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Royce Duplessis Swearing-In Ceremony

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

Author Shares the Untold Stories of the First Black Marines in America

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Author Shares the Untold Stories of the First Black Marines in America



Dr. Cameron McCoy speaks about his recent work on African Americans and military history in “Contested Valor: African American Marines in the Age of Power, Protest and Tokenism.”

Story and Photos by **Zamariah Strozier**
Data News Weekly Contributor

To be silenced means to be unknown. To speak means to tell the story. On Feb. 9, 2023, Dr. Cameron McCoy spoke with Dr. John M. Curatola in a conversation at the World War II Museum at the Louisiana

Memorial Pavilion in New Orleans about “The Men of Montford Point and the Crisis of Jim Crow.” The event recognized the Montford Point Marines, the first Black Marines, for their service in the mid and late-1900s in World War II.

“Their story is that critical – one thing that I highlight is that they are products of the Great Depression,” said

McCoy, an Alumnus and Professor at Brigham Young University who has taught at the United States Military Academy at West Point and the United States Air Force Academy. McCoy serves as an Infantry Officer in the Marine Corps Reserve, and has written about the Montford Point Marines in “Contested Valor: African American Marines in the Age of Power, Protest, and Tokenism.”

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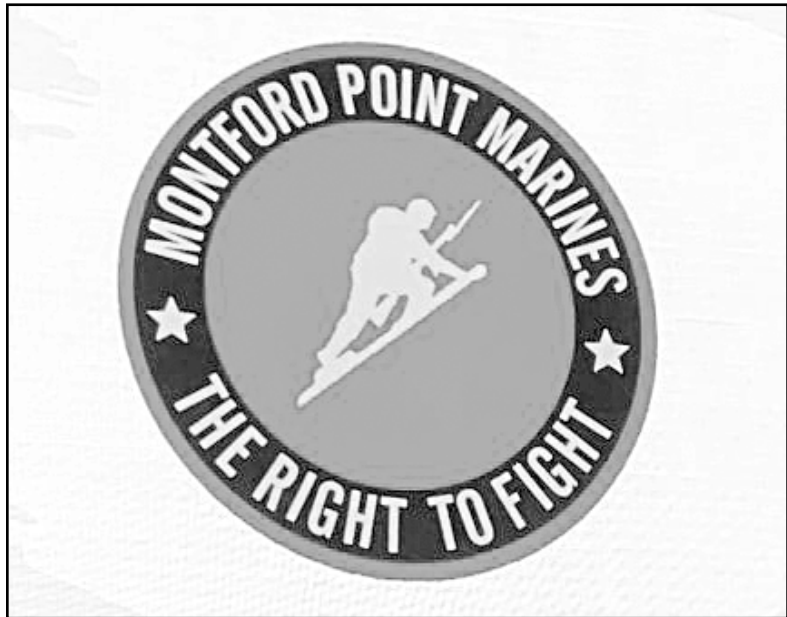
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The symbol of the Montford Point Marine Corps displayed on screen at the World War II Museum that hosted a discussion about the Men of Montford Point and the Crisis of Jim Crow with Dr. Cameron McCoy.

"It sparked in me an opportunity really to pursue at least this course of military history, that I felt you shouldn't be 20 something years old and finding this out," McCoy said.

McCoy goes into detail about how many people do not know of the first Black Marines in the Ma-

rine Corp to be officially sworn in. The Black men of Montford Point were those men, he said. They had experienced the emotional and mental state of what it meant to be a Black man in America fighting for a country that did not recognize them as human beings. They did not receive medals and badges or



Dr. Cameron McCoy speaks at the World War II Museum with Dr. John M. Curatola about the Montford Point Marine Corps and the racial system during their time of deployment.

statements of commemoration for their achievements and fighting in the war, he said.

However, they proved through perseverance, optimism, and resilience that they could not be forgotten. Making history was more important than giving up, McCoy told the audience at the Black His-

tory Month Event at the World War II Museum. Change was the bigger picture in everything, as racism and segregation were part of a social commentary and American life at that time.

"In Cameron's book, he very articulately talks about what's called the seven rules of the Jim

Crow South, which I'm a historian, I had never heard this," said Dr. John M. Curatola, a former Marine Officer, Military Historian and Author who joined McCoy in the conversation.

The laws of Jim Crow muted freedom of speech, pursuit of happiness, and rights to basic human knowledge for African Americans, McCoy shared. As they were easily dismissed, thrown to the sidelines, and given the chance to join the Marines, they were still seen as disposable. McCoy said the book publicly honors the Black men and families of the Montford Point Marine Corps, one story at a time, paying tribute to those still here today and those that have passed on.

