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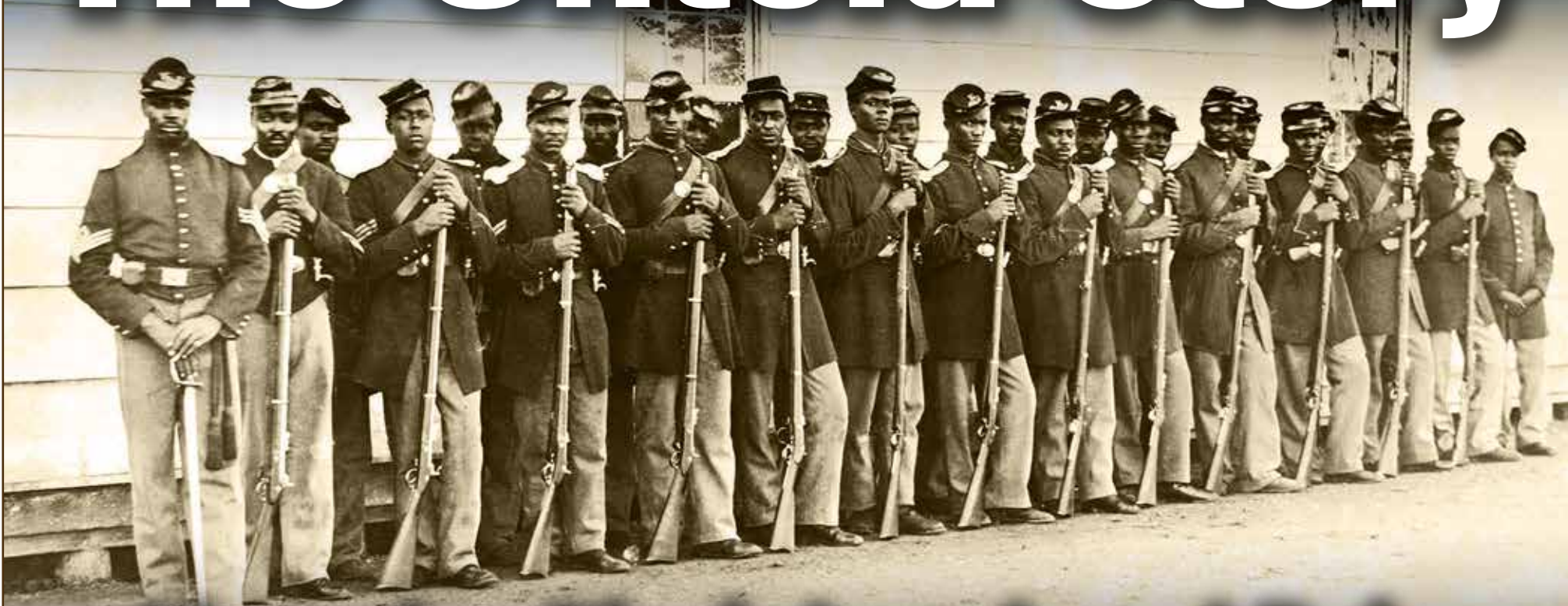
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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

# The Untold Story



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in the Inception of Memorial Day*

