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Bogalusa Blues and Heritage Festival

Data Zone Page 5

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

Residents Respond to City's Return as the Nation's Murder Capital

Page 2



Newsmaker

Black Journalists Work to Improve Coverage of African Americans

Page 6

Opinion
A New Kind of Hope Lives Here



Page 7

Residents Respond to City's Return as the Nation's Murder Capital



New Orleans continues to be plagued by violent crime, and this year is on track to being the murder capital in the nation. City leaders and citizens are concerned about how to solve this problem.

Allison Swann
Data News Weekly Contributor

In a report released by the Metropolitan Crime Commission on Sept. 18th, it was established that the City of New Orleans has overtaken St. Louis, Mo., in becoming the number one murder capital of the coun-

try. The last time the city held this record was in the mid-1990s when it held the highest homicide rate in the country.

Using crime trends data for 2019 to 2022, the commission report stated that New Orleans reportedly has had a 141-percent spike in murders increasing from 85 murders in 2019 to 205 in 2022. In September

there were 52 homicides per 100,000 residents in New Orleans, compared to the 45 homicides per 100,000 residents in St. Louis, according to the St. Louis Police Department. The crime data gathered by the New Orleans Police Department specified that the homicide data gathered included vehicle homicides, in addition to homicides that were later judged negligent or jus-

Cover Story, Continued on page 3.

INSIDE DATA

Cover Story	2	State & Local News . .	6
Data Zone	4	Opinion	7
Newsmaker	6		

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.



In the City of New Orleans homicides are up, but also armed robberies, and carjackings.



Operation North Star, a nation-wide U.S. Marshals Service operation focused on violent crime reduction, was conducted in 10 cities including New Orleans over a 30-day period. In the New Orleans metro area, there were 164 arrests while closing 180 warrants for violent offenses: 25 of the arrests for Homicide, 22 for Armed Robbery, 4 Sexual Assaults, and 35 Aggravated Assaults. 46 firearms were seized in the New Orleans metro, along with narcotics and \$36,200 in cash.

tified. Homicides are not the only increase this year; carjackings and armed robbery have both significantly escalated in 2022. However, shootings did see an 8-percent decrease going from 366 in 2019 to 338 thus far in 2022.

For many businesses in New Orleans, a significant source of patronage and profits comes from tourist activity. The new ranking has implications for both the public safety of residents and the reputation of the city as an entertainment destination.

“I’ve lived in New Orleans my whole life, and despite the new statistics, it doesn’t feel any different than before,” said Martin Davis, who works at Big Easy Daiquiris in the heart of Bourbon Street. “What worries me is the effect it will have on potential travelers and patrons who won’t come here anymore because they think they’ll get killed,” Davis said. “When you thrive off the business of tourists, news like that can really take a hit on businesses,” he added.

A main attraction of New Orleans is the open container law that allows tourists to walk around Bourbon Street and throughout the rest of the city while consuming alcohol. But in an unfamiliar city with continually rising crime, it raises the question, will tourists continue to come to a city where they do not feel safe doing activities that New Orleans is known for, French Quar-

ter workers said.

Some service workers also wanted to learn more about what the city will do to enhance public safety and recruit and train law enforcement officers. The New Orleans Police Department averaged around 980 officers by summer, and the city allocates for 1,500 officers. Employment among the NOPD continues to decline each month.

