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# Data

News Weekly

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March 27 - April 2, 2021 55th Year Volume 48 [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com)

A Data News Weekly Exclusive



# African Americans Share Experiences with COVID-19 Vaccine


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**Newsmaker  
Troy Carter  
Finishes  
First**

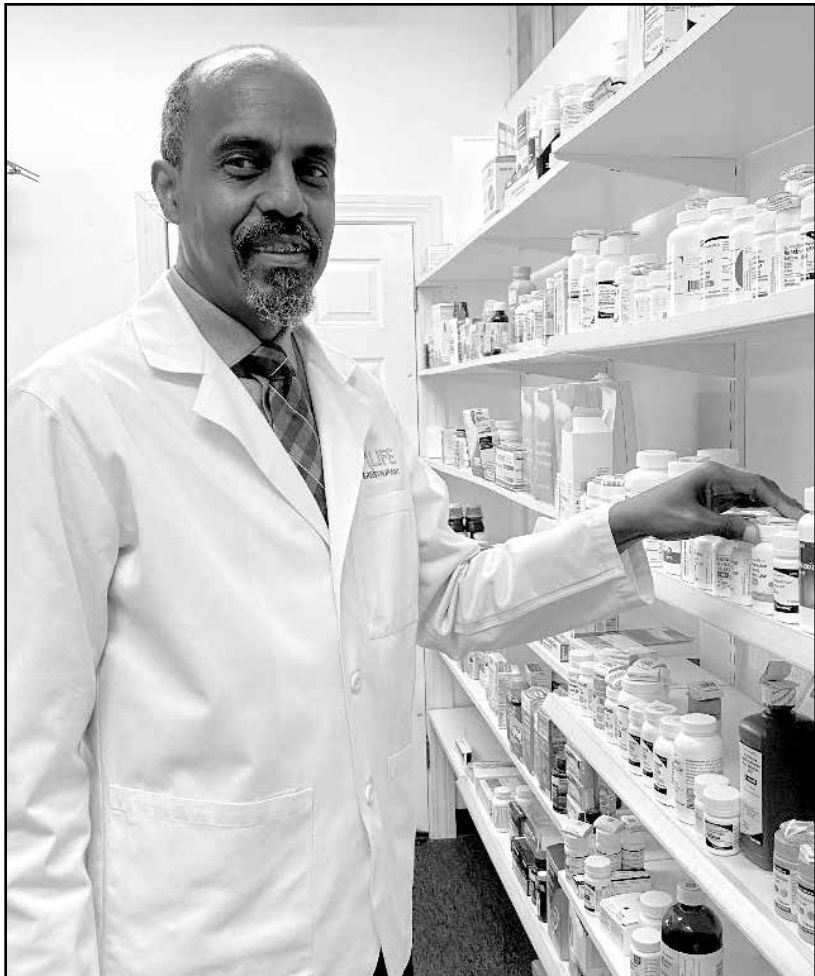
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**State & Local  
NOLA Alphas  
on COVID  
Vaccinations**



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# African Americans Share Experiences with COVID-19 Vaccine



Pharmacist Christopher Sylvain, RPh of Best Life Pharmacy and members of the Faith Full Gospel Baptist Church, where he also serves as pastor, have been working to improve access to vaccine appointments to increase the number of African Americans receiving the COVID-19 vaccine in the City.



Pharmacist Christopher Sylvain received the first shot of the COVID-19 vaccine in March and is working to get more members of the community vaccinated through the Christian Vaccine Access Coalition.

**Justice Page**  
**Data News Weekly Contributor**

The COVID-19 vaccine will become more readily available for more eligible groups beginning in late

March as vaccine manufacturers reached a major milestone on March 19th to produce enough vaccines to be distributed across the country. Some 7 million Louisiana residents have been vaccinated since December 2020. And as many residents have completed both

doses of the approved vaccines, they are sharing with their neighbors and friends their experiences with getting vaccinated.  
“At first I was skeptical, because I’ve heard it takes a significant amount of time to get a vaccine developed,”

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### DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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## Cover Story, Continued from page 2.

said Mya Willis, a public health student at Xavier University of Louisiana. "What persuaded me to get it was the fact that my mom was fully vaccinated, and she did not suffer from any side effects, I didn't hear her mention or complain about anything related to the vaccination other than the soreness that followed the second shot."

Willis said as an allied health student she wanted to join other frontline, healthcare workers and the elderly who were among the first groups eligible to get the vaccine. She shared that now that the vaccine is available to younger residents with specific pre-existing conditions, she decided to step up and get vaccinated.

