show ranging from fast-paced percussion beats by Braimah to progressive melodies by Gladney.

"It's great to have a hybrid band for these kinds of performances," Scott said. "It helps when trying to evoke what this form of music really is to a crowd." Scott also mentioned the importance of the center as a venue and what it means to him. He shared with the crowd how he remembered seeing legendary Jazz Drummer Roy Haynes perform in the same room as he was as a child and how venues such as the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans are so important to the development of young artists.

Scott's appreciation for locations such as the CAC goes back to his roots as a New Orleans Center for Creative Arts Graduate and his community work within New Orleans. He has worked with the Guardian's Institute located in the Ninth Ward, which helps to sup-

port youth education in low-income areas of New Orleans. Work such as this combined with his musical success made him an ideal guest to perform at the CAC for his three-night concert.

Regarding the planning stages for the concert, Bowling expressed his excitement for booking Scott and his appreciation of Scott's value for playing at local venues for rising artists. "New Orleans has no shortage of excellent places to see jazz, so CAC seemed a perfect fit for Scott to perform," Bowling said.

The CAC's team said despite Scott's success, he remains a gracious artist and the hard work it takes to craft an event such as this is worth it when homegrown talent returns for artist showcases like these.

"There's no better City than New Orleans when it comes to jazz," Scott said. "This City made me who I am today as a person and musician. I am glad to be here at the CAC for my homecoming," the artist said.

Fiber Artist, Continued
from page 9.

made a virtue out of necessity. Subsequently, their artistic products served as prototypes for later artistic movements and revolutions involving crochet, embroidery, tapestry, weft and warp aesthetic rhythms, and so forth.

Likewise, she emphasized the concept of aesthetics as a foundation for artistic and cultural harmony. Aesthetics, she believes, is what would preserve the cultural heritage of the African-American macrocosm.

"There is no standard for aesthetics, as it is about manipulating its very essence," she said, adding that beauty resides not in what others interpret as exquisite, but rather how well one projects their ideas

that embody an artistic climate.

In light of ancestral ignorance on the part of African-Americans about the African continent, she commented on material culture, as what keeps "us" breathing as individuals. Black culture, she said, is what identifies African-Americans as a socio-political group.

After having traveled far and wide with intimate knowledge of African aesthetics and civilization, she anticipates that the mindset of African-Americans would change toward what they identify themselves as, instead of conforming to popular culture.

"It is not our fault that we do not display the culture of our ancestors, as it was all socially engineered, and we could have died off," she said.

"Material culture is what harmonizes us," she said.

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A photograph of two Black women smiling. The woman on the right is wearing a black graduation cap with a gold tassel and a black gown. She has red hair, wears glasses, large hoop earrings, and a gold chain necklace. The woman on the left is also smiling and wearing a gold chain necklace. The background is a warm, textured wall.

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