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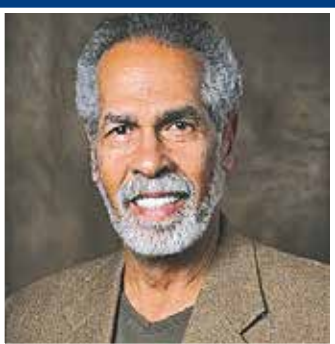
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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

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New Orleans Elections 2015



Photo provided by Louisiana Tech University photo services -- Louisiana Gubernatorial candidates pictured from left, Scott Angelle, Jay Dardenne, John Bel Edwards and David Vitter participate in a Louisiana Gubernatorial debate at Louisiana Tech in Ruston on Thursday, Oct. 15, 2015. A low voter interest in this important race mean the door is open for either the races only Democrat John Bel Edwards, or scandal plagued Republican US Senator David Vitter to win the race. The African American vote will be critical in this race on Saturday.

by **Charlie Turner**
Data News Weekly Staff Writer

October 24th is Election Day and there are many other races that New Orleanians should be aware of besides the gubernatorial one. Here is a list of state congress and school board races that you can vote in depending on your address. Make sure to look that up before you go vote next week. Districts that have incumbents running unopposed have not been included.

BESE District 1

Jim Garvey-R (Incumbent)

BESE District 1 includes large portions of Jefferson and St. Tammany parishes, and thus elects considerable more conservative candidates comparatively. Garvey's strong support of Common Core, vouchers and school privatization has made him a target of criticism pushing his campaign to raise over \$200,000 (close to 100 times that of his opponent).

Lee Barrios-R

A former schoolteacher, who challenged and lost to Garvey in a 2011 race, has also been a steadfast opponent of Common Core and Superintendent John White as well. Barrios spearheaded an Ethics Violations suit against BESE members, including Kira Orange Jones District 2 this year. In addition, she is a fierce opponent of charter schools, and has said that the current members of BESE have "made it clear that they are out to support privatization".

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BESE District 2**Kira Orange Jones****Kira Orange Jones-D (Incumbent)**

As the Executive Director of Teach For America-NOLA, Jones has become a national icon for the "education reform" movement (READ: more charter schools). She has the backing of major Louisiana politicians including former Senator, Mary Landrieu, as well as major business and think tank organizations.

Kara Tamara Washington-D

An Assistant Principal at Albert Cammon Middle School, Washington is undertaking the difficult task of ousting a well-funded and popular candidate. She is endorsed by Flip BESE, an anti-Common Core group in Louisiana interested in overhauling BESE.

State Senator 4th Senatorial District**Wesley Bishop****Wesley Bishop-D**

Bishop leaving his post as State Rep. of the 99th District to run for the State Senate. As an advocate for areas that lack economic opportunity and social services, the Lower Ninth Ward in particular, Bishop has put forth multiple bills to spur development in blighted areas including the \$100 a lot proposal last year. Besides serving in the State Capitol, Rep. Bishop is an attorney-at-law and serves on boards com-

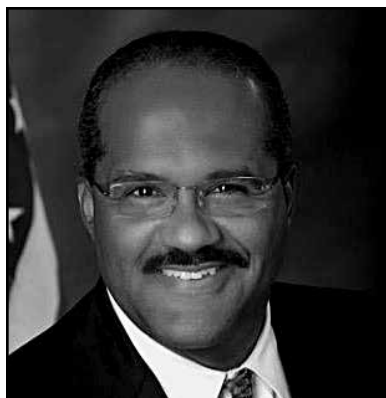
mitted to equal opportunity and criminal justice reform. Out of all the candidates, Bishop has the most name recognition.

R. Erich Caulfield-D

Caulfield is a native New Orleansian, but made his name in the Northeast where he served as a White House Fellow on Domestic Policy and then as Chief Policy Advisor for Cory Booker when he was Mayor of Newark. Since being back in New Orleans, he founded the Caulfield Consulting Group and led the Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative: a White House Program dedicated to facilitating city-federal coordination on economic growth. He is campaigning as someone with the background to bring real economic development. Caulfield is an unusually tough candidate for an electoral newcomer.

State Senator 7th Senatorial District (Open Seat)**Jeffery "Jeff" Arnold-D**

After completing his final allowed term as State Representative of Algiers, Arnold is pursuing the Senate 7th District which covers the majority of the West Bank. Arnold is often credited for bringing Federal City to his district and is seen as an opponent of Mayor Landrieu's policies. On multiple occasions, Arnold has proposed to separate Algiers from the rest of New Orleans because of what he sees as an unresponsive government for his constituents.

**Troy Carter****Troy Carter-D**

Another veteran Louisiana politician, Carter has been a public servant since the early 1990s. He ran for New Orleans Mayor and US Congress, where he was defeated by Ray Nagin and Bill Jefferson respectively. He has since served on several local economic development boards.

Leslie Ellison-D

First came into public office in 2012, as the Representative for the Orleans Public School Board and has defined her has yet to complete a full-term on the OPSB.

