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Black Women Embrace Natural Hairstyles

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Data Zone Page 4

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Breonna Taylor Ruling Falls Short of Justice

Page 2



Newsmaker
Black Voters Important in Nov. Election

Page 6

National News
AKA Sorority Raises \$1 Million for HBCU's



Page 7

Breonna Taylor Ruling Falls Short of Justice

Kelsyn Parker
Data News Weekly Contributor

In an election year plagued with an unexpected pandemic, social unrest, several storms, and a string of wildfires, the killing of Breonna Taylor sent shockwaves throughout the nation. From Louisville, KY to almost every portion of the country, Americans demanded justice. Instead, a grand jury only indicted a former Louisville police detective on Sept. 3, 2020, for wanton endangerment of Breonna Taylor’s neighbors by recklessly firing his gun during the infamous raid on Taylor’s apartment that resulted in her death. Still, two other officers who fired shots during the raid on her apartment did not face any charges.

“The outcome of Breonna Taylor’s case will without a doubt have a lasting impact on the Criminal Justice System,” said Brandon Brisco, a Practicing Attorney in the Greater New Orleans area. “We are already seeing cities such as Louisville, KY, Memphis, and a litany of others who are now banning no-knock search warrants for starters,” Brisco said.

These reforms are a small step in preventing future tragedies, Brisco noted, and they also hold officers accountable by removing previous protections that resulted in forms of impunities from their actions.

“These laws will provide for the much-needed transparency from our local officials and police departments,” Brisco said. “We have a long way to go, but Breonna Taylor’s name will forever be at the center of conversation when we speak of justice reforms and the need for change.”

The Criminal Justice System’s response to Taylor’s death contrasts to that of George Floyd’s where all officers involved were charged in his murder. The ruling of Taylor’s case has reinforced for Black women the idea that this country does not care for them or their male counterparts.

“When they announced that the officers weren’t going to be directly charged for Breonna Taylor’s murder, it reiterated that we live in a society where Black lives and bodies are not valued unless for monetary purposes,” said La’Shance Perry, a Xavier University of Louisiana student who shared on social media about her own encounter with forced police entry into her apartment.



Cover Story, Continued on page 3.

The killing of Breonna Taylor by police is one of many that’s put the issue of Black Lives Matter and racial justice in the forefront of conversations in America.

INSIDE DATA	
Cover Story	2
Data Zone	4
Newsmaker	6
Commentary.	6
National News	7

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.



Brandon Brisco



Glenda Lindsey



Halie Glenn

"Why must I demand that my life matters? Why must I repeatedly prove that my Black skin isn't a threat?" Perry asked. "Why are Black women tasked with being the healers, leaders, uplifters and protectors of a nation that brutalizes, traumatizes, demonizes and destroys us?" she asked.

Taylor struck a chord with Black women in particular because law enforcers were after a male suspect, but she lost her life as a result.

"Her lack of justice proves that Black women aren't cared for," she said. "Breonna Taylor's death signifies that we must protect Black women by any means necessary."

The indictment of former police detective Brett Hankison, who was found guilty of Wanton Endangerment as he fired his gun recklessly during the raid on Breonna Taylor's apartment, caused many to question the integrity of the justice system as they believe that the charges were not directly related to Breonna Taylor.

"They're more concerned over missing bullets than a missing life," said Halie Glenn, a New Orleans native. "Basically, that can equate to our current situation globally," Glenn said. "It's not All Lives Matter. It's not Black Lives Matter," she said. "It's No Lives Matter," Glenn declared.

The questioning of the justice system's integrity has resulted in even more focus on the importance of voting in November, particularly through early voting.

"The upcoming election means a preservation of freedom," said Sharon Brinkley, a local real estate agent. "The freedom to move freely without the fear of being terrorized by a hate group or the police," Brinkley said. "As a Black



La' Shance Perry



Sharon Brinkley

woman in America, I see no difference between the two because both groups have caused pain, fear and death to Black people that can't be undone."

While the upcoming election is a focus point for candidates on how the justice system handles matters similar to that of Breonna Taylor's, her case, for African Americans, currently represents the systemic racism of law enforcement and criminal justice in the country.

"The system failed us," said 53-year-old Glenda Lindsey, a tourist visiting New Orleans. "What else is new?" Lindsey asked as she shook her head frustratedly at the common occurrence of Black lives being claimed at White police officers' hands. "That's all I have to say," she said. "The system failed us."

Voting Matters

There are a few ways to register to vote in Louisiana, and those different registration methods have different deadlines.

The first deadline for registration to vote in Louisiana is Oct. 5 — if registering by mail or in person.

If you're registering through Louisiana's online voter portal, the deadline is Oct. 13, but you should make sure you can register online before the mail-in deadline.

