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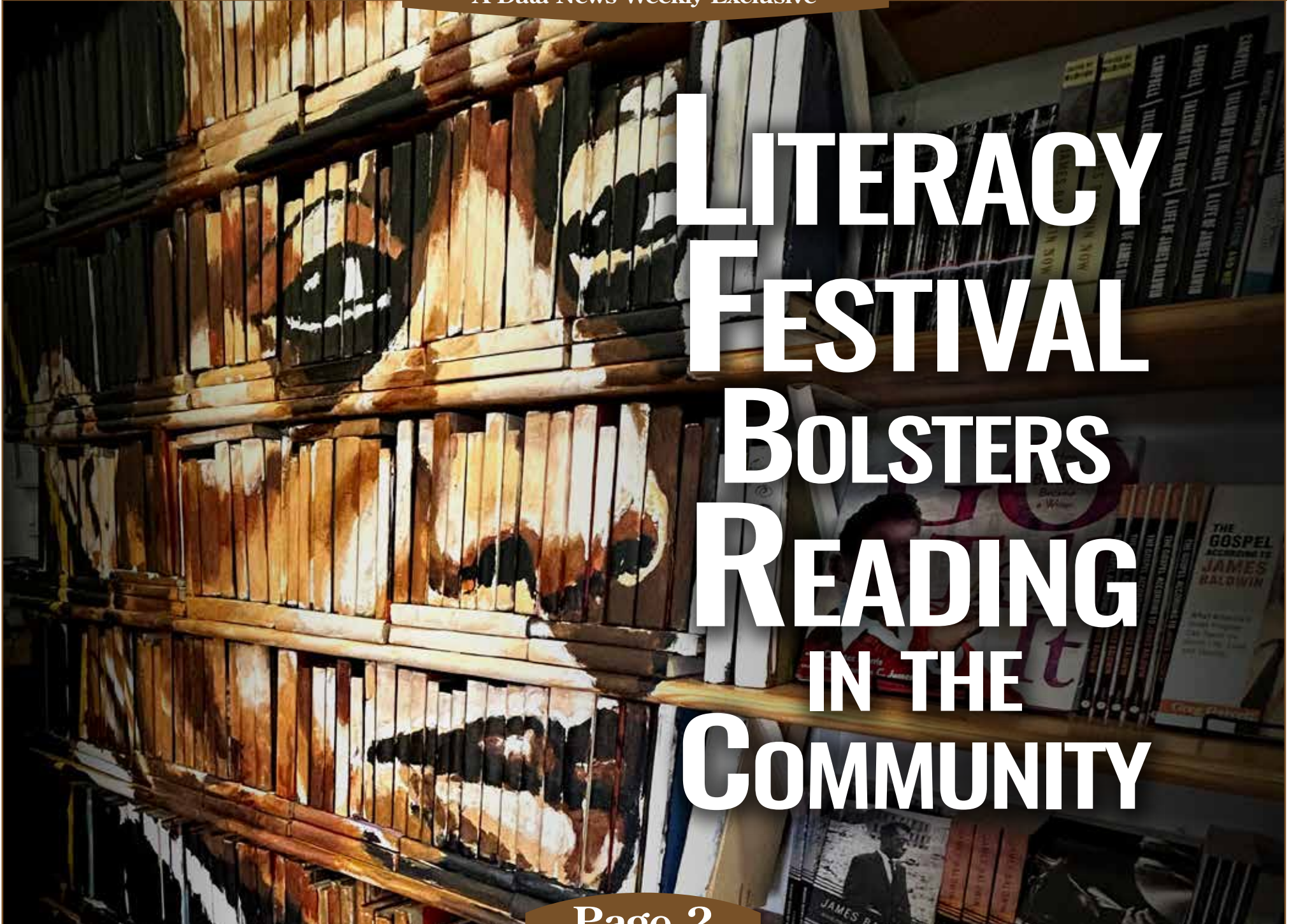
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## UNCF Mayor's Masked Ball 2025

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# Literacy Festival Bolsters Reading in the Community



Darione Barnwell shares what inspired her books “Violets Hair” and “How Harlem See’s” with children, Violet and Harlem.

**Ariel Johnson**  
Data News Weekly Contributor

Families from around the city gathered on March 22, 2025, for InspireNOLA’s Second Annual Family Resource and Literacy festival. The event was held from 2 to 5 p.m. at Baldwin & Co., a Black-Owned

Bookstore and Coffee Shop in the Marigny Neighborhood, aimed to promote literacy and provide the community with resources.

“Nothing has become more clear to me when we talk about the success of our young people than the importance of literacy,” said Louisiana State Sen. Royce Duplessis, District 5. “We cannot emphasize enough.

That’s going to open up their future.”

The event featured several stations for families to get resources connected to mentoring, wellness and healthcare and featured Black Authors discussing their books. Among the stations for families included: Big Brothers - Big Sisters of America, Metropolitan Human Services District, AlignUS, and STEMNOLA.

ON THE COVER: James Baldwin book section located in Baldwin & Co on Elysian Fields Avenue.

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### DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.



Community members explore and sign up for different resources at InspireNOLA's Family Resource and Literacy Festival on Saturday, March 22nd.