State Representative 94th Representative District**Nicholas J. "Nick" Lorusso-R (Incumbent)**

The staunch conservative, beloved by State GOP Leaders, has a relatively thin legislative record for a two-term representative. He spends his energy towards reducing business regulations, restricting the ability of individuals to sue businesses and reforming the state budget (before the \$1.6 billion deficit).

Stephanie Hilferty-R

Hilferty is a Real Estate Executive basing her campaign on the perceived passive role Lorusso has played in the State Senate. While

she is perceived as the more energetic candidate, she has not demonstrated any substantial differences with Lorusso in regards to political views. This race could go either way.

State Representative 97th Representative District**Joseph "Joe" Bouie, Jr. -D (Incumbent)**

Bouie is barely an incumbent, only assuming office last year in a special election. During his brief tenure, he has fought to give the Orleans Parish School Board more power over the privatized system and has been a leading critic against the idea of merging Southern University with UNO

Miss Keith Prevost-D

At 20 years old, Prevost is running against Rep. Bouie to help build her political brand. Her sister, age 24, is also running in the District 99 seat.

State Representative 99th Representative District (Open Seat)**"Jimmy" Harris-D**

A former aide to Rep. Cedric Richmond, Harris is vying for Rep. Bishop's seat with a dedication to expanding early childhood education, high education and the Medicaid Program as part of the Affordable Care Act. Harris sees his time in the US Congress as giving him the legislative experience that will allow him to succeed in the office that Rep. Bishop is vacating.

Rev. Ray Crawford-D

Unfortunately for his campaign, he has been dogged by allegations of tax evasion that nearly led Crawford's name to be removed from the ballot. The 4th Circuit Court of Appeal has since then reinstated Crawford's candidacy. Crawford has campaigned on Harris being a career politician who represents his colleagues more than the voters.

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Silverback's Annual Gathering

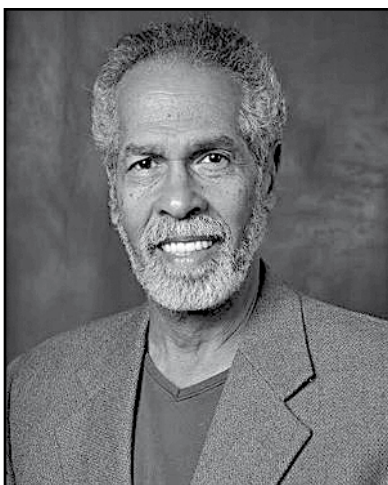
By Alexia Pierre

Data News Weekly Staff Writer
Each year, The Silverback Society, a local organization that prepares eighth grade males for their first year of high school, hosts an Annual Gathering. The event provides the opportunity for current mentors to share their experience as a Silverback Mentor. Future mentors, who are recruited by invitation of a friend or public appeal, become oriented as new Silverback Mentors after being interviewed and passing a background check. In addition, in the first year, mentors must be willing to stay in the background. The Annual Gathering of The Silverbacks takes place on Wednesday, Oct. 28 at 6 p.m. at the McKenna Museum of African-American Art. Since 2007, the Silverbacks have worked to reduce poverty,

improve student performance in school, attract businesses to the City's Black neighborhoods, reduce violence and crime, and decrease teen pregnancy.

"Success as an adult is going to depend a lot on what is done that first year in high school," said Lloyd Dennis, Executive Director of the Silverback Society. The Silverbacks' target all middle school boys, particularly eighth graders, because the group believes that early intervention is most effective in reaching young Black males if they are to succeed against the odds. Middle school boys are "Biologically at the point in life where they are starting to have hormonal changes," Dennis said. The mentors aim to show how important the first year of high school is to student success leading into college, he explained.

Mentors often say that volun-



Lloyd Dennis

teering is a gratifying experience to see young men learn to navigate a potentially difficult time on the road to become an adult. "Most of the men tell us they feel like they get more out of it than the kids because you really do understand that you have made an

impact," Dennis said.

Men are placed at a school with multiple mentors to ensure consistency, low stress on the mentors, and more importantly, the boys' happiness. "With the help of Mr. Dennis, we were able to, within about a month, start seeing the results of our interaction with the kids and their acceptance of the program," said Jerry Peterson, a mentor for two years at John Dibert Community School, currently known as Phillis Wheatley Community School. Peterson has started the Silverback Program in Biloxi, Miss. with fifth graders making the transition to middle school. His decision was led by the results he has seen at John Dibert. Peterson said he has found the mentors repeated visits to the schools has a bigger and better impact than any program that visits once a year.

From 2014-2015, the Silverbacks have mentored 332 boys on 12 different campuses with only 84 men volunteering as mentors. In addition, the Silverback Society Program is being expanded to high schoolers, in which the society tracks the progress of the scholars or males who have participated in the program. However, the greatest accomplishment of the Silverback Society is the growth of the program over eight years, according to Dennis. The program currently operates at the following schools in the City: Arthur Ashe Charter School, Gentilly Terrace Charter, Martin Behrman Charter School Academy of Creative Arts and Sciences, and Joseph A. Craig Charter School, among others.

