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Feb. 23, 2024

# The Real Views

Natchitoches Parish



Vol 22 Issue 2

# The Importance of Black History

By: Mayor Ronnie Williams Jr.

Black History Month as we know it today has origins in the early 20th century. Over time, what started as an idea has grown into an internationally recognized observance. This transformation is the result of the unrelenting efforts of individuals and organizations advocating for the acknowledgement and celebration of African American contributions and achievements.

In 1926, Dr. Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History established Negro History Week to recognize and promote the contributions of African Americans to American history. They selected the second week of February to be inclusive of the respective birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. This week was initially focused on schools and communities and involved the promotion of literature, events, and activities that highlighted Black history. Over the years, the observance gained popularity and recognition, and in the late 1960s during the civil rights movement, there was a push to extend the celebration beyond a week to encompass the entire month of February. In 1976, President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month, calling upon the public to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of



Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

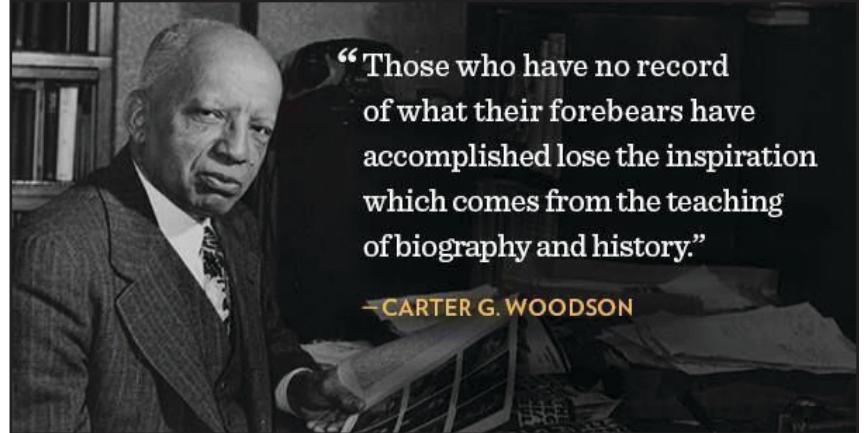
Each year, Black History Month has a specific theme, often chosen to reflect significant aspects of African American history and culture. The theme for Black History Month 2024 is "African Americans and the Arts". The theme explores the innovation, creativity, and resilience of a culture that has soothed and uplifted spirits for centuries.

It also highlights the many impacts African Americans have had on cultural movements, music, and visual arts.

In the amazing, historic City of Natchitoches we have no shortage of African Americans that embody this year's theme. Arguably, the most notable example of African Americans and the Art in Natchitoches is Clementine Hunter. Clementine Hunter is recognized as one of the most important self-taught artists in the United States. Posthumously, her art has been featured in numerous exhibitions and her paintings are held in collections of major museums and galleries including the Smithsonian Institute and the Louvre.



Photo Credit:  
Schlesinger Library  
Clementine Hunter



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And Much More...

# The Importance of Black History By: Mayor Ronnie Williams Jr.

**Continued from Page 1...**

During Black History Month we take the time to reflect, educate, and celebrate both the achievements and struggles of African Americans. Clementine Hunter was born on a plantation and died on a plantation. She never learned to read or write. Her first paintings were sold for as little as 25 cents. But she was awarded an honorary doctoral degree in Art from the Northwestern State University and now her paintings are sold for thousands of dollars.

I am proud of my African American roots. As I reflect on my life, I am so grateful to trailblazers who paved the way for me. These historical figures overcame adversity to make lasting contributions to society. I am also proud that I too will one day be looked upon as a trailblazing, historical figure. On August 15, 2020, I was elected to serve as the first African American mayor for the great City of Natchitoches. In my short tenure as mayor, I have aggressively pursued grants. We have brought in \$40 million dollars in grant funding that will fund major

improvements and projects throughout the city. I have focused on public safety. We gave the officers of the Natchitoches Police Department a raise and implemented Crime Stoppers to help make the city safer. I have implemented infrastructure improvements. We repaved streets and replaced water lines. I have even more plans for our great city, and I know that one day, history will hold me to account.

We are all living a life that will one day be recorded in the annals of history. The importance of Black History is multifaceted and extends far beyond the confines of a specific month or celebration. Ours is a history that starts long before slavery and is rooted in rich African countries steeped with culture, traditions, and heritage. Black history highlights the significant contributions of African Americans in various fields such as science, literature, arts, politics, and more. Recognizing these achievements helps build a more accurate and inclusive narrative of history. Black history sheds light on the historical struggles faced by African Americans, including slavery, segregation,

and systemic racism. Understanding this history is crucial for addressing ongoing issues of social justice and equity. It serves as a foundation for addressing systemic inequalities and advocating for policies that promote

equality and fairness. This understanding helps break down stereotypes, challenge biases, and create environments that embrace people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Black history is American history.

## The Real Views

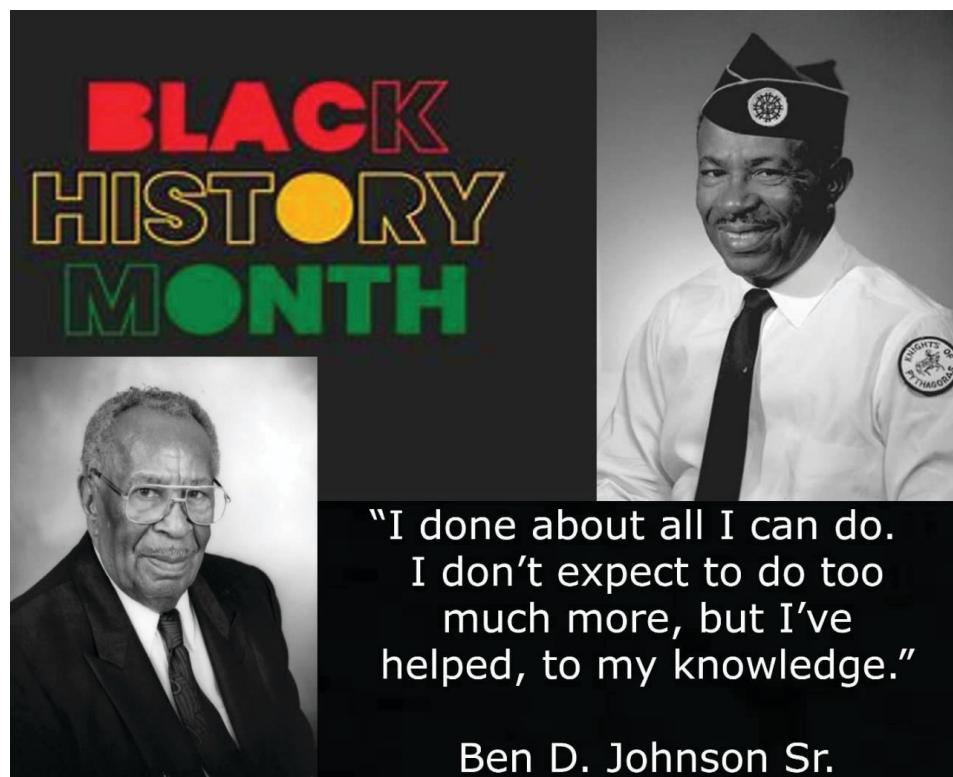
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P.O. Box 1082  
Natchitoches, La 71458

Ph: 1-866-434-4321  
Email:  
support@trvnatchitoches.com  
Website:  
www.trvnatchitoches.com



FOUNDER: J.R. "RANDY" Stelly, Original Publication 1996



**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

"I done about all I can do. I don't expect to do too much more, but I've helped, to my knowledge."

Ben D. Johnson Sr.



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BOY SCOUTS  
OF AMERICA



Veteran of the  
Vietnam War Era



Member of  
Coalition for Homelessness



Collecting for the  
Council on Aging

## HAROLD BAYONNE COUNCILMAN-AT-LARGE



### Dear Neighbors

Born and raised in beautiful Natchitoches, I'm just a guy, doing my thing to make this place a little better every day. My journey of giving began as a young boy with the Boy Scouts, and then as a young man I volunteered to be of service to my Country becoming a Veteran of the Vietnam War era. My life has since been spent giving back to my community in any way I possibly can from coaching Little League to various community charities and groups that provide a better life for all.

If you know me, I'm that guy who's always got your back when it comes to looking out for my neighbor, my loved ones, my friends and strangers alike. Whether it's lending an ear, lending a hand, or just plain rolling up my sleeves to get stuff done, I'm there. And let me tell you, when I say I'm passionate about Natchitoches, it's truly an understatement.

That's why I'm stepping up to run for Councilman-at-Large. I figure, if I'm already out here fighting for folks, why not do it from a position where I can really make a difference? From tackling rising crime rates to questioning and reducing those utility hikes that have collectively hit us each in the wallet, I'm all about finding real solutions that work for everyone.

Here's the thing: I can't do it alone. It's gonna take all of us, working together, to build the future we want for Natchitoches which means voting for the right people to be in positions that make a difference to our community. So what do you say? Let's make a change, let's make it happen, and let's make Natchitoches the best it can be. I'm ready if you are.

A vote for me, Harold Bayonne for Councilman-at-Large #33, is a vote

We Can Do Better

## ENTREPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT "KELLY JACKSON"

## Kelly Jackson Shares her Creole Heritage with the World

Photos and Article Courtesy of Kelly Jackson

Kelly Jackson's beginnings in film is a story of being in the right place at the right time. She was spending a day at Long beach when she was asked to perform as an extra in a film that was shooting that day. "I said yes, and my 30-year career started at that moment," she recalls. She was a student at Long Beach City College when she first became enamored with media and the entertainment industry. In those early days and into her career, Kelly worked in public broadcasting, modeling, filmmaking, history telling, and film festival production.

Kelly is the creator of the Cane River Film Festival. The film festival is sponsored by her historical preservation nonprofit – the Resurrection Fern Foundation. Resurrection Fern serves as a way for Kelly to support her community events and historical films. The seventh annual Cane River Film Festival is set for March 23, 2024. The festival's purpose is to celebrate and preserve Cane River's

Creole heritage through the arts. The festival also is a great way for filmmakers, community leaders, and businesses to connect and work together. "It is all about building a network," Kelly says. "My guests have become friends over the years. You can see them staying connected through social media and developing relationships that last and help support what they are doing in their lives."

