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Anthony Mackie
wins Awards**

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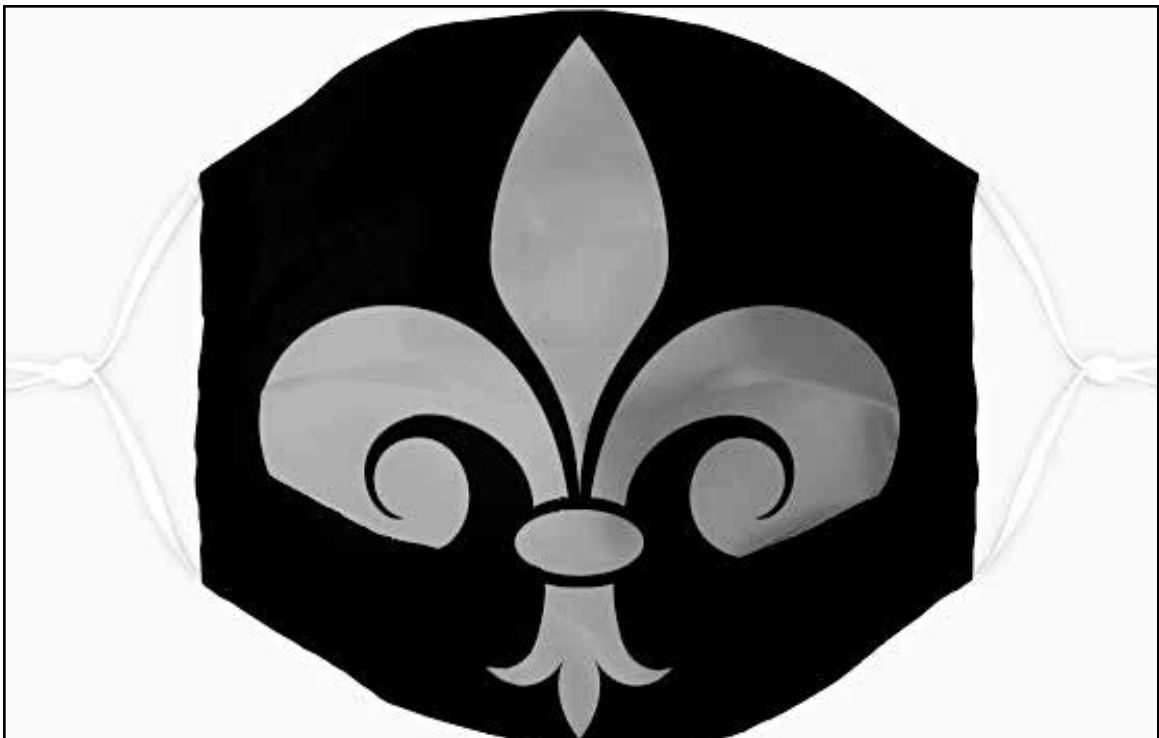
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To Mask or Not To Mask

A Question for New Orleanians



While the relaxing of mask mandates are a welcome sign for some who want to get back to normalcy, getting to herd immunity is truly the goal says Takeisha Davis, MD, New Orleans East Hospital President and CEO, who's been on the frontline leading an effort to get people across the City vaccinated.

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief

Life in New Orleans is one where every day is festival like, and the celebrations that bring hugs, laughter and camaraderie is the lifeblood that runs through the veins of the people and is at the core of their very existence.

Today our City, state, nation, and world continues to live with the new normal that is life during COVID-19. It is one where social distancing, mask wearing, sickness and unfortunately the loss of loved ones for some have become a reality.

Recently, the CDC released a statement that Fully Vaccinated People Can Stop Wearing Face Masks and End Physical Distancing in Most Settings. Giving hope that life can eventually get back to normal.

CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said that the fully protected can, however, resume doing many of the things they had to give up because of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

“We have all longed for this moment, when we can get back to some sense of normalcy,” Dr. Walensky said. “That moment has come for those who are fully vaccinated.”

Mask Mandate Relaxed in New Orleans for the Fully Vaccinated

On the heels of this announcement many cities and states began to relax mask mandates. This 180-degree turn, while a welcomed sign for many who have grown weary of mask wearing is not a sign of victory as many places including New Orleans that have not reached herd immunity that is between 75-80 percent according to New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell, who recently spoke to Data News Weekly.