More information on the Silverback Society can be found on their website at silverbacksociety.com.

Thank you to the Data News Weekly for their endorsement!



TROY CARTER was born and raised on the West Bank, and has worked tirelessly for over 25 years as a small business owner and public servant to give back to the community that has given him so much. For 23 years, he has sponsored an annual Thanksgiving Day Dinner, a toy drive, and a school supply giveaway.

As a former state representative and city council member, Troy has knocked the doors of every neighborhood in District 7. He sees the great potential of the West Bank – too often neglected by the powers that be in Baton Rouge – and he knows what will help the working people of our community succeed.

Troy Carter has the qualifications and experience we need in a Senator. He is endorsed by the Democratic Party, and has the trust of our local leaders.



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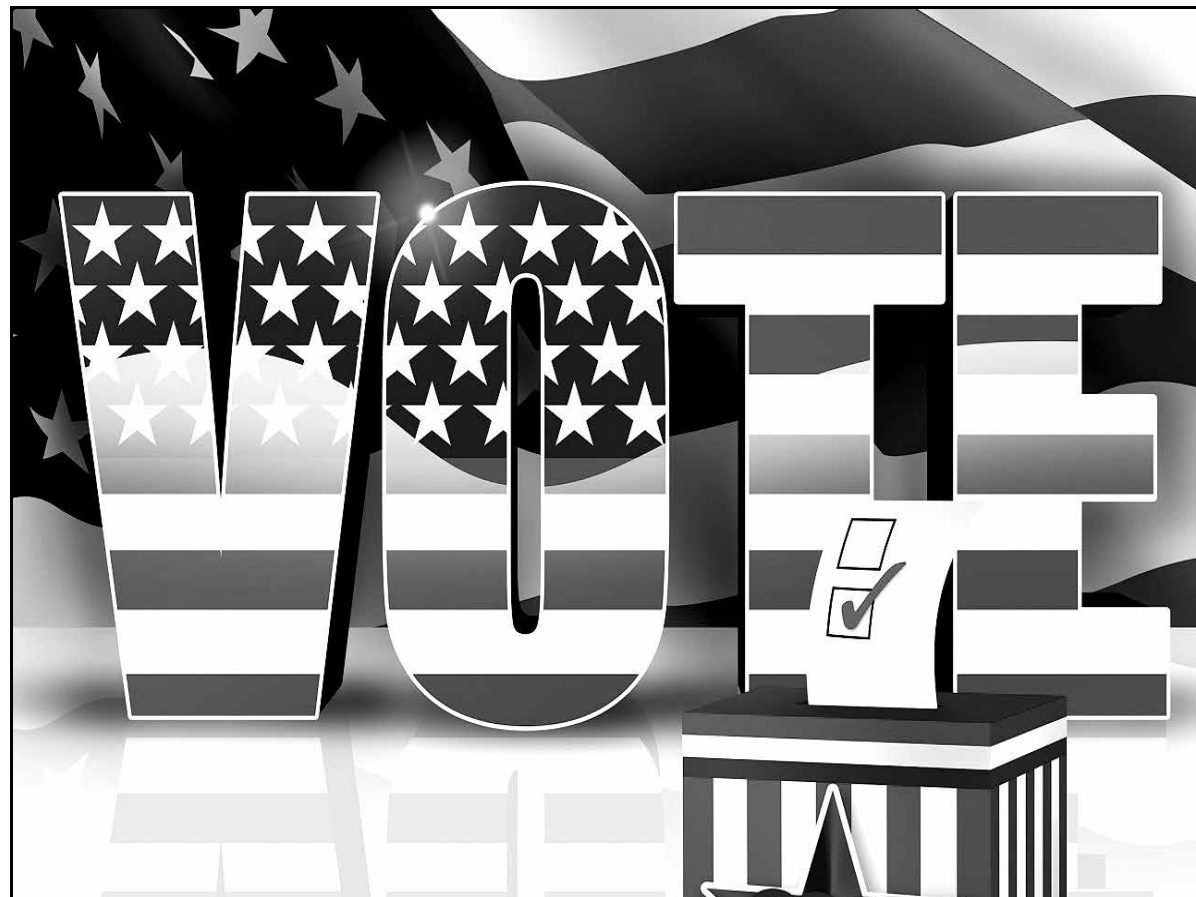
State Representative 100th Representative District (Open Seat)

John Bagneris-D

Brother of 2014 Mayoral Candidate, Hon. Michael Bagneris, John is a big name in New Orleans community activism as well as electoral politics. At the age of 65, he was able to work as an aide for the former State Representative Louis Charbonnet and is well-known amongst other elder City statesmen. Bagneris believes he can bring back business to New Orleans East in a way that term-limited Austin Badon was unable to do.

Willie Jones-D

Jones has run for other political offices unsuccessfully three times in the past, but this time sees his message on raising wages and pay equality for women as the winning ticket. He has ample experience working with the State's Democratic Party and economic development organizations. His close work with neighborhood leaders has helped him land the endorsement of City Councilmen James Gray.