A project close to Kelly's heart is the documentary The Life and Times of Marie Thérèse Coincoin, a film about her ancestors in 17th Century Natchitoches, Louisiana. Kelly Jackson is a 7th generation descendant of Marie Thérèse Coincoin and Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer. "On Facebook in 2010, I noticed others with the odd name of my grandmother from Louisiana," Kelly says. "She never knew of her family history, so finding these roots was life changing." Kelly was so inspired by Coincoin's story from slavery to freedom that she wanted her to be the focus of her next film.

After many years in the industry, Kelly is ready for her next act. "My goal as a creative artist and historian is to continue sharing my Creole heritage and history through my platforms and art," Kelly says. "In my next level, I want to continue building on stronger network alliances and sponsorship connections that will create a better future and elevate my grassroots brand to a worldwide platform." Kelly's top sponsor for The Cane River Film Festival is Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser.



Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser and Kelly Jackson

**MARCH 23 2024**

Historic Downtown Natchitoches LA.  
7TH ANNUAL

**CANE RIVER**  
**FILM FESTIVAL**

Parkway Cinema 6  
1011 Keyser Ave.  
Free Open to the Public  
**11AM-4PM**

**Winning Filmmakers**

- Film Screenings
- Award Ceremony
- Directors Q&A

**VIP**  
6PM - 10PM  
OPENING NIGHT  
Celebration Party

RiverBend  
Bed & Breakfast  
3141 LA-494

**TASTE ON THE CANE**  
**LIVE MUSIC**  
**DE'LONTRELL G. THOMAS**  
TICKETED EVENT  
Annual Fundraiser

The Resurrection Fern Foundation Inc.

**RSVP • TICKETS • FILM SUBMISSIONS**  
**WWW.CANERIVERFILMFESTIVAL.COM**

**SPONSORS**

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- NATCHITOCHES
- NATCHITOCHES
- 476
- BOM
- PLATINUM SIGNS
- CLECO
- J&V
- CITY BANK
- CRAWFISH HOLE
- Emma Robinson
- A BUTLER'S GLOVE

**Special Guest Screening**  
"Woman On The Barbed Wire Fence"  
Executive Producer  
Dr. Ross F. Williams Jr.

**Enjoy the Show!**

**LOUISIANA ENTERTAINMENT**  
a division of Louisiana Economic Development

**Acadiana Cinemas**

**Transform**

**Emma Robinson**

**A BUTLER'S GLOVE**

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[www.npfauna.org/spay-natchitoches/](http://www.npfauna.org/spay-natchitoches/)





\*\*\* Natchitoches, Sabine, Red River, Winn, Magnolia Spay/Neuter and Robinson's Rescue vets are pre-approved. Contact us for approval at other vets: [spaynatchitoches@yahoo.com](mailto:spaynatchitoches@yahoo.com)

## In Honor of Black History Month



### BLACK INVENTORS

PRODUCT	INVENTOR	DATE	PRODUCT	INVENTOR	DATE
Air Conditioning Unit	Frederick M. Jones	1949	Hair Brush	Lydia O. Newman	1898
Almanac	Benjamin Banneker	1791	Hand Stamp	Walter B. Purvis	1883
Auto Cut-Off Switch	Granville T. Woods	1839	Ice Cream Scoop	Alfred L. Cralle	1897
Auto Fishing Device	George Cook	1899	Insect Destroyer Gun	Albert C. Richardson	1899
Baby Buggy	William H. Richardson	1889	Ironing Board	Sarah Boone	1887
Biscuit Cutter	Alexander P. Ashbourne	1875	Key Chain	Frederick J. Loudin	1894
Blood Plasma Bag	Charles Drew	1945	Lantern	Michael C. Harvey	1884
Chamber Commode	Thomas Elkins	1897	Lawn Sprinkler	John H. Smith	1897
Clothes Dryer	George T. Sampson	1971	Lemon Squeezer	John Thomas White	1893
Curtain Rod	Samuel R. Scrottorn	1892	Lock	Washington A. Martin	1893
Curtain Rod Support	William S. Grant	1896	Lubricating Cup	Elijah McCoy	1895
Door Knob	Osborn Dorsey	1878	Lunch Pail	James Robinson	1887
Door Stop	Osborn Dorsey	1878	Mail Box	Paul L. Downing	1891
Egg Beater	Willie Johnson	1884	Mop	Thomas W. Stewart	1893
Electric Lamb Bulb	Lewis Latimer	1882	Peanut Butter	George W. Carver	1896
Elevator	Alexander Miles	1867	Pencil Sharpener	John L. Love	1897
Eye Protector	Powell Johnson	1880	Record Player Arm	Joseph H. Dickinson	1819
Fire Escape Ladder	Joseph W. Winters	1878	Rolling Pin	John W. Reed	1864
Fire Extinguisher	Thomas Marshall	1872	Shampoo Headrest	Charles Orren Bailiff	1898
Folding Bed	Leonard C. Bailey	1899	Spark Plug	Edmond Berger	1839
Folding Chair	Nathaniel Alexander	1911	Stethoscope	Thomas A. Carrington	1876
Fountain Pen	Walter B. Purvis	1890	Straightening Comb	Madam C. J. Walker	1905
Furniture Caster	David A. Fisher	1878	Street Sweeper	Charles B. Brooks	1890
Gas Mask	Garrett Morgan	1914	Phone Transmitter	Granville T. Woods	1884
Golf Tee	George T. Grant	1899	Thermostat Control	Frederick M. Jones	1960
Guitar	Robert F. Fleming, Jr.	1886	Traffic Light	Garrett Morgan	1923
			Tricycle	Matthew A. Cherry	1886

**#35**

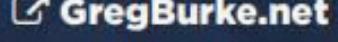
*Fulfilling the 'at-large aspect' of my position will be achieved by actively involving myself in all four city districts of Natchitoches. My aim is to ensure that residents from every corner of the city feel represented and supported.*

**The Burke Platform**

- » Confronting juvenile crime is crucial for our city's growth. Develop a decisive plan, leveraging increased law enforcement support and stricter consequences for offenders.
- » Addressing infrastructure, with a focus on utility rates, is essential. Involve the public and clearly outline how any rate adjustments will directly benefit our community.
- » Prioritizing workforce, jobs, and economic development is vital, recognizing that crime and infrastructure challenges hinder these key initiatives. The Natchitoches NEXT plan is a positive step forward, and the public must be kept informed as it unfolds.

*Vote for*  
**GREG BURKE**  
COUNCILMAN-AT-LARGE

**All for One | One for All | ALL for Natchitoches.**

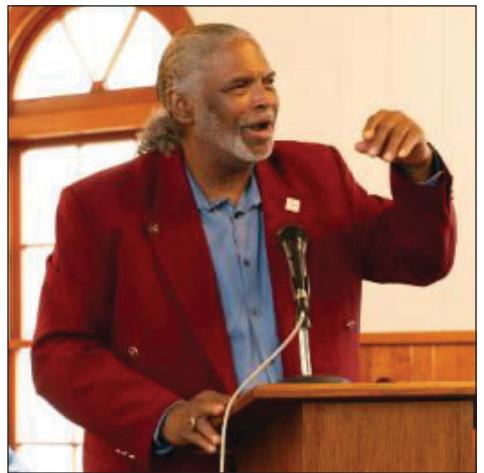
 GregBurke.net

PAID FOR BY CANDIDATE



# 2024 Nominees from Moments in African American History Event

Hosted By: Johnny Barnes President of The Concerned Citizens Association of Natchitoches



Host: Johnny Barnes



2024 Nominee: Will Turner



2024 Nominee: Dr. Ross Williams



2024 Nominee: Jessica Williams



2024 Nominee: Wanda Lucas



2024 Nominee: Billy Meziere



2024 Nominee: Sharee Mims



2024 Nominee: Brylie Condet



2024 Nominees: Rene Lewis, Sandra Brew, Yvette Williams, and Breelin Johnson



Special Tribute to Zelma Moffett

# 2024 Nominees from Moments in African American History Event



2024 Nominee: Roy Lee



2024 Nominee: Randy Williams



2024 Nominee: Latoria Freeman



2024 Nominee: Susan Johnson

## Let's Continue the Progress Begun!!

It has been an honor serving as Councilman at Large for the City of Natchitoches. It is my desire to continue to provide effective leadership and service to Natchitoches residents and therefore, I am seeking re-election to the position.

During my tenure on the City Council, I have had the opportunity to work closely with the Mayor, Council Members, private citizens and stakeholders who share in the vision for growth and building up our great city. These past 3 years, great accomplishments have been made.

The City received over 30 million dollars in grant funding and with that the council provided over \$250,000 in utility assistance, \$600,000.00 in supplemental pay to city employees, firefighters and police department.\* 1.6 million dollars for removing mold and replacing HVAC at Events Center and MLK Center\* \$400,000.00 towards enhancing Richardson Park \*5 million towards water treatment project, 6 million to remove blighted and unsafe structures, passed ordinance to re establish the Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers-Big Sister Program, and create summer jobs for youths. If you want to work with me and continue the vision in helping to move Natchitoches forward I am asking that you vote for me to again serve as your Councilperson at Large. I will continue to answer your calls, be transparent and make myself accessible to everyone. On March 23 please vote #36 BETTY SAWYER SMITH. Early voting starts March 9-16 from 8:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.(except Sunday) at the Registrar's office. You can contact me at 318-332-8668 or by email: [msbssmith@yahoo.com](mailto:msbssmith@yahoo.com).

"TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE"



**RE-ELECT  
#36  
BETTY  
SAWYER SMITH  
COUNCILMAN AT LARGE**

**EXPERIENCED \* QUALIFIED \* FAIR**

Paid for by the Candidate.

# Information on the Presidential Preference Primary

## From the Natchitoches Parish Clerk of Court's Office

The Presidential Preference Primary is scheduled in Louisiana on Saturday March 23, 2024. Among election followers, the Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) is known to be confusing and unfortunately maddening to many. All Natchitoches Parish polling places will be open on this day from 7:00 AM until 8:00 PM.

