



# Newsmaker

Class Earns \$9.2 Million in Scholarships

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# **State & Local**

Troy Carter
Receives Lifetime
Achievement Award



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## **Cover Story**

# Out of the Shadows

Deconstructing the Stigma of Mental Health in the Black Community



It is important to remove the stigma surrounding mental health in the African-American community.

### Renetta Burrell Perry **Data News Weekly Contributor**

For centuries African Americans have navigated life in the new world with transcendental savvy, poise and unprecedented grit and grace. Being ripped from our homeland and families, chained together in ships

where we endured sickness and death, and ultimately forced into the horrors and abuses of slavery and servitude has left generational and emotional scars so deep that even scholars find difficulty explaining how

Whether it is innate ability or happenstance is arguable, but regardless of the origin of our strengths, history has proven our acute possession of the unmatched and unmeasurable abilities to adapt and thrive, whatever the circumstance. While this has been fundamental to our existence in America, it has also forced us to "pack" or compartmentalize problems, to assert strength and to assimilate. In our world, we call it "keeping it moving." Little boys have histori-

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## **Cover Story**

**Data News Weekly** 

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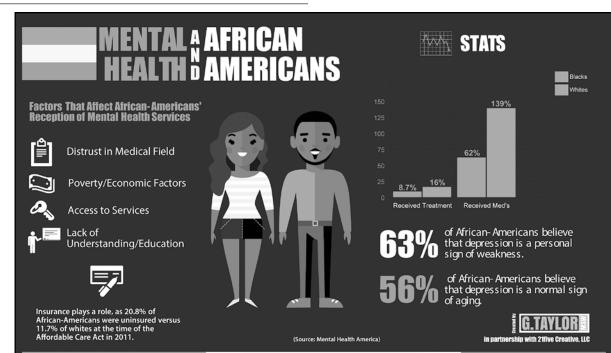
cally been told not to show their feelings or emotions from early-on. Has this translated into generations of men who lack empathy, even selfawareness? Women often adopted the mantra "I don't need a man" to cope with the absence of a man's support in their lives. Has this produced generations of women who have learned to emasculate our men? Adolescents were threatened not talk about the same sex from a romanticized perspective. Has this spawned tens of thousands to remain "in the closet" regarding their sexual identities? And children were always told to "stay in a child's place," which was a place where no conversation about anything scholarly, opinionated or overly expressive, was allowed. Was this protective or counter-productive? "Whippings" ensued as a form of punishment, supported by the "spare the rod, spoil the child," ideology which is paraphrasing of Old Testament scripture. But in more modern societies, who held the responsibility of defining the thin line between discipline and abuse?

In exchange for acknowledging or embellishing any emotional overspill, we were steadfastly directed to rely heavily on God, faith, and family. These were the unwavering forces that had the ability to get us through any and every single thing we would or could ever face. Conversely, lending credence to any circumstance that would surpass these forces was seen as unfathomable. We had, in fact, survived three hundred years of slavery with those forces on or side.

### What could possibly surpass that?

But times have changed, and generations of African Americans have acquired education to support our intelligence, acumen, and overall genius. Most of us still view God and faith as the formidable forces that guide and direct us, but we are slowly dismantling the idea that people with mental illness are "crazy," and we are forced to recognize that even with all of our strengths, we are still human. With this paradigm shift, propelled by the national movement to recognize mental illnesses as true illness, and with its mainstream acceptance, African Americans have slowly began deconstructing the myth that mental illness is a taboo subject.

