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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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LaToya Cantrell Makes History as First Female Mayor of New Orleans



On Monday, May 7, 2018, LaToya Cantrell made history by being sworn in as the first African-American Woman to be elected Mayor of the City of New Orleans. On the right, members of the New Orleans City Council and other Orleans Parish elected officials listen to Cantrell’s address as they prepare to be administered their oath of office. (photos by Kichea S. Burt)

by Edwin Buggage
Data News Weekly Editor

An Historic Day in New Orleans

On May 7, 2018 history was made as New Orleans inaugurated its First Female Mayor LaToya

Cantrell. Data News Weekly had the opportunity to conduct an exclusive interview the new mayor on the eve of her big day about her feelings of being elected mayor and her vision for the City. In addition, Data News Weekly attended Cantrell’s swearing in and the Mayor’s Ball later that night.

Reflections from Mayor LaToya Cantrell

As she speaks to Data News Weekly Cantrell’s voice reflects excitement but also a keen awareness and insight as she considers the weight of the office she will be occupying. As opposed to her previous posts the importance and impact of her vision and decisions will be magnified exponentially and will help steer the City’s

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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direction moving forward.

Known for being a person of the people her campaigns have always been bottoms up operations that were less about fundraising and more centered on bringing together people from different backgrounds, around common interests and being a bridge builder. This style of leadership is something she wants to bring to City Hall, "This movement we've built it is not about me it is about we; all of the citizens working together to move the City forward," says Cantrell.

Her ascendance to the City's highest office is inspiring people not just across the City, but the nation. She is the embodiment of an age where women are reaching new heights of excellence; Cantrell manifests the best of the spirit showing that with hard work, perseverance and a can-do attitude, your dreams can become a reality.

"I am feeling very inspired by the residents of our City who have displayed so much hope in what we have built together," says Cantrell of the coalition that led to her being elected the First Female Mayor of New Orleans. "It is an awesome responsibility to try to balance expectations thinking about that; but I am hopeful we will move forward together in a way that can impact all neighborhoods and all of the citizens of our City in a positive way. That is the main goal of my administration."

A New Day for New Orleans

Her Inaugural Address was emotion filled, at times, as she surveyed the to-capacity crowd where former mayors, elected officials, family and friends and supports came out to witness and support her on this historic day. Some wept visibly proud and overwhelmed that the City elected its first female mayor. That the City had overcome and torn down another barrier and that they were witnessing the dawning of a new age.

Her voice ringing in a triumphant tone Cantrell said, "We broke every kind of glass ceiling and color line and old outdated rule about who the mayor is supposed to be." And anyone familiar with the history of New Orleans where issues of race, privilege and colorism among Blacks were often determining factors of who should lead the City." She addressed this issue head on as well saying, "What we have done in this election is we have changed people's ideas about what the mayor is supposed to look like or where he was supposed to be born," proclaimed Cantrell who came from Los Angeles to New Orleans as a student attending Xavier University and since then has made this her



Mayor Mitch Landrieu and Louisiana Governor, John Bel Edwards.

home building her career and family in the Crescent City.

The Business of Governing

While the excitement around Cantrell's election is understandable; the larger question for the City is how it will be governed and what policies will be put in place to make the City safer and create more routes to the middle-class for the citizens of New Orleans.

Speaking of the goals for her first 100 days she says, "The first days will be about getting my staff acclimated to City Hall. I am also looking at other areas, whether it is contracts that have not been signed yet; there are a great deal of contracts that are waiting for my review and signature. But my first order of business is getting with Chief Harrison in the area of public safety and I also want to look at infrastructure and just more generally setting the expectation and vision for the City, so we can begin to go to work and get things done."

Under the Nagin and Landrieu Administrations post-Katrina, the City has changed in radical ways. It can be argued that some of them good while others threaten the life blood of the City, its identity and its most vulnerable residents. Cantrell, who in her work as a leader in her Broadmoor neighborhood, worked hard to bring back a neighborhood that was slated to become green space. Today, it is a thriving community comprised of people from all backgrounds. It is one of the success stories of a City where the best of pre-Katrina and the surge of post-Katrina changes co-exist.

