

# Life After Ahlita

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# Lisa North in Data News Exclusive Interview



Lisa North, mother of Ahlittia North, the six year-old little girl who was brutally murdered last month, discusses her daughter and the aftermath of her murder with Data News Weekly Editor Edwin Buggage.

by Edwin Buggage Editor

#### A Mother Mourns

As a City continues to grapple with crime and violence, where nearly every day one can see reports of another person killed. It seems the sad reality is that things are always not so easy in the Big Easy. The death count continues to rise, and many of the victims are young people. In July, a murder occurred that tugged at the heart strings of people around the globe. Ahlittia North, a precocious six year-old girl, was reported missing, and days later her dead body was found stabbed multiple times in a dumpster near the home of her mother Lisa North and stepfather Albert Hill in the New Orleans suburb.

On this day, I met Lisa North, the mother of Ahlittia, in a small cramped motel they call home since vacating their apartment. Ms. North sits on the edge of the bed while her 11 month-old daughter Trinity crawls about and

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#### **Data News Weekly**

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I want people to know Ahlittia was a very caring and loving person," says her mother Lisa North.



"I don't know if I will ever have closure, but I know I have to live for my other two children Trinity and Albert Jr."



During happier times husband Albert Hill with children enjoying a day in the pool with the kids.



"If there is anything you would like to do with your children or say to them do it now. Don't wait until something happens to them and say I wish I would have said this, just go ahead and do it'" says North.

her nearly two-year old son Albert Hill Jr. is peacefully sleeping and her husband Albert is close by. "I feel upset; I have a lot of anger inside me. I still can't believe this happened to her I am just confused right now. I am just really angry," she says shaking her head and speaking in a somber tone.

Ms. North is a young woman of amazing strength and courage. As we begin our conversation she recounts the person we all came to know from her tragic story, a beautiful little girl with an innocent face smiling in her green dance costume. "She was a very loving and caring person, she could just see you and she didn't have to know you and consider you a family member. She loved people and she was kind, full of energy and had a great spirit," remarks North, remembering her daughter.

#### So Many Tears

The loss of a loved one at any age is tough, especially when the loved one is a child. While still early in the grieving process, we speak on whether there will ever be a time of closure for her on the loss of her daughter Ahlittia. "I don't think I will ever get any closure. I am just taking it day-by-day and I've been to the funeral, I've seen the teddy bears and seen it on the news, I've heard what the police had to say, but I still can't believe it. I am still believing and hoping that one day she is going to come back and maybe they had the wrong person, I just can't believe it."

People from across the City and the globe were moved by Ahlittia's story. Contributions came in from all over to help the family, none of which went to Ms. North directly." Initially, I brushed off the money; I don't know if there was monies left over after the funeral, right now all I know is where and how we are living, I could use help to take care of me and my other children given how we were forced to move from our prior residence after Ahlittia's death."

Lisa North mentions an account she has set up for those who want to help out the family in this time of grieving and transition. "I have set up an account for people who still want to help, because after her death which was bad enough, now we have to deal with keeping a roof over our head for our other two children. I set up the donation fund at Regions Bank, in the benefit of Ahlittia." Speaking of the outpouring of kind words and support she's received she says, "Many of the people who have helped me are complete strangers, and I am very grateful. Recently, I was talking to a lady who lost a child in a fire and she spoke about how counseling helped her through the grieving period. I believe I do need counseling and she is going to help me with that."

#### From Struggle to Strength

After Ahlittia's body was found, police arrested Matthew Flugence, 20, who confessed in the stabbing death of Ahlittia North. Flugence is the nephew of stepfather Albert Hill and has on several occasions babysat Ahlittia. In many instances when kids are harmed it is by a loved one or acquaintance. Lisa North now feels leery about the safety of her two other children and hopes other parents can learn from this tragedy. "I think that people need to be careful when leaving their kids with people, even those who are family members. Today, I tell other parents to please be mindful of whom you leave your child with. We never suspected that he would do something like that."

Lisa North has had quite a life journey and displays poise and maturity beyond her years. Giving birth to Ahlittia in her early teens, she made what she thought was the best decision at the time and allowed her daughter an opportunity for a better life. "Before her death I was on the path of getting everything straight and yes it was true she was not with me for most of her life, I was young and I wanted her to have a nice life, better than I had, so I knew I couldn't provide for her because I couldn't get a job at that time. So, I let her go with people I trusted so she could get the things in life she needed. Before this incident, I was trying to get her enrolled in school so that she could be with me and all the kids could be together."

