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## **NOLA Women's Culture**

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A Data News Weekly Exclusive

# **Mayor Signs New Gun Safety Ordinance**

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# Mayor Signs New Gun Safety Ordinance

## Expands Violations, Increases Fines.



Mayor Mitch Landrieu signs the new Gun Safety Ordinance.

**Eric Craig**  
Multimedia Editor

On Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2016, Mayor Mitch Landrieu signed the new Gun Safety Ordinance that addresses illegal gun usage. The new legislation was led by City Councilmembers Jason Williams and James Gray.

### The Gun Ordinance

The new Gun Safety Ordinance creates new requirements for reporting lost or stolen weapons, makes all NORDC facilities firearm free zones and criminalizes the negligent carrying of firearms in the City of New Orleans.

The new law requires owners of guns to report a lost or stolen weapon within 48 hours of the discovery.

The first offense will result in a \$250 fine and repeat offenders will be fined \$500. According to the City, the new requirements will help police detect illegal gun traffickers in the City through repeat offenses. There is no state law that addresses the reporting of stolen or lost weapons in Louisiana.

The new policy marks all NORDC facilities as "fire-  
**Cover Story, Continued on page 3.**

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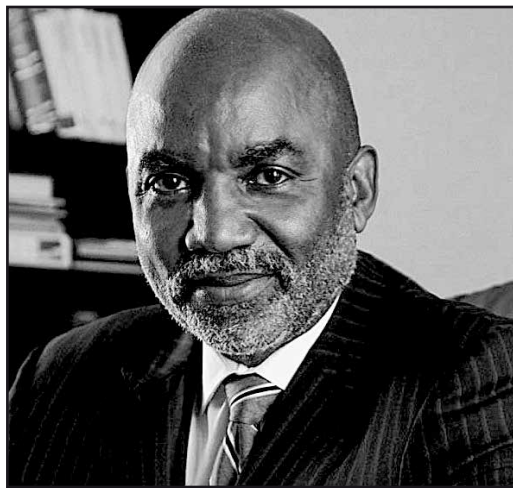
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City Councilmember Jason Williams



City Councilmember James Gray



### Cover Story, Continued from page 2.

arm-free zones.” In these zones, guns are not allowed in or around 1000 feet of the zone. Before the signage of the ordinance, the only fire-arm free zones were school campuses, school buses and venues holding school-related events, according to the City Ordinance. Violators of the ordinance will be fined \$500 or six months’ imprisonment.

The new City Ordinance also reinforces the state law that prohibits negligent concealment of a weapon. According to the City, negligent concealment “is defined as carrying a concealed firearm in a way that places others in reasonable apprehension that it may discharge or that a crime is being committed.” Violators of this reinforced ordinance will be fined \$500 or six months’ imprisonment.

### City Council Members Respond

New Orleans City Councilmembers unanimously passed the new Gun Safety Ordinance on last Monday. The legislation was advocated by City Councilmembers James Gray and Jason Williams and was unanimously passed through City Council.

Mayor Mitch Landrieu was supportive of the new legislation.

“Public safety is our top priority, and in order to keep our citizens safe, we must do everything we can to promote gun safety and reduce gun violence on our streets and in our community,” Landrieu said.

“When criminals are intent on doing harm, too many innocent people are caught in the crossfire. We have a moral obligation to do everything in our power to fight back and halt the stream of guns getting in the wrong hands and increasing the penalties when they are used negligently. By signing the Gun Safety Ordinance into law, we are giving NOPD more tools to stem the tide of gun violence in New Orleans,” he added.

Cover Story, Continued  
on page 4.

