



Dean Louis A. Berry

Civil Rights and Justice Institute



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About Us



Vision

The Louis A. Berry Civil Rights and Justice Institute 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

The Parchman Ordeal: 1965 Natchez, Mississippi Civil Rights Injustice

Written By: Tiffany Rainey



Speakers Glen LaFrancis, Darrell White, Robert Morgan

On November 14, 2019, a very dark piece of history that has been suppressed for decades was revealed to an enormous crowd of administrators, faculty, staff, students, community members and other guests. Coauthors Glen LaFrancis, Robert Morgan and Darrell White took the audience on an emotional roller coaster—shock and disbelief then anger and pride—as they told the story of the Parchman Ordeal.

The Parchman Ordeal, as they imparted, involved a 1965 effort, by young people in Natchez, Mississippi, to engage in a peaceful civil rights demonstration. On the day the planned march was to occur, they exited the church where they assembled and were greeted by law enforcement. Many of them were put on busses and transported to Mississippi State Penitentiary (Parchman). Like the Louisiana State Penitentiary (Angola), Parchman sits on the site of a former slave plantation. Also, like Angola, it was filthy and violent in the 1960s. The naïve would-be protestors were greeted with barbed wire fences, menacing police dogs and officers armed with high powered guns.



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News (Con't)

The Parchman Ordeal: 1965 Natchez, Mississippi Civil Rights Injustice (Con't)



The majority of those arrested were eighteen-years-old and younger. The youngest arrested was a seven-year-old child. The intended protestors were housed on death row where they were submitted to days of demeaning, torturous and inhuman conditions. Upon arrival, the innocent would-be protestors were ordered to remove their clothing. They were forced to drink a laxative, housed in overcrowded cells and deprived of an adequate supply of toilet paper. The cells were freezing and they were not issued blankets.

They were charged with parading without a permit. It didn't matter that they never got to "parade" that day. Those arrested were not brought before a judge before or after being taken to Parchman. All legal formalities were ignored. Perhaps more disgraceful is the fact that, in 1972, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals declared this law unconstitutional.



As Mr. White discussed this piece of hidden history, he was careful not to allow the law students to leave believing they were present only to learn a history lesson. He employed a novel, but effective way of intersecting law with history. He remarked that, "The justice system is like chlorine bleach; it works perfectly for whites, but it destroys colors." He then informed the audience of their duty to improve the justice system—to create Clorox II, the non-chlorine bleach. He suggested their service would be somewhat of a continuation of the efforts that the Parchman Ordeal victims sacrificially started so many years ago.



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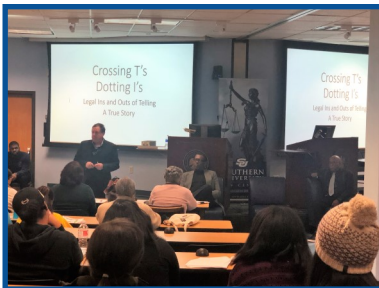


News (Con't)

The Parchman Ordeal: 1965 Natchez, Mississippi Civil Rights Injustice (Con't)



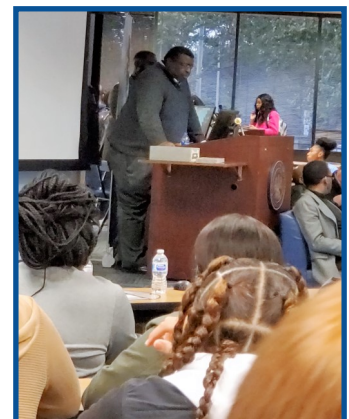
Mr. Morgan refused for this to be an abstract conversation. He showed the faces and arrest records of many of the Parchman Ordeal survivors. The images captured young, harmless, innocent people whose desire for dignity and justice was used as a basis to criminalize them. Mr. Morgan added needed context by explaining exactly why such a demonstration was even warranted. For example, he explained that African Americans were granted the right to vote, but, once they attempted to exercise their right, they were faced with pretextual conditions, such as being asked to guess how many peas are in a jar. If they couldn't comply with the request, they were not allowed to vote. They simply wanted to experience the equal treatment of the law that had been written into the United States Constitution.



