





Newsmaker
Using the
Bayou to Heal
the Skin

**National News** 

Congressional Leaders Advocate for Rosa Parks Day



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#### **Cover Story**

# **Advocates Share Their Story** to Break Stigmas for People Living With HIV

#### Story and Photos by Zora Thomas Data News **Weekly Contributor**

World AIDS Day, which is designated on Dec. 1st every year since 1988, is an International Day dedicated to raising Awareness of the AIDS Epidemic caused by the spread of HIV Infection and mourning those who have passed away from the disease. The red ribbon is the Universal Symbol of Awareness and support for people living with HIV. This year's theme was "World AIDS Day 35: Remember and Commit," which marked the 35th Year of deliberate focus and growth in the Field of Technological and Medicinal Advancements that allows those affected by HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) to live their lives and continue to look to destigmatizing and breaking down stereotypes.

"We know that when it comes to HIV and AIDS that communities of color are particularly impacted, and particularly African Americans. We have to also look within our communities to make sure [of] that education," said Chantel Gant, a Wellness Educator and a Counselor at the Office of Counseling and Wellness at Xavier University of Louisiana.

Around the world, over 39 million people live with HIV and in just 2022, 1.3 million people were newly diagnosed with HIV. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) citing data from the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals ranked Louisiana 3rd in the U.S. in estimated HIV and AIDS case rates. The New Orleans Metropolitan Statistical Area (NOM-SA) ranks 2nd in the U.S. for estimated HIV case rates and 5th for AIDS case rates, respectively."

As part of efforts to bring awareness to the ongoing rates of infection, St. Thomas Community Health Center hosted a panel on World Aids Day to give voice to patients and medical professionals on Dec. 1st. Three New Orleans residents and natives, Tatania Riley, Lorraine Loydrake, and Brandon Brown, shared their journey as people living with HIV to help bring awareness and destigmatize people who live with HIV.



Bounce to Zero is an Orleans Parish Initiative, with the goal "to reduce new HIV cases by 95 percent by 2030 and create a world with zero people out of care." Bounce Artist, Big Freedia currently serves as an ambassador of the initiative.

Brandon Brown, 40, a Mississippi native living in New Orleans for the past ten years is a Case Manager at St. Thomas Community Health Center, working to support others living with HIV. He was diagnosed twenty years ago. Tatania Riley, 45, served as a Counselor at Crescent Care, and was diagnosed when she was 14. Since then, she has had three children, two of them, Breeon Riley and Jania Edwards, joined her at the event. Breeon shared how her mother has been a hero to her and the pride she feels in seeing her share her story. Lorraine Loydrake, has been positive for over 20 years and in that time has been an advocate, a

public speaker, and a former Board Member of Project Lazarus that now works at Priority Health Care.

Brown, Riley, and Loydrake said that over the years there has been a growth in treatment for people living with HIV. Their treatments have changed from having to take sometimes up to seven pills a day, to now only having to take one pill daily or getting one shot a month. Living a full life with HIV is something they shared they now advocate for to encourage others.

In 2020, the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies was tasked by the New Orleans Film Society to create a film focusing on the experiences of five Black

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On the Cover: Advocates for people living with HIV from left to right: Brandon Brown, Tatiana Riley, Cynthia Washington and Lorraine Loydrake bring awareness for World AIDS Day. Photo by Zora Thomas.

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**DATA NEWS WEEKLY** 

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#### **Data News Weekly**

### **Cover Story**

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women living with HIV in the South, through funding from Gilead Sciences. Both Loydrake and Riley were featured in the 2020 film, "New Nickels," which was directed by Iman Shervington, and explores the journeys of five Black women in an "Out of the Shadows" Program. This initiative focused on finding community, self-acceptance, and love.

"When I was in foster care, and that's where I actually got it from. I was raped and molested in foster care. So that's how I got it. But just being able to have a voice for somebody else because back then I didn't," Riley shared, recalling her story. "So, I knew it was other people out there that was afraid or ashamed to even have a voice. So, I want I have a voice for you," she said.

A September 2022 report by the Louisiana Department of Health's Office of Public Health ranked Louisiana 4th in the nation for HIV case rates and 11th in the estimated number of HIV cases. The Baton Rouge metro-area ranked 7th and the New Orleans metro-area ranked 9th for HIV case rates, among the large metropolitan areas in the U.S.