Last week New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell said New Orleans will lift its mask mandate only for people who are fully vaccinated.

Cantrell said the mask mandate remains in place for city government buildings, K-12 schools, healthcare facilities, and public transportation.

Capacity limits of 250 indoors and 500 outdoors will also remain in place until further notice.

Also, New Orleans reportedly has a vaccination rate of over 50% for eligible people, leading the State of Louisiana.

How Do We Know Who's Vaccinated and Who's Not...An Honor's System?

While this is welcome news, many are still not vaccinated and households across the City are having to think about how to move forward, with an “honors system” without knowing if people they encounter in places such as Walmart, Costco or Trader Joe's who have removed their mask mandate are fully vaccinated.

“In a city where “Southern hospitality” is hard-wired into our DNA, the prospect of being in public, surrounded by maskless individuals is absurd to me at this point in an ongoing Pandemic. We have, over the course of 12-plus months, changed our behavior towards others, but as exciting as reengaging may sound, I believe we are jumping the gun. What will we trust: the honor system, where it's left to individuals to be honest about being vaccinated, or the mask? My intuition leads me to trust the latter and continue exer-

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cising my rights and vigilance. Perhaps once the numbers of fully vaccinated Americans have caused greater gains towards herd immunity, (a foreseeable prospect for the near future), we could finally lay aside our masks and ride off into the next second line. But until then, we should just stick it out. Our elders lived by the proverb, "trouble don't last always." Neither will this Pandemic, says Renetta Perry, who's worked in media for over two decades.

As large businesses relax mask mandates, small businesses have to consider this as well, but some are choosing to keep them in place for now. "As a business owner who is fully vaccinated, I appreciate that recent news of relaxing mask mandates for people who are fully vaccinated, but I am still concerned about the health risks involved without safeguards in place and really not knowing who is vaccinated. For now, I will continue wearing the mask when I am out in public in crowded spaces and will continue to require mask wearing in my business," says Joyce Wilson, owner of Mr. Chill's First-Class Cuts.

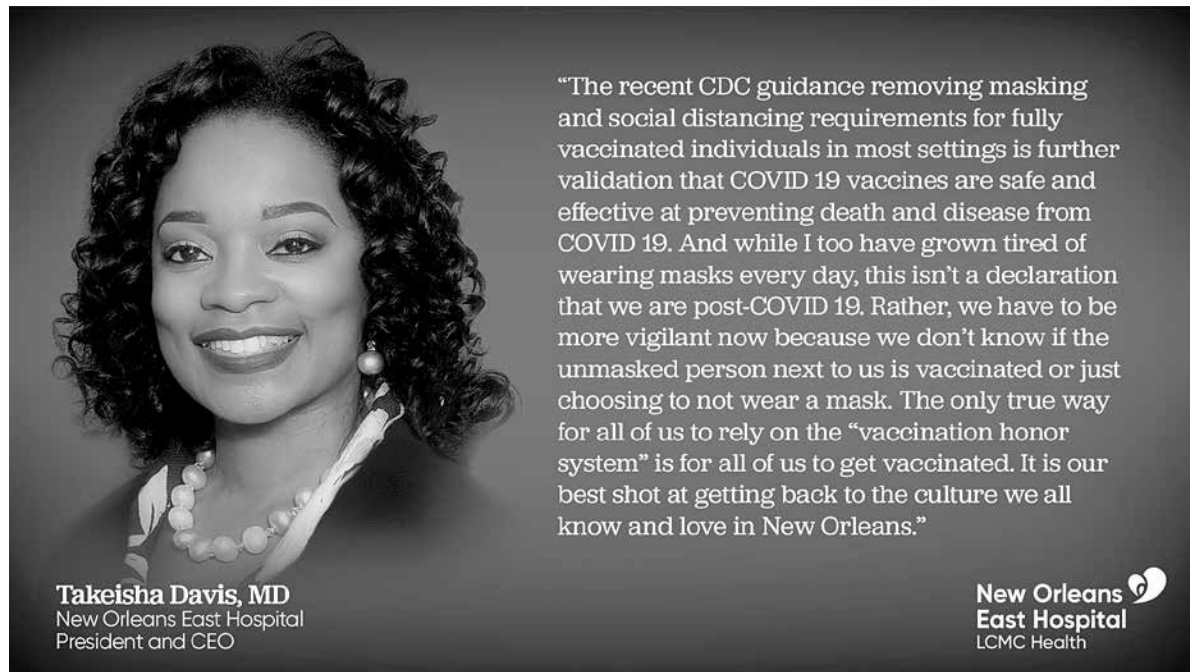
The Race to Back to Normal is Herd Immunity