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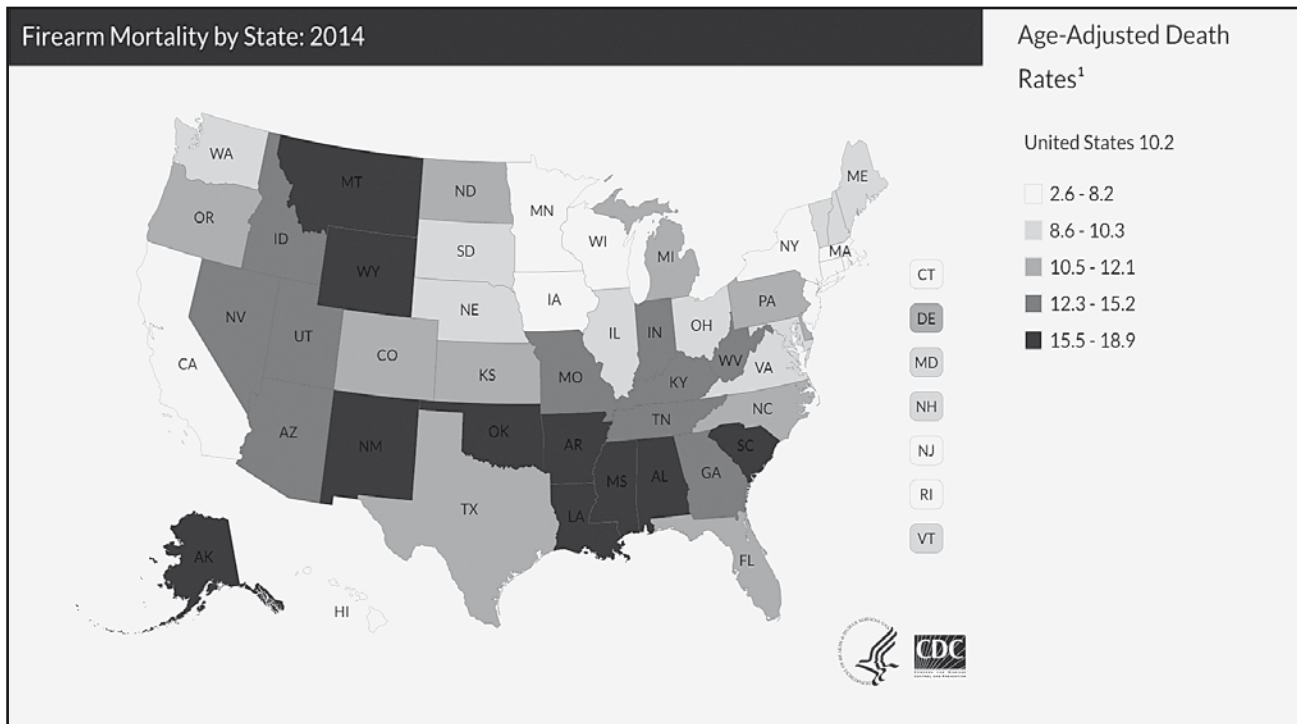
From Left: Toni Braxton, Lonnie Bunch, Lauren Seroyer, Larry Tripplett, Donovan Smith, Charles Tillman, Wendy Raquel Robinson

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**GREATER TOGETHER**



Cover Story, Continued from page 3.



Louisiana has one of the highest firearm-related death rates in the nation. Map by CDC.



Oliver Thomas, WBOK 1230AM Talk Show Host and former City Councilman

Landrieu was thankful for the support of the City Councilmembers and will continue to work with NOPD to assess gun violence in the City.

The new law was highly regarded in City Council. James A. Gray,

District E City Council member believed the new policy would make gun owners more responsible.

"Our gun legislation is meant to send a message. We will do everything in our power to reduce the number of our children that are

killed every year in New Orleans. We simply will not tolerate it," Gray said.

"If you're going to own a gun, you have to be responsible and make sure that your lost or stolen gun isn't used to

hurt anyone," he added.

Councilmember-at-large, Jason Williams, agreed with Gray on the need for responsible gun owners.

"As a public servant I am not willing to simply sit back and rely on old methods to address our gun violence crisis. This ordinance takes very reasonable measures and steps to keep guns away from young people and out of the hands of criminals. This ordinance will do nothing to limit a law abiding citizen's right to own a gun. It is singularly focused on gun safety and gun responsibility," Williams said.

#### Oliver Thomas Responds

According to a 2014 analysis conducted by the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, 890 people died from firearm related deaths in Louisiana. The CDC continued to report, stating that nearly 19 people out of every 100,000 per capita died from firearm reports in Louisiana, which is nine more people than the national average per capita.

Oliver Thomas, WBOK 1230AM Talk Show Host and former councilmember, applauded the bill, but considered firearm statistics when evaluating the new ordinance's effectiveness.

"The legislation is interesting. It's a step in the right direction. I applauded the city council for what they have done," Thomas said.

"You can rattle off 200 other initiatives that are aimed at guns but we still have proliferation on guns in the community," he added.

Thomas said gun legislation is a first step in assessing the problem. But until councilmembers, community leaders and activist get on the streets and create relationships with communities, New Orleans gun problem will not be solved.

"The one thing we know about NOLA, there are a couple things to get that is quality education and job opportunity. It's guns and drugs in the City of New Orleans," Thomas said.

You have to be in the gutter, in the poor communities. Leaders have to talk to and plead with, and educate citizens in the community," he added.

