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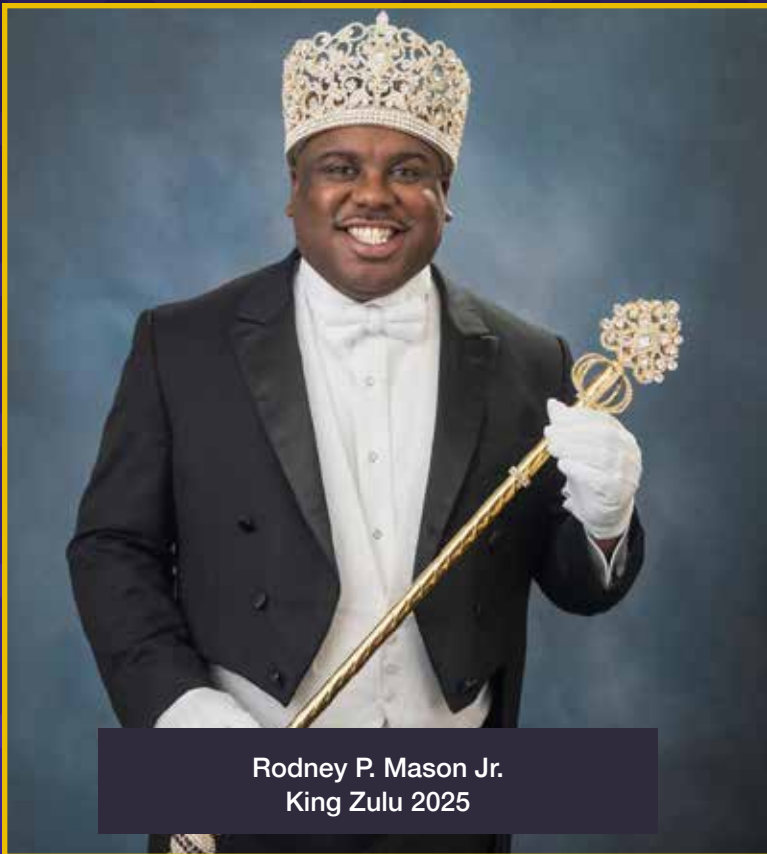
River Road African American Museum Presented Third Thursday

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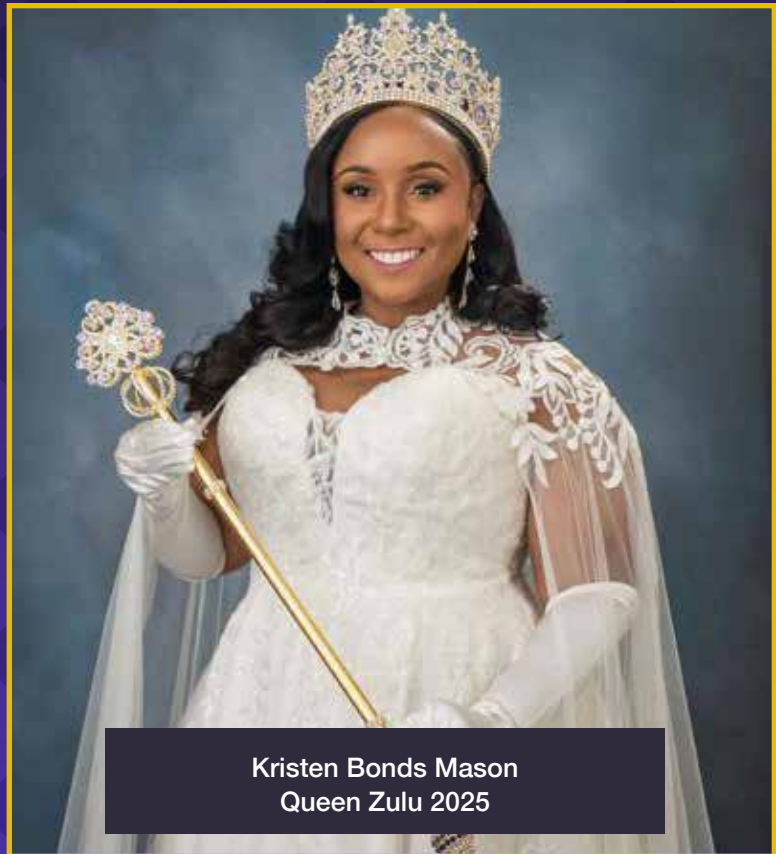
March 1 - March 7, 2025 59th Year Volume 44 www.ladatanews.com