Dr. George Nawas, a Xavier Clinical Assistant Professor, who serves as a member on the Louisiana Commission on HIV, AIDS & Hepatitis C Education Prevention and Treatment, appointed by Governor John Bel Edwards is part of a team reviewing the Impact of HIV Criminalization Laws in the New Orleans community, and especially among people of color. Such laws help to explain why people have remained in the shadows while living with the diseases, Nawas explained.

"We have to develop Patient Competency Programs to be able to help everyone understand [prevention]," Dr. Nawas said.

Nawas said this ranges from education on the proper use of condoms, explaining more of the HIV/AIDS treatment options that are typically known as PrEP, or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. PrEP is a highly effective treatment that reduces the chance of contracting HIV from sex or injection drug use, Nawas said adding that the types of PrEP available and recommended can be pills or shots.

Brown recalled how living in rural Mississippi there was a culture of keeping a diagnosis secret

or hidden away. He shared that as an advocate, he added his HIV status to his dating profile to be open and transparent. This oftenbrought rejection and ridicule from friends and family, and even at church, Riley shared, recounting a time when she attended a church service and the pastor tried to shame those living with HIV. From those experiences each of them talked about their personal growth in their spirituality or faith as a result of learning to live with HIV. For Loydrake, her experience with HIV made her a firm believer through the mental and physical trials she faced, as well as continuing to be there for others.

The New Orleans area has a number of organizations and initiatives to help educate and combat discrimination for people living with HIV and to provide resources. Bounce to Zero is an Orleans Parish Initiative, with a goal "to reduce new HIV cases by 95 percent by 2030 and create a world with zero new HIV infections and zero people out of care." Bounce Artist, Big Freedia, currently serves as an ambassador of the initiative.

There was a patient who put his medication in a box and that box is under a floorboard. And that is under the bed. That is because he doesn't want anyone to come home and see," said Ian McCusker, the Planning and Training Coordinator for the New Orleans Regional AIDS Planning Council (NORAPC). "So, I was familiar with like stigma .... the stress that that takes. So just learning about what people are going through," he added.

Kyada Jones' son Zeandre Johnson passed at the age of 22, in January 2020. He was starting his third year at Texas A&M University and had been diagnosed with AIDS in 2018. Zeandre was a drum major, cheerleader, and section leader. Jones shared the story of her son on World Aids Day and talked about the importance of destigmatizing HIV and AIDS to allow people to feel comfortable enough to receive treatments.

Her and her husband at the time were in a panic initially at the diagnosis and went to the clinic to educate themselves on the options available to treat his diagnosis. Recalling how they would even go up to the school or call to make sure he was taking his medication. She urged those who plan on going in the field of medicine to come with an open heart.

December 9 - December 15, 2023

"Z [Zeandre] was diagnosed with a rapid test and that's when we were recommended to go to Crescent Care. It's been a journey. We did everything as parents, to protect his best interests, he was very popular in high school and in college. Unfortunately, he didn't take his meds because of the stigma," Jones, said.

"He had the support from friends and family but because of the stigmas he didn't want to share his personal life and of course he succumbed to it," Jones added.

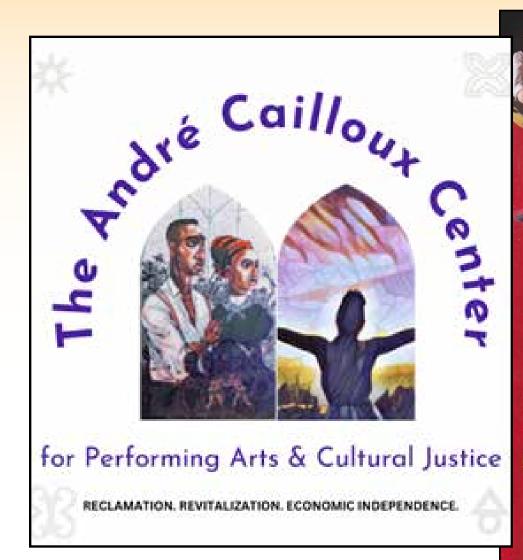
She hopes that in sharing her son's story, those who work with people living with HIV would become more educated to provide both support and compassion.