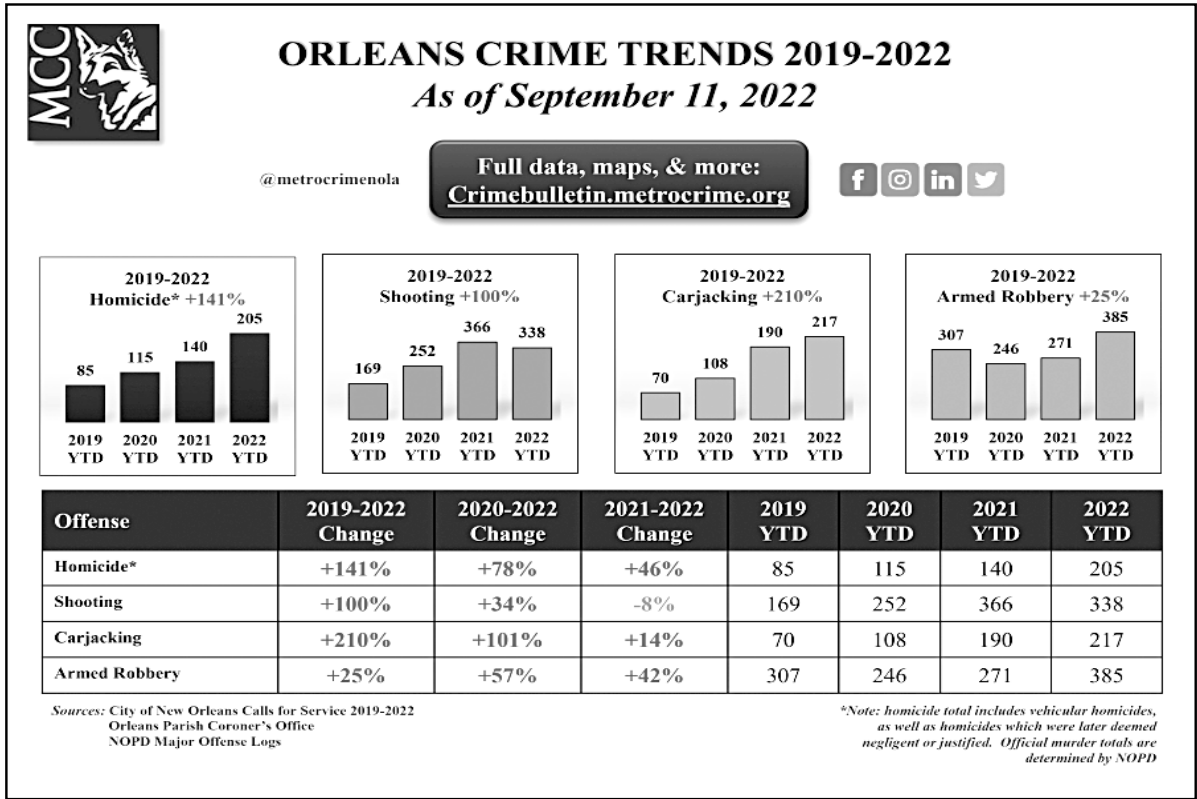
“We need a more systemic change,” said Irin Sarx, an associate at Boutique Du Vampyre, a Goth-Style Store located in the French Quarter. “Crime has been going up for years, and the police don’t seem to be doing anything about it. Especially down here in the quarter, the police presence isn’t active; they just watch,” Sarx said.

In addition to business owners in New Orleans, students coming to New Orleans to attend local universities said they have added concerns about their safety.

“I came to New Orleans for school to focus on school, and especially on a campus that’s open; it’s scary to think about how anyone could come in, and students could die,” said Satiya Ewing-Boyd, a sophomore at Xavier University of Louisiana.

Local residents said that just like in the past, the city will have to find solutions and bring residents together to address the crime spike.

“This city is my home, and noth-



ing’s gonna change that,” Sarx said. “I don’t understand why the crime rate keeps going up, but for

the safety of everyone who lives and visits here, we need to work together to keep this city pros-

perous; we can’t afford to have our own New Orleanians fighting against it,” Sarx added.

