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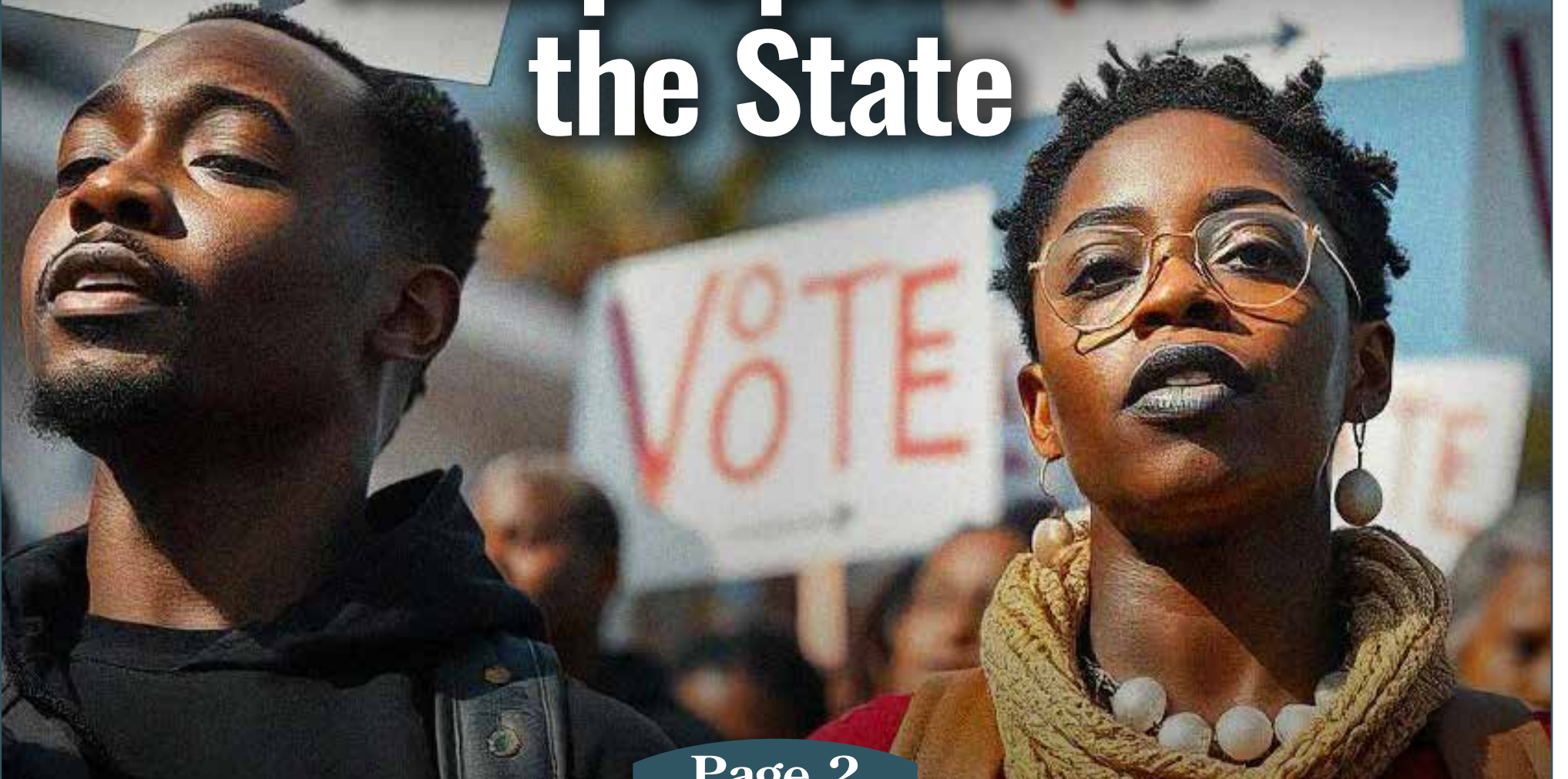
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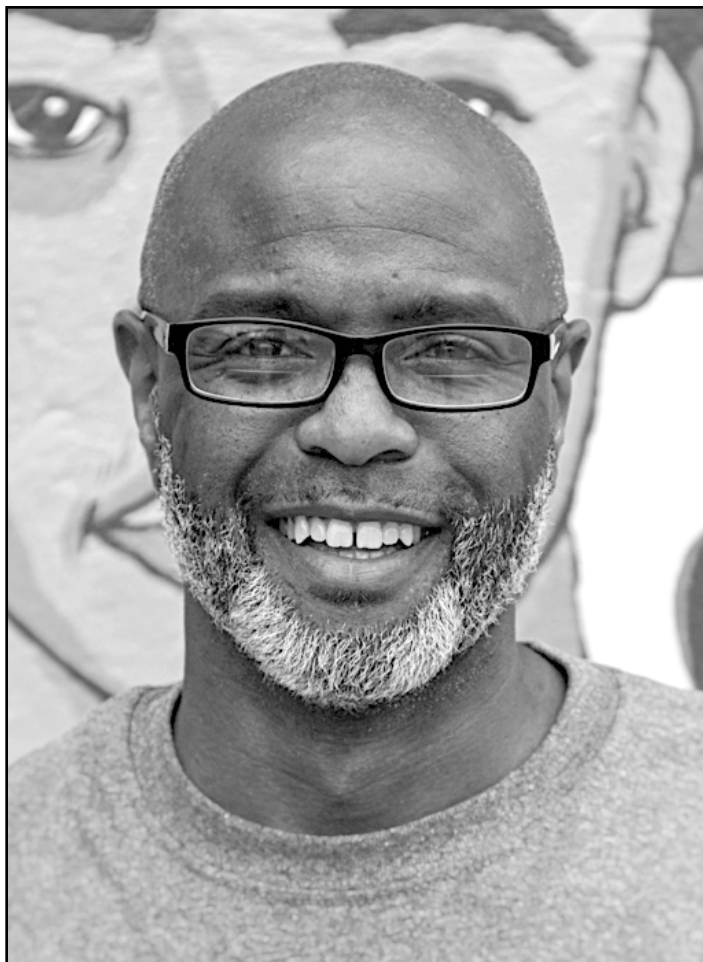
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Voter Engagement Efforts Ramp Up Across the State



