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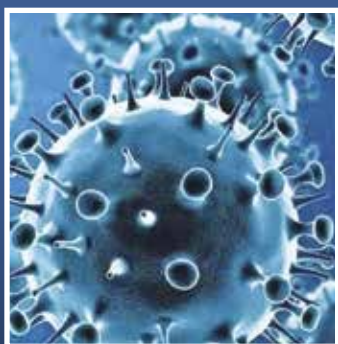
A Data News Weekly Exclusive

Omicron

Variant Causes Rise In COVID-19 Cases

*City Leaders Urge
Vaccinations, Booster Shots,
and other Safety Measures*

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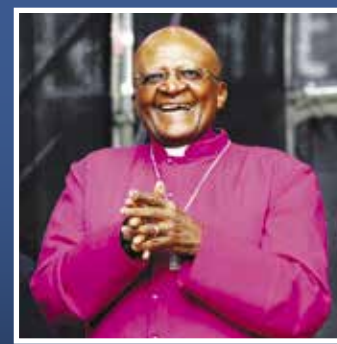
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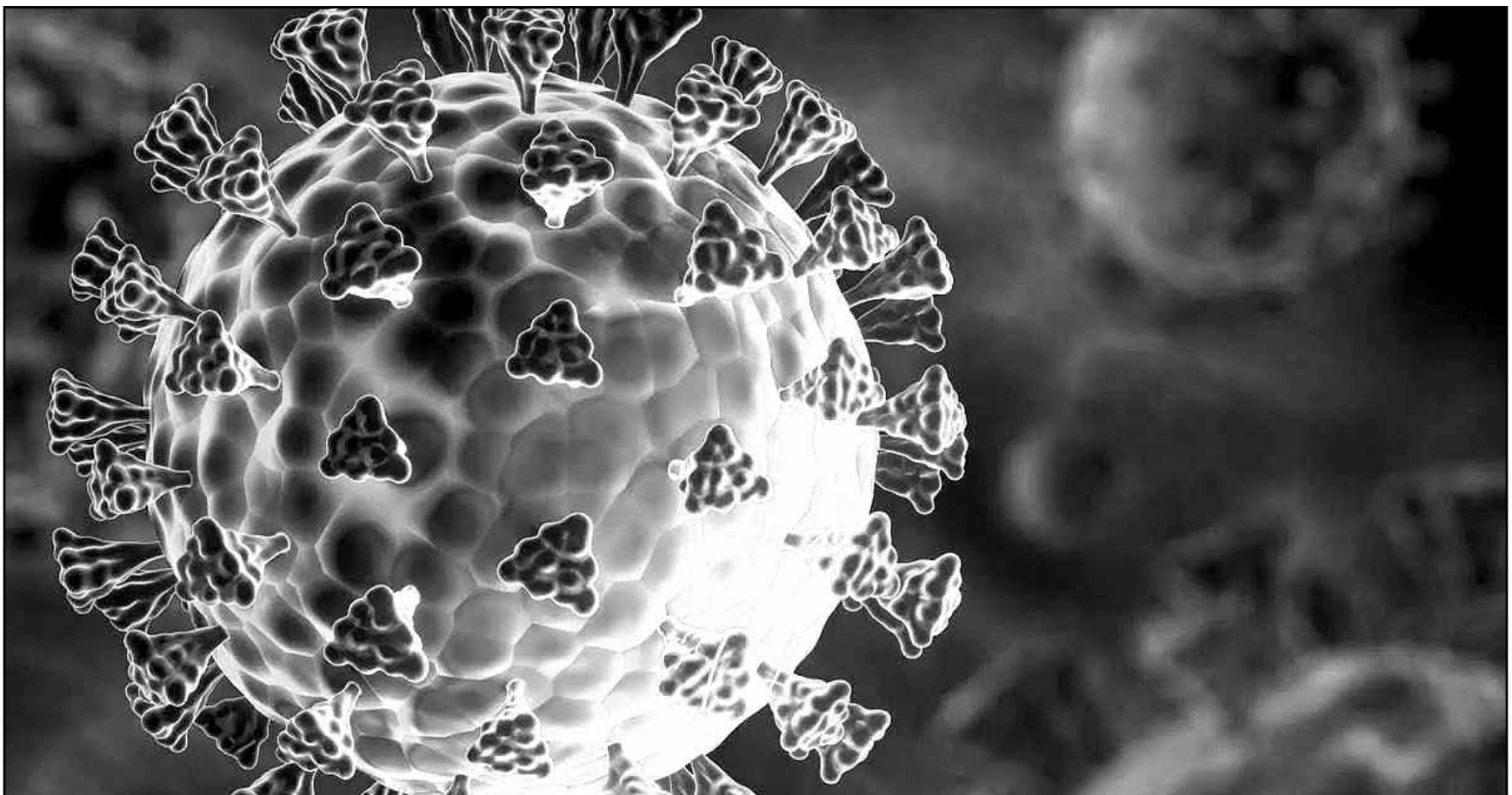
**Bishop Tutu
Dead at the
Age of 90**



