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National News Page 11

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

Love & New Orleans

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Love & New Orleans

*21st Century Renaissance Sister:
Love & Hip-Hop Creator Mona Scott-Young Talks to Data News Weekly*



“New Orleans continues to be a very special place to me and close to my heart and there is no other place like it. The food, architecture and the openness of the people,” says Mona Scott-Young of her love for the Crescent City.

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief

The Total Package

Mona Scott-Young is a media and business mogul armed with beauty, brains and a vision that’s made her Award-Winning multi-media entertainment company, Monami Entertainment, an industry leader. Named a “21st Century Renaissance Sister” by Essence Maga-

zine, Mona Scott-Young is one of the entertainment industry’s most sought after executives. She is the CEO of Monami Entertainment – home to Grammy Award-winning Artist Missy Elliott and VH1’s most popular docu-franchise “Love & Hip Hop.”

Love & New Orleans

She was recently in New Orleans being crowned “She-King” of the Treme’ Sidewalk Steppers alongside their King, New Orleans’ own Hiram Smith, participat-

ing in their Royal Ball and Second Line through the historic Treme’ Neighborhood. Data News Weekly had the opportunity to speak with this phenomenal woman who seems to have the “Midas Touch” and is the true embodiment of Jill Scott’s song lyrics, “Living life like its Golden.”

Mona Scott-Young’s love for New Orleans began 15 years ago when she and her husband Shawn Young decided that the Crescent City would be the ideal place for a destination wedding.

Cover Photo by Brandon “Ollie” Joseph

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"New Orleans continues to be a very special place to me and close to my heart and there is no other place like it. The food, architecture, the openness of the people. Never mind after I got married my initials became your Airport code MSY (laughter). It has an ambiance that I love to experience every time I come here, and I am thankful that the City embraced me, and it is an honor to be part of the Treme' Sidewalk Steppers. And I embrace the title of SHE-KING in tribute to the fearless female rulers of Ancient Egypt and Africa."

Knowing your Roots and Living with a Sense of Purpose

Scott-Young is a woman whose confidence, charisma and leadership abilities are accompanied by

memorating 400 years of slavery, it was about embracing our royal ancestry, 4,000 years we were kings. I brought this full circle. I now say that I am Haitian by way of Cameroon all those elements I wanted to celebrate. Bringing it all together and celebrating this all in our DNA."

The True Definition of Success

While she's been a success in the entertainment business, Scott-Young believes that success is more of a mindset and way of being, and that it should not be simply focused on financial success. Working in this industry, she's seen the pitfalls of this mindset. "Success is more than money; it is about setting standards for yourself and a level of achievement for yourself. Understanding your gifts and cultivating



Mona Scott-Young's love for New Orleans began 15 years ago when she and her husband Shawn Young decided that the Crescent City would be an ideal place for a destination wedding.

a compassionate spirit and she is ever evolving and striving to be better in every area of her life. Recounting her recent travel to Ghana for the "Year of Return," along with a group of notables that included New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell, she says, "This is what brought this full circle. I went with my family and a group that included your Mayor and we all went out to Ghana and it was such a life affirming experience and this helped shape me and my thinking and sense of self and purpose."

Seeing the connection between her Haitian-American identity, connection to New Orleans, and the strengthening of her ties to the motherland she says, "As much as we're com-

memorating 400 years of slavery, it was about embracing our royal ancestry, 4,000 years we were kings. I brought this full circle. I now say that I am Haitian by way of Cameroon all those elements I wanted to celebrate. Bringing it all together and celebrating this all in our DNA."



Media and entertainment mogul Mona Scott-Young was recently in New Orleans being crowned "She-King" of the Treme' Sidewalk Steppers alongside King, New Orleans' own Hiram Smith. Mona's embrace of the title of SHE-KING is in tribute to the fearless female rulers of Ancient Egypt and Africa.



Mona Scott-Young is someone who believes that anybody can be successful, "Success is more than money; it is about setting standards for yourself and a level of achievement for yourself. Understanding your gifts and cultivating them every day and building on them. With this definition I believe that all can achieve greatness."

Future Project: Telling the Story of New Orleans

Of her many projects, she says she is interested in creating a show centered on the Crescent City. "I am determined to do something in New Orleans, and there are several sources on the ground just finding the right point of entry. This is a City with so much that is very specific, things you can only find in New Orleans. I have been looking, and I am certain it will happen at some point, that would give me the opportunity to share about this city that I love so much."