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Rum Punch and Beignets Podcast Launches Season 3 with a focus on Black Women Empowerment

Story and Photos by
Omaria Ackerson
Data News Weekly Contributor

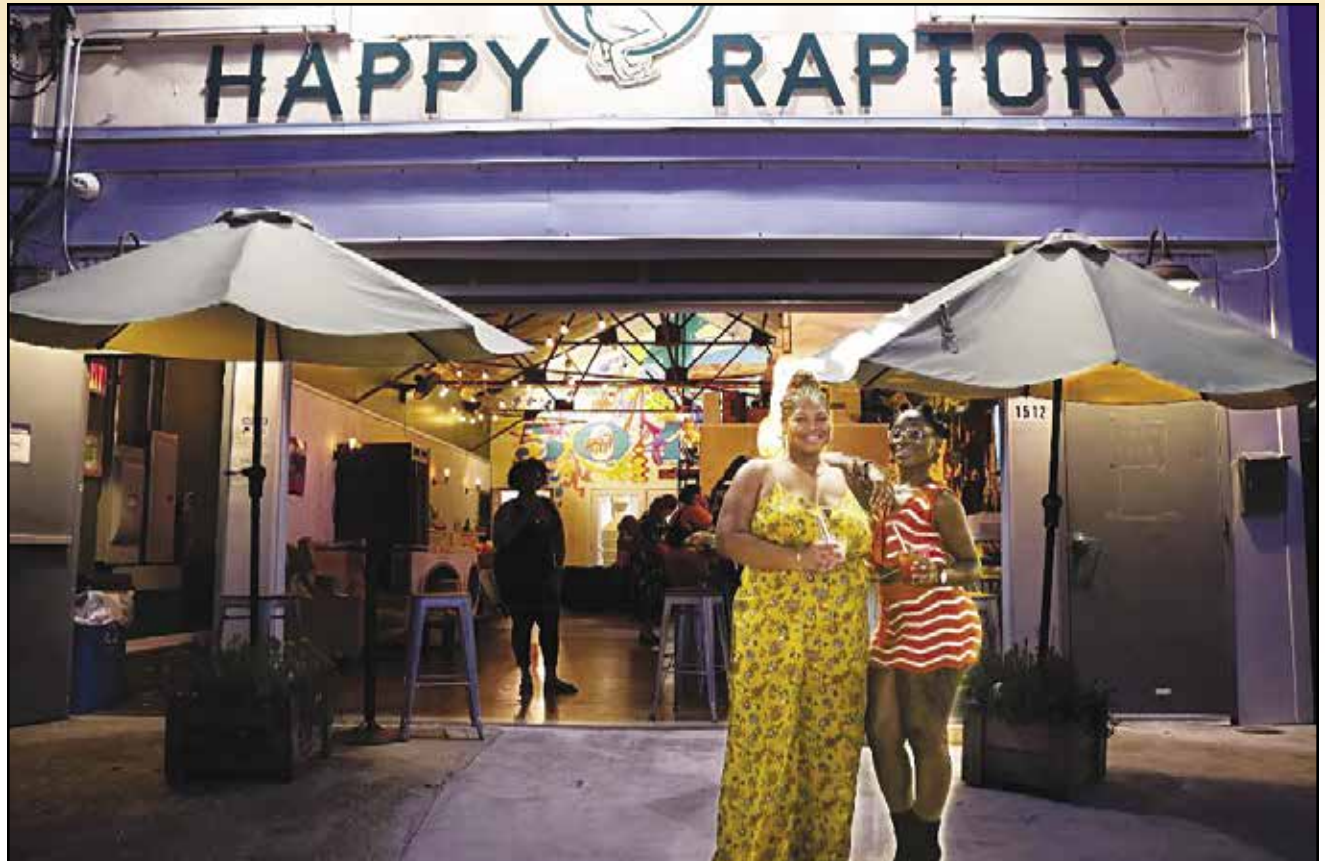
COVID-19 has impacted businesses extensively, including podcasters Britany “Teedy B” Everfield and Dominique “Teedy Dom” Campbell of the Rum Punch and Beignets Podcast, who haven’t shared a space with their listeners in almost three years since the start of the podcast in mid-2019. On a sound comeback from the initial COVID-19 shock, Everfield and Campbell are finally able to gather together again with their listeners of the Rum Punch and Beignets Podcast for their season three launch.

The Rum Punch and Beignets Podcast’s season three premiered on Sept. 21, 2022, on all major streaming audio platforms like Apple and Spotify. The podcast by Everfield and Campbell covers the going-ons of Black women in their 30s. The hosts engage listeners on pop-culture, the buzz around New Orleans, and their unfiltered opinions. The New Orleans natives said they worked hard to keep their podcast afloat through the Pandemic and were recently acquired by the local media and entertainment company, Boot Krewe Media to move the podcast to a wider reach.