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Omicron Variant Causes Rise In COVID-19 Cases

City Leaders Urge Vaccinations, Booster Shots, and other Safety Measures



Eric Connerly
Data News Weekly Contributor

As the City of New Orleans rings in the New Year, the COVID-19 Omicron Variant is affecting people all over the world, and now Louisiana is becoming a hotspot. This is causing city leaders to revisit possibly

bringing back some restrictions to keep people safe.

This week the Louisiana Department of Health announced that 449 people in Louisiana are hospitalized with COVID-19, a number that has doubled in one week.

A troubling trend is taking place as LDH officials stated the last time that many COVID-19

hospitalizations were reported was mid-October as the state came down from another surge in cases.

In New Orleans, as in many parts of the country there is a divide between the severity of new cases between the vaccinated and unvaccinated.

Recent statistics show that eighty percent of people currently hospitalized with COVID-19 are not fully vac-

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P.O. Box 57347, New Orleans, LA 70157-7347 | Phone: (504) 821-7421 | Fax: (504) 821-7622
editorial: datanewseditor@bellsouth.net | advertising: datanewsad@bellsouth.net

Terry B. Jones	Contributors	Art Direction &
CEO/Publisher		Production
Edwin Buggage	Eric Connerly	Pubinator.com
Editor	Data News Weekly	Editorial and
Sharonda Green	Staff Writers	Advertising Inquiries
Executive Assistant		datanewsweeklyad
June Hazeur	Stacy M. Brown	@gmail.com
Accounting	Robert Daniels	Distribution
		by Terrence Lee

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cinated, according to the health department.

Additionally, a total of 9,545 new COVID-19 cases out of 59,139 new tests have been reported to the state since Dec. 23rd. Also, another 1,231 people in Louisiana have been reinfected with COVID-19 in the same time frame.

LDH does not include reinfections on its dashboard. Information is still emerging, but Omicron includes multiple mutations across the SARS-CoV-2 Genome. Emerging data show this new variant is more transmissible than previous strains and that Omicron may carry an increased risk of reinfection compared to other variants of concern.

Dr. Jeffrey Elder with LCMC Health spoke with local NBC affiliate WDSU-TV 6 that so far, those who have been reinfected have mild symptoms.

"We are seeing a vast majority of people who have more mild symptoms," Elder said. "People (coming to the emergency room) really just have the cough, congestion, runny nose type stuff, fever, and they're able to go home and isolate, which is good."

But Elder said the Health System has seen an increase in hospitalizations, similar to the statewide trend. He said LCMC was treating less than 20 COVID-19 patients a week ago compared to fifty-five on Monday.

"We're only about a week and a half into this surge, so the next two weeks are really going to be telling to see what we see," Elder said.

When asked about the best mitigation measures to take, Elder said people should mask indoors and consider skipping large New Year's Eve gatherings.

"I would tell people now's not the time just because of what we're seeing in the community," Elder said.

He also encouraged anyone who

has been exposed to the virus to get a test, vaccinated or not.