While the relaxing of mask mandates are a welcome sign for some who want to get back to normalcy, getting to herd immunity is truly the goal says Takeisha Davis, MD, New Orleans East Hospital President and CEO, who's been on the frontline leading an effort to get people across the City vaccinated.

"The CDC guidance removing masking and social distancing requirements for fully vaccinated individuals in most settings is further validation that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective at preventing death and disease from COVID-19. And while I too have grown tired of wearing masks every day, this isn't a declaration that we are post COVID-19. Rather, we have to be more vigilant now because we do not know if the unmasked person next to us is vaccinated or just choosing not to wear a mask. The only true way for all of us to rely on the "vaccination honor system" is for all of us to get vaccinated. It is our best shot at getting back to the culture we all know and love in New Orleans."

Better Days Ahead: Masking Up and Getting the Whole Family Vaccinated

The target of 75-80 percent of people getting vaccinated is possible, but of course there is some reluctance among some and this



Takeisha Davis, MD
New Orleans East Hospital
President and CEO

"The recent CDC guidance removing masking and social distancing requirements for fully vaccinated individuals in most settings is further validation that COVID 19 vaccines are safe and effective at preventing death and disease from COVID 19. And while I too have grown tired of wearing masks every day, this isn't a declaration that we are post-COVID 19. Rather, we have to be more vigilant now because we don't know if the unmasked person next to us is vaccinated or just choosing to not wear a mask. The only true way for all of us to rely on the "vaccination honor system" is for all of us to get vaccinated. It is our best shot at getting back to the culture we all know and love in New Orleans."

New Orleans
East Hospital
LCMC Health



Almore Cato, a retired educator, who continues to work with children and feels the recent CDC Guidelines are a step in the right direction. "I am grateful for the latest CDC mask directives and plan to only wear my mask in large indoor gatherings and in close proximity to unvaccinated persons."



Now children as young as 12 can get the vaccine, for some parents this is a welcomed sign that their children can go back to some sense of normalcy at some point. "I agree with lifting the mask mandate, it shows much needed progress towards a path normality. It would be great if my son could receive the vaccination. We're all in this together," says Jamie Jones, a local educator. (Pictured with son Jamie Jones Jr.)



As a business owner who is fully vaccinated, I appreciate that recent news of relaxing mask mandates for people who are fully vaccinated, but I am still concerned about the health risks involved without safeguards in place and really not knowing who is vaccinated. For now, I will continue wearing the mask when I am out in public in crowded spaces and will continue to require mask wearing in my business," says Joyce Wilson, owner of Mr. Chill's First Class Cuts.



"In a city where "Southern hospitality" is hard-wired into our DNA, the prospect of being in public, surrounded by maskless individuals is absurd to me at this point in an ongoing pandemic. We have, over the course of 12-plus months, changed our behavior towards others, but as exciting as reengaging may sound, I believe we are jumping the gun. What will we trust: the honor system, where it's left to individuals to be honest about being vaccinated, or the mask? says" Renetta Perry, who's worked in media for over two decades. (Pictured with daughter Kaylani Perry).

recent revision by the CDC muddy the water and can possibly lead to some to decide they do not need to take the vaccine.

Now children as young as 12 can get the vaccine, for some parents this is a welcomed sign that their children can go back to some sense of normalcy at some point. "I agree with lifting the mask mandate, it shows much needed progress towards a path normality. However, we need the rest of the country to buy in for total herd immunity. It would be great if my son could receive the vaccination. We're all in this together," says Jamie Jones, a local educator.

In the U.S., the response and roll-out of vaccine have not been perfect by any measure but compared to some nations the country is turning the corner with better days ahead.