This election serves the Democratic and Republican Parties as the mechanism to help choose their Presidential candidates for November's national election. The PPP election can be misunderstood because it is one of the few elections that currently allow Democrats to only vote for Democrats and Republicans to only vote for Republicans. Voters that are not registered Democrat or Republican cannot vote in this part of the election because it is for their party members only. This means citizens registered No Party, Independent, or any other political party will not vote in this portion of the election.

If you are unsure how you are registered, there are a couple of easy ways to find out. You can go to the Louisiana Secretary of State's voter portal, geauxvote.com, enter your name and requested information and you will confirm how you are registered. Voters can also call the Natchitoches Parish Registrar of Voters office at 318-357-2211 to confirm that information.

For Voters that would like to become a member of one of the political parties or change their political party registration, they can do that on-line via the Geauxvote.com app by March 2. If you would prefer to make that change in person, you can do that at the Registrar's office at the Natchitoches Parish Courthouse Monday through Friday 8:30 to 4:30. If you make the change in person, it must be done by February 21.

In parts of the parish, there will be other important races on the same ballot. You do not have to be in a particular party to vote on those races. On the same ballot citizens of the City of Natchitoches will have a Mayoral election, a Council Person at large election and three of the four City Council district races will be contested. The village of Clarence will have Mayoral, Alderman and Chief of Police races. The other issue on the ballot is a Natchitoches School Board Proposition for Consolidated School District 11 that includes all or part of 13 precincts.

The Natchitoches Parish Clerk of Court's office will have more information on the March 23 election as we get closer to Election Day. You can always call the office at 318-352-8152 if questions.

PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY SATURDAY MARCH 23

TO VOTE IN THE PRIMARY PORTION OF THE ELECTION YOU MUST BE A REGISTERED DEMOCRAT OR REPUBLICAN

CURRENT VOTERS CAN REGISTER FOR A POLITICAL PARTY IN PERSON BY FEBRUARY 21 or ON LINE BY MARCH 2

IMPORTANT DATES FOR THIS ELECTION						
Feb. 21	Mar. 2	Mar. 9	Mar. 16	Mar. 19	Mar. 22	
Registration Deadline (In person or by mail)	Registration Deadline (GeauxVote Online)	Early Voting Begins	Last Day of Early Voting	Last Day to Request an Absentee Ballot (Other than military and overseas voters)	Last Day for Absentee Ballots to be Received. (by 4:30 pm)	
Mar. 23	Mar. 26	Apr. 1	Apr. 9	May 9	June 10	
Election Day Last day for military, overseas, and hospitalized absentee ballots to be received.	Deadline to Request a Recount	Last Day to Contest a Candidate Election	Official Results (Promulgation)	Last Day to Contest a Proposition Election	Last Day to Contest a Tax Proposition Election	

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May 1, 2024

Yes, a second time.  
I see the hardship it is  
causing on our community.

We can fix this



#26

LEE POSEY for MAYOR

EXPERIENCE & INTEGRITY MATTERS



Paid for by the Candidate.

# Interview Questions for District 3 Councilman Christopher Petite

## 1. Please name the neighborhoods or areas that are within your district.

Jackson Square, Airport Rd., Fairgrounds Rd., Hwy 478, University Parkway business corridor and NSU campus.

## 2. What have you implemented or name a specific thing that has been done that benefits your district?

**Implementations, Volunteer efforts, services provided, etc.**

As relating to our youth. We reestablished the Boys & Girls Club, our administration brought in Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program. Throughout the summer we employ a great number of youths to work in various departments, such as, public works, the fire station and the mayor's office. The program allows our youth to build a resume and gain work experience.

I have hosted a number of community clean-ups (volunteer-based) to address litter. I have worked with planning and zoning to address blight throughout the district. We have had some success in our attempts to address dilapidated properties throughout the district.

As noted early in my term as councilman we experienced two of the worst storms seen in Natchitoches Parish (Hurricane Laura). I did not waver in my response to a call of action. I volunteered and assisted with tree / limb removal, provided food, water & ice to those without power.

Worked to secure funding to revitalize Richardson Park. Secured a grant win of \$400,000 & additional funds with the aid of Mayor & city council. Totaling over a half of million dollars for the project.

## 3. Do you provide a report to the citizens of progress made? If so, would you like to share that report with the readers?

Yes. I have held a series of town halls to keep the citizens informed. I have also delivered handwritten letters to my constituents. I have used other means as well, such as, radio, social media, Natchitoches Times, and Natchitoches Journal. I most definitely will share future reports with the readers.

## 4. What is your vision for your district?

## Key Areas of Focus:

Public Safety - It is of the upmost importance that citizens are safe. #1 Priority.

For me seeing new construction (homes) and community revitalization is at the top of my list. Natchitoches Next which is a comprehensive master plan for the City of Natchitoches looks to do just that.

We must continue to work and provide assistance to the elderly or those who are less fortunate.

I am committed to developing more positive programs for the youth of Natchitoches.

Any changes? Any additions you would like to see? Yes. I believe growth is important. I welcome the annexation of property for residential use. It is also my belief that we need a larger recreational facility for our youth.

## 5. What do you think is more important for our city right now: building new homes, rehabbing existing homes and adding commercial businesses to your district?

Most definitely the rehabbing of existing homes. I will continue to work to find funding to make this possible. Not against new construction as stated above. I also am encouraged that with the improvements to our water system we are putting ourselves in position to land another large manufacturing company, such as, Roy O Martin, International Papers, Pilgrims, or a Weyerhaeuser. We will continue to develop the University Parkway business corridor. My goal is to see that entire strip saturated with new developments, such as, the new auto mall & retail stores.

## 6. Some people in the community say they are concerned about crime in the City of Natchitoches, what is your suggestion to help with public safety?

We need to be able to retain good officers who have a passion for the communities they serve. We have increased our number of officers in this first term. We were short 11-13 officers & now we have only a vacancy of 5. We have made some progress as it relates to public safety. We have established Crime Stoppers, a com-

## munity-supported non-profit organization **you do with it and why?**

I would use the funding to create a home revitalization program. My district consists of a lot of older homes. Through weatherization improvements and upgrades, these households can save on average \$372 or more every year.

## 9. What are your ideas to encourage community engagement in your district?

Through events, such as, National Night Out, initiatives, and outreach programs, I aim to bring people together and create meaningful relationships. I'm committed to fostering a sense of belonging and connection among all members of our community.

## 10. Please provide contact information for the residents of your district.

If I can be of any service, please reach out. I can be contacted at 318-581-7642. I can also be reached by email at natchitochesdistrict3@outlook.com

## Re-Elect Christopher Petite

## Councilman District 3

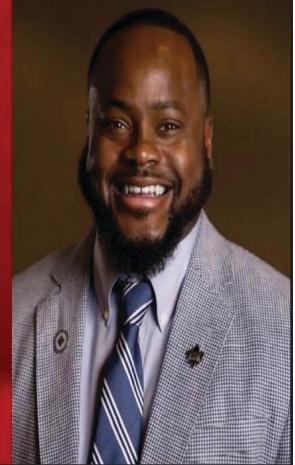
### "Moving Forward"



- Honesty

- Integrity

- Results Driven



Paid for by the Candidate.

# Scenes From the Best of Natchitoches Awards Luncheon

Hosted by: The Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce





## Questions and Responses from The City of Natchitoches District Candidates Seeking Office

### Within the first 30 days of office, what would you like to implement or see happen in your district and why? 90 days

1. We can all agree that for the citizens in the City in implementing effective governmental decisions.

2. So that every part of the City will benefit from our City Funding.



**Robert  
Lilly Jr.,  
Candidate  
for  
District 4**



**Maria  
Mangum,  
Candidate  
for  
District 2**

Question 2: Within the first 90 days, What would you like to implement or see happen in your district and why?

In the first 90 days, I would like to see a gate with a code that all police, fire and medical would remember at the end of the road in Paniham. Since there is a key and one keyholder, a key can be lost or misplaced but anyone can remember a code. I am for the people and I want them to remain safe but accessible when there is an emergency.

Also, at the end of Clarence Dr in those trailers, I want to see more efficient lighting in that area. This would be a great improvement in the area as well as improving policing in the Abbie Drive/ Lakeview Area.

Question 1: Within the first 30 days, What would you like to implement or see happen in your district and why?

In the first 30 days, I would like to see to see the road open from south town to the bypass so the citizens in that area are not trapped in incase a train gets stuck on the tracks.

I also would like to see the storage units by Carter's Trailer Park obtain more cleanliness in that area. I think the units are successful but to make the community remain clean, some disposals must take place.

# Black History is Us!

By: Nikki Madison



We should all know where we've come from, and black history is not just the famous people that made it possible for us to do the things that we are privileged to do today.

There is a lot of black history that isn't well known. Black history goes beyond slavery and black leaders. We create black history every day that we open our eyes. We all have the power to touch each other's lives with positivity. Black History Month shouldn't be focused just on the famous or the exceptional. It should also be about those that touch our

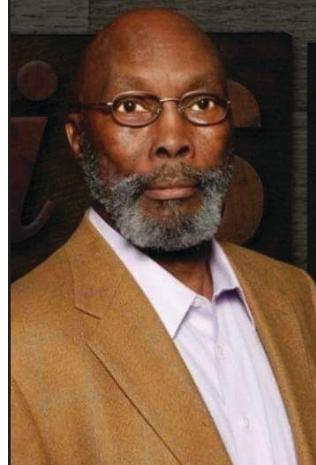
lives daily. This goes for all the parents that are raising up successful young women and men. The people in the community that are sharing their voices to let the community concerns be heard.

This is about togetherness and the willingness to want to make a difference. So, let's speak life in our children and strengthen them up to be the next generation that is going to make a difference. Let's continue to make beautiful black history. Lead by example by showing love, support, and peace with one another. We all have the power to change our outcome. Black history is us!