Building on that model she says, "I want to make sure that we are a City that is open to all. That really does not work until we address the disparities that exist in

our City. I plan to be very intentional and inclusive in initiatives of how we deliver services to the residents of the City of New Orleans. In terms of my administration it is to erase barriers and disparities that's held back so many of our families here in New Orleans."



Mayor LaToya Cantrell is pictured as she takes the administered Oath of Office.

Forward Together

The reality for most politicians is that no matter how optimistic they may be in their intent; the sad reality is that getting things done once elected is easier said than done. But spending time as a community leader, member of

the City Council and now Mayor of New Orleans, LaToya Cantrell realizes this sobering fact regarding policymaking. "We are in this together and there is no magic wand that's going to fix everything that is

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on page 11.

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Voices of Congo Square Wows Audience

By Oba Lorrius
Data News Weekly
Contributor

On Saturday April 20th, 2018 The Orpheum Theater hosted an almost sold out ecstatic audience for the VOICES OF CONGO SQUARE.

Written, Directed, and Produced by Naimah and Shaka Zulu, this groundbreaking stage production brought to life Black History as it relates to New Orleans; thoroughly empowering, educating, and entertaining every attendee.

Producer/Artistic Director Naimah Zulu said, "The Voices of Congo Square is the dedication to Afro-New Orleans Culture,"

Congo Square is an historic site in New Orleans on the National Registry of Historic Places. New Orleans natives and the transatlantic African diaspora who met in

Congo Square did not speak the same language verbally, but the two things they had in common were their traditions of drumming and dancing, and that's the language they used to communicate. Voices of Congo Square presents the language of a people.

After the show we had a chance to interview Jude a New Orleans native who gracefully executed every thoughtful movement playing the role of Jean-Jacques Dessalines in the Haitian Revolution scene.

Q. What is your dance background?

A. I started off in church and got my first official lessons from Kelly School of Dance around sixteen. By then I was getting ready to go to college on a music scholarship. I came back home and went to Delgado and went back to Kelly's. I booked my first two dancing jobs, but they were in-



Voices of Congo Square Dancer and Performer, Jude Evans. (photo by Oba Lorrius)

dian. Aside from that family connection there was a moment when the Black Indians were coming from the back of the house onto the stage and everyone in the wings, all the musicians were playing and chanting. Suddenly it went from just the musicians doing the chant to everyone backstage that was from New Orleans started chanting and dancing. This was before the proper ballet started, this was just presenting the Black Indians. There was a moment right before the choreographed piece started and you heard someone in the audience continuing the lead of the chants and all of us backstage and in the entire audience kept singing. One of the choreographers back stage she looked at me and said, "This is your home. Don't ever forget this, don't sell it, don't let nobody tell you anything different, this is your home, this is your people, this is where you come from, this is you!" In that moment the fourth wall was broken, and it was no longer a performance.

Producer/Musical Director Chief Shaka Zulu said, "Preservation is Salvation." The rich culture in New Orleans is the root and fountain of that salvation for Americans of color. Every storyline, choreographed ballet, and drum hit was on time and intentional.


The Voices of Congo Square culminated in a roaring dancing Nola style second-line ovation. Everyone from child to elder danced all the way out the theater onto the street. Inspiration lived in the words of excited attendees exchanging stories of their experience watching the Voices of Congo Square. In one night on one stage we learned centuries of history without a word being spoken. Actions speak louder than words and truly there are no words to describe the out of body historical experience that is the Voices of Congo Square.

Oba Lorrius is a Data News Weekly Contributor and is also the Curator for BNola.

interrupted by Hurricane Katrina. After that I moved to Houston and took classes at the Houston Met. until I joined Urban Souls Dance Theater and learned a lot of my technique. In three years I went from being accepted into the 2007 Alvin Ailey Summer Program to getting into one of the most prestigious programs in the school. I knew that I'm starting late so I must work that much harder. Since moving to N.Y. full time I've danced with Balance Dance Theater, Footprints, Alpha & Omega Theatrical Dance Theater, and Forces of Nature Dance Theater where I have been now for 5 seasons.