Alicia Plummer Clivens-D

Clivens also has a long track record of public service in New

Orleans East. She was part of the grueling effort to buy the Methodist Hospital Building and renovate it

into the New Orleans East Hospital. Clivens says she will use her experience in property acquisition and

healthcare to bring back business and social services to a neglected area of the City. Clivens has been endorsed by the AFL-CIO LA and the Louisiana Federation of Teachers.

Member of School Board District 1

John A. Brown-D (Incumbent)

Brown has been a school teacher and principal for decades who wants to bring more public control to the Orleans School System, instead of maintaining the Recovery School District fully private model.

Keith Barney-D

A Special Education Teacher at the Arthur Ashe Charter School, Barney paints Brown as a failed school administrator during the dysfunctional pre-Katrina system. In terms of policy, there is no real difference between Brown and Barney. However, personal character is a major talking point in this race, after Ira Thomas was arrested on bribery charges earlier this year.

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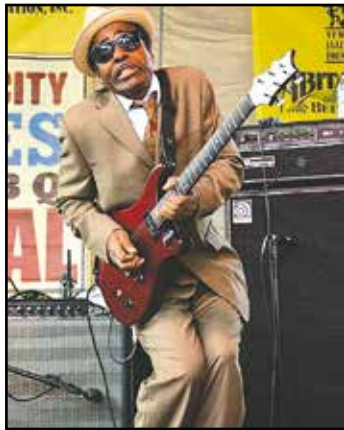
2015 Crescent City Blues & BBQ Festival

Photos by Kichea S. Burt

2015 CRESCENT CITY BLUES & BBQ FESTIVAL

New Orleans is - as Art Neville famously sang in The Meters' classic version of the Lee Dorsey song Ride Your Pony - the Home of the Blues. So it goes to say that the 10th annual Crescent City Blues & BBQ Festival was a very special treat. The event featured two stages with a constellation of blues and R&B luminaries, including: Ruthie Foster, Marcia Ball, Jarekus Singleton, Denise LaSalle, Kenny Neal, Swamp Dogg, Lurrie Bell, Mason Ruffner, Mr. Sipp "The Mississippi Blues Child," Son Little and a reunion of Excello Records artists with Lazy Lester, Carol Fran and Classie Ballou.

This free event took place Oct. 16-18, 2015, in New Orleans' Lafayette Square Park and was produced and presented by the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation.



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

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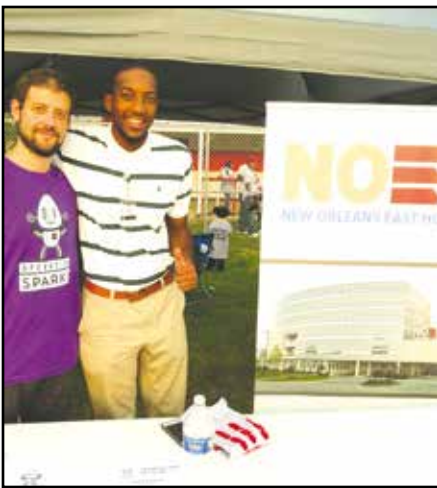
Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Curing the Epidemic of Chronic Violence

Photos By Glenn Summers

The CeaseFire New Orleans Community Engagement Fair was held at the Kenilworth Playground. The event was well attended by members of the New Orleans Black community. CeaseFire New Orleans aims to reduce shootings/killings. Violence interrupters with street credibility, members of CeaseFire New Orleans resolve conflicts, assist high-risk youth to change thinking/behaviors, and mobilize the community to promote new behaviors around violence and conflict.

For more information on CeaseFire New Orleans, call 504-564-8864.



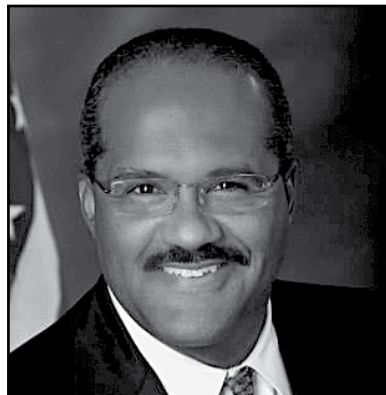
Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events

Publisher's Editorial and Endorsements



Terry B. Jones
Publisher,
Data News Weekly

Data News Weekly once again emphasizes the importance of voting, even after Katrina we are still the majority in the City and the majority of us are registered voters. Truly I understand that we are not happy with all our current leadership.



Troy Carter

We at Data truly feel that the importance of our vote is critical for our future. We have the power of our vote and unless we utilize it nothing will change; our families, our community or our way of life



Wesley Bishop

is directly related to the leaders that we choose, our governor and all elected officials in our City and our State.

We at Data truly feel the importance of our vote is critical for our



Marty Maley

future. We have the power of our vote and unless we utilize it nothing will change, not our families, our community or our way of life is directly related to the leaders that we choose, our governor and all elected officials



John Bel Edwards

in our City and our State.