Living Life like Its Golden

Mona Scott-Young's life is a cup that is full on so many levels. She balances her business success and her rich family life effortlessly. While her accomplishments in the business are many, she believes in giving back and inspiring others that they too can be successful. Mona Scott-Young is as the title of the Maya Angelou epic poem "Phenomenal Woman" and is continuing to show that with integrity, hard work and dedication, anything is possible.



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Cyntoia Brown-Long Visits New Orleans; Speaks On Life After Prison

Lauren Jones
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Photos courtesy of Dillard University/Sabree Hill

Seven months after her release from prison, Cyntoia Brown-Long visited New Orleans to speak about her challenge of navigating the court system as a teenager and the hard-earned lessons of forgiveness, humility, and grace that sustained her behind prison bars. Walter Kimbrough, President of Dillard University, invited Brown-Long to share her journey from incarceration to freedom during Dillard University's President Lecture Series on Feb. 4, 2020.

"In some way, everybody is just one bad decision, one mistake, one accident from being caught up in the justice system," Brown-Long



Cyntoia Brown-Long and her husband Jaime Long sign her 2019 book "Free Cyntoia" with Dillard University student ambassadors on Feb. 4, 2020.

for Redemption in the American Prison System."

Over 300 people gathered in Georges Auditorium to hear her conversation about advocacy, finding love in prison and, most notably, her spiritual journey behind bars for her New Orleans stop, as she travels the country to share her story. She told the crowd God "made [her] freedom possible," and that her early prison release reminds her she is destined to accomplish more in life.

"[The presentation] was phenomenal. The thing that caught everybody off guard was that it's not just a story about redemption, it's a story about faith, and that's powerful," Kimbrough said after a short Q&A took place.

While incarcerated, Cyntoia Brown-Long earned her GED Diploma, finished a Bachelor of Professional Studies in Organizational Leadership, and mentored at-risk youth. She said that part of her newfound purpose is discussing the need for a continued dialogue surrounding sex-trafficking and Juvenile Justice Reform. She intends to use her freedom to improve the lives of others and for the fight that helped free her. Brown-Long and her husband, Musician Jaime Long, formed a nonprofit, the Foundation for Justice, Freedom and Mercy, which has a mission to shed light on the inner workings of the Criminal Justice System.

"I'm committed to the same fight that got me free, I definitely think that there's a need for reform, not just in prison, but in sentencing and the way justice is handed out in our country. I'm committed to fighting for all the other people who are just like me," Brown-Long said.

She stated that the goal of the American Juvenile Justice System is to remove the "taint of criminality." She explained that true justice will only prevail across the country once people desire to be a part of the change. By discussing the importance of community, she encouraged attendees to speak out about these social issues.

"[Cyntoia Brown-Long] inspires a lot of people, and her story definitely taught us to not lose faith and to never get comfortable in being unsatisfied," said Chandler McBride, a Dillard Student Ambassador from Seattle, Wash., who got to meet with Brown-Long after the event.

Xavier University of Louisiana



BLACK HISTORY MONTH Convocation

with keynote speaker
L. CHRIS STEWART

FEBRUARY 11, 2020

**Xavier Covocation Center
12:15 PM**

ABOUT THE EVENT

Black History Month Convocation is the university's official celebration of Black History Month. Each year, Xavier University honors the achievements of African Americans to recognize the central role blacks have played in shaping United States history.

February 12, 1926, marked the first week-long celebration by African American historian and Harvard scholar Dr. Carter G. Woodson. It expanded to a month-long celebration in 1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial.



Dillard University President Dr. Walter Kimbrough and Cyntoia Brown-Long at the Georges Auditorium for her New Orleans Public Lecture on Feb. 4, 2020.

said. "We all should be invested in making sure that it's treating people the way they should be treated, the way that you would want to be treated," she said.

At 16 years old, Brown-Long was convicted and sentenced to life in prison for fatally shooting a 43-year-old man she says solicited her for sex in 2004. Brown-Long and her defenders said she was a victim of sex trafficking. After serving 15 years, Brown-Long, at age 31, was released from prison in August 2019, after Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam granted her clemency. She documented her journey in her 2019 autobiography "Free Cyntoia: My Search

Pontchartrain Links, Inc. Hosts HBCU College Fair at McDonogh 35

Story and Photos by Gerard LeFrere
Data News Weekly
Contributor

High school juniors and seniors gathered on their basketball court on the second floor of McDonogh 35 College Preparatory High School on Feb. 5, 2020. Greeting them were a collection of six regional Historically Black Colleges and Universities including Southern University at New Orleans, Southern University in Baton Rouge, Grambling State University, Xavier University of Louisiana, Talladega College, and Dillard University and their representatives who set up tables with pamphlets, pens, folders, and other assorted hand-outs.

