

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

Data

News Weekly

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December 14 - December 20, 2024 59th Year Volume 33 www.ladatanews.com

A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DON'T VOTE?



When Blacks do not vote in large numbers, candidates are elected who often do not consider the needs of the African American community. Enacting policies that have adverse effects that impact access to education, jobs, healthcare, the right to vote, and the criminal justice system. But despite the recent election results, whether citizens voted or not, it is important to remain civically engaged with those who hold elected office, holding them accountable to the needs of the Black community.

Benjamin Bates
Data News Weekly Contributor

In this last election cycle, candidates on the national, state, and local levels won, not because they were the best-qualified candidates but because of low voter turnout. In the Saturday New Orleans runoff, only 10%

came out to vote, and in Baton Rouge, only 36% went to the polls.

We must remember that in a democracy, voting is not just a right—it is a responsibility, a fundamental tool for shaping the future. Yet, when we choose not to vote in these turbulent times, our silence speaks volumes, often echoing with unintended consequences.

The Power of the Vote

Voting is more than selecting candidates; it is about influencing policies, priorities, and the allocation of resources. Each vote contributes to the collective voice that determines the direction of communities, states, and nations. It empowers individuals to address issues that matter most—healthcare, education, climate

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Please call 504-309-9913 for subscription information or to obtain a back issue of the paper ONLY.
Dated material two weeks in advance. Not responsible for publishing or return of unsolicited manuscripts or photos.

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change, civil rights, and economic equity. To abstain from voting is to forfeit this power, leaving decisions to others whose priorities may not align with your own.

The Consequences of Silence

When voter turnout is low, the outcome often reflects the will of a small, highly motivated segment of the population. This can skew representation, reinforcing policies and systems that fail to serve the broader community. Historically, marginalized groups have been disproportionately affected by decisions made in their absence. Their silence, whether due to systemic barriers or apathy, has perpetuated inequities in justice, opportunity, and access.

The Cost of Apathy

The reasons for not voting are varied—disillusionment, lack of information, or the belief that one vote doesn't matter. However, history tells a different story. Elections have been decided by razor-thin margins, proving that every vote counts. When individuals choose



not to participate, they relinquish their influence over decisions that impact their daily lives and the generations to come.

Overcoming Barriers

It's essential to recognize and address the barriers that prevent people from voting. These include voter suppression tactics, limited access to polling places, and misinformation. Civic education and

community engagement are crucial in empowering individuals to participate fully in the democratic process.

A Call to Action

Voting is an act of hope and a declaration of belief in the power of collective action. It is a statement that our voices matter and that change is possible. When we don't vote, we surrender this power, and the



silence can be deafening. Let us not allow apathy or obstacles to mute our voices. Instead, let us engage, educate, and empower ourselves and others to participate in shaping a future that reflects the diverse and dynamic fabric of our society.

In every election, we are faced with a choice—not just of candidates, but of whether to embrace or relinquish the responsibility of citizenship. Let us choose to vote, to speak, and to act. The stakes are too high for silence.

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Cozy Up Styles



Tracee Dundas
Fashion Stylist

MEN'S

1. Flannel Black Plaid Shirt, White Hoodie & Black Slim Jeans - from Coofandy
2. Block Color Jogger Set - from Shein
3. Cream Varsity Jacket & Khaki Cargo Pants - from AloYoga
4. Charcoal Quilted Jacket & Loose Fit Jogger - from Banana Republic
5. Coffee 3 Piece Set - Long Jacket, Turtleneck & Loose Pants - from Coofandy



WOMEN'S

6. Bronze Quilted Hoodie Set & Ivory Oversize Scarf - from AloYoga
7. Red Stripe Crewneck Sweater & Loose Fit Jeans, Cap - from Banana Republic
8. Purple Hooded Velour Hi-Low Dress - from Ashley Stewart
9. Indigo Blue CableKnit Three Piece Set - from Fashion Nova



The Network 2024 Coalition Presented "What Legends Are Made Of"

Photos By
Glenn Summers
Data News Weekly
Contributor

A celebration of Greatness honoring the best and the brightest who have made an undeniable impact in Louisiana and the Nation. The event was held on Friday, November 29th, 2024, at the Le Pavillon Hotel in New Orleans.