Q. What scene/role most connected you with the audience, why?

A. The last two scenes, The Black Indian and Second-Line Dance. Being from New Orleans my family has a strong direct connection to the Black Indians and Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs. Through this production I actually found out that my maternal grandmothers oldest brother was a Black Masking Indian. Based on where they lived my guess is He was an uptown In-



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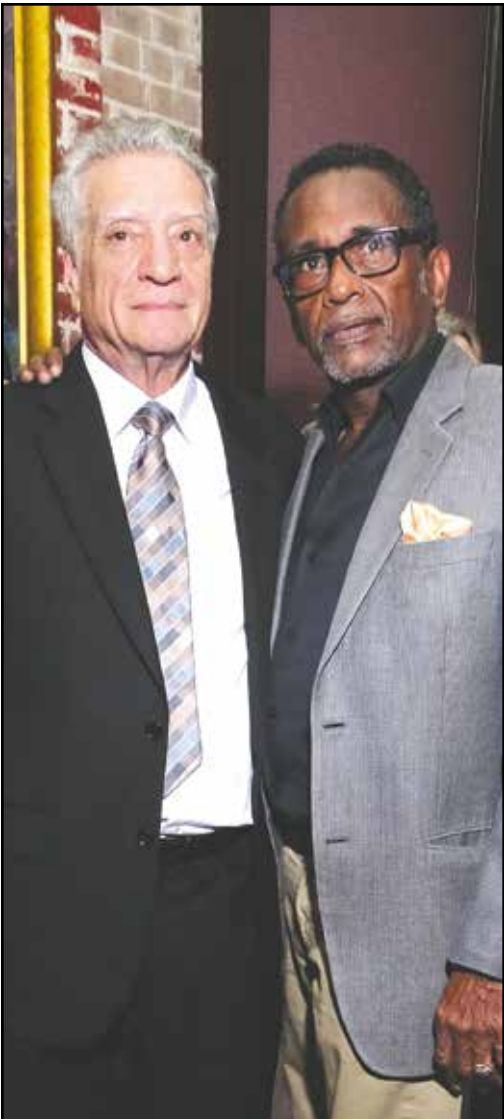
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Dr. Dwight McKenna Sworn In as Orleans Parish Coroner

Photos by Glenn Summers
Data News Weekly
Contributor

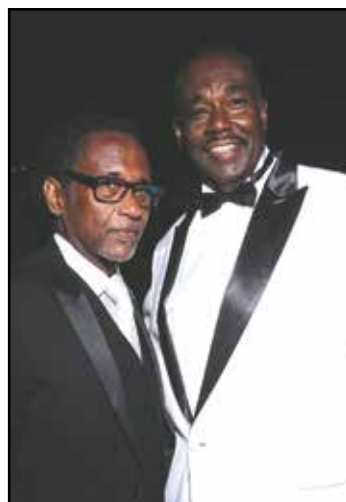
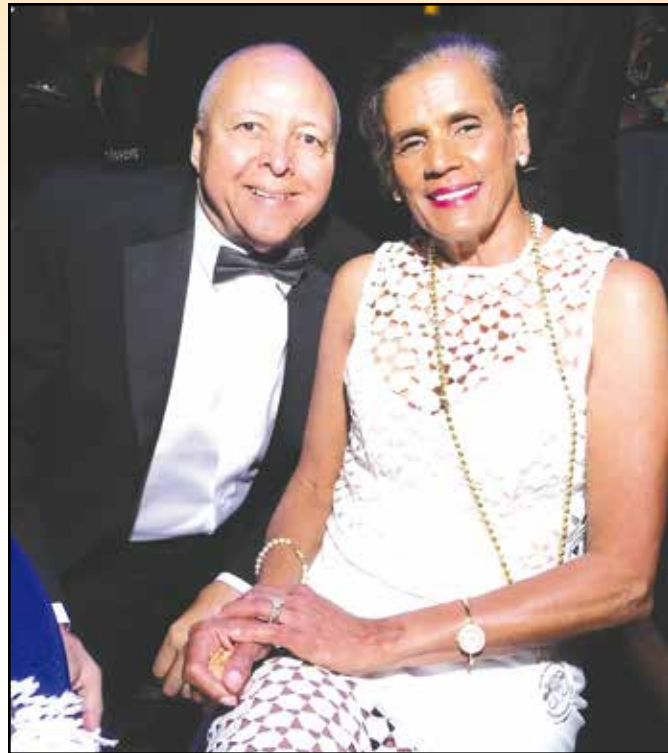
On May 7, 2018, Dr. Dwight McKenna was sworn in as Orleans Parish Coroner after winning his electoral race in October, 2017. This event is historical not only for New Orleans, but Dr. McKenna is now the first African-American to be elected as Coroner in the nation. We congratulate Dr. McKenna on his accomplishment, and wish him the best in this position.