Thomas said that new legislations without reaching out to citizens will not help solve the problem.

"If you're not lifting the citizens up, you just have new laws with the same people and the same value," Thomas said.

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# Gov. Edwards Requests Increase in Federal Assistance

**Eric Craig**  
Multimedia Editor

On Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2016, Gov. John Bel Edwards requested an increase in federal assistance in the recent Louisiana Flooding. Edwards sent a letter to President Barack Obama to increase assistance from \$2 billion to \$2.8 billion.

According to the governor's office, the additional \$800 million requested will be used to fund projects that will make homes more resistant to future flooding. Gov. Edwards spoke with the Louisiana Congressional Delegation asking for approval of the increased monetary request.

"After two rounds of historic flooding in just eight months, it is clear that Louisiana needs additional assistance from the federal government to rebuild our commu-

nities and make our state stronger than it was before," said Edwards.

While Edwards sent a letter to President Obama, Congress has not approved the \$800 million increase. The governor, while hopeful, is still in conversation with the Congressional Delegation on the increase.

Rep. Cedric Richmond (LA-02) was present in the Congressional Delegation regarding the increase of funding.

"I am grateful for the state and local leaders who journeyed to Washington, D.C. last week to help me make the case to our federal partners the need for a swift investment of additional federal resources," Congressman Richmond said.

Rep. Richmond is confident that the federal government will support Louisiana's request for increased federal assistance.



"The President has expressed his support for Louisiana to me on a number of occasions. I had a number of calls with Administration officials last week on various points of interest related to the recovery," Richmond said.

"Additionally, because of the leadership of the Governor, the support of our Congressional Delegation, and the efforts of the local officials who came to Washington last week—some of whom did not testify—to press the case, I am certain the President will announce his support for additional federal resources for our state soon," he added.

After the march flood damage in Louisiana, the

federal government opted to cover 90 percent of the flood damage. In the August flood, President Obama approved Gov. Edwards request to cover 90 percent of the August flooding damage.

While the federal government has increased federal assistance, analysis show estimated damages are higher than the \$2.8 billion requested.

The Baton Rouge Area Chamber's analysis has tracked the damage of the recent flood. According to its preliminary analysis, 31% of the homes in the Baton Rouge area received flood damage. The collective worth of those homes is \$20.7 billion. Up to 15 percent of those homes were flood insured. Over 7,000 business, 21 percent of the business population, were affected by the August flood.

## Rep. Richmond Responds to Obama Administration Support for Additional Funds for Louisiana Recovery

**Data News Staff Edited Report**

Congressman Cedric Richmond (LA-02) released the following statement in response to Obama Administration support for emergency supplemental funds for Louisiana flood recovery efforts:

"President Obama has expressed to me his support for the citizens of Louisiana on a number of occasions. Since the August flooding, the President and his Administration has ensured we had the resources and services necessary to ensure a full recovery," said Rep. Richmond. The Administration's support for the supplemental funding the Governor and our Congressional delegation has requested is no surprise and greatly appreciated. It will go a long way as we continue to make the case for additional support with our Congressional colleagues. The



Congressman Cedric Richmond (LA-02)

President has sufficiently fulfilled his commitment to the people in Louisiana. I hope my colleagues in Congress will find the will to step up and do our part."

## September at the Jazz Market



**Alexis Davis**  
Data News Weekly  
Contributor

After a year of performing at different venues and feeling that their original style of music was not being respected, New Orleans Jazz Band CoolNasty said the People's Health News Orleans Jazz Market has finally given them a home. Fans of the band turned out to hear CoolNasty at The Jazz Market on Sept. 7, as part of The Jam with CoolNasty. The event was part of September at the Market, which is located at 1436

Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. The performances at the market are free, take place every Wednesday from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., and showcases different local acts performing poetry, comedy, and music among other forms of entertainment.

"The Jazz Market accepted us for who we were and the type of music we displayed," said Myla Bocage, a band member for CoolNasty, who plays keys. "We had an opportunity to grow along with our fan base."

Bocage said the band, which formed in 2014, has a signature style that incorporates all angles

of sound and rhythm enriched into jazz. The market is an ideal fit for their music, she said. Other than opening their doors to new and old performers, the market has a mission to support the City's creative industries, and to make culture accessible to the public.

"No charge at the door. There will never be a charge at the door, because we want people to come and experience the venue, shows, and positive energy coming from this event," said Madania Graves, the Events Manager for The Jazz Market.