"If you're boosted or vaccinated, you don't necessarily have to quarantine if you've been exposed," Elder said. "You ideally should get tested, basically, around day one to two after finding out you've been exposed and then again, roughly, around day five."

But health care leaders acknowledge that COVID-19 tests are hard to come by right now.

Meantime, local and state leaders continue to stress the importance of getting vaccinated and boosted.

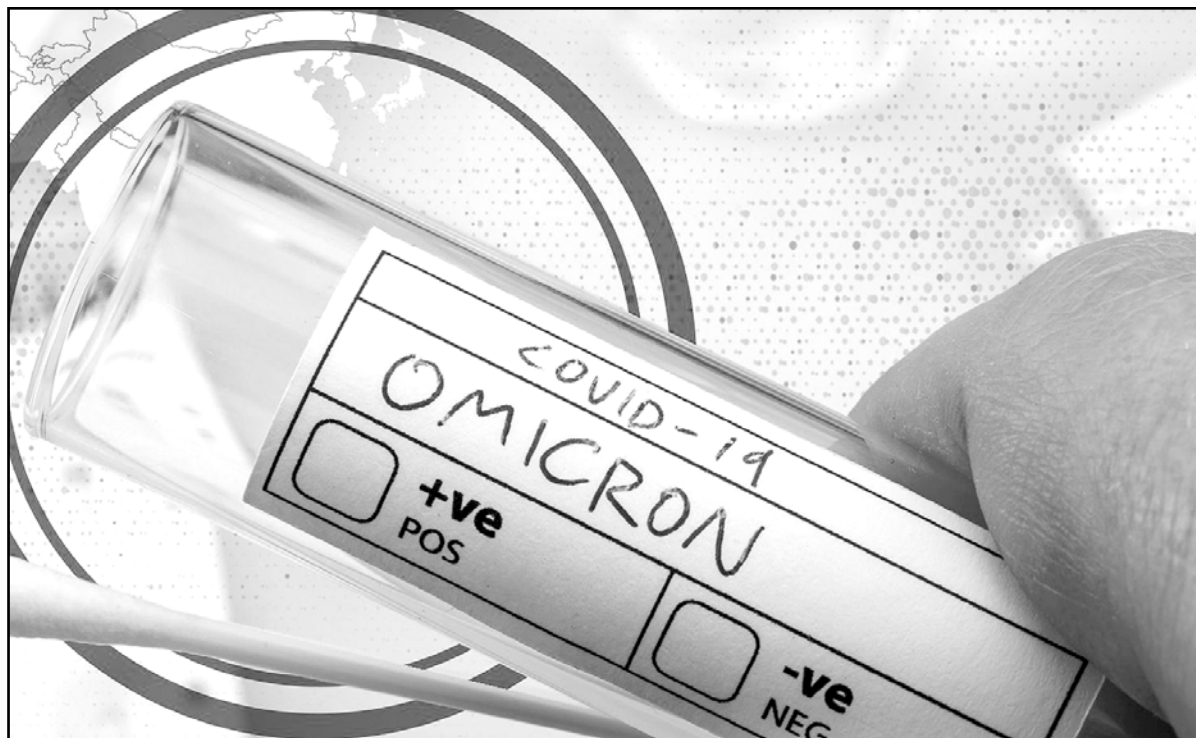
"Being vaccinated, being boosted really gives you strong protection versus critical illness, ending up in the hospital or dying from it," Elder said.

LDH is also urging everyone the following mitigation measures to limit the spread of the virus:

- To reduce transmission, regardless of vaccination status, mask in all indoor public spaces, mask in all indoor private spaces with people who are not in your immediate household and mask outdoors when not able to social distance. Masks are effective in protecting against infection for all the currently circulating variants.

- Work remotely if feasible.
- Limit exposure to individuals outside your everyday household.
- Get tested for COVID-19 before and after traveling or gathering with individuals outside your everyday household. LDH recommends testing one to two days before travel and three to five days after travel.

If you have questions about vaccines, you can speak to a medical professional and learn about vaccination sites near you by calling Louisiana's vaccine hotline at 855-453-0774. For a list of locations near you, visit <https://ldh.la.gov/covidvaccine> or text your ZIP code to GETVAX (438829) in English or VACUNA (822862) in Spanish.



