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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

Celebrating New Orleans' Black Music Legacy

During Black History Month



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Celebrating New Orleans’ Black Music Legacy

During Black History Month



Dwayne “Lil Wayne” Carter

Big Freedia

Mia X

Jelly Roll Morton

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief Data News Weekly

New Orleans, often called the birthplace of jazz, boasts a rich and profound Black Musical Heritage that has shaped the landscape of

American music. As Black History Month unfolds, Data News Weekly takes a closer look at the key genres, artists, and historical moments that define the Crescent City’s sound, one that continues to influence music worldwide.

Roots in African and Caribbean Influence

New Orleans’ Musical Legacy traces back to African rhythms and spirituals brought by enslaved Africans, which merged with French, Spanish, and Caribbean influences. A significant site

for this cultural exchange was Congo Square in the early 1800s, where enslaved people gathered on Sundays to play drums, dance, and engage in call-and-response singing. These traditions laid the groundwork for jazz and other genres that would emerge in the city.

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Brass Bands & Second Lines: A Tradition of Celebration

The Brass Band Tradition in New Orleans evolved from military-style bands infused with blues and syncopation, creating an energetic and distinctly Black American sound. This tradition lives on today in the city's famous Second Line parades, which originated from jazz funerals. These processions begin with solemn dirges before bursting into joyous, celebratory dance music, a practice that still draws thousands into the streets for annual parades led by social aid and pleasure clubs.

The Birthplace of Jazz

From the late 1800s to the early 1900s, New Orleans became the Cradle of Jazz, thanks to pioneers such as Buddy Bolden, often credited as the first jazz musician, and Jelly Roll Morton, who famously claimed to have "invented jazz." The city also gave rise to Louis Armstrong, whose innovative trumpet playing and gravelly voice revolutionized the genre. Other key figures, like King Oliver and Sidney

Bechet, helped spread jazz from New Orleans to the world.

The Rise of R&B and Funk

By the mid-1900s,

blues (R&B) and funk. Professor Longhair blended Caribbean Rhythms into his signature piano style, while Fats Domino became

helped define the New Orleans soul and R&B sound. Meanwhile, The Meters laid the foundation for funk, influencing hip-hop and future funk artists with their infectious rhythms.

Gospel & Soul: Voices of Power and Emotion

New Orleans has also made a lasting impact on gospel and soul music. Mahalia Jackson, one of the most influential gospel singers of all time, brought the city's gospel traditions to international prominence. The city also produced Irma Thomas, known as the "Soul Queen of New Orleans," whose blend of gospel, soul, and blues remains legendary.

Hip-Hop and Bounce: The Sound of Today

In the 1990s, New Orleans birthed Bounce music, a high-energy subgenre of hip-hop known

for its call-and-response lyrics and signature "Triggerman" beat. Artists like Big Freedia have since propelled bounce music into mainstream pop culture. The city also became a hip-hop powerhouse through labels like No Limit Records and Cash Money Records, launching the careers of Master P, Mia X, Lil Wayne, and Juvenile.

A Living, Breathing Musical Legacy

New Orleans' Black Musical Traditions are far from static—they continue to evolve, influencing artists and genres worldwide. The city's music, born from resilience, joy, and cultural fusion, remains a gift to the world. From jazz to bounce, every note played on New Orleans' streets tell a story of history, struggle, and triumph.

As we celebrate Black History Month, let us honor the artists and traditions that have made New Orleans a Global Musical Treasure. The city's sound is more than music—it is the heartbeat of a people, a culture, and a history that continues to thrive.



Mahalia Jackson

the New Orleans sound expanded beyond jazz, birthing rhythm and

a rock 'n' roll icon with hits like Blueberry Hill. Allen Toussaint, a prolific songwriter and producer,

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Tracee Dundas
Fashion Stylist

Photos provided by Retail Brands

New Orleans is more than just parades and beads—it's a season of elegance, tradition, and high fashion. The city's grand balls, hosted by historic krewes, are the pinnacle of celebration, where attendees don luxurious gowns and tuxedos that blend classic grandeur with contemporary flair.