A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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Introducing King and Queen Zulu 2025



Rodney P. Mason Jr.
King Zulu 2025



Kristen Bonds Mason
Queen Zulu 2025

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief Data News Weekly

King Zulu 2025 – Rodney P. Mason Jr.
New Orleans native Rodney P. Mason Jr. is a devoted family man, public servant, and gifted musician. An alumnus of St. Augustine High School and Alabama A&M University, he honed his skills as a trumpet player and leader in Kappa Kappa Psi. Employed with

New Orleans' Capital Projects Administration, Rodney dedicates his work to revitalizing his city. Inspired by his father's longstanding commitment to the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, he joined Zulu in 2006 and has served in roles such as Zulu Mayor and Recording Secretary. Now elected as King Zulu 2025, he embod-

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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ies the organization’s legacy, bridging generations with passion and service.

Rodney is extremely honored to be elected King Zulu 2025, the youngest millennial Zulu King. He is forever grateful for his father Rodney P. Mason Sr. for introducing him to this great brotherhood and thankful for the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club for all the great experiences and opportunities over the years. This organization led to him marrying the love of his life and now being elected the 109th King of Zulu. Rodney has an immense passion for the Zulu Organization and the City of New Orleans, he guarantees that he will be a King you will be proud of and remember for years to come. King Zulu 2025 is the representation of Zulu Yesterday, Zulu Today, and Zulu Tomorrow.

Queen Zulu 2025 – Kristen Bonds Mason

New Orleans native Kristen Bonds Mason is a dedicated wife, STEM Advocate, and community leader. Raised in Uptown New Orleans and active in her church choir,

she earned degrees in Biology and Public Health before forging a career as a Health Physicist protecting public safety. A lifelong dancer and cultural ambassador through her involvement with local dance krewe groups, Kristen inspires others to embrace their potential. As Queen Zulu-Select 2025, she champions the values of faith, family, and community, reflecting the vibrant Spirit of New Orleans.

As Queen Zulu, Mrs. Kristen B. Mason’s goal is to encourage young adults to embrace their unique potential and walk through life with passion and purpose. Mrs. Mason has a deep appreciation of the vibrant culture that is embedded in the City of New Orleans. She represents the multifaceted young girls and women raised in our resilient city. She aims to demonstrate the importance of being well-rounded, which includes remaining focused on her commitment to faith, family and the community while also promoting social empowerment and continuing to focus on her career. She hopes that these values, taken together, will inspire others.



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River Road African American Museum Presented Third Thursday

An Evening of Music, Art, and Culinary Excellence

Photos by N'iya Evans
Data News Weekly Contributor

The historic River Road African American Museum led by Executive Director, L'Oreal Evans, invited the community to an unforgettable evening of culture, creativity, and connection at Third Thursday on February 20, 2025, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.

Set against the backdrop of one of Louisiana's most treasured cultural institutions, that special night featured:

Live Music by Red Tape Musiq: Attendees immersed themselves in the rich sounds of Red Tape Musiq, which delivered an electrifying performance blending jazz, soul, and contemporary rhythms.

Gourmet Cuisine by Chef Kharam: Guests savored an exquisite culinary experience crafted by the talented Chef Kharam, renowned for his bold flavors and artistic approach to Southern-inspired dishes.

Live Art by Jamar Pierre & Tamerick Zachary: Revelers took part in a sip and paint event from acclaimed Visual Artists Jamar Pierre and Tamerick Zachary, who brought vibrant stories to life on canvas throughout the evening.

Garden Party Giveaway: One lucky guest and five friends won a Garden Party Experience for six, adding a touch of elegance and celebration to their future gatherings.

