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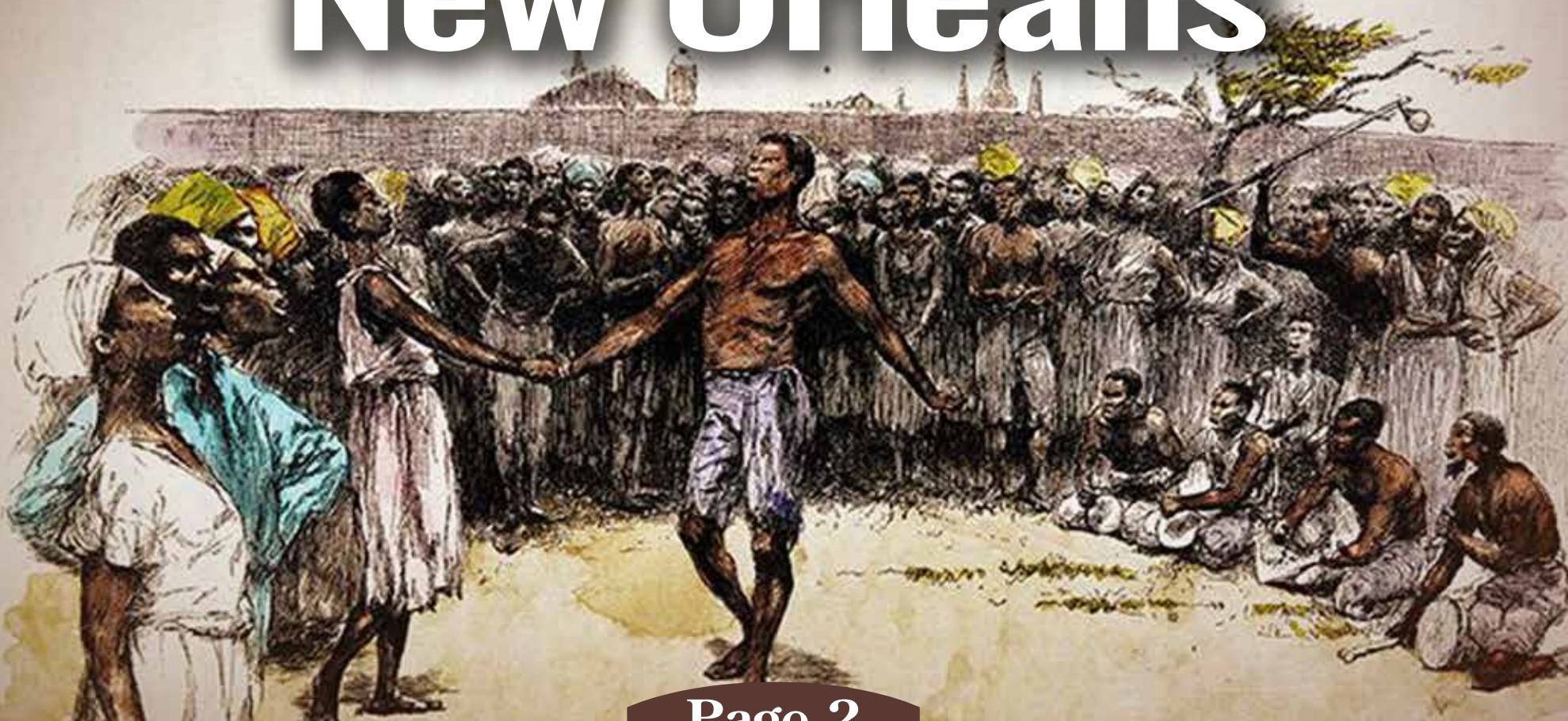
## The NNPA 2024 Midwinter Data Zone Training Conference

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February 2 - February 9, 2024 58th Year Volume 41 [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com)