Mr. LaFrancis reminded the audience of how important law had been to every aspect of the Parchman Ordeal story, from the actual encounter through publication of the book and creation of the documentary. He said one of their foremost concerns was avoiding legal challenges as they told the story and there was only one way to successfully accomplish this: lawyers! He suggested that all future lawyers, publishers and producers get acquainted with terms like defamation, copyright, permission, fair use, public domain and patent. The Institute proudly partnered with the SULC Lecture Series Committee to host this event.



3L Michael Thomas Delivering the Opening Remarks



Chancellor John Pierre Delivering the Closing Remarks



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News (Con't)

The Parchman Ordeal: 1965 Natchez, Mississippi Civil Rights Injustice (Con't)



Some Members of the SULC Lecture Series Committee with Presenters



Institute Staff with Presenters





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News (Con't)

Audience Reaction to the Parchman Ordeal Presentation

"This was a moment I will forever cherish and a lesson I will use going forward. It is human nature to be moved by past events. However, if one fails to internalize and confront the pain of those who suffered and witnessed these past tragedies, one runs the risk of missing an opportunity to make a difference."

Michael Thomas, 3L



"The evening was beyond surreal. The part that impacted me the most was when Mr. White revealed that they 'received major backlash' from publicizing the story and he then expressed that many people 'still want to shut us up.' When we suppress our history and turn a blind eye to unjust events, those same events are likely to reoccur. I will forever admire and celebrate every victim of the Parchman ordeal for their sacrificial decision to exercise their rights so change could manifest. There was also something extremely empowering about seeing these authors make their own set of sacrifices in the name of social progress."

Stephanie L. Nelson, 3L

"The presentation exposed me to a piece of history I had never been exposed to. This event caused me to realize that African Americans have always had to fight for their rights. Many believe, because slavery was abolished, segregation ended and the vote is more readily available, that racial discrimination is a thing of the past. This presentation showed better."

A.B., High School Student

"The presentation served as a jolting reminder of the sacrifices, hardships, and unprecedented oppression African Americans faced in pursuit of the very liberties and protections they were vested with through federal, statutory and constitutional guarantees."

Chelsea Hale, 3L

"The Parchman Ordeal presentation highlighted much more than a massive injustice that took place in Natchez, MS. The presenters left a poignant reminder of the blood-cost of our 'liberty' to vote. This could not have been timelier given the upcoming presidential election to be decided by masses of people who have lost belief in the value of voting."

Justin Bullard, 3L



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News (Con't)

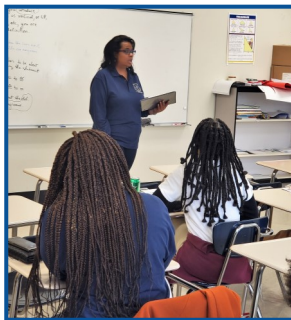
Teaching Transitional and Restorative Justice to Istrouma High School's Pre-Law Club

By: LaCrisha McCallister

During our December 2019 visit, we taught alternatives to our system of retributive justice, which seeks to punish wrongdoers. The Istrouma High School Pre-Law Club learned that restorative justice is a way of dealing with victims and offenders by focusing on the settlement of conflicts and resolving the underlying problems which cause it and that, central to restorative justice is the recognition of the community, rather than criminal justice agencies, as the prime site of crime control. They also learned that transitional justice refers to the set of judicial and non-judicial measures that are implemented by countries in order to redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses.

To test their knowledge, the students were asked to decide which form of justice might work best in the instance of bullying. The students unanimously voted that restorative justice should be used. Their decision was influenced by the potential for growth on the part of the bully, healing on the part of the victims and the opportunity for all parties to coexist throughout the process. The mood changed suddenly when the voice of James Brown singing, "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" appeared. No one could play school anymore. The students and the Institute staff fully indulged in this impromptu party, not bothering to care why it had gotten started.

