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Mary J. Blige's MY LIFE

Mary J. Blige's Documentary Explores Queen of R&B Hip-Hop

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This is America 2021



The death of George Floyd by police in 2020 has become a watershed moment where people from around the country of all backgrounds are demanding police reform and an end to systemic racism in America.

Edwin Buggage Editor-in-Chief

The American Paradox

Today as we have just celebrated the 4th of July and Juneteenth, that's just become a national holiday, but we must ask ourselves where we are in our mission to

become a more perfect union. In a country that continues to struggle with equality and justice for all. However, the United States is a country today that one can say have made great strides towards developing into an advanced economy, where freedom to make consumer choices are unfettered. Conversely, it is one where state governments are working to restrict

access to the polls for its citizens to vote. In 2021, it is a divided nation involved in an uncivil war. Where misinformation is in many ways responsible for citizens of the nation speaking at and not to each other. It is one where problems are magnified, and differences are manipulated by leaders to score political points.

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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On Jan 6, 2021 there was a riot at U.S. Capitol, where a group of Donald Trump supporters wanted to contest the certification of the presidential election in which Trump lost. Today unfortunately, many still believe the election was stolen, fanning the flames of intolerance.

It can be argued that this is what led to the Jan. 6th "Red Hat Riot" where supporters of former U.S. President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol because they would not accept the results of a free and fair election.... This is America in 2021.

Race Mattes and the End of Whiteness

We have to ask ourselves what is going on in a nation that seems to be ripping apart at the seams. What is happening in a nation where the currency of White privilege; while still relevant is diminishing and that there is a backlash that's causing some in leadership attempting to put Jim Crow like legislation in place to restrict Black people's rights to self-determination.

But as the country continues to evolve, last summer and into 2021, America have witnessed young people marching together in solidarity proclaiming Black Lives Matter. In light of the death of George Floyd, it's become a rallying cry to demand police reform and an end to systemic racism. And while one can applaud the guilty verdict of Derek Chauvin being convicted in Floyd's murder and recently being sentenced to over two decades; in far too many similar cases charges are not filed against police or other Whites who commit heinous crimes against Black people. It is time for this to change...This is America in 2021.

COVID-19 and the New Normal

Not just in the U.S., but the world has been turned upside down by COVID-19. It is something that's taken many lives and created new norms for us all. But even in the case of an illness that does not dis-



In a positive turn U.S. President Joe Biden, recently signed into law making Juneteenth a federal holiday.



Because of the Pandemic, many parents have had to take on the role as teacher as their kids learned remotely.

criminate, Americans are divided on whether or not to get vaccinated. Also, we have witnessed fighting around mask wearing.

However, it is important to note, this has been a time for serious reflection for many who have had the time to rethink their lives and decide to focus on new things and go in new directions. To decide to prioritize family, or think of changing careers or find a work life balance and get off the hamster wheel that is work, work, work...This is America in 2021

The Need for Greater Investment in Education and Mental Health

This have also been a time we have come to appreciate and celebrate our first responders. And while usually our medical professionals have been at the forefront of these conversations, our educators must receive a special nod for the work they do preparing our young people to become leaders and responsible citizens.

In the 2020-21 school year many parents experienced how much



Nikole Hannah-Jones, of the 1619 Project, that teaches a revision of American history that reframes the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the very center of the national narrative.



Americans across the nation are beginning to take the vaccine. (Pictured Vice President Kamala Harris taking COVID-19 vaccine).



Because of COVID-19 many are beginning to pay attention to the crisis in mental health in America.

work it takes for teachers to educate children while their kids learned remotely. It would seem that after the Pandemic experience, a top priority for the nation would seriously begin considering increasing the pay of educators and those who work with children.

In addition, we must invest in mental health resources where a crisis is taking place because of the Pandemic. The isolation, the sickness and sometimes death of loved

ones have been devastating and taken a toll on many people.

In these tumultuous times, it's even been tougher for some given families who could not visit hospitals or have funerals and celebrations of life could not take place on a large scale. And for a City like New Orleans, where life and death are celebrated it's been hard on so many fronts...This is America in 2021

Cover Story, Continued on page 6.

Mary J. Blige's 'My Life' Documentary Explores the Trials, Tribulations and Triumphs of the Queen of R&B Hip-Hop

Elise Schenck
Data News Weekly Contributor

Mary J. Blige is the embodiment of someone who has been able to thrive in the face of many obstacles. This point becomes abundantly clear in her recent documentary "My Life" named for her 1994 Album that looks at the trials, tribulations and triumphs of this amazing star, who for nearly three decades captivated audiences with her heartfelt songs.