A Data News Weekly Exclusive

# Exploring the Black History of New Orleans



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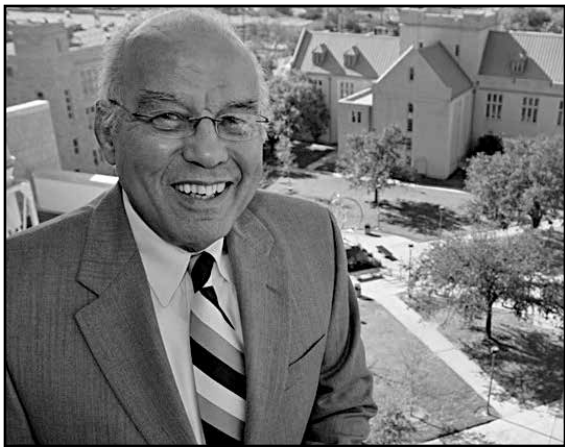
Learn to Row Event  
Brings Water Sports  
to Black Students



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# Exploring the Black History of New Orleans



The history of Black New Orleans is rich and vast. Blacks have contributed greatly to the culture and heritage of the city. In February, Data News Weekly will explore how Blacks have continued shaping what makes the city one of the world's most fascinating places to visit and live.

**Eric Connerly**  
Data News Weekly Contributor

In what has been called the most African-influenced city in the U.S., the Black History of New Orleans is rich and multifaceted, truly reflecting

the unique cultural and social landscape of the city. This month Data News Weekly will take our readers on a journey exploring the impact of the Black people of New Orleans and how they are important in shaping the unique cultural heritage of the city.

**African Influence and Heritage**

New Orleans has a strong African Heritage, brought by enslaved Africans who were forced to the city during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Their influence is deeply embedded in the city's culture, from music to cuisine, and religious practices.

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### DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.

### Slavery and the Slave Trade

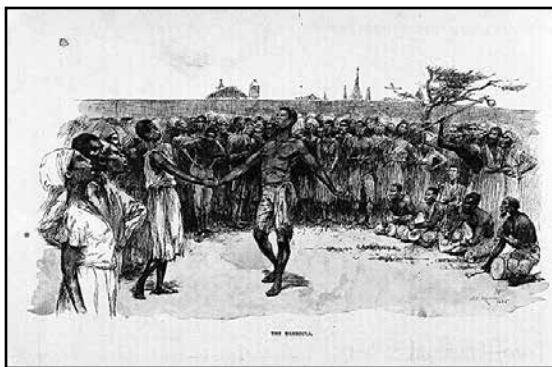
New Orleans was one of the largest slave markets in the United States. The city's economy heavily relied on slave labor, particularly in the plantation system surrounding it. Enslaved Africans in New Orleans faced brutal conditions, but they also resisted in various ways and formed their own communities.

### Free People of Color

New Orleans had a significant population of free people of color, known as "gens de couleur libres." This group, often of mixed African and European descent, occupied a unique social and economic position in the city. They were instrumental in shaping the Cultural Landscape of New Orleans.

### Civil Rights Movement

Like other Southern cities, New Orleans was a Battleground for Civil Rights. The city saw various protests and efforts to desegregate public spaces and schools. Notable figures in these movements included activists like Oretha Castle Haley, Jerome Smith, and A.P. Tureaud.



### Jazz and Music

New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz, a genre deeply rooted in African American History and Culture. Legend-

ary musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, and Buddy Bolden came from New Orleans, shaping the course of music history.

### Mardi Gras Indians

The Mardi Gras Indians are a unique cultural group in New Orleans, consisting of Black residents who dress in elaborate, hand-made

costumes resembling Native American Ceremonial Attire. This tradition honors the solidarity between African Americans and Native Americans.

### Hurricane Katrina and Its Aftermath

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 disproportionately affected New Orleans' Black community. The disaster highlighted longstanding issues of racial and economic inequality. The rebuilding process also led to significant demographic and cultural changes in the city.

### Contemporary Culture and Issues

Today, New Orleans continues to be shaped by its African American community. Issues such as gentrification, cultural preservation, and economic inequality are at the forefront of current discussions about the city's future. These aspects represent just a glimpse into the complex and vibrant Black History of New Orleans, a history that continues to influence the city profoundly.