Amongst the dancing and laughter, Mrs. Rainey took centerstage and explained why we had just taken that musical journey back to 1965. She said it was to understand that the 1960s were a complicated time. It was a time where African Americans experienced both temporary pleasures and frequent injustices. Then and there, we knew our temporary pleasure had just come to a screeching halt. As Mrs. Rainey told the story of the Parchman Ordeal, the students fought tears. Afterwards, they were tasked with forming restorative and transitional justice solutions. Some of their suggestions were the very things that have resulted, such as a monument, an acknowledgement and an apology. This visit left the students with yet another example of why not voting should never be an option. It also left them new justice options to consider in 2020 and beyond.



Professor Bell



Some Members of
IHS Pre-Law Club



Mrs. Rainey



Justin Bullard, 3L,
LaCrisha McAllister, 2L



Some Members of the
Institute Staff



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News (Con't)

Calling Curators, Historians, Sociologists, Storytellers and Economists for Participation in The American Audit

Donney Rose, Kennedy Center Teaching Artist, has begun work on one of his latest projects: The American Audit. The American Audit is a multimedia spoken word and mapping project assessing the nation's standing with its African American citizens four hundred years after the first slaves settled in Jamestown. The project uses America as a metaphorical corporation being audited by living African Americans. A significant portion of The American Audit involves conducting interviews with historians, storytellers, sociologists, economists and museum curators. If you are an expert in one of these areas and you would like to be interviewed for this project, please contact Mr. Rose at: donney.rose@gmail.com. Click here to learn more about The American Audit:

[Kennedy Center Medium Review](#)

[The American Audit Preview- The Drum Newspaper](#)

[Performance Review- University of North Iowa](#)



Donney Rose, 2018-2019 Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Fellow



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DID YOU KNOW?



That Art Can Be Used to Effect & Inspire Social Change Insurgent Maternity Showcases How...

Written by: Derrick West



While there are many effective tools to achieve civil and human rights—litigation, demonstrations and protests, policy and legislative advocacy – often it is an image that ignites action. Lawyers sometimes overlook the value of partnerships with artists. Interdisciplinary artist and Harvard graduate Anna Wexler makes a compelling case for these partnerships in the struggle for justice and equality.

On February 14, 1970, Inez Williams, Doris Maxwell and Georgia Jackson would receive news that would change their lives forever. Their three sons, the Soledad Brothers, would be accused of murdering John Mills, a corrections officer at the California State Prison. The men were promptly indicted for murder. There was local, national and international interest in the case, largely due to co-defendant George Jackson's notoriety as an author whose voice allowed Americans unprecedented access into the fate of the incarcerated, as well as the plight of political prisoners and the realities of social injustice.

At the very core of this Soledad Brothers movement were these mothers who organized protests, oversaw fundraising, attended hearings, assisted with defense efforts, visited and did everything else imaginable to prevent their sons from being falsely convicted. Their efforts yielded electrifying results. None of the Soledad Brothers were convicted of that murder. The Soledad Mothers did what African American woman have universally done without fame, recognition and often without appreciation. They were protectors of their birthright, a shock absorber for their community and families, people of immeasurable endurance and unrelenting warriors in the face of injustice. In *"Insurgent Maternity: The Soledad Mothers in the Radical Black Prison Movement,"* Ms. Wexler well fuses together two import civil rights themes: the rich legacy of African American woman and the necessity of decreasing our reliance on penal institutions.

Click here to learn more about this project: <https://historydesignstudio.com/features/insurgent-maternity-the-soledad-mothers-in-the-radical-black-prison-movement>

Click here to learn more about Anna Wexler: <http://www.mobius.org/anna-wexler>



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Reading Assignment



Historical Society Shares Story of Expelled Black Doctors

It's often hard to recognize history's cycles. That's why historians document the past. The Iberia African American Historical Society held a two-day remembrance honoring the four doctors and four NAACP leaders who were expelled from New Iberia seventy-five years ago. Southern University Law Center Chancellor John Pierre compared the tension felt in those times to the current rise in racist ideologies. "If you do not see there is a movement to reimpose what happened in 1944 afoot today, you are fooling yourself," Pierre said. "History moves forward, but it can also go backward."