"I praise God for blessing the country to arrive at this juncture in the Pandemic. Just look at what's happening in India and one can imagine that this could have been the United States if not for the Grace of God," says Almore Cato, a retired educator, who continues to work with children and feels the recent CDC Guidelines are a step in the right direction. "I am grateful for the latest CDC mask directives and plan to only wear my mask in large indoor gatherings and in close proximity to unvaccinated persons."

In homes that are multi-generational masking up and taking heed to safety protocols are important. This is the case with Renetta Perry, who is in the home with both her mother and 12-year-old daughter.

"For my 86-year-old mother who is still able to decide her own medical fate, it was a no-brainer. After surviving the virus late last year, she was all for being vaccinated. Now having completed both rounds of the Moderna vaccine with no side effects, she is relieved and is an advocate for vaccination."

"But for my 12-year-old daughter, the decision is far more complicated to reach. As a parent, I am responsible for her well-being and overall quality of health. The jury is still out on the effects of the vaccine on children under 18-years-old. For this reason, I have decided to wait. I need more information and I'm dedicated to researching and educating myself in an effort to advocate for her. I realize time is of essence, so I intend to make a decision before school bells ring next August. Until then she will do what she's been doing for the past 12 months: "masking up, social distancing, and washing her hands often. These measures have worked for us thus far."

New Orleans Native Anthony Mackie Wins Two MTV Movie and TV Awards

Eric Connerly
Data News Weekly Contributor

It's been a stellar year for New Orleans own Anthony Mackie. Who is not only a Marvel Superhero, but an inspiration for many from his hometown and beyond who beam with pride to see one of their own have a decades long career in television, theater, and film,

At the 2021 MTV Movie & TV Awards, Mackie, who's been on his grind as a critically acclaimed actor is picking up awards for Best Hero for his starring role as Sam Wilson, or Falcon in Disney+'s popular mini-series The Falcon and the Winter Soldier. He also won an award for best duo.

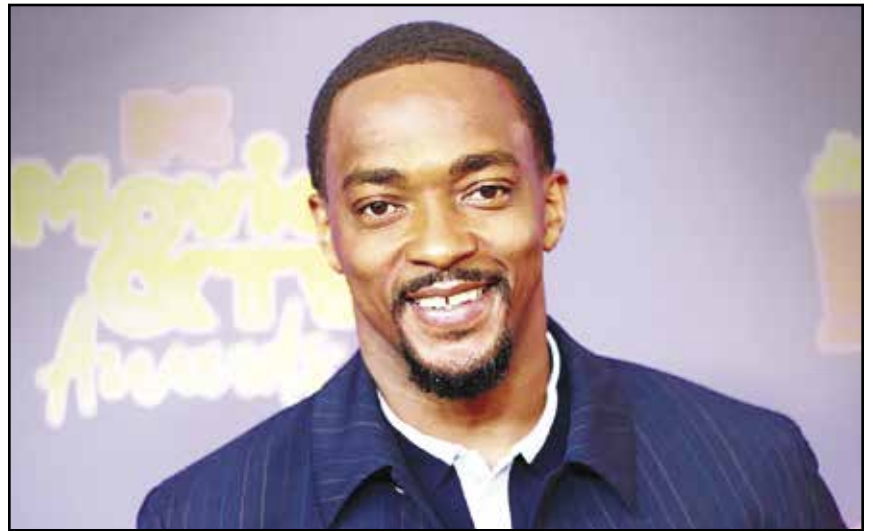
In his acceptance speech, Mackie thanked the "incredible cast" of The Falcon and the Winter Soldier, including his co-star Sebastian Stan, the Winter Soldier to his Falcon.

Everything that has happened in the past year and a half has been literally a very hard experience," he told the live studio audience at the Palladium Los Angeles. "But we got through, and we're stronger for it. Thank you for this, MTV. You will never know the amount of blood, sweat, and tears that went into this show."

Mackie's career continues to be on the rise as he is being slated by many as one of the most versatile and talented actors of his generation and breaking barriers for African Americans in the movie and television industry.