Charles Amos is the New Orleans Chapter Organizer for VOTE



X Marks the Ballot aims to educate New Orleans High School and College Students about issues facing voters and how to navigate first-time voting.

Jayvon Watkins
Data News Weekly Contributor
Photos courtesy VOTE
and X Marks the Ballot

Only 36-percent of 3 million registered voters in Louisiana cast a ballot in the 2023 governor's race,

according to data from the Louisiana Secretary of State. With the presidential and national elections approaching in November, local voting organizations are focused on reaching out to residents, especially those who often feel disengaged from the voting process.

"We register people to vote, and our target audience is formerly incarcerated people," said Charles

Amos, the New Orleans Chapter Organizer for Voice of the Experienced (VOTE), who is also working to engage formerly incarcerated individuals in the electoral process. VOTE was founded by Norris Henderson who was wrongfully incarcerated and served a 27-year sentence.

"Formerly incarcerated people do have the right to

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vote,” Amos explained. “It’s important that they realize this and not only register to vote but pledge to vote.”

In Louisiana, people who have been convicted of a felony can vote if they are no longer serving a sentence, if they are on probation, or if they have been on parole for more than 5 years. Amos said it’s important for formerly incarcerated individuals to know their rights, and to be involved in decisions that affect their communities.

“I remember the quote ‘no taxation without representation,’” Amos said. “If you’re going to tax me, then I should have a say on how my money is being spent.”

Young voters are another focus of VOTE’s efforts. Tayla Chatman, a canvasser with the organization, first got involved by joining the group at the capital to sit in during a legislative session.

