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News Weekly

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2025 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival

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MY FATHER'S NAME IN THE STREET

*Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr. Reflects on
the Legacy and Street Renaming
of His Father Big Chief Bo Dollis Sr.*



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My Father's Name in the Street

Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr. Reflects on the Legacy and Street Renaming of His Father Big Chief Bo Dollis Sr.

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief
Data News Weekly
Photos Courtesy of the
Dollis Family

New Orleans: A City of Traditions

New Orleans is a city steeped in rich traditions, heritage, and culture—a city that draws people from around the world to experience its splendor. During this time of year, Jazz Fest puts that legacy on full display, with performances that honor both legends and living torchbearers of New Orleans music. One of those cultural icons, the late Big Chief Theodore “Bo” Dollis Sr. of the Wild Magnolias, was recently honored with an honorary street renaming at the intersection of Jackson Avenue and Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard.

A Dream Realized: Honoring a Cultural Pioneer

Many gathered to celebrate the legacy of a man who brought New Orleans culture to the world through music, tradition, and spirit. His son, current Wild Magnolias Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr., described the ceremony as deeply personal and historic.

“It was my biggest dream to have a street named in his honor. We had all kinds of people out there—one of my dad’s oldest Indians, people from the community, people from the music world. People who knew him and didn’t know him but recognized his impact on New Orleans and the world. A real blessing to me and my family—it was history in the making,” proudly said his son, current Wild Magnolias Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr., whose mother is Laurita Barras Dollis, also known as Big Queen of the Wild Magnolias.



Big Chief Bo Dollis Sr., legendary leader of the Wild Magnolias, stands as a towering figure in New Orleans culture, blending tradition, music, and spirit to share the rich legacy of the Mardi Gras Indians with the world. His life and work continue to inspire generations to honor and celebrate the true heartbeat of the city, now permanently recognized with the honorary renaming of the intersection of Jackson Avenue and Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard.

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For Dollis Jr., his father was more than a cultural icon—he was a mentor and hero. The lessons passed down weren’t just about masking, but about character. “He taught me how to be a man and how to be a chief.”

The New Orleans City Council unanimously approved the renaming, recognizing Bo Dollis Sr.’s lasting contributions to the cultural identity of the city. Dollis Jr. extended special thanks to City Councilmember Lesli Harris, who championed the effort.

“She and her staff worked to make this a reality, and I am eternally grateful. This effort was me simply stepping out on faith, and to see my father’s name on a street sign is an incredible feeling for both me and my family.”



“It was my biggest dream to have a street named in his honor. We had all kinds of people out there—one of my dad’s oldest Indians, people from the community, people from the music world. People who knew him and didn’t know him but recognized his impact on New Orleans and the world. A real blessing to me and my family—it was history in the making,” proudly said his son, current Wild Magnolias Big Chief Theodore “Lil Bo” Dollis Jr. (pictured with his father), whose mother is Laurita Barras Dollis, also known as Big Queen of the Wild Magnolias.

The Life and Legacy of Bo Dollis Sr.

Born Theodore Emile “Bo” Dollis on January 14, 1944, he began masking as a Mardi Gras Indian at age 13. In 1964, he became Big Chief of the Wild Magnolias, and his leadership brought the group—and the tradition—national and

international acclaim. Their 1970 single “Handa Wanda” and later albums fused Indian chants with funk and R&B, introducing Mardi Gras Indian culture to the world stage.

Dollis passed away on January 20, 2015, at the age of 71. His home-going celebration drew thousands, a testament to his influence and the deep love the city holds for him.

Carrying the Torch and Spreading the Music Across the Globe

Today, his son continues that legacy, leading the Wild Magnolias and preserving the sacred traditions of the Mardi Gras Indian /

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First Weekend of the 2025 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival Kicks Off with Music, Culture, and Flavor

Photos by Demian Roberts
Data News Weekly Contributor

The first weekend of the 2025 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival delivered a vibrant and amazing celebration of music, culture, and community at the Fair Grounds. Thousands of attendees experienced a diverse lineup of performances. Culinary delights were abundant, with nearly 70 food vendors offering traditional dishes like Crawfish Monica and Cochon de Lait Po'boys, emphasizing the festival's dedication to local cuisine. In addition to the music and food, the festival also showcased a wide array of arts and crafts vendors, featuring handmade jewelry, paintings, clothing, and cultural artifacts, highlighting their creativity and craftsmanship.

Data News Weekly was there to catch some of the highlights from this amazing event!