Anthony Mackie, Who is not only a Marvel Superhero, but an inspiration for many from his hometown and beyond who beam with pride as he's become a critically acclaimed actor who recently won 2 MTV Movie and Television Awards for Best Hero for his starring role as Sam Wilson, or Falcon in Disney+'s popular mini-series The Falcon and the Winter Soldier. He also won an award for best duo,



New Orleans Native Anthony Mackie's career continues to be on the rise as he is being slated by many as one of the most versatile and talented actors of his generation.

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BUT IF I'M NOT, WHO WILL?

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Reconnecting With Self: Having Some Fun



Diva Dionne Character
Female Empowerment
Columnist

There is a freedom in reconnecting with self and while it may seem like your mind, body and soul has not been interrupted with critical issues presented to us on a silver platter in the name of vaccines and decisions on returning to work and home schooling, we have to reconnect with ourselves in order to move towards a healthier way of living.

It's time to do something out of the ordinary and go have some fun with the intention of reconnecting with self, letting the responsibility of being grown take a back seat for a moment, as we re-discover our inner child, realizing how blessed we are and create a new plan while tapping into our creativity and dreams.

We have to realize that peace provides direction and insight as we



There is a freedom in connecting with self.

continue on a course so complicated, some of us may never return from being overwhelmed with the new lives we are forced to live. It's time to engage in self-care as we expand our minds from our old ways, choosing to have more fun and not taking life so seriously.

Honey, it is time to plant some seeds, listen to more jazz and unwind as we do in New Orleans. Let yourself

loose, be free and enjoy the little things because the world as we once knew it will never be the same.

Take back control of your life, enjoy a simple walk in the park and live. Don't let life be about what mask you're going to wear, let it be finding your peace, connecting with friends, and letting go of fear. Have some fun! Make up your own rules and let the universe reveal the



Let today be the day you connect with friends and enjoy life.

truth as it always does. Take back your life—enjoy time with family and friends, and don't forget we are strong women who can tap into the uniqueness of us all.

We are the source of the world. Let today be the day that you start living. See the good in you and re-energize your soul by simply having more fun!

Dionne Character can be reached at characterhollywood.com.

State & Local News

Troy Carter Sworn in to Serve in Congress

Recently, Troy Carter was sworn into Congress Tuesday by Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Carter was sworn in on the House Floor to fill the 2nd Congressional District seat for the remainder of the 117th Congress in a seat formerly held by Cedric Richmond, who was recently appointed a Senior Advisor in the Biden Administration. On hand for the swearing in was Carter's family, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards and Cedric Richmond.



Above: Troy Carter surrounded by family, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards and Cedric Richmond, Senior Advisor and Director of the Office of Public Engagement.



Right: Troy Carter and wife sharing a moment with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi.

City Calls Audible on Abandoned Amusement Park's Redevelopment Plans

Did the City Commission cheat Successful Black Businessman to allow Drew Brees more Time to Improve Proposal?

Kenneth Cooper
Black Source Media

Why was Drew Brees' led group given extra time to improve their proposal?

The City of New Orleans' response to the proposals to redevelop the abandoned Jazzland Amusement Park in New Orleans East was umm, shall we call it perplexing. Did the city really pass on a superior proposal that the community clearly favored to allow Drew Brees to redo his proposal that the community rejected?

Maybe not. But it might as well have. At least that would've been a more honest dismissal, as opposed to the shenanigans that went down.

Imagine the scenario. The city establishes an oversight committee



New Orleans businessman Troy Henry is leading a group called Bayou Phoenix and is a finalist in the running to redevelop Six Flags in New Orleans East. Their plans includes an indoor/outdoor water park, a logistic center, a travel center, a hotel, a sports complex, a redeveloped Eastover Country Club, and an expansion plan to include an amusement park.

and puts out a call for proposals to finally transform the long abandoned Six Flags Site into something not so

abandoned, a site that residents of the East could be proud of. They go about this process with little in-

put from those residents, then set a deadline for May 11th to make a final decision.

So, the moment comes. The grand unveiling. Two proposals stand out, one led by local business consultant Troy Henry. It includes an indoor/outdoor water park, a logistic center, a travel center, a hotel, a sports complex, a redeveloped Eastover Country Club, and an expansion plan to include an amusement park. The new name is Bayou Phoenix. The other is led by Drew Brees and Demario Davis. Its' centerpiece is a local farm. The farm will be used to teach kids how to grow crops. Yes, crops. In an area as economically starved as the East, one of the top proposals was one that would use acres of land to grow crops. It would also include a water park and food truck park.

