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New Orleans: Historical Memory and Urban Design | Spring 2019 Studio Course

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NEW ORLEANS: HISTORICAL MEMORY AND URBAN DESIGN

GLOBAL URBAN HUMANITIES UNDERGRADUATE INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH STUDIO COURSE CASE STUDY



WHY READ THIS CASE STUDY?

New Orleans: Historical Memory and Urban Design, an interdisciplinary research studio, focused on the ways human history and urban design interact over time. Faculty members Anna Livia Brand (Landscape Architecture) and Bryan Wagner (English) led this undergraduate course, which posed fundamental questions: how are cities designed, and how are such designs reshaped over time – benefiting some residents and neighborhoods while imposing lasting harm on others? How can these multilayered histories be peeled back, allowing the roots of violence and injustice to be revealed and contested? And how might place-based resistance strategies reclaim the past and portend the future?

This course took students from a variety of academic majors on a journey through the history of New Orleans' Black communities. They tracked the progressive marginalization, displacement, and gentrification of these communities, and traveled to the city to explore and learn from local residents and organizations firsthand. Brand and Wagner challenged students to harness their imaginations and creativity to reimagine place-based strategies of resistance and

design a map to guide residents and visitors to important cultural events. The studio partnered with the New Orleans Paper Monuments project to create public poster art about sites of deep meaning to the community, featuring individuals, social movements, and historical events that shaped the city's social geography and landscape. Then, students developed a digital interactive map of Claiborne Avenue, a main thoroughway through the city's Black community, locating important sites of resistance and cultural regeneration – historical places, public art, cultural events, and street performances.

In this case study, readers are introduced to the semester-long studio's structure and pedagogical objectives, can view a rich sample of student creative work, and gain insight into the student experience via a set of reflective essays.

Keywords:

New Orleans, Urban history and design, African American neighborhoods, Treme and 7th Ward, Claiborne Avenue, Paper Monuments, project-based learning, place-making and performance.

This case study is part of an archive of the UC Berkeley Global Urban Humanities Initiative and its Future Histories Lab, supported by the Mellon Foundation. The entire archive, including course case studies, faculty and student reflections, digital projects, symposia, exhibitions, and publications, is available at https://escholarship.org/uc/ucb_guh_fhl.

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Cover Photo of the Money Wasters Second Line by Daniel Olea.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

NEW ORLEANS: HISTORICAL MEMORY AND URBAN DESIGN



Photo: Christopher Porche West

A GLOBAL URBAN HUMANITIES RESEARCH STUDIO

Landscape Architecture 154 / American Studies 102

4 Units, Spring 2019

Instructors:

Anna Livia Brand (Landscape Architecture)

Bryan Wagner (English)

How can a city's past become a meaningful platform for its future? How can city planners and community organizations work to answer this question in historic neighborhoods destabilized by environmental catastrophe, gentrification, multi-scaled development and the privatization of schools and social services?

In this Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Research Studio, students answered these questions by working in groups to create "paper monuments" (poster or other medium) proposing a public monument to a particular person, event, or movement from the history of New Orleans. Projects considered setting as well as the substance and design of the proposed monument and interfaced with Paper Monuments in New Orleans. The class also produced a collaborative, interactive digital map of North Claiborne Avenue, representing public art (murals), street performance venues (Mardi Gras and second lines), and past and present neighborhood institutions (anchor businesses, parks, and community centers).

THE INSTRUCTORS



Anna Livia Brand

Anna Livia Brand's research focuses on the historical development and contemporary planning and landscape design challenges in Black mecca neighborhoods in the American North and South. She is investigating how (re)development paradigms in the 21st century reflect ongoing racialization and her work interrogates the gendered, racialized and resistant constructions of the built environment over time. Her comparative work on Black mecca neighborhoods traces historical and contemporary productions of racial landscapes and resistance to these constructions in and across different cities, including New Orleans, Houston, Chicago and Washington D.C.. Her work on post-Katrina New Orleans examines how racial geographies have been reconstructed after the storm through disciplines like urban planning. Anna received her PhD in Urban Planning from MIT and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at the University of California, Berkeley.



