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Katrina 20 Conference Reflects on Lessons Learned from the Past Two Decades



Cassandra Shepard, Ph.D. speaks during a panel discussion at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans, Friday, Aug. 29, 2025. The event marked the 20th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and brought together scholars, community leaders and survivors to reflect on the storm's lasting impact.



Youth from Kuumba Academy, part of the Ashé Cultural Arts Center, perform traditional drumming during the K20 Week of Action on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025.

Story and Photos by Daelyn House
Data News Weekly Contributor

Twenty years to the date, Hurricane Katrina devastated the City of New Orleans, displacing 103,000 people permanently and impacting more than 700,000 people. On the 20th Anniversary of the storm, commu-

nity leaders and activists reflected on the storm at the Katrina 20 Conference on August 30, 2025, to share their experiences and discuss how the city continues to rebuild while the scars of Katrina remain two decades later.

“My strongest memory is the participation I took in the search and rescue of people who were stranded

in the water during Hurricane Katrina,” said Author Omar Casimire, who founded the Katrina National Memorial Museum Project. Casimire played a critical role in saving lives across the city, commandeering a boat to reach those in need. He has kept the memory of Katrina alive, publishing “The Katrina List” in 2021, a book documenting the storm’s untold tragedies, while

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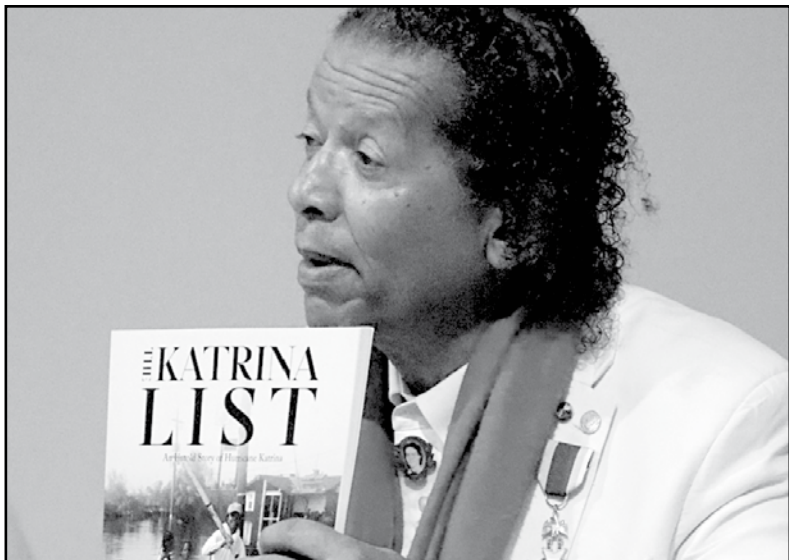
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Omar Casimire holds a copy of his book "The Katrina List" during a panel discussion on the 20th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025. Casimire's book recounts stories of survival and resilience following the storm. (AP Photo/Daelyn House)



Activist Malik Rahim receives a Certificate of Recognition on his work reviving communities Post-Katrina.

trina Commemoration Foundation, helped solidify August 29th as "Katrina Day" in Louisiana.

"That was momentous, simply because it is always going to be that thing that we have to hold to remember the folks whose lives were lost and to also be able to just honor that day, honor that moment, honor them," Winder said.

Presenting mutual aid as the most powerful and effective path for community recovery, Dr. Cassandra Shepard, an Assistant Professor at Xavier University of Louisiana, noted that New Orleans natives are still waiting for lasting government support nearly two decades after Katrina. Many continue to question whether state and federal agencies have moved on from the disaster while communities still bear its scars.

"What we need is a collective movement that takes care of each other... Mutual aid is how we all help each other to be able to get through disasters and events that are difficult. And I think that that is where the power truly lies," Shepard said.

also taking on the difficult task of updating the death toll by recording the names of loved ones lost.

"The government reported 1,800 or so people died, but it's over [that]," Casimire said. "Some of the officials say about five or six people died at the Convention Center," but he believes there are far more deaths that were unrecorded.

The city's low-income neighborhoods were receiving little to no assistance in the evacuations and rescues, as residents tried to escape the dangerous floods.

"It is those who have already recovered and refuse to help those who are still suffering from the wrath of not just Hurricane Katrina, but [post-] hurricane racism," said

Malik Rahim, a Community Activist, and New Orleans native. Rahim shared that his mother's house was threatened during the time of Katrina, and he feared it may be taken away due to him being Blacklisted from getting a job. The challenges that remain in neighborhoods were even more impacted by the storm, shifting the focus from physical to

social and systemic failures.