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# Author of “All Boys Aren’t Blue” Speaks on Banned Book

Story and Photos by  
Anaya Dennis  
Data News Weekly Contributor

George M. Johnson, Author of The New York Times bestseller “All Boys Aren’t Blue” spoke about the current impact of the 2020 book with Journalist and Author Jumata Emill at Baldwin & Co. Bookstore and coffee shop on Jan. 23rd.

“Most days, I don’t think about the book ban, I am worried about the next book and my other projects,” said Johnson about the book, which is now at the forefront of a nationwide ban.

“All Boys Aren’t Blue” is a memoir consisting of a series of personal essays about the author’s childhood, adolescence, and college years and the trials and triumphs they faced growing up Black, male, and queer.

Johnson faced a criminal complaint in Florida with the claims that their book consisted of “pornography” and “obscenity,” according to Jill Woolbright, a member of the Flagler County School Board, who filed a report with the sheriff’s office. Woolbright eventually lost her seat on the Flagler County School Board. Johnson also said that currently, eight districts in eight states want to ban the book, and conservative groups like “Moms of Liberty” have continued to attack the work. Johnson said critics would leave hate comments on their social media accounts and other book platforms where the book can be reviewed.

“All Boys Aren’t Blue” was published as a Young Adult (YA) Book, and both authors spoke about the current biases within YA Publishing. The field is dominated by White women authors who are given the space to write queer and minority stories. The authors said that this practice in the industry often skews perceptions of queer and minority experience.

“We have lots of common ground. I am also a fan, so it was nice to be able to make connections as a reader as well,” Emill said.

Johnson who now identifies as non-binary wanted their memoir to speak to a younger generation. They wanted to tell an honest truth about growing up Black, queer, and at the time male, in America an experience they said, does not just get better, but they had to continue to fight for it.



New York Times best-selling book “All Boys Aren’t Blue” is currently on a banned list of books in 8 states.



Author George M. Johnson signs a copy of the banned book “All Boys Aren’t Blue” at Baldwin & Co. Bookstore during an author’s talk on January 23rd.



Author George M. Johnson discusses their book with Journalist Jumata Emill at an author book talk at Baldwin & Co. Bookstore.

“Blackness is the queerness of the world. The world runs on Anti-Blackness,” Johnson said, noting that within the Black community, there is also a continued lack of acceptance for those who speak on queer and Black issues.

Johnson said they also wanted the book to pay homage to Black, queer heroes like James Baldwin and Jose-

phine Baker, so young queer individuals can easily find their role models.

“I work in a school so I really like how Johnson normalized his experience because it’s important to show kids who don’t always have a support system,” said April Defillo, a local school teacher who attended the book talk.

Johnson also spoke on how the cov-

er illustration for “All Boys Aren’t Blue” was intentional. They wanted the cover to inspire, just like their upcoming new book “Flamboyance,” which is a fully illustrated, mixed-media book about the Harlem Renaissance that comes out this September.

“It’s okay to judge my book by its cover,” Johnson said.

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



# The NNPA 2024 Midwinter Training Conference

## *EMPOWER - The Black Press, The Black Vote, and Black America*

The NNPA held a Midwinter Training Conference in Fort Lauderdale, Florida from January 24th through January 27th, 2024. The Conference and lodging were at The B Ocean Resort.

It was an overall success. It was the first opportunity for our new Chairman, Bobby Henry to take leadership as the National Newspaper Publishing Association (NNPA) moves forward in a positive and strong direction.

With the overall goal of increasing voter registration.



Ben Chavis, President/CEO, OF NNPA and his family.