The event celebrated the rich history, artistic expression, and culinary traditions of African American Culture.

The event featured all Black brand distilleries Bumbu, Lasserre, Termana, Uncle Nearest, and Timeless Vodka. The event highlighted Black music, chefs, artists, and liqueurs to support the cultural economy in BI-POC (Black, indigenous and people of color) communities.



Red Tape Collective



Artist and Art Educator Jamar Pierre led eventgoers in a sip and paint session.



Rev. Norman Lawrence and Carlis Lawrence (events and education coordinator for RRAAM).



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

List of Parades and Events for Mardi Gras 2025

Fleur De Lis

Data News Weekly Contributor

Zulu Ball

(2025 Zulu Coronation Ball):

Friday, February 28th – Saturday, March 1, 2025

New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center

A formal social event hosted by the Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club celebrating the Coronation of King and Queen Zulu with food and music by Jeffrey Osborne, Chante Moore and SWV.

Lundi Gras:

Monday, March 3, 2025

Typically held in Woldenberg Park along the Mississippi River in the French Quarter (other venues may also host events)

A festive, day-long celebration featuring live music, food, arts, and crafts that mark the final pre-Mardi Gras day.

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

- Krewe of Druids – Uptown; starts at 6:15 PM
- Krewe of Alla – Follows Druids (Uptown)
- Krewe of Nandi – Westbank; begins at 6:00 PM

Thursday, February 27, 2025

- Knights of Babylon – Uptown; 5:30 PM
- Knights of Chaos – Follows Babylon (Uptown)
- Krewe of Muses – Uptown; 6:30 PM
- Krewe of Symphony – Metairie; 6:30 PM
- Krewe of Atlas – Follows Symphony in Metairie

Friday, February 28, 2025

- Krewe of Bosom Buddies – French Quarter; 11:30 AM
- Knights of Hermes – Uptown; 5:30 PM
- Krewe d'Etat – Uptown; 6:30 PM

- Krewe of Morpheus – Follows Krewe d'Etat (Uptown)
- (Additional parades in neighboring areas include Selene and Dionysus in Slidell, plus Aphrodite in Houma.)

Saturday, March 1, 2025

- Krewe of NOMTOC – Westbank; 10:45 AM
- Krewe of Iris – Uptown; 11:00 AM
- Krewe of Tucks – Uptown; Noon
- Krewe of Endymion – Mid-City; 4:00 PM
- (Other parades such as Krewe of Bush, Isis, and Mardi Gras are held in areas like Bush, Kenner, and Houma.)

Sunday, March 2, 2025

- Krewe of Okeanos – Uptown; 11:00 AM
- Krewe of Mid-City – Follows Okeanos (Uptown)
- Krewe of Thoth – Uptown; Noon
- Krewe of Bacchus – Uptown; 5:15 PM
- Krewe of Athena – Metairie; 5:00 PM

Monday, March 3, 2025 (Lundi Gras)

- Krewe of Proteus – Uptown; 5:15 PM
- Krewe of Orpheus – Uptown; 6:00 PM

Mardi Gras Day

Tuesday, March 4, 2025

- Krewe of Zulu – Uptown; kicks off at 8:00 AM
- Krewe of Rex – Uptown; begins at 10:30 AM (with associated events such as the Lions Club and Carnival in Covington following the route)
- Krewe of Elks Orleans – Follows Rex
- Krewe of Crescent City – Follows Elks Orleans
- Krewe of Argus – Metairie; 11:00 AM
- Krewe of Elks Jeffersonians – Follows Argus
- Krewe of Folsom – Folsom; 2:00 PM

Community Project Gives Fathers Quality Time with Their Kids

Story and Photos by
Kristopher Beavers
Data News Weekly
Contributor

Fathers from across the city gathered on Saturday, Feb. 22nd at the Sojourner Truth Neighborhood Center for the first-ever Play Date with Dads Community Event organized by the We Play Center and the Dad-A-Port Initiative.

