



Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



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About Us



SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
LAW CENTER

Vision

The Louis A. Berry Institute for Civil Rights and Justice seeks to ensure the law center's place as a center of excellence in social and restorative justice and civil and human rights research, advocacy, education and instruction. It further seeks to pursue policy initiatives and judicial outcomes that promote equal rights and justice.

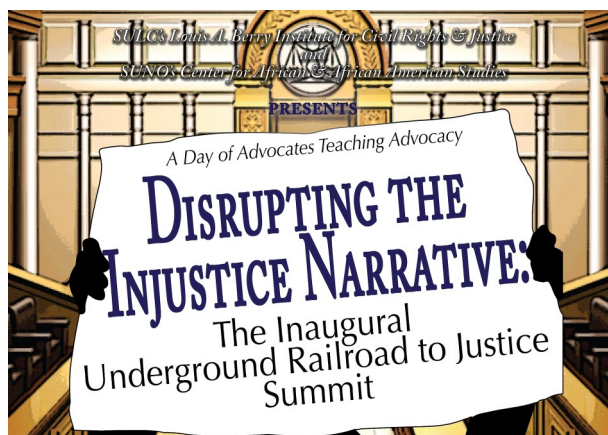
Mission

The Louis A. Berry Institute for Civil Rights and Justice is committed to the advancement of civil and human rights and social and restorative justice, especially in Louisiana and the South.

News

Change of Venue for February 7, 2020 Advocacy Training

Due to an overwhelming response, the "Disrupting the Injustice Narrative: The Inaugural Underground Railroad to Justice Summit" has been moved to City of Baker Municipal Center (3325 Groom Road, Baker, Louisiana 70714). Registration for this year's event is closed.





Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



News (Con't)

Reflections on African American History Month and the Life and Legacy of Betty Jean Owens

By: Angela A. Allen-Bell

The celebration of African American History Month, also known as Black History Month, commenced in 1976. During this annual February commemoration, the history and achievements of African Americans are recognized. Despite there being an incalculable number of individuals who have contributed to the advancement of African Americans, a predicable few garner a disproportionate amount of attention during these annual celebrations and tributes. In heroizing a select few, we irresponsibly discount the daily risks, consistent traumas and regular sacrifices that were collectively endured by individuals and communities in the name of social progress. The story of Betty Jean Owens punctuates this reality.

In 1959, while a student at Florida A & M University in Tallahassee, Florida, Betty Jean Owens and three friends had the misfortune of encountering four white males in pursuit of an African American female who they could have an "all night party" with. Ms. Owens became their prey. Her four attackers, armed with shotguns and switchblades, abducted her and raped her a total of seven times. Later, the police discovered her bound and gagged in the rear of their vehicle. When her feet touched the ground, she collapsed. Her attackers laughed during their ride to jail. Tragically, at that time, this was not a newsworthy event. African American men and women lacked body autonomy from the days of slavery. What is consequential is Ms. Owens' response and the wellspring of lessons that are embedded in her story.

At the time of her attack, Ms. Owens was a student. She could have returned to her educational pursuits. That would have been far less challenging. Had she done so, another case of an African American woman violated by a white male would have been recorded. After the ink dried, the world would have had one more reason to accept this cultural norm. Generations more of African American women would experience the continuing trauma of sexual victimization and, for white males, the sexual victimization of African American women would remain a socially acceptable option. Ms. Owens abandoned what was easy in order to do what was needed. She opted to do the hard work of dismantling a system when this was never what she had envisioned for her life. For this gravely sacrificial act, she is deserving of honor.

Ms. Owens was a pioneer, but the scrolls of history have been less than forthright about the magnitude of her contribution. A study of Ms. Owens' historical contribution illuminates the role gender bias and stereotypes play in historical narratives about African American women. History is often more willing to cast them as angry and sexual than it is to depict them as intellectuals, change agents, visionaries or strategists. Ms. Owens contributed mightily to our understanding of freedom. We had evolved to view it as the right to move about and to make decisions, much like we witnessed the slaves do when they were emancipated. But, at this juncture, few viewed freedom for African Americans more expansively—as control over one's body. Ms. Owens' bold testimony—before an all-white, male jury, in a segregated courtroom, in the presence of a defense lawyer who referred to her as a "n _ _ _ _" during official proceedings and who repeatedly insinuated that her failure to resist suggested consent—was a major catalyst for the women's rights movement. Ms. Owens' story is a reminder of the ever present will to minimize or deprive women, in general, and African American women, in particular, of attribution for the positive contributions they make to American society. Ms. Owens was a proponent of fairness and equality for women long before anyone coined the phrase #MeToo. Too few have credited her for her enormous historical contribution. Worse, many more refuse to question why.