"Times have changed, technology, and everything is still increasing. Unfortunately, my son was one of those kids who hid his virus," Jones said. "So, I'd say again, for anyone who's going to be a first responder, second responder, or third responder, they need to know that somebody cares outside of the people that's sitting there."



#### **Data Zone**

## **Drummer Bill Summers, Musicians** Sunpie Barnes, Delfeayo Marsalis and more Join Forces for Two Concerts.





Papa Legba meets Papa **Noel: A Christmas Season Blessing & Benefit Concert** for the Andre Cailloux **Center for Performing Arts** and Cultural Justice

Edwin Buggage **Editor-in-Chief Data News Weekly** 

ArtSpot Productions and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation present Papa Legba Meets Papa Noel: A Christmas Season Blessing during two performances at the André Cailloux Center for Performing Arts and Cultural Justice (ACC), located on historic Bayou Road in New Orleans. Two shows are scheduled for Saturday, December 9th; 2:00 PM and 7:00 PM. Tickets are \$35 in advance and at the door.

Led by noted Drummer Bill Summers, Papa Legba Meets Papa Noel, includes such noted musicians as: Aurelien Barnes, Sunpie Barnes, Tricia Diamond, Steven Bernstein, Helen Gillet, Matt Hampsey, Delfeayo Marsalis, James Singleton and Cole Williams. Karen-Kaia Livers will serve as the emcee for performances.

During the shows, the Holy Warriors will perform the score from Holy Wars, a story about Captain André Cailloux, the nation's first Black Civil War military hero and Father Claude Maistre, the French Abolitionist Priest and Founder of St. Rose de Lima Church in New Orleans.

ACC is named in honor of Cailloux. Bill Summers, initiated into the prestigious Yoruba Order of Sacred Drum-

mers by Estaban "Cha Chaa" Vega—the most revered drummer in Cuba, will perform a blessing of the Center during the performance.

Established in 2022 to support New Orleans' cultural guardians, the André Cailloux Center provides access to performance and rehearsal space, technical expertise in stage lighting and sound, and supports ticketing/POS. The only, Black-led performing arts space in Louisiana, the ACC serves as a community-centered performing arts, culture, and organic intellectual center dedicated to freedom, flourishing, and the promotion of justice through the arts, community engagement, dialogue, and sustainable arts enterprise development for Black makers.

2023 marks the 160th Anniversary of Cailloux's death in battle and his

Historic Funeral Procession in New Orleans, deemed the largest public gathering of the Black community in the nation at that time. The ACC seeks to honor the Legacy of Cailloux and other forbearers across history whose heroism, activism, and community engagement significantly contributed to the city, state and nation. The two benefit concerts are intended to assist the ACC in "keeping its doors open" so that it can continue its work supporting performing arts organizations, artists, and community-centered organizations and programming that highlights history and culture within the African American community and the world-wide African diaspora.

For additional information, email: press@accneworleans.com

**Data News Weekly** 

## Adonis C. Expose', King Zulu 2017 Hosts His 25th Annual Toy Drive – DRIVE-BY

#### **Data News Staff Edited Report**

Adonis C. Expose', a former King Zulu will be hosting his 25th Annual Toy Drive. The Toy Drive will be a Drive-By Toy Drive. This Drive-By Toy Drive will be safe and festive as we will have Santa Claus, Zulu's Toys for Tots Committee and community volunteers on the sidewalk waving at the passing attendees in their cars as they collect the new unwrapped toys. There will also be a DJ playing holiday music to spread some holiday cheer. The toys collected will be donated to Zulu for their upcoming Toy Giveaway right before Christmas.

We want to make sure we do as much as we can to bring a smile to the faces of as many kids as possible, especially given these challenging times.

The Drive-By event is free and open to the public.

Saturday, December 9, 2023 1:00pm - 4:00pm

**Zulu Social Aid** & Pleasure Club 732 N. Broad Street New Orleans, LA 70119







# Bea's Bayou

### Using the Bayou to Heal the Skin

#### Tashia Hogue Data News Weekly Contributor

Bea's Bayou stands out by harnessing the power of probiotics and bayou herbs, offering a natural and effective solution for those seeking relief from persistent itchiness. Named in honor of founder Arielle Brown's maternal grandmother, Beatrice, this form of natural skin care ties a personal narrative into the rich cultural fabric of the Big Easy.