"They broke barriers. They were presented the Congressional Gold medals. It stretched way further than just their contributions in the military as very productive citizens and their careers afterwards," said Jackie Robinson, Sr., the President of the National Montford Point Marine Association, Inc. Granville Alexander Chapter 7 in New Orleans.

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New Orleans Trombone Great Delfeayo Marsalis Celebrates Mardi Gras with Iconic Classics and Spirited Originals on the Latest by his Uptown Jazz Orchestra.

Uptown on Mardi Gras Day features Guest Appearances by Branford Marsalis and Glen David Andrews, Performing Mardi Gras Classics and New Originals.

Fleur De Lis

The entire City of New Orleans becomes one big party during Mardi Gras, but Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra know that there's no place to be, quite like Uptown on Mardi Gras Day. With their latest album, UJO provides the ultimate soundtrack for Carnival Time in the Crescent City with a spirited collection of Mardi Gras classics and buoyant new originals. Uptown on Mardi Gras Day is a celebration like no other, a unique combination of big band swing feel, small group jazz spirit, and brass band funkiness that would feel equally buoyant on the parade route or in the concert hall.

"This album is a celebration of the greatness of New Orleans culture," Marsalis says. "Mardi Gras is an interesting time because people who are not from New Orleans descend upon the city to have a big party. The folks who live here are gracious and help them to have a great time, but when everybody leaves the community is still here. The music of Earl King or The Meters or Professor Longhair represents how they lived and who they were as humans. We wanted to do our best to honor that legacy. And besides, it's just so funky. Lord have mercy!" Uptown on Mardi Gras Day is also a tribute to the city's resilience in the face of yet another in a long history of setbacks.

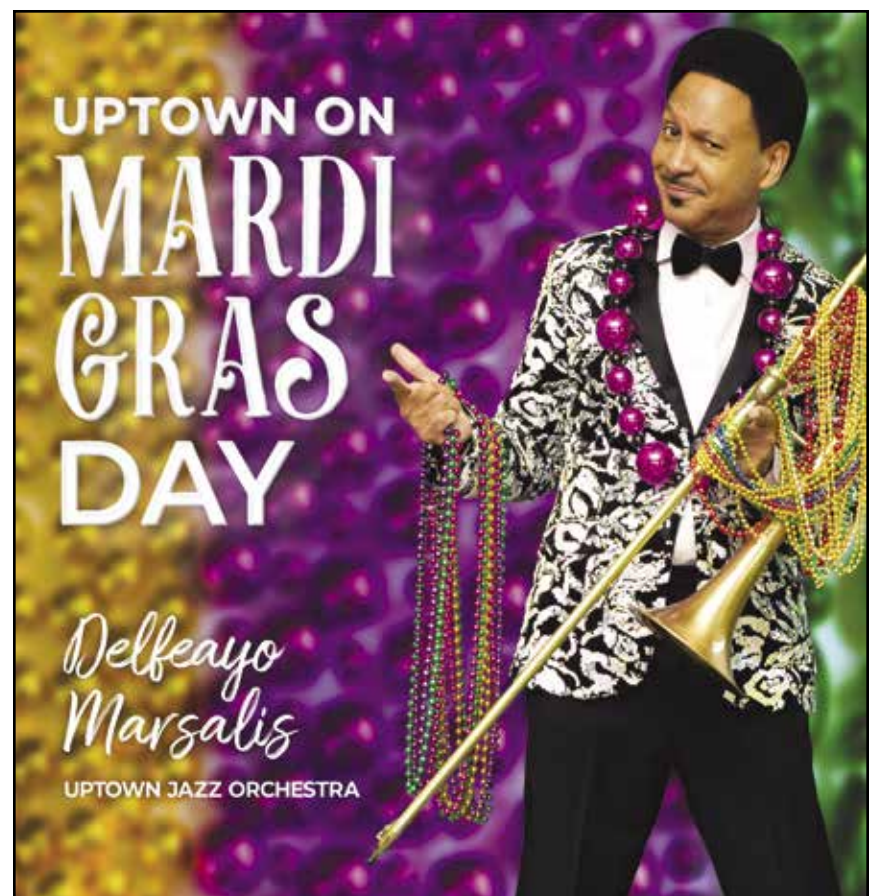
In addition to the close-knit ensemble of gifted New Orleans musicians



Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra

that makes up UJO, the album features guest appearances by Delfeayo's brother Branford Marsalis on Saxophone, along with Drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, and Vocalists Glen-David Andrews, Dr. Brice Miller, and Tonya Boyd-Cannon. All of the arrangements for the session were crafted by both Marsalis and UJO Trumpeter Andrew Baham, who also contributes vocals on several tracks.