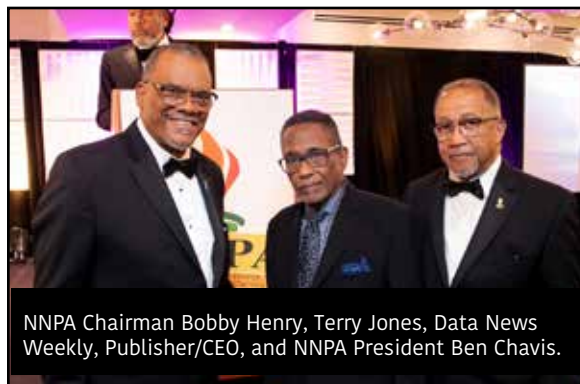
Terry Jones, Fran Farrer, Kerri Watkins, Miata Smith, and Ben Chavis



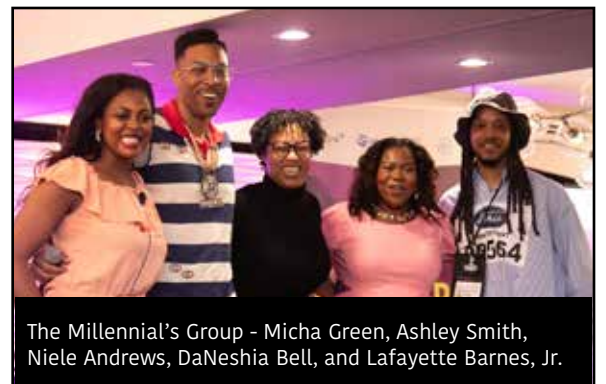
Ben Chavis, DaNeshia's sister, DaNeshia Bell, and Rev. Mark Thompson



NNPA Chairman Bobby Henry, Terry Jones, Ben Chavis and Claudette Perry, seated.



NNPA Chairman Bobby Henry, Terry Jones, Data News Weekly, Publisher/CEO, and NNPA President Ben Chavis.



The Millennial's Group - Micha Green, Ashley Smith, Niele Andrews, DaNeshia Bell, and Lafayette Barnes, Jr.



Saxophone player, Randy Corinthian and his Band



Lifetime Achievement Award recipients John and Carol Zipperi being presented the award by NNPA Chairman, Bobby Henry, with NNPA President Ben Chavis at the Podium.



Jocelyn Allen, CEO/Co-Founder of the Allen Lewis Agency, Terry Jones, and Molly Belt.



## Jury Finds Cardell Hayes Guilty of Manslaughter in 2016 Killing of Former Saints Defensive End Will Smith.



Cardell Hayes

### Data News Staff Edited Report

A New Orleans jury deliberated for more than four hours before returning a guilty verdict early Saturday morning in the deadly shooting of former Saints Defensive End Will Smith.

Cardell Hayes was convicted of

manslaughter for a second time after Smith was shot following a dispute over a vehicle crash in April 2016. Smith was driving an SUV at the time of the traffic incident. A verbal altercation began over whether Smith's vehicle had hit Hayes' Hummer along Magazine Street in New Orleans.

Hayes could now face up to four

decades following the jury's decision in the retrial of the nearly eight-year-old case.

District Attorney Jason Williams insisted during his closing argument that Hayes had fired needlessly.

Hayes Attorneys John Fuller and Sarah Chervinsky, said they plan to file an appeal.

## Harry Connick Sr, Longtime New Orleans DA Dead at 97

### Data News Staff Edited Report

Harry Connick Sr., the longtime New Orleans District Attorney, and father to two, including musician Harry Connick Jr., has passed away at the age of 97.

The younger Connick's Publicist confirmed the elder Connick's death to Fox News Digital Thursday, saying that he died peacefully at his New Orleans home with his children and wife by his side.

He won re-election four times, a White politician who successfully built biracial support as the city's political power base shifted to African Americans.

A lifelong music fan, he took up singing in the early 1990s and became a regular performer at nightclubs in New Orleans and



Harry Connick Sr.

across the state, in addition to many successful guest appearances with his son.

His son's publicist said Connick "will be deeply missed, but all who knew him were well aware that his greatest desire was to spend eternity with God in heaven."