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News (Con't)

Reflections on the Life and Legacy of Betty Jean Owens (Con't)

By: Angela A. Allen-Bell

Ms. Owens' story holds unspoken lessons about our overreliance on the rule of law alone. The debt owed for the attack upon Ms. Owens rested upon the convictions of an all-white jury who presided during this Jim Crow era trial. Ms. Owens didn't make the mistake of blindly trusting in the rule of law as a means of achieving justice. Instead, she and her fellow students understood that the rule of law works as well as the system that it exists in. In 1957, many Florida A & M University students were active in the Tallahassee bus boycott. As a result of their activism, they understood the need to demand justice, as opposed to waiting for it.

Within twelve hours of the crime, these students held a unity march. In the ensuing days, there were several campus protests. They even threatened to boycott classes. This resulted in a grand jury indictment and a decision to incarcerate the accused pending trial. These same students packed the courtroom daily. Undoubtedly, the public pressure contributed to the unprecedented issuance of life sentences against white men for the violation of an African American woman in a locale that led the country in the rate of lynchings. Ms. Owens is to be celebrated for enhancing our understanding of the rule of law and showcasing that it is but a tool of oppression when those in custody of it operate with bias and a supremacist mindset. She and her fellow students are to be credited for reminding us that progress has always followed a well-orchestrated and persistent public demand for it.

Ms. Owens has been blessed to see some of the fruits of her labor take form. She celebrates her eightieth birthday, on February 29, 2020, during African History Month. Betty Jean Owens has earned a place on the scrolls of history. She should be remembered and celebrated as we honor those who have contributed to our social progress. And as we do so, we should resist attempts to limit the honorees to a select few ordained leaders. This diminishes the enormity of our struggle. It is my hope that her rich story will become both an inspiration and a justification for you to claim your place in the continuing struggle for civil and human rights.





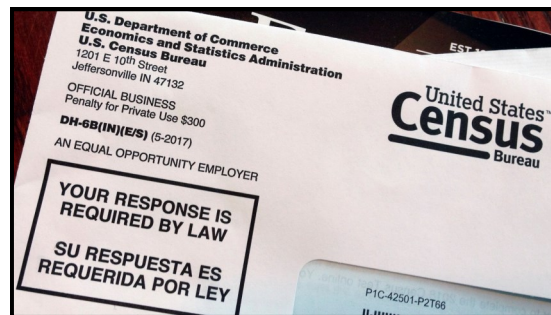
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News (Con't)

Census 2020 Time: Louis A. Berry Institute for Civil Rights and Justice Joins the 2020 Census Complete Count Committee

Written by: Tiffany Rainey



Rep. Edward "Ted" James, Louisiana House of Representatives

According to Representative Ted James, director of Baton Rouge Operations for the Urban League of Louisiana, "The Urban League of Louisiana's Complete Count Committee (CCC) utilizes local knowledge, influence and resources to educate communities and promote the census through targeted outreach efforts." Towards this end, the Louis A. Berry Institute for Civil Rights and Justice (the Institute) has become an active member of the CCC. Representative James expressed that the Urban League of Louisiana's goal is "to shape and implement a fair and accurate 2020 Census and to increase the census response rate, especially for the African American community and other communities of color with special attention to families with young children and opportunity youth."

The census, described by some as a self-portrait of the nation, is required by the United States Constitution every ten years. Beginning in March 2020, every household will receive a mailing from the United States Census Bureau with instructions to visit their website. This process should be completed by April 1, 2020. You may also respond by mail or by phone. Under the law, census data can only be used for statistical purposes. The information shared is protected by confidentiality laws so there is no threat of it being used adversely in later proceedings. There are more than a few good reasons why participation is gravely important.