"One of the greatest things younger people can pay attention to is policy. There were so many policies that were not in place. There were policies that just completely derailed what needed to happen at that time," said April Winder, a New Orleans native. Winder, who worked with the New Orleans Ka-

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Annual Second Line Marks Katrina Anniversary

Story and Photos by
Kristopher Beavers
Data News Weekly Contributor

The Six Ward Steppers and the Hip Hop Caucus of New Orleans hosted its Annual March and Second Line Parade in remembrance of the devastating National Tragedy that was Hurricane Katrina. The city marked the 20th Anniversary of Katrina on Friday, Aug. 29, 2025, of one of the most horrific natural disasters in America which forced the relocation of over 1 million native residents of the greater metro area of the city.

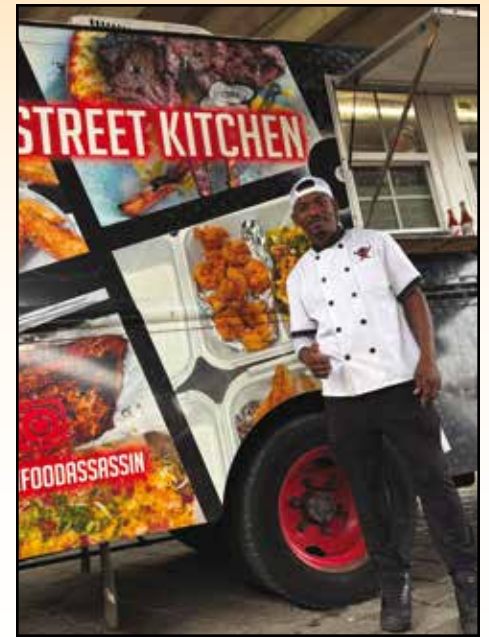
The Annual Katrina March and Second Line event at North Galvez and Jourdan Avenue was not only a time to reflect and mourn but celebrate recovery with food, live music, and tokens made by residents.

"It was a hard sight to see people sitting on roofs and cars," said Emanuel January, an Eighth Ward native and Head Chef of "Da Street Kitchen."

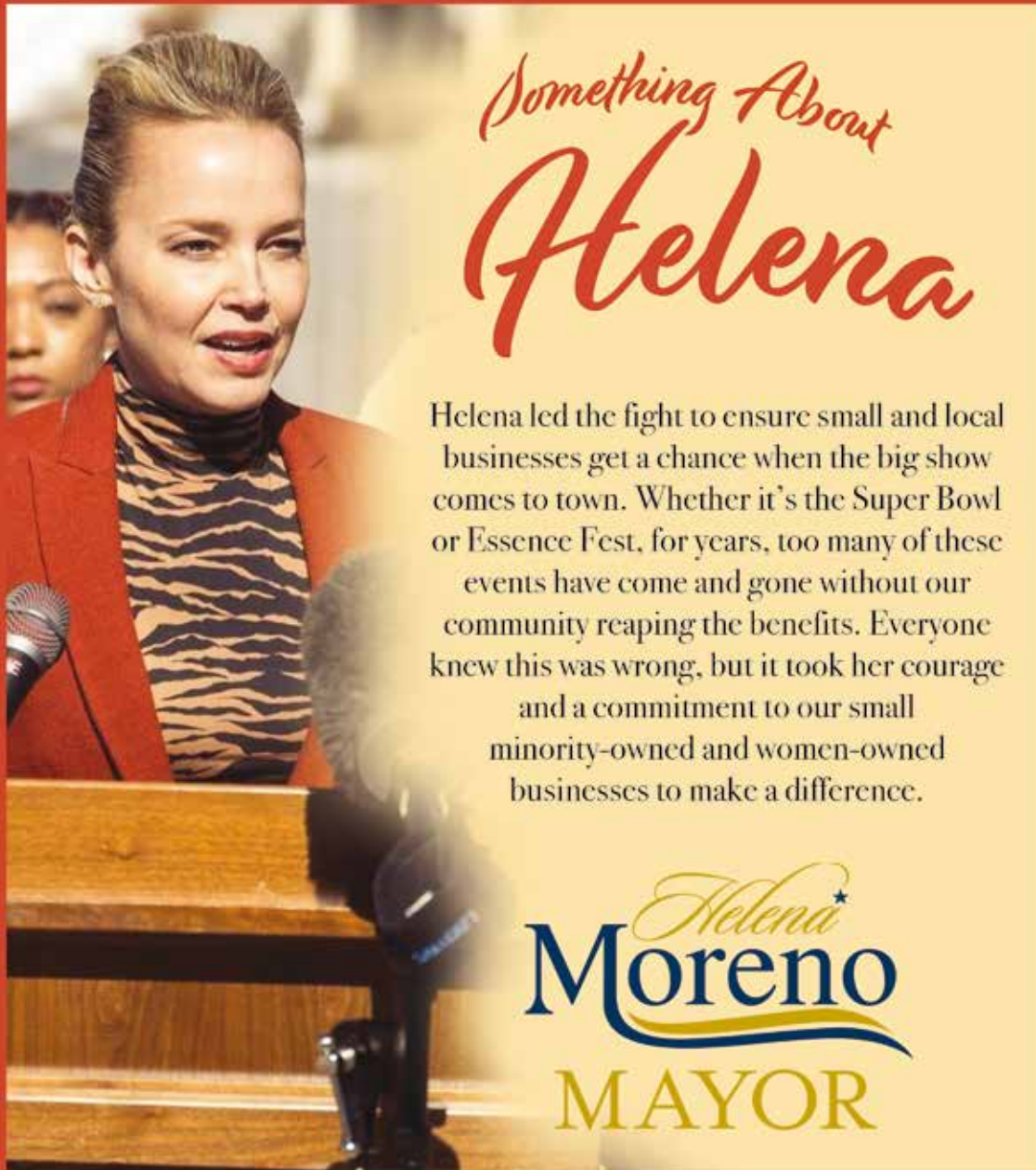
"But we must learn to celebrate life and