NATCHITOCHES ASSOCIATION OF MINISTERS  
PRESENTS



*Black People Making History*



February 25, 2024 | 6 PM  
The Abundant Life Church  
618 Ben Drive Natchitoches, LA

Special Guest  
**Dr. Joe S. Green**



# Interview Questions for District 2 Councilman Dale Nielsen

**1. Please name the neighborhoods or areas that are within your district.**

Chinquapin Subdivision, Keyser Avenue, Melrose Park, Pecan Park, Parkway Drive, South Williams, Shoreline, Pan Am, Town South, Hazel Drive, Greystone, Sadia, Clarence Drive, Abbie Drive, Lakeview Drive, Quida Drive, Woodyard Drive and South Drive.

**2. What have you implemented or name a specific thing that has been done that benefits your district? Implementations, Volunteer efforts, services provided, etc.**

There have been so many positive things that we have done over my time on the council, and I am glad that I have had the opportunity to always put the community first and address the needs of our citizens. I am very proud to have been able to help connect Town South and Pan Am by obtaining right of way to overlay Railroad Street. This allows each subdivision an additional railroad track crossing, in the event that a crossing is blocked by the train. In addition, an emergency road to Mill Street was installed in the event that both crossings were blocked. Another project that I am very proud of is the hard surface overlay of Sadia Street. This allows a secondary access to Hwy 1 for citizens on Abbie, Clarence and Lakeview Drive.

**3. Do you provide a report to the citizens of progress made? If so, would you like to share that report with the readers?**

We have done numerous Town Hall meetings, provide important

information on Social media, the City web page, the Go Natchitoches App and other media outlets.

Keeping our citizens informed will always be important to me.

**4. What is your vision for your district?**

District 2 has a good mix of Commercial Business and Residential Housing. We need to continue our efforts in Street overlays and improving water and sewer lines, so we are providing the best possible drinking water and providing sanitary sewer for our citizens.

**5. What do you think is more important for our city right now: building new homes, rehabbing existing homes and adding commercial businesses to your district?**

Building new homes, rehabbing old homes and demolishing blighted property are all important components that we need to continue to focus on.

**6. Some people in the community say they are concerned about crime in the City of Natchitoches, what is your suggestion to help with public safety?**

NPD has a huge task in dealing with our crime issues and has made progress on reducing some of our crime. The recent numbers indicate a reduction in certain crimes. I am hopeful that the State will change some of our current laws to help deter crime in the near future. We have made progress as a result of the pay increase recently given to Police and as a result we have filled most of the open positions. This means that we should have more police out patrolling and

responding to our citizens needs.

**7. How do you plan to get more community involvement from the residents in your district?**

Continue to do Town Hall Meetings, both in person and virtual. Increase Social media interaction and encourage citizens to download the Go Natchitoches app to stay informed on all City activity.

**8. If you received a \$1 million grant to use for your district, what would you do with it and why?**

I would put the money towards implementing some of the items in District 2 that are in the Safe Streets for all initiative. Some of those items are a proposed pedes-

trian walkway adjacent to the South Drive Bridge, sidewalks on Mill Street, Fairgrounds Road, Watson, Hancock and Parkway.

**9. What are your ideas to encourage community engagement in your district?**

Continue our efforts in programs such as National Night Out, Neighborhood cleanups and continuing to encourage participation in ongoing current events.

**10. Please provide contact information for the residents of your district.**

Dale A. Nielsen, 125 Lodi Street, Natchitoches, LA 71457, 352-1603 Home phone, 318-581-7654, dnielsen@cp-tel.net

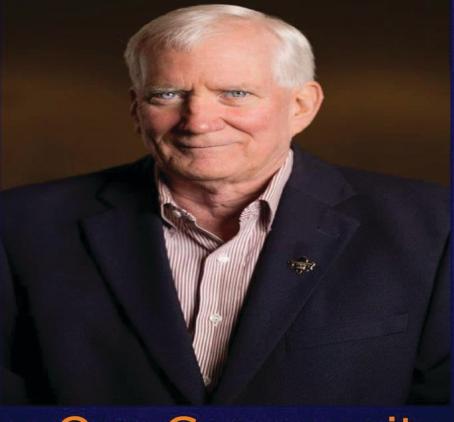
EXPERIENCE MATTERS

**Re-Elect**

**Dale**

**Nielsen**

**City Council, District 2**



**Putting Our Community First**

Paid for by Dale Nielsen



# Ribbon Cutting for Eternal Peace Funeral Home of Natchitoches

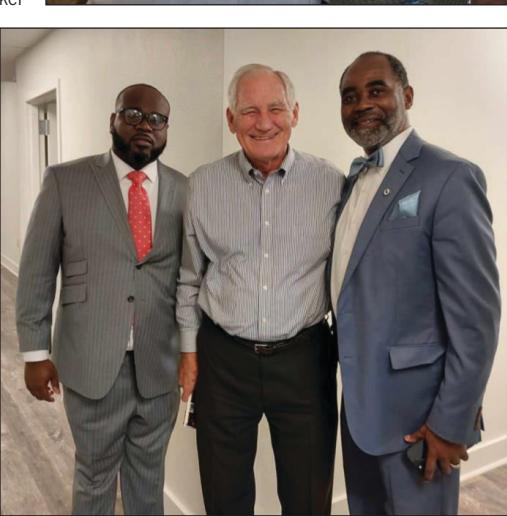
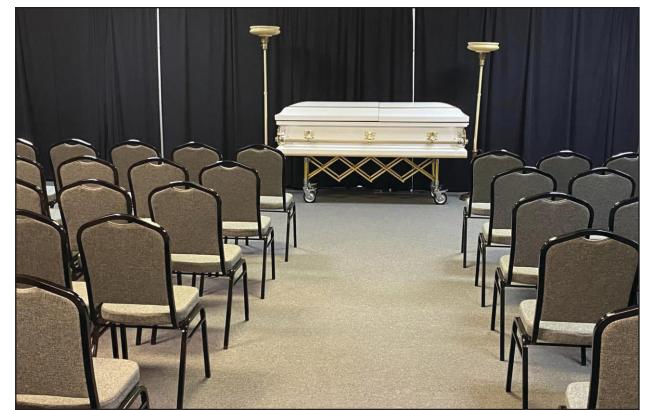
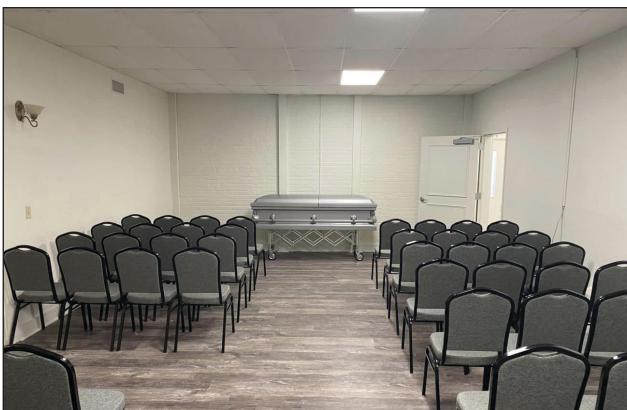


Photo Credit: Kevin Walker



# Prayer Changes Things

By: Katraivia Bell

In life we will face unforeseen circumstances that even the most prepared, could still not be prepared for. Troubled times never last forever but sometimes the feeling of uncertainty can bring negative thoughts to our head that aren't true. All you need to do is take one step at a time to focus on the present moment when life can seem overwhelming. Once today is gone, we can never get that time back. Don't sit and dwell on things that are out of

your control. Everything you're going through is preparing you for what you've asked God for. I remember asking God to help strengthen me, and then I went through trials that I was nowhere near ready for. I had to learn how to appreciate things better, so he took everything. Sometimes we don't see the blessings in disguise because we are too busy asking for something that he already has provided us with. He is just waiting on you to be willing, ready, and accepting of it.



Eventually you will learn to appreciate God putting you through all of those trials. At times you must go through things to experience the many blessings he always had waiting on the other side for you. God made us all unique and created each one of us individually. Please remember that you are not the only one going through problems, facing troubles, or experiencing hard times that you feel no one else will understand. In moments of your life where you don't know

what to do or where to turn, I challenge you to pray because prayer changes things. Start surrounding yourself with positive people who want to help you become a better version of yourself. Always remain positive, learn to love yourself more, and continue to spread kindness to others. It's imperative we remember to always overcome challenges, instead of letting challenges overcome us. Never be ashamed to pray and don't ever be afraid to pray because again, prayer does change things.

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MARCH 10TH 3PM  
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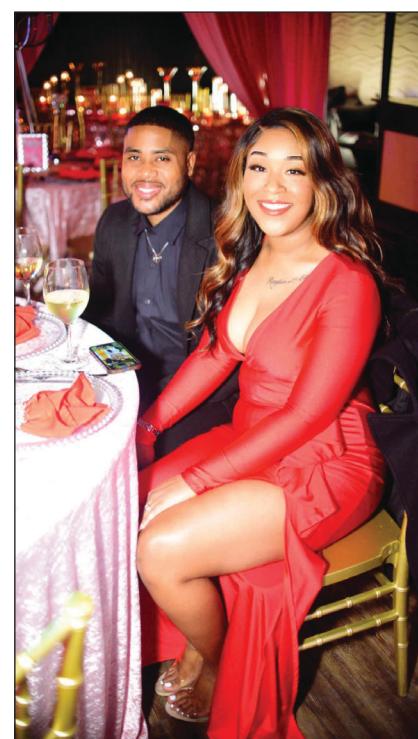
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# The Village of Natchez Celebrates Love

Congratulations to the oldest married couple in Natchez, Mr., and Mrs. Lloyd Johnson Sr., who have been married for sixty years. They received a gift card for a Valentine's Day dinner.



**Jerry Forrest Jr.** is a high school graduate of NCHS, class of 2002. He graduated Louisiana Technical College with a technical degree in Electronics Technology. He currently works full-time at NRMC as the I.T. Manager for 5 years. He owns and operates Repairtech Services LLC.

**Paula Forrest** is a high school graduate of NCHS class of 2005. In 2009, she graduated BPCC with an associate in respiratory, graduated from NSU in 2016 with a Bachelor of Applied Science in Allied Health and later graduated from Commonwealth Institutions for Mortuary Science in 2019.

