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Story of African Heritage in the African American Journey

Data Zone Page 4

November 8 - November 15, 2025 60th Year Volume 29 www.ladatanews.com

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Dr. Ruth J. Simmons

Inspiring Saint Katharine Drexel Prep Students with Powerful Message of Perseverance and Purpose



Page 2



Newsmaker
What's Up with the Black and Gold?

Page 6

State & Local
States Suing Trump USDA for Gutting Food Aid



Page 7

Dr. Ruth J. Simmons

Inspires Saint Katharine Drexel Prep Students with Powerful Message of Perseverance and Purpose



The Prep Class of 1964 Alum, Principal Skidmore of Katharine Drexel Preparatory and Friends Welcome Dr. Ruth Simmons. Left to Right: Karen Becnel Moore, Bart Moore, Lolita V. Cherrie, Principal Skidmore, Sheryl B. Neely, Dr. Ruth Simmons, Pearl Algere Lonian, Myra Haydel.

Glenda Bell
Data News Weekly Contributor

The young women of Saint Katharine Drexel Preparatory School were treated to an unforgettable morning of wisdom, reflection, and inspiration during an exclusive Author Talk featuring Dr. Ruth J. Simmons, the

Trailblazing Educator, Leader, and New York Times Best-Selling Author of *Up Home: One Girl's Journey*.

Organized by Alumnae Sheryl B. Neely (Class of 1964) and Karen Becnel Moore, in collaboration with the school's principal and staff, the event brought together generations of Drexel Prep women united by a shared commitment to educa-

tion, empowerment, and legacy.

Dr. Simmons, daughter of a sharecropper, Dillard and Harvard University graduate, and the first African American President of an Ivy League institution (Brown University) captivated students with stories from her remarkable life journey. Her words resonated deeply as she encouraged the young ladies to remain

Cover Story, Continued on page 3.

INSIDE DATA	
Cover Story	2
Data Zone	4
Newsmaker	6
State & Local News . . .	6
National News	7

DATA NEWS WEEKLY

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Dated material two weeks in advance. Not responsible for publishing or return of unsolicited manuscripts or photos.

Cover Story, Continued from page 2.



steadfast and optimistic in the face of challenges.

"I want you to take the lessons from my journey and remember that even when you don't have everything you need, you can still move forward," Dr. Simmons told the students. "Stay positive and persistent; those qualities will carry you farther than any obstacle ever could."

The upper-grade students engaged in a heartfelt dialogue with Dr. Simmons following her talk, reflect-

ing on themes from her memoir *Up Home: One Girl's Journey*. Each student received a personal copy of the book, symbolizing the importance of storytelling, self-determination, and resilience.

In a touching gesture of support for her longtime friend, Sheryl B. Neely, and in Recognition of Drexel Prep's Mission to nurture future leaders, Dr. Simmons announced a \$10,000 donation to the school. Her contribution underscored her lifelong commitment to expanding educational access and empowering young women to achieve beyond expectation.

"Having Dr. Simmons visit our campus was not only an honor, but a moment our students will remember for a lifetime," said organizer Neely. "Her journey mirrors the values we hope to instill in every Drexel Prep student faith, perseverance, and excellence."

The morning concluded with applause, reflection, and renewed inspiration as students and faculty celebrated the impact of a woman whose life's work continues to transform education across generations.



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Original Stage Production Tells the Story of African Heritage in the African American Journey

**Story and Photos by
Kevin Anderson
Data News Weekly Contributor**

Through rhythm, dance, and storytelling, Deacon Larry Calvin brought history to the center stage on Sunday, November 2nd, through his original play "Our Story in Words and Songs." The play explored African and African American History from the great African Kingdoms to slavery and emancipation, and eventually to the fight for Civil Rights.

"We have to know who we are and where we come from," Calvin said.

He said his inspiration for the work came from both faith and a need to educate. "I was inspired by the Holy Spirit," he said. "There's not enough real history taught in our schools."

Calvin worked with performers of all ages to bring this production to life. Young Gospel Dancers aged 8 to 15, seasoned choir members, and a live band kept the audience engaged throughout the play. Calvin said the different musical elements were essential to the play's message.

"Storytelling has always been part of who we are and the music - whether spirituals, freedom songs, or protest chants - it has always carried our people through," he said.

Calvin, who is a proud alumnus of Xavier University of Louisiana and graduated in the Class of 1969 and a long-time former Administrator, said his experiences at the university shaped the work that he continues to do for Civil Rights and Racial Equality in education and cultural preservation today.

"I hope the community and students realize the power they have to make a difference," he said. "That's what our ancestors fought for; to give us a voice and a purpose," he added.

Through "Our Story in Words and Songs," Calvin invited the audience to remember, reflect, and rise as a time when he said the current political climate aims to erase and "whitewash" histories and end diversity programs that ensure that Black Histories remain included in the American story. He said his message with this play is clear: knowing our history is key to shaping our future.

"If we don't tell our story," Calvin said, "someone else will, and they won't tell it the way it needs to be told."