Mayor's Inaugural Ball Highlights

Photos by Glenn Summers
Data News Weekly Contributor

Here are the highlights from the Inauguration Eve Celebration for New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell. Well wishers from all around the City came to wish Mayor Cantrell well, and to be a part of the historic evening. Congratulations Madam Mayor!!!



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

Remembering Ernest “Dutch” Morial

First African American Legislator Since Reconstruction

Photos by Terry B. Jones
Data News Weekly
Contributor

On Thursday, May 3rd, friends, colleagues, legislators and citizens joined the Morial family and Governor John Bel Edwards for a private reception to honor Ernest “Dutch” Morial. The occasion marked 50 years since Dutch arrived at the State Capitol, and featured legislation, photos and news articles, chronicling the life of the legendary man who was the first African-American legislator after Reconstruction. The event was sponsored by the LA Legislative Black Caucus Foundation, Governor John Bel Edwards and the State Research Library.



Sybil Morial (center), Gov. John Bel Edwards and the Morial Family.



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

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Jazz Fest Fashion



Delaney George
Columnist

Jazz Fest is a time any New Orleanian looks forward to. Each year, the Fairgrounds of New Orleans crawls with music, fun, food and fashion! For two weeks, locals pull out their best duds and fest gear to have a good time in the name of good music.

Fashion styles at Jazz Fest range from bohemian to fairytale to tribal coming from the Jazz Fest affiliates. Here are some of the top looks seen at the second week of Jazz Fest.

For more information on Jazz Fest 2018 email Delinkey@yahoo.com.

(All photos by Laneslense - Delinkey@yahoo.com)



Jazz Fest attendee struts her stuff in a traditional Cinco de Mayo dress with the umbrella to match.



Nobody does watermelon like New Orleans. These gentlemen of Jazz Fest take a creative approach to one of the summer's hottest treats.



Dreams come true in New Orleans, you might even find yourself a fairy princess.



The men of the CTC did not disappoint, wowing the crowd with their vibrant moves and even more vibrant suits and accessories.



The red carpet of Second-Lines. This old and nu-style stepper shines brightly in her custom second-line outfit.



Festival Chic! These ladies know how to bring out the sexy summer style at Jazz Fest.

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Xavier Student Named Goldwater Scholar

By Jared Braud
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Only two students in Louisiana received the prestigious honor of being named a 2018 Goldwater Scholar by the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation. One of them is Lauren Thornton, a junior Biology Major at Xavier University of Louisiana. This is the first time Xavier University has received such an award. The only other HBCU to receive this was Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga.

"This opportunity is quite humbling," Thornton said. "I'm ready to use this to my advantage to further my research which is really important to me because I want to make the world a better place through my research," Thornton said.

At Xavier, Thornton has been a BUILD/McNair Scholar. BUILD stands for Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity and is a STEM (Science-Technology-Engineering-Mathematics) Mentoring Program set up at Xavier. McNair Scholars are a select group of students prepared to enter graduate programs with one day earning doctoral degrees.

The Barry Goldwater Scholar student studies in the sciences and is provided with external mentors such as scientists, mathematicians, and engineers. The amount awarded for receiving this scholarship is \$7,500 at maximum and is based on financial need. Barry Goldwater was an American politician, businessman, and author. He was a five-time United States Senator.



Lauren Thornton (pictured above) is one of only two students in Louisiana to receive the prestigious 2018 Goldwater Scholar Award by the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation. Thornton, a Junior Biology Major at Xavier University of Louisiana. (photo courtesy of Xavier University)

He was also the Republican Party's nominee for Presidency in 1964. The foundation awarded 240 scholarships for the 2017-2018 academic year. The Barry Goldwater Scholarship was established by the United States Congress in 1986.