“I learned a lot about how laws work and how the people we put in office make decisions that affect our lives,” Chatman said. She now focuses on encouraging others to vote in local elections because those elections are important, too.



VOTE has conducted several school and community voter education and registration drives in September.

“A lot of young people are aware of problems, but I don’t think they understand they can actually change the way things are when they vote,” Chatman said.

VOTE is working to engage new and younger voters, Amos said, who often may not know how to register for the first time, find a vot-

ing location or understand which districts they are eligible to vote for. The organization is collaborating with College Campus Voting Organizations to improve the rate of young voter participation.

“What we’re trying to emphasize is that voting and being active in politics impacts your everyday

life,” said Keziah-Yvonne Smith, the Director of Elections for Xavier University of Louisiana’s Student Government. Smith is also a Co-Director in Xavier’s “X Marks the Ballot” Initiative which focuses on getting students civically engaged and passionate about voting.

However, getting young people

active and involved in voting has not been easy. Smith’s team recently traveled to Loyola University in New Orleans to conduct surveys of students to see how they felt about voting.

“A lot of people feel like their vote doesn’t matter,” Smith said. “If everyone actually went to do their civic duty that is when change happens. Students and young voters have been changemakers in a lot of previous elections,” she added.

Nevertheless, Smith is still determined to reach out to students who feel disconnected from politics. “It’s been a challenge, but it’s been a good challenge,” Smith said. She also emphasizes that her goal is not just to get people registered to vote but to also get them to be active voters. “It’s one thing to register, and it’s another thing to actually vote.”

Initiatives like X Marks the Ballot and organizations like VOTE are bringing voter resources to communities who often may not know where to look for voting guides and information.

“People fought tremendously to give me the right to vote, so now in 2024 it is our job to go out and do what they couldn’t,” Smith said.

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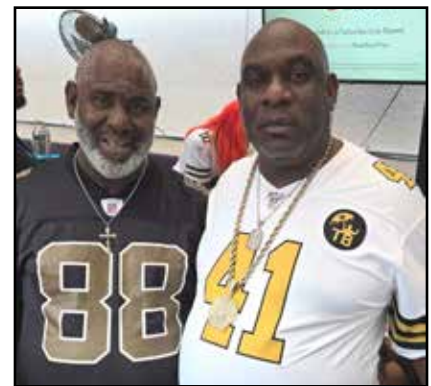
FIND MORE WAYS TO SAVE AT ROUSES

New Orleans Takes Over In Atlanta

Photos by
Glenn Summers
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Thousands of fans of the Black and Gold went to Atlanta for the Saints vs, Falcons game this past weekend. While the Saints came up short, the people of New Orleans represented in a way only members of the WHO DAT NATION can!

And of course, Data News Weekly, The People's Paper was there to catch all the action as we NOLA took over the ATL.



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

Bishop Tom B. Watson Celebrates His 69th Birthday

Elise Schenck
Data News Weekly
Contributor

It was a wonderful birthday celebration and reception honoring Bishop Tom B. Watson filled with love, joy, and great inspiration on Sunday, September 29th (actual birthday) at 4400 St. Charles Ave. The awesome Watson Memorial Sanctuary Choir under the direction of Rev. Thiffani B. Watson rendered great songs and his son-in-law, Pastor Caleb Rowe gave a powerful and uplifting sermon. Psalmist Jada Tanner gave a beautiful selection that inspired the audience.

Several elected officials attended the worship or the reception including, Sheriff Susan Hutson, Clerk of Court Darren Lombard, State Rep. Delisha Boyd, Judges Kern Reese, Simone Levine, Clint Smith and State Supreme Court Justice Piper Griffin along with State Senator Royce Duplessis.

His wife, Pastor Pat Watson coordinated the event and gave warm words of thanks at the conclusion of the worship.



Bishop Watson with grandkids and bonus grandkids enjoying turning 69 years young living a life of purpose and impact.



Bishop Tom Watson with his brother Pastor Aubrey Watson.