"After Hurricane Katrina, I realized that—as New Orleanians and musi-



Delfeayo Marsalis have assembled an all-star cast on his new album "Uptown On Mardi Gras Day."

cians—we have a certain obligation to represent our culture," Marsalis says. "The country is in a tough spot – the whole world is in a tough spot. New Orleans has always been a place that's provided a certain type of healing for the country, especially with music that

carries a joyful optimism. People young and old can't wait to hear the brass bands coming down the street so they can dance and have a good time, and that's what we're trying to capture...a jazz party, all night long!"

Let's Vote!

February 18, 2023

93rd State Representative Special Primary Election

Royce Duplessis (State Senator District 5) Swearing-In Ceremony

On February 8, 2023, at the Xavier University's William and Mary McCaffrey Ballroom, State Senator Royce Duplessis was sworn in to serve as representative of Louisiana Senate District 5. At the ceremony Sen. Duplessis was surrounded by family, friends and supporters who came out to support an elected leader who is building bridges across communities and continues to be an effective legislator.

Photos by
Malcolm Johnson



Royce Duplessis and Education leader Tamara Griffin Major.



Louisiana State Senator Royce Duplessis pictured with family celebrating his swearing-in ceremony.



Data News Weekly Publisher Terry Jones and Louisiana State Senator Royce Duplessis.



Louisiana State Senator Royce Duplessis, his wife, Krystle and daughter Reese at swearing in ceremony by the Hon. Bernette Joshua Johnson Chief Justice, Louisiana Supreme Court (Retired).



State Senator Royce Duplessis pictured with Henry and Karen Coaxum of Coaxum Enterprises.



Royce Duplessis pictured with (L) the Hon. Diana Bajoie and artist Sheleen Jones..



State Senator Royce Duplessis picture with proud parents Hedy and Wilfred Duplessis.



Master of Ceremony, Attorney Jatavian L. Williams and State Senator Royce Duplessis.



Attorney James Moffett and District 5 Louisiana State Senator Royce Duplessis.



Business Owners Blair Dottin-Haley and Brandon Dottin-Haley pictured with Royce Duplessis.

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Students at Abramson Sci Academy Honored for Top Performance in College Courses

As the spring semester begins, seniors and juniors at Abramson Sci Academy are hard at work earning college credits through multiple pathways.

New Orleans Agenda

National Reach

Abramson's top performance was honored last week by the Honor Society of the National Educational Equity Lab (Ed Equity Lab). This education justice nonprofit works to bridge the gap between high school and college for students from low-income communities by offering dual credit courses from schools including: Howard University, Stanford University, Princeton University, Cornell University, Brown University, and Spelman College.

In Fall 2022's Poetry in America's course, more than forty (40) high schools and 650 students examined the relationship between "the city" and poetry. From Walt Whitman to Jay-Z, Abramson students performed textual analysis and engaged in spirited discussion.

The Results were Stellar:

Abramson was celebrated for being in the Top 5 of highest average



course grades for this course!

Senior Ethan Dinh received the 2nd highest grade nationwide, earning him Salutatorian honors!

Former US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, an Ed Equity Lab board member, called this effort "game changing" for students. "Democratizing access to higher education in our nation has never been more critical. Efforts like this

help us do just that."

Local Roots

Through a strong partnership with Southern University of New Orleans (SUNO), more than twenty-five (25) Abramson students travel to campus each afternoon for college-level English and Math courses.

In addition to laying the ground-



work for postsecondary success, students benefit from a shared cohort model, coaching and advising on how to access the resources available at SUNO, and build college-going identity. These students are on-track to complete introductory English and Math course requirements.

Abramson School Leader Anthony McElligott shared, "We

are grateful for the collaboration with SUNO. Our kids are so smart and capable. When we create pathways like this one with SUNO, we give students the opportunity to shine."

The mission of Abramson Sci Academy is to prepare all scholars for college success, equipped with the passion and tools to strengthen any community they choose.