In a recent article published by the University of Houston, Dr. Rheeda Walker, author of "The Unapologetic Guide to Black Mental Health," addresses the phenomenon of African Americans and suicide in her research. "Anything that is perceived as mental health-related is taboo in the Black community. To further complicate things,





Chef Blake Cressey, Owner of Tasty Treat Restaurant, Author of "Chef Blake's Recipes, Delicious Air-Fryer Recipes" and Creator of "Get Ya Mind Right" Mental Health Festival

'getting help' is seen as a weakness so folks press on even when they are struggling. Doing so is part of a cultural legacy of survival in the face of brutal circumstances," says Walker. As of February 2022, several high-profile African Americans had ended their lives through suicide, including former Miss USA and Attorney Cheslie Kryst, 30, who was the most popular. Others include "Walking Dead" star Moses Moseley, 31; Mayor of Hyatsville, MD., Kevin Ward, 41 and Ian Alexander, son of Oscar winning Actress Regina King. Alexander was only 26 years old. Closer to home, the 2022 suicide deaths of a middle school student in New Orleans and a Southern University of Baton Rouge student both left the community riveted with grief and grappling for answers. These events uncover a disturbing trend that is supported by the troubling statistics revealing that in the past decade, suicide rates in minorities have dramatically increased with African American youth, specifically aged 25-35, leading the numbers of a population of young people choosing to end their own lives. Dr. Walker suggests that suicide is "preventable" and points to "open conversations" and "proactivity" as remedies.



Jozetta Taylor Martin, Social Worker, Support Coordinator at QSC, (Quality Support Coordination)



Dr. Rheeda Walker, Professor of Psychology and Director of the University of Houston's Culture, Risk and Resilience Lab



Joe Giarrusso (councilman), Chef Blake Cressy (CEO of Tasty Treat Restaurant and Get Ya Mind Right Festival Creator), Dr. Rochelle Dunham (Metropolitan Human Šervices), Lisa Romback (NAMI), Royce Duplessis (Louisiana State Representative)

Local Social Worker Jozetta Taylor Martin, Support Coordinator at QSC, (Quality Support Coordination) agrees. "Mental health encompasses a broad spectrum of illnesses, and it affects our community in many ways," she says pointing to the plethora of adverse issues unchecked mental health can cause. Without proper diagnoses, analysis, and medical support, she says the problems manifest through "criminal activities, domestic violence, disputes, drug addiction, homelessness and suicide."

But Martin, like Walker, feels

reform is within our reach through first of all recognizing problems, secondly confronting them, then putting resources into action. "It is important that everyone knows that mental health affects everyone, especially the African American population because we don't know about the resources; however it is important that we become more educated on mental health and mental illness," she asserts, challenging the community to research and become acquainted with the broad spectrum of illnesses that fall under mental health so that we could be-

come familiar with terms and outcomes which will ultimately make us more savvy at acquiring help. In light of the growing rate of suicide in our community, she offers, "we need to make it known that suicide is a problem and address it as whole, seeking more resources for those who have suicidal thoughts. We must realize that it affects everyone from young people to adults, many of whom do not know how to reach out for help." She adds, "we can address these mental health issues by making it known that there are resources."

#### **Community Resources**

Visionaries like Entrepreneur Chef Blake Cressey, owner of Tasty Treat, are at the forefront of a movement of young leaders who are willing to tackle mental health in our community head-on. As the creator of the groundbreaking festival called "Get Ya Mind Right," Cressey understands and wants to convey to the community the importance of "controlling your mind and not letting your mind control you." She agrees with Martin in that the conversation must start early-on, at a school aged level in order to assure its effectiveness. "Mental health has been a part of our community before the pandemic and now it has worsened," she says, adding that not everyone will require medication, but many, oftentimes just need someone to talk to. "Sometimes they just may need to share how they're feeling, just to vent, just to release, and that's not always available."

Cressey says the biggest issue surrounding mental health in our community is that it is not talked about. She sees her event as a step towards changing that. She would like to see it take place at least once a month and her goal is to "literally help people to get their minds right" through learning how to manage their mental health by learning techniques like meditating and talking things through. She also wants the community to know that it is not all about a prescription from the doctors. She wants to offer alternative ways to gain mental health. She says in our community, we all have tried different approaches because many doctors do not take Medicaid/Medicare, or do not have available appointments for patients who do not have the resources to pay, so "we are just trying to figure things out as we go."