She currently works full time at Rapides Regional Medical Center as a Registered Respiratory Therapist and at Winnfield Memorial Funeral Home as a Licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer.

The couple met at NCHS and have been married for 14 years. They have 3 beautiful children (Olivia, Danielle and Jerry III). They have always had a great support system to help support them in everything they do. The couple tells us that it was not easy and still not easy, but they trust God and keep pushing for every goal they set out to achieve.



**The Village of Natchez also recognized the couple Jerry and Paula Forest for being the first Black I.T. Manager and first Black Registered Respiratory Therapist and Licensed Funeral Director & Embalmer in Natchez, La.**

# The Surprising Impact of a Simple Apology

By: Tomer Rozenburg

A crosswalk encounter that made me think.

As we wrap up another week, I want to share a personal experience that occurred to me this week that made me stop and ponder for a moment.

One evening, on my way back from a particularly long day at work, I found myself standing at a crosswalk, waiting to cross the street. I noticed a car approaching at a speed that made me unsure if it would stop in time. To my surprise, the car did stop, but right in the middle of the crosswalk, blocking my path.

What happened next was unexpected and left an impression on me. The

driver rolled down his window and apologized. He admitted he hadn't calculated his stop correctly and sincerely asked for my forgiveness for not giving me the right of way.

At that moment, my frustration dissolved. I smiled genuinely and assured him it was okay, wishing him a great day ahead. As I continued my way, I couldn't help but reflect on the interaction. It was a brief exchange, a minor hiccup in the grand scheme of things, yet it was profoundly humanizing.

The driver had the option to keep driving and only delay me for a fraction of a second, leaving me slightly irritated or angry at their behavior. However, he chose to completely block

my path, preventing me from continuing my way home and causing a much longer delay. Logically, it would have been better for me to be delayed for a shorter period, but as humans, we are primarily driven by emotions.

This experience reminded me of the power we all have to transform a potentially negative situation into a positive one, simply through acknowledgment and understanding. The driver's apology and my response created a moment of connection that turned an ordinary evening into a memorable one.

It's easy to underestimate the impact of our actions and words on others, especially in the hustle and bustle of daily life. Yet, this encoun-

ter showed me that taking a moment to recognize each other's humanity can have a ripple effect, spreading positivity and understanding in ways we might not anticipate.

As we move forward into the coming week, I encourage you to look for opportunities to acknowledge those around you, even in the smallest of ways. Whether it's a simple nod of understanding, a smile, or an apology when things don't go as planned, these acts of acknowledgment can be powerful tools for fostering connection and empathy in our increasingly busy lives.

Let's not forget the impact we can have on each other's day, for, in the end, it's these moments of human connection that truly enrich our lives.

# BLACK HISTORY IS AMERICAN HISTORY

*"One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all"*



The Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office is a leader in our area by maintaining a well trained and diverse workforce that is reflective of our communities.

This message brought to you by Sheriff R. Stuart Wright and the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office

# Master Flutist Will Illuminate NSU with 'Jazz and The Civil Rights' Exploration

By Dr. Jasmine Wise

NSU coordinator of Black Studies

NATCHITOCHES – Northwestern State University is set to host an evening of music and education with Master Flutist Galen Abdur-Razzaq at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 29 in the Student Union Ballroom.

Known for his masterful flute performances, Abdur-Razzaq will not only captivate the audience with his rich and powerful musicality but will also delve into the fascinating relationship between jazz and the Civil Rights movement. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn how jazz served as an advocate for civil rights, with concert proceeds financing significant events like the Freedom Rides and the historic March on Washington in 1963.

"The Mrs. H.D. Dear Sr. and Alice E. Dear School of Creative and Performing Arts is excited to add Galen Abdur-Razzaq to the Celebration of Diversity Series," said Dr. Marcy McKee CAPA coordinator of the Diversity Series. "We are looking forward to learning more about the history of jazz and Civil



Rights movement. It is always fascinating to see how the arts assist and support such an important political movement. This lecture recital promises to be an entertaining and thought-provoking performance with exceptional information and talent."

Abdur-Razzaq's flute playing is often described as big, resembling the rich and powerful sound of a saxophone. His music is smooth, melodic, passionate, and sensational, earning him a devoted fan base. This event promises an immersive experience that transcends traditional musical boundaries.

Abdur-Razzaq will chronicle the evolution of jazz from the turn of the

century to the present day, highlighting various artists, their struggles and their influence on the genre. As an educator, Abdur-Razzaq holds a degree from the Berklee College of Music and a master's degree in Performing Arts and Education from Rutgers University. His encyclopedic knowledge of the history of jazz and the Civil Rights movement makes him a riveting speaker, according to Brittany Broussard, director of Culture and Climate and the Gail Metoyer Jones Center for Inclusion and Diversity.

"I am looking forward to hosting Mr. Galen Abdur-Razzaq again here at NSU," Broussard said. "He did an outstanding job last time he visited with us for 'Women in Jazz' so I know this time will be no different. We do not often learn about how music influences and shapes a movement so his presentation

should provide a unique perspective about that time in history."

"I love it when we offer events such as this at Northwestern," added Dr. Jasmine Wise, coordinator of Black Studies. "I want students to know that Black Studies is expansive. There are numerous options and opportunities including traveling the world teaching our history through music and culture. This event will be a treat for our students and community to enjoy."

"This event is free and open to the public, offering a unique opportunity for students, staff, faculty and the community to engage with the cultural and historical significance of jazz. Don't miss this exceptional evening that combines the artistry of a master flutist with a profound exploration of Jazz and its role in shaping the Civil Rights Movement."

CELEBRATING  
**BLACK HISTORY**  
*Month*



First African American  
President at  
Northwestern State  
University



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See residence halls, lab spaces, and classrooms where you'll live and learn as an NSU student. We offer private, personalized campus tours led by our student ambassadors and admissions experts.

# Executive Order JML 24-01

By: Marvin Blake Jr.

Having been a teacher in the local school system for four decades, I will honestly say that I was never the toughest teacher in the building, but a person who truly tried my best to help children succeed. Even being retired for nearly three years, there are two groups of student's juniors and seniors that I am still familiar with at Natchitoches Central and whenever a former student asks me to write a letter of recommendation for a scholarship or a job, my answer to them is always yes and each time I try to write the best letter of recommendation that I can to help that child achieve their goal. As a teacher in grades 7-12, I was always pleased with the students who studied hard and passed my class, but my proudest moments as a teacher were in how many students that I could keep from failing my class. Whether you are teaching children in K-12 or on the college level or being on a local school board or state board of education, the major emphasis should always be on helping children prepare for the future and succeed!



Last summer, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved a policy to allow high school seniors across Louisiana who failed the LEAP Exit Exam an opportunity to appeal to the local school system. Through the appeal process, seniors who failed the test had to complete a portfolio project, demonstrate employability, and meet all the other Louisiana standards required to graduate. Understanding that a college education is not for everybody, the new policy seemed to be the right thing to do to keep a child from becoming a high school dropout statistic to being a high school graduate.

But on October 20, 2023, a Louisiana House Oversight Committee dominated by Republicans voted to nullify the new appeals process for the students who failed the Leap Test. Shortly afterward, to right a wrong, outgoing Democratic Governor John Bel Edwards on December 20, 2023, overruled the committee and allowed the appeals process to take effect.

But with **elections having consequences**, in early January of this year, Jeff

Landry was sworn in as Louisiana's next governor. Shortly after being sworn in, the new Republican Donald Trump endorsed governor signed his first **Executive Order** entitled **JML 24-01** that removed the appeals process for high school seniors who failed the LEAP Test. Shortly after the executive order, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education reported that a mere **seven** children in the State of Louisiana were granted an appeal process that will allow them to graduate from high school. Due to the new order, they will be the last.

As of this day, no new funding for remediating students who failed the test has been put in place by the new governor. So, moving forward, students can retest until they pass the test, or try and pass Louisiana's HISET Test (GED) or just drop out of school and become a statistic. As I close, I would feel much better if the person(s) who are doing this to children would just admit that the bottom line is that they are trying to do one thing and that is continuing to try and keep a permanent underclass in Louisiana. SMH!

That's My View!

The Emma Robinson Williams Education Foundation, Inc (ERWEF)

By: Dr. Ross Williams

We are celebrating over 25 years of being in existence and supporting the Boys and Girls in the community of Natchitoches Parish. I would like to reintroduce the foundation to the community and share the impact over the 25 years of existence. The Emma Robinson Williams Education Foundation (ERWEF) cordially invites you to attend their 1st Inaugural Fundraiser Soiree, themed "HATS, WINE & CIGARS". The event will be held on **FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 2024**, from 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM at the Onyx Wine & Cigar Lounge located at 312 Texas St., Natchitoches, LA 71457. ERWEF is committed to a collab-



orative approach changing one child at a time and making quality education accessible to all. By supporting this fundraiser, you will contribute to scholarships, educational programs, and health initiatives that empower individuals to reach their full potential.

The soiree promises to be a sophisticated and stylish affair, featuring a curated selection of exquisite wines and cigars. Attendees will have the opportunity to showcase their finest hats, be it classic, quirky, or daring, and celebrate individuality and style as we showcase the artistry of headwear. In addition to the 1st Inaugural Fundraiser Soiree, ERWEF documentary is being featured at the Cane River Film Festival on Friday, March 23, 2024.

2024 INAUGURAL EMMA ROBINSON WILLIAMS EDUCATION FOUNDATION FUNDRAISER(ERWEF)

FRIDAY MARCH 22

Hats, Wine & Cigars

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# God's Plan and Purpose

By: Minister Tristen Jefferson

God has a plan and purpose for every one of our lives. As human beings, we have a purpose for being here on earth. As you read this encouraging message, let it penetrate your heart, mind, and soul. Never give up: trust, hope, have faith in God, and always remember He loves you.

I found myself gazing into the ceiling as I lay in bed morning and night—sometimes with tears, I could not hold back. I did the same thing throughout the day as I gazed into the blue sky. I found myself questioning God as I was waiting for answers. I felt like my life was at a total standstill; nothing was adding up according to God's promises in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. I knew in my heart that God loved me, but at times, my soul felt empty, and my thought process was full of doubt. I was struggling with everyday struggles, trials, and tribulations, finding myself wanting to give up on God.