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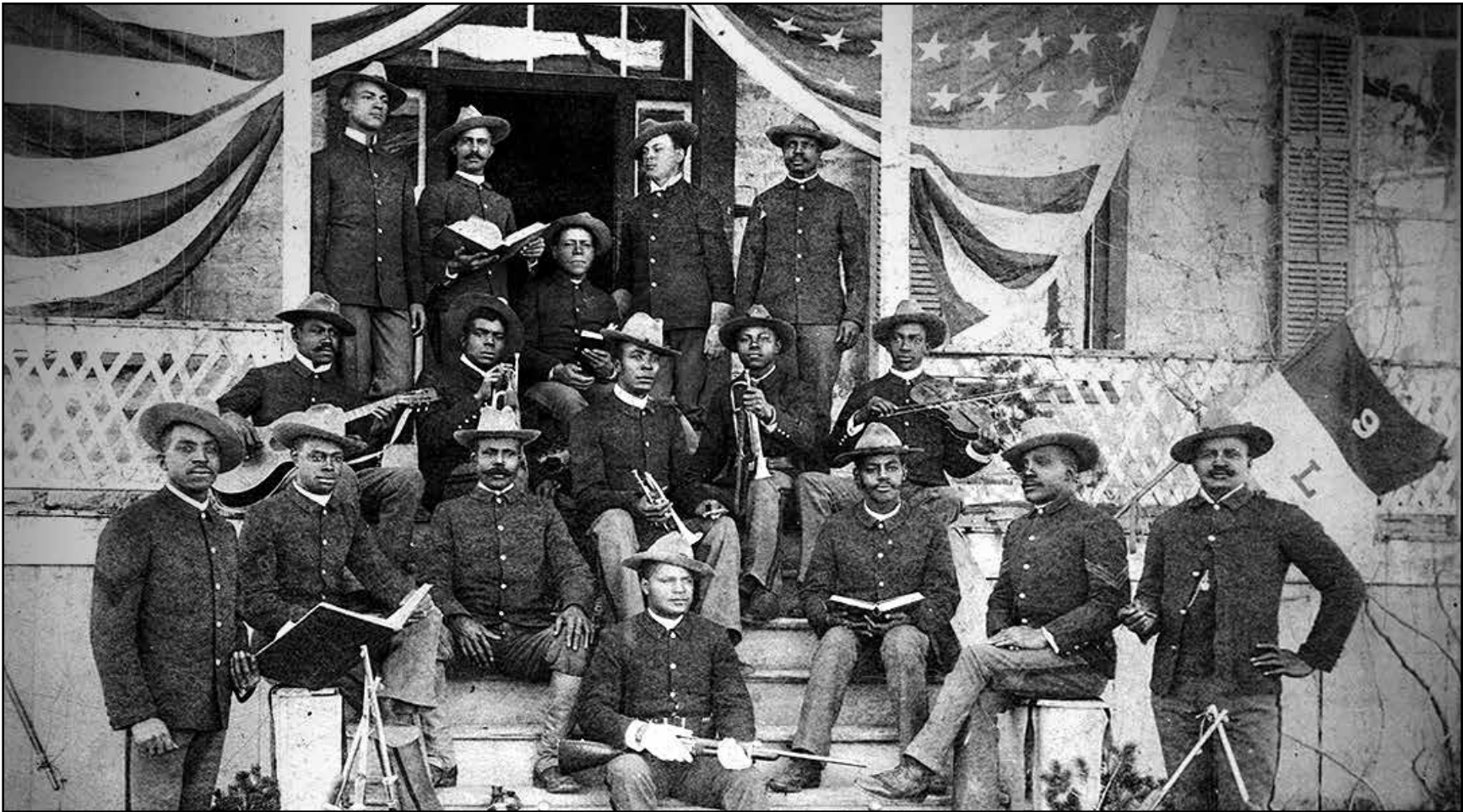


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# The Untold Story

*Honoring Black Americans' Role in the Inception of Memorial Day*



Memorial Day has a deep historical connection to the African American community in the United States. The holiday which originated as Decoration Day, initially began when formerly enslaved individuals and their descendants gathered to decorate the graves of Union soldiers who fought during the Civil War.

**Stacy M. Brown**  
NNPA Newswire Senior National  
Correspondent

Earlier this week the nation celebrated Memorial Day, which is a day of reflection and remembrance for those who died while serving in the

U.S. military. While the country honors those who made the ultimate sacrifice for the nation. There is the untold story of African Americans and their connection to this holiday.

Memorial Day has a deep historical connection to the African American community in the United States. The holiday, which originated as Decoration Day,

initially began when formerly enslaved individuals and their descendants gathered to honor and decorate the graves of Union soldiers who fought during the Civil War.

“Oddly, that’s a fact that I wasn’t fully aware of,” former U.S. Ambassador Andrew Young told the Black Press.

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### DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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## Cover Story, Continued from page 2.

"It's not surprising, though," said Young, an American civil rights leader and hero.

Indeed, on a day when picnics, family outings, and other leisurely pursuits occur, the founders of Memorial Day meant for the occasion to honor African Americans newly freed from enslavement, and those who lost their lives fighting for freedom, said actor Wendell Pierce.

"We will never forget those brave and honorable souls," Pierce stated.

Famous DJ Donnie Simpson called the occasion "very different for me."

"While we honor those who gave their lives in service for this country, I can't help but think of those African Americans who were massacred in Tulsa 100 years ago," Simpson wrote on Twitter.

Author Christina Coles deadpanned, "The Civil War was over, and African Americans had founded Memorial Day in a ritual of remembrance and consecration. They were the true patriots."

