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New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

"The People's Paper"

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NOLA Stay at Home Jazz Fest Edition

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive



CLASS *of* 2020

*Tries to Make
Sense of
Graduating
during
COVID-19*

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from the
Mayor**

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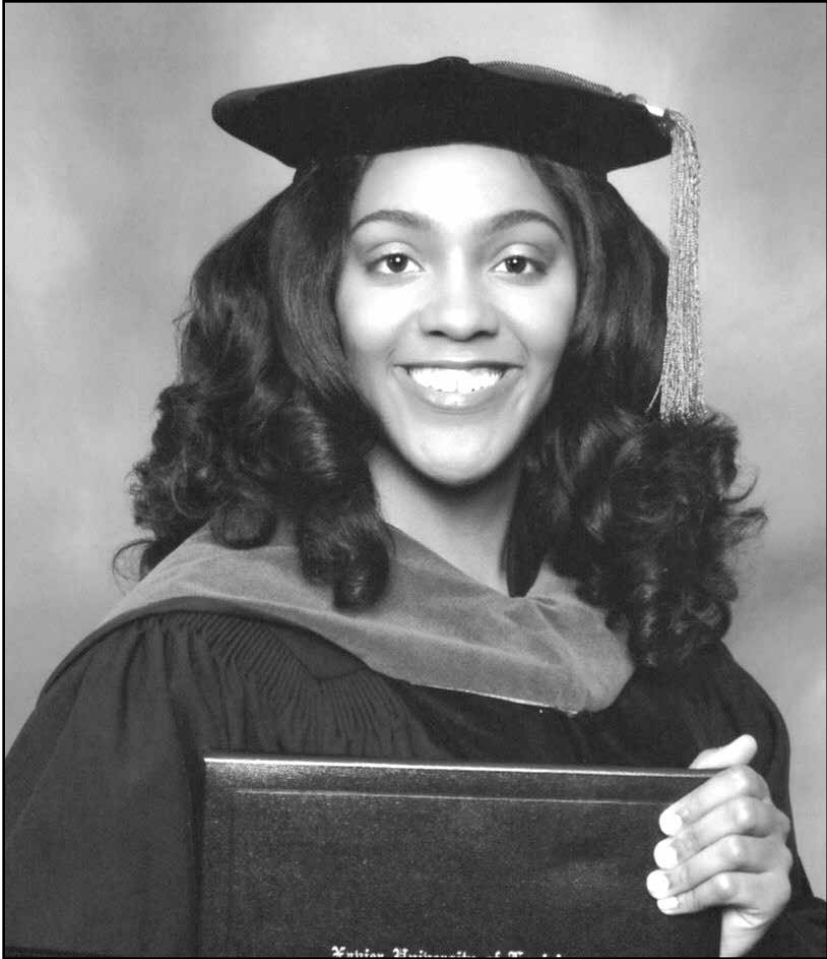
**State & Local
COVID-19
Effects on Black
America**