"When I found out that Xavier was partnered with Tulane University, offering the vaccination to students, I said alright, what do I really have to lose?" Willis said. "I just want to go back to a normal life. I got my first shot three weeks ago, and I am scheduled to receive the second dosage next Tuesday," Willis added.

Willis is not alone in her initial hesitancy about getting the COVID-19 vaccine. There are in fact many people in the African American community who were unsure about it, experts said. Past historical events have had many in the community on edge about the particular outcomes of the vaccine, but fears have changed as African American health care professionals, elders, and public figures have set the example nationwide demonstrating the importance of getting vaccinated when the time is presented to the wider public.

"I try to tell people to take it at my church and my community to be the example," said Allene McCann, a registered nurse at Guardian Angel Hospice in Metairie. "I took mine as soon as I could ... I think it is safe and I encourage everybody to take it," McCann added.

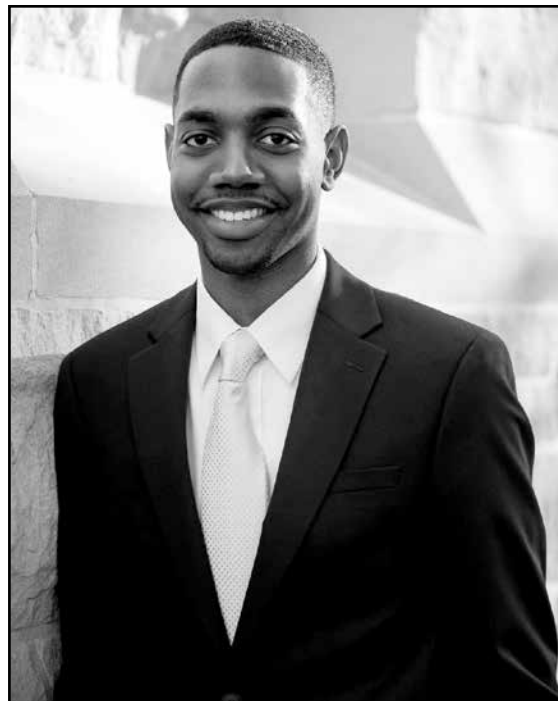
The African American community has been hit the hardest by this virus and the pandemic. The death rates have been extremely high due to the exposure rates. Pharmacist Christopher Sylvain explained why, in fact, people of this community should consider the vaccine.

"We disproportionately live in multi-family housing and have direct contact jobs," Sylvain said. "We already suffer from decreased opportunities in many areas, but vaccination rates have a lot to do with pastors and other community leaders encouraging others to make the right choice," he said.

Sylvain, who is also a pastor of Faith Full Gospel Baptist



Allene McCann is a registered nurse with Guardian Angel Hospice.



Blaine Turner is a Biology student at Xavier.



Tulane University's School of Medicine has expanded vaccination to frontline workers in March at its J. Bennett Johnson Building downtown on Tulane Avenue. (Photo courtesy Tulane University/credit Paula Burch-Celentano)



DePaul Community Health Center has been administering COVID-19 vaccines through its mobile unit set up across the City. On March 12th the mobile unit vaccinated residents at Xavier's campus. Photos of the mobile vaccine unit are taken by Mark Veals.

Church, and a fellow physician started the Christian Vaccine Access Coalition to assist local churches helping members of the community get scheduled to be vaccinated. Since last year, Sylvain has been working with the Louisiana Community Engagement Alliance Against COVID-19.

Disparities to ensure that the Black community had the facts about the vaccine and access to clinical trials inclusion and the latest data on vaccine research.

"The numbers are holding worldwide that vaccination provides almost 100 percent protection against death, while being unvaccinated gives anyone almost 100 percent exposure to death," Sylvain said.

"The choice should be clear to get vaccinated asap, to not be exposed to the possibility of being infected and possibly dying," he said. "This is an excellent opportunity to show concern and compassion for others within our own community and it also shows the power of people working together in groups," Sylvain added.

Natalie Reine, a minister, and member of Faith Full Gospel Baptist Church is supervising the daily work of the access coalition to get individuals as much information they need on receiving the vaccine.

"What we've done, we've actively taken a role in this by forming a coalition. The coalition actively calls providers on hand, we are connected with the Louisiana Department of Health. We find out if they have the vaccine right now, we found out who out of the providers have the vaccine right now; which type, where are they located, how to make an appointment, that sort of thing," Reine shared.

Through the coalition's website, individuals are able to become informed about where the vaccine is available, in real time, and then set appointments or be added to a wait list.

"We gather that information and publicize it on our website in order for the community to view it and know where they are able to get vaccinated," Reine said.