Ben Gold, a historian and founder of the real estate investment firm Recommended Homebuyers, said recognizing Black soldiers' and



African Americans have a rich legacy of serving in the military. Fighting and dying for this nation in every war in the history of the United States.

their families' sacrifices and bravery is essential because it acknowledges their often-overlooked role in shaping the nation's history.

"Commemorating Memorial Day with Black heroes in mind serves several critical purposes.

First and foremost, it ensures that their stories are included and preserved within the broader narrative of the holiday," Gold insisted.

He said that by highlighting Black service members' courage, resilience, and contributions, Amer-

ica pays homage to their sacrifices and honors their memory.

Moreover, Gold asserted that it fosters a sense of inclusivity, promotes diversity, and enriches our collective understanding of the complex tapestry of American history.

"In my experience as an investor and developer, I have witnessed firsthand the power of recognizing and celebrating diversity," Gold said.

"Just as the real estate industry thrives when it embraces inclusivity, so does our society when we acknowledge and appreciate the diverse perspectives and experiences of all those who have served our country.

"By featuring the stories of Black heroes in Memorial Day commemorations, we not only educate and inspire, but we also contribute to a more inclusive and united nation."

Indeed, as noted in a Washington Informer editorial, the significance of African Americans in the holiday's development and the numerous ideas regarding its origins may not be widely known.

Although the origins of Memorial Day trace back to the period following the Civil War, when some 620,000 soldiers lost their lives, the precise origins remain a source of controversy.

Several cities have staked

Cover Story, Continued on page 7.

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# Design for Good

## TRASHION: a Recycle, Reuse, ReFashion Show

*Trash is Revolutionizing the Future of Fashion at WasteExpo 2023*



**Tracee Dundas**  
Fashion Stylist

Creative upcycling is the new trend to create a more sustainable fashion industry.

For the first time in New Orleans, WasteExpo Conference, North America's largest solid waste, recycling, and organics industry event, partnered with New Orleans Fashion Week, Dress for Success New Orleans, and the Environmental Research & Education Foundation for Waste360's TRASHION: a Recycle, Reuse, ReFashion Show.

Textiles have fast become one of the largest growing waste types and clothing represents a share of that. This topic has been on the industry's radar for years, but recent pushes and mainstream discussions on sustainability, EPR, manufacturing, fast fashion and pandemic behaviors have truly shone a light on the growing issue.

TRASHION showcased upcycled sustainable designs from designers who breathed new life into discarded items, deadstock fabric and other creative use of materials. This was a fun, and impactful way to shine the spotlight on one method for waste diversion. Designers from the Gulf Coast Region and beyond did not disappoint, showing their creativity with materials from denim jeans, woven rugs, beverage ring tops, placemats, and repurposed wedding gown! Designers could acquire their material from a variety of resources, including Dress for Success New Orleans, the nonprofit organization whose mission empowers women to achieve economic independence that benefits their families as well as the local community by receiving gently used clothing from the community, at the same time supporting the vision of keeping clothing from landfills.

The designers were scored by industry experts that judged them on creativity, originality, and craftsmanship to name one Best in Show (Nick Linson), Runner Up (VanShawn Branch) and Fan Fav (Charmia Elam) selected by the audience.

Photographer Credit: John Merrit  
@johnmerritphotos



Designer Alexandra Bujan, Model, Tracee Dundas & Judges Terri Haigler, Brianna Henry of DDM



Designer Gabrielle Landry & model



Designer Charmia Elam & model



Designer, Charisse Lockett & model



Designer VanShawn Branch & model



Designer Elaine Vigne & model



Designer Gwen Hawkins & model

Visit [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com) for more photos from these events.