Black Women Embrace Natural Hairstyles Even More During Pandemic

Alexa Green
Data News Weekly Contributor

The COVID-19 Pandemic may have forced working women to get used to a new normal, but for Black women, the initial closure of hair salons meant finding new ways to preserve and protect their hair, including returning to natural hairstyles. For Black women professionals, the shift in working norms has provided a moment to advocate for natural hairstyles in the workplace and to bolster support for policies like the CROWN Act to end hair discrimination for ethnic hairstyles.

"No other group of women is asked, or expected, to alter the natural texture of their hair in order to succeed in our society," said Attorney Adria N. Kimbrough, who serves as the Pre-Law Program Advisor at Dil-



Sheba Turk is the morning News Anchor for WWL-TV. She has shifted to wearing natural hairstyles on air.



WDSU-TV Anchor Christina Watkins is among others African-American women in embracing natural hairstyles.

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lard University, and who wears natural hairstyles. "Black hair has always been policed in this country, and that is why the CROWN Act is so important."

Schools and organizations have developed policies that regulate hairstyles that Kimbrough explained are "simply proxies for race-based discrimination."

"The provisions of the CROWN Act protect Black women from this kind of discrimination and give Black women the freedom to make personal choices about their hair without fear of losing out on a job or educational opportunities," Kimbrough said.

Only 7 states have passed the CROWN Act, but many Black women professionals say they are not waiting for society or lawmakers to reaffirm Black women's hair, they are doing so on their own, even if it may mean some pushback or criticisms along the way.

"I hope that my decision to wear natural hairstyles on TV helps to normalize Black women wearing their natural hair in professional spaces," said WWL-TV

Morning News Anchor Sheba Turk, who has styled natural curls and braids on air.

"Someone decided that straight hair was 'professional.' I refuse to accept that, and I hope that the more people see me doing my job professionally with my hair the more people expand their minds when it comes to Black women, their appearance, and their unlimited capabilities with any hairstyle."

Turk said she persevered through negative comments from viewers when she first switched to natural hairstyles but after a local reporter at another station said her decision encouraged her to also wear braids, she felt the move was having an impact.

Like Turk, fellow New Orleans Anchor Christina Watkins of WDSU Channel 6 News recently made the move to natural hairstyles just this summer.

"Since I've been in the industry, I've always worn my hair pressed. I decided to finally switch it up in July, and wear knotless braids,

Data Zone,
Continued on page 5.

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

Data Zone, Continued from page 4.



Attorney Adria N. Kimbrough is the Pre-Law Program Advisor at Dillard University. Her natural hair has inspired other Black women in legal and academic professions to also try natural hairstyles.

to give my hair a break,” Watkins said of her journey. “I was so nervous, but I think it helped make people realize braids are professional,” she said.

Already, Watkins said other women have applauded her switch to a natural hairstyle. “I’m grateful our viewers have been receptive,” Watkins said. “I even get messages from women who said I inspired them to get braids and how they finally feel free. It’s been a great experience.”

Watkins’ decision to switch to a natural, protective hairstyle reflects choices Black women are making across the country about how to manage their hair when based mostly at home. Although COVID-19 did cause salons to be closed for a while, this allowed many to experiment and learn their natural hair and help those around them.

“At the moment I have noticed more people interested in doing their own hair due to COVID,” said Michelle Tollen, an owner of a Natural Hair Salon in Philadelphia, Penn. “They are learning that they can do their own hair and also learning more about their hair.”

Some women noticed that the shift to natural hairstyle also improved the overall health of their hair.

“I started doing twist outs again because it was making my hair healthier and fuller and I have also moved to stop putting heat in my hair completely,” said Miriam C. Purnell, Pharm.D., who is an Associate Pro-

fessor and the Chair of the Department of Pharmacy, Practice and Administration at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore.

It helps show how natural hair can be the new norm for younger generations of Black women, Purnell said.

“My daughter is doing the same and is starting to embrace and try new natural hairstyles as well,” Purnell added.

Although natural hair is becoming accepted in more professional environments, in many other states, Black women can still be fired over their hairstyles. When California State Sen. Holly J. Mitchell introduced the CROWN Act SB188 in 2019, she hoped to put into law protections that prohibit race-based hair discrimination, ranging from the denial of employment and educational opportunities because of hair texture or protective hairstyles including braids, locs, twists, or Bantu knots. Black women professionals say they are fighting to not just protect their right to wear their natural hair but to empower their children and future generations to have the freedom to wear their hair as they choose.

“My decision to wear my hair natural is more connected to my identity as a mother than as an attorney,” Kimbrough said. “I wanted to normalize natural hair for my daughter and to help her understand that her hair is beautiful just the way God designed it.”