The census data determines congressional districts and the number of representatives, which directly impacts political power and access to fair representation. The Census impacts nearly \$700 billion in federal funding each year that is vital to economically challenged communities, including funding for Head Start, Medicaid, SNAP, free and reduced lunch programs, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, and Pell grants. Census data is also used to: forecast future transportation needs; plan for location of hospitals, nursing homes, clinics and health services; provide evidence in litigation involving voting rights and land use; establish fair market rents; enforce fair lending practices; assess the potential for the spreading of communicable diseases; understand consumer needs; and, monitor discrimination and the enforcement of a broad range of civil rights laws.

Angela A. Allen-Bell, director of the Institute reminds us that "Emancipation was about more than physical freedom. It was also about social and political freedom. Participating in the census count is both an exercise of these freedoms and an act in defense of them." Remember, the census is 10 questions—10 minutes—impacting our communities for the next 10 years! We implore every household to make participation in the 2020 census count a priority.



Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



DID YOU KNOW?



Implicit Bias

Written By: Chelsea Hale

That bias is a very present reality in the lives of most people. Consider what makes an individual decide to shop at Walmart versus Target? Both stores have a grocery, pharmacy, and clothing department so why choose one over the other? Respected scholars suggest implicit bias as a possible explanation. Implicit bias encompasses a positive or negative preference for a social category that operates outside of one's awareness. Implicit bias has three components: stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. Stereotypes are defined as generalizations about the perceived "typical" traits of a social category. Prejudice is how one feels about a class of a given social category. Discrimination is how one acts toward a group of a given social category.

Imagine what happens when discretionary decision-making intersects with implicit bias. This reality plagues educators, administrators, law enforcement officials, medical professionals, juries, judges and/or prosecutors on a daily basis. The results are harmful to the individual on the receiving end and catastrophic to society. Justice depends on decisions that result from careful and conscious analysis and not bias.

In an effort to study the effects of implicit bias, the Implicit Association was founded by three scientist from Harvard University, the University of Washington, and the University of Virginia. These scholars created the Implicit Association Test (IAT). As part of its commitment to civil and human rights and restorative justice, the Institute encourages law students and all others to discover if a gender, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexuality or ethnicity bias exists. Give yourself the gift of awareness. Take the Implicit Bias Test:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

After you do your own assessment, consider ways of using this knowledge to improve the quality of justice in America. We salute Mikah Thompson and David Achtenberg, professors at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, for doing just this. They served on the Missouri Supreme Court's Commission on Racial and Ethnic Fairness and, in this capacity, recently provided research that was used to move model jury instructions through the necessary legislative committees. The jury instructions seek to ensure that jury decisions are based on an unbiased review of the evidence and respect for the views of jurors whose backgrounds and perspectives may be different. These jury instructions are mandatory and will be read prior to jury selection and again at the close of evidence.



Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



Reading Assignment



A Sinister Slavery Railroad Once Led to Louisiana

In 1825, five young, free black boys in Philadelphia were lured onto a small ship with the promises of food and pay. Instead, they were abducted and taken south to be sold. This story takes readers to Louisiana, which was, in the 19th century, highly dependent on slave labor.

For more information: https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/opinion/our_views/article_6c646438-ea26-11e9-a0b5-bf98f2b88dd1.html

Judge Rules on Claim That Chatham County Violated State Confederate Statute Law

The county has maintained that the 1907 license that allowed the United Daughters of the Confederacy to erect the monument can be revoked. The license does not say whether the monument is a gift but leaves it "in the care and keeping of the Daughters of the Confederacy." If the monument were determined to be a gift, that would make it a public monument protected under a 2015 state law that limits the circumstances under which a public monument can be removed.

For more information: <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/counties/chatham-county/article237953074.html>

BRPD Officer Injured in Alton Sterling Protest Can Pursue Negligence Claim Against Organizer

A Black Lives Matter organizer cannot be held liable for the conduct of an unidentified person who seriously injured a Baton Rouge officer during a protest after the 2016 killing of Alton Sterling, but the officer's negligence claim against the organizer can go forward, a divided federal appeals court said in its third ruling in the case this year. Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Don Willett said he originally agreed with denying DeRay Mckesson's First Amendment defense but has since had a "judicial change of heart."

