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Bayou Classic 2025

A Celebration of HBCU Pride, Culture, and Community



The 2025 Bayou Classic returns to New Orleans, celebrating the rich heritage and rivalry between Southern University and Grambling State University. This iconic HBCU tradition brings generations together through culture, music, and community pride.

Benjamin Bates
Data News Weekly Contributor

The 2025 Edition of the Bayou Classic once again transformed New Orleans into the Epicenter of HBCU pride, culture, and tradition. The annual matchup between Southern University and Gram-

bling State University brought tens of thousands of fans to the city for a Thanksgiving-weekend celebration that has become far more than a football rivalry. This year's Classic highlighted the deep cultural roots of both institutions while showcasing the evolving ways HBCUs continue to innovate, entertain, and impact the broader community.

A Weekend of Signature Events

Festivities began on Thursday with the Annual Parade through downtown New Orleans. The procession featured colorful floats, energetic school and alumni groups, and lively marching bands representing both universities. Families, locals, and visitors lined the streets to cheer and celebrate

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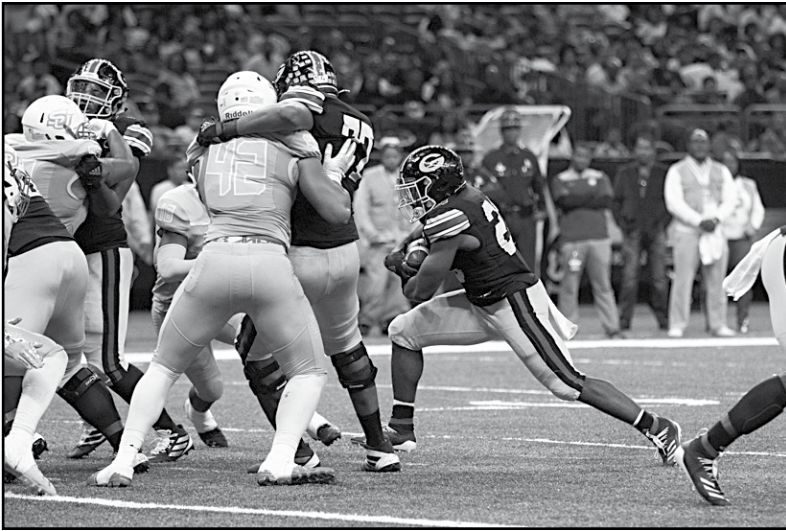
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P.O. Box 57347, New Orleans, LA 70157-7347 | Phone: (504) 821-7421 | Fax: (504) 821-7622
editorial: datanewseditor@bellsouth.net | advertising: datanewsad@bellsouth.net

Terry B. Jones	Contributors	Art Direction &
CEO/Publisher	Benjamin Bates	Production
Edwin Buggage	Edwin Buggage	Pubinator.com
Editor	Mayor-Elect Helena Moreno	Editorial and
Sharonda Green	Glenda Bell	Advertising Inquiries
Executive Assistant	Adia Fienagha	datanewsweeklyad@gmail.com
June Hazeur	Lauren Burke	Distribution
Chief Operating Officer		by Terrence Lee

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the start of a weekend steeped in pageantry.

By Friday, excitement reached another level with one of the most anticipated traditions of the Classic: the Battle of the Bands. Southern University's iconic Human Jukebox and Grambling State's World Famed Tiger Marching Band delivered show-stopping performances, blending powerful musicianship with intricate choreography. For many, the band battle is the heart of the weekend, an artistic showdown that embodies the spirit, discipline,

and showmanship HBCU bands are known for.

This year also introduced a new competitive frontier. Southern and Grambling faced off in a dedicated esports matchup at Champions Square, marking the first time the Classic formally incorporated digital competition. The event drew strong participation from students and fans, signaling the growing role of technology and gaming within campus culture and student engagement.



Game Day Energy in the Superdome

When Saturday arrived, the Caesars Superdome was electric. Fans poured into the stadium draped in blue and gold or black and gold, representing generations of alumni and families who return year after year. The game itself was spirited, but the Classic has always been about more than the scoreboard. It is a reunion, a cultural festival, a business engine, and a symbolic homecoming for countless HBCU supporters.

Adding to the spectacle, rising Hip-Hop Star GloRilla took the stage



during halftime, blending contemporary entertainment with the traditional rhythms of HBCU culture. Her performance underscored the Classic's ability to honor legacy while embracing what is fresh and relevant to younger audiences.

Why the Classic Matters

For decades, the Bayou Classic has stood as one of the most important gatherings in Black higher education and culture. It serves as a multigenerational meeting place for alumni, families, and supporters who see the event as both a celebration and a homecoming. Greek-

letter organizations, community leaders, and student groups all play visible roles throughout the weekend, creating a vibrant tapestry of Black excellence.