Newsmaker, Continued on page 7.

Commentary

"My Truth"

Women don't get a Break... Especially Black Women



Cheryl Smith
Publisher, Messenger Media
Texas Metro News

I hope you've paid attention to the chatter following the "bombshell" announcement by Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, who has decided not to seek another term this Fall. Full disclosure. I have mad love for the Mayor. On a number of fronts our lives parallel: roots in Crawfordville, GA; attended Florida A&M University; Journalism majors; pledged the Beta Alpha Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and we are both mothers, but not by birth.

So, some may want to stop reading now because "Cheryl is going to be biased" and to those critics, I have two things to say: first if you think the majority of stuff you read and see does not have biases embedded within, well I say "child

please" and; secondly, the longer I live and the more I have to live with things like COVID, Trump, and self-haters who tear their people down, I say, "don't come for me unless I send for you!"

In three words: I'm not apologizing. In another eight words, I'm sick of people tearing Black women down. We're too strong, weak, mean, angry, et al. I can't go on because I get sicker with every adjective. Black women catch hell from all sides and angles and then the ones who should be the most supportive are the biggest damn critics! OTHER WOMEN! No, let me call it like it is — OTHER BLACK WOMEN! Which brings me to my truth.

It was frustrating to hear and read comments as folks far and wide speculated about why Mayor Lance Bottoms would not seek another term. There was talk about President Biden, a large drugstore chain job, pursuit of another office, etc. Atlanta's rising crime rate, jail issues, investigations of previous administrations, and more were fodder for those needing something to say. There was also talk of her being "tired, angry," and yes, "salty."



Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms

In her video, the Mayor talked about challenges and triumphs. She definitely had to face some situations that no one could have prepared her for because there's no one else alive who has encountered a Pandemic of the magnitude of COVID-19, and it is so disingenuous to hear people try to reason that COVID-19 is not having an impact on everything.

It's been challenging for leader-

ship and I know folks have to have something to do, so they speculate. It makes them feel good inside. But haven't you learned anything from the death of actor, humanitarian Chadwick Boseman. Da 5 Bloods co-star Clarke Peters, following Mr. Boseman's death, said he recalled seeing his co-star being pampered on the set and thinking, "maybe the Black Panther thing went to his head."

Mr. Peters said he regretted those thoughts, because at the time he didn't know that Mr. Boseman had been battling colon cancer for the past four years. We don't know Mayor Lance Bottom's journey. What we do know is that she has some serious receipts and if you do the homework her legacy is intact because she has served in numerous capacities throughout her lifetime and prayerfully, she has many more decades to go.

Heck, if she wants to put her law degree to work to serve, joining the likes of Atty. Ben Crump; or if she wants to put that J-School degree to work, doors are open even right here at Texas Metro News; or if she wants to stay home with the children; teach at FAMU's Law School

or she can go back to the bench as a judge; assume a leadership post with Delta Sigma Theta; or, become a college, preferably HBCU President; it's her life, her journey.

Get yourself some business, because when your time is all said and done, will it have been spent talking about what others have done or will you have done something worth celebrating or sharing in history books? Wow! Yes, I am here in Texas with enough issues of my own as I am sure I am going to be accosted by some unsuspecting person who comes for Fort Worth Mayoral Candidate Deborah Peoples as she faces a candidate in a runoff election where if elected, she will become the Cowtown's first Black Female Mayor.

Heck. First Black Mayor! Unfortunately, Ms. Peoples, is dealing with some of the same hateration where folks just have something negative to say. I'm not saying don't criticize. What I am saying is "know what you are talking about." Bring receipts or shut up. If you want help living a life without regrets: you can begin by pledging to stop being so damn judgmental! Mayor Keisha is living her life. Live yours.