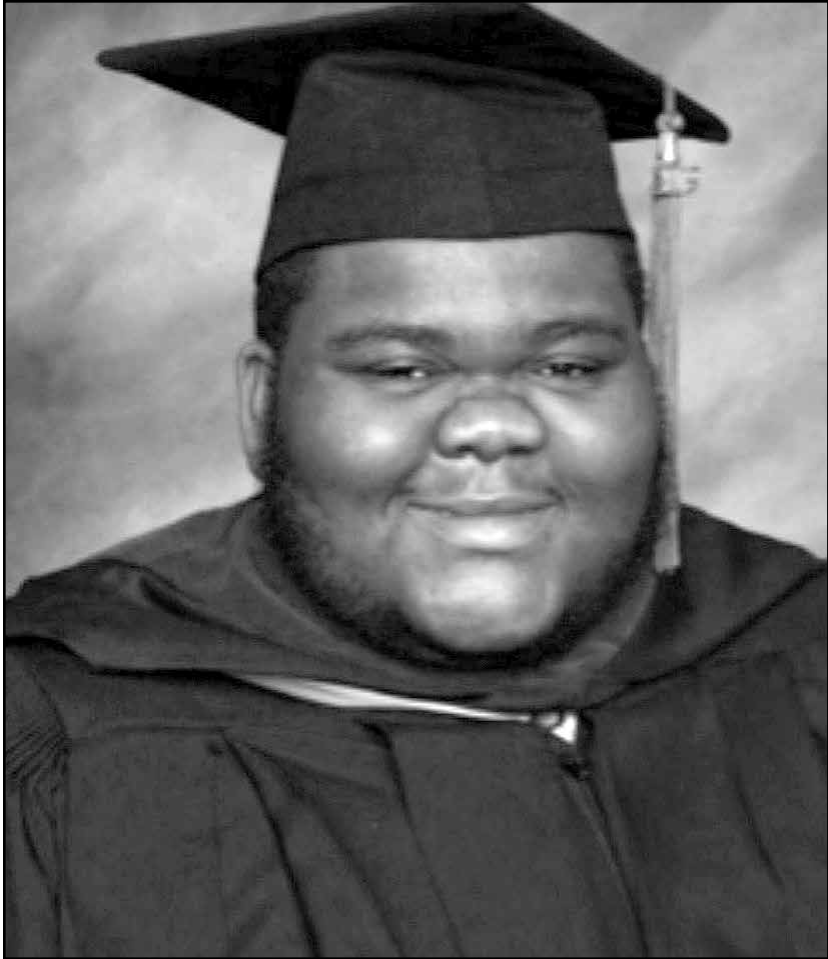
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Class of 2020

Tries to Make Sense of Graduating during COVID-19



Shaina Griffin, Xavier University College of Pharmacy



Jordan Deloch, Xavier University

Jordan Deloch
Data News Weekly Contributor

The coronavirus turned the month of May, a time when graduates celebrate academic milestones, into a somber memory of cancelled proms, games, senior class trips and ceremonies.

Following the closure of schools and universities

throughout the nation, many schools modified or postponed graduation dates and some switched to virtual ceremonies. The general consensus by the Class of 2020 was that graduation would simply never be the same.

“I worked so hard, and now I can’t even celebrate my moment. To say that I have been waiting my entire life for this, I am truly hurt that I will have to end things

on this note,” said Kyla Holmes, who is a graduating senior at Southern University at Baton Rouge. “College graduation is something that many people are not blessed to be afforded. The mere fact that I cannot enjoy mine is heartbreaking,” added Holmes, a native of LaPlace, LA., who will earn a bachelor’s degree in May in Education from Southern.

Louisiana college students said the lack of tradition-

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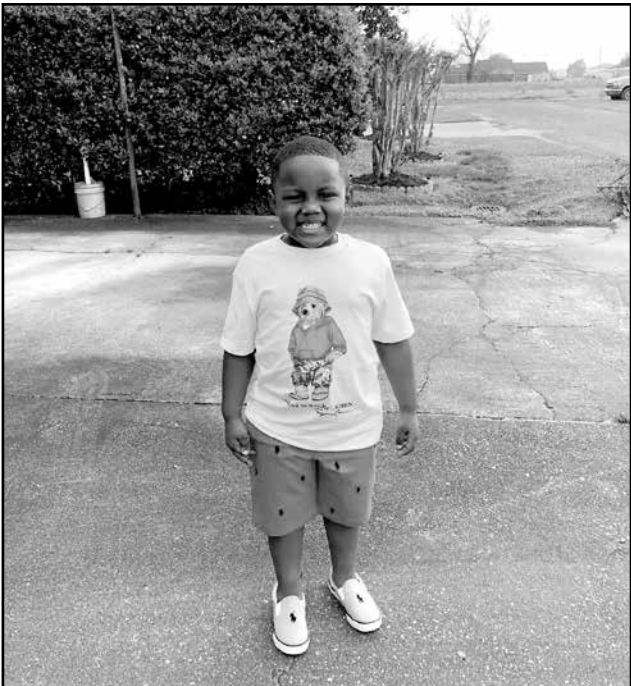
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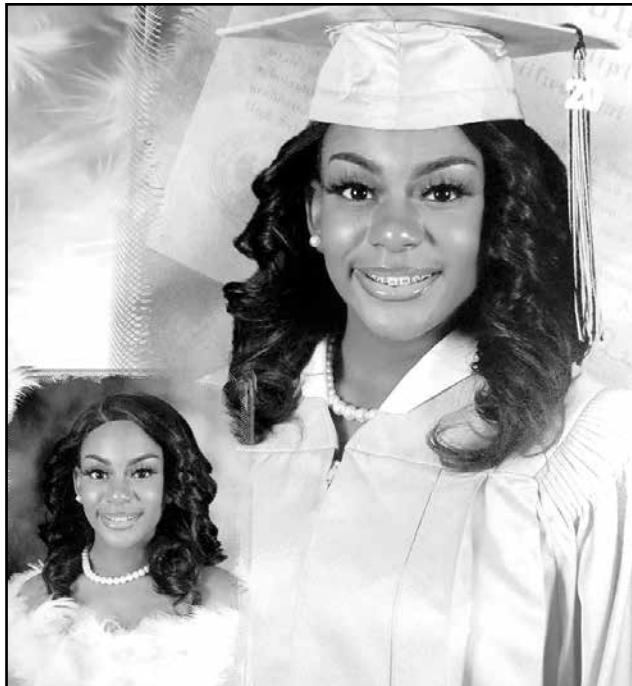
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Kenedi Jackson, Edna Karr High School