When she submitted the application, Thornton said she did not think that she would even be qualified. She did not think she would get in at all because she felt her experience with research was not sufficient. But with a GPA of 3.98, she said Ja'Wanda Grant, who oversees Student Scholar Development at Xavier, encouraged her to apply and helped her with the application process. Her career goal is to earn a Ph.D. in neuroscience, neurobiology, or molecular biology. She wants

to become a professor one day and teach STEM, as well as be able to do her own independent research. For her to be one of the only two college students from Louisiana is an honor, she said.

"The selection process was intense. They asked me questions like what do I do in school and outside of school," she said.

Thornton's research consists of studying the disease called Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia. It's a genetic disease that causes patients to lose the ability to walk. She studies a motor protein that transfers cargo in the spinal cord and how the mutations affect that protein's ability to function.

"In the BUILD Program we are paired with a research mentor and with that mentor we work alongside them on projects," Thornton said. Her faculty mentor, Thomas Huck-

aba, an Associate Professor of Biology at Xavier, helped and inspired her by having her work alongside him, to show her what it really takes to be in this profession.

Thornton's parents are not scientists themselves, but they support all of her endeavors. Her mother, Cynthia Thornton said the family is pleased to see a girl like Lauren trying to help the world move forward in science and that she will possibly cure illnesses that seem incurable today.

"As a parent, I am extremely proud of all that she has accomplished," Cynthia Thornton said. "Lauren has known since 7th grade that she wanted to be a scientist. She's focused on her goal and striving to be a world class scientist. What more could we ask for?" she said.

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Cantrell Revisits Her Early Beginnings in the City

By Piper Thurman
Data News Weekly
Contributor

In one of her stops back to her roots, before her inauguration this week, New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell reminded students that she knows exactly what it's like to be in their shoes. She revisited her alma mater, Xavier University of Louisiana on April 30, 2018, to share her journey from student to elected official during a service at St. Katherine Drexel Chapel.

She is more than just the first African-American woman to serve the City as mayor, said Xavier Alumnus Trenton Butler who is an intern for Cantrell. Butler said that working with her, he finds her to be a down to earth, humble woman who cares about the rights of every single person in this City.

"It's humbling to know where I started. It makes me know that where I started is where I want to make sure I stay connected to as I move through this journey to make New Orleans a better City," Cantrell told students.

She came to New Orleans to attend Xavier in 1990, and although



Mayor LaToya Cantrell addresses Xavier students on April 20, 2018 at St. Katherine Drexel Chapel. (photo by Piper Thurman)

she had the help of her grandparents, she said she still needed to find work to support herself. She told students she found a job at a hotel, working in the laundry room

and at the front desk. To get to Xavier, she would take a street car every day, then transfer to a bus that took her to Louisiana Avenue, and then over to Washington Avenue, and fi-

nally to Xavier. It was her everyday transportation that opened her eyes to a lot of different environments in the City, as well as the different mentalities and mannerisms the passengers had, Cantrell said.

"That's what drew me in and kept me in the City of New Orleans. Those disparities that made me care about the people, wanting to make life better for everyone in every neighborhood of this City," Cantrell said.

When she arrived in New Orleans, it was to pursue a degree in Biology/Pre-Medicine, but God had different plans for her, Cantrell said. She ended up graduating with a degree in Sociology and a minor

in Political Science. She hadn't dreamt about going into politics, or ever becoming the Mayor of New Orleans, but now that she is, she said she plans on leaving her mark, as she begins to implement change and different policies in the City.

Cantrell spoke about prayer and trusting in God's mission when life hits with unexpected circumstances.

"We all have a role to play no matter what our age is, no matter what our accomplishments are, and through life there will be ups and downs," Cantrell said, "But we need to be connected to people with that spirit of humility to understand that with trusting in the Lord that you can overcome and you can get through it," Cantrell said.

Students said they related to Cantrell's story and found her advice helpful. Some students even went up and gave their own testimonies about surviving college and the school year. Bryan Redman, who serves as the Student Government Association President at Xavier spoke about his perseverance throughout his senior year, sharing a story about a friend he lost while at Xavier.