State & Local News

Local Organizations Partner to Improve Black and Jewish Relations

Story and Photos
by Ashton Broden
Data News Weekly
Contributor

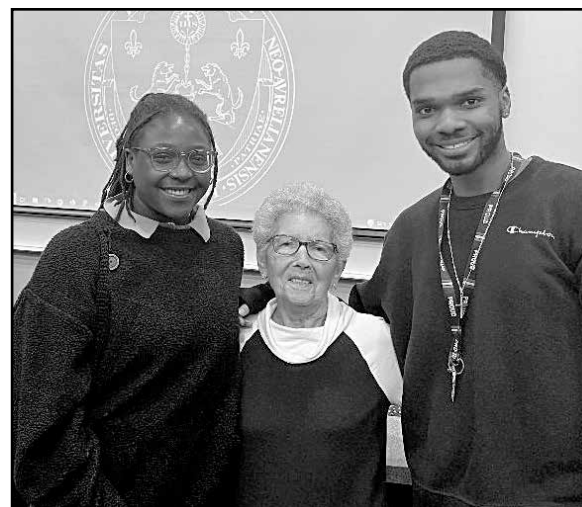
After an uptick in antisemitism towards the Jewish community, local organizations are working to improve Black and Jewish relations particularly in light of recent comments and actions from rapper and recording artist, Kanye "Ye" West. Xavier University of Louisiana, locally-based Jewish organizations, and other Historical Black Colleges and Universities said that the first step in bridging the gap between minority groups is to improve understanding and be open to the reality of other cultures. As part of those efforts, they are working together to provide tools and resources to educate young African Americans and other cultures on reversing these stigmas.

"History is not perfect, people



Xavier University honors program students Aarinni Parns-Green and Jamya Davis with Lindsay Friedmann, the Associate Regional Director for the Anti-Defamation League South Central at Unity Day. Local HBCUs are working together on anti-hate campaigns this year to combat misinformation.

are not perfect, it takes time for people to learn and grow. We are asking people to learn and grow," said Lindsay Friedmann, the Anti-Defamation League South-Central Associate Regional Director, at the



Xavier University honors program students Keziah Yvonne Smith and Brandon Dixon meet Holocaust survivor Anne Levy at Unity Day on Feb. 3, 2023.

Unity Day event organized by the Anti-Defamation League, the Urban League of Greater New Orleans, the Jewish Community Relations Council, and other local partners.

Loyola University-New Orleans'

College of Law hosted the 20th Annual "Unity Through Understanding Day" on Feb. 3, 2023. The event was an experience to open up a gateway to allow some 150 plus high school students from fifteen

area schools, with an opportunity to engage in small group conversations with a diverse cross section of students through the community, tackling these controversies facing marginalized groups. The Anti-Defamation League's mission is to combat all forms of hate wherever it lives whether it is online, the legal system, or through society's standards, Friedmann explained. The students were split up into breakout rooms to foster in-depth conversations and to address forms of bias.

"We have a responsibility to open doors to conversations so that more people are aware of lived experiences and lived struggles," Friedmann added in hopes for change in engagement within communities.

In these sessions she explained how students grasped an understanding of how and when bias is left unchecked, it turns into preju-

State & Local,
Continued on page 7.

Mississippi Lawmakers Seek Return to Jim Crow with Separate White System of Justice

Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

Mississippi's Black community is outraged that state lawmakers are moving closer to establishing a separate justice system in Jackson for whites and African Americans.

According to Mississippi Today, the proposed new law would let the state's white chief justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court, its white attorney general, and its white state public safety commissioner appoint new judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and police officers to run a new district in the city that includes all the city's majority-white neighborhoods.

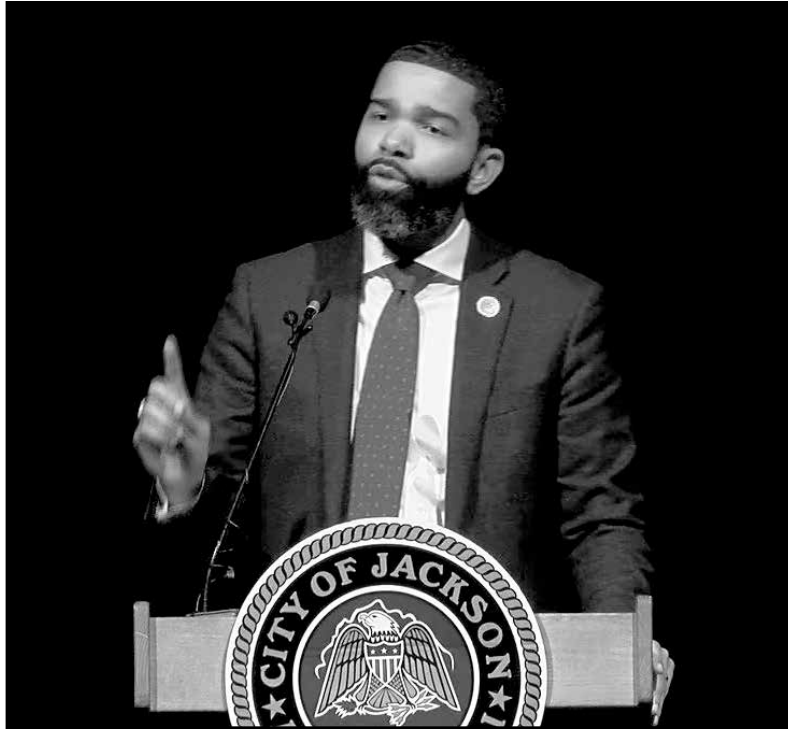
Such a move would create a separate justice system for whites in an area where whites are statistically the majority.