As I've said many times before, a non-vote is a vote for the wrong guy. So Data News Weekly encourages and implore you to vote in the elec-

Publisher, Continued on page 9.

Should Sex Education be Taught in our Schools?



Kevin Chavous
Columnist, Urban
News Service

As of January 1, 2015, all states are somehow involved in sex education for public schoolchildren. In particular, 22 states and the District of Columbia require public schools to teach sex education. But, is this really best for our kids? And, if so, is the material taught adequate and appropriate for today's fast paced society.

You see, adolescents are disproportionately affected by sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Young people ages 15 to 24 represent 25 percent of the sexually active population, but acquire half of all new STIs. Furthermore, an estimated 3.2 million adolescent females are infected with at least one of the most common STIs. (www.

ncsl.org/.../state-policies-on-sex-education-in-schools.aspx)

The United States still has the highest teen birth rate in the industrialized world. Roughly one in four girls will become pregnant at least once by their 20th birthday. Sadly, teenage mothers are less likely to finish high school and more likely than their peers to live in poverty, depend on public assistance, and experience overall poor health. (<http://sex-education-magnum.blogspot.com>)

The main point: sexual activity has consequences. Just as we are taught to say "no" to drugs, our kids need to be taught to practice safe sex, act responsibly and be aware of related consequences.

A recent poll by National Public Radio, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government found that only 7 percent of Americans believe that sex education should not be taught in schools. Moreover, in most places there is even little debate about what kind of sex education should be taught.

While sex education is now required in our schools, we must

improve and revamp exactly what is taught in schools. With so much content easily accessible through online video, cell phones and social media, our kids are often overstimulated and faced with different challenges that previous generations. For example, more than one in ten (13%) 14 to 24 year olds have shared a naked photo or video of themselves via digital communication such as the Internet or text messaging. This type of exchange of explicit sexual messages or images, by mobile phone or email, is known as "sexting". (<http://www.athinline.org/>)

As such, educators must ensure that sex education is relatable to today's kids. Karen, a high school junior from San Francisco, said the video shown in her class was too long, boring and contained an unnecessary amount of shock value. "I think our sex education class would have been much more effective if it was more realistic, younger people other than their regular teachers were leading the discussion, and real life students were interviewed or featured in the video," stated Karen. Click

here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFvHF2DvR-U>) to view 7th graders reactions to watching a sex education video.

According to a 2011 Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) survey, more than 47 percent of all high school students say they have had sex, and 15 percent of high school students have had sex with four or more partners during their lifetime. Among students who had sex in the three months prior to the survey, 60 percent reported condom use and 23 percent reported birth control pill use during their last sexual encounter.

"I absolutely think that sexual education and sexual health should be taught in school. If our kids don't get the information from school, they will get it elsewhere and it may not always be accurate," said Michele Blackburn, a mother of a 20-year old daughter in college. "In addition, today's popular culture makes sex not only the norm, but also glamorizes and minimizes it all together."

Just as some parents rely on schools to teach their kids core subjects, they must also look to

schools to impart thorough and accurate knowledge around sexual activity and sexual health while recommending additional resources for support, if needed. This will, in turn, create opportunities for honest dialogue.

That is not to say that parents shouldn't play a role in educating their own kids about sex and sexual health. As with academics, it is vital that parents reinforce and discuss this delicate subject with their kids as home. Providing students with age-appropriate comprehensive sexual health education is instrumental as we strive to teach them to take personal responsibility for their health and well-being.

All kids must be armed with the critical skills and tools they need to make healthy decisions about sex, sexual health and relationships. After all, it is far more effective than denying them information altogether and telling them to simply say "no" to sex.

Kevin P. Chavous
Urban News Service
Executive Counsel, American
Federation for Children

From Prison to Redemption, Var-G raps his Testimony



By Alexia Pierre
Data News Weekly Columnist

This column is a weekly feature taking Data News Weekly's readers behind the scenes of the New Orleans Gospel Scene. We launch this column with a series on New Orleans gospel rap and rappers.

The personal stories of New Orleans Gospel Rappers testify to the ability to overcome adversity in a way that resonates particularly with listeners in the City. Levar Green, better known as Var-G, has turned his life's story into smooth but convicting lyrics. Green, 38, a Marrero native, served time in prison at St. Martinville and Elayn Hunt Correctional Centers in the state for 2 1/2 years from 1996 to 1998.

"I got real with God and he got real with me, to the point where I just flat out said, 'God if you do not help me, then I know I will be back in the place where I'm at,'" Green said. "From that very moment, my life has never been the same."

The rapper, who works full time as an electrician, has been married for 16 years and is a father of four. "I am truly inspired by all that he does," said Tina Green, Levar's wife. "His love for his family and the compassion he gives throughout all

of life's ups and downs," are some of the attributes that have come out from Levar Green's transformation, Tina Green said. Prior to his incarceration, Green was a Secular Rap Artist. "[I] took the same gift and begin to utilize it for the kingdom of God," Green said."

