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New Orleans

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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Election 2021

A New Direction For New Orleans



Oliver Thomas, New Orleans City Councilman-Elect District E surrounded by supporters.

By Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief

Election 2021
In this Election Cycle the City of New Orleans is do-

ing a sea change in leadership. In several key races incumbent candidates were defeated by political newcomers. Now the question becomes, what does this mean for the future of the City of New Orleans. What type of leadership do we expect from those who we have charged with shaping public policy?

A New City Council
When the new City Council is sworn in, it will have five new members: JP Morrell, Lesli Harris, Freddie King, Eugene Green and Oliver Thomas. These alongside, Helena Moreno and Joseph Giarrusso, will lead the legislative branch of our City Government.

Photos by Malcom Flot

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While turnout was low, this does not negate the fact that their job is to serve all the people of their respective districts and the city more broadly. They must find ways to work together on policies that work for all the residents of the city.

This was illustrated most profoundly by the election of Oliver Thomas, whose story of redemption is a metaphor for a city that needs new approaches to old problems like crime, poor infrastructure, lack of affordable housing and inequality.

Moreover, as the city is changing demographically, it is important to note how they can continue to serve older residents while embracing newcomers to the city who are as committed to its betterment and have offered themselves up for service.

This is happening across the city, but in District B, in this cycle, we saw newcomer Lesli Harris win over Jay Banks, someone who is steeped into the culture and fabric of New Orleans. While this was a race that at some point became contentious, it is important to note that citizens come together and work on common things that can lift all residents to a better standard of living across the city.

Criminal Sheriff and Clerk of Criminal District Court

In an upset victory Susan Hutson defeated long time Criminal Sheriff Marlin Guzman. What this means for the future of the office is currently unknown. What will the impact of new leadership have on problems that go far beyond what happens on Tulane and Broad? Where solutions to crime in the city requires more holistic approaches.

In the race for Clerk of Criminal District Court, Darren Lombard was victorious and comes to the office armed with the experience and necessary skill set to succeed Arthur Morrell.

City Government: Working for All the People

If New Orleans is to become a better city for all, having competent people in office who put the good of the people before themselves is important moving forward. To realize that all zip codes matter in the city not just a few. To help build consensus that newcomers and longtime residents are equally important to the city having the potential to be what it could be. But most importantly, people must become civically engaged. While voting is only one way to do this, it is important to work on things that can improve communities and the quality of life for all people across the City of New Orleans.



Oliver Thomas makes history serving in three different seats on the New Orleans City Council.



Lesli Harris, Councilmember-Elect District B, with Data News Weekly Editor-in-Chief Edwin Buggage.



Political Newcomer Lesli Harris, built a coalition of longtime and newer residents to the city to win City Council District B. This is a necessary strategy for those seeking office in Post Katrina New Orleans.



City Councilmember-at-Large Helena Moreno and State Senator Dr. Joseph Bouie, onstage during Oliver Thomas Victory speech.



New Orleans District Attorney Jason Williams, and Data News Weekly's Edwin Buggage.



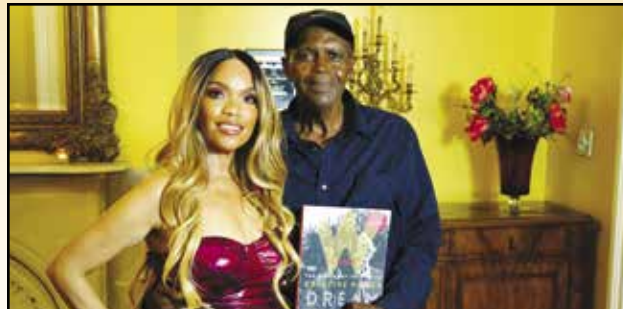
You Better Got Your Dream

By Eric Connerly
Data News Weekly Contributor

Essence Bestselling Author and Female Empowerment Columnist, Diva Dionne Character's Booksigning at Magnolia Mansion for her fifth book entitled *You Better Got Your Dream*, for Women Creatives.



Cydney, Cyril Neville and Dionne Character



Actor and Filmmaker Jeffrey Poitier and Diva Dionne Character



Tara, Elizabeth and Diva Celebrating "You Better Got Your Dream" Booksigning



Diva Dionne Character, Essence Bestselling Author, 7 Pairs of Black Shoes and WildFlower: Growing from the Muck

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Adonis C. Expose', King Zulu 2017 Hosted 23rd Annual Toy Drive – DRIVE-BY

Eric Connerly
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Adonis C. Expose', a former King Zulu hosted his 23rd Annual Toy Drive on Saturday, December 11th from 1:00 P.M - 4:00 P.M. at Zulu's Roy E. Glapion Hall, 730 N. Broad St., NOLA 70119. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, the Toy Drive was a Drive-By Toy Drive this year.

Before the event, Expose' told Data, "It's safe to say, there's no safe way we could gather to have a normal toy drive with a festive crowd mix and mingling



Adonis C Expose' and Trudy Barabino-St. Julien pose for pictures for the toy driveby. Many members of the community came by and donated over 500 toys and bikes.



Krista Pouncy-Dyson and Melvin Dyson was amongst many who dropped off bikes for the kids in the community.

in a building, bringing new toys. This Drive-By Toy Drive will be safe and festive as we will have Santa Claus, Zulu's Toys for Tots Committee and community volunteers on the sidewalk waving at the passing attendees in their cars as they collect the new unwrapped toys."

Regarding the proceeds from the event, he said, "The toys collected will be donated to Zulu for their upcoming Toy Giveaway right before Christmas. We want to make sure we do as much as we can to bring a smile to the faces of as many kids as possible, especially given these challenging times."