I knew God had a plan and purpose for my life here on earth. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' I didn't know God's plans for my life or my purpose in being here, but somehow, I knew I had to wait patiently for God to move in my life. The Bible encourages us to wait for God to act in His timing, even when our needs seem too great to wait any longer: "We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully

realized." (Hebrews 6:11). I didn't understand what the plan God had in store for me, but there was a purpose for me being here.

I was raised in church all my life as a Christian, pastor's son, ordained deacon, and praise team leader. Yet I somehow wandered off course in my Christian journey, and my soul was filling up with guilt and shame. Satan tried to lead me in the direction that wasn't what God had in His plan for my life. The road was very ugly and full of sin, which pretty much destroyed my marriage and family.

I praise God for giving me a praying wife. She never once gave up on me despite my sinful acts.

By God's grace and His plans that He had as my destiny, God's Word and the Holy Spirit led me back in the right direction and put me back on God's map for my life. I knew God had forgiven my sins as I confessed them to Him.

Psalm 130:1-8 honestly states God will surely forgive us if we confess our sins to Him. God's love for me was bigger than I could ever imagine. God has a plan and purpose in our everyday walk with Him. We must obey God's words in the Bible, obey His commands, trust, and have faith in Him. We need to love Him with all our heart, mind and soul (Matthew 22:37). We must obey the Holy Spirit's direction about the plans God's already mapped out for us.

The plans I had mapped out weren't aligned with God's plans. I was trying to draw up a future diagram and plot a plan to guide me in the right direction, but unfor-



tunately, it wasn't what God wanted. I wasn't letting God's plans direct my life. I was planning my life according to my selfish desires and excluding God.

Proverb 16:9 says, "In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." So, I decided to pray about it. I went to God with humility and a sincere heart, asking God to determine my steps and lead me in the direction He mapped out for me to go. I wanted to be led by the Holy Spirit to reach His destination, different from what I had planned. After I prayed, I waited patiently for God's plans to work in my life.

"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (Deuteronomy 31:8). There was now no need for me to worry about my future because I knew God was with me every day of my life. He honestly states that He will never leave me. His plan was already predestined even before I was born: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet" (Jeremiah 1:5). Praise God!

Your ways may seem weary and tired; your days may seem dark and lonely. Everything may appear to be at a standstill. The road you're traveling down may be going in the wrong direction, or the map you've chosen to follow could need to be corrected or updated. Pray and ask God for direction and guidance whatever you are going through.

Ask Him to provide you with the correct map: His plan for your life and your purpose for being here on earth. Then, study God's Word to learn what His will is.

The map God has for you will cause you to head in the right direction. His map will keep you from getting lost because it will lead you to His plans for your life. Remember, God loves us so much that he gave His only begotten son, Jesus Christ, who paid the price for our sins and the sins of the world. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

I knew my Father in heaven had a plan and purpose for my life, and He has the same for you.

Confess your sins to him and believe in your heart that His son Jesus Christ paid the price for your sins when he was crucified on the cross and then raised from the dead. Read and study His word daily and obey His commands, and He will be with you every hour of the day.

I can honestly say that one of God's plans is for me to continue to write gospel tracts like this one to encourage believers and non-believers throughout the entire world to follow in the direction of His son, Jesus Christ. My brothers and sisters: stay encouraged, meditate on God's words daily, and DON'T GIVE UP!

HOLD ON, remember God has a plan and a purpose for your life. You are here for a reason, not a season. God loves you more than your heart can even imagine.

# Community Discussion To Redesign Ben Johnson Baseball Park



## Deacon Clinton Jones' Ordination Service



## Good News for the Town of Campti!

**PARK IMPROVEMENTS  
TOWN OF CAMPTI  
NATCHITOCHES PARISH, LOUISIANA**

THIS PROJECT IS BEING FUNDED BY THE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT  
THROUGH THE LOUISIANA OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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Jay Dardenne  
Commissioner  
BALAR Associates, Inc.  
Engineer  
Coordinating & Development Corporation  
Administrative Consultant

*"Benefitting the Town of Campti and all Louisiana"*

The groundwork for their pavilion has started.

## Black History Moment Recognizing Natchez Mayor Patsy Ward-Hoover



First African American female to be elected to serve as a member of the Parish Council and was elected by the Parish Council to serve as Chairperson for the year 2017.

# An Appeal to the Citizens of the City of Natchitoches:

I am writing this letter in support of a good man. Four years ago, the citizens of Natchitoches made history by electing someone who had never served in a political office. The national political environment was perfect for this historical accomplishment...people were marching across America in protest of George Floyd's racially motivated, Jim Crow-style murder on national television. The Citizens of Natchitoches were embarking on something that had been tried unsuccessfully four times before.

Historically speaking, we accomplished a significant milestone for the City of Natchitoches (a city that was established in 1714...the oldest city in the Louisiana Purchase Territory.). Moreover, Natchitoches is four years older than New Orleans. Given the aforementioned historical facts and racially motivated murder four years ago, we elected the first black Mayor against all odds!

The "Establishment" in the City of Natchitoches was dumbfounded. "How did this happen?", they asked themselves. According to their expectation, Blacks were never supposed to come together in a common cause for their advancement. "It had never happened before, so why should it happen now?", they asked themselves.

But we did! Now here we are again, embarking on another campaign to collectively do what has never been done before...re-elect Mayor Ronnie Williams, Jr. to serve a second term as the first African American Mayor of the City of Natchitoches. Oh, by the way, the "Establishment" is now saying that we can't do it a second time because we are too busy "hating" one another. They're firmly convinced that we hate one another and love our enemy (The Establishment). They believe blacks will not support Mayor Williams given what has been experienced in the lack of voter turn-out during the last few local elections. To add "insult-to-injury", the Establishment is also stating that local blacks are only interested in drinking, smoking and "having a good time"! Are they right or wrong?

Can't we come together and go out to vote for the greater good, the re-election of Mayor Ronnie Williams? Is Mayor Ronnie Williams perfect? No! Is he God? No! Though he's been severely criticized over the past three (3) years (more than likely because he is African American), we must give him credit. He visits all the churches, participates in most civic events, attends most funerals, and visits anyone that requests it of him.

Furthermore, his achievement while in office is greater than any of the other mayors before him given that he has brought in more money (over 40 million dollars) to the City of Natchitoches...we were not taxed a dime. Look at his record...I am not going to list all of his accomplishments because you can find that out for yourself. In summary, our Mayor has been valiant in serving the Citizens of Natchitoches over the past three (3) years. He is a young man with a wife and four young children that we all should be proud of.

*Remember, we are nationally fighting to keep a dictator out of office in the person of Donald Trump...a racist tyrant who's seeking to take our rights (including voting rights) away if he is elected. The local "Establishment" is in full support of him.*

In closing, won't you join me and do whatever you can to speak well of Mayor Williams and support him with your money and voting for him? Folks, let's do all that we can and not be caught lacking. Let's prove the Establishment wrong. We can come together! We don't hate one another like they think! We are proud of the work Mayor Williams has done. As he grows in experience and knowledge, bigger and better things will "continue" to happen for the Citizens of Natchitoches.

Let's go to work and most importantly, re-elect Mayor Ronnie Williams, Jr!

Sincerely,  
John E. Winston, Sr.

Ronnie Williams, Jr.  
Ballot #27

## Letter to the Editor regarding the naming of the MLK Recreation Center Gym after John Winston Sr

Dear Natchitoches,

I am writing to express my dismay and concern regarding the recent news release of a citizen in our community being honored with the naming of the gym located within the Martin Luther King Recreation Center to the John Winston Sr Gym. This contradiction is deeply troubling and warrants attention from our community.

Martin Luther King Jr. dedicated his life to promoting equality, justice, and unity among all people, regardless of race or ethnicity. His teachings emphasized the importance of love, compassion, and understanding in overcoming discrimination and prejudice. Therefore, it is deeply ironic and contradictory to honor someone who embraces discriminatory views with a center named after Dr. King.

Recently, myself and several other voters in our community, all seemingly of African American ethnicity, were taken aback to receive a letter from Mr. John Winston Sr that was highly race-baiting and divisive. While the letter expressed fervent support for re-electing our current Mayor, it also contained racist language that encouraged division within our community. Mr. Winston referred to an 'establishment' of people who supposedly do not want the African American community to succeed or progress.

It is true that until 2020, Natchitoches had never had an African American Mayor. However, it is important to recognize that the so-called 'establishment' he mentions has always been comprised of a diverse and inclusive group of citizens who have been dedicated to investing in the future of Natchitoches for decades. This 'establishment' is not a hierarchy seeking to suppress African American citizens, but rather a collective of individuals from all backgrounds working towards a common goal.

In 2020, our community, alongside this inclusive 'establishment', shattered the glass ceiling by collectively

electing our first African American Mayor. This historic moment was a testament to the unity and progressiveness of our community, with voters of all ethnicities coming together to make history.

It is deeply troubling to see divisive rhetoric being used to sow discord within our community, especially at a time when unity and solidarity are more important than ever. Moving forward, it is imperative that we continue to work together, regardless of race or ethnicity, to build a more inclusive and equitable community for all.

As a community, we must uphold the values and principles that Dr. King fought for. Discrimination and bigotry have no place in our society, and it is essential that we denounce and confront any actions or attitudes that perpetuate division and inequality.

Furthermore, naming a youth center after Dr. King should serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration for our youth, encouraging them to embrace diversity, promote equality, and strive for positive change in their communities. To honor Dr. King's legacy effectively, we must ensure that the individuals and institutions associated with his name embody his values and teachings.

I call upon our community leaders and decision-makers to reconsider this decision and to uphold the spirit of Dr. King's legacy by promoting inclusivity, equality, and justice for all. While I am not aware of the many contributions Mr. John Winston Sr has made to the community of Natchitoches, I do not believe these contributions equate to being able to have his name synonymous and within the walls of a center created with Martin Luther King Jr's dream for our children. Let us work together to create a future where discrimination is eradicated, and Dr. King's dream of a beloved community continues to blossom.