Economically, the Classic remains one of the city's major holiday events, generating millions in revenue for local hotels, restaurants, small businesses, and artists. It also provides national visibility for both institutions, supporting recruitment, alumni engagement, and university branding.

The introduction of esports and expanding entertainment elements show how the Classic continues to evolve while preserving the traditions that make it special.

A Living Legacy

The 2025 Bayou Classic reaffirmed its status as a Cornerstone of HBCU Heritage and New Orleans Culture. With its blend of fierce athletic competition, unmatched band performances, cultural unity, and economic impact, the Classic remains a powerful celebration of history, community, and the enduring Legacy of Black Colleges.

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Congressman Troy A. Carter, Sr. Thanksgiving Drive-Thru Dinner

Congressman Troy Carter's 33rd Annual Friends & Family "Drive-Thru" Thanksgiving Dinner. This auspicious event was held on Saturday, November 22, 2025, at Alice Harte Charter School at 5300 Berkley Drive in Algiers from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. This event aims to provide a complete holiday meal for those who might spend the holidays alone. The event was free to the public, and food was served on a first-come, first-serve basis. Over the past thirty-three years, Congressman Carter has hosted this community event since he was in the Louisiana State House of Representatives, a New Orleans City Councilman of District C, a private citizen, and now a United States Representative for Louisiana's Second Congressional District. Over the years, more than 10,000 citizens have been served. "This Thanksgiving Dinner has been a much looked forward to occasion where senior citizens and families alike come and enjoy a Thanksgiving meal with no questions asked. The only requirement is that you come hungry." Congressman Carter said during a recent interview.



U.S. Representative for Louisiana's
2nd Congressional District



CONGRESSMAN
TROY A. CARTER, SR.
Louisiana's 2nd Congressional District

*Welcome Southern
University and
Grambling University
teams, alumni, and friends
to New Orleans for the
52nd Anniversary of the
Bayou Classic.*



Southern Jaguars



Grambling Tigers

Mayor-Elect Moreno

Pipeline to the Community

As we welcome another Bayou Classic weekend to New Orleans, I am honored to celebrate this powerful tradition that brings together generations of alumni, students, families, and fans from Southern University and Grambling State University. The Bayou Classic is a celebration of excellence, culture, community, and the enduring impact of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. It strengthens our local economy, brings thousands of visitors to our hotels and restaurants, and gives young people a view of what their future can hold.

As Mayor-Elect, I am in the midst of the transition process, working alongside a diverse group of more than 300 civic

and community leaders to prepare my administration to hit the ground running on day one. During this season of Thanksgiving, I'm especially grateful for their dedication, partnership, and belief in what New Orleans can achieve together. We are taking a deep dive into the most pressing challenges facing our city, exploring opportunities for growth, and building the plans needed to deliver results with urgency, accountability, and collaboration.

To all our visitors, welcome to New Orleans! Enjoy the game, enjoy our city, and know that your presence contributes to something greater.

Have a safe and fun Bayou Classic weekend.

New Orleans Mayor-Elect
Helena Moreno



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Coco Gauff Visits Joe W. Brown Park in New Orleans East A Vision for Community & Youth Empowerment

Glenda Bell
Data News Weekly
Contributor

On a bright Monday afternoon in New Orleans East, tennis star Coco Gauff arrived at Joe W. Brown Park for a surprise community visit that underscores both her roots in the sport and her deepening commitment to racial and economic equity in underserved neighborhoods.

Gauff, who has become a global name in professional tennis, chose to shine a spotlight on Joe W. Brown Park's neglected tennis courts, which she personally helped fund and spearheaded the renovation of. According to local observers, the courts had fallen into disrepair, limiting safe spaces for local youth to train, play, or simply recreate.

From Pro Courts to Local Courts

On-site at Joe W. Brown Park, Gauff mingled with local teens, community leaders, and coaches, encouraging youth to take advantage of the renewed space. Her



CoCo Gauff, the reigning US Open champion with deep Louisiana family roots, visited New Orleans' Joe Brown Park to celebrate the renovation of its tennis courts. Pictured with her family, Gauff encouraged local youth to dream big and stay committed to the sport.

presence was not ceremonial alone: she picked up a racquet, served a few balls, and spoke about how sport had helped shape her life and how she hopes this facility can do the same for New Orleans East.

Why It Matters Locally

Joe W. Brown Park is situated in a part of the city long affected by under-investment, storm damage,

and socio-economic challenges. Revitalizing its tennis infrastructure is more than about courts; it's about creating safe, affirming public space where young people of color can build confidence, resilience, and opportunity.

Gauff's project aligns with broader conversations about community investment and equity. For many families in the neighbor-

hood, a functioning public sports facility is not just a welcome amenity; it is a tangible resource for hope, recreation, mentorship, and potential pathways out of adverse circumstances.