For more information: https://www.iberianet.com/news/historical-society-shares-story-of-expelled-black-doctors/article_14d7f050-091a-11ea-b589-f3b101dc55a2.html

Calcasieu Judges Order End to Defendants' Purchase of Gift Cards for DA Office in Exchange for Reduction of Sentences

There's been a major rule change to Calcasieu Parish District Attorney John DeRosier's Monopoly game. Defendants in the 14th Judicial District Court may no longer pass go by purchasing get out of jail gift cards.

For more information: <https://louisianavoice.com/2019/11/21/23958/>

Attorney Who Played Instrumental Role in Baton Rouge Boycott Celebrates 100th Birthday

Attorney Johnnie A. Jones, Sr. played an instrumental role in the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott after graduating from Southern's law school. On November 27, 2019, Mr. Jones was surrounded by family, friends, and loved ones who celebrated his 100th birthday. The big celebration was held at the White Oak Estate and Gardens.

For more information: <https://www.wafb.com/2019/11/28/attorney-who-played-instrumental-role-baton-rouge-boy-boycott-celebrates-th-birthday/>



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Reading Assignment (Con't)



They Do Not Need Louisiana's Permission: Pipeline Companies Seize Land Rights With Eminent Domain

The authors of the Constitution knew the power of eminent domain was ripe for abuse. In the Fifth Amendment, which addresses criminal and civil legal procedure, they inserted "nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." The Amendment made clear that owners should be paid when their land is taken, but the term "public use" has fueled decades of legal debate. Once considered a clear reference to amenities the public owns or has a right to access, the definition was loosened by a 2005 U.S. Supreme Court's decision that allowed New London, Connecticut to bulldoze a low-income neighborhood and replace it with an industrial park. The court said that eminent domain was justified because the park would spur economic growth.

For more information: <https://southerlymag.org/2019/08/20/they-do-not-need-louisianas-permission-using-eminent-domain-pipeline-companies-seize-land-rights/>

Reform and Filmmaking Go Hand in Hand: An Interview with UNO Grad Student Ben Donnellon

Local film director Ben Donnellon discusses his use of art to create social change. Mr. Donnellon's documentary "Non-unanimous," about the state's now overturned law regarding unanimous jury verdicts, recently screened at the New Orleans Film Festival. For many months, Mr. Donnellon followed members of the advocacy team who successfully fought to end the use of non-unanimous juries in Louisiana criminal trials. This started with a call to Colin Reingold, a New Orleans public defender who he started filming. That led to the inclusion of Will Sowden, current director of Vera Institute of Justice and Professor Angela A. Allen-Bell, Director of Louis A. Berry Institute for Civil Rights and Justice at Southern University Law Center, who are featured in the film with Ed Tarply, a Louisiana lawyer who previously served as District Attorney for the 35th Judicial District. Now that Louisiana has overturned the law, the state and federal courts are dealing with the aftermath of 120 years of non-unanimous felony convictions.

For more information: <https://unodriftwood.com/3712/entertainment/reform-filmmaking-go-hand-in-hand-an-interview-with-uno-grad-student-ben-donnellon/>



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Giving

The Louis A. Berry Civil Rights and Justice Institute is seeking monetary donations to support the continuation of our 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

December 10, 2019

All Lives Matter

Assessing Healthcare at EBRP

The East Baton Rouge Parish Prison Reform Coalition and its partners will examine the healthcare delivery system at the East Baton Rouge Prison where there has been an unprecedented forty deaths since 2012.