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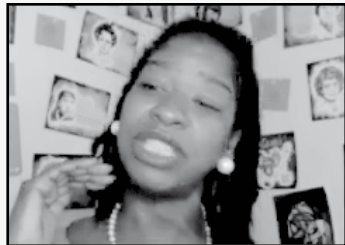
Policy Leaders Emphasize the Importance of the Black Vote

Nigell Moses
Data News Weekly
Contributor

After a record-breaking 66.6 percent voter turnout in 2012, the Black voter turnout declined for the first time in 20 years, plunging to 59.6 percent in the 2016 presidential election. Many African American voters believe their vote is valueless and is ineffective at creating change in government policy. A panel of public policy leaders and elected officials discussed the importance of exercising the right to vote in the upcoming 2020 Presidential Election, as a pivotal turning point for all marginalized communities.

"This is an important election, perhaps it is even the election of our generation," said Alanah Odoms, the Executive Director for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Louisiana, during a virtual panel discussion hosted by Xavier University's Center for Equity, Justice and the Human Spirit on Sept. 22, 2020. "It will determine in many instances whether we live or die."

With the enduring global pandemic, the policies of President Donald Trump's administration and continued racial injustices, voter turnout is crucial to the well-being and future of Black and Brown



Nia Weeks, Founder and Executive Director of Citizen SHE and Citizen SHE United Attorney



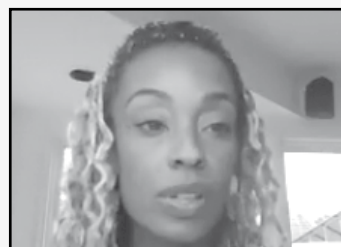
Ashley K. Shelton, Executive Director for the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice



Rep. Royce Duplessis, Louisiana State Representative of District 93



Rev. Mitchell J. Stevens, Interfaith Chaplain for Campus Ministry



Alanah Odoms, Executive Director for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Louisiana

communities, the panelists said. The disenfranchisement of African Americans' right to vote reflects a centuries-long fight for equality and social justice. Through the 15th and 19th Amendments, African American men and women gained the fundamental right to vote, a critical instrument to shift political power.

"We have to make our right to protest our right to vote, which are the most powerful tools that we have, we have to make them matter

and we have to make them sacred again," said Ashley Shelton, the Executive Director of the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice.

One of the major obstacles in exercising the right to vote is voter suppression. For everyone Democratic voter suppressed, that equals 70 Republican votes cast, the panelists said. Many Republican-controlled states continue to use tactics that suppress minority voting in their states,

they said. Tactics such as mass incarceration, disinformation, state identification procedures, and relocation of polls all contribute to voter disengagement.

"It's bigger than voting. It's so we can have this strong arm together when it comes to policy enactment," said Nia Weeks, the Founder and Executive Director of the Citizen SHE and Citizen SHE United.

The panelists explained the significance of power relations when

it comes to electing public officials and appointing justices in office. Accountability plays a vital role in the persons elected for office, they said. The expansion of federal and state programs, like Medicaid, is an example of how low-income African American families and individuals can be stripped of access to free healthcare.

"We're talking about the difference of 500,000 people being covered, versus 500,000 people not being covered, simply based upon who was put in office," said La. State Rep. Royce Duplessis of District 93. "We're talking life and death," he added.

Public education of local and national policies is the first step to accurate representation, policy leaders said. More importantly, making the educational process easy for the average citizen to understand is necessary for political change.

"Moving forward in everything that we do, it is up to us to change it now," said Ta'Mia Morrisette, the President of Epsilon Tau Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated and a Senior Psychology Major at Xavier. "I challenge everyone to take at least one person to the polls with them and write down one thing that you want to see change in your lifetime," she added.

Commentary

From Desire to Purpose...A Dreamer's Journey

Rising To Rebuild



Renée Dugué
Co-Founder and Executive Director of Reborn and Rising

The old saying "Time flies" is so true! It's been fifteen years since Hurricane Katrina washed me out of New Orleans and the only home I'd ever known. Relocating to Houston, one of the country's most diverse cities, and having traveled to various places in the world, has clarified for me what many already



From St. Philip the Apostle School in The Desire to traveling the world, Renée Dugué, is journeying on her purposed path. Learn more of her WALK4WATER Campaign's efforts to provide clean water to Africans in need at RebornAndRising.org.

know...There is no place or a people like us from The N.O. We are truly a different breed. Even from the rest of Louisiana! True New Orlean-y-uns won't say NOLA. We say, "I'm from The N.O. BayBay!" Y'all know what I'm talking about. Let the gentrifiers have NOLA. Ya' hoid me! We are deeply passionate and unapologetically direct. We are brutally honest, and when necessary, we are brutal. Made stronger with Melanated Magic, no water from busted levies, systemic injustice, bio-chemical planned-emic or vaccines will stop us. We are fighters and survivors. It's time now though, for us to unite and elevate our fight.