Parents from the 9th Ward to the 17th Ward joined into the quality time with their young children, building lifelong memories and strengthening communication skills. The event highlighted the many dedicated Black fathers across the Greater New Orleans area creating community and space for Black fathers and Black male caregivers.

"The most inspiring part of being a father in NOLA is setting up the next generation with events such as this," said Andre Apparicio, the Director of Community Partnerships and Development for Dad A-Port. "The lack of opportunities like this can make it harder for children to grow and succeed," said Apparicio, a community organizer and New Orleans resident.



A group of proud New Orleans fathers gather to build networks at the Play Date with Dads event on Saturday, February 22nd, 2025.



Spencer Robertson and his son work together to build a playset city during the Play Date with Dads event on Saturday, February 22nd, 2025.

The event aimed to support young fathers new to parenting while also providing a space to network with other parents. Play Date with Dads featured a variety of toys and activities designed for children ages 0 to 3, including basketball, football, educational books, and mazes to help develop critical thinking skills.

"Being able to showcase the festivals and culture of New Orleans to my kid is one of my favorite parts of being a dad," said Spencer Robertson, an Information Technology Professional and father from West Algiers, who helped his son build a small playset city, at the event.

According to national data, 49-percent of African American

children live in single-parent households, a statistic often linked to systemic factors such as mass incarceration, organizers said. This cycle leaves many Black youth at a disadvantage, often growing up without the presence of both parents.

Troy Avery, a New Orleans native and father who grew up in the St. Bernard Projects attended the playdate event with his child. Avery, who holds a Master's Degree in Education from Xavier University of Louisiana, participated in several activities, including the bean bag song.

"There is a lack of preventative measures to make sure our youth are safe, loved, and protected in this city," Avery said.

The We Play Center and Dad A-Port Plan to host more events for fathers and their children in New Orleans. The next gathering, the Family Dance Party, will take place on Friday, March 7th. It will feature music, activities, and childcare services for parents. As these events allow fathers an opportunity to have meaningful involvement with their children in the city, their impact on New Orleans families is expected to grow, organizers said.

State & Local News

Krewe of ALLA Crowns First African American King and Queen

Data News Staff Edited
Report

In a historic first for Mardi Gras, Gian Durand and James Carter have been crowned as the Inaugural Black King and Queen of the Krewe of ALLA, marking a milestone for the 93-year-old organization and the city's time-honored celebration.

The coronation is a personal triumph for Durand and Carter and a Heartfelt Tribute to Civil Rights Pioneer Dorothy Mae Taylor. Taylor's groundbreaking 1992 ordinance dismantled segregation in Mardi Gras Krewes by requiring any krewe using city services to adopt nondiscriminatory membership policies. "Dorothy Mae Taylor opened the doors for all of us to participate in Mardi Gras fully," Durand



Gian Durand (L) and James Carter (R) have been crowned the Inaugural Black King and Queen of the Krewe of ALLA, marking a milestone for the 93-year-old organization.

said. "We're here today because of her courage, and we're committed to continuing her legacy."

Carter added, "This is about more than just us. It's about honoring the generations before us

who fought for inclusion, and the generations to come who will see themselves reflected in Mardi Gras Tradition."

Honoring a Trailblazer's Legacy

Taylor, who broke barriers as the first Black woman elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives and later served on the New Orleans City Council, played a pivotal role in ensuring Mardi Gras evolved into an inclusive celebration of New Orleans culture. In recognition of her legacy, Durand and Carter will participate in initiatives that include a video series detailing their historic coronation and an Educational Outreach Program aimed at local schools.

A Cultural Revolution on Parade

The newly crowned royals are set to lead the Krewe of ALLA Parade on Wednesday, Feb. 26th—a day that promises to be a landmark in Mardi Gras History. For the first time, they will be joined by the Royalty of the 6th Ward Steppers, marking the debut inclusion of a Second Line Social Aid and Pleasure Club in the parade. "The merging of Mardi Gras Royalty and second line culture is a true reflection of what New Orleans has always been—a place where traditions evolve and history is made in real time," Durand remarked. Second line clubs, long celebrated for their role in preserving Black New Orleans

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on page 7.