The event was organized by the Pontchartrain Chapter of the Links, Incorporated, an organization of Af-

rican American women who work to strengthen their community through programs, volunteering, and mentoring. The Pontchartrain Chapter has worked with McDonogh 35 on a number of Mentorship Programs over the last decade, including its Rising Stars Program.

"I've been in there since eighth grade. I love it. They're very helpful. Like, if you need help, they help you. They help you get scholarships... And it's just a great experience," said Janelle Raymond, a senior at McDonogh 35 who participates in the Rising Star Program.

The Link's Incorporated was founded by Margaret Hawkins and Sarah Scott in 1946 and is one the nation's oldest and largest Volunteer Service Organizations committed to advancing African American communities, said Valerie Sholes, the Chair of the HBCU Initiative at



McDonogh 35 Students with representatives of Dillard University.

the Pontchartrain Chapter of the Links Inc. There are 288 chapters located in 42 states, Washington D.C., the Bahamas, and the United Kingdom.

"We don't just mentor them for one year and then let them go. We continue to follow them throughout their education, and we try to help them get into schools," Sholes said, emphasizing the importance of bringing HBCUs to area high schools. "Then we follow them, and we give them scholarships and programs and help them to get through their programs," she said.

Links members also help mentees even after they enter college if they need assistance with finding a place to live or support throughout their studies and career choices.

"We try to mentor them through-

State & Local, Continued on page 11.



AUDUBON NATURE INSTITUTE EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

CRYSTAL SHEPARD GIFT SHOP SUPERVISOR

Crystal Shepard joined the Audubon family in 2008 as her first job and has loved it so much, she's stayed and grown at Audubon since! She has always been passionate about animals and values the fact that her role allows her to support wildlife care and conservation while meeting new people and learning new things. Whether helping visitors from across the globe or telling Audubon Members about the newest things to see and do, every day is different!

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Treme' Sidewalk Steppers "Royal Homecoming Gala"

Photos by
Glenn Summers

Mardi Gras Season is in full swing and was on full display as the Treme' Sidewalk Steppers hosted two events in celebration of the rich culture of Treme'. This year's ball was held at Mardi Gras World and people from all walks of life came out to celebrate this great event.

The Royal Court featured She-King-Elect Mona Scott-Young, CEO of Monami Entertainment, best known for producing the reality television franchise Love & Hip-Hop and New Orleans' own event planner extraordinaire King-Elect Hiram H. Smith.

"The Royal Homecoming" Gala featured performances by Big Freedia, Juvenile and other special guests. And in true New Orleans fashion there was a second line parade most appropriately called "The Greatest Show on Earth."

Of course Data News Weekly staying true to our role as "The People's Paper" was there!!!



The Royal Court featured New Orleans' own event planner extraordinaire King-Elect Hiram H. Smith and in a nod to ancient female rulers of Africa and Egypt, She-King-Elect Mona Scott-Young, CEO of Monami Entertainment, best known for producing the reality television franchise Love & Hip-Hop.



"The Royal Homecoming" Gala was on and popping with guest from all walks of life. It featured performances by Big Freedia, Juvenile and other special guests. It was a place to see and be seen and is becoming one of the premiere balls of the Mardi Gras season.



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



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Impeached President, Illegitimate Acquittal

Trump's conviction was bipartisan, his acquittal was partisan.



Cong. Maxine Waters (CA-43)
Chair of the House Committee on Financial Services

Today's illegitimate acquittal is fitting for a dishonorable, unpatriotic, dangerous, illegitimate, and impeached president. Anyone who lends any credence to the idea that

this unlawful outcome serves as a credible exoneration of Donald Trump is an enemy to the rule of law and the Constitution.

The founders of this country never imagined that our democracy would be confronted with a corrupt president who would be aided and abetted in the cover-up of his crimes by a coequal branch of government. Despite the fact that the House Managers presented an ironclad set of facts that Donald Trump did in fact abuse his power and obstruct Congressional investigations of his crimes, the Senate

has utterly failed to do its job. This was not a credible trial. No witnesses were called. No evidentiary documents were presented.