Let's first answer the questions: Who are we fighting and what are we fighting for? The police? The

judicial system? Black Lives Matter? Women's / Pro-Choice Rights? Education reform? And what is our end game? How do we attain our goals? The short answer, in my humble opinion, is TOGETHER. Building on the base commonality oppressed people share, melanin, realizing who the real enemy is, and has always been. Their strategy is long game, consistent. From slavery to Black Codes, to peonage, divide and conquer tactics are in place. When we as a collective were strongest and began to demand a change that would benefit all of us, our ranks were infiltrated, and we as people were distracted. Specifically, our Queens were pulled into

Commentary, Continued on page 7.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.® Does It Again and Raises \$1 Million in Support of HBCUs

Online Donations Help Sorority to Exceed Its Goal

NNPA Newswire

CHICAGO, IL- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® is proud to announce that for the third consecutive year, the sorority has successfully raised \$1 million in 24 hours for the benefit of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The sorority's Annual HBCU Impact Day on September 21 exceeded its \$1 million goal in online donations alone from local AKA Chapters, private donors and corporate matching dollars from across the globe.

"We did it, we did it again!" Dr. Glenda Glover, AKA International President and Chief Executive Officer shared with excitement in a video message to sorority members. "The online receipts alone totaled more than \$1.3 million. We can now continue to provide endowments to our treasured HBCUs."

HBCU Impact Day is one part of a four-year \$10 million fundraising goal set by Dr. Glover, who has challenged the women of AKA to lead the charge in helping to secure fiscal sustainability and success for accredited HBCUs around the country. The sorority was successfully able to reach the \$1 mil-



AKA International President and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Glenda Glover (second from right) is joined by (l-r) former Bennett College President Dr. Phyllis Worthy Dawkins, Jennifer King Congleton, AKA Mid Atlantic Regional Director and Erika Everett, Executive Director, Education Advancement Foundation at Alpha Kappa Alpha International Headquarters in Chicago for grant presentations to 32 HBCUs during Black History Month in 2019.

lion goal consecutively in 2018 and 2019, supporting the organization's HBCU for Life: A Call to Action platform, which aims to promote HBCUs by encouraging students to attend and matriculate through these institutions.

Last year, AKA gifted \$1.6 million to the first 32 of 96 HBCUs through the AKA-HBCU Endowment Fund. Each HBCU received \$50,000 in unrestricted endowment funds as part of a phased approach to help schools reduce student debt

through scholarships, fund industry-specific research, recruit and retain top faculty, and other critical operations especially during this global pandemic.

On Sunday, September 20, the sorority held a virtual brunch to launch the next round of 32 HBCU endowment recipients. Four more recipients were announced: Delaware State University, Lane College, St. Phillips College, and Medgar Evers College. Four additional grants will be announced on Fri-

day, September 25, the last day of HBCU Week. The sorority will then announce 24 more recipients — six schools every Thursday for the next four weeks.

"These institutions continue to make a powerful impact in our communities and throughout our country, graduating 22% of all African Americans with bachelor's degrees, nearly 80% of all African American judges and 50% of all black lawyers," said Dr. Glover, who is also the president of Tennessee State University and an HBCU graduate. "It's gratifying to know that funds raised will establish endowments, providing sustainability to our Historically Black Colleges and Universities."

Dr. Glover thanks everyone who contributed to the success of the 2020 HBCU Impact Day and notes that the \$1.3 million raised online does not include checks in the mail and other contributions. Although HBCU Impact Day has passed, individuals or organizations interested in supporting the effort can still make contributions by texting AKAHBCU to 44321, giving by mail or online at <http://aka1908.com/hbcus/donate-hbcu>.

Commentary, Continued from page 6.

other women's rights issues only to decrease support for our melanated rights. Housing and welfare incentives were introduced to encourage women to abandon the traditional family structure and to devalue the worth of our Kings. We all know this though. And they know too, the power and value our men pos-

sess. How is Louisiana, which is less than a tenth of the size of the largest state in the U.S., the prison capital of the entire country? We have to understand that the real enemy is the perpetrator of deception, and the real fight is to be free of the mindset of dependence on them.

This task of de/re-programming will take time. It will require an unwavering commitment from each

of us. It will take all the Melanated Magic and supernatural strength of our ancestors to reawaken the collective spirituality and belief in ourselves that has been stripped away and polluted. We truly have all we need to organize, educate, empower, care for, and protect ourselves. We can grow and produce our food and teach the truth to our children while exemplifying

strength and unity. This may all seem daunting; like a huge mountain to climb, but the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. We can all take a step forward, offering the gifts we have, contributing just where we are, one day at a time. I walk every day, literally, on my journey from desire to purpose. Be encouraged to walk in truth and light on your path.

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