With the vaccine becoming available to all ages above 16, more young people said they are willing to get in line if it will protect the elderly, their family and help the city reopen fully.

"I think everyone should get the vaccine because it is another step in the right direction," said Blaine Turner, a biology student at Xavier. "We have the ability to protect ourselves and communities with the vaccine so we should take advantage of it," Turner said.



# Troy Carter Campaign Party



Photos by Malcom Flot  
Data News Weekly Contributor

In the race for who will represent the citizens of Louisiana's 2nd Congressional District, Troy Carter placed first and is headed to the run-off on April 24th. He held a socially distant campaign event at Mardi Gras World surrounding by family, friends and supporters.

Data News Weekly have endorsed Troy Carter's run for the U.S. Congress and ask all to get out and vote in the run-off election and let your voices be heard.



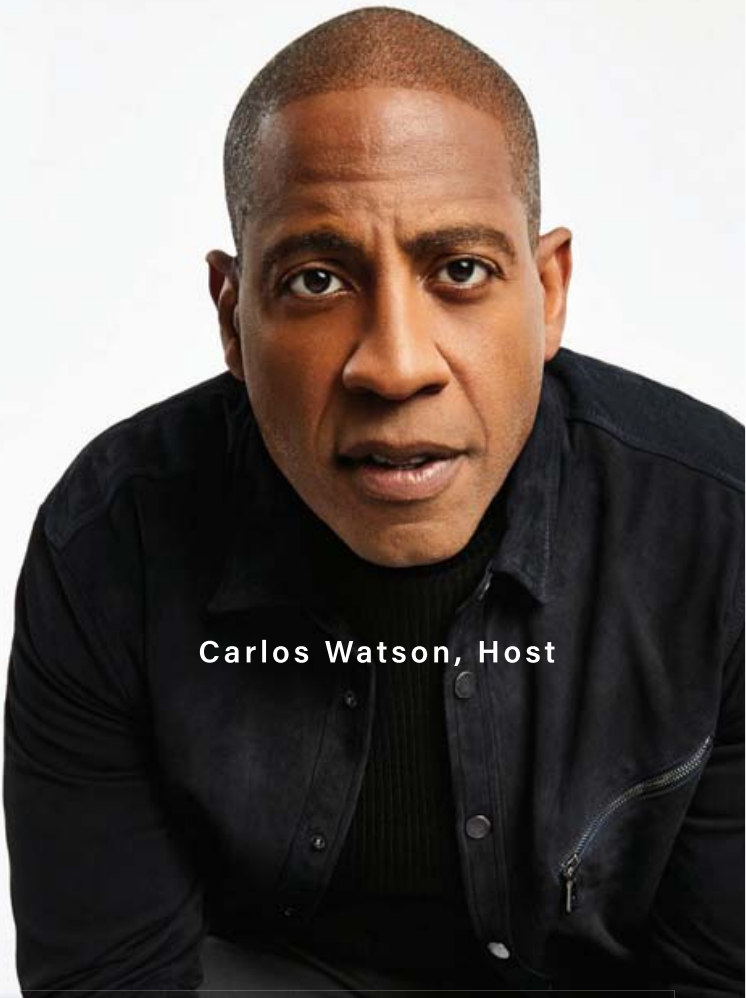
Visit [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com) for more photos from these events



# BLACK HEALTH IN AMERICA

REAL TALK,  
REAL CHANGE

Real Talk Real Change is back with episode two where we discuss COVID, Pregnancy & Doctors in the Black community.



Carlos Watson, Host



OZY.COM/REALTALK

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# Troy Carter Finishes First in the Race for Louisiana 2nd Congressional Race