Designer Quanisha Chelette & model



Designer Katharine Faust & model



Designer Nick Linson & model



Designer Renee Johnson & model



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Designed by Renee Johnson



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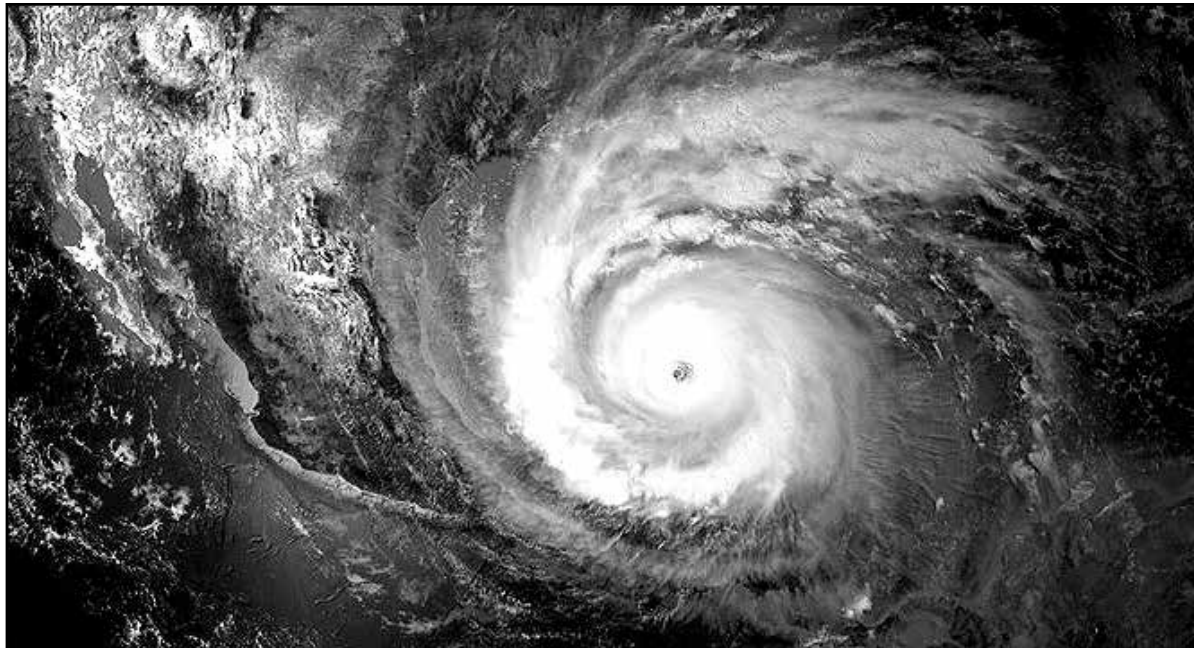
# Hurricane Season Begins June 1st

**Benjamin Bates**  
Data News Weekly  
Contributor

It is Hurricane Season again. This year's forecast is predicted to be near normal according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Predictions for this Hurricane season prediction calls for 12-17 named storms (winds of 39 mph and greater), with 5-9 hurricanes (winds of 74 mph and greater). Of those hurricanes, 1-4 could become major (category 3 and higher with winds of 111 mph and higher).

It is unknown how many of these will head towards the greater New Orleans area. But it is important that citizens stay weather aware, and Data News Weekly will always keep our readers informed about



weather developments.

Let's keep each other safe during this hurricane season.

Ahead of potentially devastating storms this hurricane season, the Red Cross recommends having the

following supplies on hand:

- **Water:** At least a 3-day supply; one gallon per person per day

- **Food:** At least a 3-day supply of non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food
- **Flashlight**
- **Battery-powered or hand-crank radio** (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
- **Extra batteries**
- **First aid kit**
- **Medications** (7-day supply) and medical items (hearing aids with extra batteries, glasses, contact lenses, syringes, cane)
- **Multi-purpose tools**
- **Copies of personal documents** (insurance policies, birth certificates, lease or deed to home)
- **Sanitation and personal hygiene items**
- **Emergency blankets**
- **Insect repellent and sunscreens**
- **Baby supplies** (bottles, formula, baby food, diapers)
- **Rain gear**

## State & Local News

# Xavier University Professor Kim Vaz-Deville named Harvard Radcliffe Institute 2023-2024 Fellow

*Dr. Kim Vaz-Deville will write "The Art of Resistance: Sacred Visual Creations of New Orleans' African American Mardi Gras Maskers,"*

**Data News Staff Edited Report**

Kim Vaz-Deville, PhD, Professor of Counseling and Education at Xavier University of Louisiana, was recently named a member of Harvard Radcliffe Institute's 2023-2024 class of fellows, a cohort whose projects contend with the urgent, the beautiful, and the vast: from reckoning with the challenges of climate change to creating digital models of iconic Italian violins to detecting distant galaxies.

A Radcliffe fellowship offers scholars in the humanities, sciences, social sciences, and arts—as well as writers, journalists, and other distinguished professionals—a rare chance to pursue ambitious projects for a full year in a vibrant interdisciplinary setting amid the resources of Harvard. The 2023-2024 fellows represent only 3.3

percent of the many applications that Radcliffe received.