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'Harlem'

Tracy Oliver's Vibrant Amazon Prime Series Pulses with Heart and Vigor

Robert Daniels
Contributor Indie Wire

In Harlem, under the weight of a deep history, courses a destiny of magnetic laughter and the pulses of proud people, both built by Black women. The historic neighborhood and its inhabitants have always been under threat, whether it is the extralegal Justice System, dirty policing, or racism. Now its gravest hazard, afflicting other predominantly African American neighborhoods, stretching from the South Side of Chicago to South Los Angeles, is gentrification. No one has borne the brunt of these systematic hurdles more than the recipients of misogynoir: Black women.

"Harlem," the vibrant, colorful Amazon series created by Tracy Oliver ("Girls Trip"), follows four tight-knit Black women as they soul search through dating, work-life balancing, and an omnipresent prejudice felt in the historic, but drastically changing New York City neighborhood. With a nimble flair, Oliver's series combines elements of "Girlfriends," "Sex and the City," and "Living Single" — and features sharp, fun interplay between its four formidable leads.

Ostensibly, an ensemble piece, the ten half-hour episodes center on Camille (Meagan Good). A popular adjunct professor at Columbia University (her classes are always waitlisted), Camille is on a tenure track, vying for the institution's open Associates Professor position. The position seems like a sure bet, a goal she made deep sacrifices for when four years ago she broke-up with her charming longtime boyfriend, Ian (Tyler Lepley). In her day-to-day, Camille often finds support from her three talented friends: the fashion designer Quinn (Grace Byers), a down-on-her-luck Singer Angie (Shoniqua Shandai), and a lesbian tech mogul Tye (Jerrie Johnson), who has created an app for queer Black singles, often the most at-risk group, to find safe dates and dating experiences in the city.

"Harlem" is bursting with other themes — the depleting Black landscape of Harlem, sexual awakenings, hair care, and the ways Black creatives are often forced to sacrifice their scruples for a chance



Grace Byers and Meagan Good star in "Harlem", now airing on Amazon Prime.



The ensemble cast takes a refreshing approach to African American women in their search for success, love, and purpose.

at success — but leaves enough juicy meat on the bone for a possible second. It accomplishes all of these challenges while putting on a display of lavish costumes, detailed, colorful production designs — relying on teals, pastel pinks, and yellows — and allowing the luminousness of Black skin to be captured. Despite some early slip-ups, Oliver's "Harlem" resonates with fun, heart, verve, and the feeling of togetherness, inherent in both the neighborhood and the Black women it supports.



The show features many guest stars including award winning Actress Whoopi Goldberg.

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



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In The Year 2022 Changes in Covid-19 Protocols Will Include Children as Young as Age Five

In short, parents who want to take their children to places in New Orleans will have to show proof of vaccination starting in a week.

This comes after New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell announced updates to the city's Coronavirus Guidance.