Gladys Knight



Stanley Clarke



Dee Dee Bridgewater



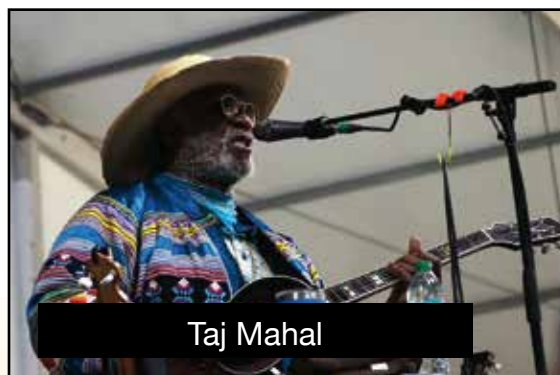
Seun Kuti



Karl Denson



Branford Marsalis



Taj Mahal



Tarriona "Tank" Ball

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



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Black Masking Culture.

"We get more blessings outside of New Orleans and stardom. I have been with my father in places all over the world. I remember he was performing in Japan, and the people couldn't speak a lick of English. My dad started singing, and they were singing along with him. That's the most wonderful thing, it shows how music brings people together. It's a language for everybody."

A Father's Lessons, A Chief's Responsibility

For Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr., his father was more than a cultural icon; he was a mentor and hero. The lessons passed down weren't just about masking, but about character.

"He taught me how to be a man and how to be a chief. At the time, I didn't know what he was doing. I thought he was just being hard on me. But he was teaching me valuable lessons on how to be a man and to take care of my family. Most importantly, it was to never give up and never complain."

The Heartbeat of the City

The Mardi Gras Indian Tradition is centuries old, and for Dollis Jr., it's not just a celebration, it's the cultural heartbeat of New Orleans.

"All the Indians and musicians who made a difference and spread the culture of New Orleans are important in showing the best of who we are as a city. They need to get their flowers while they're still here."

"Without the Mardi Gras Indians, there is no New Orleans. Mardi Gras Indians are New Orleans—the spirit, the culture, the drums, the dancing, the singing, and the people. It embodies everything great about this city."

The renaming of this street in Bo Dollis Sr.'s honor ensures that legacy lives on not only in the hearts of those who knew him, but in the very streets of the city he helped define.



Big Chief Bo Dollis Jr. (c), Big Queen Laurita Barras Dollis (l), and legendary hip-hop artist Mia X (r), gather at the street renaming ceremony honoring Big Chief Bo Dollis Sr., celebrating his lasting impact on New Orleans culture and the global legacy of the Wild Magnolias and the Mardi Gras Indian/Black Masking Tradition.



The street renaming honoring Big Chief Bo Dollis Sr. ensures his legacy lives on not just in the memories of those he touched but in the very streets of New Orleans that he helped shape and inspire.

Did the Saints Miss a Golden Opportunity by Passing on Shedeur Sanders in the NFL 2025 Draft?

Fleur De Lis
Data News Weekly
Contributor

The New Orleans Saints made a bold and arguably questionable move in the 2025 NFL Draft by passing on quarterback Shedeur Sanders, who was heralded as one of the most dynamic and talked-about prospects in recent memory. Instead, the Saints chose to reinforce their offensive line, selecting Kelvin Banks Jr. from Texas with their first-round pick.

While strengthening the trenches is traditionally sound football strategy, passing on a quarterback with Shedeur Sanders' potential raises serious questions, especially given the Saints' uncertain future at the position. Derek Carr remains the starter for now, but at 34 years old and following a rocky 2024 season, it's clear he is not the long-term successor to Drew Brees. The Saints must begin planning for a new era. Sanders offered a rare blend of pedigree, leadership, and playmaking ability that could have energized the fan base and set a bold new direction for the franchise.

Critics argue that while Sanders' transition to the NFL will come with challenges adapting to pro defenses, faster game speed, and different



The New Orleans Saints passed on highly touted quarterback Shedeur Sanders in the 2025 NFL Draft, selecting offensive tackle Kelvin Banks Jr. in the first round and quarterback Tyler Shough in the second round

offensive systems, so does the leap for every young quarterback. Passing up on potential franchise quarterbacks has historically haunted teams. Could this be another case the Saints regret?

The Saints instead opted for a "safe" pick in Banks, aiming to protect their current quarterback rather than secure their next one. In the second round, they added Tyler Shough, a talented but less-heralded quarterback prospect,

suggesting they recognize the need for youth at the position but were not ready to invest a first-round pick in it.

With this being the case, why wouldn't they pick a player of Sanders' talent in round two? As more reports surface, it seems that this was a decision that was bigger than the Black and Gold.

This decision feels less like bold leadership and more like cautious project management. New Orleans

is a city built on passion, risk, and resilience and passing up on a quarterback with Sanders' upside seems to run counter to that spirit.