Sincerely,  
'Coach' Diane Dodd

# John Winston Responds to Diane Dodd's Letter to the Editor

I started in politics with the Voters and Civics League in 1972. Right here in the city of Natchitoches we were trying to get blacks on school boards, the police jury, and the city council. No blacks were in those offices at that time.

I worked with the voter's league and in 1974 I ran for police jury in the spring of 1974 and lost. In December of 1974 I signed up to run for the city council. It was through the efforts of the voter's league that we got the city council reapportioned. I represented district 3, and John Below represented district 4. We went on to city council together and 24 years later we got off the city council together. We had served 24 years a piece.

Diane Dodd doesn't know the struggle that John Below and I went through in those years. Anything in those 24 years, no exception, any bill, or any ordinance dealing with race, always lost not sometimes but ALWAYS lost 3 to 2. It was a 5-man council, 2 blacks and 3 whites. The vote always went down 3 to 2. John Below and I voted for the black issues and the 3 whites voted against us.

Throughout my years involved in politics, I supported, worked, canvassed, and organized for white candidates at the state and parish level. In fact, over the years, I worked and served for Don Kelly, Jimmy Long and various other statewide candidates and I never took a dime from any of them. They trusted me with managing their money and with canvassing in the black community or what have you and I never took one penny. Don Kelly is still living, and he can justify what I am saying. That's what I have been about. I want to tell Ms. Dodd that I have been putting forth those efforts. She wants to paint me as a

racist. I am not a racist! First, I am a Christian and I am not like some of these modern Christians. What I do know if I say I am a Christian I must love everybody. Not black, not white I have to love everybody. One thing about me, I respect you if you are black or white if you respect me. If you fight me, I am going to fight you. That's just the way it is. Now I understand politics is a rough game and you can't be weak kneed and be in politics. I am not weak kneed. I have a lot of white and black friends. I have a lot of black and white people that I don't care to fool with. The "thing" that I, John Below and all black politicians fought against, is the "establishment". I met with Billy West the other day with his podcast, and he didn't like the reference to establishment and evidently Ms. Dodd didn't either. An everyday white man is not a part of the establishment and is not a mover and shaker. The establishment is. Those are the people that make things happen politically not just in Natchitoches but across the state and nation. Ms. Dodd evidently does not understand what the civil rights movement is, she was over in California which is a whole lot better than living in Louisiana. She just got back here so she can't know or evidently didn't want to know what had gone on before. We always had to fight the "establishment". Martin Luther King fought the "establishment". The white citizens council, the city council, the legislatures stood in the way of progress. If everything was alright, we wouldn't be having this conversation.

Please restate this quote, "If everything was alright racially, we wouldn't be having this conversation because there would be no need for it."

Everything would be equal, but everything isn't equal. Why are we still fighting?

Another point I want to make to Ms. Dodd; we have had African Americans to run for mayor 5 times. I ran for mayor twice. Lost. The first time I lost by 64 votes. The 2nd time I ran I lost by about 1000 votes because incumbent Mayor Wayne McCullen had control of the department heads and the apparatus of the city government. So, I lost. I was not a sore loser. I went on about my business and said, well it wasn't for me. William Hymes, Marvin Blake, and Juanita Fowler ran and lost. None of those races including mine got more than 5 % of the white votes. In Mayor Ronnie Williams' last race, the only reason why, he won is because there were no more whites to vote. Lee Posey got 98% of the white votes and Ms. Dodd is talking about how inclusive Natchitoches is. She doesn't know what's going on or has gone on in Natchitoches. I wish to God that it was different, but I must deal with reality. It is what

it is. So, she criticized me for doing something political with recognizing what I am up against even the mayor doesn't realize and I hate to say it, he thinks that whites are going to vote for him, and I pray that they will. But reality tells me something different. "I pray that they will change but reality says different."

I want to get down to another statement she said, the establishment is dedicated to investing in the future of Natchitoches for decades and I say Prove It! History doesn't show that. I hope that it changes. I hope that she is right for the future. The past does not say that.

Another statement she made; the establishment is not a hierarchy seeking to suppress African American citizens, but rather a collective of individuals from all backgrounds working towards a common goal. I said, "Not so." She doesn't know the community, nor does she know the history. History says something totally different. Don't take my word for it. Go back and do your own research.

**Continued on Page 27...**

**Voters and Civic League**

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Vote**

**Thursday, Feb. 29**

**Location: Winnfield Funeral Home**

**318 North Street**

**6:00 pm**

**\*\*\* ELECTION OF OFFICERS \*\*\***

# Happy Black History Month, Everyone!

By: La'Quinta Scott-Favors

We have made history in more ways than we can imagine! Many of us are evolving daily to become better than the person we were the day before! We must always focus and stay on the path to reach and fulfill our destinies! Those we are connected to are like power lines; the wrong connections will cause electrical surges, causing a power outage, and you must take care of YOU! Today, I want to lift you up! I want to empower you to continue being resilient in



all areas of your life! Keep showing up for others when they don't show up for you; keep being who the Lord calls

you to be and not answering who the world wants you to be! This year, I want to challenge you to disconnect from anyone who's not growing with you, empowering you, holding you accountable, or pushing you to your potential! You are a wonderful person! If you are reading this, I want you to know that you are a wonderful human being.

That's very appreciated! If no one else has told you, I am telling you that I am very proud of you! Many times, we are overlooked, but not today! This article caught your attention because you needed to hear it! I want to leave you with Joshua 1:9(KJ): Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest!! The Lord is with you, and he will never leave you! Continue leaving your footprints in the lives of those you come across!

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# John Winston Responds to Diane Dodd's Letter to the Editor

Continued from Page 25...

Here is something she did say that I agree on, she said it is deeply troubling to see divisive rhetoric being used, she is saying what I said was divisive, but it is not... back to her letter, she said divisive rhetoric is being used to sew discord into our community, especially at a time when unity and solidarity are more important than ever. This is the part she wrote, moving forward it is imperative that we continue to work together, regardless of race or ethnicity, to build a more inclusive and equitable community for all. I agree! I hope that race will not continue to be a factor but right now it is. And I want to say this just for her sake, evidently, she doesn't know what governor Landry is proposing

to do in this special session of the legislature right now, evidently, she doesn't know that what Governor Greg Abbott is preaching as far as the immigrants and not teaching black history. They are against it; they are burning books. Same thing with DeSantis in Florida, he started it first. Evidently, she doesn't know any of that or it went right over her head, or it didn't apply to her. They are trying to turn back the clock. That is why they have Donald Trump talking about making America Great Again. We understand what he is saying about making America great again and I am not the only one that understands that. All black well let me take that back, MOST blacks understand that Trump wants to go back to the 1950's and below. They got it. He has so much support.

**Why do you think there is a problem with naming the MLK Recreation Center Gym after you?**

Because of what I stand for. She has a problem with it and the establishment well I don't know what the establishment said but Billy West said he had a problem with it because I used the word "establishment." If the "establishment" wasn't going in a different direction we wouldn't be having this conversation because the common white man does not have anything to do with what goes on with making laws, proposing laws or anything else. It is the "establishment" that does. And that's why her and has Billy West have a problem with it. And Billy West and I are good friends we just happen to differ in the use of that word and what it stands for.

**So, to be clear who is the "establishment"?**

The "establishment" is the people at the top running things. The people with the money that serve in high offices.

The establishment controls who win in all races. If you don't have money, you can't do nothing.

My effort was to try and mobilize the African American community to remind them of a few things so that we would all get on the same page.

Lastly, I would challenge any white or black person to go to the library or online to order a book that is written by WJ Cash in 1940 titled, "The Mind of the South". I would also encourage blacks and whites a like to research the Willie Lynch speech of 1712 and understand what we are up against. They would better understand what we are up against as a black society.

## COLD CASE

### Jay Tousant Jr.

Murdered on August 6, 2022  
on Woodyard Drive

**REWARD OFFERED**

Crime Stoppers of Natchitoches

(318) 238-2388



The City of Natchitoches and the Natchitoches Police Department are seeking the public's help with any information leading to the arrest of the killer or killers of Jay Tousant, Jr. Jay Tousant, Jr. was murdered on August 6, 2022, on Woodyard Drive. Jay, affectionately known as "Bugs" by family and friends, was a father to his young daughter and son of Jay Tousant, Sr., and Jennifer Tousant.

If you have any information about the murder of Jay Tousant, Jr. you may call Crime Stoppers of Natchitoches at 318-238-2388. Crime Stoppers of Natchitoches is a totally anonymous organization to which you may provide important information leading to an arrest in this case and therefore receive a monetary award up to \$2,500 all while keeping your identity hidden.

You may also yield valuable information concerning this crime by calling or texting Detective Rudy Glass at (318)-521-0088. This information may include names, contact information, social media accounts, locations, vehicles, and background that will prove motive.

# Have a Retreat for Lent

by Herbert de Launay

Have a retreat for Lent! Take time to renew your closeness to the Lord. Some of us are so busy in our daily lives, or maybe it is our minds that stay so busy. We need to take time to grow in our closeness to the Lord. We need to spend some quality time just relaxing with the Lord. We need time for prayer and spiritual reading, especially in the Bible.

A couple years ago, I went to the hospital for a biopsy. I ended up with a collapsed lung, and I spent a week in the hospital. I kept the TV off, and I spent my time in prayer and spiritual reading. That week was truly a gift from God.

Because God loves us, he wants to spend time with us. God wants to speak to our hearts. God enjoys our time in communion with him. There are special blessings that come to us through our time with God.

However, the temptation, or perhaps the devil's trick, is to be so busy that we fail to take time for the spiritual nourishment that will refresh us. We miss out on many of the graces and blessings that God is offering us.

Many churches have a retreat or mission during the Lenten season. These can help us reorient ourselves spiritually. The prayers and Bible readings during this time of Lent can also be used for a spiritual retreat. Take time to reflect on the readings that are provided by your church.

Many churches follow a pattern

of readings for Lent. These can be profitably used for our spiritual growth and renewal. There are various apps and websites. Some churches give out booklets with daily readings.