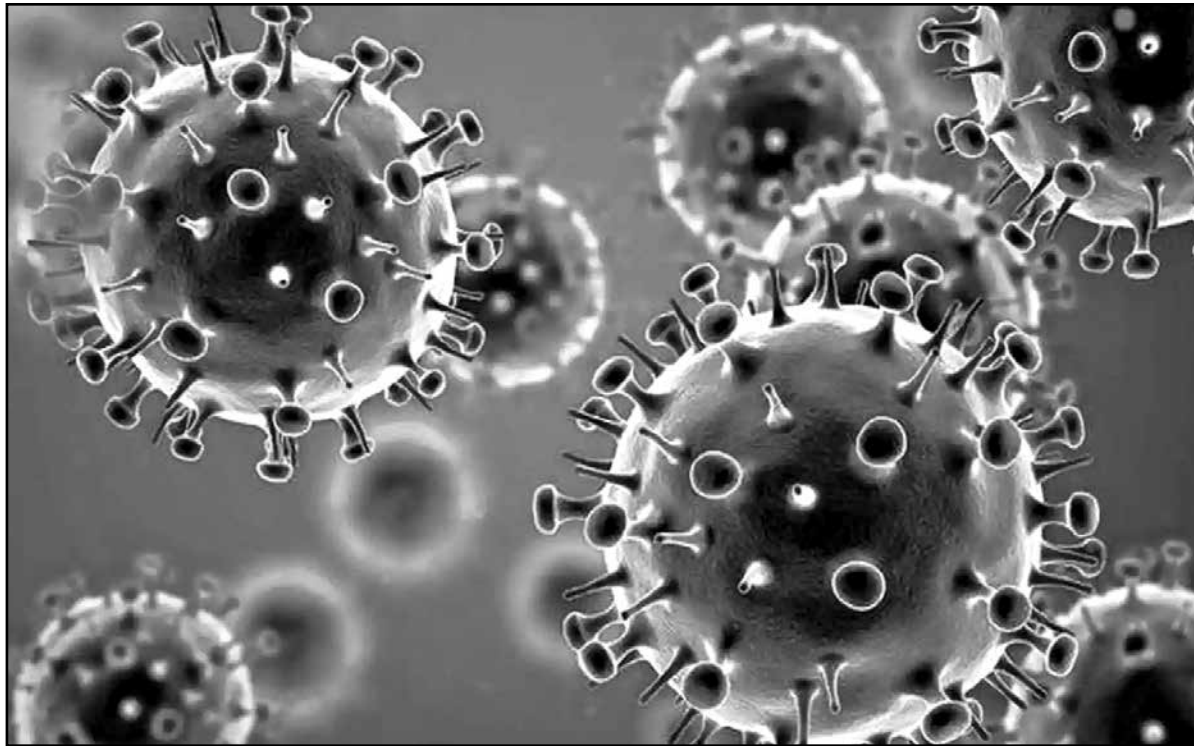
Starting Jan. 3, 2022, proof of vaccination or a negative test will be required for everyone ages five and up at restaurants and public places.

Children will have to show proof of at least one dose, and proof of two doses starting in February.

This means parents have a week to begin a vaccine series for their children if they want to go to restaurants or visit public places in New Orleans.

"Starting in January you need to start getting your children vaccinated," Cantrell said.

Cantrell said that the move was



made to keep people safe ahead of the holiday seasons as well as for Carnival Season.

This comes as the Omicron Variant continues to spread across the City of New Orleans.

Dr. Jennifer Avegno with the New Orleans Department of Health said average cases have nearly doubled. Omicron is expected to become the dominant strain here locally by the New Year.

The vaccine is at least 70% effective against Omicron, which is down from at least 90% against Delta. Avegno stressed the importance of booster shots during this time in increasing effectiveness.

Health officials said while 80% of the adult population in New Orleans is fully vaccinated, the numbers are much lower for those ages 5-17. They are 27% fully vaccinated.

State & Local News

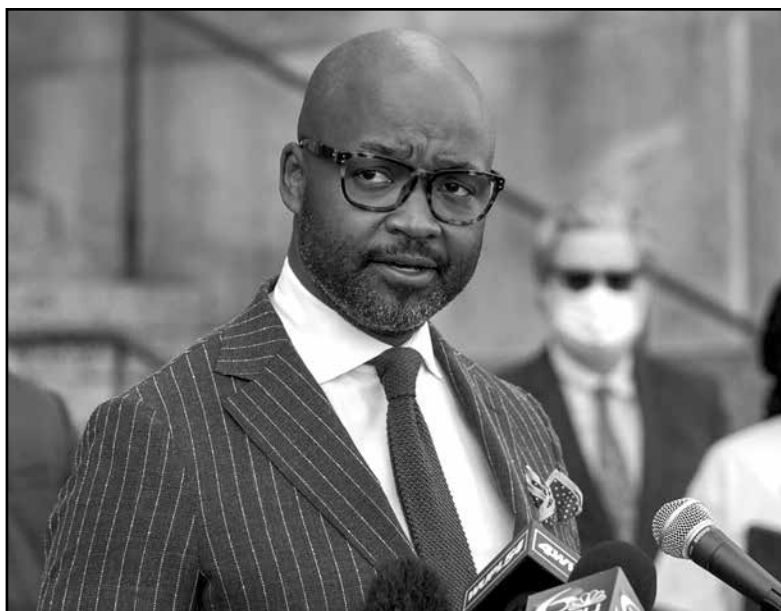
DA Williams Issue Report on Accomplishments from First Year of His Administration and Looks Ahead to 2022