Families were able to get free books and meals. They were also able to access Baldwin & Co. to look at and buy books by diverse authors. Each author later got their own respective time to speak about their work and read on stage.

Duplessis reflected on visiting the Orleans Parish Prison recently to understand how literacy is also important for inmates. He also emphasized that literacy and a solid K-12 education is important in end-

ing the school to prison pipeline.

"One of the first things they ask for is books. If they get the books here they won't end up there," Duplessis said, referring to the literacy event. "There is a direct correlation," he added.

Residents said they were pleased to see InspireNOLA provide an event to help address the literacy issue within and beyond the community. According to the Statewide K-3 Literacy Screener Results, 35.2% of

students are well below their expected literacy level.

"To see what this network is doing not just for the students but for the families is powerful," said Tonya Boyd Cannon, who hosted the event and is a longtime educator. She shared how she has proudly collaborated with InspireNOLA to host several community events now and watching the impact of addressing inequities.

"That's why the Recidivism



Tonya Boyd-Cannon and Blonka Mack dancing with community members following Mack's author talk at Family Resource and Literacy Festival on Saturday, March 22nd.

Rate is what it is," Boyd-Cannon said in terms of the kinds of solutions that can ensure youth have a positive future.

While the festival emphasized literacy it also brought together local businesses, educators, families and local leaders. Many speakers pointed out a deeper meaning of the event with the importance of representation and exposure to solutions that promote positivity. Community

members pointed to the welcoming atmosphere of the Literacy Festival, and that it felt like a family reunion.

"When children see stuff like this, they get curious and want to learn more," said New Orleans resident Barbara Twimon, who came across the event on the way to pick up her prescription. "This will help for our African American children, and for children all over," she added.

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# UNCF Mayor's Masked Ball 2025 Brings Glamour and Giving to New Orleans

By Edwin Buggage  
Editor-in-Chief Data News Weekly

Photos by Glenn Summers  
Data News Weekly Staff Photographer

It was a dazzling evening with a powerful purpose as the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) hosted its highly anticipated Mayor's Masked Ball 2025 in New Orleans. This unforgettable celebration brought together celebrities, civic leaders, and changemakers in a shared commitment to investing in the next generation of Black excellence through education.

Held at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans, the Black-Tie Gala was co-hosted by Nischelle Turner and Kevin Frazier, the Dynamic Emmy Award-winning Duo from Entertainment Tonight, who brought charm, wit, and heart to the evening.

The event featured a show-stopping performance by the legendary R&B Group En Vogue, whose powerhouse vocals and timeless hits had the audience on their feet. Additionally, the night featured moving tributes, scholarship presentations, and a call to action to support Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

The night was not just a celebration, but in these important times a call to support future generations of students, to pursue excellence and reach their full potential, where every mind has the chance to shine.

For more information on how to support UNCF's mission or to contribute, visit [www.uncf.org](http://www.uncf.org).



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







# Introducing the New Orleans Museum of Art's 2024–25 Creative Assembly Cohort

**The museum's community engagement-driven Creative Assembly Residency fosters collaborations with NOMA's collection, exhibitions, programs, and staff**

Data News Staff Edited Report

Eight artists from various disciplines are included in this year's cohort of Creative Assembly residents at the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA). Launched in 2021, NOMA's Creative Assembly Residency promotes community engagement by welcoming artists to collaborate throughout the year with the museum's permanent collection, special exhibitions, and programs.

"We are thrilled to see this year's Creative Assembly Cohort hit the ground running, finding inspiration in NOMA's collection and exhibitions," said Susan M. Taylor, The Montine McDaniel Freeman Director of NOMA. "As one of the largest fine arts museums in the Gulf



Top (left to right): Jer'Lisa Devezin, Caleb Dowden, Cassie Watson Francillon, Carl Harrison Jr.  
Bottom (left to right): Horton Humble, Nikkisha K. Napoleon, LaVonna Varnado-Brown, Andy Young

South, we are honored to serve as a space for discovery and innovation for the artists who are defining our current moment."

## Members of the 2024–25 Creative Assembly Cohort are:

Poet and Novelist Andy Young  
Dancer and Choreographer Caleb Dowden  
Filmmaker and Visual Artist Carl Harrison Jr.  
Musician, Spoken Word Artist, and

Harpist Cassie Watson Francillon  
Painter, Drawer, and Ceramic Artist Horton Humble  
Clay, Metal, and Fibers Artist Jer'Lisa Devezin  
Collage Artist LaVonna Varnado-Brown  
Poet Nikkisha K. Napoleon

Full artist bios can be found here.

Artists kicked off the residency period with an orientation, followed by a series of professional development workshops and learning op-

portunities to dive into the museum's collection and programs. Over the course of the residency, Creative Assembly Cohort members are provided funds and museum support to develop artistic projects and public offerings, like programs and workshops.

The theme for the 2024–25 Cohort is Literacy and Language, inviting artists to explore how communication, accessibility, and language shape our world. Through this theme, NOMA will challenge the artists to consider

the transformative power of words, symbols, and other forms of expression in today's society.