For more information: https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/courts/article_8115e746-20e3-11ea-bac9-e3b6fc6aca74.html

Legacy of a Judge in Blackface Looms over Terrebonne Civil Rights Case

It has been only fifteen years since a Louisiana district judge, Timothy Ellender, got suspended for attending a Halloween party in blackface and shackles with his wife playing jailer and his brother-in-law dressed as Buckwheat. In removing Ellender from the bench for six months, the state Supreme Court accepted that he didn't mean to insult black people. Just imagine how offensive he would have to be for the court to think he meant it. There is no way of telling whether voters were dumb enough to doubt that Ellender's jape was deliberately racist, but they evidently weren't offended. Ellender was reelected the next year. This was eminently predictable; no black candidate has ever won a contested election for a judicial or at-large office in Terrebonne Parish.

For more information: https://www.nola.com/opinions/james_gill/article_e57e39f8-1b67-11ea-b8f5-4f735d5af242.html



Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



Reading Assignment (Con't)



Sick and Shrouded in Secrecy: Alabama's Contract to Gas Humans to Death

For \$25,000, Alabama's Attorney General Steve Marshall has contracted with Tennessee company "FDR Safety," to assist Alabama in developing a barbaric new protocol – to execute its death row prisoners, whom Alabama treats like human guinea pigs– with nitrogen hypoxia. Paradoxically, FDR Safety specializes in workplace safety consulting, not manufacturing gas masks or gas chambers to exterminate flesh-and-blood human beings – which condemned men and women are – deserving of humane treatment in any conscious, compassionate, and just legal system, no matter how terrible their crimes. The new method of execution, nitrogen hypoxia, deprives the condemned of oxygen, replacing it with an allegedly precisely regulated purified form of nitrogen. Given the complexity of administering a newly developed method of execution, it seems probable that executions will be botched as previous execution methods have been, causing agony to the dying prisoner. And when that occurs, when our constitutional ideals are trampled upon, it is a certainty correctional officials in Alabama will continue ducking and dodging death penalty accountability at every turn.

For more information: <https://www.alreporter.com/2019/11/05/opinion-sick-and-shrouded-in-secrecy-alabamas-contract-to-gas-humans-to-death/>



Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



Giving

The Louis A. Berry Institute for Civil Rights and Justice seeks monetary donations to support the continuation of its work. If you wish to contribute, use this link and select the Louis A. Berry Institute from the list of options: <https://secure.acceptiva.com/?cst=416825>

Payments can also be mailed to:

Office of Development
PO Box 9294
Baton Rouge, LA 70813

We are also soliciting donations of civil rights era documents, memorabilia and/or artifacts. If you wish to donate, please email our director at: ABell@sulc.edu.

Announcements

February 3, 2020

Charles Frye Memorial Lecture

The Center for African and African American Studies at Southern University at New Orleans will commence its African American History Month Celebration with Professor Angela A. Allen-Bell presenting: "When Law & Injustice Become Bedfellows: Justice Becomes the Business of the People." If you want to better understand the history of Louisiana's criminal justice system in an effort to work toward needed criminal justice reforms, attend this initial part of our two-part advocacy week programming.

Southern University at New Orleans

Millie M. Charles School of Social Work Auditorium

6801 Press Drive

New Orleans, LA

11:00 am - 2:00 pm

Free and open to the public.

February 7, 2020

Disrupting the Injustice Narrative: The Inaugural Underground Railroad to Justice Summit

At this advocacy summit, grassroots activists and experts will teach people to navigate obstacles that they face as victims of Louisiana's criminal justice system or advocates for justice-impacted individuals.

City of Baker Municipal Center

3325 Groom Road

Baker, LA 70714

9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

Agenda: www.sulc.edu/page/4838

Registration for this year's event is closed. Free and open to those who registered before the registration deadline.

Jointly hosted by: Louis A. Berry Institute for Civil Rights and Justice and

Center for African and African American Studies



Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



Announcements (Con't)

February 15, 2020

Afro-Carnival Ball

SUNO-Conference Center

6400 Press Dr.

New Orleans, LA 70126

9:00 p.m.-1:00 a.m.

Hosted by: Center for African and African American Studies and
African American Music Heritage

February 17, 2020

Commemorating African American Carnival History and Celebrating 50 Years of the Black Indians of New Orleans

SUNO-Conference Center

6400 Press Dr.

New Orleans, LA 70126

11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Hosted by: Center for African and African American Studies

February 27, 2020

VOTE BR Monthly Meeting (meeting held every 4th Wednesday)

Voice of the Experienced (VOTE) is a grassroots organization founded and run by formerly incarcerated people, their families and allies. Vote is dedicated to restoring the full human and civil rights of those most impacted by the criminal justice system.