In the film it chronicles the Queen of R&B Hip Hop, whose innovative sound and style helped redefine R&B. It can be argued that she created the template (the merging of R&B and Hip-Hop) for what is now considered the formula that's been used from the likes of Beyonce, Alicia Keys and many others.

She is a multi platinum Grammy Award Winning Artist, who's also been twice nominated for the coveted Oscar. This film features many who have seen her evolution, including Sean P. Diddy Combs, the late Andre Harrell, Taraji P. Henson, Alicia Keys, Tyler Perry, Nas and many others.

This film that is now streaming on Amazon Prime is a must see and will leave one with a spirit of triumph; That in spite of all the things they have been through, that they can live a life with "No More Drama."

Living their best lives and using their experiences to be their best selves.



Mary J. Blige amazing documentary "My Life" explores her amazing journey overcoming many obstacles to become not only a force in the entertainment industry, but an inspiration to many.



This is a must see film that is now streaming on Amazon Prime.



The film chronicles the Queen of R&B Hip Hop, whose innovative sound and style helped redefine R&B. It can be argued that she created the template (the merging of R&B and Hip-Hop) for what is now considered the formula that's been used from the likes of Beyonce, Alicia Keys and many others.



Cyril Neville's First Performance Since the Pandemic



Diva Dionne Character
Female Empowerment
Columnist

Recently, Cyril Neville gave an intimate performance at The Magnolia Mansion in New Orleans, while being accompanied by a three-piece band surrounding his soulful voice as the hard wood floors withstood the crowds of people who were eager to get back to the music of New Orleans since the COVID-19 Pandemic and the loss of



Grammy Award Winning Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, and member of New Orleans First Family of Funk, Cyril Neville pictured with family and Dionne Diva Character (in red print dress) at his first concert since the COVID-19 Pandemic.

live music throughout the streets of the birthplace of Jazz.

This heartfelt performance included songs by Louis Armstrong, along with the debut of a serenade to his

wife, Gaynielle Neville, singer, songwriter, and poet.

The room was full of guests celebrating the freedom to enjoy music up close and personal once again. This

performance proved to be something very different for the Grammy Award Lifetime Achievement Recipient, Cyril Neville, as he too was amazed by the reception of the people who danced and clapped for so many reasons, as he delivered a dynamic performance. Perhaps, we will in the future be able to catch more intimate settings by Cyril Neville, a man who has been performing as a percussionist and vocalist for most of his life as a member of The Neville's and The New Orleans Meters.

Cyril Neville's voice and style is rare and unique. He has become a giant in the entertainment industry while remaining meek and humble to those who will forever enjoy his music.

Dionne Character can be reached at characterhollywood.com.

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Councilmember Palmer and Tremé' Community Leader Alonso Knox Issue Statement after Council Passes 'Protect Tremé' Interim Zoning' Legislation

Data News Staff Edited Report

NEW ORLEANS - Last week, District "C" Councilmember Kristin Palmer and Tremé residents, community, and business leaders celebrated the approval of the 'Protect Tremé Interim Zoning District' Motion. The motion temporarily stops the Cantrell Administration from moving City Hall into the Municipal Auditorium located inside Louis Armstrong Park.

The Council approved the legislation by Councilmember Palmer today, prohibiting the Department of Safety and Permits from allowing developers to construct government offices, parking lots, or parking garages within Louis Armstrong Park for one year or until the Council votes to remove the measure.

Councilmember Palmer and Tremé community leader Alonso Knox issued the following statements regarding the passage of the legislation:



Recently, residents from across the City of New Orleans, came out to voice their opposition to moving City Hall to The Mahalia Jackson Center For The Performing Arts, that's located in the historic Tremé' neighborhood.

"The administration is moving forward with a 'request for a quote' for the construction of City Hall at the Municipal Auditorium. That means if we didn't pass this legislation today, construction would have moved forward. As the current rep-

resentative of Tremé, I couldn't just quietly standby and let Tremé be trampled by a top-down City Hall development again," said Councilmember Palmer. "Today, this Council made it very clear that we are standing with Tremé residents



"This legislation will protect the rich cultural history of the first Black community in the United States," said Tremé' Community Leader Alonso Knox.

and protecting our City's Black History and Culture. This motion takes immediate action and goes into effect today to stop the move of City Hall to the Municipal Auditorium and intruding on the sacred space of Congo Square. Even considering putting a parking garage near Congo Square is offensive."

