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National Urban League Declares 'State of Emergency' for Black America in 2025 Report

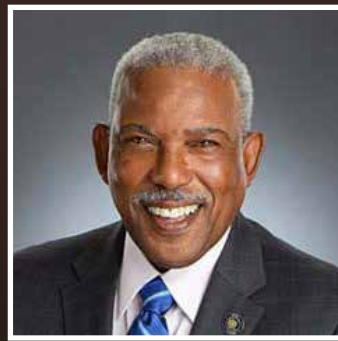
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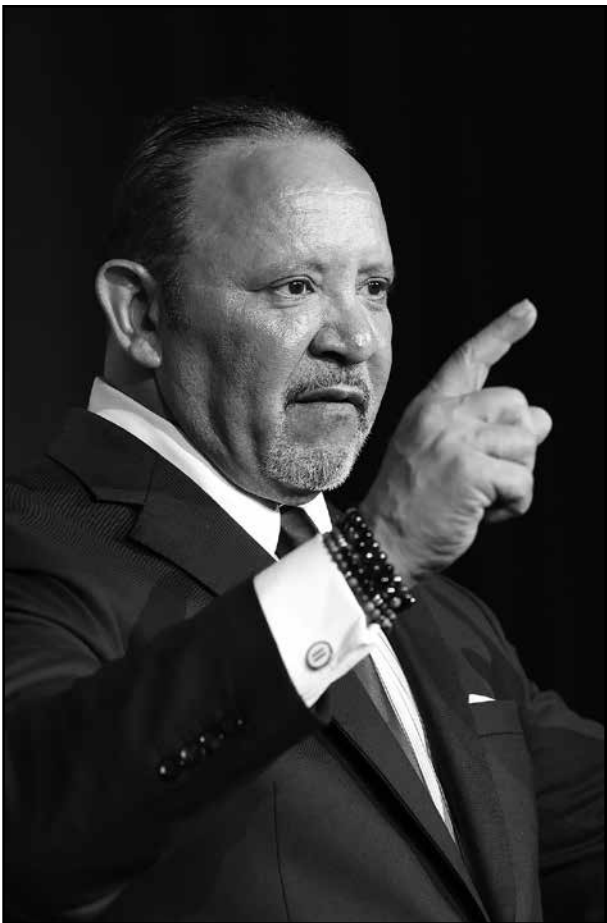
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National Urban League Declares 'State of Emergency' for Black America in 2025 Report



The 2025 National Urban League Convention stands as a powerful gathering for advancing equity, economic empowerment, and civil rights. Led by CEO and President Marc Morial, the event highlighted a legacy of leadership while shaping the future of advocacy and opportunity in communities nationwide.

Stacy M. Brown
Black Press USA
Senior National Correspondent

In its most urgent warning to date, the National Urban League has declared a “state of emergency” for Democracy and Civil Rights in the United States.

The organization’s 49th Annual State of Black America Report, unveiled at its conference in Cleveland, Ohio, outlines what it describes as a deliberate, coordinated campaign to reverse decades of progress for Black Americans. “A democracy willing to destroy itself rather than deliver justice is a democracy in crisis,” the report states. “The work is difficult. The road is

long,” National Urban League President Marc H. Morial added. “But we know from experience that the arc of history does not bend toward justice on its own—it must be bent by those with the strength and will to see it through.” This year’s report, titled “State of Emergency: Democracy, Civil Rights, and Progress Under Attack,”

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Cover Story, Continued from page 2.

sounds the alarm over efforts to dismantle Civil Rights Protections, suppress voting access, and strip away diversity initiatives. “The notion that we are living through a ‘state of emergency’ is not rhetorical flourish. It is an honest reckoning with a government increasingly determined to sacrifice its founding principles—equality, liberty, and justice—rather than accept the truth of a diversifying nation and deliver equitable opportunity to all,” Morial wrote in his foreword. Among the most pressing threats detailed in the report is the systematic rollback of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

“Almost daily, since January 20, 2025, the federal government, at the direction of the White House, has set fire to policies and entire departments dedicated to protecting civil and human rights, providing access to an equal education, fair housing, safe and effective health-care, and ensuring that our democratic process is adhered to across the nation,” the report authors wrote. It also describes the radical transformation of the U.S. Depart-

ment of Justice’s Civil Rights Division. “Under its new leadership, the Civil Rights Division has been hollowed out and repurposed, transforming from a guardian of justice into a tool for political retribution,” the report said. Within weeks of the new administration taking power, “cases against election deniers who’ve tampered with the election equipment were dismissed and January 6th rioters were pardoned.”