#### **Starting Over**

At the beginning of the summer, Lisa looked forward to reuniting her kids and beginning a new life being a full-time mother of her first born. Reflecting with a mix of sadness and regret she says, "I wanted her to be with me and her siblings and for us to grow as a family and I feel like if I thought for a second something like this would happen I would have left her in Donaldsonville. At least there I could talk to her and go to see her and right now I have to say this really hurts."

Again speaking of their present living arrangement and their plans for the future that presently remains uncertain, "We still have grief, and now we have to be concerned about how we are going to survive and keep a roof over our head. My husband has had three heart attacks and is waiting for his disability and working part-time." After their loss they are still holding onto hope that their fortunes will soon change. Lisa and her family are not looking for a handout but a hand-up. Anyone who is willing to help can email Lisa at ardencytasks@yahoo.com. They say that any help is greatly appreciated. "Any time frame that they can help us for with housing, whether it is permanent or temporary we are willing to work with anyone who is willing to help," says Lisa.

Lisa is also looking to enter the job market, and is looking for viable daycare options, but remains wary about her children's safety. "A job would be a considerable option, but because of the situation just happening, I am kind of afraid for my other children. But a daycare would be ok and a job, but first I would like to find a daycare that would be secure for my kids because I just can't take it if something would happen to my other children."

#### Living for Today Because No One is Promised for Tomorrow

Young Ahlittia touched a lot of people's lives and Lisa is moved by the outpouring of love from people around the City and **Cover Story, Continued** 

#### Data News Weekly Data Zone

# **The Butler**

#### By Dwight Brown

It's about time. Finally a major-release film about the African American struggle for equality, told from a Black man's perspective. Why has it taken Hollywood (aka the film industry) so long to do the right thing?

Eugene Allen served eight presidents, Truman to Reagan, over 36 years in various positions at the White House. However, it is his role as a butler that made him the subject of a Washington Post article in 2008, "A Butler Well Served by This Election," and brought him notoriety. That article and his life, from the days of segregation, through the Civil Rights Movement, War in Vietnam and end of apartheid, became the basis for this evocative film that intelligently pays homage to Allen and Black American history. Lee Daniel's The Butler is a momentous accomplishment. A milestone.

Cecil Gaines grew up in Macon, Ga., picking cotton with his father in the 1920s. After his dad was killed, he worked in a home on a plantation as a servant. As a young adult, Cecil (Forest Whitaker) parlayed his service skills into a job at a swank Washington, D.C. hotel, where his ability to be apolitical and verbally spar with rich White men got him noticed by an official at the White House. He and his wife Gloria (Oprah Winfrey) were pleasantly surprised when he got a job at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. There, he slowly grew up the ranks, becoming a head butler who worked directly with the leaders of the government.

Cecile and Gloria had two sons. Louis (David Oyelowo, Red Tails), the rebellious one, and his younger broth-



er Charlie (Elijah Kelly) reaped the benefits of a stable middle class life. They grew up in a nice environment, surrounded by nurturing friends and family members. When Louis went off to Fisk University, it was inevitable that he would rebel against his apolitical father and become an ardent civil rights advocate. He met and fell in love with Carol (Yaya Alafia, Mother of George), and the two, through sit-ins and civil disobedience, sought an end to Jim Crow laws and segregation.

Meanwhile at the White House, Cecil was setting tables, serving martinis and making small talk with Eisenhower (Robin Williams), JFK (James Marsden), Jackie Kennedy (Minka Kelly), Lyndon B. Johnson (Liev Schreiber) and Nixon (John Cusack). Rarely did the conversations with the leaders of the free world touch on politics, but when they did Cecil's instincts were to avoid confrontation.

Upstairs, the presidents and their White male staff members made farreaching decisions on civil rights, wars and world events. Downstairs, the mostly Black maids, kitchen staff, doormen and butlers formed a camaraderie. Cecil was a friend to co-workers James Holloway (Lenny Kravitz) and Carter Wilson (Cuba Gooding Jr.).

Danny Strong, from just an essence of truth, has written an ambitious screenplay that charts the course of politics, as it relates to the African American community, in the 20th and 21st centuries – specifically through the dissimilar eyes of a complacent, aging man and his rebellious son.