At Radcliffe, Dr. Vaz-Deville, a Lillian Gollay Knafel Fellow, will write "The Art of Resistance: Sacred Visual Creations of New Orleans' African American Mardi Gras Maskers," a book that chronicles the story of maskers informed by spiritual practices outside mainstream Christianity who expand traditional Black Masking subject matter. During the Carnival season, African American maskers adorn themselves with regalia showcasing themes of racial trauma. Over the past sixty years, and



Dr. Kim Vaz-Deville

with controversy, some began to characterize their practices as having an overt spiritual dimension. Her book draws on a decade of ethnographic and participant observations and chronicles these expansions to traditional Black Masking subject matter designed to produce awareness among revelers of their community's African and Afro-Caribbean Heritage and shared global struggles.

Vaz-Deville is among a cadre of fellows who will spend the year at Harvard Radcliffe exploring a large variety of topics across disciplines.

"This year's cohort

promises, once again, to accomplish incredible things," said Tomiko Brown-Nagin, Dean of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Daniel P.S. Paul, Professor of Constitutional Law at Harvard Law School, and Professor of History in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. "As ever, we have outstanding fellows with expertise in a wide range of fields. Many are grappling with some of the most urgent challenges facing humanity, including seven exemplary scholars working at the forefront of research into climate change and issues of climate justice."

"I look forward to welcoming the new class of fellows," said Claudia Rizzini, Executive Director of the Fellowship Program. "I look forward to fostering a community that transcends individual disciplines and is fueled by collective intellectual energy and creativity."

# What's Love Got to Do with It: Remembering Tina Turner



**Diva Dionne Character**  
Female Empowerment  
Columnist



**Queen of Rock and Roll Tina Turner**, broke many barriers during her impactful life. She recently passed away at the age of 83.

**TINA TURNER** – She was better than the rest. She exemplified strength and endurance. Surviving a half-century career full of ups and downs, she became the “Queen of Rock n’ Roll.” She gave us sexy, powerful and perhaps the most remembered dance steps with her iconic set of legs.

The singer, whose career launched in the 1960’s and 70’s, as a duo with former husband, Ike Turner, gave the world collaborations like “River Deep Mountain

High,” “Proud Mary,” and “Nutbush City Limits.” Turner would later become recognized for surviving an abusive marriage, which went public during her divorce. She lost her record contract, stepped away from the scene and re-invented her-

self, turning those lemons into an entire lemon-aid stand.

In the 1980’s she signed a new deal, giving us hits like “Private Dancer,” and “What’s Love Got to Do With It,” which launched her career, earning her three Grammy’s,

Best Female Pop Vocal and Record of the Year.

Girl, when life gives you lemons you don’t have to completely give up. Maybe you just need some time away to settle your mind to realign your thoughts because just when you think life is over, there is always one more surprise from the universe. All you have to do is continue to believe in yourself and if you don’t, you should always be able to call another strong woman for support.

Let us come together and channel our inner Tina Turner and never give up because you can do whatever your beautiful mind desires. Keep asking yourself “What’s Love Got to Do With It,” and continue to dance in the footsteps of a woman who never gave up on her dreams.

Dionne Character can be reached at [www.characterhollywood.com](http://www.characterhollywood.com)

## Cover Story/ Continued from page 3.

claims to be the first to celebrate Memorial Day.

Still, a different narrative, perhaps more accurately, says that African Americans in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1865 were the true founders of the holiday.

Renowned historian David Blight, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and American history professor at Yale University recounted a poignant commemoration in Charleston on May 1, 1865.

Organized by formerly enslaved people and white missionaries, Blight determined that the event occurred at a former racecourse

that had served as a Confederate prison for Union soldiers during the war’s final year.

At least 257 prisoners had perished there, primarily due to disease, and were buried in unmarked graves.

Eventually, two dozen African American residents of Charleston meticulously rearranged the graves into orderly rows.

They erected a three-meter-tall white fence around them, creating what they called the ‘Martyrs of the Racecourse’ memorial.

“After the Confederate evacuation of Charleston Black workmen

went to the site, reburied the Union dead properly, and built a high fence around the cemetery,” Blight documented.

“They whitewashed the fence and built an archway over an entrance on which they inscribed the words, ‘Martyrs of the Racecourse.’”

He continued:

“The symbolic power of this Low Country planter aristocracy’s bastion was not lost on the freed people, who then, in cooperation with white missionaries and teachers, staged a parade of 10,000 on the track.”

The gravesites were transformed into a breathtaking “sea of

flowers,” as described by the New York Tribune, and the event was hailed as a procession of mourning and remembrance, unlike anything South Carolina or the United States had witnessed before.