As Var-G, Green has produced 3 albums. His most recent album, "Trap Broken," won him the 2015 Gospel Artist of the Year Honor at the NOLA Gospel Awards. Of that album is Green's most popular hit, "Hey Hater." After leaving prison, Green said he encountered some old friends who he rejected because it meant a return to the life of sin that first got him into trouble. Because he rejected their company, Green said his old friends reacted negatively to his stance. "'Hey Haters' is a message to everyone that speaks over your life the negative things versus what God has said about you," Green said. "When that thing do come to pass about what God said versus what 'they' said, then you could look back and say, 'Hey Hater,'" Green explained about the message behind the song.

"Instead of giving death, I can give life," is what Green says he loves most about being a Christian Rap Artist. When he performed in clubs as a Secular Artist, Green said he saw the fruits of the goodness of his gifts being taken from God because the majority of the time, people were shot or killed following the performance. "So now the lyrics that I am given through



Levar Var-G Green

the Holy Spirit and the gift that God has given me now is to enlighten, to impact, to empower young teens," Green said. "I'm causing someone else to think about living."

As a father, Green said his mes-

sage to parents is to love and pray for their children even if they are on the wrong path. "Just because they're in a place where you think they shouldn't be doesn't mean that it's not a place where God cannot

use them," Green said.

As a teen, Green said he made some poor choices. One of them was at the age of 14, where Green entered into a dice game because he didn't have enough money to purchase gold teeth, a hot trend in the City of New Orleans in the nineties. In the game he won approximately \$500 to purchase his gold teeth, which he then wore for almost 20 years. After the removal of his gold teeth in his thirties, Green explained that he did not need any work done on them, not even a root canal after all that time.

"That was a testimony within itself that God has preserved not just my teeth, but my life as well," Green said. "The bible said that death and life is in the power of the tongue."

Stay tuned for next week's column as we continue to share opinions and highlights of the local gospel scene.

Publisher, Continued from page 8.

tion on October 24, 2015.

We've only chosen four races that we recommend you to vote.

For Governor **John Bel Edwards** because after interviewing him he has he best directions for Louisiana and New Orleans.

Troy Carter for Senator for District 7. He is a former state representative and city councilman and he is well-known for community service. He has proven his commitment to the West Bank over decades of strong leadership and service. He has the experience that will be needed in Baton Rouge to fix our budget and bring resources home for the Westbank.

Wesley Bishop for State Senate #40 -as State Representative for District 99, he hit the ground running to fight for the city that we love by working to pass legislation that would improve the quality of life for his district - and fighting equally as hard to defeat measures that he felt were not in the best interest of the people he was elected to represent.

Attorney **Marty Maley** for Attorney General - The best choice to move our state forward. His four point plan is to be hard on hardened criminals, fight for victim rights, promote early intervention efforts and always...Pro Life, Pro Gun and Pro Louisiana!

These are our recommendations and we hope you take them into consideration but most of all our passion is for you to vote.

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Black Lives Matter Symposium

By Kendall Lawson
Data News Weekly Staff Writer

With the recent racial conflicts and injustices in the African-American community, civil rights activists, educators, and religious and community leaders from across the country will convene in New Orleans to start a conversation on the issue of race. The "Black Lives Matter: Race, Violence & Poverty" symposium takes place on Nov. 6-7, 2015, on Xavier University's Campus. The national speakers will touch on issues of police brutality and racial disparities in the African-American community.

"I felt that there has not been any substantive articulation of what the Black Lives Matters movement means, by any Historically Black College or University or the

Catholic Church, as a whole," said Rev. Dr. Maurice Nutt, the Director of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier and Organizer for the Black Lives Matter Symposium. "I hope those who attend the symposium will walk away with a greater, clear understanding of the value of lives, but most importantly the value of Black lives."

Nutt estimates about 1,000 college students and scholars from across the country will travel this week to participate in the symposium to further their knowledge and perspective on a social phenomenon, and meet with like-minded people to discover positive solutions.

"What's so genius about that, is that [Black Lives Matter] reached many people, then began a movement," Nutt said. "When you have a movement you can't stop it, this

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2015

Keynote Address by Fr. Bryan Massingale
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Reception
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Keynote Address by Ms. Brittany Packnett
Executive Director of Teach for America
St. Louis - member of the Ferguson
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race in New Orleans will moderate the featured panels. Brittany Packnett, the Executive Director for Teach for America in St. Louis will be the Keynote Speaker for the symposium. Packnett has been named one of the 12 new faces of Black leadership in January 2015 by Time Magazine, Nutt explained her selection. She also sent teachers to teach students during the Ferguson protests in 2014.

"Education avoided a traumatic experience in Ferguson, thanks to Packnett," Nutt said of the Keynote Speaker. "She sent teachers to teach children in the needed areas. This young woman is phenomenal and is making a difference," Nutt added.

The event will have students at New Orleans universities volunteer and organize. Local students have begun to prepare poems and other artistic expression as part of student engagement at the conference. "Open mic is the best time to share what's on your mind and what you're feeling," said Cameron Williams, a Sophomore at Xavier who said he plans to volunteer at the symposium. "I encourage all that come to participate to contribute your voice with the millions against the tragedies African-Americans are facing in this day in age."