Avante-Garde Mardi Gras Fashions embrace bold statements while honoring tradition. Gowns are no longer confined to heavy, ornate designs; today's couture features sleek silhouettes, daring cutouts, and high slits that add a touch of modernity while maintaining regal sophistication. Metallic fabrics, jewel tones, and intricate beading still reign, but now, fashion-forward guests opt for asymmetric necklines, feathered embellishments, or sheer overlays for a fresh take on Mardi Gras royalty.

For tuxedos, the classic black-and-white ensemble is being reimagined with rich velvets, deep-hued brocades, and unexpected pops of color. Jewel-toned jackets in emerald, sapphire, or even metallic shades elevate the look, while tailored fits and statement accessories—think patterned bow ties, embroidered lapels, or velvet loafers—make for a refined yet modern aesthetic.

Attending a Mardi Gras Ball whether in New Orleans, Washington, DC, or Rio de Janeiro; isn't just about dressing up; it's about embodying the theatrical spirit of the season. From dramatic entrances to waltzing under chandeliers, every detail matters. A carefully curated ensemble ensures that revelers don't just attend the ball—they own the night. Whether dripping in sequins or commanding attention in a velvet tux, Mardi Gras Fashion is all about making an unforgettable statement.



Purple dress with sheer sleeves & vine embellishments by Designer Gwen Hawkins | Photo Credit: Depicted Images



Elegant red gown with fringed neck & sleeves by Designer Gwen Hawkins ItalyDirect



Royal blue coat with sleek black cummerbund & bowtie provided by John's Tuxedo | Photo Credit: Depicted Images



Emerald, green smoking jacket with bowtie & black slacks provided by Luca Falcone Custom Clothier



Three-Piece blue & grey plaid slim suit provided by Luca Falcone Custom Clothier



Strapless sequined gown encased by ostrich feathers by Designer Pedram Taheri / Romey Roe



Blue dress with pleating & unique neckline provided by West London Boutique



Blush color corseted gown with layered tulle skirt & high slit provided by The Red-Carpet



Avant-garde dress with sheer puffed sleeves, choker neckline, & tulle skirt odAOMO by Designer Sophia Omoro

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

BeauTea Bowl Lounge will serve as Local Pop-up for Major City Event

Story by Zaria Fenderson
Photos by C Freedom
Data News Weekly Contributors

As Super Bowl week took over the City of New Orleans, two Houston and Atlanta-based businesses ensured that ladies could spend their weekend in style.

On Feb. 6th, 2 Hoots Hard Iced Tea & Cocktails teamed up with Lemon-Light Media and Indigo Marketing to create The BeauTea Bowl Lounge. This exclusive pop-up event provided free pampering services to the public, women in sports, credentialed media outlets, and entertainers.

The event, held at The Ferrea Showman Gallery downtown, transformed into a women's dream event. It featured free facials/massages, hair styling, nails, lashes, and other pampering. "With our team trying to figure out all the logistics for hosting the event and getting more media exposure was a lot," said Jenelle Pinnock, a spokesperson for Lemon Light Media.

"However, I'm so glad that we got to bring so many women together to be able to enjoy a relaxing and upscale event that was made to uplift them," she added.

It was an open event for all women to enjoy blended luxury, self-care, and community involvement during the weekend. It also consisted of an open bar of beverages and delicate appetizers for guests to partake in. Those who attended said the lounge was a breath of fresh air.

"This was an event that was dedicated to sophisticated women behind the



Indigo Marketing CEO Chaka Howard and Lemon Light Media CEO La'Torria Lemon welcome patrons to the pop-up lounge



Summer Cosmetics was one of the vendors at the lounge handing out gift bags and beauty products and tips.

scenes of the NFL," said La'Torria Lemon, the founder of Lemon Light Media.

Local beauty professionals donated their services, offering expert and personalized treatments. Attendees were also given complimentary gift bags filled with goodies from brands like Slapwoodz and 2 Hoots that contained socks, and herbal care products.

Beyond the pampering, the Lounge also acted as a networking hub for many individuals. The women were able to connect with fellow attendees, entrepreneurs, and influencers. A few participants were seen swapping business ideas, cosmetic ideas, and even self-care relaxing techniques.

"This event was an opportunity for someone like me who is a college student at an HBCU to be able to get out and network with others," said Tashia Hogue, a senior at Xavier University of Louisiana.

Many guests shared that the event will become an annual tradition beyond the Super Bowl, allowing women to enjoy comfort and pleasure while celebrating major events that happen in the city.