VOTE

251 Florida St. Ste. 201

Baton Rouge, LA 70802

6:00 p.m.

Contact: jenniferharding@vote-nola.org

February 28, 2020

The American Audit Performance by Donney Rose

A live performance centered around the assessment of laws, culture, economics and family structure as it relates to African Americans four hundred years after the arrival of the first slaves.

Manship Theatre (Hartley/Vey Studio)

235 North Blvd.

Baton Rouge, LA 70801

10:00 a.m. & 12:00 noon & 7:30 p.m.

Tickets required.

Contact Ronni: 225-389-7266 or schoolshows@manshiptheatre.org



Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



Announcements (Con't)

March 2, 2020

The American Audit Performance by Donney Rose

A live performance centered around the assessment of laws, culture, economics and family structure as it relates to African Americans four hundred years after the arrest of the first slaves.

Manship Theatre (Hartley/Vey Studio Theatre)

235 North Blvd.

Baton Rouge, LA 70801

10:00 a.m.

Tickets Required.

Contact Ronni: 225-389-7266 schoolshows@manshiptheatre.org

March 6, 2020

Pre-Roots Camp

"Race and Nationalism" movie followed by a panel discussion with:

[Shailly Agnihotri](#), The Restorative Center

[Frank Curiel](#), LiUNA and former body guard to Caesar Chavez

[Mike McClanahan](#), Louisiana NAACP

[Maxine Crump](#), Dialogue on Race Louisiana

The Unitarian Church

8470 Goodwood Blvd

Baton Rouge, LA 70806

5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

[Click here to register](#)

\$50 Registration fee covers March 6-7, 2019 events.

*Admission free to SULC students who register and present an ID.

Jointly hosted by: Solidarity Project Advocacy Network and

Louis A. Berry Institute for Civil Rights and Justice

March 7, 2020

Roots Camp

RootsCampLA is the convening of activists in the state. It has been the progressive event of the year for the past nine years whether your issue is maintaining democratic control of schools, worker's rights, #BlackLivesMatter, voting rights, women's rights, transit, racial equality, LGBTQIA, disability rights, healthcare, or housing. This isn't your usual gathering; it's an "unconference." Instead of Power-Points and "expert" panels, participants design sessions and decide the program. This doesn't mean "experts" aren't in the room. They are - many of them are you. RootsCampLA is about fostering homegrown talent.

Southern University Law Center

2 Roosevelt Steptoe Drive

Baton Rouge, LA 70813

[Click here to register](#)

\$50 Registration fee covers March 6-7, 2019 events.

*Admission free to SULC students who register and present an ID.

Hosted by: Solidarity Project Advocacy Network



Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



Announcements (Con't)

March 16, 2020

Sharon Weston-Broome, Mayor-President East Baton Rouge Parish

"All Women, Especially African Americans, must be Motivated to Pursue Political, Civic, and Social Action!"

SUNO-Conference Center

6400 Press Dr.

New Orleans, LA 70126

11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Hosted by: Center for African and African American Studies

March 19, 2020

The History of Danielle Metz "From Pep Rallies to Prison"

Danielle Metz was granted clemency by President Barak Obama in 2016 after being sentenced to life in prison for a non-violent drug offence. Danielle Metz will tell the story of how she went from becoming a high school drop out, sentenced to life in prison, received her GED, granted clemency and is now on the Dean's List in college.

St. Katharine Drexel School Auditorium

5116 Magazine Street

New Orleans, LA 70115

Time: TBA

Hosted by: Center for African and African American Studies

April 1, 2020

Census Deadline

Be counted before the deadline.

Pledge to be counted by texting "2020" to 52886

Issues while voting or registering to vote, share your story at: <https://wevotewecount.org/>

To learn more about the 2020 Census and voting rights, visit <https://nul.org/>





Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



Food for Thought

“Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.”

Warren Buffett

Subscriptions

Our newsletters are mailed to subscribers only. Please share our subscription link with others:

<http://www.sulc.edu/form/subscribe-to-the-louis-a-berry-civil-rights-and-justice-institute-enewsletter>



Louis A. Berry Institute For Civil Rights and Justice



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