Bishop Watson with Evangelist Melanie Pichon (left) and Pastor Eileen Johnson (right).



Bishop Watson with his beautiful wife Pastor Pat Watson.

VOTE

DATA NEWS WEEKLY

Your Voice Matters

Entertainers, Hosts Promote Solutions to Address Youth Crisis

Ja'lyn Jones
Data News Weekly
Contributor
Photos courtesy Monica Basilio and InspireNOLA Charter Schools

Violent Crime Statistics in shootings, assaults, and armed robbery have increased across the metro-area since 2022, and young people under the age of 18 accounted for nearly 10-percent of all violent crime arrests. Roughly 10-percent of Louisiana children aged 3-to-17 - 91,000 children, were diagnosed with depression or anxiety in 2020, with those numbers increasing since the Pandemic.

To address some of the challenges facing local youth, InspireNOLA Schools hosted its second and largest NOLALove Rally that included moti-



Nick Cannon pictured with students.

ational talks with young people from public figures in the entertainment world. Radio host Charlamagne Tha God, Actor and Comedian Rickey

Smiley, and Actor and Rapper Nick Cannon spoke at the rally on Sept. 20, 2024, at Xavier University of Louisiana's Convocation Center with 4,200



Charlamagne Tha God speaking to students/audience.

youth in attendance. The goal behind the event was to encourage love, peace, and advocacy among the city's youth.

"It's all about legacy. People inspired us and now that generation has to inspire the next. We must be change agents because that's what we're all here to do," Cannon said.

The speakers touched on entre-

preneurship, literacy, the importance of mental health, and participation in extracurricular activities like band and sports. Literacy rates in New Orleans have also declined post-Pandemic, with only 34-percent of the city's public-school third graders reading at grade level, according to City Data. Children from low-income families are disproportionately affected by this literacy gap, having a nearly 40-percent lower likelihood of reading proficiency.

"Literacy, in the space of mental health, and financial literacy is the main thing we need to build our community," Cannon said.

The extreme levels of stress that young people in New Orleans experience, from loneliness, academic difficulties, bullying, and family expectations, are a major factor in the city's rising rates of anxiety and depression, according to a study conducted by Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies (IWES).

Newsmaker, Continued on page 7.

State & Local News

The Ashé Rooftop Festival & Gala, Presented by Ashé Cultural Arts Center, Returns on Oct. 11th & 12th, 2024



New Orleans Agenda

The Ashé Rooftop Festival & Gala, presented by Ashé Cultural Arts Center, returns this year to a neighborhood near you! On October 11th & 12th, the event will span across three locations: Mid-City, The Warehouse District, and the Tremé/French Quarter area. This annual fundraiser invites the community to experience the African Diaspora in the sky

and support Ashé's premier focus of celebrating the people, places, and philosophies of the African Diaspora. Tickets for the festival are on sale now—including VIP, General Admission, and Youth tickets. Children 13 and under are free with a ticketed adult. Additions include a kid's corner on the Main Rooftop and free Rooftop Shuttle that will transport guests to each themed experience.

Ashé will kick off the weekend with its Rooftop Gala on Friday, October 11, 2024, and invites you to attend in your best AFROCHIC Attire and experience the African Diaspora in the sky with a headlining performance by Kindred the Family Soul, hosted by Shay O'Connor, and sounds by DJ Rakimbeau! Don't miss an opening performance by Erica Falls and closing by Kings of Brass. Patron party sounds by T-Ray the Violinist.



Prescription Drug Price Hikes Hit Black Americans Hardest as Biden Pushes for Reform

Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

The fight to lower prescription drug prices is hitting African Americans especially hard. A recent report by Patients for Affordable Drugs reveals that pharmaceutical companies have increased prices on more than 1,000 prescription drugs this year, nearly half of those price hikes exceeding the inflation rate. For many Black and Latino patients, especially those aged 65 and over, the rising costs are becoming unbearable.