Inaugural Richard E. Zuschlag Memorial Award Honorees – (L to R) Tim Burke, VP Acadian Companies; Senator Gerald Boudreaux, Congressman Troy A. Carter, E.J. Kuiper, Franciscan Michael McClanahan, Louisiana NAACP; and Taylor Porter, Acadian Companies.



The Loeb Sisters (Cynthia & Sheila) presented a special jacket to the Mayor of Opelousas for his exceptional transition to being parking lot attendant for a day. It was a tongue & cheek moment of laughter. (L to R) Clophus Semien, Sr., Sheila Loeb, Mayor Julius Alsandor, and Cynthia Loeb Tarver (podium). Mayor Alsandor is also State President of LMA Black Caucus- LEO.



Congressman Carter paid a very special tribute to the first African American Sheriff in CADDO Parish (Shreveport) history, Henry L. Whitehorn. He was given a Congressional Commendation and Lifetime Achievement Award. Mr. Whitehorn was also the second Black Superintendent of State Police and the first Black U.S. Marshall of the Western District of Louisiana nominated by President Barack Obama. (L to R) Allen Semien, Henry L. Whitehorn, and Congressman Troy A. Carter.



Pastor Joshua A. Joy Dara Sr. of Zion Hill Church Family of Pineville (Alexandria) is recognized for his devotion and commitment to the people of Central Louisiana especially our youth and elderly. He was also given the Distinguished Community Service Award. (L to R) Congressman Troy A. Carter, Pastor Joshua A. Joy Dara, Sr., and Allen Semien.

Approved
10/4/2024
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gp2 Black & African American
Connections to
Parkinson's Disease Study

For yourself. For family. For community.

The Global Parkinson's Genetics Program (GP2) is an international research program. GP2 aims to learn more about gene changes that may cause Parkinson's in people from all backgrounds.



GP2 is seeking Black and African American people age 18 and older – **both with and without Parkinson's disease** – for a research study. Participants will help advance knowledge about Parkinson's disease in Black and African American people.

To learn more and see if you're eligible, please contact:
Dom Thomas, Clinic Program Coordinator - Neurology
dominique.thomas3@ochsner.org
504-842-3980

blaacpd.org

gp2 Global Parkinson's
Genetics Program

THE MICHAEL J. FOX FOUNDATION
FOR PARKINSON'S RESEARCH

Greater St. Stephen Ministries to Host a Free Toy Giveaway December 14th

Data News Staff Edited Report

The most wonderful time of the year is upon us, and Greater St. Stephen Ministries is excited to spread joy and holiday cheer with its Annual Toy Giveaway. This community event will take place on Saturday, December 14th at 11:00 a.m. at Greater St. Stephen (Morton Hall), 5600 Read Blvd., New Orleans, La. 70127.

The Toy Giveaway aims to ensure that all children experience



the joy of receiving a Christmas gift. With the support of various community organizations and sponsors, the event will provide over 1,000 new toys for children up to age 14, on a first-come, first-served basis.

In addition to the toy distribution, the holiday festivities will include digital holiday portraits, light bites, and a host of family games, ensuring fun and wholesome entertainment for all. This event promises to be a memorable celebration for families, with activities that cre-

ate lasting memories and bring the spirit of the season to life.

“Greater St. Stephen Ministries is thrilled to give back to the community this holiday season. Our Toy Giveaway is a chance to brighten the lives of our youth and their families, creating a joyful and unforgettable Christmas experience,” said Bishop T. Delbert Robinson, Senior Pastor of Greater St. Stephen. “This event reflects our mission to not only provide gifts but also to offer a sense of hope, love, and togetherness.”

State & Local News

Daughters Beyond Incarceration Launches 2025 Policy Fellowship for High School Girls with Incarcerated Parents

Fellowship Offers \$3,000 Stipend, Legislative Education, and Leadership Development

New Orleans Agenda

Daughters Beyond Incarceration (DBI) is thrilled to announce the launch of its 2025 Policy Fellowship, an empowering program designed to educate and engage high school girls with incarcerated parents in the legislative process. The fellowship runs from January to July 2025, providing participants with hands-on experience in criminal justice reform, voting rights, and policymaking. Fellows will earn \$3,000 for their participation.

The fellowship is open to girls ages 15-18 who are currently enrolled in high school and have an incarcerated parent. The application period closes on December 14, 2024, and interested applicants can apply through DBI's Policy Fellowship Application Form.