East Baton Rouge Parish Library
7711 Goodwood Blvd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70806
11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

To register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/all-lives-matter-assessing-healthcare-at-ebrpp-tickets-84549617181>

Free and open to the public

Hosted by: East Baton Rouge Parish Prison Reform Coalition and
Medical Task Force Committee

December 11, 2019

Kenneth "Zulu" Whitmore's Next Hearing

The results of fingerprint tests are at issue. For over thirty years, Mr. Whitmore has professed his innocence. Show your support for justice by being present. Judge Balfour presiding (but Judge Erwin's name might still be posted outside the courtroom).

19th Judicial District Court
Baton Rouge, La.
Room 10-B
10:00am

To learn more about Mr. Whitmore's case, please visit www.freezulu.org



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Announcements (Con't)

February 3, 2020

Charles Frye Memorial Lecture

The Center for African and African American Studies (CAAAS) at Southern University at New Orleans will commence its African American History Month Celebration with Professor Bell's presentation: *"When Law & Injustice Become Bedfellows: Justice Becomes the Business of the People."*

Millie M. Charles School of Social Work Auditorium
6400 Press Drive
New Orleans, LA 70126
11:00am-2:00pm

Free and open to the public

Hosted by: Center for African American Studies

February 7, 2020

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

At this advocacy summit, grassroots activist will teach people to navigate obstacles that they face as victims of Louisiana's criminal justice system or advocates for justice-impacted individuals. The following panels will present:

- Becoming a Legislative or Policy Advocate
- Becoming a Mental Health Watchdog
- Becoming a Solitary Confinement Watchdog
- Becoming a Watchdog for Children of Justice-Impacted Parents
- Social Workers as Watchdogs
- Becoming a Grand Jury Watchdog
- Becoming a Felony Voting Rights Watchdog
- Getting the Ear of the Media
- Using Art to Advocate
- Responding to Prosecutorial Misconduct

Southern University Law Center
2 Roosevelt Steptoe Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70813
9:00a.m.- 4:00p.m.

Lunch registration required by January 15, 2020. Send to: TRainey@sulc.edu.

Free and open to the public

Jointly Hosted By: Louis A. Berry Civil Rights and Justice Institute and
Center For African American Studies



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Announcements (Con't)

February 15, 2020 Afro-Carnival Ball

SUNO-Conference Center
6400 Press Dr.
New Orleans, LA 70126
9:00p.m.-1:00a.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
11:00a.m. - 2:00p.m.

Hosted by: Center For African and African American Studies

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 arrest of the first slaves.

Hartley/Vey Studio Theatre
235 North Blvd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70801
7:30 p.m.

Tickets starting at \$10
Reservations required.

Contact Ronni: at schoolshows@manshiptheatre.org

March 2020 The History of Danielle Metz "From Pep Rallies to Prison"

Danielle Metz was granted clemency by President Obama in 2016 after being sentenced to life in prison for a non-violent drug offense. Danielle Metz will tell her 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
11:00a.m. - 2:00p.m.

Hosted by: Center For African and African American Studies



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Announcements (Con't)

March 6, 2020 Pre-Roots Camp

"Race and Nationalism" movie followed by a panel discussion with Frank Curiel, Maxine Crump and others.

The Unitarian Church
8470 Goodwood Blvd
Baton Rouge, LA 70806
5:00p.m. - 8:00p.m.

[Click here to register](#)

\$50 Registration fee covers March 6-7, 2019 events.
*Admission free to SULC students who present an ID.
Hosted by: Solidarity Project Advocacy Network

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 present an ID
Jointly Hosted by: Solidarity Project Advocacy Network and
Louis A. Berry Civil Rights and Justice Institute

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

Hosted by: Center For African and African American Studies





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Food for Thought

“Each day, I feel less like a lawyer and more like a part of a modern underground railroad system. My work involves the daily disruption of a state-sanctioned, human trafficking system and the battling of Jim Crow who refuses to be evicted from the South.”

Angela Allen-Bell, Esq.

Subscriptions

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



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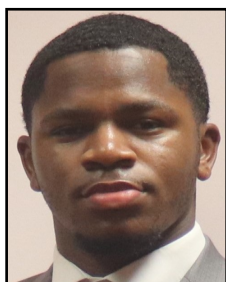
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