Black Women's Roundtable Joins Citizen SHE United Effort to end Race Based Hair Discrimination The C.R.O.W.N. Act

The C.R.O.W.N. Act House Bill No. 382 by Representative Candace Newell would ban racial discrimination based on natural hair styles

Louisiana Unity Coalition

The Black Women's Roundtable is pleased to join hands with Citizen SHE United to increase awareness and build added support for passage of House Bill No. 382 by Representative Candace Newell (Democrat-District 99) to become the first state in the Deep South to adopt a C.R.O.W.N. Act. "The C.R.O.W.N. Study, by Cosmetic Company Dove, revealed Black women are 80 percent more likely to change their hair to fit social norms and workplace expectations."

In a published report by WWNO's Bobbi-Jeanne Misick, it was noted that the City of New Orleans became the first City in the South to "pass the C.R.O.W.N. Act Ordinance, which prohibits race-based hair discrimination, including the denial of employment and housing because of hair texture or protective hairstyles like braids, dreadlocks and bantu knots... C.R.O.W.N. is an acronym for Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair."

Citizen SHE United's founder Nia Weeks, who encouraged New Orleans City Council President Helena Moreno to introduce the measure, said, "we are so excited about our success... to pass an Anti-Race Based Hair Discrimination Ordinance."



Nia Weeks, Founder and Executive Director of Citizen SHE United in New Orleans, with her two daughters, Peyton (left) and Cameron (right) [Photo credit: Phoebe Jones/WWNO]

nance! We are now shooting to be the first state...

Representative Newell's bill closely aligned with both former State Senator Troy Carter's (Congressman Carter, LA-2nd District) and State Representative Tammy T. Phelps District 3's CROWN Act bill, but also includes Natural hair protection addresses issues related to work, school and housing. This version is in line with previous bills



successfully passed in a number of other states, with language that

is crafted to address the language specifically outlined in the Louisiana Code, according to Weeks.

She adds, "This movement is being spearheaded by incredible Black Women and allies all over the Country and we have rejoiced in their success and have been grateful for the support and guidance given to us so that we can join the ranks! So, for us to be successful, we need your support!"

Newsmaker, Continued from page 6.

So of course, the decision was a no brainer for the committee. With over 200 of the 300 responses from residents of the East that were present supporting Bayou Phoenix, the committee did the most logical and obvious thing a biased committee could do. It ranked the Drew Brees led proposal as number 1 on the list with Bayou Phoenix coming in a close 2nd. Rather than just outright award the contract, because the two were apparently "so close", the committee then concocted a run-off scenario. Or as they said a 30-day window for both to tweak their proposals. Then a decision will finally be made.

Why was Drew Brees' team given extra time to improve their proposal? The score sheet containing the basis of the ranking was not made available to the public.

But Troy Henry said that he has requested it.

Whatever the justification, the committee's decision left many in the community baffled. "Something is rotten at the top of the chain," said Tangie Wall, member of N.O. East Matters. "Nobody from the committee ever asked the East how do you feel. It just wasn't a fair process."

It's a point that's hard to argue with. Troy Henry is a resident of the East and a highly successful businessman. His team canvassed the community to see exactly what was wanted, needed, and financially viable. He then went out and got the financial backing for Bayou Phoenix from Hillwood, a prominent investment company, so it's sound. The Drew Brees led proposal, on other hand, only has an iconic name behind it. But the East doesn't need icons. It needs the economic growth that businesses will bring, as opposed to a farm.



Troy Henry is a resident of New Orleans East and a highly successful businessman. His team canvassed the community to see exactly what was wanted, needed, and financially viable. He then went out and got the financial backing for Bayou Phoenix from Hillwood, a prominent investment company, so it's sound. The Drew Brees led proposal, on other hand, only has an iconic name behind it.

"We looked beyond the iconic," said Wall. And when speaking of Bayou Phoenix, she said, "We feel it will provide the substantial economic development

the community needs."

What's needed now is for the committee to come to the same conclusion in 30 days. "We'll be as responsive as we can be," said Henry when asked about responding to any tweaks the committee may request.

In the meantime, the best thing residents of the East can do is to state their preference and state it loudly.

"It's time for the East to rise up," said Wall. "We're not intimidated or backing down."

She's right. For too long the East has been neglected and disrespected. The committee's decision to give the Drew Brees led group a do-over is just another example of decades of disrespect. It's time for that to come to an end. Get in touch with our mayor and City Council representative. Let them know that what's more important is the economic impact of the plan, not the name behind it.

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