“Every year, we see the impact of incarceration ripple through families and communities. This fellowship is about empowering the daughters of incarcerated individu-



als to become advocates and leaders in shaping a more just system,” said Dominique Johnson, Executive Director of Daughters Beyond Incarceration. “We’re giving these young women the tools, resources, and confidence to not only tell their stories but to create lasting change in their communities.”

Key Fellowship Highlights:

Eligibility: High school girls (ages 15-18) with an incarcerated parent.
Stipend: Participants earn \$3,000 during the program.

Program Focus: Voting rights,

criminal justice, and the legislative process.

Timeline: January–July 2025.

Application Deadline: December 14, 2024.

How to Apply: Submit an application via this form.

Applicants are encouraged to express their interest creatively through essays, songs, poems, or videos in response to the question: “Why is it important for you to help raise awareness of the damages incarceration causes to families?”

DBI invites educators, parents, community activists, and advocates to share this opportunity widely. Community members can support by sharing DBI's recruitment flyers and encouraging eligible students in their networks to apply. Together, we can equip these young women with the tools they need to make a difference. For more information, visit www.dbinola.org.



Daniel Penny Acquitted in Subway Chokehold Death of Jordan Neely, Sparking Fresh Outrage

Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

Daniel Penny, the former Marine who placed Jordan Neely in a fatal chokehold on a New York City subway, was acquitted Monday of criminally negligent homicide. Neely, a 30-year-old homeless man with a documented history of mental illness, died on May 1, 2023, in an incident that drew national attention and ignited weeks of protests over issues of mental health, public safety, and racial justice.

The acquittal came after a jury of seven women and five men deliberated for five days. Their decision followed a deadlock on a more serious manslaughter charge, leading Judge Maxwell Wiley to dismiss it on Friday. Penny, 26, who faced up to four years in prison, walked free after the jury found no unanimous consensus on his criminal liability.

Neely's final moments were captured on bystander video, showing Penny restraining him with a chokehold for nearly six minutes. Witnesses testified that Neely, a one-time Michael Jackson impersonator, had been shouting on the train, expressing his desperation, hunger, and desire to return to jail. His erratic behavior allegedly frightened some passengers, and Penny grabbed Neely and placed him in a chokehold.



Jordan Neely

The case has drawn comparisons to the infamous 1984 incident involving Bernhard Goetz, a White man who shot four Black teenagers on a New York City subway after claiming he believed they were trying to rob him.

The case has drawn comparisons to the infamous 1984 incident involving Bernhard Goetz, a white man who shot four Black teenagers on a New York City subway after claiming he believed they were trying to rob him. Goetz's acquittal on attempted murder charges, despite being convicted of illegal firearm possession, sparked fierce debates on race, vigilantism, and self-defense. Much like the Goetz case, Penny's acquittal has again highlighted the persistent racial disparities in how the justice system perceives and punishes acts of force, particularly when the victims are Black.

he acted out of fear for other passengers' safety and did not intend to kill Neely. They further claimed that the amount of pressure Penny applied during the restraint was unclear.

The case has resurfaced deep societal divides over the handling of mental health crises and vigilantism. Neely, a Black man battling untreated mental illness and homelessness, became a symbol of systemic failures. Penny's actions—and his subsequent legal defense—drew sharp criticism for perpetuating dangerous stereotypes and justifying lethal force against vulnerable individuals.

Jordan Neely's father, Andre Zachary, has since filed a civil lawsuit against Penny in New York Supreme Court. The suit alleges negligence, assault, and battery, seeking damages exceeding the jurisdictional limits of lower courts. "We are still seeking justice for Jordan," Zachary said.

Prosecutors argued Penny's actions were reckless and caused Neely's death by neck compression. The city's medical examiner ruled Neely's death a homicide, attributing it to the chokehold. Penny's defense team maintained

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Job Opportunity

Freelance Writers Wanted

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.

Compensation is competitive and great story ideas will be appreciated.

If you are interested, please email your resume and 3 writing samples to: terrybjones@bellsouth.net and datanewseditor@bellsouth.net.

We can't wait to hear from you!

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A photograph of a man in a blue graduation gown adjusting a purple cap on a woman in a red dress. The man is smiling and looking down at the woman, who is looking up at him. They are standing in front of a blue background.

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