Members of the cast from Corpus Christi-Epiphany Catholic Church perform in an original stage production written by Deacon Larry Calvin, celebrating the resilience, faith, and triumph of African descendants.



Deacon Larry Calvin, playwright and community leader, created and directed the original production highlighting the spiritual strength and enduring legacy of African descendants through faith and music.

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

Xavier University of Louisiana to Close Centennial Homecoming with Gospel Music Legend Yolanda Adams

Eric Connerly
Data News Weekly Contributor

For one hundred years, Xavier University of Louisiana has stood as a beacon of faith, excellence, and service, preparing generations of students to lead, uplift, and transform their communities. As the nation's only Historically Black and Catholic University concludes its Centennial Homecoming Celebration, this enduring mission will come alive in an afternoon of soul-stirring music and spiritual fellowship at the Gospel Concert Extravaganza, featuring the incomparable Yolanda Adams, on Sunday, November 9, from noon to 4 p.m. in the Convocation Center, 7900 Stroelitz Street, New Orleans.

The celebration begins with a Homecoming Brunch, welcoming alumni, students, faculty, and friends to gather in gratitude and joy. This special event will



Yolanda Adams

showcase performances by both alumni and current members of the Xavier Gospel Choir, symbolizing the living bridge between the university's rich past and its dynamic future. Renowned International Soprano, Bridget Bazile, will grace the audience with her melodious voice as she accompanies the Xavier Gospel Choir as Guest Soloist. Their harmonies will echo the university's centennial theme, Faith, Purpose, and Excellence: A Century of Xavier Pride.

Headlining this Jubilant Finale is Yolanda Adams, the four-time Grammy Award-Winning Gospel Icon whose extraordinary voice and uplifting spirit have inspired millions worldwide. With 15 acclaimed albums and countless honors, including multiple Dove Awards, NAACP Image Awards, Stellar Gos-

pel Awards, and BET Awards, Adams continues to redefine gospel music by infusing it with messages of hope, empowerment, and divine love. Her performance at Xavier will be both a homecoming and a benediction, a reminder that faith and purpose remain at the heart of Xavier's Legacy.

The Gospel Concert Extravaganza serves not only as a musical finale to Xavier's 100th-Year Celebration but also as a reaffirmation of its commitment to educational excellence, spiritual grounding, and community service. It is a moment for all who have been touched by Xavier, from students to alumni, from faculty to friends, to come together in praise and reflection on a century of faith-filled achievement.

Tickets are available at <https://us.givergy.com/GospelExtravaganza/?controller=home>.

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DATA NEWS WEEKLY

Your Voice Matters

Who Dat

What's Up with the Black and Gold?

Fleur De Lis
Data News Weekly
Contributor

The streets of New Orleans are always alive with rhythm, resilience, and hope, but this football season, the beat feels off. With the Saints limping to a 1-8 start under new Head Coach Kellen Moore, the Who Dat Nation is asking a painful question: What's up with the Black and Gold?

When Kellen Moore was hired, optimism filled the Crescent City. A young offensive mind with a reputation for creativity, he was expected to breathe new life into a stagnant offense and re-energize a fan base craving the glory days of Payton and Brees. Instead, nine games in, the Saints look out of sync, struggling to find an identity on either side of the ball.

Moore's offensive schemes, once touted as innovative have too often looked predictable, inconsis-



tent, and disconnected from the talent on the field. The quarterback carousel continues to spin, the running game is sputtering, and the offensive line has offered little protection. It's a frustrating sight for fans who remember

when the Superdome was home to precision, passion, and points.

Defensively, the story isn't much better. Once the backbone of the franchise, the Saints' defense now struggles to get off the field. Missed tackles, blown

assignments, and a lack of intensity have turned once-close games into blowouts. While Moore is an Offensive Coach, leadership starts at the top, and accountability must extend across the roster.

The bigger question looming over Airline Drive isn't just about X's and O's, it's about culture. Where's the fire? The swagger? The belief that used to define this franchise? Saints' fans have weathered hurricanes, heartbreaks, and heartbreak losses, but they've never accepted hopelessness. And right now, that's what this season feels like.

It's unfair to place all the blame on Kellen Moore. He inherited an aging roster, cap challenges, and a team searching for direction after years of inconsistency. Still, leadership means adapting, inspiring, and demanding excellence, and those qualities have been in short supply so far in 2025.

For this team to climb out of its

hole, it must rediscover its purpose. Veterans must lead with urgency, young players must step up, and Moore must find a way to light a spark in a locker room that's running low on confidence. The Saints don't just play for wins, they play for a city that bleeds Black and Gold, a city that knows how to come back from anything.

Right now, the fans aren't asking for miracles, they're asking for effort, heart, and pride. Because in New Orleans, the Saints aren't just a team; they're part of the city's soul. And the Who Dat Nation deserves a team that reflects that spirit.

As the 2025 season spirals, one thing is certain: it's time for Coach Moore and the Saints to look in the mirror, regroup, and remember what it means to represent New Orleans. Until then, the question echoes through the Dome and the neighborhoods alike... What's up with the Black and Gold?