*Headed to Run-off on April 24th*

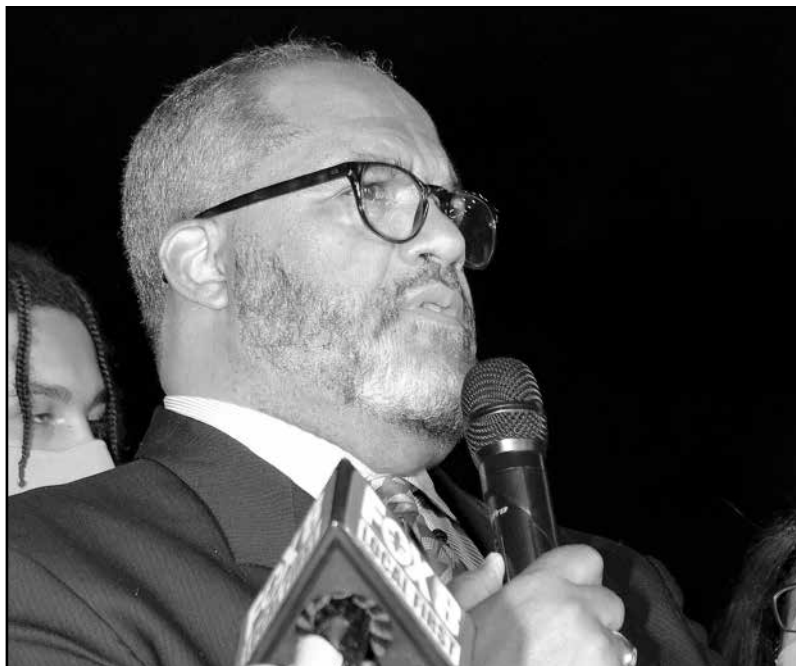
**Edwin Buggage**  
Editor-in-Chief

In the race to replace Cedric Richmond to represent Louisiana 2nd Congressional District, Troy Carter placed first in the primary and is headed to the run-off.

During the March 20th election Troy Carter led the field of 15 candidates with 36% percent of the vote followed by Karen Carter Peterson with 23% of the vote and Gary Chambers of Baton Rouge with 21% of the vote.

Troy Carter and Karen Carter Peterson, both New Orleans Democrats, will meet in an April 24th runoff.

Troy Carter received the endorsement of Cedric Richmond, as well as endorsements from a cross section of supporters. He also led



Troy Carter speaking to supporters after placing first in race for Louisiana 2nd Congressional District. The runoff takes place on April 24th.

all candidates in fundraising.

Records from the Federal Elections Commission showed Carter raised more than \$924,000 in about two months for his campaign, compared with \$450,000 for Peterson.

At his campaign event that took place at Mardi Gras World, Carter was surrounded by family, friends and supporters. During his speech, he thanked the cross section of the constituents of Louisiana 2nd Congressional District who helped him place first in the primary.

He also spoke of his message of unity and reached out to other candidates and their voters to support him in the run-off.

Carter, who is 57, has represented the 7th Louisiana Senate District since January 2016 and has been minority party leader in the upper chamber since that time. He

is a Xavier University graduate who was previously a New Orleans City Council member representing District C from 1994 to 2002 and served one term in the Louisiana House of Representatives from 1992-94.

His opponent, Peterson, 51, has held the 5th Louisiana Senate District seat since 2010 and before that served a partial term in the Louisiana House of Representatives. She is a graduate of Howard University and Tulane Law School, she was Chair of the Louisiana Democratic Party from 2012 to 2020 and the first woman to hold that role.

The race for this seat is one that is of both local and national interest. Data News Weekly in our role as "The People's Paper" encourage all to get out and vote in this important election.

## State & Local News

# NOLA Alphas on the Importance of the COVID Vaccinations

*The Sigma Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.*

Alpha Phi Alpha is committed to community leadership for healthy, safe, and just communities, where all can thrive. Over the years we have contributed leadership in areas as diverse as natural disaster response, awarding scholarships to young men, promoting voter participation, and providing support to vulnerable populations including COVID-19 support to first responders and health professionals. The COVID-19 Pandemic challenges us to be more vocal and lend our resources to address vaccine hesitancy in communities of color and the African American community specifically. Vaccine hesitancy was identified by the World Health Organization as one of the top ten global health threats of 2019. Due to significant distrust in the African American community, there is a heightened level of vaccine hesitancy that must be addressed with greater vigor due to the effects of COVID-19. We believe a better understanding of the clinical trial



Founded in 1925 the Sigma Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha was the first Greek letter organization in the City of New Orleans. Providing tens of thousands of dollars in scholarships, voter education and registration, and many other forms of activism the chapter has provided continuous leadership for the African American community.

process and the goals of herd immunity will help alleviate some of the concerns in our communities.

Human trials for a vaccine go through a three-phase process where in each phase volunteers are given either the vaccine or a placebo. The effectiveness and side effects of those given the vaccine is then compared to those given a placebo (usually a saline water solution). At a very high level the three phases can be described as: phase I - the first administration of a vaccine candidate to humans primarily to evaluate its safety. Phase II - assess the impact of demo-

graphic and other variables on immune response to identify the vaccine preparation, optimal dose, and schedule. Phase III - evaluates the efficacy and safety of the vaccine candidate on a large population. Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines has gone through all three phases for the clinical trial process, with over 70,000 participants and 36,000 for those received the vaccine. The clinical trial process addresses two of the main concerns of African Americans; being first and the concern regarding side effects. Before the FDA approved the current vaccines, they had been received by 36,000 people. Though the trial process can't identify every possible side effect, because of the trial process there is quite a bit known about side effects and they can be discussed with your doctor.