Cressey is seeking sponsors, vendors, advertisers, and volunteers to help make her event successful. Anyone interested should reach out to her via her social media: @tastytreatfoodtruck and #getyamindrightfest

The event is scheduled for

# **Prom Princesses**



**Tracee Dundas Fashion Stylist** 

Prom Night is the one of the most important experiences for a high school girl. But many young ladies do not get to have that special moment experience often due to financial challenges. From selecting the perfect dress, shoes, and accessories to getting the final details done, such as hair, makeup, and a manicure; the cost to get the complete prom look can be pricey and not something many families can afford.

However, a group of Sarah T Reed High School students were recently surprised with a visit to Daughter of the King Girls Club for a special prom dress giveaway.

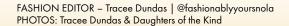
Founder and CEO of Daughter of the King, Casme Carter, former contestant of NBC's Season 19 of The Voice, making it to the show's battle round. Her passion to mentor and help young girls is as deep as her love for singing. Daughter of the King Girls Club is a safe place that young ladies can meet monthly for teach-ins on self-care, etiquette, and even prom dress giveaway.

Prom night is one of the most special and memorable events for a high school girl. But many girls forfeit attending their high school prom because they cannot afford to buy a new gown and all the add-ons that go with it. Our goal is to make it her feel like the princess she is by providing her with a beautiful prom dress and so much more;" said, Casme Carter.

The event was coordinated by Democrats for Education Reform Louisiana in partnership with Orleans Parish School Board Member Katie Baudouin, Einstein Charter Schools, Daughter of the King Girls Club, Dress for Success, and New Orleans Fashion Week.

Tatiana Begault, DFER Deputy State Director adds; "Dances are expensive and getting a gown can be a big part of that expense – particularly for families who lost their jobs or had decrease work hours and wages during COVID, paying for a prom dress can be a struggle. Helping make a girl's dream come true to attend her prom in a beautiful gown and seeing the smile on her face as she realizes she is being gifted a prom dress is priceless. It is her moment to feel like a princess."

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Full & Fluffy PromDress



**Grecian Goddess PromDress** 

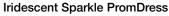


Royalty Ready PromDress

www.ladatanews.com Data Zone

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Lady in Red PromDress



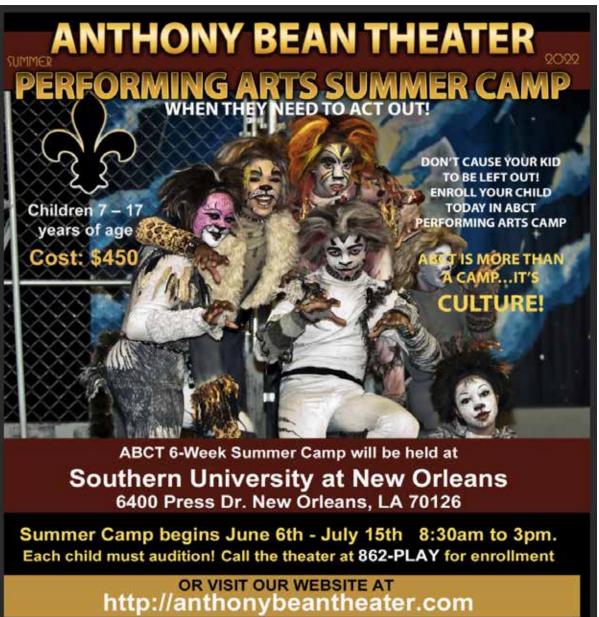
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Ladylike Elegance PromDress







## Newsmaker

# All-Black New Orleans Graduating Class Earns \$9.2 million in Scholarships with 100 Percent Acceptance Rate

Stacy M. Brown NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent

New Orleans' St. Augustine High School, which accomplished many firsts for African Americans during the 1950s and 1960s, again enjoyed a historical moment for its 2022 graduating class.