The jurors abandoned impartiality and openly colluded with the guilty defendant. The presiding justice remained silent in the face of unprecedented attacks on judicial norms.

I applaud the courage of the 48 Senators – 45 Democrats, 2 Independents, and 1 Republican – who put their careers on the line to protect and defend our nation from the most dangerous president our

country has ever known. Each and every Trump-party elected official who betrayed their oath of office and protected the deplorable interests of a conman over the interests of this country is a national disgrace who should be voted out of office without delay.

The American people can rest assured that this fight is not over, and all is not lost. The Democratic House majority will continue to provide a check on this president. Each House committee chair will continue to conduct proper oversight of this administration. We will

continue to fight in the courts and demand that our lawful subpoenas be upheld.

Donald Trump has been impeached. His conviction was bipartisan. His acquittal was partisan. This is the legacy of Donald Trump, now and forever. His presidency is an utter failure and disgrace, and history will record it as such. In November, the American people can and will do what insufferable and pathetic Trump-party Republican Senators didn't have the courage to do: remove him from office once and for all."

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Black Towns in Louisiana

Soul Of America

There were All Black Towns all across American after slavery and into the early 20th Century. Louisiana had several all Black Towns according to Soul of America's website soulofamerica.com a website dedicated to Black travel.

Bobtown

In 1898, Robert "Bob" Celestin, a twenty-five-year-old man of African and Native American ancestry, and his father-in-law, Bob Creary purchased a large parcel of land. The property was eventually cleared and the settlement of Bobtown was created.

Robert and his wife Betsy had twelve children: nine boys and three girls. After the death of his wife in 1921, Robert partitioned the settlement and gave an equal share to each child. As the children grew up and raised their own families, they assisted each other in building homes and making improvements to the property. The community eventually grew to include a family-owned store, a church and two taverns. There was also a barbershop that was built around a tree, leaving it undisturbed and extending through the roof of the building.

Located an hour's drive from New Orleans, Bobtown continues today as a quaint community of about twenty-five homes. The original home of Bob Celestin, who died in 1952 at the age of seventy-nine, is being considered for designation as a historic landmark. Most of the Bobtown citizens are direct decedents of the original families, the most legendary being Beatrice



All Black Town Mossville, Louisiana Church Mount Zion Baptist Church circa 1918, it has been in operation for over 150 years.

"Aunt Lulee" White-Bolden. Aunt Lulee who passed away in 1985, received national attention in 1983 when she registered to vote at the age of 107 years old.

Washington

Situated on the Morgan railroad, about six miles above Opelousas, Washington was incorporated in 1830 and had a population of about 1000 people. The town was recognized as a prosperous community which grew to include factories, warehouses, several fine stores and a large cotton and rice shipping business.

Still flourishing into the early 19th Century, Washington also had a local newspaper, both a Catholic and a public school and several

churches. One of the earliest residents, Antoine Lemel, was reported to be "a rich negro who owned a large tract of land and a great number of slaves."

Mossville

The town was settled by former enslaved Africans who were granted the land through a "fee-simple title acquired by squatters' rights." In this manner, anyone who agreed to improve the property while residing for a specified number of years could attain ownership.

After the Civil War, these individuals mostly from nearby farms, settled on the land and began growing crops and raising cattle. Originally known as Shoats Prairie, Mossville has a current population of 8,000 inhabitants.

The area remained rural until the early 1900s, when the Locke-Moore

Company built a sawmill. Lumbering became the major industry and was later joined by sugar refinement.

The greatest period of growth occurred in the 1940s and 1950s, when petrochemical and industrial plants moved into the area. Today, these plants remain the primary source of employment for Mossville residents.

St. Maurice

Established in the 1850s and located in an area of rolling clay hills in southwest Winn Parish, the town was originally a shipping and supply depot for inhabitants of the Red River Valley. In 1900 the town had a population of 416 people and included many prosperous businesses: a telegraph station, several cotton gins, sugar refineries and mercantile establishments.



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Delfeayo Marsalis Uptown Music Theater Wins Outstanding Production at the 2020 Junior Theater Festival (JTF) in Atlanta, GA.



Members of the Uptown Music Theatre with Trophy for Outstanding Production at the 2020 Junior Theater Festival (JTF) in Atlanta, GA.