### State & Local News

## Learn to Row Event Brings Water Sports to Black Communities and Students

### Story and Photos

Ja'lyn Jones

Data News Weekly Contributor

Only 2 percent of rowers are Black. Brannon Johnson, the owner of the first and only Black-owned and operated rowing club in the country, is working to change that statistic. Johnson teamed up with two-time African American Olympian Rower David Banks to expand access to water sports.

"One of the consequences of what our history [involves], is that water wasn't really accessible and when it was, we were treated with extreme violence," Johnson said as she led the Community Rowing Event on Friday, Jan. 19th in partnership with the New Orleans Rowing Club (NORC) and Xavier University on Bayou St. John.

Johnson's BLJ Community Rowing of Philadelphia is training the Xavier's new rowing team, which plans to collaborate with St. Augustine University in Raleigh, N.C., which also launched a Rowing Pro-



Coach Brannon Johnson and Olympian Rower David Banks train students on rowing techniques at Bayou St. John on Jan. 19th at the Community Rowing Event.

gram in 2022. Besides Xavier and St. Augustine, the only other historical rowing team at HBCUs was at Howard University in the mid-1960s.

"It was a worthwhile endeavor just because getting rowing in HBCUs is a huge part of BLJ Community's initiative, and we have partnered with Diversity in Aquatics, [so] getting rowing at HBCUs and just getting education

around it is a huge objective for us," Johnson said.

Young rowers showed up at the NORC Boathouse to train on ergometers and were able to head out on the water as Johnson and Banks demonstrated the dynamics of rowing.

"[It's] unfamiliarity," Banks said about the hesitance in the community to embrace water sports. "A



The Learn to Row Event at NORC's Boathouse introduced rowing and aquatic sports to the community and college students.

narrative has been told that is not true about the water. Before, Black people were the divers. That narrative got flipped due to racism, Jim Crow, segregation, everything," Banks said, "so it's about changing that narrative and bringing the access and opportunity back."

As a form of fitness and quality of life, Johnson shared how the sport of rowing can be implemented in

everyday life.

"I think this was a wonderful showing of what we can do together. If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together. I think you saw a really nice synergy of what happens when people put egos to the side and do their part to solve a problem that we're all trying

Learn to Row,  
Continued on page 7.



# Inequitable Algorithms

## Facial Recognition's Alarming Pattern of Misidentifying Black Individuals Sparks Calls for Reform

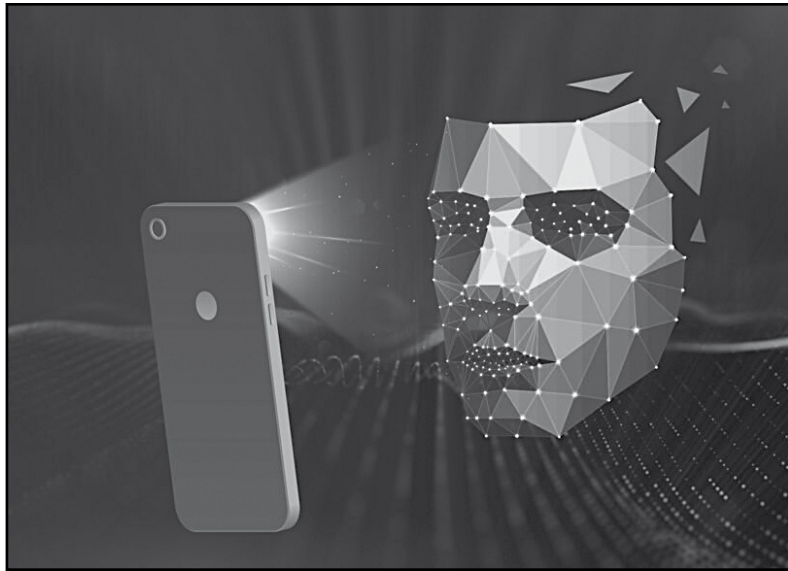
Stacy M. Brown  
NNPA Newswire Senior  
National Correspondent

Recent research conducted by Scientific American Online supported fears that facial recognition technology (FRT) can worsen racial inequities in policing. The research found that law enforcement agencies that use automated facial recognition disproportionately arrest Black people.