"A number and a decimal point does not define who we are. We can and will get through it," Redman said.

As she finishes her junior year at Xavier, Kelsey Green, Miss Xavier 2018-2019 said she deeply admired Cantrell and connected to her journey.

"It's so rewarding to see a woman, an African-American woman at that, making history in New Orleans. We have someone that looks just like us as our mayor, which is so inspiring," Green said.



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New Orleans HBCUs Come Together for SpringFling Fun

By Glenn Rebert II
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Feeling the pressure that comes with final exams at the end of the school year, students often look for ways to relieve themselves of that stress. All three Historically Black Universities in the City: Dillard University, Xavier University of Louisiana, and Southern University of New Orleans, decided to help ease that stress themselves. The HBCUs planned a three-event weekend, the NOLA HBCU SpringFling 2018, with Dillard hosting the first event, a Luau, to kick off the weekend on April 27th.

"We put the whole event together because we wanted to get all the HBCUs together and enjoy a fun time with our brothers and sisters from the other schools and just show love to one another," said Joshua Foster, a Dillard sophomore, and one of the event organizers.

"Because some HBCUs are being closed [elsewhere] so this was just a host of events put together to bring everyone together," Foster said of the importance of the institutions in the City.

The Luau took place on Dillard's



Students from Southern University of New Orleans, Dillard University and Xavier University have fun at a Luau on April 27th as part of NOLA HBCU SpringFling. (Photos by Glenn Rebert II)

campus in front of their Student Union, next to their infamous pond. The area was well lit with torches along the grass. There was food, and three specialty drinks provided for the students. The event featured a wall and Luau accessories used for taking pictures, as well as games,

and live music from DJ Retro. The students bonded over volleyball, a blown-up beach ball, connect four, limbo, blown-up balls that the students used to knock each other over with, and water balloons and water guns, used on almost everyone who attended the Luau.

Most of the students participated with their fellow HBCU members in all the activities, as well as danced when a few songs were played.

"What brought me out tonight was the unity of the HBCUs: Xavier, SUNO, and Dillard, being all in one setting together as college students, that are normally rival schools, was amazing to see," said Joseph Caldwell, Mr. Dillard 2018-2019.

Normally, during sporting events, the three schools are at one another's throats cheering and arguing back and forth about whom is the better team and ultimately, the better school. However, all those differences were put aside as the students celebrated a long semester and blew off steam together.

"The Luau was a very big stress reliever, because we have finals coming up, and for the whole weekend to have all the schools come together I think it's special," said Brianna Montgomery, a Xavier student. "Even though we have rivalries, it shows that we're all college students and we just want to get through it and have fun and I will be looking forward to this every time 'finals' come around," she said.

Cover Story/ Continued from page 3.

wrong with our City." Echoing what has become her clarion call to the citizens of New Orleans she says, "It is not about me it is about we, so I want to build the City and unify the communities, and that leads us to improving the quality of life for everybody so that everybody can win."

Today is the beginning of a new era for the City as it moves forward.

The question remains, who will thrive in this City, this great cultural jewel that lies on the mouth of the Mississippi? And, can this, a City that has taken a giant step forward become a City that no longer has two tales? Can we overcome the dichotomy of a few who have plenty and too large a number of those have not enough or nothing at all? Can a City where stately mansions exist only a stone's throw away from crime, violence and social chaos, and where unlimited opportuni-

ties and hopeless can co-exist, turn the page and become a welcoming place where all can flourish?

Only time will tell whether the new Mayor LaToya Cantrell can help steer the City in the right direction. And while it is important to have strong leadership, there must be a commitment at all levels by not only wanting but working to make New Orleans the great City it has the potential to be. It will take all of New Orleans to build a City where winners and losers no lon-

ger exist. Then we all can let the music play, pull out the second-line umbrellas, dance, celebrate and let the fireworks blast off into the sky overlooking the Mississippi River as they did during the Inaugural Ball. In the days to come, if this is New Orleans' direction, its citizens will not simply rest on with having made historical strides but continue its forward motion in changing lives for the better for its people.

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