"This legislation will protect the rich cultural history of the first Black community in the United States. Tremé is a community that has already been traumatized by decades of destructive development. Armstrong Park only exists because a whole blocks of Tremé's Black-owned homes and businesses were ripped up to put down a park that is behind a locked gate.

We're fortunate to have a leader like Councilmember Palmer, who does what she says she will do. She was the first Councilmember to engage the Tremé community and to speak out on our behalf. We appreciate the full Council for joining her today and protecting our community," said Alonso Knox.

Councilmember Palmer continued, "We can't wait until next year to begin community engagement. We can't wait four or more months as suggested by Mayor Cantrell - and we don't have time to wait for Councilmember Moreno's resolution to make its way through the Planning Commission before beginning a public process. We need to start outreach immediately."

State & Local News

New Orleans and Baton Rouge Mayors Compete for Title of Who Will Have the Highest Vaccination Rate by the End of July

Eric Connerly Data News Weekly Contributor

It is time for residents of both New Orleans and Baton Rouge to continue to get shots in arms, as the COVID-19 Delta variant is becoming a threat.

This have put the mayors of New Orleans and Baton Rouge, springing into action are now in competition to see how many of their residents can get vaccinated over the next 30 days.

Baton Rouge Mayor Sharon Broome challenged Mayor LaToya Cantrell in a video message over social media.

The two then released a joint video message promoting the friendly competition to get people vaccinated.

Mayor Broome said Baton Rouge has 41 percent of eligi-



Baton Rouge Mayor Sharon Broome challenged Mayor LaToya Cantrell in a video message over social media. The two then released a joint video message promoting the friendly competition to get people vaccinated in the month of July.



ble resident vaccinated.

Mayor Cantrell said New Orleans is almost over 60 percent vaccination rate.

The city with the highest vaccination rate at the end of the

month will win the competition.

Both mayors are encouraging people to get out and get vaccinated, because it can save their lives as well as their loved one. Also it can help get both cities to herd immunity.

Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

America...Who Are We and Who Can We Become

It is a fact many have gotten vaccinated, but we are far away from herd immunity. In some instances, it seems things are getting back to normal as more people are resuming life as they had pre-COVID. On the surface this may seem the case, but I would argue that much of what's happened in 2020-2021 have changed us all.

That this is a turning point in the history of not just our nation, but the world. In that we can transition, shifting our focus and taking this opportunity to put people first. To begin to value life as opposed to focusing on consumption, materialism, status seeking and the sometimes trivial and trite world of some aspects of social media.

We can as a more enlightened nation of citizens begin to build bridges of understanding to our common humanity and forge ahead in this direction. To move beyond socially constructed identities that keep all of us as prisoners in the tribalism that threatens the future of our nation.

It is time that "We The People" means all the people of this nation, not just a few. If we can work towards this goal, Lady Liberty's light can shine brightly as we as citizens moves toward truly becoming "One Nation Under God With Liberty and Justice For All."

...This is what we wish for America in 2021 and beyond.

EXCLUSIVE: Bill Cosby Released From Jail, Urges Black Press to 'Push Forward'

**Stacy M. Brown NNPA
Newswire Senior National
Correspondent**

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court's ruling to vacate Bill Cosby's conviction is not only about vindication for the comedian.

For Cosby, it is now about helping other Black men who were falsely accused.

He told the Black Press in an exclusive telephone conversation just hours after his release from a prison outside of Philadelphia.