The National Urban League’s response, detailed in the report, includes a broad campaign of legal challenges, advocacy, and community organizing. It has launched the Equitable Justice and Strategic Initiatives Division, established the 21 Pillars for Public Safety Framework, and coordinated the Fair Budget Coalition to push for a “just and inclusive FY2026 Federal Budget.” The League also filed suit, alongside Lambda Legal and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, challenging executive orders that target diversity and equity. “This is not business as usual,” Morial said. “This is an emergency. The



National Urban League urges vigilance, mobilization, solidarity, and support. This year’s State of Black America is a call to action to stand together as we defend our rights and the principles of American Democracy in our courts, our communities, and our coalitions.”

Contributors to the report include civil rights leaders, attorneys, and elected officials such as Damon Hewitt, Kristen Clarke, Janai Nelson, LaTosha Brown, U.S. Representatives Steven Horsford and Hakeem Jeffries, and others committed to defending Democracy. “We are witnessing something more than policy shifts. We are watching an attempt to turn back the clock to an era when the full humanity of all Americans was not recognized—when the idea of true equality was treated as a threat to the social order,” the report authors concluded. “What we face today is a deliberate, coordinated effort to deny the future of a more just and inclusive America.”

The full report, essays, and resources are available at www.stateofblackamerica.org.

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Caitlyn Summers

Celebrates Her 19th Birthday

Photos by Glenn Summers
Data News Weekly Staff
Photographer

Caitlyn Summers marked her 19th Birthday with a joyful celebration at Tana's Italian Restaurant, surrounded by her closest friends and family. The intimate gathering included her dear friends Kimberly, Asma, Mariah, and Emani, who filled the evening with laughter and cherished memories. Caitlyn's dad, Glenn Summers, and her uncle Granville Summers also joined the festivities, adding a special touch to the occasion. The restaurant's warm ambiance and delicious Italian cuisine provided the perfect backdrop for a night of joy and togetherness. As the candles were blown out, Caitlyn couldn't help but feel grateful for the love and support of those around her.



Caitlyn Summers (center) recently celebrated her 19th Birthday during a joyful evening with loved ones, pictured here with her father, Glenn Summers (left), and uncle, Granville Summers (right).



Caitlyn is surrounded by friends during her birthday celebration.



Happy Birthday, Caitlyn !!!

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

Malcolm-Jamal Warner Dies at 54

Celebrated Actor, Musician and Role Model

Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief Data News
Weekly

Beloved Actor Malcolm-Jamal Warner, best known for portraying Theodore "Theo" Huxtable on *The Cosby Show* (1984–1992), has died at age 54 after an accidental drowning in Costa Rica. The incident occurred at Playa Cocles in Limón Province, where authorities confirmed strong currents pulled him out and later pronounced dead.

Warner, born August 18, 1970, in Jersey City, New Jersey, began acting at the age of nine. His role as Theo earned him a 1986 Emmy nomination, making him one of the youngest nominees ever in that category.

As Gen X watched, he helped shape perceptions of Black families on television with his portrayal, cited as a catalyst for many to pursue higher education and loving relationships.

Beyond television, Warner was a Renaissance Artist, a jazz musician, a poet, a director, and a host. In 2015, he won a Grammy Award for Best Traditional R&B Performance and later received a nomination for a Spoken Word Poetry Album.

He made regular appearances on series including *Malcolm & Eddie*, *Reed Between the Lines*, *Sons of Anarchy*, *American Crime Story*, and *The Resident*, as well as voice work on *The Magic School Bus*.

Off-screen, Warner stood as a steadfast advocate for Black culture and mental health. He co-hosted the 2023 Beloved Community Awards, championed Civil Rights, and co-created the podcast *Not All Hood*, a platform for nuanced discussions about Black life.

Celebrities, fans, and organizations from Tracee Ellis Ross and Magic Johnson to the NAACP and Martin Luther King Jr. Center have paid tribute to Warner's kindness, artistry, and impact.

In a 2023 interview, Warner reflected: "That show had such an impact... on how Black people saw ourselves globally," a reminder of his pivotal cultural significance.

As a positive role model, he demonstrated grace, dedication, and the possibility of life beyond childhood fame. He is survived by his wife and daughter.