The report's authors stated that they believe these results come from factors that include the "lack of Black faces in the algorithms' training data sets, a belief that these programs are infallible, and a tendency of officers' own biases to magnify these issues."

FRT was again cast in a negative light after the arrest of a 61-year-old grandfather, who is now suing Sunglass Hut's parent company after the store's facial recognition technology mistakenly identified him as a robber. Harvey Eugene Murphy Jr. was subsequently held in jail, where he says he was sexually assaulted, according to a lawsuit.

The robbery occurred at a Sunglass Hut store in Houston, Texas, when two gun-wielding bandits stole thousands of dollars in cash and merchandise. Houston police identified Murphy as a suspect, even though he lived in California. They arrested Murphy when he returned to Texas to renew his driver's license. His lawsuit claims that, while in jail, he was sexually



assaulted by three men in a bathroom, causing him to suffer lifelong injuries.

The Harris County District Attorney's Office later determined Murphy was not involved in the robbery, but the damage was already done while he was in jail, his lawyers said in a news release.

"This is precisely the kind of situation we've been warning about for years: that these systems, whatever their theoretical reliability, are in practice so finicky and consequential that they cannot be fixed," Os Keyes, an Ada Lovelace Fellow and PhD Candidate at the University of Washington, told Vice News.

"The only thing I'd push back on is Murphy's lawyer's claim that it could happen to anyone; these systems are attractive precisely because they promise

to automate and speed up 'business as usual,' which includes laundering existing police biases against people who are already in the system, minority groups, and anyone else who doesn't fit. This outcome is as inevitable as it is horrifying and should be taken as a sign to restrict and reconfigure policing in general as well as FRT in particular."

Scientific American researchers noted that the algorithms used by law enforcement "are typically developed by companies like Amazon, Clearview AI and Microsoft, which build their systems for different environments." They argued that, despite massive improvements in deep-learning techniques, federal testing shows that most facial recognition algorithms perform poorly at identify-

ing people besides white men.

In 2023, the Federal Trade Commission prohibited Rite Aid from using FRT after the company wrongly accused individuals of shoplifting. CBS News noted that, in one incident, an 11-year-old girl was stopped and searched by a Rite Aid employee based on a false match. Also last year, the Detroit Police Department was sued by a woman whom their technology misidentified as a carjacking suspect. Eight months pregnant at the time, Porcha Woodruff was jailed after police incorrectly identified her using FRT.

The FTC acknowledged that people of color are often misidentified when using FRT. "Disproportionate representation of white males in training images produces skewed algorithms because Black people are overrepresented in mugshot databases and other image repositories commonly used by law enforcement," Scientific American researchers determined. "Consequently, AI is more likely to mark Black faces as criminal, leading to the targeting and arresting of innocent Black people.

"We believe that the companies that make these products need to take staff and image diversity into account. However, this does not remove law enforcement's responsibility. Police forces must critically examine their methods if we want to keep this technology from worsening racial disparities and leading to rights violations."

### Learn to Row, Continued from page 6.

to find a solution to," Johnson said.

As an Olympian Trailblazer in rowing, Banks added that the sport provides empowerment.

"In this sport, it taught me a lot that if you try, [if] you fail, and then you push through, then you're like I can do this. You feel kind of big. You feel like a champ. You reach these new levels, and you feel like you're on top of the world," Banks said.

The new Xavier Rowing Club

hopes to train sufficiently to be ready for a Spring Competitive Season and to represent for HBCUs at rowing events.

"I think in some ways it is what we call a proof of concept. People want to learn, we have the space to do it, and we can replicate this again...and keep expanding rowing into the Xavier community and beyond," said Dr. Elizabeth Manley, a NORC Member, Professor of History, and Chair of the History Department at Xavier who is leading the initiative.

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#### Job Opportunity

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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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A man in a blue graduation gown is adjusting a purple graduation cap on a woman. The woman is wearing a red dress and looking up at the man. They are standing in front of a blue textured background.

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