The event is \$25 for college students with student identification, while other guests will be admitted for \$50. Pre-conference registration takes place on the first floor of Xavier's University Center on Nov. 4-5 from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. Parts of the symposium will be available via live stream for a \$25 fee. Registration and more information about the Black Lives Matter: Race, Violence & Poverty Symposium can be found online at <http://www.xulacklivesmatter.com/>

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movement has no leader or one organization."

Historically Black campuses play a unique role in facilitating dialogues on race, as they have done during the Civil Rights Era, said Dr. Brian Turner, an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Xavier, and a guest panelist at the symposium.

"My work has put me in a position to speak about how different groups of people interact," said Turner, also a Clinical Psychologist. "A lot of mental health diagnoses come out from interaction with people. Having to talk about Black

Lives Matter brings my specialty of how to work with people different than us," Turner added. Each workshop examines a different issue prevalent in the African-American community, such as poverty, cooperating with law enforcement, racism in the media, and White privilege.

The symposium will begin with Rev. Bryan Massingale, a Professor of Ethics and Theology at Marquette University, followed by an open mic and spoken word session. Times-Picayune Columnist Jarvis DeBerry, who writes on issues of

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Ford, GM Score High Diversity Marks

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Contributing Writer

For the nation's automakers, diversity is measured in colors and it's better to be a solid green than a token yellow or a non-existent red.

The recently released Rainbow PUSH Automotive Project, an initiative of the Citizenship Education Fund (CEF), revealed a multi-topic assessment scorecard of diversity in the auto industry.

The scorecard provides consumers, investors and industry experts a snapshot of each automotive manufacturer's ability to build and sustain ethnic diversity as a driver of marketplace competitiveness, according to a release from the Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition.

"The only way to achieve a meaningful return on investment for the dollars we spend with auto companies is to measure our progress on fair trade, because what is measured is what matters," said Jackson, the founder and president of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition.

Those who received a green certification reflect best practices for ethnic diversity while those with a yellow mark showed some indication of diversity evident goals, initiatives and accountability, according to the ranking system.

Red indicated that diversity initiatives and investments were non-existent, not disclosed or that the company did not provide enough relevant information for scoring or they didn't submit a completed survey.

The release of the diversity scorecard highlighted the Rainbow PUSH Global Automotive Summit in Detroit where auto executives, suppliers, dealers and government officials gathered to discuss ways to strengthen and create opportunities in the industry for minorities.

"Minority companies need a short-term plan for survival and a long-term critical path to success with measurable goals, targets and timetables," Jackson said.

Of the 12 automotive companies to participate in the scorecard, Ford Motor Co. received the top ratings, including green marks in five of six categories.

BMW and Mercedes Benz were the only companies to receive red indicators in each of the categories which included employment, advertising, marketing, procurement,



Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr. speaks during a press conference for the Rainbow Push Coalition Global Automotive Summit in Detroit, Mich. (Ron Burke/The Washington Informer)

minority dealer development and philanthropy.

Mercedes-Benz spokeswoman Donna Boland told Automotive News that the company's ratings were the result of an "unusual situation" in which the company was moving its U.S. headquarters from Montvale, N.J., to Atlanta as the survey was conducted.

As a result, the automaker was unable to know the composition of its work force since it knew many of its workers would not move with the company, Boland said.

"Unfortunately, the scorecard reflects red when data is not available," Boland said. "We'll have to live with that, but it in no way reflects our commitment or accomplishment in this area."

Boland said the company spoke with Jackson in February to discuss its situation.

"We have had conversations with Reverend Jackson and his team since then and we will be meeting with him before the end of the year to take him through where we are in a variety of areas," Boland said.

Rainbow/PUSH also criticized Mercedes-Benz in 2013 for not replying to its survey.

Rainbow/PUSH officials said

Jackson and Executive Director Glenda Gill will meet with automakers to discuss the results of the survey and to develop a "road map for progress in diversity and inclusion."

Ford received green marks for employment, procurement, minority dealer development and philanthropy.

"At Ford, we are proud of our inclusive business practices, and we recognize diversity as strength," said Ford spokeswoman Becky Sanch.

"Diversity and inclusion strategies are an integral part of our business and we recognize how valuable they are to drive innovation, compete in the marketplace and serve the greater community," Sanch said.

Meanwhile, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA), Nissan and Honda received green for employment while Honda and Hyundai each received green respectively for procurement and minority dealer development.

Green marks for philanthropy also went to General Motors, FCA, Honda, Hyundai and Volkswagen.

While they didn't fair as well as officials thought they may have, General Motors has con-

tinued to build a strong diversity track record.

"Our diversity and inclusion efforts are something we take seriously," said Leslie Gordon, senior manager of diversity communications at General Motors, who garnered green marks for employment, procurement, and philanthropy.

General Motors works with more than 200 certified minority and women-owned businesses in the United States and Canada.