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Alexis Davis  
 Data News Weekly Contributor

Rosaline "Baby Doll Ra Ra" Theodore was born into a history of Baby Dolls. The love for its culture and meaning immediately entranced her. She remembered seeing them on Mardi

Gras mornings or during some other special occasions. Theodore became a part of the Treme' Million-Dollar Baby Dolls, where she admired their short sexy attire, stockings, and garters. Along with embracing her beauty through cloth-

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#### Data Zone, Continued from page 6.

ing and dance, she started to notice the negative outlook that came with it.

"As we walked down the streets, men watchers would judge us on our past history, but that has now changed," Theodore told an audience at Dillard University's Library Commons on Sept. 8th. "I'm here to say Baby Doll women are educated, proud Black women, that support their communities."

The story of the Baby Dolls began in Black Storyville in 1912, said Author and Women's Studies Scholar Kim Vaz-Deville. Members of the Wild Tchoupitoulas Baby Dolls, Renegade Rebel Baby Dolls, Gold Digger Baby Dolls, and 'Treme' Mil-

lion-Dollar Baby Dolls joined Vaz-Deville to speak on their tradition and its cultural legacy. The One Book, One New Orleans Literacy Campaign selected Vaz-Deville's book on the History of the Baby Dolls as its 2016 book of the year.

Vaz-Deville, who is also an Associate Dean at Xavier University, documents this uniquely New Orleans tradition in her 2013 book, "The Baby Dolls: Breaking the Race and Gender Barriers of the New Orleans Mardi Gras Tradition" published by the Louisiana State University Press. Vaz said she wanted the City to fully understand who these women were and what they added to the City's history.

The Dolls shared that Black Storyville,

around Basin Street, was known as a Red Light District, which operated around gambling, bars, and prostitution. The Baby Dolls interacted in the dance halls of New Orleans around 1910. Their tradition began from the competition between women competing for business on Mardi Gras. The Baby Dolls wanted to make a statement that woman can express their sexuality and still be respected, and by that they did. In defiance of social norms, they took to the streets wearing bloomers, while flinging money at men.

"I have always been interested with women who break the rules in their society, because traditional society is sexist, giving men the upper hand," Vaz-Deville

said. "I admired these women for taking that opportunity to get their name known."

Meghan Holt, a Tulane University Professor and Project Leader for the Young Leadership Council's said she hoped the Baby Dolls would inspire Dillard students, along with ladies in the community to take leadership by being independent and supportive of other women.

"We have so many generations of women that are here tonight," said Holt, who organized the event. "I wanted to inspire the next generation by showing them how the Baby Dolls paved the way," she said.

Visit [www.ladatanews.com](http://www.ladatanews.com) for more photos from these events

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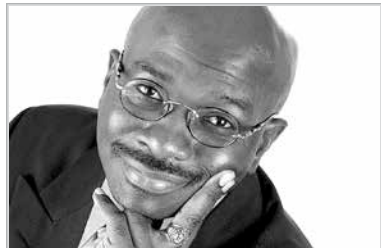
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# Moral Origins of Donald Trump's Improbable Rise to Power



**Armstrong Williams**  
NNPA Columnist

As if to compound the insult to American power represented by the world's vociferous rejection of the Bush doctrine, the U.S. found itself in 2008 facing the biggest economic disaster since the great recession. The collapse was so stark, so sudden, and so unavoidable that several of America's largest and most venerable financial institutions collapsed overnight. The recession in America led to a global recession, as liquidity dried up, debts got called in, and entire

nations went bankrupt.

This blow to Americans' confidence would provide fertile ground for doubt, resentment and rebellion. It quickly became apparent that the economic status quo that existed before the Iraq War and the Great Recession was giving way to a 'new normal.' The country limped along in this new normal; American businesses experienced very slow economic growth amidst massive economic dislocation. The Federal Reserve used every trick at its disposal to ward off total catastrophe. It was successful in its aim, although the resulting 'Franken-economy' it created began to resemble a monster that moved and walked, but was somehow strangely also dead.

To wit: even though employment 'recovered,' labor force participation dropped to a thirty year low. People came back to jobs that paid less, offered fewer benefits

and demanded more of their labor. American workers were hailed by economists for their increasing productivity, although, to most workers, it just seemed like a pay cut. Never had industrial performance and the state of the labor market seemed less congruent; and this strained an unspoken assumption about the trickle-down benefits of capitalism.

The twin monsters of insulted national pride and injured economic prospects began to foment a visceral, growing resentment to the economic and political establishment that first found expression in the Tea Party (on the political right) and the Occupy Wall Street movement (on the political left). Both movements were essentially defeated – the former was co-opted by the Republican Party, and the latter was crushed by the police (at the bidding of 'liberal' elected officials).