Bryan Wagner

Bryan Wagner is a Professor in the English Department at the University of California, Berkeley. His research focuses on African American expression in the context of slavery and its aftermath, and he has interests in legal history and vernacular culture. His books include *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery* (Harvard University Press, 2009), *The Tar Baby: A Global History* (Princeton University Press, 2017), *The Wild Tchoupitoulas* (Bloomsbury, 33 1/3 Series, 2019), *The Life and Legend of Bras-Coupé: The Fugitive Slave Who Fought the Law, Ruled the Swamp, Danced at Congo Square, Invented Jazz, and Died for Love* (Louisiana State University Press, 2019). He has also co-edited a collection of critical essays, *Looking for Law in All the Wrong Places* (Fordham University Press, 2019). Current research includes a collaborative digital archive, *Louisiana Slave Conspiracies*



The class traveled to New Orleans to learn the history of Claiborne Avenue, which was a thriving Black business center anchoring the Treme district before it was decimated by an elevated highway in 1969. Students interviewed residents about current development plans that threaten the area with gentrification and further displacement. Using archival materials and analyses of redevelopment, students created a multimedia critical cartography map of the corridor.

COURSE SUMMARY

CONTEXT

Students were engaged in readings, research, guest lecturers, and more to dive deep into the context of New Orleans. Students initially worked in groups to create “paper monuments” (posters or other mediums) proposing a public monument to a particular person, event, or movement from the history of New Orleans. The class later produced a collaborative project focused on North Claiborne Avenue, which runs through the Treme and 7th Ward neighborhoods, New Orleans’ historic black core. The course ended in a week-long trip to New Orleans, where students got to engage with the neighborhoods they were learning about.



PAPER MONUMENTS: ARTS & HUMANITIES METHODS

In the first part of the class, prior to their study trip to New Orleans, students engaged with New Orleans history through research-based creative projects. Paper Monuments (papermonuments.org) was a public art and public history project that emerged in the wake of the takedown of Confederate and White League monuments in New Orleans during 2017. Paper Monuments spark reflection and conversation about memorialization first, by soliciting proposals for new monuments dedicated to previously underrepresented people and events in the city’s history; second, by pairing writers and artists to create posters on topics chosen from the proposals; and third, by distributing and displaying the resulting posters in public spaces throughout New Orleans.

Inspired by this public art project, students created their own paper monuments, i.e. posters with images and text. Each student researched and wrote proposals for three Paper Monuments. Students were encouraged to look to other resources that supplemented the resources the instructors shared with the class to aid them during their research process. Instructors then chose a list of fifteen monuments from the proposals, and students then signed up to work on two monuments, serving as a writer for one poster, and an artist for the other poster. Students gave 10 minute in-class presentations on their posters. Paper Monuments were also displayed in connection with the Global Urban Humanities initiative at UC Berkeley.

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CLAIBORNE PROJECT: CITY PLANNING METHODS

In the second part of the class, students used city planning, landscape analysis, and social science methods to consider urban issues. Claiborne Avenue runs through the heart of New Orleans’ historic black core. As the spine that connects Treme and the 7th Ward communities, this corridor was historically the site of a vibrant black business district. New Orleans’ Treme and 7th Ward neighborhoods, the historic home to Free People of Color and Black Creoles, have given us Creole building arts, jazz music, second lines and brass band music, not to mention other vital elements of New Orleans’ sensory, culinary, and historical culture. Yet the vibrancy that once characterized Claiborne Avenue and its adjacent black neighborhoods has deteriorated since the 1960s construction of the elevated I-10 expressway. The decimation of this critical business and cultural corridor coupled with urban disinvestment and decline means that both Treme and the 7th Ward have seen increased indices of crime, abandonment, and social/economic inequality since the 1960s. Despite these changing conditions, the communities adapted and elements of New Orleans’ black culture continue

to thrive in these neighborhood spaces. It is under the Claiborne overpass that Mardi Gras Indians gather on St. Joseph's and Mardi Gras Days, where paraders celebrate Zulu, and where second line traverse. The spaces under the overpass have been reclaimed - with murals of the oak trees that once lined Claiborne Avenue a testament to the continued vitality of these communities.

Since Hurricane Katrina, the areas adjacent to the Treme and 7th Ward neighborhoods are facing tremendous development pressures, which stand to affect the economic affordability and the social vitality of these black historic neighborhoods for their current resident and therefore threaten the viability of New Orleans' historic black, cultural core. The corridor, with its varied, rich and even conflicted history contextualized by racial inequality and social vitality, continues to be integral to the geographic imaginations of local residents, serving not only as historical memory for black economic well being, but the contemporary consciousness of adaptation and resilience in the face of inequality.

The Claiborne project works at this specific moment in time, yet traces back the deep social and business history that still informs resident's imaginations. Students created an engaged, critical cartography project on the history and present uses of this black business corridor. Using archival materials and analyses of redevelopment, students created a multi-layered and multimedia mapping of the corridor.