“Having two ladies who are both so dynamic, yet different, come together and speak on thought provoking topics in a way that truly captured me is so important for the community,” said Ranata Edgerson, 33, a former podcast guest and listener, who showed up to support the hosts at their Season 3 launch on Sept. 10, 2022, at the Happy Raptor Distillery in the Central Business District.

This being the first time Everfield and Campbell were able to greet their listeners in person in over two years. Through a partnership with Happy Raptor Distillery, hosts gave out gift bags for their guests that contained some of their Mardi Gras shirts from earlier this year, and some of the distillery’s most popular bottled cocktails.

“We emailed them with a media kit we had prepared. They emailed us back and set up a phone call. They even took the time to listen to the show and tap into what we’re doing and our direction. We are very excited to be working



[From left to right] Dominique “Teedy Dom” Campbell and Britany “Teedy B” Everfield launch Season 3 of their podcast at the Happy Raptor Distillery. The Rum Punch and Beignets Podcast kicked off on Sept. 21st on Apple, Spotify and other podcast platforms. Photo Credits: Omaria Ackerson



[From left to right] “Teedy B” and “Teedy Dom” greet listeners at a season launch party event. The podcast focuses on New Orleans life from the perspective of Black women. Photo Credits: Omaria Ackerson

with Happy Raptor!” Everfield said.

Having this partnership with both

Boot Krewe Media and more recently

Happy Raptor Distillery cultivation was

key to the return for a third season. The hosts said they wanted the season launch to be on female empowerment and treated their listeners to musical selections from Rakim “DJ Rakim” Ambeau and crawfish pasta served by Chef G. Adriane.

“Their event was perfect. It was very on brand for who they are and what they represent. The vibes were pure and genuine and there was love in abundance. It was obvious that everyone in attendance truly wants to see them win and it honestly gave everything that a celebration is supposed to give,” Edgerson continued.

This event allowed attendees to spend time with other members of their community, eat local food, and connect with Everfield and Campbell. Looking forward to season three, their listeners said that they cannot wait to hear what is coming for this new era of Rum Punch and Beignets Podcast.

“In the 3rd season, we are taking everything to the next level from our content to guests, and even the partnerships we make,” Everfield said.

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

Bogalusa Blues and Heritage Festival

Data News Staff Edited Report
Photos By Demian Roberts

Bogalusa is the birthplace of Henry Roland Byrd (Professor Longhair) as well as the home of The Studio in the Country a nationally acclaimed recording venue for many decades. The group Chapel Heart was a finalist on America's Got Talent and drew the largest crowd ever at this festival. They are from Poplarville Mississippi a short drive from Bogalusa LA.

Headlining Saturday night was Ruthie Foster a four-time Grammy nominee. Kenny Neal and Walter Wolfman Washington plus many more were on stage Friday and Saturday.



Chapel Heart



Kenny Neal



Chapel Heart



Ruthie Foster



Walter Wolfman Washington



Ruthie Foster

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

Black Journalists Work to Improve Coverage of African American Communities

Story and Photos by
Deanna Johns
Data News Weekly
Contributor

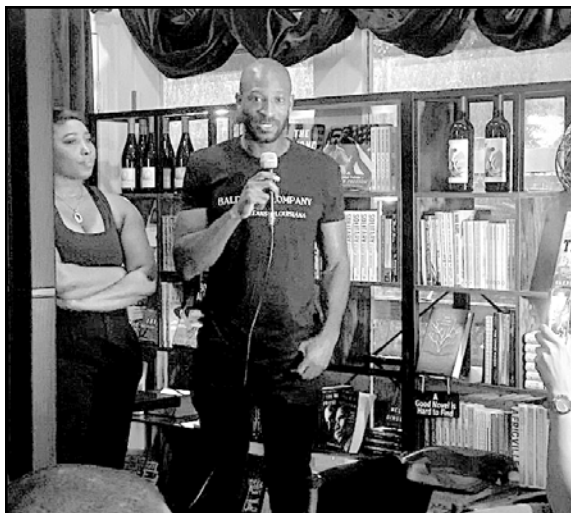
Since the death of George Floyd in May 2020, media outlets across the United States have been taking steps toward diversifying their staff and introducing mandatory diversity training as a necessary step in equipping journalists to better report on issues within minority communities. However, some experts say they still have a long way to go.