The Bigger Picture: Sports, Equity & Representation

By turning her global platform toward local impact, Gauff amplifies two key themes: first, the importance of athletic and community infrastructure in historically marginalized communities; and second, the power of representation, young Black girls and boys in New Orleans East saw in Gauff a living example of what is possible, rooted in their own cultural identity and place.

Community leaders present at the event noted how the courts will now be used for youth clinics, after-school programming, and partnerships with local organizations. One local coach told the press that having Gauff's name attached to the project brings "credibility, visibility, and investment"

that will help sustain the facility's use for years to come.

What's Next?

Gauff indicated that this is just the beginning; the intention is to keep programming active, involve local school systems, and ensure that the courts are accessible and welcoming to all children in the neighborhood, not just competitive players. She also expressed hope that private and public partnerships will follow to improve other recreational assets in New Orleans East.

For the community, Monday's moment was more than a photo-op, it was a declaration: that talent born on global stages can and should return home, that sport can be a vehicle for social justice, and that public parks are fertile grounds for the dreams of tomorrow.

In the words of Gauff herself as she addressed the gathered young athletes:

"This space is for you. Use it, build on it, and show the world what New Orleans East can do."

State & Local News

Prize Awards \$1 Million to Social Impact Organization

Story and Photos
by **Adia Fienagha**
Data News Weekly
Contributor

One million dollars. This was the prize money awarded to the Laureate of the 2025 Opus Prize, an Annual Award given to faith-based Humanitarian Organizations. Each year, the Opus Prize Foundation partners with a Catholic University to announce the award recipient. This year marks the first time the award was hosted at an Historically Black University at Xavier University of Louisiana, which is the only Catholic HBCU in the country.

"It is very important for us to read the sign of the times so that we remain relevant and we are not imposing our needs on the people. We choose the way of agriculture because we went through a period of drought," said Sister Rosalia Sakayombo, the Superior Mother of the



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IN MEMORIAM

Jimmy Cliff: Reggae Music Pioneer and Partner to Bob Marley, Dies at 81

Lauren Burke
NNPA Newswire
Correspondent

The six-decade career of Legendary artist Jimmy Cliff, who was born in the Somerton District of Jamaica, was one of the most influential in Reggae History and a Global Ambassador for Jamaican Culture. Cliff was raised in a rural farming community and began writing songs as a child. His family moved to Kingston as a teenager to pursue his music. What followed over the next thirty years was legendary.

Cliff's wife, Latifa Chambers, wrote on Instagram in the early morning hours of November 24th that, "It's with profound sadness that I share that my husband, Jimmy Cliff, has crossed over due to a seizure followed by pneumonia. I am thankful for his family, friends, fellow artists, and co-workers who have shared his journey with him. To all his fans around the world, please know that your support was his strength throughout his whole career. He really appreciated each and every fan for their love." She then thanked Cliff's doctors and medical staff.

Jimmy Cliff and Bob Marley shared a parallel rise within Jamaica's dynamic 1960s music scene, each shaping the emerging sound of reggae while carving distinct artistic identities. The two maintained a relationship marked by mutual respect and an understanding of each other's cultural impact. Cliff, who achieved international recognition earlier, particularly through "The Harder They Come," helped open global doors that Marley would later rocket through as he became the reggae genre's most iconic figure. Marley would, in turn, push the music's political aspects to new heights, which Cliff openly admired. Their relationship was defined less by collaboration and more by a shared mission: Elevating Jamaican music onto the world stage and using it as



Legendary musician Jimmy Cliff, who helped introduce reggae to the world alongside Bob Marley, has passed away. His groundbreaking music and global influence forever shaped the genre and inspired generations. His passing marks the loss of a cultural giant whose legacy will continue to resonate worldwide.

a vehicle for storytelling, struggle, and liberation.

Jimmy Cliff achieved his breakthrough moments with a series of socially conscious songs in the 1960s. They included "Many Rivers to Cross," "You Can Get It If You Really Want," and "The Harder They Come." That song became part of a movie soundtrack that would introduce reggae to international audiences and build Cliff's image as a pioneer of the genre. Cliff would become second only to Bob Marley in shaping reggae's global reach.

Over the decades, Cliff continued to change musically and fuse reggae with rock, pop, and world music influences. But he always maintained sharp political and emotional clarity in his songwriting. Jimmy Cliff's musical collaborations included work with the Rolling Stones, Elvis Costello, and Annie Lennox.

Cliff's contributions earned him induction into the Rock & Roll Hall

of Fame in 2010, making him one of the few reggae artists to be inducted into the Hall. Known for his charismatic stage presence and unwavering commitment to political

messages of resilience, Jimmy Cliff

will remain an enduring icon whose music has spoken across generations from Jamaica and beyond.

Jimmy Cliff is survived by his children, Lilty Cliff, Aken Cliff, and Nabiyah Be.



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