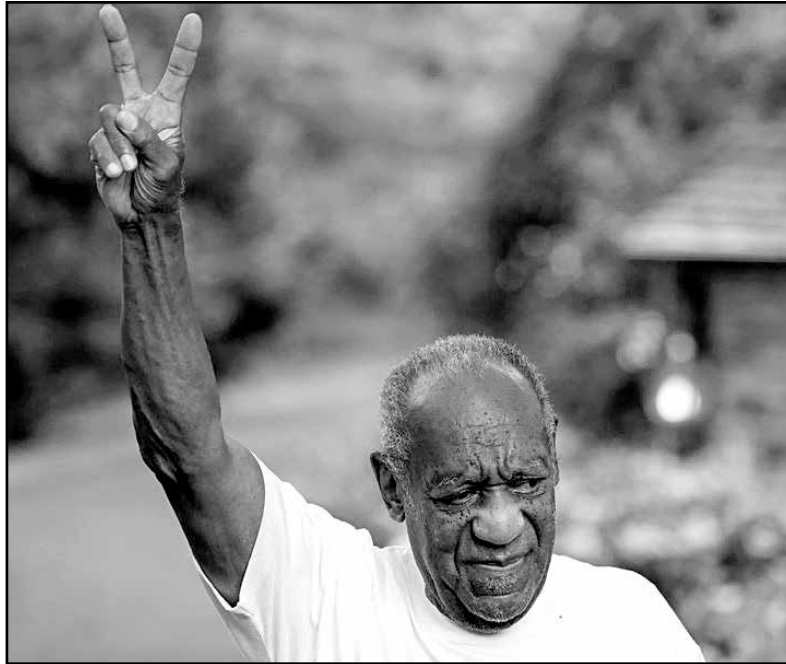
"This is an opportunity that the Black Press, the writers, the men, and the women have now an opportunity with great intelligence, with great foresight, with great after sight, not just about Mr. Cosby, it is about what you saw, it is about what you know, and you must tell it, and you must be believed, and you have to put it in a way a level of intelligence," Cosby insisted.

He said it's important that the NAACP's Crisis Magazine also reports the truth of his case because it could assist many falsely accused African Americans who don't have the notoriety or the means to fight their cases.

The National Newspaper Publishers Association closely monitored both of Cosby's trials in Pennsylvania, and not surprisingly, the reporting done by the Black Press of America proved far different from mainstream media's accounts.

For instance, the Black Press regularly reported on the egregious behavior of trial court Judge Steven O'Neill, District Attorney Kevin Steele, and several lawyers who openly coached witnesses while they were giving testimony.

The Black Press also reported that jurors in Cosby's first trial initially voted to acquit the comedian but was ordered by Judge O'Neill to deliberate further. That first trial ended in a hung jury, despite



Legendary entertainer Bill Cosby has been released from prison. He now vows to help those wrongly accused of crimes. He also thanked the Black Press for their coverage of his case.

Cosby's team declining to put on a defense.

Former prosecutor Bruce Castor exclusively told the Black Press that Cosby should never have been tried because of a deal he reached with the superstar a decade prior.

Castor also called into question the credibility of Andrea Constand, the lone alleged victim in the case.

"What is happening to Bill Cosby is a travesty, a miscarriage of justice," Castor said.

The state Supreme Court backed up Castor in overturning the conviction.

"By publicly announcing that appellant William Cosby would not be charged with any crimes related to Andrea Constand — a decision apparently made, in part, to force Cosby to testify in Constand's future anticipated civil suit — former Montgomery County District Attorney Bruce Castor intended to, and in fact did, force Cosby to give up his Fifth Amendment right against

self-incrimination," Justice Kevin Dougherty wrote.

"Then, years later, Castor's successor used the damaging evidence Cosby turned over in the civil case to convict him of the same criminal offenses he had previously been induced to believe were off the table. I am constrained to agree with the majority that due process does not permit the government to engage in this type of coercive bait-and-switch."

Justice David Wecht further broke down the reason for overturning Cosby's conviction.

"In 2005, Montgomery County District Attorney Bruce Castor learned that Andrea Constand had reported that William Cosby had sexually assaulted her in 2004 at his Cheltenham residence. Along with his top deputy prosecutor and experienced detectives, District Attorney Castor thoroughly investigated Constand's claim," Justice Wecht wrote.

"In evaluating the likelihood of

a successful prosecution of Cosby, the district attorney foresaw difficulties with Constand's credibility as a witness based, in part, upon her decision not to file a complaint promptly. D.A. Castor further determined that a prosecution would be frustrated because there was no corroborating forensic evidence and because testimony from other potential claimants against Cosby likely was inadmissible under governing laws of evidence."

The judge continued:

"The collective weight of these considerations led D.A. Castor to conclude that, unless Cosby confessed, "there was insufficient credible and admissible evidence upon which any charge against Mr. Cosby related to the Constand incident could be proven beyond a reasonable doubt."

NNPA President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., said the Black Press continues to cover the Cosby matter because of the tremendous interest of Black America to see justice done.

"Today's decision by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania emphasizes the importance of what the NNPA has been doing about the Cosby case," Dr. Chavis exclaimed.