According to a 2022 study by the Pew Research Center in 2022, of 12,000 journalists surveyed, 52-percent say that their companies do not make ethnic and racial diversity a priority and that most U.S. newsrooms are dominated by White reporters and journalists.

"The work that Black journalists do is paramount. It is very important to tell our stories from our perspective," said DJ Johnson, the founder and owner of Baldwin & Co., a Black-owned independent bookstore that



NOABJ President and 4WWL Anchor Charisse Gibsson speaks on the importance of cultivating safe spaces for Black journalists at the NOABJ event on Sept. 21st.



DJ Johnson, the Owner of Baldwin & Co. Bookstore shares his involvement in the community through his partnerships with organizations like NOABJ.

opened in 2021 in the Marigny.

Johnson joined members of the New Orleans Alliance of Black Journalists to discuss the importance of Black voices in the media at the organization's September meeting at the Nola Art Bar. Johnson has partnered with Charisse Gibson, the Evening News Anchor for WWL-TV Chan-

nel 4, to support the success of Black media professionals in the city. These gatherings allow local Black journalists to come together to build connections and work toward improving the negative narrative surrounding African American communities, Gibson shared in her remarks.

In 2020, conservative news

outlets were more likely to use language about "looting" and "rioting" to describe the Black Lives Matter protests following George Floyd's Death, according to a study by Signal AI. They were also less likely to mention racism and police brutality when discussing the motive and cause of Floyd's

death, the study found. News outlets also faced significant challenges when reporting on the BLM protests that took the world by storm, according to the study.

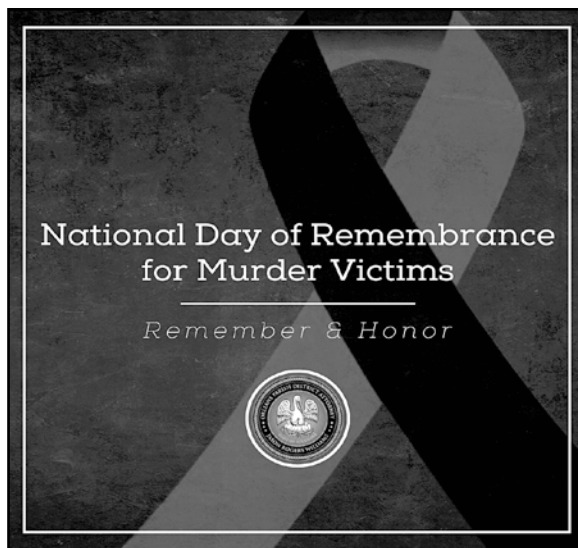
"Journalists from diverse backgrounds lead to better journalism. Media has centered White, wealthy interests, while excluding and actively harming Black, Latino, Indigenous, immigrant, LG-BTQ+ and other oppressed communities," said Jennifer Larino, the Executive Director at Lede New Orleans, a non-profit news initiative.

Lede supports training for Black, Brown, Latinx, Asian, and LGBTQ+ young adults to tell the stories of marginalized communities in and around New Orleans. Larino said the non-profit works to streamline New Orleans youth and existing media professionals into spaces that equip them to be leading storytellers within the community.

"We must build journalism spaces where the thoughts and perspectives of all individuals are valued and matters," Larino said.

State & Local News

DA Williams, DA's Office Recognizes National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims



New Orleans Agenda

NEW ORLEANS – District Attorney Jason Williams and the entire Orleans Parish District Attorney's Office (OPDA) recognize the National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims. Observed annually on September 25th, the purpose of this day is to remember and

honor those who lost their lives to murder as well as their surviving family members.