Lemon and her crew are already looking to expand, including establishing more events like this in other cities for major events like NBA All-Star Weekend and the Essence Festival.

BeauTea Bowl Lounge's dedication embodies the growing importance of wellness-focused events, demonstrating that even amid huge sporting events, there's always room for self-care.

"I remember one thing that stuck with me when I left the event, [it] was the saying behind every strong man is a strong woman," Hogue said.

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New Orleans Museum Of Art (NOMA) Appoints Anne Collins Smith as Chief Curator

Data News Staff Edited Report

Last week the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) announced the appointment of Anne Collins Smith as Chief Curator.

In an important role for the museum, Smith leads NOMA's Collection and Exhibition initiatives and manages the institution's team of curators, conservators, and collections staff. Smith is responsible for the museum's presentations of modern and contemporary art adding significant expertise in African American Art.

"The museum's permanent collection of art spanning 5,000 years is at the center of everything we do," said Susan M. Taylor, The Montine McDaniel Freeman Director of NOMA. "Anne Collins Smith is an ac-



Anne Collins Smith new Chief Curator for New Orleans Museum Of Art (NOMA)

complished curator, art historian, and museum leader, and we are thrilled to welcome her to NOMA in this crucial position. Her experience in institutions across the country and her perspective as a native New Orleanian make her an important addition to our staff."

As Chief Curator, Smith will spearhead forward-thinking approaches to NOMA's Collection and Exhibitions that are both aligned with best practices in the field and responsive to the museum's specific needs. Upcoming projects include planning for the reinstallation of parts of the permanent collec-

tion and serving as the institutional curator for upcoming retrospectives by Artists Hayward Oubre and Willie Birch.

Smith was most recently Director of the Xavier University of Louisiana Art Gallery. She has held positions including Curator of Collections at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta, Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College, and Romare Bearden Fellow at the Saint Louis Art Museum. In 2021, Smith was selected for a prestigious Center for Curatorial Leadership Fellowship. Smith holds an MA in Visual Arts Administration from New York University and a BA from Spelman College.

Additionally, Smith's professional interests include arts and the economy, audience development, the evolving role of the curator, and artistic and cultural practices

across the African Diaspora. She has worked on exhibitions with important figures in contemporary art including Howardena Pindell and Maren Hassinger and last year organized *Lighting the Path: A Testament to the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament*, which looked at the history of the religious order that helped found Xavier University and many other institutions.

"This appointment is the opportunity of a lifetime and a testimony to perseverance and my dedication to curatorial practice. I look forward to advancing NOMA's Mission and shepherding exemplary art experiences with our dynamic team of curators," said Smith. "The Art Historian Mary Ann Calo speaks of how curators serve as interlocutors between art, artists, and the community. This principle continues to guide me through my career."

Commentary

Administration's Slash-And-Burn Campaign to Dismantle Education Is Unlawful, Unpopular, and Disastrous



Marc Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

"Presidents Trump and Musk and their billionaire buddies are so detached from how Americans live that they cannot see how ending public education and canceling these contracts kills the American Dream. This is not about Democrats versus Republicans. This is about billionaires versus the middle class. If kids from working class families do not have access to schools, how can they build a

future?" — U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro

The Elon Musk-led slash-and-burn squad euphemistically known as the Department of Government Efficiency has revoked the contracts of researchers who are years into the collection, analysis, and study of educational data.

It has pulled about 100 Department of Education employees, including those with even the slightest connection to diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, from their jobs.

At her Senate confirmation hearing, the nominee for Secretary of Education — an extremist advocate for diverting public funds to private schools — outlined her plan for dismantling her own department.

Meanwhile, extremist allies in the House of Representatives were preparing legislation to divert the

resources slashed from educational initiatives to billionaires.

The current administration appears recklessly determined to sabotage our nation's competitiveness in the new technology-based economy by undermining federal oversight and support for education. Openly mocking its own legal and moral duty to eliminate educational opportunity gaps as "wokeness," the administration will abandon students in underserved communities, shifting ever-more resources toward the wealthiest Americans.