The pressing unanswered question of why Wall Street got bailed out while Main Street floundered was never successfully answered either by a Republican Congress or a Democratic White House. The midterm elections of 2010 promised to bring about major changes as a Tea Party insurgency came to power in Congress. However, the insurgency did not prove strong enough to enact its agenda – slashing government debt and spending on entitlements, and reducing regulatory burdens on small businesses. Not able to advance its own agenda, The Republican Congress settled for a role as a spoiler caucus, mainly concerned with preventing the Obama Administration from putting its own proposals forward. Over the past six years, the Congress has done practically nothing in the way of helping the American people out of the mess they are in.

The lack of commitment to a national project for reconstruction seemed strange in a country that had just demanded such brave sacrifice from its warriors.

The political impasse stymied American progress, and extended the economic recession beyond its reasonable shelf life. Amidst the doldrums of economic and political stagnation, Donald Trump's bold rhetoric, a stark departure from the normal fare, seemed to be a strong wind. It didn't really matter whether that wind was blowing America forwards or backwards — towards a safe harbor or further out to sea. At least, for the first time in six years, there seemed to be some movement. When one is stuck in the same place for what seems like an eternity, even going backwards can seem like making progress.

**Armstrong, Continued on page 9.**

## What You Need to Know About Voting on Tuesday, November 8



**Julianne Malveaux**  
NNPA Columnist

Are you ready to vote? Are you registered? These may seem like simplistic questions, especially for those who are aware, but every year some folks are denied access to the polls, because they didn't register on time, or they moved and their address does not match the address the registrar of voters has, or SOMETHING. The Presidential election is likely to be a nail-biter, and there are local races that are also close. Your best bet is to make sure you know what the requirements for voting are in your state. Check out [www.vote.com](http://www.vote.com); the site lists the requirements for all 50 states. A few states allow voter registration on the day of an election, but most states require you

to register between 11 and 30 days before the vote. Some states allow online registration, most allow registration by mail (with requirements about the date a registration is postmarked), and almost all allow in-person registration.

The terms and conditions of voting are still being negotiated in some states so it makes sense to stay on top of voting rules. A federal appeals court recently kicked discriminatory North Carolina voting terms to the curb, saying that that state discriminated against African Americans with "surgical precision." Efforts to reduce the number of days available for early voting, or to eliminate Sunday voting, disproportionately affect African American voters. North Carolina Republicans are deliberate and mindful in their attempt to sideline African American voters, since most African Americans are Democrats. They want to deliver their state to Donald Trump and they want to ensure that Senator Richard Burr and Governor Pat McCrory, both Republicans, are also re-elected.

North Carolina isn't the only state with electoral shenanigans.

Texas, Kansas, Georgia and Alabama have also implemented restrictive measures that are being appealed by civil rights groups, the League of Women Voters, the NAACP and others. Disputes revolve around things like absentee ballots, purges of inactive voters, and issues of whether ballots will count if they are cast in the wrong precincts. In our "Democracy," it seems that we do more to discourage voters than encourage them, and while the voting process could be seamless, plans to prevent as many as 50,000 Kansas voters from going to the polls, for example, make no sense in a "participatory democracy."

Some folks don't want it to be participatory, though. Republicans now control most state legislatures, and have been passing voter suppression laws since 2010, when they began to take control of state houses. Civic participation organizations, like the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the National Coalition for Black Civic Participation, and others, are fighting back, preparing to have people available to help voters, especially

in battleground states, and with hot lines (1-866-OUR-VOTE) and other forms of voter assistance. In an election that is likely to be close, it is important that every voice be heard.

I'm still not clear why polling suggests that this vote is so close. Secretary Hillary Clinton, for all her imperfections, is a stunningly superior candidate to the bumbling Donald Trump who just recently praised Russia's Vladimir Putin as a "better leader" than President Obama. Now, that's just downright unpatriotic, not to mention short-sided, and tone-deaf. While folks are running Colin Kaepernick down for being unpatriotic, Trump gets away with comments that border on the treasonous, and is still considered a "credible" candidate for President. Really?

Donald Trump goes to one Black church and gets all kind of mainstream media coverage. Hillary Clinton visits numerous Black churches, and the mainstream media is absent. Donald Trump blusters his way through an interview with Matt Lauer on national security, and is hardly challenged and,

certainly, never interrupted. Hillary Clinton offers substance to an extremely biased Lauer who was, at best, unprepared for the interview. Instead of getting kudos on her performance, too many have noticed that Hillary didn't smile. National security is no laughing matter, folks.