"As I visited Cosby in prison in Pennsylvania, I witnessed firsthand the strength of his spirit and affirmation of his innocence. Yet, it took the great work of his lawyers and the growing sentiment in the court of public review that enabled the Supreme Court to make this historic decision.

"I know from personal experience, and it is very difficult to have an alleged criminal conviction overturned by appellate courts. But now, like what happened to the Wilmington Ten in the 1970s and 1980s, we have the Bill Cosby case today as a reminder of the systemic racism and injustice in America's criminal justice system."

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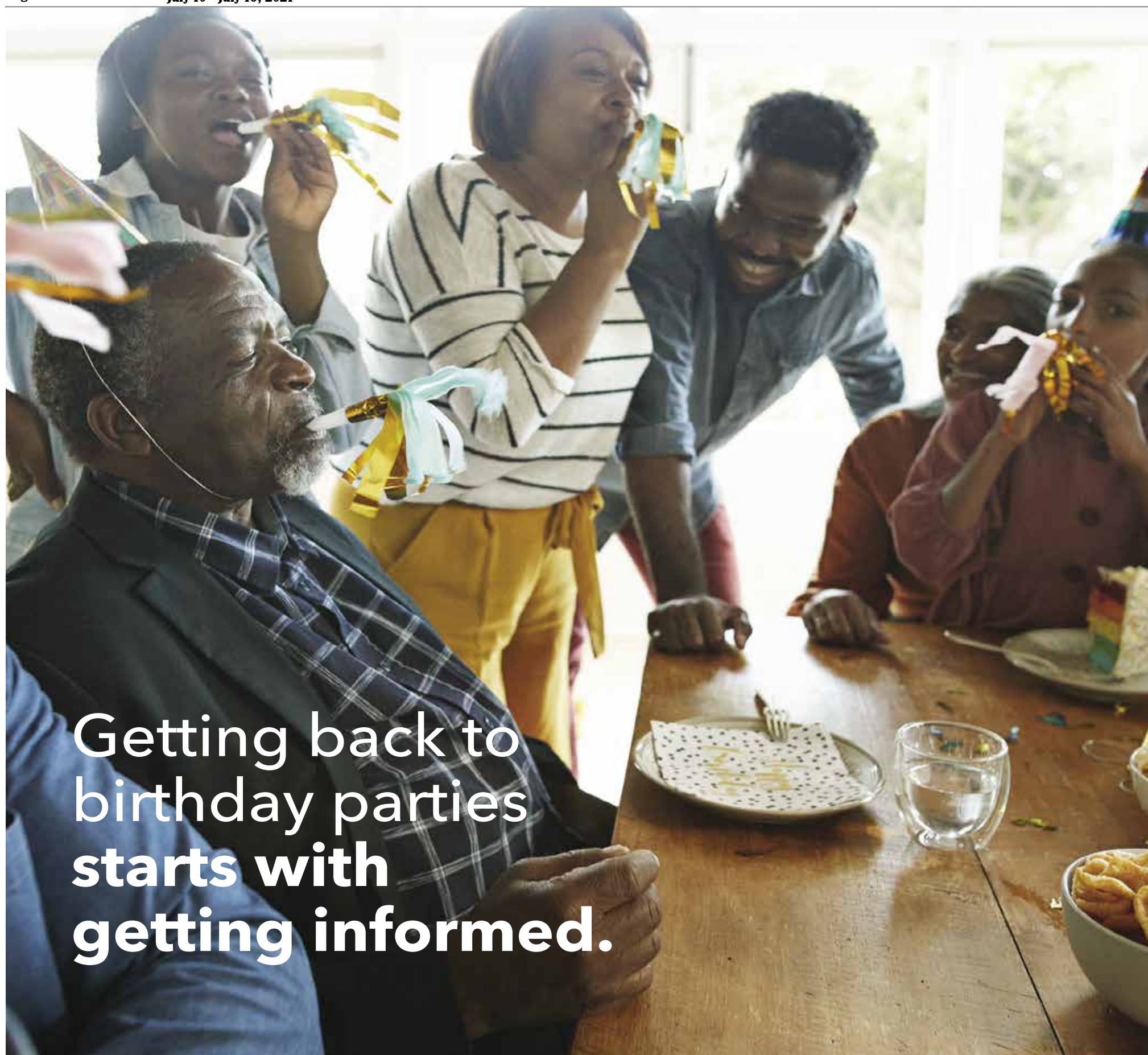
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