The goal is to reach herd immunity. Herd immunity occurs when a large portion of a community becomes immune to a disease, in this case COVID-19, making the spread

of disease from person to person unlikely. This critical as morbidity and mortality rates in the African American community is 3 to 4 times higher. At this point we do not know enough about COVID-19 to determine what percentage of the population must have immunity to achieve herd immunity. The percentage needed varies based on the contagiousness of the disease. However, we do know that vaccines are a key tool in reaching herd immunity. Getting there will allow our children to get back into their schools, our friends, and families to further their bonds and provide needed support, our loved ones to get proper burials to provide a sense of closure, and for other important routines, traditions, and rituals to take place. We are asking everyone in the African American community to 1) please talk to your doctor and 2) get the vaccine as soon as you can.

The Sigma Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.



# New Mini-Series Explores the Life of Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin

**Tamir Wright**  
Data News Weekly  
Contributor

Aretha Franklin finally earns her R-E-S-P-E-C-T in the form of a televised biography by National Geographic. Titled "Genius: Aretha," this anthology series has had two previous seasons that focused on the lives of Albert Einstein and Pablo Picasso. The show has been dubbed as the 'first-ever, definitive and only authorized scripted limited series on the life of the Queen of Soul' according to the network.

The mini-series stars two-time Academy Award-nominated Actress Cynthia Erivo in the role of Aretha Franklin and Courtney B. Vance plays the singer's father, preacher and activist, Rev. C. L. Franklin. Other important figures in Aretha's life get their stories fleshed out for the first time on screen in the series.

"I wanted to make sure that I didn't want to imitate Ms. Clara, but I did want to try to embody as much of her as I could so it would be authentic to those people that would be viewing the performance," said Actress Tina Fears, who plays the 'Godmother of Soul' Clara Ward who was a close friend to Aretha Franklin's father.

The two toured together and were good friends outside of performing. Ward spent a lot of time in the Franklin household where she played a large role as one of Aretha Franklin's mentors. Her story is brought to life by Fears, a Los Angeles native, and singer and actress, who has appeared in theatre productions such as "In the Heights," "Tom Key and Friends," and as Nina Simone in "Simply Simone: The Music of Nina Simone," and Michelle Morris in "Dreamgirls" at the Atlanta Lyric Theatre.

Fears shared in an interview that she wants audiences familiar with Aretha Franklin as an iconic artist to get a deeper look inside the life



Helmed by Pulitzer Prize Winner Suzan-Lori Parks, Genius: Aretha sees Emmy, Grammy, and Tony Winner Cynthia Erivo (one Oscar away from an EGOT) play Franklin throughout the decades of her adulthood, and newcomer Shaian Jordan play Little Re throughout her formative childhood years.

of the Queen of Soul.

"I will definitely be watching the show when it comes out. I grew up with my parents listening to her. I love, love, love her and I'm very excited to see her story. She has been a huge influence in my life, from birth," said Christina Lewis, a sophomore at Xavier University of Louisiana, who majors in Political Science and shared that singing and writing songs are her hobbies.

Some viewers are more excited to hear the music that will be performed in the series. The episodes will feature songs by Aretha Franklin and others who influenced her style as an artist.

"Music is my life, so I'll be watching this in the hopes of finding some new songs to add to my playlist on Spotify. I love hearing old songs; they feel different than today's songs. More often than not older songs have more soul in them," said Josh Alexander, a musician who is a sophomore at Xavier and a member of the school band.

"Genius: Aretha" is aired at 8 p.m. on March 21, 2021 kicking off a 4-night event on Nat Geo and available to stream on HULU the next day. It is directed by Anthony



Tina Fears plays Clara Ward in "Genius: Aretha"

Hemingway and was created by Pulitzer Prize Winner Suzan Lori Parks, who also created "United States vs. Billie Holiday" which recently won a Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Motion Picture Drama for Singer Andra Day's performance of Holiday.

"We had wonderful directors. They pushed us because the stakes are so high, but I think it hasn't really hit me until now that I am really blessed to be in this project with some true goats. I'm just beyond honored and really thrilled," Fears said.

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### Job Opportunity

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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.

Compensation is competitive and great story ideas will be appreciated.

If you are interested, please email your resume and 3 writing samples to: [terrybjones@bellsouth.net](mailto:terrybjones@bellsouth.net) and [datanewseditor@bellsouth.net](mailto:datanewseditor@bellsouth.net).

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[Data as of March 2021]

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