Black Americans are more likely to suffer from conditions like diabetes, chronic pain, and high blood pressure, which means that these skyrocketing prices have a disproportionately negative impact on them. Enhertu, a drug used to treat HER2-Positive Breast Cancer, has seen its price rise eight times since 2019. This is especially alarming for Black women, who are more likely to die from HER2-Positive Tumors than White women. Meanwhile, the price of Revlimid, used to treat Multiple Myeloma, has jumped to over \$89,000 per month. Black Americans are more likely to suffer from Multiple Myeloma and experience worse outcomes.

While lawsuits and regulatory actions move forward, advocates like Margarida Jorge, Executive



In addition to dismantling crucial consumer protections established by the ACA, such as coverage for pre-existing conditions and prohibitions against insurance company abuses, officials said the Republican budget would also convert Medicare into a "premium support" program, potentially raising premiums for millions of seniors and exacerbating prescription drug costs. (Photo: iStockphoto / NNPA)

Director of Health Care for America Now, point to the long-standing racial inequities in healthcare that contribute to the crisis. She cites the lack of affordable treatment for conditions like sickle cell anemia, which affects 1 in 13 Black babies born in the U.S., as a clear example of systemic racism. "There hasn't been much attention to really getting down to the business of trying to cure Sickle Cell Anemia with a drug that is affordable to regular people," Jorge said in an NBC News interview.

The Biden Administration has taken steps to address the issue through the Inflation Reduction Act, which aims to cap out-of-pocket drug costs for Medicare benefi-

ciaries at \$2,000 annually by 2025. President Biden also announced that Medicare will begin negotiating lower prices for some of the most expensive and widely used drugs. In his statement, Biden emphasized the stark contrast between his administration's actions and the opposition from Republicans in Congress, who he said have consistently tried to repeal these reforms.

"For too long, millions of Americans have faced the impossible choice of paying for their prescription drugs or being able

to afford other basic needs," Biden said. "While Big Pharma made record profits, Americans footed the bill for the industry's price hikes. Not anymore."

Starting in October, seniors and people with disabilities enrolled in Medicare will pay less for 54 Part B prescription drugs, Biden announced. "That means more money will go back into the pockets of people with Medicare – including some of the 822,000 seniors and people with disabilities who use these drugs annually to treat conditions like cancer, osteoporosis, and pneumonia, and some seniors will save more than \$3,800 per day," he stated.

"These lower costs are only possible because of the Inflation Reduction Act, which passed with the leadership of Democrats in Congress, and with Vice President Harris casting the tie-breaking vote in the Senate – without a single Republican voting for it," Biden added. "While Republicans in Congress try to repeal the Inflation Reduction Act which would mean high drug costs for seniors, Vice President Harris and I will keep fighting to ensure all Americans can pay less for prescription drugs."

Newsmaker, Continued
from page 6.

Many of the city's youth cope through music, video games, and friends. Simultaneously, they highlight the need for safer and secure environments where young people can express their emotions.

"I want young people to be confident. I want them to be involved with being able to show, give, and spread love without being stigmatized or stereotyped based on their love," said Singer-Songwriter Tonya Boyd-Cannon, who hosted the NO-LALove Rally event.

"I want them to be vocal about how they feel because we don't want anyone to feel a certain way and can't be able to express it because they're dealing with abuse," said Boyd-Cannon. "I am a testament to domestic abuse, so I know what that's like as well. So, we want to make sure that when we're

speaking up, we're speaking loudly. Speak up more about love."

The artists also encouraged students to use their voices in the upcoming election.

"Local government. We put too much emphasis on the pageantry. We need to focus on our own communities and putting the right leaders in place to actually change the things in our neighborhood," Cannon said.

Boyd-Cannon added: "Young people need to speak up and be vocal about what their needs are and hold those political figures to that challenge. Challenge them. Hold them to the standards and their beliefs," she said.

"When you say something, you got to mean what you say and say what you mean. Accountability, transparency, and truth will allow us to see who people really are," she said.