Rev Yearwood & Wild Wayne



Emanuel January at his food truck at the Anniversary Second Line.



Roi Chip Anthony performing at the Katrina 20th Anniversary Second Line.

all that comes because we live to see what we've lived through and what we've been through," said January, who catered at the second line set up near Hunter Field in the Seventh Ward and ran from 11 a.m. to around 5 p.m.

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on Aug. 29, 2005, as a Category 3 storm from the Gulf of Mexico. Thousands of Louisiana residents were forced to leave their homes for their safety but those that stayed dealt with an 18-foot flood water surge and lack of supplies and power for several weeks. Peaches Porter from Uptown, New Orleans was in high school when the storm hit the city.

"It was traumatic not being able to talk to your family during the entire situation," said Porter, who is a Hip-Hop Artist and uptown native. "A lot of people lost their homes, and we might have thought we were never going home," Porter said.

While some lost their homes others also lost their livelihoods. It has taken the city two decades to begin to find its way back.

"Hurricane Katrina was a double-edged sword," said Don Harley, the Owner of "Fresh Fruit Sensations and a native of Harvey on the West Bank.

"Overall, the city is better, but it is a shame it had to become better after such a tragedy" Harley said. Since then, and after some \$76 billion dollars in recovery aid, New Orleans has vastly improved the infrastructure of the city from the devastation back in 2005, some residents said. Several new schools were built amongst a reinforced levy system. But residents believe there is still so much more needed for the city to fully return.

"The way the people and the city stuck together is simply deserving of a celebration," Harley added.

Mayoral Candidate Helena Moreno Engages with Community



Mayoral Candidate Helena Moreno at the House of Refuge Apostolic Church Proclamation to BMike/Katrina Mural



Mayoral Candidate Helena Moreno checking out the Gaming experience with Nola Grown and Nord Commission with the Young Ladies from Level Up Church



Mayoral Candidate Helena Moreno speaking with members of the audience at the Lakefront Property Owners Association's Mayoral Forum



Mayoral Candidate Helena Moreno speaking with Pastor Fred Luther of Franklin Ave Baptist Church at the Hurricane Katrina Joint Worship with First Baptist



Mayoral Candidate Helena Moreno at the Hurricane Katrina 20th Anniversary Press Conference