Data News Staff Edited Report

Recently, District Attorney Jason Williams released "The People's Report," a review of achievements from his first year at the helm of the Orleans Parish DA's Office ("OPDA") in the areas of (1) increasing safety, (2) delivering justice, (3) investing in our youth, (4) increasing victim/witness and diversion supports, (5) rebuilding public trust/transparency, and (6) building a 21st Century prosecutor's office.

In 2021, OPDA has prioritized collaboration with law enforcement and community partners to properly and successfully prosecute violent crimes, divert mental health and substance abuse cases to treatment, and enhance public trust and cooperation in investigations by resolving wrongful convictions and increasing transparency.

"I promised my fellow New Orleanians when running for



New Orleans District Attorney Jason Williams.

District Attorney that I would transform the DA's Office, from one that solely sought high conviction rates and sentence lengths – without regard to their actual impact on public safety – to one that instead sought to make

our neighborhoods truly safer and the Criminal Legal System more just," said District Attorney Jason Williams. "I'm proud to have kept that promise in my first year in office."

Under the Williams Adminis-

tration, OPDA has produced on-the-ground, community-centered achievements such as:

Obtained fifty-eight grand jury indictments for violent crimes committed in New Orleans.

Vacated the excessive sentences of nearly one hundred people who had served more than 20 years of life or life equivalent sentences, saving the State at least \$5 million a year in Department of Corrections incarceration costs.

Issued salary increase of lowest-paid Assistant District Attorneys

Secured guilty pleas in over 1,700 cases, with 3,000 charges resulting in guilty pleas as part of these case.

Brought eighty-six people home to their families from prison, including forty-nine people who were sentenced to life without parole.

Settled three years of litigation against former DA's Office Administrations for prosecutorial misconduct, saving taxpayers millions in financial exposure and legal fees.

Doubled the size of our Victim/

Witness Services Staff, including placing our office's first ever Victim/Witness Advocate in the Juvenile Division.

Launched a Restorative Justice Diversion Program.

Launched a Cold Case Unit and secured indictments and arrests for 2016 homicide, obtained in part by the new unit.

Signed a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the City of New Orleans and New Orleans Public Library System to open DA Satellite Offices in low-income neighborhoods in 2022.

Launched a brand-new website (www.orleansda.com), which includes the first of many public data dashboards.

Participated in quarterly People's DA Coalition forums.

Having laid this foundation in 2021, DA Williams looks forward to building on it in the year ahead in order to continue to increase safety and deliver justice in New Orleans.

South Africa's Leading Advocate for Change and Reconciliation under a Black Majority Rule and the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Bishop Tutu, Died in Cape Town on December 26 at the Age of 90.

Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

Long before Nelson Mandela won his freedom from 27 years of imprisonment fighting apartheid in South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu earned the moniker "the nation's conscience."

White and Black residents of the popular African nation lauded the bishop for his relentless fight to unite races and end the racist system of apartheid.

South Africa's leading advocate for change and reconciliation under a Black majority rule and the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Bishop Tutu, died in Cape Town on December 26 at the age of 90.

South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa first confirmed the bishop's passing.

"He was a leader of principle and pragmatism who gave meaning to the biblical insight that faith without works is dead," President Ramaphosa exclaimed.

A spokesperson for the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation said Bishop Tutu succumbed to cancer after a decades-long battle with the disease.