We have stark choices in this election, but some of us won't be making choices because we won't be prepared to vote on November 8. Now is the time to make sure you are prepared. Are you registered? Where will you vote? Will you be out of town or unable to get to the polls on November 8? Can you do early voting or vote via an absentee ballot? These aren't questions to ask on November 5, they are questions to ask now. Don't shake your head on November 9 and say you didn't like the outcome if you didn't bother to vote on November 8. The stakes are high!

Julianne Malveaux is an author and economist. Her latest book "Are We Better Off? Race, Obama and Public Policy" is available via [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) for booking, wholesale inquiries or for more info visit [www.juliannealveaux.com](http://www.juliannealveaux.com)



# Hillary Clinton Rolls Out Mental Health Care Plan

By Stacy M. Brown  
NNPA News Wire Contributor

Hillary Clinton said she's alarmed by the statistics.

Approximately one in five adults in the United States – or 43.8 million Americans – experience mental illness in a given year.

About 18 percent of adults in the country experienced an anxiety disorder such as post traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and specific phobias.

Also, one in every four college students experiences a mental illness.

Statistics like these must and will be met head on if Clinton is elected president, she promised during a media call last week to unveil her plan to better incorporate mental health services into general health care settings.

Clinton said this is her way of increasing access to treatment.

The former First Lady and Secretary of State told reporters that among the first order of business she'd undertake in the Oval Office is to host a White House conference on mental health.

Steps outlined by Clinton include retooling reimbursement systems in Medicare and Medicaid and promoting early diagnosis and intervention, including a national suicide prevention initiative and randomized audits of insurance companies to make it more difficult to conceal when mental health care services are denied.

"Addiction, homelessness and a



"Addiction, homelessness and a broken criminal justice system" are byproducts of a poor mental health system, the former First Lady and Secretary of State told reporters, stating that among the first order of business she'd undertake in the Oval Office is to host a White House conference on mental health. (photo by Worsom Robinson, Chicago Defender Newspaper)

broken criminal justice system" are byproducts of a poor mental health system, Clinton said. Further, Americans are losing nearly \$200 billion each year due to a lack of care, understanding and tolerance, she said.

"The human cost is even worse with the suicide levels at the highest in years. People are dying from conditions that go undetected and untreated, too often," Clinton said.

"I have heard the heartbreaking stories for years about these incredible challenges. During the campaign, it seems like the flood gates have opened," she said.

Clinton, who leads Republican Presidential nominee Donald Trump by double digits in most na-

tional polls, said if she were elected she'd see to it that state and local governments were fully funded and capable of handling mental health issues.

When there's been cooperation, there has been success, she noted.

"I've heard stories of encouragement, of people who have been able to get help," Clinton said.

"We have to make clear that mental health is not a personal failing but that right now our country is failing. From launching a suicide prevention initiative to reforming criminal justice so that low-level offenders wind up in treatment and not in jail; we need to start focusing on the whole person. Focus on early detection and treatment and

to make sure that mental health is covered by insurance," she said.

Clinton also cited the need to expand housing and job opportunities as part of the overall remedy for the nation's mental health crisis.

"We have to expand providers and make sure they have the support and that they deserve. We will make mental health a national priority if I am elected president," she said. "We have got to make sure that every community in the country have the information and the resources that they need."

Mental health has been a highlight of the Clinton campaign, particularly after she met last year with individuals at Town Hall forums who said their families were struggling with mental health and other illnesses.

Clinton had earlier announced an initiative to speed up the process

for a cure for Alzheimer's disease, which on Monday claimed the life of actor Gene Wilder.

Clinton's proposal that she rolled out during the call with reporters also called for improving law enforcement training in crisis intervention and how to respond to those with mental illness.

"Why do I care so much about mental illness? This is what I've been hearing about and I want to take on the issues that both make headlines and that keep families up at night," Clinton said. "Mental illness is not respective to income, status, race, political affiliation or any other category. I believe together we can make sure that the next generation get quality health care without the stigma, shame or other barriers," she said.

Armstrong, Continued  
from page 8.

Along came Trump, testing the political frontiers, boldly going where no politician of either party dared go before. Donald Trump was not a polished politician, and proved not to be afraid to voice what many people were thinking, even if the rhetoric was somewhat impolitic at times. He railed against illegal immigration, because of its dilutive effects on American labor, but couched the debate in ethnic terms that the man on the street could easily digest. Trump complained about a lopsided trade arrangement with China that over the past thirty years has seen American manufacturing all but vanish, but couched it in 'Us vs. Them' terms that were easily made into media

sound bytes.