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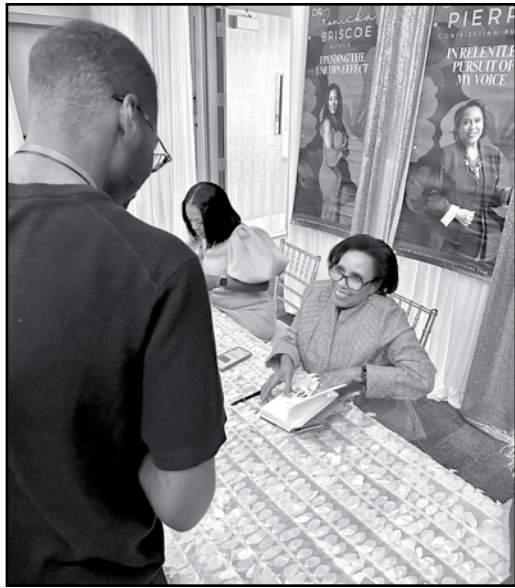
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Movement Aims to Address the Unicorn Effect Black Women Face

Aaliyah Brown
Data News Weekly
Contributor
Photos courtesy
Dr. Ronicka Briscoe

Since the beginning of 2025, roughly 300,000 Black women have lost employment over a three-month period, and particularly Black women in executive or leadership roles. Black women are expected to out-perform at work and rarely experience the protections from other groups. This “Unicorn Effect” as coined by New Orleans native, Dr. Ronicka Briscoe, is part of the burnout many Black women experience. She brought together a group of Black women across different fields at the Community Book Center on Bayou Road on Aug. 29th and at JE Banquets on Aug. 30th to kick off what she describes as a movement in which Black women take time to reflect on the current times and choose their path with purpose.

“I was intentional about curating contributors from different back-



grounds, industries, and regions, because our collective narrative is stronger and more impactful than any single voice,” said Briscoe, educator, scholar, and CEO of Winning on the Road, LLC.

“The Unicorn Effect,” a term coined by Briscoe, explains the pressures placed on Black women to meet unattainable professional goals with the additional realities of

Systemic Racism and gender bias.

A variety of highly accomplished Black women teamed up with Briscoe to release a 2025 Ethnographic Anthology, “In Relentless Pursuit of Me: Upending the Unicorn Effect.” The Anthology consists of life reflections from Contributing Authors Ebony Allen, a Clinical Therapist and Counselor, Dr. Jawan Brown Alexander, an Education Leader,



Dominique Luster, an Archivist and Entrepreneur, LaShon Ormond, a Youth Empowerment Advocate, Aaron Harrison, an Educator and Co-Founder of Legacy Foundation for Girls, Monica Pierre, an Emmy Award-Winning Reporter and Producer, and Dr. Dorothy Doolittle, an Education Transformation Leader, alongside Briscoe.

After the Anthology’s release on



July 22nd, it ranked as a No. 1 Amazon bestseller in 11 categories, featuring stories from each author telling their journey as a Black woman navigating complex social dynamics, and struggles with identity.

“I wanted to show that real strength isn’t doing more, it’s choosing peace without apology,”

Newsmaker, Continued on page 7.

State & Local News

Louisiana Unions Celebrate Job Growth, Highlight Worker Challenges at Labor Day Picnic

Data News Staff Edited Report

Union members and their families gathered at Marconi Meadows in City Park for the Annual Labor Day Picnic, celebrating gains while confronting challenges in Louisiana’s Labor Landscape.

According to Leaders for a Better Louisiana, the state saw 1.1% job growth over the past year, with eight of its ten Metro Regions adding jobs, including New Orleans. But AFL-CIO President Tiger Hammond said that progress masks deeper struggles for local workers.

“What’s a shame of it all is that we have a lot of people who want collective bargaining, and they’re being denied their rights in the Greater New Orleans area,” Hammond said.



Nurses’ Contract Fight

Among those at the picnic were nurses from University Medical Center (UMC), still fighting for their first contract nearly two years after unionizing with Na-

tional Nurses United.

“Over 620 days without a contract,” Nurse Ory Mire said. “The hospital just keeps delaying and thinking that we’re going to go away. Four strikes, we’re staying.”

Nurses say they want higher pay, safer staffing ratios, and better workplace protections.

“Our fight is about changing health care,” Nurse Terry Mogilles added. “Our fight is about the real spirit of Charity putting patients over profit.”

In a statement, UMC said it “remains committed to reaching a fair and balanced contract that recognizes the vital contributions of our nurses and care team members, while ensuring we continue delivering exceptional care to every patient who depends on us.”

Broader Labor Struggles

Beyond the hospital dispute, labor leaders emphasized that low wages remain a persistent challenge. Louisiana’s minimum wage is still \$7.25 per hour, the federal minimum.