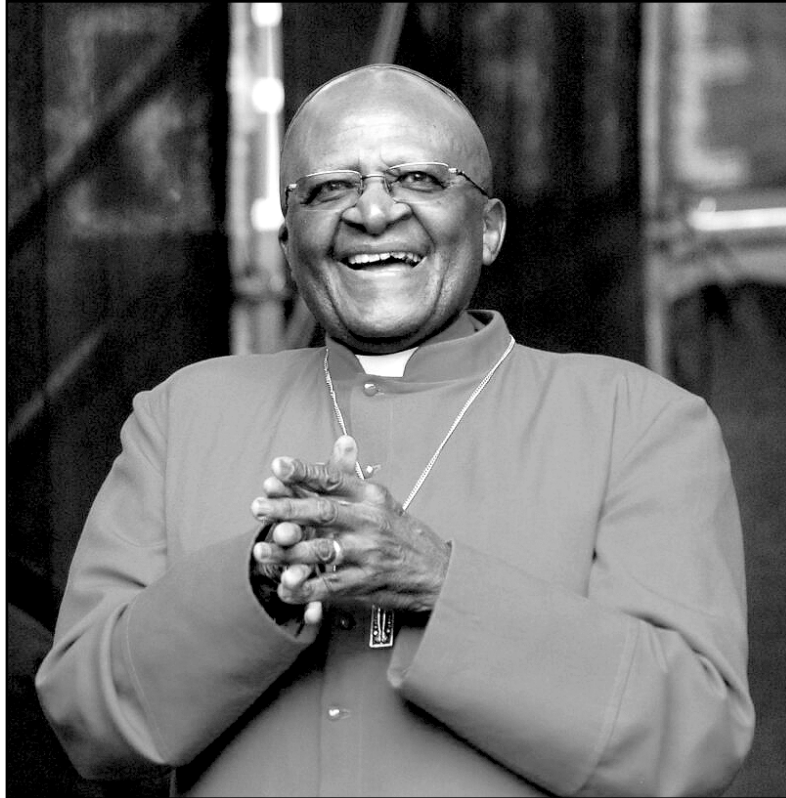
Bishop Tutu reportedly had been hospitalized several times in the years since his 1997 diagnosis but continued his work.

His demands for freedom and advocating that justice be accomplished in a nonviolent manner helped earn Bishop Tutu the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

Born on October 7, 1931, in Klerksdorp, South Africa, Bishop Tutu's mother, Aletha, was a domestic worker, and his father, Zacharia, was a teacher.

Bishop Tutu was baptized a Methodist, but his family would later join the Anglican Church, according to his official biography.

When he was 12, his family



Humanitarian Bishop Desmond Tutu recently passed away. The South African Freedom Fighter was honored by leaders from across the globe.

moved to Johannesburg.

Bishop Tutu often spoke of Rev. Trevor Huddleston, a white preacher who opposed apartheid.

Rev. Huddleston earned the young Tutu's admiration because of a simple gesture: Rev. Huddleston tipped his hat to Tutu's mother.

Desmond Tutu studied at the Pretoria Bantu Normal College and earned a degree in teaching from the University of South Africa.

He taught for three years but resigned after South Africa enacted the Bantu Education Act, lowering Black students' education standards.

He married Nomalizo Shenxane, and the couple remained together for more than 66 years until Bishop Tutu's death.

They have four children, Trevor, and three daughters, Theresa, Nao-

mi, and Mpho.

"Archbishop Desmond Tutu was a mentor, a friend, and a moral compass for me and so many others," former U.S. President Barack

Obama said in a statement.

"A universal spirit, Archbishop Tutu was grounded in the struggle for liberation and justice in his own country, but also concerned with injustice everywhere. He never lost his impish sense of humor and willingness to find humanity in his adversaries, and Michelle and I will miss him dearly."

England's Royal Family tweeted condolences from Queen Elizabeth.

Ethiopia Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali also tweeted out his sympathies.

"I join other world leaders in expressing my sadness at the passing of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who has been the embodiment of the struggle for liberation," Prime Minister Ali wrote. "Ethiopia sends its condolences to the people and the government of South Africa."

Officials at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Atlanta also released a statement of sadness.

"Our hearts go out to his family. Archbishop Tutu was a global human rights activist and a compassionate, bold, consistent voice on behalf of the ostracized and oppressed," the King Center officials wrote. "May we carry his love forward."



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