It is clear that Donald Trump is a masterful salesman, especially when he is selling himself. He tells the buyer what he or she wants to hear, and promises he's the only one who can deliver. He engages in what some might call tawdry rhetorical wars with his critics and political adversaries. It has all made for great theater. Trump might not be right on all the issues, but he sure is entertaining.

But perhaps Trump's greatest asset – and the factor that has accounted most for his rise in the polls – is Trump's ability to externalize America's faults. It is not so much that he is attempting to restore the idea of American exceptionalism to prominence. No, his mission is much simpler. He merely seeks to

place the blame on someone else. The reason why we're not doing well folks, is because the Chinese are beating us; or it's the Mexicans; or it's the Muslims. Get rid of all those people, and we'll be back in the saddle. This is a message that holds deep appeal for many people who are faced with personal challenges they have not yet figured out how to overcome. In Trump's moral philosophy – if that is what it can be called – it is in our stars and not ourselves that we are knaves.

Read Armstrong Williams, author of the brand new book Reawakening Virtues, content on RightSideWire.com and Come join the discussion live at 6-8 p.m. and 4-6 a.m. est. on Sirius/XM UrbanView 126, Become a fan on Facebook, and follow him on Twitter



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# NORDC Hosts Movies in the Park for NOLA Youth

**Leonard Lewis**  
Data News Weekly Contributor

The rain held up on a sunny Friday afternoon to allow New Orleans East families time to enjoy a screening of the action flick Batman vs. Superman. Movies in the Park returned to the East at the Joe Brown Recreational Center on Read Blvd on Sept. 9, 2016. The event is organized by the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission to encourage families to actively use the City's parks and playgrounds.

By 7 p.m., residents cracked open their lawn chairs, rolled out blankets, and set out picnics signaling that the screening of Batman vs. Superman was about to begin. "Since there is still no movie theatre in New Orleans East, this is a great

way for kids to socialize in a non-violent manner," said Tangee Wall, who hosted the event and serves as President for the Friends of Joe Brown Park group of residents. "It also shows young kids that fun does not have to involve violence," Wall said.

At the Joe Brown screening, parents said they were pleased to let their kids run around freely without any concerns. "NORDC and Joe Brown has put continuous efforts into catering to the youth of New Orleans East communities, especially with Movies in the Park Program," said Tanya Lewis, a resident in the area.

In addition to the film, the event featured Fit Nola Activities. Fit Nola is a partnership between the City of New Orleans and local organizations working to create a healthier



Parents and children warming up to Michael Jackson Thriller during a NORDC Program.

City by promoting more physical activity and improved nutrition. Fit Nola partners with over 200 non-profit organizations, schools, and direct service providers such as NORDC playgrounds. One of their signature events is a Michael Jackson Dance Fitness class that mixes dance and exercise.

"Our main goal is to bring families and people together through exercising whether it's dance, running, or stretching," said Molly Pucillo, the Manager of Fit Nola Activities. Fit Nola tries to participate in big events throughout the City, such as upcoming the Halloween flashmob on Oct. 31, 2016 at City Hall.

This is not the first time Movies in the Park has been located at Joe Brown Park. In previous years, movies such as Jumanji and Shrek have been shown there. The event receives sponsored support from Southern Theatres, whose Chief Executive Officer, George Solomon, is a board member for the foundation for NORDC. NORDC hopes to continue to reach the community through events like Movies in the Park and other programs like Stem Nola, it's Teen Council, and Reading with the Stars Program. The City will continue its Movies in the Park Fall schedule every Friday until Nov. 18th. The next Movies in Park will screen Zootopia on the Burke Playground at Lyons Recreational Center at 2524 Annunciation Street.

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# Curator and Researcher Shares Insight into New Black History Museum

By Stacy M. Brown

The new Smithsonian National Museum of African-American History and Culture contains an exhibit that features slave cabins, one that curator and museum specialist Mary Elliott called powerful.

Almost as powerful, however, is Elliott's recounting of the vital input and assistance by one local citizen who inspired many seniors and others to participate in the new museum.

"To get all the stories together about the slave cabins, we brought in the help of a genealogist and we used our local research here and reached out to the community," Elliott said. "And, when we were dismantling the cabin, the community came out and it was Black, White, young, older men and woman who were there. But, there was one young woman, whose name was Eileen, and she was very important."

Elliott said that Eileen was just over 50 and she really helped museum staffers connect with the elders in the community.