The Darryl Chappell Foundation is partially supporting this year's Creative Assembly Cohort by providing funding for two Afrodescendent visual artists.

"We are excited to partner with NOMA to support exceptional artists from the New Orleans community as a part of the 2024–25 Creative Assembly Cohort," said Darryl Chappell, CEO and Chairman of the Darryl Chappell Foundation. "Our mission is to empower Afrodescendant artists to achieve their highest potential, and this collaboration aligns with our vision of artists having a transformative impact on their local community."

Projects from the 2023–24 Creative Assembly Cohort include video works and live performances by Kr3wcial, Charm Taylor, and Simone Immanuel; workshops led by Daniel Fitzpatrick, Dianne Honoré, and Paige DeVries exploring topics such as poetry, Black Masking Indian beadwork, and cell phone photography; and a site-specific dance work by choreographer Lauren Ashlee Messina inspired by American classical composer Julia Perry.

## State & Local News

# March 29th Election *Get Out and Vote!*

Eric Connerly  
Data News Weekly  
Contributor

On Saturday, March 29, 2025, Louisiana will hold a statewide election featuring four constitutional amendments and various local races. In New Orleans, voters will decide on these amendments and local propositions.

Louisiana Illuminator.

## Constitutional Amendments:

**Amendment 1:** This amendment would grant the Louisiana Supreme Court jurisdiction to discipline out-of-state lawyers for unethical practices within the state. Additionally, it would authorize the legislature to establish trial courts



with limited or specialized jurisdiction.

**Amendment 2:** This proposal seeks to implement extensive changes to Article VII of the Louisiana Constitution, which governs

change would allow the legislature to modify the list more easily in the future.

**Amendment 4:** This measure aims to adjust the timeline for filling judicial vacancies by aligning

the state's tax and fiscal policies. The revisions include modifying tax rates, deductions, and the structure of state funds.

**Amendment 3:** This amendment would move the list of crimes for which individuals under 17 can be charged as adults from the state constitution to state statutes. This

special election dates with the regular elections calendar, ensuring vacancies are filled at the earliest possible date.

## Local Propositions:

In addition to the statewide amendments, New Orleans voters will consider local propositions, including the Lakeview Crime Prevention District parcel fee measure.

## Key Dates and Information:

Absentee Ballot Request Deadline: March 25, 2025, by 4:30 p.m.  
Louisiana Secretary of State

## Absentee Ballot Submission Deadline:

March 28, 2025, by 4:30 p.m.  
Louisiana Secretary of State

## Election Day:

March 29, 2025; polls open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

For personalized sample ballots and additional voter information, resources such as the provide parish-specific details. Additionally, the Louisiana Secretary of State's website offers comprehensive information on the proposed amendments and election logistics.

Power Coalition for Equity and Justice -

## Louisiana Secretary of State

It's essential for voters in New Orleans to review these amendments and propositions thoroughly to make informed decisions on election day.



# Reaction to the Education Executive Order

Lauren Burke & April Ryan  
NNPA Newswire Contributors

There are plenty of negative reactions to President Donald Trump's latest Executive Order abolishing the Department of Education. As Democrats call yesterday's action performative, it would take an act of Congress for the Education Department to close permanently. "This blatantly unconstitutional executive order is just another piece of evidence that Trump has absolutely no respect for the Constitution," said Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) who is the ranking member on the House Financial Services Committee. "By dismantling ED, President Trump is implementing his own philosophy on education, which can be summed up in his own words, 'I love the poorly educated.' I am adamantly opposed to this reckless action," said Rep. Bobby Scott who is the most senior Democrat on the House Education and Workforce Committee.

Morgan State University President Dr. David Wilson chimed in saying "I'm deeply concerned about efforts to shift federal oversight in education back to the states, particularly regarding equity, justice, and fairness. History has shown us what happens when states are left unchecked—Black and poor children are too often denied access to the high-quality education they deserve. In 1979 then President Jimmy Carter signed a law creating the Department of Education. Arne Duncan, former Obama Education Secretary, reminds us that both Democratic and Republican presidents have kept education



a non-political issue until now. However, Duncan stressed Republican presidents have contributed greatly to moving education forward in this country.

During a CNN interview this week Duncan said during the Civil War President Abraham "Lincoln created the land grant system" for colleges like Tennessee State University. "President Ford brought in IDEA." And "Nixon signed Pell Grants into law." In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush which increased federal oversight of schools through standardized testing. Meanwhile, the new Education EO jeopardizes funding for students seeking higher education. Duncan states, Pell Grants are in jeopardy after servicing "6.5 million people" giving them a chance to go to college. Wilson details, "that 40 percent of all college students rely on Pell Grants and student loans."

Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC) says

this Trump action "impacts students pursuing higher education and threatens 26 million students across the country, taking billions away from their educational futures. Meanwhile, During the president's speech in the East Room of the White House Thurs-

day, Trump criticized Baltimore City, and its math test scores with critical words. Governor West Moore, who is opposed to the EO action, said about dismantling the Department of Education, "Leadership means lifting people up, not punching them down."



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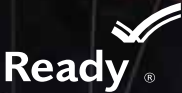
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