The entire graduating class at the all-boys college preparatory school received acceptance to college, earning more than \$9.2 million in scholarship offers.

As noted on the Black excellence blog, Because of Them We Can, one of the mothers of a St. Augustine graduate, Twitter user @ Kay\_Jeaux, took to the social media platform to share a clip of the class of 2022 as they celebrated graduation in cap and gown alongside a second line band.

Captioned under the clip were a few receipts for the graduating class.

"It's late, but I don't care. The world



The entire graduating class at the all-boys college preparatory school received acceptance to college, earning more than \$9.2 million in scholarship offers.

deserves to see this Black boy joy. Congratulations to THE St. Augustine High School class of 2022. 100% college acceptance. \$9.2M in scholarships.

Straight out of the 7th ward of New Orleans." Jeaux tweeted.

The blog pointed out that the post sparked widespread praise for the

graduating class, having been viewed already more than 300,000 times.

According to the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center,

the Seventh Ward, where St. Augustine High School sits, was once considered the quintessential Creole neighborhood in New Orleans.

"Many educated and accomplished people of color lived here before the Civil War and throughout the time when Jim Crow laws were in effect," data center officials reported.

After desegregation, the city built the I-10 interstate right over the Claiborne neutral ground, destroying the 7th Ward's prosperous business district in the process, the officials added.

"Take note, America," Twitter user Kim M. Carpenter declared.

"Here is what happens when a community comes together and loves their children."

Added Hannah White, another Twitter user:

"This just made my whole day! Those young men battled hard to do so very well and now they can celebrate. #NewOrleans celebrates you! Congrats to the Class of 2022."



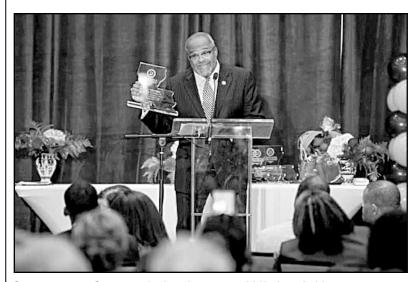


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## **State & Local News**

# Congressman Troy Carter receives coveted Lifetime Achievement Award for Public Service



Congressman Carter recieving the coveted Lifetime Achievement Award for Public Service.

#### Data News Staff Edited Report

Recently, Louisiana Congressman Troy Carter received the coveted Lifetime Achievement Award for Public Service. Over the years he's served the people of the state

bringing much needed resources to make a positive impact on his constituents.

Congressman Carter said that "he is eternally grateful to have been recognized by the Louisiana Democratic Party and the citizens of Louisiana".

# **National News**

# Soledad O'Brien Teams up with JP Morgan **Chase for Impactful Health & Wellness Event**

Patrick Washington **Dallas Weekly News** 

In the wake of the 2020 social uprising in response to the now globally recognized George Floyd killing, many corporations and entities public messaged that change was necessary and specifically the engagement and support of the African American community. It is an established fact that many facets of American society and power systems purposely excluded Black Americans from achieving success and wealth through various programs and redlining efforts.

One of the companies to pledge support and correction to the injustice was JPMorgan Chase. As the largest commercial bank, JPMorgan Chase pledged billions to the cause. That has manifested in investment into Black owned companies and marketing with Black owned media. The latest effort JPMorgan Chase is hosting a full day of conversations and informational sessions to support financial health education, wealth-building, and financial inclusion for Dallas' Black and Hispanic communities The Summit will take place at Gilley's South Side Event Center on Saturday, May 21, 2022, from 11a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and one of the invited speakers include Is Soledad O'Brien, recognized journalist, CEO of SO'B Productions, Producer and Philanthropist.

O'Brien sat with the Dallas Weekly to discuss the potential impacts and value of this event and its subsequent activity. As an advisor to the Advancing Black and Hispanic Pathways Summit O'Brien made sure that is not and will not be lip service without action.