"It's a hard history and sometimes people don't want to talk about it, but she helped us to get the stories out," said Elliott. "She was a real dynamic person."

After taking the cabins to Virginia for conservation work and hosting a listening session that included Eileen and Eileen's grandmother, Elliott learned that Eileen died.

"She was younger than the elders that she helped get the stories from. Eileen had so much energy and spirit and was so passionate about the fact that the story was being told and correctly," Elliott said. "She may not be here on the 24th when this museum opens and that's heartbreaking, but I smile because her spirit will definitely be here."

It's been a long, arduous and incredible road to get to the September 24 grand opening and Elliott has helped to research, conceptualize and design the "Slavery and Freedom" inaugural exhibition.

She also contributed to the exhibition script, consulted with expert scholars, and identified and secured collection donations including the antebellum slave cabin that will be featured in the museum, according to the museum's website.

A graduate of Howard University and Catholic University of America's Columbus School of Law, Elliott helped produce local history



Mary Elliott, curator and museum specialist for the Smithsonian National Museum of African-American History and Culture, pauses next to a slave cabin exhibit during a recent media tour. (Freddie Allen/AMG/NNPA)

exhibits in the Washington, D.C. area and produced several public history programs.

Now, as the opening of the historic museum rapidly approaches, Elliott told the NNPA Newswire what she's most excited about and how she's handling all of the excitement surrounding the historic grand opening.

"I really appreciate the collective effort to get the story out and let people know what they are going to see before they get here. People ask me, 'Are you excited?' And, truthfully, I get reflective," said Elliott, who has served as a contractor and consultant to various organizations including the National Visionary Leadership Project, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the Reginald Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and the Humanities Council of Washington, D.C.

"I think about family, relatives, ancestors, those I knew personally and those before them," Elliott said. "I think about my church family and my community and I get so full, because I cannot wait for people to see the museum not just as a building, but to hear people say about our history that, 'I never looked at it that way, wow,' and to have them think a little differently about their approach to American history and understanding the Afri-

can-American experience."

Elliott has more than 20 years of experience in researching and presenting African-American history and culture. Her personal research focuses on African-Americans from antebellum slavery through the Jim Crow Era, with a specific concentration on migration and community development.

With a lifelong interest in Black history, Elliott's extensive research revealed that her own family is connected to Booker T. Washington, one of the foremost African-American leaders of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who founded the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute that became Tuskegee University.

"I was really passionate about the research I was doing on my family and then I realized that this was even bigger," said Elliott. "I started to see this amazing picture of African-American legacy and I found all of these primary resources and that really illuminated it for me and I thought it was as if someone took our history, tore it up into little pieces, and blew it into the wind."

Elliott continued: "You had to go and track it down and put these pieces back together and see what the picture really was."

When first invited to apply to work for the new museum, Elliott initially scoffed at the idea.

"I was so deep into doing my own research and, in my background,"

she said, noting that her paths could have taken her elsewhere as she holds a law degree and she's already passed the Maryland Bar.

"[The museum] just didn't cross my mind. So, when a friend of mine asked me to apply, I was like, 'No,' but then she convinced me after about a week," Elliott said.

Anxiously awaiting the Sept. 24 opening, Elliott said the deep roots of African-American history will offer visitors the kind of truths that should lead many to think deeply and it also will possess the kind of true stories that need to be a part of the American history narrative, including those about the African continent and how diverse it is.

"So, we open with people, from the beginning, that this is a story of humanity and we see how this history flows," Elliott said. "I tell everyone the harsh story of slavery, but the very important understanding of resistance and resilience and survival."

"There is a wall dedicated to the domestic slave trade and the Middle Passage, but when you see the extent of the information and the way it will be presented, it will blow people away," she said.

The museum doesn't ignore the struggle many African-Americans have today, particularly the recent rash of police shootings and violence with individuals of color.

"We don't hold back on violence during the period of slavery," Elliott said. "People will see how this ebbs and flows and that this violence [today] is nothing new and to understand it in a historical concept to wrestle with how to end it...and to also understand that African-Americans are Americans who have contributed to the development of this nation."

Elliott said that there is also a part of the exhibit where visitors can read about African-Americans who struggle with the concept of whether to stay in this nation or to leave.

"There is one camp that said, 'We need to leave, because this is no longer safe for us,' Elliot shared. "But, there is another camp that said, 'We need to stay, because we built this nation and it belongs to us.'"

The National Museum of African-American History and Culture officially opens on Sept. 24 and nearly 30,000 opening weekend tickets were issued, reportedly, within one hour of becoming available.

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