"Being a Black entrepreneur is about living the dream of our ancestors. It's about creating legacy and being their best self. I can be in the moment that I'm in and hopefully inspiring others to do the same," said Brown as she encouraged Black college students to take up entrepreneurship on Nov. 30th.



Arielle Brown is working to scale her natural skin care line, inspired by the experiences primarily of Black women using skin care and hair care treatments.

Bea's Bayou is where the History of the Bayou meets the Science of Skincare and where Brown shared, she is carving out her own lane in the cosmetic industry. The

Lafayette, LA. native started the company in 2020, creating innovative products that cater to individuals experiencing eczema-related skin concerns, acne, and for hair

care treatments ranging from dandruff to scalp irritation.

She was inspired to find a line of natural products for women, after dealing with her own diagnosis of Seborrheic Dermatitis as a teenager. The condition creates both scalp irritations and hair thinning, and after years of trying medicated shampoos and creams, Brown decided she would create a product that would treat such conditions while keeping hair healthy.

Since her skincare line launch, she has raised over \$170,000 in funding from organizations that invest in Black women entrepreneurs, and she is currently raising over \$1 million to scale her business. In 2022, she participated in the New Orleans' Idea Village Program that supports startups created by people of color. Brown also shared the pros and cons of owning

her own business. She emphasized the importance of mental health in navigating the process for scaling and expanding a brand and getting investors to see the value and worth of a product.

"Sometimes it takes being the salesperson to go out and pitch the retailer. That to me was a challenge because you don't want to let your friends and family down, but sometimes I'm like I'm tired and you have to be able to say no," Brown said

Brown earned a master's degree in Social Work from Southern University at New Orleans. With Bea's Bayou, she hopes to be among a small but growing group of Black women entrepreneurs who are entering into the beauty business, which unfortunately today, is still

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#### **State & Local News**

# Council Vice President Moreno, in Collaboration with Representative Jason Hughes, Sets Local Rules to Remove Property Tax Exemptions from Slumlords as Authorized by Recent State Constitutional Amendment

#### Data News Staff Edited Report

Recently, Council Vice President Helena Moreno codified a new law to authorize the city to enforce code enforcement violations against slumlord nonprofits that imperil the safety of their residents.

The law, authorized by a State Constitutional Amendment authored by State Representative Jason Hughes and passed by voters in October, provides a clear public process for stripping tax exemptions from nonprofits operating slum properties cited by City Code Enforcement.

"Thanks to all of the residents and the advocates for bringing attention to the issues at The Willows and similar sites throughout our city," said Councilmember Moreno. "We were so proud to work alongside a great leader in our community, Rep. Jason Hughes, to pass a Statewide Constitutional Amendment to give cities more tools to address living



State Representative Jason Hughes

conditions at residential properties owned by law-breaking nonprofits. It's been years of issues at The Willows that led to Rep. Hughes and I offering up a constitutional amendment to remove property tax ex-



City Council Vice-President Helena Moreno

emptions from nonprofit slumlords. We thought this type of step was a necessary additional tool to get slumlords in compliance but knew it would take tremendous work and a statewide vote. Today's

ordinance creates a transparent public process to remove these exemptions and put these properties back on the tax rolls by forcing violators to pay fines and bring properties up to code. It also provides reinstatement processes for properties that have been rehabilitated and infractions addressed."

"The result of this monumental effort, first and foremost, is a testament to partnership, and I want to reiterate to the public that the legislative branches of government - federal, state, and local - we will work hand in hand to get things done on behalf of our citizens," said Representative Hughes. "There were many skeptical colleagues in the legislature who wondered why we introduced this constitutional amendment, and the answer is simple: we did it on behalf of the people. That's why we took this effort on. Council Vice President, I could not have asked for a better friend and partner in this effort than you. You were there every step of the way; you helped lead many intense, meaningful and necessary negotiations with our extraor-

Commentary, Continued on page 7.

#### **National News** December 9 - December 15, 2023

# **Congressional Leaders Advocate for** Rosa Parks Day Federal Holiday

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

As the nation approaches the 68th Anniversary of Rosa Parks' historic arrest, U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell of Alabama's 7th District, along with Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Chairman Steven Horsford and Representative Joyce Beatty, held a press conference on Capitol Hill to rally support for H.R. 308, the Rosa Parks Day Act. The proposed legislation aims to designate December 1st as a federal holiday in honor of Rosa Parks, recognizing her pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement.