Daniel's directing career is a study in contradictions. His previous films run the gamut. Shadowboxer: Stylish, but very esoteric. Precious: Heartwarming, but off-putting. The Paperboy: A repulsive miscalculation. Yet some how, those films prepared Daniels for this stroke of genius. It's as if he's risen to his full potential. Skillfully, he interweaves prissy White House parties, with brutal racist at-

The Butler, Continued on page 6.



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Real Talk for Real Times...

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# **Gardening in the Shade**



#### By MG Calla Victoria Data News Weekly Columnist

One of the biggest challenges to gardeners is the prospect of providing color and pizzazz at the shady end of their gardens. Because of a huge shade tree there is a big bald spot in the garden, or what once was a sunny area has now become shady because of small trees that you or your neighbor planted a couple of years ago are now spreading their wings. Have no fear; there are lots of shadeloving plants that can brighten up your surroundings. Always check out the care tag on each plant that you buy for its sun exposure requirements. Full sun plants will not survive in shady areas, and shade-loving plants will burn up if you plant them in sunny areas. Of course the first plants we think of for shady areas are hostas and coleus as their lush foliage brings dimension and life to those otherwise void areas. But there are so many other plants that add color and pizzazz in shady

areas. The Astilbe hybrids are great for color and texture in the shade. Caladiums add shape and pops of color in shady areas. Most bromeliads are shade loving, easy-care plants that add color, drama, and exquisite foliage in a shade garden. Orchids are fabulous in a shade garden. Although coveted as an indoor plant, orchids can thrive out doors after all that is where they started. Bare root orchids like vandas are very striking in the garden just dangling under the branches of a shade tree. Just remember the orchids have to be misted twice daily, and they don't like wet feet. That is why most orchids are in those wide-weaved baskets or slotted terracotta pots for maximum drainage. Shady does not have to be bland; the right plant material can take your garden from shady to amazing.

Check out my "Gardening Tip of the Week" at **www.thegardening diva.com**, and email your gardening questions to **sowing@thegardeningdiva.**com Remember, never get too busy to stop and enjoy the beautiful flowers!

# DATA NEWS WEEKLY'S 47TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION **SALUTE TO OUR TRAILBLAZERS** AUGUST 29, 2013

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#### Data News Weekly Commentary

#### www.ladatanews.com

# Jackie Jackson A Mother's Love



George C. Curry NNPA

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On Wednesday, Aug. 14, Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr. was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison in connection with using campaign funds for personal use.

She began by noting, "I am Jacqueline Jackson, the mother of five children, one of whom I am writing about, my son Jesse Jackson, Jr."

Her letter shed light not only on her son's problems growing up in his famous father's shadow, but provided a peek into the family's early struggles.

"... My husband was granted a Rockefeller Scholarship to attend Chicago Theological Seminary. With a family of almost three in 1964, we arrived at McGifford House on Woodlawn Avenue in Chicago. By the time my son was born, my husband was attending school and organizing the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (K.O.C.O) and was its first Executive Director (an unsalaried position)," Mrs. Jackson wrote. "Because of the success of this organization, and based on the recommendation of Rev. James Bevel, my husband was

Christian Leadership Conference for \$75. If my memory serves me correctly, that was his weekly salary. To sustain our family, we were given food baskets by our Pastor, Rev. Clay Evans and the members of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church, where my son Jesse Jr. chose later to be baptized. I learned to provide the other necessities by frequenting resale shops, lawn sales, learning to preserve and can foods, and sewing and mending things that did not fit. But most of all, I learned to express my appreciation and gratitude for the kindness of others."

hired to work for the Southern

Just as her family struggled in the early stages, so did Jesse, Jr., Mrs. Jackson wrote.

"Contrary to the belief of many who only see us as we are today from a televised perspective, Jesse Jr., was not born with a silver spoon nor was he born privileged. Jesse Jr., my second child and my eldest son, was born during the turbulent sixties, the period of terrible hatred for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and those who followed Dr. King and the principles of non-violence he espoused. Our son, Rev. Jackson's namesake, inherited his friends and enemies. As a child, Jesse Jr. held jobs waiting tables, cleaning floors and other odd jobs. Growing up in the shadow of his father, Jesse Jr. has always tried desperately to live up to the expectations



Jackie Jackson and Jesse Jr.

we have had for him. I think perhaps too hard, he has tried." And she recalled that Jesse, Jr. was not always successful.