Despite documented evidence about this event, the narrative of African Americans being the founders of Memorial Day essentially went untold.

“That’s the surprising part,” said Ambassador Young, a civil rights icon who also served as mayor of Atlanta from 1981 to 1990.

“It’s history I want to read and know more about, and everyone else should as well.”

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Data News Weekly, “The People’s Paper,” is looking for freelance writers to join our team print and digital team. We need writers who can cover New Orleans news stories, ranging from local high school sports, community events, City Hall and entertainment. Experience in print is necessary, experience in digital and social media are encouraged.

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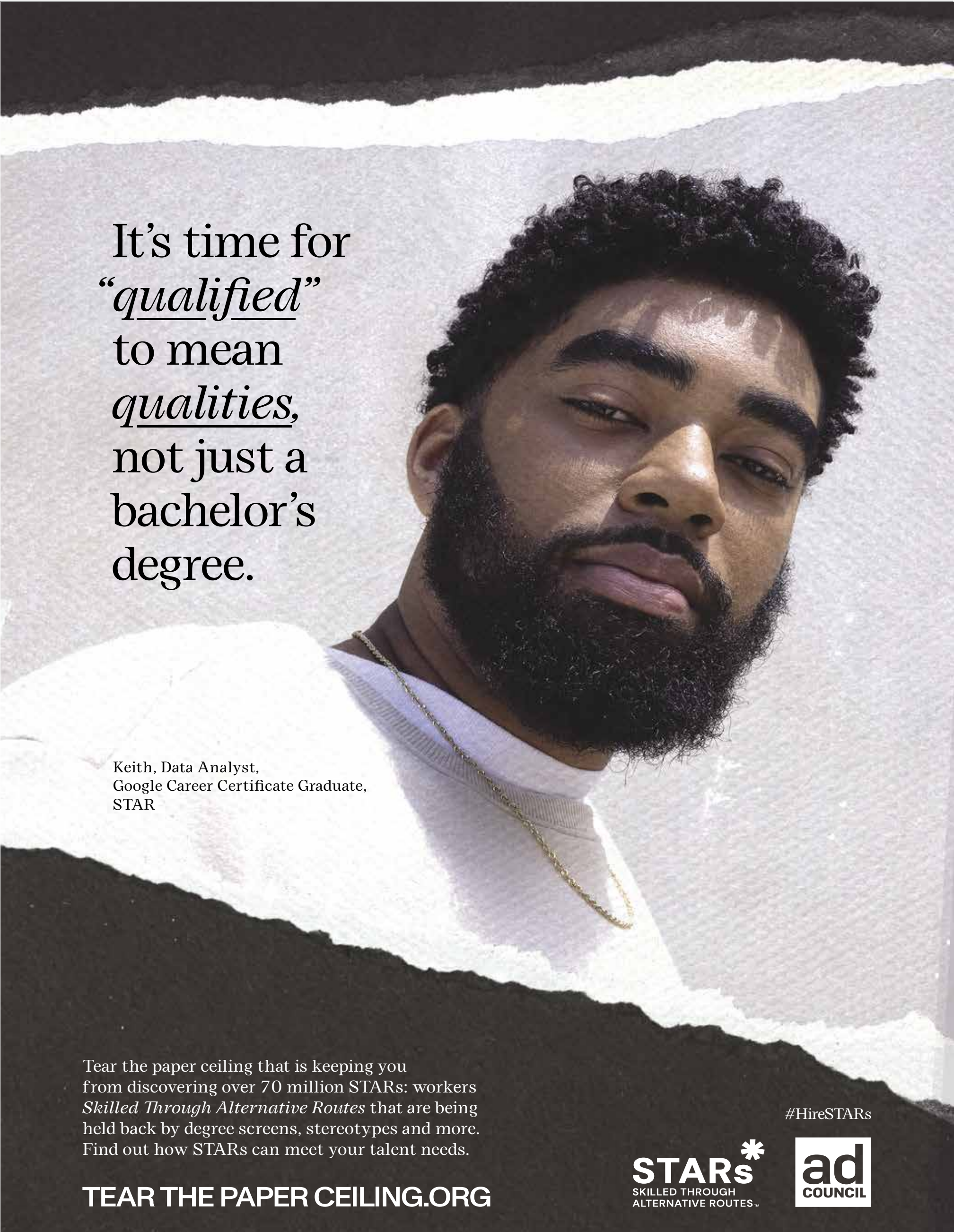
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