State & Local News

GNO, Inc. Sunday Night Highlight - Jefferson Parish Spotlights Parks and Partnership

Michael Hecht
President & CEO Greater
New Orleans, Inc.

Stretching from the South Shore of Lake Pontchartrain all the way to the Gulf of Mexico, Jefferson Parish is the largest parish by population in the Greater New Orleans region and recently celebrated its 200th Birthday.

At this week's State of Jefferson Address, Parish President Cynthia Lee Sheng outlined a new vision for turning Jefferson into a year-round Sports Destination. From turf fields and tennis courts to powerboat races and disc golf, major investments are underway to attract national tournaments, fill hotel rooms, and drive regional spending. These include:

The new John Alario Jr. Sports Complex, opening in 2026, which already has more than 30 events booked, from baseball and softball to football showcases that will bring thousands of athletes and families to the West Bank during the summer months.



In Marrero, Parc des Familles will host the Disc Golf Pro Tour Big Easy Classic next March, a nationally streamed event expected to draw thousands of spectators.

Bright Playground is adding nine new courts as part of the Recreation Reimagined plan, positioning Jefferson to host state and re-

gional tennis tournaments.

Lafreniere Park continues to anchor the parish's running and walking events, now including the new Park to Park 10K connecting LaSalle and Lafreniere.

Collectively, these projects are expected to generate nearly 20,000 hotel room nights in 2026. Sheng



noted that Jefferson's growing Sports Tourism Sector is also a regional asset, pairing the parish's family-friendly venues with Greater New Orleans' Cultural Attractions to create a uniquely balanced visitor experience. "Few destinations can offer that kind of variety in such a short distance," she said.

A key theme in the address from both Sheng and Council Chairman Scott Walker was enthusiasm about working with New Orleans Mayor-Elect Helena Moreno to advance shared regional goals, from sports tourism and infrastructure to emergency management and permitting innovation.

25 States Suing Trump USDA for Gutting Food Aid to 40 Million Americans

Stacy M. Brown
Black Press USA Senior
National Correspondent

Twenty-five attorney generals across the country and three governors have filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture and its Secretary, Brooke Rollins, after the agency moved to suspend the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, better known as SNAP, which helps more than 40 million Americans buy food each month.

The lawsuit, filed in Federal Court in Massachusetts, argues that Rollins and the USDA unlawfully halted the program despite having billions of dollars in contingency funds that Congress specifically approved for emergencies like the current Federal Government Shutdown. It names both the USDA and the Office of Management and Budget, led by Russell Vought, as defendants, accusing them of violating federal law and the Administrative Procedure Act by arbitrarily denying food assistance to millions of people who depend on it. "SNAP is the largest Anti-Hunger Program in D.C., and if these cuts are allowed to go through, tens of thousands of District children, seniors, and families will be unable to afford food," said District of Columbia Attorney General Brian Schwab. "The adverse downstream impacts on public health, education, and public safety will be immediate, catastrophic, and irreparable. Additionally, the economic impact on our local business community will be severe as hundreds of SNAP retailers, including many that operate in food deserts, will lose a vital revenue stream. If these stores are forced to close, even non-SNAP recipients will lose access to critical sources of food."

According to the complaint, the USDA ordered states on October 24 to suspend all November SNAP benefit allotments until further notice, claiming insufficient funding due to the lapse in congressional appropriations. But attorney generals in 25 Jurisdictions argue that the agency's position is both unlawful and immoral, as Congress has already provided two separate \$3 billion Contingency Reserves



specifically to cover such emergencies. The complaint further alleges that the USDA has tapped other emergency funds to reopen Farm Service Offices and finance other programs during the shutdown, while refusing to use similar funds to feed families. For the District of Columbia and so many others, the impact will be devastating. In fiscal year 2025, an average of 141,000 D.C. residents relied on SNAP each month, including 47,000 children and 24,000 elderly individuals. The suspension will also cripple the local economy. More than 420 local retailers, including over 320 small "mom and pop" stores operating in food deserts, depend heavily on SNAP purchases. Many already run on razor-thin margins, and without those sales, they risk permanent closure.

The coalition argues that the USDA's decision defies decades of precedent. During every prior government shutdown, SNAP has continued to operate, and the agency has always used available funds to prevent hunger. This is the first time in history that benefits have been interrupted since the program's inception in 1964. The 51-page Lawsuit paints a dire picture. It notes that even as the USDA claims poverty, its contingency accounts hold billions of unused dollars, in-

cluding a \$23 billion "Section 32" Fund drawn from customs receipts

and agricultural tariffs. The agency recently used part of that fund to cover the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program through October, but refused to extend the same courtesy to SNAP recipients. The suit argues that this selective funding violates both Federal Law and the agency's duty to act rationally and in good faith.

Food banks, many already overwhelmed, are bracing for surges in demand. Governors in several plaintiff states, including California and Minnesota, have already deployed Emergency Funds to keep families fed. Schwab warned that the consequences go beyond hunger. "The ripple effects of this decision will reach every corner of our city," he said. "Children who are hungry cannot learn, seniors will face life-threatening health risks, and small businesses will go under. This fight is about basic human decency and about keeping food on the table for those who need it most."

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