Kaiden Kyle, Donaldsonville Primary



Ashia Henry, East St. John High School

al ceremonies diminishes the long journey towards completing their degrees through many obstacles, including a semester turned upside down by the pandemic.

“COVID-19 has altered our graduation by making it seem as though we have to just go on about our daily lives,” said Kenneth Jackson, a graduating senior at the University of New Orleans. “Instead of going out with a ‘big bang,’ it’s almost like we’re ending things with a small flame,” added Jackson, who is a New Orleans native.

Some students said that despite the lack of ceremonies, they understand that the disappointment is for a greater good.

“I’m very upset about not being able to have a graduation. After completing six years [two years of undergraduate studying and 4 years of pharmacy school], I looked forward to graduation, because I waited so long for this accomplishment to be recognized,” said Shaina Griffin, a graduate student in Xavier University of Louisiana’s College of Pharmacy. “However, although I am upset about this, I do understand that this is how it has to be. As someone who has been working to help combat this virus, I do see how serious it is, and can accept that this is for the best,” added Griffin, who is a New Orleans native.

For high school seniors, while COVID-19 has prompted schools to cancel traditional commencement ceremonies, other events, such as the athletic season, prom, and Academic Signing Day have been either altered or cancelled.

“As an athlete, I hoped to finish

out my senior season with my team, yet instead it was cut short, along with other things. This is certainly not the ending that I expected,” said Kenedi Jackson, a senior and softball player at Edna Karr High School in New Orleans. “What is even more concerning to me is not knowing whether I will be able to attend school in the Fall to be able to practice with my new team,” Jackson added of her college plans.

Other high school students said they wanted the opportunity to mark a rite of passage and to seal the memories they made with childhood friends.

“Graduation to some may just seem like the day that you get your diploma, but to me and many other seniors, this is a major accomplishment,” said Ashia Henry, a senior at East St. John High School in Reserve, LA. “

“This day celebrates all the work and effort you put in for four years of high school, and for COVID-19 to happen and take it away is truly devastating. Along with graduation, COVID-19 took away prom, senior experiences, and all the lasting memories of high school friends,” Henry added. “I can’t help but think COVID-19 took, and is taking, the most memorable times of me and my classmates’ lives,” Henry said.

Even down to the littlest graduates in the Class of 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak has brought about much sadness for the loss of such special moments.

“I just wanted to make my family proud, and now I can’t,” said Kaiden Kyle, a kindergarten graduate of Donaldsonville Primary School.