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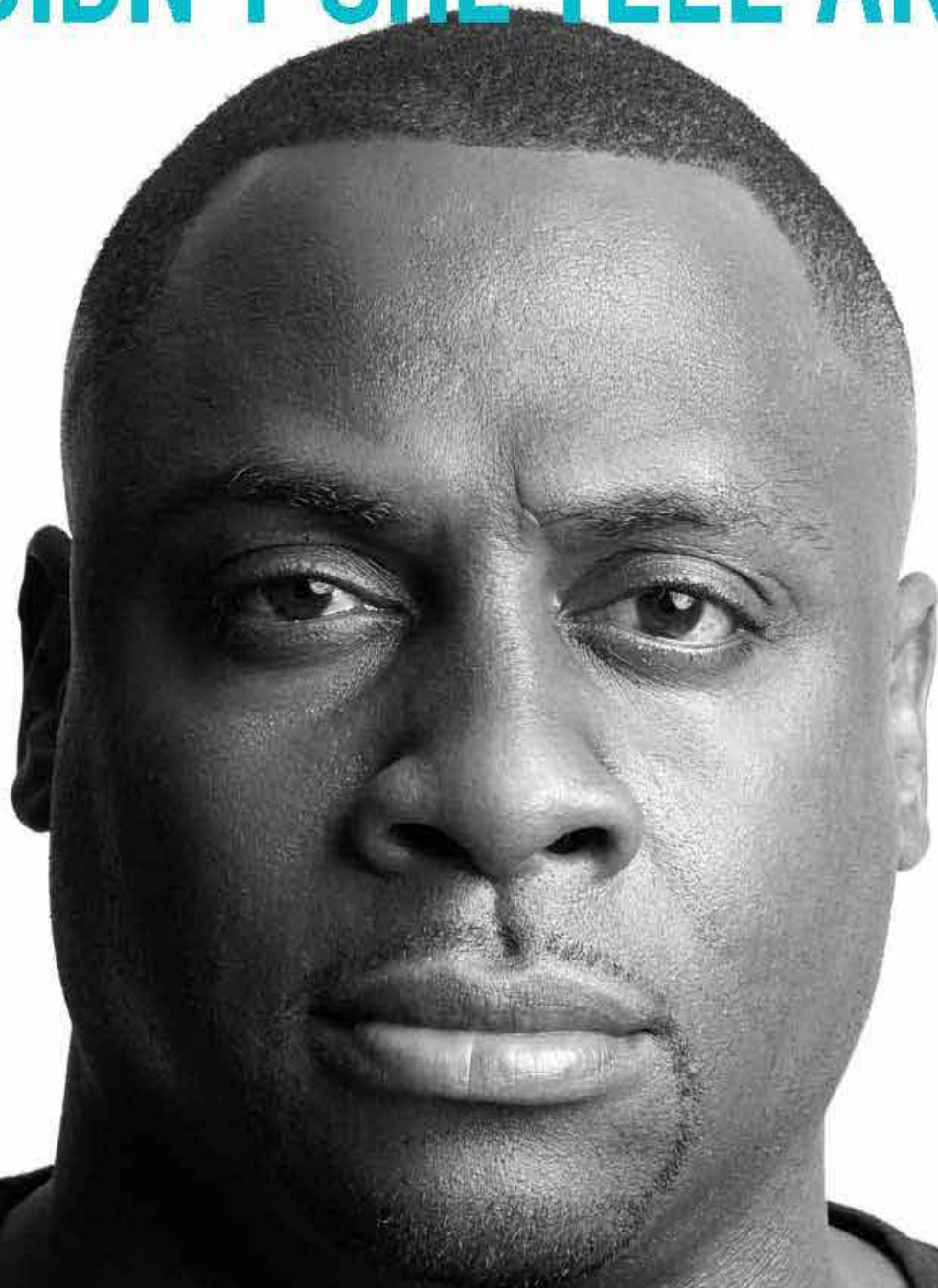
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