Packing Local Boards, Whites Kill Black Access to Housing

Kenneth Cooper
Black Source Media

Besides barely voting in local elections, Black people also tend not to participate in their neighborhood association boards. That was the gist of a report the Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center released last week on affordable housing in the city. In the report, the Center found that regardless of a neighborhood's racial makeup the board that represents the neighborhood is usually majority White. Then those Whites do what they can to block any type of affordable housing from being built in the neighborhood. This is a new modern-day form of redlining in New Orleans.

The housing in question usually takes the form of apartment complexes. And the Whites who oppose them usually voice their displeasure at City Council meetings. There these proposed complexes are labeled as ghettos or crime magnets. And this strategy stopped over six hundred units from being built since Katrina. The result is two-fold. One is a housing crisis for Black people in need. The second is more and more desirable areas of the city getting Whiter and Whiter.



Gentrification

In areas like Tremé and other parts of the seventh ward, Black people are finding themselves priced out of the neighborhood. Afterwards, these neighborhoods begin to see financial investments that weren't being offered before. Yoga studios pop up. So do cafes, restaurants, and fresh food options.

Response of the City Council

The Council relents to pressure from these boards because they are the ones who show up

at the Council meetings. It is a squeaky wheel that gets the oil type of scenario. The minority get their way because they make the most noise. The Fair Action Center chides the Council for giving these boards so much sway. They point out the egregious racial undertones of their opposition.

But only 29% of registered voters actually show up to vote. So, Council members may be a bit wary of making enemies out of those who are politically active. Does the Council support this modern-day redlining?



The Center proposed a number of recommendations to prevent a minority of Whites from determining where Blacks end up. The recommendations include having these boards annually report the income and racial makeup of their members. They also recommend having affordable housing incentivized through amendments to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. What is not recommended though is encouraging Black people to participate. Blacks should become more active on

the boards that claim to represent them. That way the Council or some third-party won't have to regulate these boards. This is a more sustainable way of achieving a racial balance on these boards.

One way to do this would be to require boards that are registered with the city to notify neighbors of board meetings. It is not unreasonable to assume that in some areas a good deal of people might not even know that there is a board that exists. So, then even knowing about meetings is farfetched.

Whether more Black people on these neighborhood boards would result in more affordable housing being permitted is hard to say. But at least they won't be shot down with covert racist language. And at least it will be a decision made by those who represent a majority make-up of the area.

It will be interesting to see if any change comes as a result of The Center's report. Or if it will just be information that is swept under the rug. But finding a way to get their Black constituents more involved should be a priority for the newly elected Council members as our neighborhoods continue to evolve.

Accountability was Evident in Arbery's Case but No Justice

Roger Caldwell
NNPA Newswire Contributor

The justice system worked, in the Ahmaud Arbery case after 74 days, because it was forced and pushed to do its job. There is very little to be satisfied with from the judicial system when two District Attorneys, Jackie Johnson and George Barnhill, have worked with one of the suspects on a daily basis, and they prevented the police from doing their job. Former District Attorney Jackie Johnson has been charged with breaking her oath, but for 74 days the entire Glynn County prosecutors' office was not executing their responsibilities.

For two and a half months three murderers were allowed to walk around free and brag about their actions. The system only worked because thousands of protesters, truth tellers and national activists forced and pushed the system to expose the truth. There also was a video that was leaked, which forced the county to take action.

In a fair system, three killers would be charged immediately. The District Attorney would not be allowed to investigate a case where they had worked with the charged



individual on a daily basis. It was obvious that the District Attorney would not be impartial and prevented the police from doing their job.

When we think of justice in America, this case was an example of why the system is broken and flawed and must be reformed. Instead of working to expose the truth, the first two District Attorneys were fighting to protect their friends and hide the evidence.

Initially, it appeared that the dead Black man was the killer and the criminal, and the three White men had acted in self-defense, and it was not necessary to have a trial. In this case, the killers were comfortable telling the investigators that they said, "Stop you know, I'll blow your f...ing head off!"

three White men were going hunting for a Black man, and they had their shotguns.

In America, there are hundreds of cases on a yearly basis, where police and local citizens are not charged because they are White or a policeman and the persons, they kill are Black. Many times, there is no video or factual evidence and there is a big cover up. Ninety percent of the time, the legal system works for White Folks, and they expect it to work one hundred percent of the time.

Many of these murders are modern day lynchings and the evidence is swept under the rug. Ahmaud Arbery's death was a case where one such incident existed. In this case there were three White men: Travis

There is something in the White men psyche that they believe there is nothing wrong with killing Black men/people, because they have a badge, gun, and uniform. On February 23, 2020, these

McMichael, 35, son; Gregory McMichael, 65, father; and neighbor, William Bryan, 52. In this case according to the District Attorney, it was not necessary to create a crime scene, or do a criminal investigation, because the three men were innocent.

As pressure mounted from across the country, internationally, and the federal government, the three men were charged with murder and aggravated assault. Even though many around the country are calling this trial a victory for justice, with a different judge the killers could have got off free.

There was a jury with 11 Whites and 1 Black, which many in the country thought was racist and the defense kept asking for a mistrial. The defense used reverse racism for the White killers and tried to claim the criminals could not get a fair trial.

It is very difficult to consider this trial a win for the justice system and the legal system. This trial was a win for accountability and exposed the corruption in the judicial system. Racism is alive and well in Glynn County and there is a need for more organizations to fight corruption — and help reform the legal and justice system — all over America.

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