Kyla Holmes, Southern University Baton Rouge



Kenneth Jackson, University of New Orleans

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Darnell and Denna, adopted 16-year-old Isaiah

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NOLA Stay at Home

Jazz Fest Edition

Fleur De Lis
Data News Weekly Columnist

This is the time of year when the streets of New Orleans are filled with people during the two amazing weeks of "Jazz Fest". This year because of COVID-19 it was canceled; but this did not stop some from "Jazz Festing" in place. During this time many have taken to social media to stay connected and keep the spirit of this great City alive. Therefore, this week as part of our "NOLA Stay At Home" series we caught up with some people from our creative community. They are not only the bearers and keepers of our culture, but those who keep the spirit, heritage and traditions of our City alive as we deal with the COVID-19 crisis.



Singer Alicia Renee A-K-A Blue Eyes



Charlie Tenner, Spyboy of the Comanche Hunters



Randall Ray A-K-A DJ Troubleman

Mayor LaToya Cantrell on the Fight Against COVID-19

An Exclusive Message to the Readers of Data News Weekly

Forward together is how we started! And these are truly important and pivotal times for our city, state, nation and world in the face of the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is something that's changing all of our lives, where there is a new normal impacting us all. For us to win the fight against this invisible enemy that is claiming the lives of so many of our people, we the citizens of New Orleans must step up to the challenge. We must do our due diligence in protecting our most vulnerable and in assisting our medical community so that they can remain as vital and as viable as possible.



During this crisis, New Orleans has been hit extremely hard, but we are a resilient people who for over 300 years have overcome unfathomable obstacles and we have always done this by working together. This time is no different, because all of our lives depend on it.

In the fight against COVID-19, we have made great strides and we are pleased to report that we can see a flattening of the curve because so many of our citizens are doing their part abiding by our stay-at-home order, staying informed and taking the precautions necessary to remain safe. For that, I would like to thank all of you, but this is not the time to think we are out in the clear.

We have to remain vigilant in this fight against COVID-19 if we are to survive this pandemic. No matter your race, income, zip code or which ward you are from, we all have skin in the game and must do our part. New Orleans is an amazing city whose welcoming spirit is full of vibrancy, charm and unmistakable uniqueness. We look forward to sharing the warmth of our summers, the taste of our cuisine, the sights of our art and the excitement of our music with the world once again. We look forward to brighter days and as we forge ahead, with all of your help, we will get there soon!

Data Zone,
Continued on page 5.

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

Data Zone, Continued from page 4.



Trumpeter and vocalist James Andrews



Vocalist extraordinaire Charmaine Neville



Visual Artist Ayo Scott



If I could do one thing,
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Officials Examine COVID-19 Effects on Black America

Nigell Moses
Data News Weekly
Contributor

African Americans make up 33 percent of Louisiana's population but account for 70 percent of the state's COVID-19 deaths. A panel of healthcare experts and elected officials examined the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on the Black community in a virtual panel discussion, hosted by Xavier University's Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities and Center for Equity, Justice, and the Human Spirit on April 29, 2020.

"There's a saying, when America catches a cold, Black people get the flu, well, in 2020 when America catches coronavirus, Black people die," said Dr. David Robinson-Morris, the Director for the Center for Equity, Justice, and the Human Spirit, as he quoted a Brookings Institute article by Rayshawn Ray.

African Americans are more likely to be essential workers, putting them at a greater risk to contracting the coronavirus disease, experts said. National data shows that 30 percent of bus drivers and 20 percent of food service workers are African American, making Black essential workers the second largest group in those categories, after White essential workers.

"People went to work sick, people got sick at work, because they were afraid that they were going to lose their housing," said Andreanecia Morris, the Executive Director for HousingNOLA.

Morris addressed racial discrimination within housing, noting that even before the coronavirus outbreak, over 350 families had lost housing in New Orleans last year. Attempts to improve healthcare, education, and economics have failed due to the structural issues in finding affordable housing in the city, Morris said. There are 14,000 vacant apartments in New Orleans, yet people still have no stable place



Local health experts and officials examine COVID-19 impact on the Black community on April 29 in a virtual panel. From left to right: Dr. Kathleen Kennedy, Dr. Daniel Sarpong, Andreanecia Morris, Dr. Esteban Gershanik, State Rep. Royce Duplessis, Dr. David Robinson-Morris, Dr. Torrie Harris.

to live, she said.