The Department of Education has been a cabinet-level agency for only 46 years, but opponents of educational equity have been trying to eliminate federal oversight and support for education since shortly after the Civil War. Just a year after President

Andrew Johnson signed a bill creating the first Department of Education, resentment over the education of formerly enslaved people led to the demotion of the agency to an office within the Department of the Interior.

Federal support for education remained relatively feeble for nearly a century, until the landmark Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. Part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the Act represented the first significant federal investment in primary and secondary schools and a commitment to closing the achievement gap.

Both Republican and Democratic presidents have reauthorized the Act over the years, most notably 1994's Improving America's Schools Act under President Bill Clinton, 2002's No Child Left Behind Act under Presi-

dent George W. Bush, and 2015's Every Student Succeeds Act under President Barack Obama.

The Trump administration is drafting an executive order that calls on Congress to eliminate the Department of Education, but members are unlikely to defy the strong public sentiment in favor of it. Only 29% of voters want to see the Department eliminated, and nearly 70% support increased funding for education.

A clue to the motivation behind the administration's unpopular and disastrous campaign against education lies in Musk's own publicly declared desire to displace American-born engineers with lower-paid immigrants. He falsely claims that Americans aren't educated enough for the work, but seems determined to make that claim a reality.

Companies Face Immediate Backlash for Abandoning DEI Pledges

Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

America's retreat from diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) commitments is already having significant repercussions, with consumer boycotts, stock fluctuations, and mounting legal battles reshaping the financial landscape for major firms. Companies that once championed DEI efforts in the wake of George Floyd's murder have begun to abandon these initiatives under mounting conservative pressure, only to face economic and public relations consequences of their own.

Target is at the center of a lawsuit alleging it misled investors about its Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and DEI policies. The lawsuit argues that Target's messaging led to widespread boycotts following its 2023 LGBTQ+ Pride campaign, which extended into a 2024 backlash. The impact on the retailer's bottom line has been undeniable, with Target's stock price experiencing a sharp decline. On a recent trading day, shares dipped another 28 cents. Further, Blue Chip Partners LLC reduced its holdings in Target by 6.8% in the fourth quarter, selling more than 10,000 shares.

Despite dropping its own DEI initiative, Walmart has fared better than Target, even as Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund recently divested from the retailer. On Feb. 14, Walmart's stock slipped from \$105.30 per share opening to \$103.60, a minor dip compared to the larger financial instability seen elsewhere.

Other corporations abandoning DEI commitments are feeling the strain in different ways. Ford, which eliminated its DEI program, is now facing what many argue is the karma of a staggering \$2.5 billion in punitive damages from a recent



The impact on the retailer's bottom line has been undeniable, with Target's stock price experiencing a sharp decline.

jury verdict in Columbus. McDonald's has seen its stock continue steadily declining, falling to \$308.55 per share, with Blue Chip Partners LLC also selling off its holdings in the fast-food giant. Coca-Cola and PepsiCo, preparing to comply with executive orders to dismantle DEI programs, have also taken hits. Coca-Cola's stock dropped by more than 63 cents, while PepsiCo saw a more than \$1.19 per share decline.

The entertainment and media industries are not immune. Disney has overhauled its DEI initiatives, dropping its "Reimagine Tomorrow" website and adjusting diversity-related content warnings. While Disney's stock has fluctuated, it recently slightly increased by 79 cents. Meanwhile, PBS has shuttered its DEI office, citing the need to comply with anti-DEI executive orders.

Retailers and financial institutions are also responding. Lowe's has merged its employee resource groups under one umbrella and cut its participation in external diversity events. Truist Financial Corp. recently trimmed its stake in Lowe's, selling off over 39,000 shares. Meanwhile, Amazon omitted DEI language from its latest

sociation (NNPA), representing the Black Press of America, has launched a national public education and selective buying campaign in response to corporate America's retreat from DEI. The NAACP has also issued a spending guide identifying businesses that have abandoned or upheld diversity commitments. Pastor Jamal Bryant of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta has called for a 40-day economic fast against Target, urging 100,000 people to halt spending at the retailer. Bryant noted that Target had pledged \$2 billion toward Black-owned businesses but rescinded that commitment in January.

"Black people spend \$12 million a day at Target," Bryant said on the Black Press' Let It Be Known news program. "Because of how many dollars are spent there and the absence of commitment to our community, we are focusing on Target first."

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Compensation is competitive and great story ideas will be appreciated.

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