December 1, 1955, marked a turning point in American history when Rosa Parks, a courageous African American woman, was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to surrender her bus seat to a White passenger. Her act of defiance ignited the Montgomery Bus Boycott and became a



Civil Rights Icon Rosa Parks

catalyst for the broader struggle for Civil Rights.

Sewell, representing the district where Rosa Parks' arrest occurred, emphasized the significance of recognizing this momentous occasion. As Rep. Sewell's first bill in the 118th Congress, the Rosa Parks

Day Act (H.R. 308) is of particular significance to the Congresswoman and CBC members.

"Rosa Parks' bravery on that December day changed the course of history, and it is only fitting that we honor her legacy with a federal holiday," Sewell stated. "It's time for our nation to officially recognize the contributions of a woman and a Black woman to the fight for equal-

Currently, the United States lacks a federal holiday dedicated explicitly to honoring a woman or a Black woman. The Rosa Parks Day Act seeks to rectify this by amending Section 6103(a) of Title 5, United States Code, to include "Rosa Parks Day" as a legal public holiday, placing it alongside other significant national observances.

The bill's proponents argue that recognizing Rosa Parks' arrest as a federal holiday would pay tribute to her courage and serve as a broader symbol of the ongoing struggle for equality and justice.

#### Commentary, Continued from page 6.

dinary housing advocates. The win is not for me, Vice President Moreno or members of this City Council; the win was on behalf of our residents, and they deserve it. This is another meaningful tool in the toolbox and a testament to what we can accomplish when we work together."

"I am in full support of this item addressing the nonprofit status of owners who own properties that for years have negatively affected the quality of life for tenants and surrounding communities," said Dawn Hebert, President of East New Orleans Neighborhood Advisory Commission. "Properties that have been poorly managed have not been properly addressed or cited by Code Enforcement. HANO or HUD. In particular, The Willows Apartment Complex has experienced increasingly higher rates of crime including several murders and ongoing substantiated tenant complaints. I am happy that Councilmember Moreno has been out there to see up close and personal what is happening. Over the last couple of years, I have been attempting to get some type of citation on this apartment complex because

my neighborhood borders the complex. Many of the owners of these complexes are outside owners. I am thankful for you all to bring this to fruition, and I do wish that Code Enforcement takes this seriously because they have the documents and the data to go forward and deal with these properties."

The law was inspired by apartment properties such as The Willows in New Orleans East, which are owned by out-of-state nonprofits and have clear code enforcement violations that go unenforced due to the property's tax-free status. Under the new law, the Council has the authority to hold a public hearing to strip the nonprofit tax exemption from the property and, therefore, subject it to code enforcement liens and fines. Without tools like this, properties like The Willows can avoid accountability even when they violate life safety codes that puts residents' health and lives at risk.

The constitutional amendment passed overwhelmingly on October 14th and goes into effect on January 1, 2024. The new laws passed by Councilmember Moreno enact this authority at the first possible date.

#### Newsmaker, Continued from page 6.

heavily dominated by companies owned and run mostly by men.

"Seeing a Black woman, like me, express herself and reach her goals while I'm in college struggling, and hearing her say 'go through college and do what you really want to do while taking risks,' redirected me to stay focused on my studies," said Cambria Carey, a business, sales, and marketing major at Xavier University of Louisiana, who attended Brown's talk as part of the "Lunch with a 'Trep," a series coordinated by Xavier's Entrepreneurship Insti-

Mark Quinn, a Professor in the Division of Business at Xavier, said that it is necessary to host these events where potential connections can guide young people in the right

direction on what it takes to create a start-up, scale it, and to remain passionate about an idea.

"We bring entrepreneurs in person here on campus to meet informally with the students and share their stories, give some insight as to what motivated them to start their business, their successes, and their challenges, all with an eye towards showing the students that entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship is not something that's unattainable," Quinn said.

"We think that everybody is an entrepreneur at some point in their life. You know, we're just trying to show students that entrepreneurship is accessible and that there is a lot of help here on campus as well as throughout the city and throughout the nation," Quinn added.

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