“It’s kind of hard to concentrate on one job when you have to work two,” said Chris LeFleur of LIUNA Local 99.

This year’s AFL-CIO Labor Day Theme, “Workers over Billionaires,” reflects frustration over the widening pay gap between employees and corporate executives.

“Instead of sharing the wealth with the workers who put the jobs in every day, they prefer to give it to the CEOs,” Hammond said.

Looking Ahead

Hammond also warned of looming disruptions as artificial intelligence and automation advance, potentially threatening many union jobs.

“Workers need a seat at the table,” he said. “If not, we’re going to see technology replace people instead of working alongside them.”

Thousands March on Wall Street Demanding Economic Justice and Equity

Stacy M. Brown
Black Press USA
Senior National
Correspondent

Sixty-two years to the day after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" Speech, thousands poured into Lower Manhattan on Thursday, linking arms and voices in what was billed as the largest demonstration of its kind since Donald Trump returned to the White House.

Led by Rev. Al Sharpton and the National Action Network, the March on Wall Street drew National Civil Rights Leaders, clergy, activists, and elected officials, all demanding economic justice, equity, and fair opportunity at a time when diversity, equity, and inclusion programs have been dismantled by the Trump administration. The march began at Foley Square, paused at the African Burial Ground National Monument, and wound its way down Broadway to Whitehall Street. Participants spanned generations and professions — labor unions, fraternities and sororities, educators, and teens — all united by the call to defend rights secured in the 1960s and to push back against what they see as the biggest transfer of wealth in U.S. History.

Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, who was arrested earlier this year while protesting ICE, challenged fellow municipal leaders to act. "We are here because our ancestors demand that we be here, because the times demand that we be here, because every mayor in every city in



Rev. Dr. Boise Kimber, President of the National Baptist Convention USA Inc. and Rev. Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr, President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) at the March on Wall Street, August 28, 2025, in New York City.

America should be rising up right now as Donald Trump tries to send the National Guard into our communities — we are here as they create the biggest transference of wealth this country has ever seen," Baraka declared. The presence of Martin Luther King III and Andrea Waters King underscored the continuity of the movement. "It's extraordinarily significant, but in the back of mind, I am thinking about how sad this is, that 62 years after Dad delivered that dream for our nation and world that we are in the position we are in," King said. "And the goal is to find ways to move this

nation forward around economic inequality." King also posted on social media: "We were proud to join @NationalAction and my good friend, @TheRevAl, for the #MarchOnWallStreet. On the 62nd Anniversary of the #MarchOnWashington and in the financial capital of the world, we marched for economic justice and fair opportunities for ALL."

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, stood with Rev. Dr. Boise Kimber, President of the National Baptist Convention USA Inc., marking the moment's deep historical ties. "It

marked 62 years after the historic 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and we continue to march, we continue to speak out, and we continue to demand freedom, justice, equality, and equity," Chavis said. "Thus, we join the Rev. Al Sharpton and the National Action Network in the March on Wall Street. The Rev. Boise Kimber and I stood together, shoulder to shoulder, at the March on Wall Street. I was pleased to represent the Black Press of America under the auspices of the NNPA. In the words of Publisher-Leader Frederick Douglass, 'Freedom is a constant struggle.'"

Rev. Dr. Christopher Davis, General Secretary at the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., drove home the financial realities confronting communities of faith. "I don't care the size of your church," Davis said. "Whether you have 10,000 members or 10 members, you can't do ministry without money, so we have to be concerned about the economic plight of the people that fill our pews." Among those addressing the crowd were Michael Eric Dyson, Benjamin Crump, Melanie Campbell, Maya Wiley, and others, each pointing to the urgency of resisting what they described as attacks on democracy, workers, and Black communities. "It means we continue the movement 62 years later, marching on Wall Street, raising the issues of income inequity, DEI, and the takeover of cities with Black mayors. The dream is alive," Sharpton told the crowd.

Newsmaker, Continued from page 6.

said Ebony Allen, on her observations on the "Unicorn Effect" and the toll it can take on the Black women she has worked with.

She explained that some women have been able to "flip that pressure into power," while others may not. Her chapter explores her own feelings of overwhelming pressure and how she overcame it slowly but surely.

"Telling our individual stories is

always an Act of Courage. There is healing in the telling," said Emmy-Winner Monica Pierre. "On the Book Dedication page, each author shares the names of their grandmothers. We wanted their names to be written down in history so they can be celebrated and never forgotten," Pierre said, adding that she used this book as an opportunity to unveil a vulnerable side of herself that most may not know.