"Use it, or lose it," they say. This is true of physical fitness, but it is sometimes true spiritually as well. We can exercise and diet to get in shape, and then a couple years later we are out of shape again. Maybe at one time you and I were closer to the Lord. Well, as they say, "If God seems far away, who moved?"

We can return to the Lord. We can reread our favorite books and Bible passages. We can study some books of the Bible. We can read through one of the four gospels for Lent. In the fourth century, St. Jerome said, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." Billy Graham said, "If you're ignorant of God's Word, then you'll always be ignorant of God's will."

I did a Google search for "Bible readings for Lent." It gave numerous suggestions from various sources. Also, is there a favorite spiritual book that you read years ago? You might get a lot out of rereading it.

I enjoy the Hoopla app that I downloaded from the Natchitoches Parish Library website. This app has thousands of books and other items that can be accessed online for free. It has books and other items on many, many topics. I have been delighted to find that it



also has numerous spiritual books and audiobooks. It has many from centuries ago. It also has many from recent authors. All you need is a library card to access thousands of free items.

## ELECTION: MARCH 23, 2024

Here in Louisiana, we have an election in a few weeks, March 23, 2024. Early voting at the parish courthouse is March 9-16. This is a presidential preference primary as well as local voting for Mayor and City Council members here in Natchitoches. To get election dates and find out who is on your

ballot, you can download the Geaux Vote app. Put in your name and address as it appears on your voter registration, and it will show you what your ballot looks like.

Another resource is the website usa.gov. Do a search for "Elected officials." Click on "Find and contact elected officials." You can then put in your address, and it will tell you who your elected officials are on the federal, state, and local level. You can also find out their website or address, including email addresses. If you have an opinion on various issues, you can contact your elected officials.

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# Let's Talk About Love

By: Delrix Franklin

Most, if not all, of us, have either claimed to or have been told that we love someone. Do we honestly know what Love is? Or do we go with what we are taught or shown growing up? Some of us may have been taught or shown the correct way, and others may not. I had to reevaluate what I had believed Love is once I meditated on what Paul defined Love as in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Paul states, "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."

(1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT) I know many of us have read or either heard that scripture plenty of times but like myself how many of us take it into account when we either claim to love someone or someone claim to love us? I know we won't be perfect in doing so, but how much better would our relationships with our spouses or relationships with people in our lives

be if we practice what Paul said Love is? When we decide to love God's way, we can then love one another properly and know the difference between what Love is and what isn't. I've been married to my wife for almost ten years and discovered that I didn't really love her the way God intends us to love simply by evaluating my actions vs. what Paul said Love is, and I found out that there's more work to do to love her like Christ loves the church. Anyone can throw around the word Love, but can they show it? Paul shows us that Love has to be put into action and not just said. A perfect example of Love is how God didn't let what Adam and Eve had done determine how we'd spend eternity, but instead, he sent his only begotten son, Jesus. Because of Jesus, we have grace, mercy, forgiveness, and even the Holy Spirit! Now that's Love! I often wonder how much better the world we live in or even our relationships would be if we put what God says Love is into action. With that being said, I challenge everyone who has read this article to read 1 Corinthians Ch 13 and then put it into action. Remember, faith, hope, and Love stand forever, but Love is greater than them all, and as always, it starts with Jesus.



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## 4 Ways to Automate Your Finances and Supercharge Your Savings

It's easier than ever to automate your finances, including automatic reduction of debt and automating your savings. Here are four ways:

**Set Up Automated Savings.** Determine the amount of savings you would like to amass for emergencies and for retirement, and then allocate different amounts toward those accounts.

**Automate Regular Payments.** Automating all your payments is critical to a stress-free financial game plan. This includes your mortgage or rent payment, credit card payments in full, car payment and cell phone, utility, or any other regular bills you have.

**Pay Your Future Self.** You could contribute to an employer-sponsored 401(k) if your company offers one, or you could open an IRA and set your monthly payments on auto and forget about them.

**Automate Your Debt Payments.** An easy strategy you can use right now on credit card debt and higher interest loans is debt stacking. You can focus on paying off the highest interest debt you have while automating minimum payments on the rest of your debts. As you pay debts off, you add those now freed-up funds to the minimum payment of the next in line.

# Reader Advocates for City, Parish to Seek RAISE Grants

By: Tom Tubre

Letter to the Editor and to the Citizens of Natchitoches Parish.

The Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant allows Municipalities and Parishes to apply for up to \$25 Million dollars each year for FY 2021 through FY 2026.

- FY 2021 was not applied for. In FY 2022 the City of Natchitoches was awarded \$17,253,272 for its Natchitoches Safe Streets Revitalization Project.

FY2023 was not applied for.

The deadline for applications for FY2024 is rapidly approaching Feb. 28.

FY2025 and FY 2026 are yet to come.

The areas on the West side of Cane River within the city limits of the City of Natchitoches are qualified for 100% funding. The areas on the East side of Cane River within the city limits of Natchitoches qualify for an 80-20 split.

The Parish of Natchitoches meets all requirements according to the RAISE maps to qualify for 100% funding.

### Possible Projects:

- A combination project between Natchitoches Parish and the City of Natchitoches Parish for upgrading Blanchard Road and Dirt Blanchard.

- Upgrading existing Amulet Street with curb and gutter streets, street lighting and sidewalks and extending Amulet Street to Hwy 1 would be a 100% grant project for the City of Natchitoches.

- The City of Natchitoches has \$300,000 for demolishing unused structures which would start the process of cleaning up Amulet Street.

The route basically follows the old mule train route into Natchitoches and should be on the National Historic list of trade routes. Additionally, coming from North on Hwy 6, it would eliminate stopping at three traffic lights to arrive in downtown Natchitoches.

- A four lane of Hwy. 1 from Lott Oil to Keyser Avenue. The widening of the bridge may qualify for funding under the BridgeInvestment Program, which requires an 80-20 split.

These grants are your tax dollars. Why not get some benefit?

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# New Life

By: Minister/Author,  
Bonita G. Moses Arnold

Growing up in church, I heard the choir singing an old gospel song, "New Life." I recalled the words like this, "I moved from my old house, I moved from my old friends, I moved from my old way of strife, thank God I moved out, to a brand-new life." (Repeat).

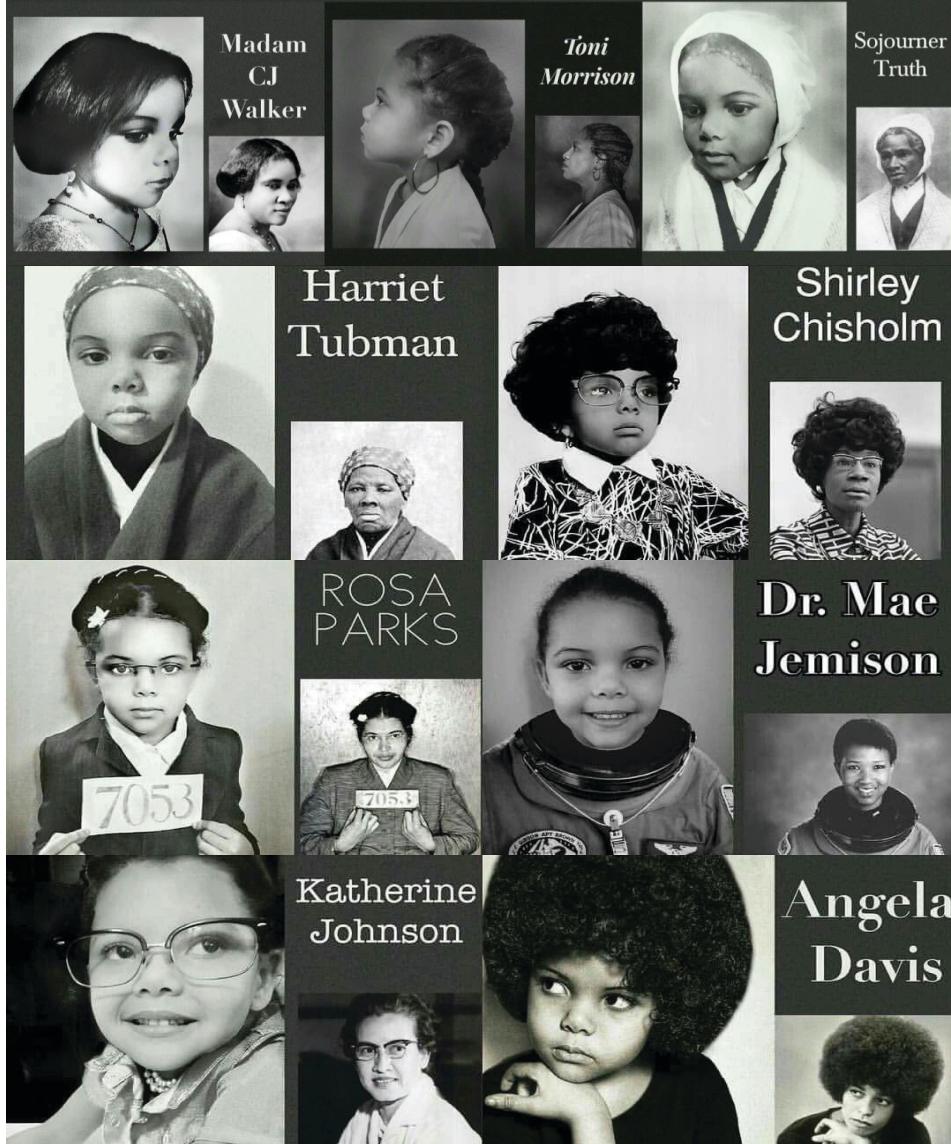
He changed my old ways with words. He changed my old-level mind. He changed my heart and gave me a new



start. Thank God I moved out to a brand-new life.

It's quite easy to look at things differently in a new year, but why can't we do that each day? A new life doesn't have to always start in a new year. What if we don't make it to a new year? A new life can begin right here and right now. Jesus is saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hear my voice and opens the door, will come in and eat with that person, & they with me," Revelation 3:2 NIV

## Celebrating Women in Black History



## Historical Photos from Walmart's Annual Black History Program

HeadStart Kids Honor Community Leaders



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