In 1968, the company became the first automotive original equipment manufacturer to establish a formal supplier diversity program and, as a result, General Motors' affirmation of their commitment is visible among minority and women-owned businesses where the company has spent more \$70 billion since the program's inception, according to GM officials.

The scorecard awarded General Motors yellow for advertising, marketing and minority dealer development.

"We plan to meet with Rev. Jackson and we are working closely with Rainbow PUSH on programs that speak to financial education," said Gordon, who noted that important information that could have raised GM's score did not make it into the scorecard.

Also, Rainbow PUSH Coalition and Chevrolet – a General Motors company – are jointly hosting a series of workshops to educate African-American consumers on financial literacy and assist participants in developing concrete steps toward financial security.

The workshops, Rainbow PUSH Money Matters sponsored by Chevrolet, are scheduled in Detroit, Atlanta and Chicago, with the goal of helping demystify the complexities of college financing, credit, and the benefits of long-term money management.

"For over forty years, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition has been committed to leveling the social and economic playing field in this country and around the world," Jackson said.

Jackson continued: "The next phase of this movement will involve a comprehensive, national empowerment campaign aimed at helping to improve the quality of financial health. This exciting partnership with Chevrolet will help us get there."

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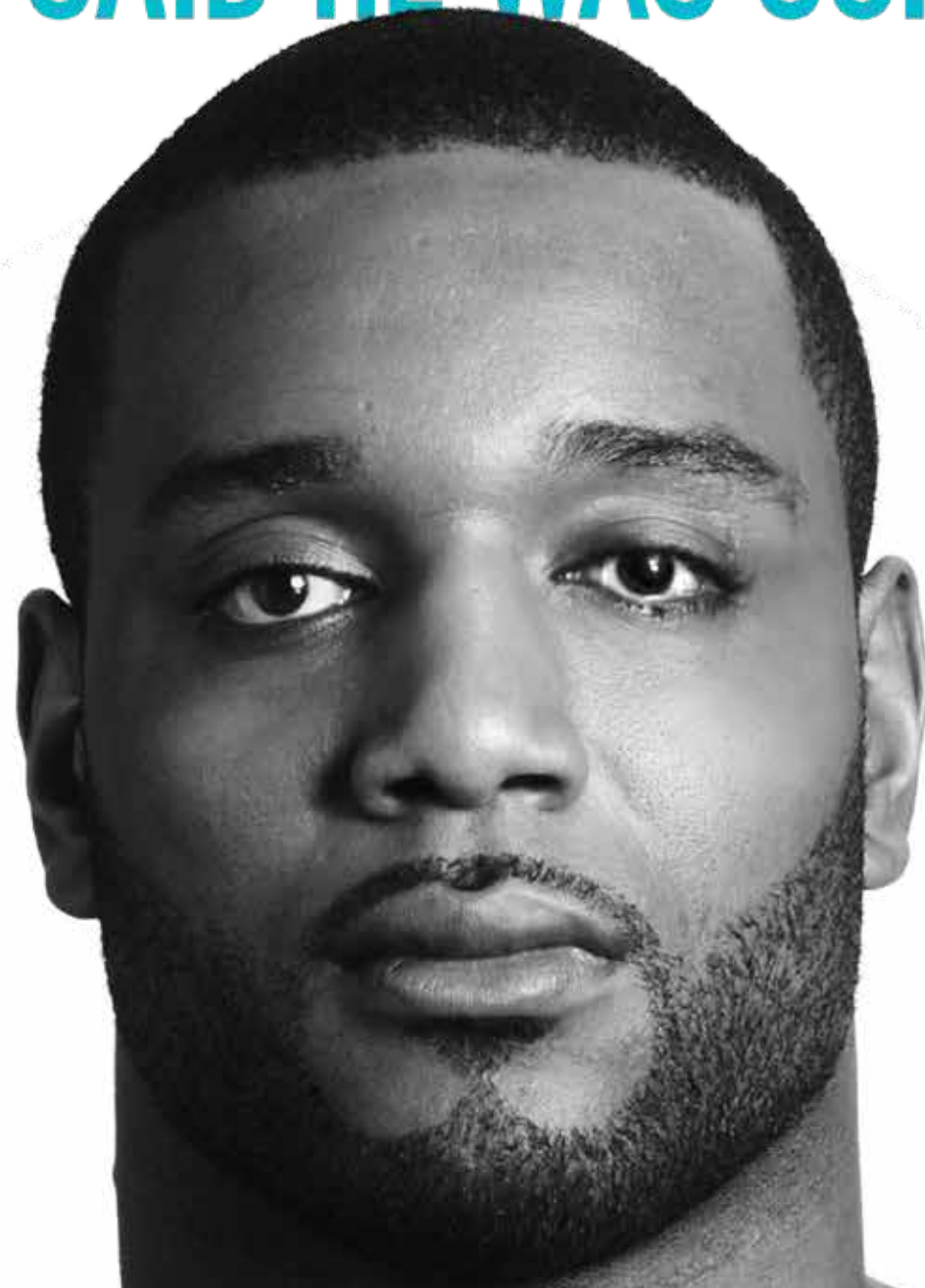
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