She encouraged Black women to be confident in their own sense of self and to find their own voice.

"Journey to my Voice by Monica Pierre is a reminder that life is a journey, not a destination, even among the most talented," said Ms. Shelia Higgs Burkhalter, who attended the book launch and is a Vice President of Student Affairs at Winthrop University. She shared that being a woman in leadership, the book and event resonated strongly with her personally.

"We're naming the truth, reclaiming our narratives and reminding each other that we are not alone," Briscoe said in a statement.

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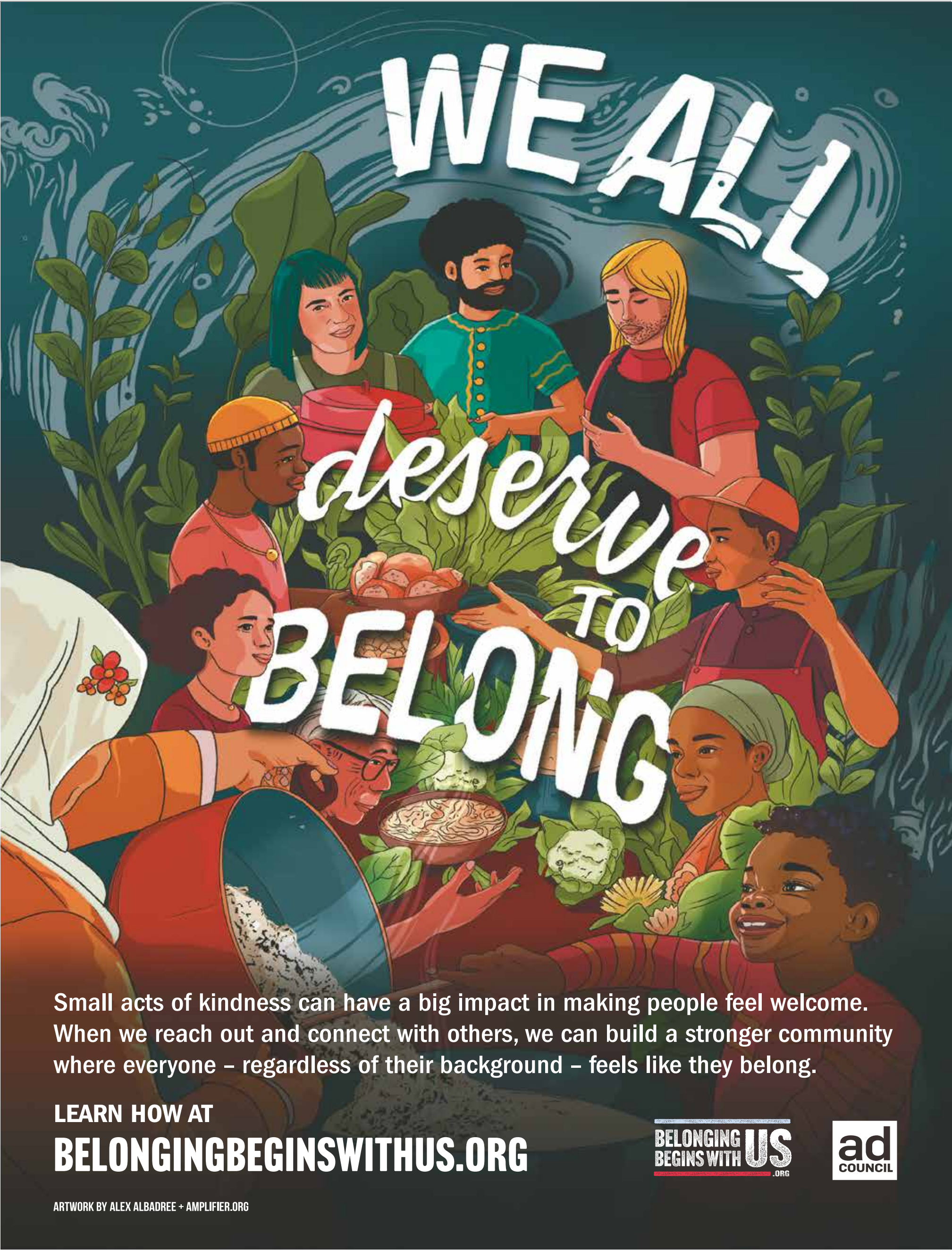
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