Data News Weekly Staff Edited Report

The Uptown Music Theater Competition team (UMT) won Outstanding Production for the 7th time in 9 years for their production of the Lion King Jr. at the 2020 Junior Theater Festival (JTF) in Atlanta, GA.

UMT, founded by Delfeayo Mar-

salis, participating in this year's JTF with 127 groups from 28 states and 6 countries including: The United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, England, and China. The productions were judged by current Broadway professionals, and following the adjudication round the performers participate in singing, dancing, and acting workshop taught by professionals from the

global theater community.

As a result of winning one of the 8 Outstanding Production Awards, UMT performed one of the numbers of the production on the festival's mainstage for an audience of over 6000 people; the team will receive a Proclamation from the New Orleans City Council sponsored by Councilmember Jay Banks for achievements.

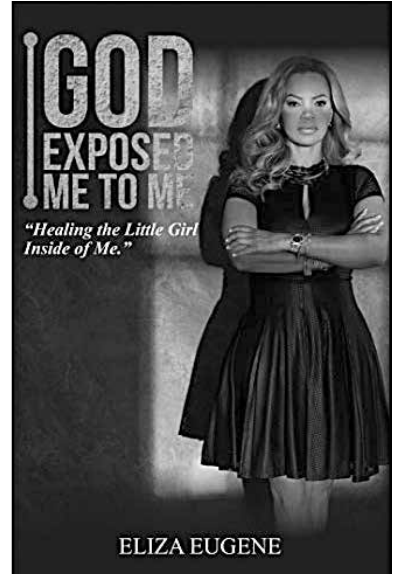
God Exposed Me to Me

Healing the Little Girl Inside of Me by Eliza Eugene

New Orleans Agenda

How do you hold on to theology when the reality is sitting here? In this personal, yet life-changing memoir, Eliza brings you on her journey from her adolescent years up until now. Eliza has endured abuse, domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, and the brutal murder of her brother just to name a few.

This story is about survival, endurance, success and God's divine favor. If you are sitting in pain and not knowing how you got there, this book is for you. Eliza shares her testimony on how she was able to get through it all while still holding on to her faith. From the streets to the suites, Eliza rose to the occasion and allowed God



to transform her life in ways that were unimaginable.

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Southern's 45th Annual Mardi Gras Scholarship Gala

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The Southern University Alumni Federation Houston Chapter recently played host to its 45th Annual Mardi Gras Scholarship Gala. As the organization's Annual Fundraiser, the event helped provide scholarships to students in the Greater Houston area who are pursuing higher education at one of the campuses in the Southern University and A&M College System.

Attendees of the event held at the Westin Houston Memorial City included Greg Burton, Ryan Bethune, Antonia Altemus, Kristen Bethune, Lisa Chargois, Aaron Hammond, Keidra Powe, Adraon & Traci Greene, Rosalind Erby, Jaslyn Perrodin, Kirk Bowie, Shirley Demerson, Pat Bynum, Rhondreka Hughes, Jeff Bryant, Calandra & O'Neil Robinson, Ray Sewell and scores more.



Robyn Merrick, (2nd from left) Southern University System Vice President for External Affairs and attendees.



State & Local, Continued from page 5.

out their life and help to shape their personalities and their character," Sholes said.

Many Links members attended HBCUs and Sholes believes their main purpose for educating African American children today, as they did when they were first founded.

"I feel like it nurtures our children in our community, and they know they understand our issues," Sholes said of HBCUs. "I really

think that HBCUs are a good area for kids who are trying to find their place in the world," she said.

As students visited the various booths, senior Daya Jones said she wanted to study nursing and eventually go back to school to become an obstetrician-gynecologist.

"HBCUs are good because of the experience...it teaches you different things," Jones said. "It'll help more down the line for finding a job or going forward to your

career," she said.

HBCU representatives said that visiting local high schools is an important part of their outreach, said Brent Hodges, a recruiter at SUNO.

"They were designed basically for students who couldn't get into a public White institution...and gave us the opportunity that we can flourish. It's a privilege to go to an HBCU," Hodges said. "[It's] more family oriented. It's like being taught by your parents," he added.

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Data News Weekly, "The People's Paper," is looking for freelance writers to join our team print and digital team. We want to hear from you if you are a working journalist, or an aspiring journalist who has 2 years or more of newspaper or PR writing experience. We need writers who can cover New Orleans news stories, ranging from local high school sports, community events, City Hall and entertainment. Experience in print is necessary, experience in digital and social media are encouraged.

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