Questions linger: Will Kelvin Banks emerge as a true cornerstone on the offensive line? Perhaps. Can Tyler Shough eventually develop into a reliable starting quarterback? Only time will tell. But if Shedeur Sanders thrives elsewhere—both on the field and as a charismatic figure off it—the Saints' 2025 draft strategy may ultimately be seen not as a smart, methodical build, but as a missed opportunity. Beyond his potential to win games, Sanders' star power could have brought renewed energy, national attention, and a boost to the Saints' bottom line.

Sometimes, greatness requires a gamble. And sometimes, by playing it safe, you risk losing far more.

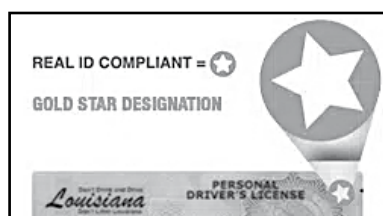
State & Local News

Louisiana Residents Urged to Obtain REAL ID Before May 7, 2025, Deadline

Data News Staff Edited Report

The Louisiana Office of Motor Vehicles (OMV) is reminding residents that starting May 7, 2025, a standard Louisiana driver's license will no longer suffice for certain federal purposes, including boarding domestic flights and entering secure federal facilities. To comply with the federal REAL ID Act, individuals aged 18 and older must present a REAL ID-compliant license or another acceptable form of identification, such as a U.S. passport or military ID, at Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoints.

A REAL ID-compliant license is easily identifiable by a gold star



in the top right corner. Without it, travelers may face delays, additional screening, or be denied access at airport security checkpoints.

How to Obtain a REAL ID in Louisiana: (BOLD)

To upgrade to a REAL ID, residents must visit an OMV office or an authorized Public Tag Agent in person and provide:

Proof of Identity: An original or certified copy of a birth certificate or a valid U.S. passport.

Proof of Social Security Number:

A Social Security card or a W-2 form displaying the full Social Security number.

Two Proofs of Louisiana Residency: Documents such as utility bills, bank statements, or lease agreements.

Why the REAL ID Matters: (BOLD)

Enacted in 2005, the REAL ID Act aims to enhance the reliability and accuracy of state-issued identification documents, thereby improving national security. After multiple extensions, the final enforcement date is set for May 7, 2025. Post-deadline, only REAL ID-compliant licenses or other federally approved IDs will be accepted for air travel and access to certain federal facilities.



State of the People POWER Tour™ Launches a 10-State Effort to Build a National Black Agenda

Lauren Burke
NNPA Newswire Contributor

Organizers of the inaugural “State of the People POWER Tour” will launch events around the U.S. starting this Saturday. The tour seeks to amplify Black voices across the country. The nationwide tour will be anchored by a diverse coalition of community leaders, civil rights activists, entrepreneurs, influencers, and policy chiefs. The effort is set to visit Black communities in ten states, beginning with a two-day series of events in Atlanta on April 26. Leaders and participants of the nationwide effort include Angela Rye, President and CEO of IMPACT Strategies; Joy Reid, journalist; Derrick Johnson, President and CEO of the NAACP; LaTosha Brown, Co-Founder of Black Voters Matter; Pastor Mike McBride, activist Tamika Mallory, Executive Director of Live Free USA and activist and strategist Gary Chambers, Jr. among many others. Different leaders and activists will be highlighted from city to city. The effort is designed to spotlight local leadership, elevate community-driven solutions, and help shape a national Black agenda ahead of Juneteenth 2025. Organizers say the initiative is rooted in deep listening, movement building, and networking among those most impacted by systemic inequity.

From the first 48 hours of his second term in the White House, President Donald Trump has been focused on policy to dismantling diversity and inclusion. Additionally, his administration has made several anti-Black moves, including the removal and defunding of Black historical figures and sites,



ad an ongoing assertion that inclusive policy means a lack of qualifications. “Atlanta, widely known as the ‘Black Mecca,’ is the perfect starting point for this journey,” a press release on April 23 said. “Its historic legacy of civil rights leadership and cultural excellence embodies the spirit of this movement — one grounded in vision, strategy, and collective power.” Following its kickoff in Georgia, the tour will make stops in North Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, New Jersey, Virginia, Michigan, California, and Kentucky, culminating in a Juneteenth General Assembly at a location yet to be announced.

Throughout the tour, organizers will release policy reports addressing key issues impacting Black communities, including economic justice, education equity, health care access, criminal justice reform, environmental justice, and voting rights. Each stop will feature local convenings, strategic workshops, and collaborative planning sessions,

all aimed at strengthening the infrastructure of Black-led change. With the 2026 midterms on the horizon and a national reckoning around equity still unfolding, the “State of the People POWER Tour” signals a new chapter in community-cen-

tered movement building. “This is more than a tour — it’s an organizing strategy, a policy lab, and a call to action,” said one coalition leader. “We’re building power that lasts — and we’re doing it together.”

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Compensation is competitive and great story ideas will be appreciated.

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