"My thoughts and prayers continue to be with all victims and families impacted by homicide in our community. Each year, countless people lose their lives to senseless murders in New Orleans and across the world. The

National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims keeps their legacy and memories alive, and the DA's Office unequivocally stands in support," said District Attorney Jason Williams. "Today, we remember and honor these victims and their families as we continue our relentless work to increase safety in New Orleans."



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A New Kind of Hope Lives Here



Evidence indicates that ex-offenders have substantially lower probabilities of being hired than members of other disadvantaged groups – such as welfare recipients, high school dropouts, unemployed people, and those with “spotty” work histories – who do not have a criminal record.

Amanda Mahan
Operation New Hope,
Chief Communications Officer

Research has found that 70 million people in the United States have criminal records. Of that number, 63 percent are no longer in jail, on probation, or on parole, yet roughly 27 percent of these ex-offenders remain unemployed due to their criminal records. This disproportionate statistic to the overall unemployment rate confirms the realization that the challenge of finding work for the formally incarcerated can be a daunting task.

Evidence indicates that ex-offenders have substantially lower probabilities of being hired than members of other disadvantaged groups – such as welfare recipients, high school dropouts, unemployed people, and those with “spotty” work histories – who do not have a criminal record. Dionne Barnes-Proby, a researcher at the non-profit, non-partisan think tank the RAND Corporation, has studied how to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders.

“People transitioning from incarceration to employment face many challenges,” says Barnes-Proby, “from limited education, skills, and work history to stigma and employers’ fears about criminal behavior and reincarceration.

Barnes-Proby led a study of the Sacramento Probation Department employment program Career Training Partnership (CTP), which offers career and life skills training and a comprehensive support team, to analyze how these combined ele-

ments can positively affect program participants and identify remaining challenges.

RAND’s research of the CTP Program suggests that combining education, vocational training, and job placement with staffing agencies or reentry programs, local employers, and union relationship building can yield positive results.

At Operation New Hope (ONH), we understand that people returning from incarceration face a multitude of barriers, with employment, transportation, and housing being three of the most reported obstacles. Without these necessities, people often feel less connected to their environments, creating communities that experience higher rates of crime, unem-

ployment, and recidivism.

ONH supports life and job skills training for people with a history of involvement with the Criminal Justice System and places them in employment that offers a sustainable quality of life. People like Kendall McCoy, a convicted felon, can attest to the effectiveness of the nonprofit’s mission. For months, McCoy had tried unsuccessfully to navigate a wary job market with limited skills. At the not-so-subtle urging of his probation officer, he reluctantly showed up at the facilities of ONH. He found we offer family reunification services, a galaxy of job training and employer partnerships, mental and emotional therapy, and other wraparound services. As it turned

out, working with his probation officer was a tremendous benefit.

For McCoy, it was important that ONH’s program qualified him to make a sustainable living wage while paying restitution and court costs, making the decision not to consider illegal sources of income that was much easier. RAND’s study revealed that securing employment at a livable wage is one of the most significant challenges facing ex-offenders. Career training can be a way to obtain a hand-up, not a handout.

Josh Martino, a partner, and board member at ONH, says he’s hired several ex-offenders in his businesses. He realized that hiring employees through ONH’s “Ready-4Work” Program cut down on time, hiring costs, and his concerns as an employer. He appreciated that employment candidates had been thoroughly vetted and came with a qualified endorsement.

To make training programs more successful, RAND suggests removing obstacles to participation, for example, by providing transportation or helping ex-offenders address driver’s license issues. Providing a subsidy or stipend may also help participants offset costs and increase their chances of completing the program.

ONH understands the importance of providing support to the ex-offenders and continues to work every day to build a stronger community by creating opportunities to realize second chances and reduce recidivism.

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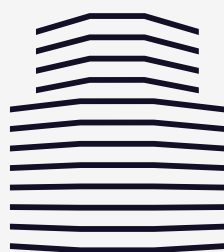
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