Black Press, NAACP, and Lawmakers Warned America— Now Trump's Project 2025 Agenda is Reality

Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

The Black Press warned Americans. The NAACP warned Americans. Texas Democratic Rep. Jasmine Crockett warned Americans. Several others who paid attention to the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 sounded the alarm too. Yet, despite Donald Trump's lies and attempts to distance himself from the plan's hateful and destructive mandate, reality has set in. Less than one month into his presidency, Politico noted that Project 2025 has shown up in 37 of Trump's executive orders, placing its architects squarely in power and moving swiftly to reshape the nation's policies. Despite public denials, the fingerprints of the far-right Heritage Foundation's sweeping agenda are unmistakable.

Among the immediate actions are Trump's reinstatement of harsh immigration policies, directives rolling back civil rights protections, and a push to gut the Department of Education's diversity programs—each item aligning with the Project 2025 blueprint. Executive orders dismantling environmental safeguards, restricting reproductive rights, and granting broad powers to law enforcement have followed, echoing the project's call for a return to what its authors describe as “traditional American values.” “This is exactly what we warned about,” Rep. Crockett said. “They're moving with precision, targeting the most vulnerable commu-



nities first—immigrants, Black and brown people, LGBTQ+ folks—and they're doing it under the guise of restoring law and order.”

The Black Press of America issued numerous reports before the election detailing how Project 2025 aims to strip away civil liberties and concentrate power in the executive branch. Critics say the speed at which these policies are being implemented proves that Trump's earlier denials were calculated deception. The NAACP released a statement emphasizing the stakes: “This is not about politics—this is about survival,” officials at the nation's oldest civil rights organization stated. “Communities of color will bear the brunt of these policies. We told you this was coming.”

Behind the scenes, Trump has appointed several Heritage Founda-

tion affiliates to top White House positions. John McEntee, one of Project 2025's key contributors, now oversees personnel decisions, ensuring federal agencies align with the agenda's hardline stance. Meanwhile, another architect of the plan, Russell Vought, plays a central role in rewriting federal budget priorities to defund programs that benefit marginalized groups. The executive orders have included eliminating funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives across government agencies, establishing federal penalties for “disruptive” protests, and reinstating the controversial “Remain in Mexico” immigration policy.

“Donald Trump can pretend he's not involved, but look at the people in his administration,” said Derrick Johnson, President of the NAACP.

“Look at the policies being pushed through with record speed. This is Project 2025 in action.” Many of Trump's moves echo those listed in the Heritage Foundation's publicly available 920-page blueprint. The document outlines plans to overhaul the Department of Justice, weaken protections against police brutality, and limit LGBTQ+ rights, all of which have been reflected in Trump's recent directives.

Civil Rights organizations are rallying to fight back, filing lawsuits, and urging Americans to mobilize. Still, the road ahead remains steep, with Republican-controlled legislatures supporting many of these initiatives. “There's no time for complacency,” Rep. Crockett said. “What we are witnessing is the normalization of fascism disguised as patriotism.”

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Culture through resilience, joy, and unity, now receive overdue recognition as an integral part of the city's heritage.

As Durand, Carter, and the 6th Ward Steppers make their way through the streets, their procession will stand as a powerful symbol of progress and Black excellence, reinforcing that Mardi Gras is a celebration for a new generation.

A New Chapter in Mardi Gras Tradition

Founded in 1932 and named for the Algiers neighborhood in Louisiana, the co-ed Krewe of ALLA has continuously evolved to reflect the

city's vibrant diversity. A decade ago, its parade route shifted from the West Bank to St. Charles Avenue—a change coinciding with the decision to welcome female members for the first time. More recently, in July 2024, the New Orleans City Council reallocated ALLA to a prime slot on the Carnival Parade Schedule, taking over the Wednesday before Fat Tuesday from the previously designated Krewe of Nyx.

This historic coronation and the accompanying parade not only celebrate the evolution of Mardi Gras but also honor those who paved the way for a more inclusive and dynamic New Orleans.



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