Health literacy also plays a crucial role in the health inequities communities of color experience within America's healthcare system. "We don't communicate as a healthcare profession as well as we should, to all communities in a direct way that we should," said Dr. Esteban Gershanik, a Hospitalist for Children's Hospital New Orleans, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. "There needs to be greater efforts for that," he added.

Stigmas against African Americans are a direct reflection of the language used to describe the data about the rate of deaths due to COVID-19. The panelists said that national figures failed to fully explain why Black communities are most vulnerable for poor health outcomes and instead focused on stereotypes. The panelists addressed Surgeon General Jerome Adams' message towards communities of color, where Adams asked them to "avoid alcohol, tobacco and drugs," and to "do it for your abuela," and to

"do it for your big mama and pop-pop." Local experts said that these messages reinforce racist assumptions, while victimizing people of color.

"I think given his position, where he was, having that national platform and putting it that way, may come across a little distasteful," said Dr. Daniel Sarpong, the Director and Endowed Chair for Health Disparities for the Center for Health and Health Disparities at Xavier. "I don't think people should focus so much on the packaging, at this point of crisis, we need to focus on the content," Sarpong added.

Policies referring Americans who feel sick to call their primary care physicians disregard that many African Americans do not have primary care physicians, which can be the reason for more African American deaths due to COVID-19, said Dr. Kathleen Kennedy, the Dean of Xavier's College of Pharmacy.

"If they loosen the restrictions on who can be tested, then everyone has an opportunity to be tested so they will know if they are positive or

not," Kennedy said.

Officials said they are working with health care providers to find better ways to offer testing and treatment to Black communities.

"I was on a phone call with a local hospital system just earlier today about planning their roll out of antibody testing, and then hopefully offering it to the community in a larger capacity," said Torrie Harris, the Health and Equity strategist for the New Orleans Health Department.

Diversity in research, organizations and policies is a must to ensure the inclusion of all groups of people in decision-making, Harris added. Experts also acknowledged the need for empathy and participation from policy makers.

"From a practical standpoint, the federal government just cut a \$2-trillion check without blinking in two days," said LA State Rep. Royce Duplessis of District 93. "It's all about political will, courage and commitment to righting the wrongs of the past. 'Til we do that, we will remain in these circumstances," he added.

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AMID A GLOBAL CRISIS, MANY IN WASHINGTON ARE PROTECTING **INSURANCE COMPANY PROFITS** OVER **BLACK HEALTH CARE**

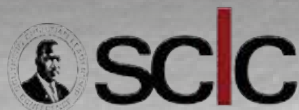
Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 is killing Black Americans at much higher rates than White Americans. Even knowing that, many members of Congress are pushing for a surprise medical billing legislation that would only serve to further starve Black communities of access to health care — at a time when we need it most. If this legislation goes through as written and is included in the next coronavirus package, insurance companies will be able to continue refusing to cover emergency services, forcing patients to pay bills they cannot afford, or shuttering hospitals. And hospitals in our communities are the first to be hit. Emergency services are already hard to come by in our communities, and we are already receiving the brunt of this global health crisis — the time to put a stop to it is now. Together, we can ensure that the old way of doing business — putting insurance company profits over people - **STOPS**.

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Let's join leaders like Rev. Al Sharpton, the Congressional Black Caucus, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Black Women's Health Imperative, National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Dr. Benjamin Chavis, and Dr. Julianne Malveaux in working to ensure that insurance companies expand their networks and cover more emergency services.

JOIN US AND SUPPORT THE CBC

Help us work to make sure that while they prepare the next coronavirus aid package, Congress passes a bill that keeps us healthy and alive — by allowing insurance networks to grow and cover lifesaving services.



Dr. Benjamin F.
Chavis Jr.

Dr. Julianne
Malveaux

For more information, visit: <https://nationalactionnetwork.net/newnews/black-americans-and-healthcare>