And it would happen without a single vote from any of Jackson's 80 percent Black residents for any of these officials.

"It makes me think of apartheid," Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba said.

Three of the bill's principal backers said on the floor of the Mississippi Legislature that "public safety" was the bill's primary goal because of worries about the crime rate in Jackson.

But Newsweek reported that some legal experts said that what the Mississippi Legislature was trying to do was a way for white conservative politicians to try to hurt



Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba

the Black vote in a way that hadn't occurred since the Jim Crow era.

Many Republican lawmakers who voted for the bill live in districts being fought over by groups like the American Civil Liberties Union because they make it harder for Black people to vote.

Bill Quigley, a retired law professor at Loyola University-New Orleans and a former lawyer for the NAACP Legal Fund, told Newsweek, "I am shocked by this."

"I know of no other such legislation in judicial elections or selections in decades. This is not a step backward. This is a complete Olym-

pic-level broad jump backward to Jim Crow era politics."

Quigley said that this kind of system was "the rule for decades" in the South until the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965 and formally prohibited arbitrary rules like poll taxes and literacy tests designed to prevent African Americans from voting.

Experts stated that the latest proposal from the Mississippi Legislature would likely be unconstitutional because it has a clear racial bias, which is against the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

In 2020, Lumumba said he

wanted to make Jackson "the most radical city on the planet" by implementing policies like a universal basic income, a reformed police department, and other progressive policies.

Lumumba has been under constant scrutiny from Mississippi's conservative establishment.

The Voting Rights Act would have helped Jackson in this case, but the U.S. Supreme Court removed many protections offered by that law.

State leaders had recently been very critical of Lumumba's government and of the city's liberal leanings, leading to claims that the latest move is politically motivated.

Experts said the only problem is that, unlike other states, Mississippi does not have a clause in its constitution that says laws can't target one group, which would make this more difficult for the city to challenge the law in court.

"In the absence of any evidence that this was done with a racial purpose—people don't tend to do things for racial reasons as much as they used to—and so the courts kind of often will conclude that their hands are tied," Fred Smith Jr., a scholar of the federal judiciary at Emory University, told Newsweek.

"It's concerning to see from a perspective of democracy. While in some ways, it's not as bad as declaring secession, it also is in the sense people's taxes are being invested in a system they cannot democratically control."

State & Local, Continued from page 6.

dice, causing prejudice to grow into discrimination or laws that are discriminatory. Local groups emphasized it was necessary to counter this through speaking out and by training law enforcement.

"To create a better, more unified world, it is important that we, as students and future leaders of our country, know our history, even the hidden, untold pieces," said Aarii Parms-Green, a Xavier University honors student, who spoke at the event and is part of a project collaborating with local Jewish organizations to bridge conversa-

tions between Black and Jewish young people.

The collaboration will see Xavier University's honors students lead an awareness campaign in partnership with The Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans, Tulane University, and Dillard University to help spread awareness and educate teens and young adults on how to prevent and confront different forms of hate. Parms-Green, who is a Baton Rouge native, and her team designed a trivia series that highlights shared histories and culture between Black and Jewish people

to eradicate biases formed from misunderstandings.

Recently, Dillard University's newly inaugurated 8th President, Dr. Rochelle L. Ford, announced on Jan. 17, 2023, that it will relaunch Dillard's National Center for Black-Jewish Relations that ran from 1974 through 1997.

"Instead of letting differences separate our communities, Dillard wants to reestablish bonds through conversations, education and learning that result most importantly in courageous actions to improve our society," Ford said in a statement announcing the center's goals.

Dillard hosted a screening of the documentary "Shared Legacies: The African American Jewish Civil Rights Alliance" and held a discussion with Black and Jewish experts.

"When we build a more inclusive society for all people, we are building a better society for the future. We can't stop hate against one group without proactively working to irradiate hate against all marginalized groups," Friedmann said. "Our groups alone may not have the numbers but together we do. I think that's really important," she added.

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