She wrote, "I recall how disappointed Jesse Jr. was when he discovered he could not enter high school without repeating the 9th grade. My husband finally convinced him to accept this as his challenge. Rev. Jackson said, 'Sometimes you must go down to come up' and Jesse Jr. prevailed. He completed his undergraduate studies in three years, received a Juris Doctor degree and received his Master's degree in Theology. His passion for the word of God led me to believe and hope he would

find his niche in Theology. However, he chose public service, the United States Congress, and we are proud of his choice and the good he accomplished during his 17 years of perfect attendance and sterling voting record."

She recalled when Jesse Jr.'s illness was made painfully clear to her.

"I received a call from my daughter Santita, who requested that I check on Jesse Jr. because she was concerned for him," Mrs. Jackson recounted. "Sometime during the last weeks of June 2012. I did as she requested, and found my son grossly underweight and in poor health.

He asked that I take him to the office because he had an upcoming vote. When I took him to his Capital Hill office to prepare for the vote, the office was in total disarray, which was most unusual for my son. A security guard approached me and said, 'Please take care of Jesse. Last week he collapsed on the floor of the House and was taken to the hospital by ambulance.' My heart sank. No one had shared with me my son's condition. I called my husband. We told our son to 'come with us. We are going to get help for you.' He did not offer any resistance which made us know his condition was dire. Everything that has happened since that day is public record. My son is much better now."

She closed her letter with this paragraph: "My mother says, 'there is always some good in all things.' There was a transforming moment during the horrific trial experience. As my son Jesse Jr. faced the judge, he turned around to look for his father's support just as he did when he had to repeat the 9th grade. His lips shaped the words, 'I love you and I am so sorry.' I shall never forget that moment because my heart leapt. I then realized the joy and love that sustains all mothers. I love my son. May God guide your decision."

George E. Curry, is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA.) He is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach.

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around the world. "I would like to thank the community for showing a lot of support, I have collected six bags of teddy bears and it means a lot and I know it means a lot to Ahlittia."

We all shudder when we think of any child dying under these horrific circumstances. These are things we see in the news or TV shows but rarely does anyone think it can happen to them. "I hope that this makes people understand that life is serious, I thought this kind of stuff happens in movies or television or to someone else. Never would I have thought something like this could happen to me. So understand that this can happen to anyone." Continuing, Lisa makes a passionate plea to parents, "If there is anything you would like to do with your child or say to them do it now. Don't wait until something happens to them and say, I wish I would have said this, just go ahead and do it."

#### Ahlittia North: A Beautiful Life

Throughout our conversation Lisa goes through a whole range of emotions; as we near its end, a trace of a smile is across her

face as she reminisces about the happy, joyous times she spent with her daughter. Laughing, she says, "I remember a time we were watching "Toddlers and Tiara's" and she said I want to be on there and I said show me how you would walk, and she did this walk and the face she made with the walk was so hilarious and we both burst out laughing. Then I got up and showed her how to walk and we laughed together, she loved to model, dance, cheerlead and just have fun. She was just an amazing child."

#### The Butler/ Continued from page 4.

tacks and archival footage.

Oprah's performance grows on you. You know you're watching a billionaire mogul on the screen, but her acting overwhelms her pop culture persona. By the end of the film she's worn you down, and Gloria feels like that pushy aunt who was always the life of the party. Forest Whittaker's portrayal is even subtler as he ages from a young man to an octogenarian. The nuances of his scenes with presidents, jovial moments with colleagues and the turmoil at home make Cecil feel authentic. This film obliterates other recent films that chronicled Black history.

There is no worthy comparison.

As voting rights take a beating from the Supreme Court, and Black kids are killed for walking down the street, the pertinence of this film is oh so apparent. A young Cecil when explaining how he became such an adept server: "I was a House-N'word." A new mentor corrects him: "Don't you ever use that word! That's a White man's word filled with hatred."

This powerful drama, which is based on fact and told from a Black perspective, puts the African American community's hard-fought struggle for equality into context. Brilliant. Historic. Compelling. **State & Local News** 

## Dinerral Shavers Educational Fund

4th Annual Back to School Extravaganza

The Dinerral Shavers Educational Fund (DSEF) and Tulane University's Staff Advisory Council are pleased to announce plans for its 5th Annual Back to School Extravaganza. This event is a free school supply giveaway targeted towards all New Orleans students, and will include food, music, games, entertainment, health screenings, and more.