Remembering Malcolm-Jamal Warner, beloved actor, artist, and role model, who recently passed away. His groundbreaking performances, creative brilliance, and unwavering commitment to positive representation continue to inspire and uplift generations.



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

From One Suit to 12 Doors

This Baton Rouge Couple Buys the Block with Faith, Integrity

Candace J. Semien
Managing Editor
Jozef Syndicate

A Suit, a Store, a Whisper from God

In the sweltering Baton Rouge heat, a group of boys gather outside The Master's Touch, a men's clothing store, mesmerized by sleek suits and polished shoes. Inside, owner William Bates wears confidence and style like a second skin. For him and his wife Maria, the store is more than a business; it's a calling.

Their journey began in 2007, when Maria wanted to gift William a \$499 suit they couldn't afford. After a divine nudge and a failed attempt to purchase the suit wholesale, God instructed Maria to get a business license and begin selling suits herself. On Christmas, she gifted William not the suit, but a vision: to launch The Master's Touch.

The couple began selling from home, inventory quickly overwhelming their living space. Amid the 2008 recession, Maria felt led to a dilapidated studio on Monterey Drive. They secured the space and, with their own hands and credit cards, transformed it into a store. On Black Friday 2008, The Master's Touch quietly opened, and its first customer spent over \$1,000.

Faith, Trials, and Community

Despite no formal retail experience, William studied business



William and Maria Bates stand in front of the new House of Fades Barbershop in the Park Forest Business Plaza in Baton Rouge. Photo by Yusef Davis | YD Photo and Art

models and relied on faith. Maria worked as a nurse and handled administration. A small business program at Southern University helped Maria prepare a business plan, leading to a \$50,000 loan.

When sales slowed, William prayed outside the store and heard God say, "You're crying over a suit store, but I'm trying to give you a strip mall." That declaration marked the beginning of a new vision.

After the 2016 floods damaged their home but spared their store, they gave away suits to those in need. In 2017, 225 Magazine named The Master's Touch the Best Men's Clothing Store.

During COVID, the couple adapt-

ed with creativity, hosting Facebook Live sales, inspired by "The Homeboy Shopping Network," and selling 150 custom suits in three months. In 2021, they signed an N.I.L. deal with Southern University, suiting up athletes in style.

Buying the Block

In 2022, Bates Real Estate Inc. purchased the Park Forest Business Plaza: 12,989 square feet, five tenants, and seven vacant units. With \$500,000 in commercial loans and another \$80,000 invested in upgrades, they transformed the space.

Now, all 12 units are filled not with liquor stores or payday lend-

ers, but with community businesses like House of Fades Barbershop, Vina Nail Salon, and Midnight Munchies. At the heart is The Master's Touch.

William remains intentional about who he leases to. He's rejected businesses that don't align with the community's values. "When you own the block, you get to decide what goes in it. That's power. That's stewardship," he said.

Building a Legacy

Maria and William met at Southern University in 1992 and married in 1994. From humble beginnings, they've built a clothing brand,

Stitch-by-Stitch, and a legacy rooted in faith, ownership, and excellence.

Now in their 50s, the couple sees their investments as a foundation for future generations, both their own and others in the community. "This is for every business owner here and their families," said William. "We pray for their success."

Maria added, "We started with nothing—no trust, no legacy. But we believed in what God showed us."

Their journey is a testament to faith in action. "People need to hear they're not crazy for believing," Maria said. "If the Lord said do it, we did it."



Maria and William Bates of Bates Real Estate. Photo by Yusef Davis | YD Photo and Art LLC

State & Local News

Dr. Joseph Bouie Jr. Named New Chancellor of Southern University at New Orleans

Data News Staff Edited Report

The Southern University Board of Supervisors has named Louisiana State Senator Joseph Bouie Jr. as the next Chancellor of Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO), marking a homecoming for a longtime advocate of the institution. Bouie will officially begin his tenure on August 1st.

Currently representing District 3 in the Louisiana State Senate, Bouie brings decades of experience in higher education, public service, and community leadership. A SUNO Alumnus and for-

mer Chancellor of the university, Bouie described the appointment as deeply personal.

"SUNO raised me actually, it saved my life," Bouie said. "The legacy of this institution is critical to not only this region but to the nation. I am grateful to have this opportunity to work with the SUNO family once again."