"We are going to be very intentional, it is called Advancing Black Pathways, right? It is not called 'making everybody more solvent.' We must figure out how to improve outcomes for [Black] people when it comes to wealth" O'Brien says. "What I have liked about being an advisor to Advancing Black Pathways... is that it is strategic, it is tactical, it means they are focusing on education. Literally how do you get



Soledad O'Brien sat with the Dallas Weekly to discuss the potential impacts and value of this event and its subsequent activity.

money into the hands of entrepreneurs? How do you literally specifically make those changes? Which I have always appreciated."

In addition, the Advancing Black and Hispanic Wealth Summit will feature panel discussions with various celebrity and industry experts, including interactive workshops focused on financial wellness, money saving tips, navigating the real estate market and homeownership, entrepreneurship, and wealth generation.

"It is about focusing on generational wealth building. Where do you find generational wealth? Well, you have to give them access to capital. You have to make sure once they access, they have access to information so their companies can be successful. You must make sure there is money in the education, so people are not coming out of college in a ton of debt, and you must make sure you give people access to financial literacy information." O'Brien says, "Where we have the most wealth is in our homes. We know that's where people pass along wealth to their kids. That is how you build generational wealth [...] How do you navigate real estate, literally, how do you save money, literally, how do you think about home ownership, literally, how do you think about entrepreneurship literally and specifically."

The focused effort is the plan for JPMorgan Chase. The very "bank-

ery" approach is the driving force. It is a detail-oriented plan with follow up activity for ensured success. As a part of the summit, Chase bankers will host breakout sessions and one-on-one meetings with attendees to discuss their own financial health goals. The Advancing Black and Hispanic Wealth Summit is a collaboration between Chase local leaders, Advancing Black Pathways and Advancing Hispanic and Latinos, the firm's two diversity, equity and inclusion centers focused on helping the Black, Hispanic and Latino community chart stronger paths towards economic success and empowerment.

"There are so many important conversations around financial freedom, entrepreneurship, wealth, and legacy building, many of which I cover on my radio show Everyday Wealth, but too often Black and Hispanic audiences are left out. I am honored to join JPMorgan Chase in centering communities of color around creating generational wealth," said Soledad O'Brien.

Soledad has done stories on red lining and even reported on the Southern Dallas Community. When talking about the correction of the historic and systemic injustice, she understands and believes Chase understands that there cannot be just a start from scratch approach. There must be clean up first. When a community has had to adjust to oppression, the official rules of how

to play the game are not used and become the standard practice of business owners who historically have been denied the opportunities to grow. So, in an effort to right the wrongs, it must be understood that concessions or "outside-the-box" thinking must be applied.

JPMorgan Chase is expressing they have a clear eye view of the challenges ahead. This effort is not a two year or five-year plan. The plan cannot be that simple when you are talking about generational injustice. When speaking to Soledad about the generational struggle she recalled a well-known story here in north Texas about Shingle Mountain. This is the story of Marsha Jackson's quarter century fight to rid her community of the toxic mountain of roofing waste, just recently came to an end more or less in Jackson's favor. O'Brien uses the story as a reference of the time it takes to correct injustice in a meaningful way, and emphasizes that that ideology, of long-term investment, is the strategy of JPMorgan Chase.

"It takes a long time, and it requires capital. It requires an organization to say we are going to put a lot of money into educating people, into funding businesses, into making sure we are successful. I have been really impressed because JPMorgan Chase is bringing both the conversation and also the capitalization. Bringing money into the community to really help entrepreneurs. Not just say 'hey we're here to support you,' but also here is the financial wherewithal to back up the information we are giving you. We know if it is just information and not funding, it is not helpful if you are not backed up by the money." O'Brien stated.

JPMorgan Chase is presenting this opportunity to the public for the goals of increasing the diversity pool in the business community, and to begin to shift the relationship between the banking world and communities who have been hurt generationally and historically. The sold-out Summit will be held at Gilley's on Botham Jean Blvd.

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