This year's Extravaganza will be held Saturday, August 31, 2013 at the Ashe Cultural Arts Center (1712 Oretha C. Haley Boulevard New Orleans, LA 70113) from 12:00 noon to 4:00pm. This event will feature live performances by: TBC Brass Band, Baby Boyz Brass Band, Luther Gray & Bamboula 2000, School Boys, Mc-Donogh #35 Cheerleaders, and T Cherrelle, with a special finale performance by the Hot 8 Brass Band and the infamous Spy Boy Honey Mardi Gras Indian. There will be motivational speak-

ers, tons of giveaways, surprise guest, and kids will be able to meet and greet their favorite cartoon characters such as; Dora the Explorer, Sponge Bob, and Elmo. In return, we are encouraging New Orleans citizens to donate can goods and non-perishable food items to our 2nd Harvest Food Drive in support of disaster victims. The focus of this annual event is to promote the culture of music education in New Orleans. In that, DSEF will highlight several music, art, and educational programs across the city while encouraging parents and kids to take part as an outlet to counter

the culture of violence. The Dinerral Shavers Educational Fund is a non- profit 501(c)3 organization founded in March of 2007. This organization was created in memory of Dinerral Shavers, an educator, musician, entrepreneur, and New Orleans Civil Sheriff.

### Entergy Reminds Louisiana Customers to be Wary of Scam Artists

Entergy wants to remind you of a scam still targeting customers in Louisiana. As they have since late spring, con artists give you a call and say that your electric bill payment is past due, and that your service will be disconnected within the hour if you don't pay up. Then you are directed to transfer funds electronically, sometimes through the system known as "MoneyPak."

Entergy doesn't want you to fall victim to this scam and reminds you:

While the company does place courtesy calls if you are at risk for disconnection, these are recorded calls, and are not calls from live customer service representatives. Entergy NEVER demands immediate payment.

While you may pay your Entergy bill by phone or credit card, it is ONLY through BillMatrix, a third-party vendor we use for this purpose. You shouldn't give your personal information to strangers. If a call sounds suspicious, call 1-800-ENTERGY (1-800-368-3749) to speak with an Entergy customer service representative.

Also, you can manage your Entergy account and review account alert options to stay better informed by downloading the free Entergy smart phone app or visiting entergy.com to register for myAccount.

You should only use authorized methods and legitimate banking information to pay your Entergy bill.

If you believe you're a victim of this scam, you should notify the proper authorities, such as the local police or the state attorney general's office. If you believe your Entergy account has been affected, call 1-800-EN-TERGY (1-800-368-3749) to speak with an Entergy customer service representative.

## Qualifying Times Announced For October 19th Election

Louisiana Secretary of State Tom Schedler reminds everyone that qualifying begins for October 19th municipal races on Wednesday, August 14th and runs through Friday, August 16th from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. ALL CANDIDATES FOR LOCAL MU-NICIPAL RACES WILL QUALI-FY WITH THEIR LOCAL CLERK OF COURT.

As a reminder, on Saturday, October 19th elections will be held in the following 55 parishes: Acadia, Allen, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, Caldwell, Cameron, Catahoula, Concordia, Claiborne, DeSoto, East Baton Rouge, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Jackson, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, La Salle, Lincoln, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Orleans, Ouachita, Plaquemines, Rapides, Richland, Sabine, St. Bernard, St. Helena, St. James, St. John, St. Landry, St. Mary, St. Martin, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Terrebonne, Union, Vermillion, Vernon, Washington, Webster, West Carroll, West Feliciana and Winn.

For more information about qualifying for the October 19th election, visit the Secretary of State's website at: www.sos. la.gov/ElectionsAndVoting/ BecomeACandidate/Qualify-ForAnElection.

Anyone wishing to follow candidate qualifying in real time can visit the Secretary of State's candidate database at: www. sos.la.gov/ElectionsAndVoting/GetElectionInformation/ SearchForCandidates.



**Future SEC** 

**Track Champs** 

King Grant sprinters Anthony Rabathaly (left) and Bryson Osborne (right) successfully completed the Jefferson Parish Track meet at West Jeff Stadium recently.

Anthony was a dual first place winner with a magnificent leap of 5 feet 9 inches in the long jump, and set a parishwide record running the 50 meter dash in an astonishing 8.34 seconds.

Bryson Osborne finished a very close second to Tory Lambert of Oakdale, who set a parish-wide record in the 70 meters. While Bryson came in at 10.90 seconds in the 70 meters race. King Grant is coached by Ms. Jackie Ellison, and Bryson is also coached by the legendary coach Lloyd Dillon.

All three amazing athlete Anthony, Tory, and Bryson are eying LSU to compete one day.

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