Bouie holds a degree in Sociology from Southern University, a Master of Social Work from Tulane University, and a Ph.D. in Administration and Planning from Clark Atlanta University. Over the course of his career, he has served as a Professor of Social Work, Univer-

sity Administrator, and a staunch Legislative Advocate for Education and Equity.

Southern University System President Dennis Shields expressed confidence in Bouie's leadership.

"I am pleased to welcome Dr. Bouie back to SUNO as its next Chancellor," Shields said. "He is a proven leader whose academic, administrative, and legislative experience make him uniquely qualified to guide SUNO into the next chapter. His deep roots in the SUNO Community and lifelong commitment to public service will be invaluable as we continue to build on



Dr. Joseph Bouie Jr., Louisiana State Senator, has been named Chancellor of Southern University at New Orleans. A SUNO alumnus and former chancellor, Dr. Bouie returns to lead the institution with a renewed commitment to academic excellence and community engagement.

the university's momentum."

Bouie succeeds Chancellor James Ammons and is expected to

focus on student success, institutional growth, and strengthening community partnerships.

Zora Neale Hurston's Final Home Purchased and Preserved by The Conservation Fund

Jason Roberts Contributor
blackpressusa newswire

More than 60 years after acclaimed author Zora Neale Hurston resided in a modest home on a quiet street in Fort Pierce, Florida, that property has been protected. But more help is needed to ensure it permanently honors Hurston's Legacy. The Conservation Fund (TCF) purchased the home when it was about to be placed on the open market, putting it at risk of demolition or development. TCF will transfer the property to the Zora Neale Hurston Florida Education Foundation (ZNHFEEF), which will turn it into a visitor and education center.

The home is in the Historic Lincoln Park Community, a formerly segregated African American section of town. Hurston is the only person to ever live in the building, and her grave site is a few blocks away. "It's an honor to be a part of protecting the final place where Zora Neale Hurston resided," said Lauren Day, Florida Director for The Conservation Fund. "Despite its designation as a National Historic Landmark in 1991, this home was at risk of being forgotten, developed, or falling further into disrepair – something that threatens hundreds of African American sites around the country. We are thrilled to help ensure Zora's important legacy alongside our partners."

Zora Neale Hurston is one of the most acclaimed authors of the 20th Century. She is closely associated with the Harlem Renaissance, a period of creativity and rebirth for African American authors, artists, and musicians. Her most famous work, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, is taught in high schools and colleges across the country. During the time she lived in the Fort Pierce house, Hurston wrote for the Fort Pierce Chronicle, a newspaper written by and for Black people. "Zora Neale Hurston's final home deserves to be part of her enduring legacy," said Marvin Hobson, President of the Zora Neale Hurston Florida Education Foundation.



Zora Neale Hurston, acclaimed author, journalist, anthropologist, and folklorist, captured the voices and stories of Black life in the American South. Best known for her seminal novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God", Hurston was a key figure of the Harlem Renaissance whose work preserved African American folklore and celebrated Black cultural identity with unmatched depth and authenticity.

"A home is a place of safety and refuge. As a writer in a male-dominated industry who worked during Jim Crow America, it's easy to imagine the peace and comfort that Zora would have sought at her Fort Pierce home. We're honored to partner with The Conservation Fund to ensure this property honors one of the greatest American writers of the 20th Century." The property is part of the Dust Tracks Heritage Trail honoring Hurston's life and contributions to American history and literature. Locations across Fort Pierce include Hurston's gravesite, the Chronicle Newspaper where she worked, the former St. Lucie Welfare Home where she convalesced, and Lincoln Park Academy, the formerly segregated school where Hurston taught English.

The Conservation Fund and ZNHFEEF are actively fundraising to replenish the funds used to purchase the property and make critical improvements to the home. ZNHFEEF plans to open the visitor and education center to the public

shortly. The Zora Neale Hurston home is the latest African American Heritage Site protected by The Conservation Fund and partners. Other projects include the Chattahoochee Brick Company Memorial Park in Georgia, the Harriett Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument and formerly segregated beaches in Maryland, and the Freedom Riders National Monument in Alabama. "These locations represent a small fraction of African American sites around the country that must be protected and honored," said Tony Richardson, Director of The Conservation Fund's Legacy Places Initiative. "We're working with partners to safeguard these important cultural sites before they are lost, ensuring these vital places and stories live on for all Americans, for generations to come."

To learn more, visit www.conservationsfund.org.

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