I-10 HIGHWAY DURING AND AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA.



STUDENT REFLECTIONS

CITY, CULTURE & POLITICS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF I-10 IN NOLA

By Nero Dotson

September 2019

Nero Dotson majored in Economics and completed the Undergraduate Certificate in Global Urban Humanities in 2019. He is interested in ways that private companies can contribute to low-income communities and the growing role of businesses and their relationship with the communities in need. He was a student in the Spring 2019 GUH Undergraduate Studio course, New Orleans: Historical Memory and Urban Design. This is his reflection about the class trip to the Crescent City.

The city of New Orleans and its relentless spirit cannot be captured in its entirety because of its eclectic and fascinating synthesis of influences that has created a unique culture. Born out of its mixture of people and cultures, diversity of thought and celebration of differences, the Crescent City may truly reflect America's ideal values. However, these ideals are not consistently realized due to problems with the structure of power in place combined with the lack of forethought or purposeful design of the city.

I was honored to join a group of ambitious and enthusiastic UC Berkeley Global Urban Humanities students led by Professors Anna Brand in Landscape Architecture and Bryan Wagner in English to take an eye-opening journey to New Orleans. Prior to my journey, I learned about the complexities of the design



Congo Square. a historical site and birthplace of jazz where enslaved people and freed slaves would congregate on Sundays to play music and dance.

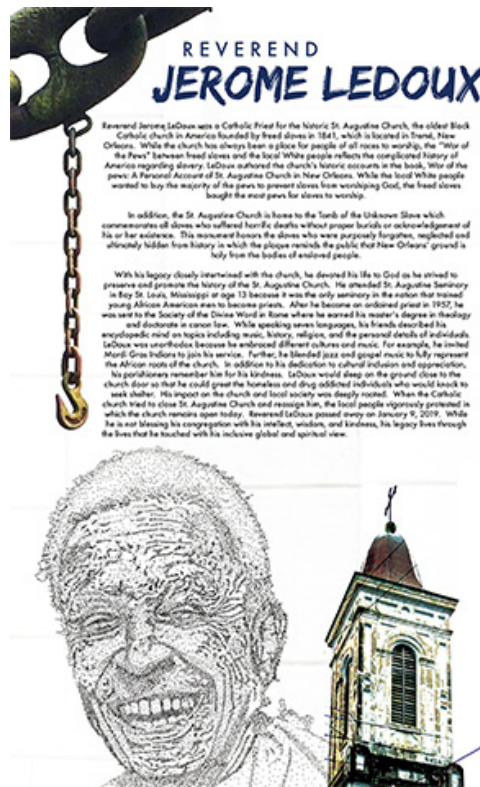
of New Orleans. The first half of the course dissected the history and current state of New Orleans' culture while the second half focused on North Claiborne Avenue, a thriving Black-owned business district formed due to segregation and disrupted by the construction of the Interstate-10 highway.

Absorbing knowledge from readings, research and personal experiences from professors, and discussions with experts and guest speakers transformed into on-site fieldwork where I used all five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch to viscerally experience New Orleans for five days. We spoke with the residents who lived and witnessed the rapid change of the city. In fact, residents nicknamed New Orleans "Little San Francisco" due to the increasing prevalence of gentrification, including the displacement of residents, changing demographics of neighborhoods, and altering the culture of Tremé, a historic African American neighborhood. We also met prominent community leaders, such as Lambert Boissiere (public servant), to hear their opinions about the accelerated changes of New Orleans. Demond Melancon, Big Chief of the Young Seminole Hunters and contemporary artist, echoed his concern for the sudden changes in the city with the hope that it could eventually

come back.

The most important takeaway from this experience was the resilience of the residents and their strong ties with their culture, local and beyond. Regardless of the intentional planning of the freeway to disrupt Black business progress, the community reclaimed the area by embracing the changes to the Claiborne district. During my cultural immersion, I attended the Tremé 7th Ward Festival under the freeway, danced in the Second Line celebration, and tasted the incredible cuisines offered by the local restaurants.

The GUH studio course allowed me to gain a holistic understanding of New Orleans, its culture, and the perspective of the locals who are undergoing rapid transformation in real time. This course delivered an interdisciplinary approach to studying cities, from critical thinking about urban spaces to project collaborations with my classmates. As a business administration and economics double major, I was able to work on projects with classmates with broad interests and diverse majors. I observed the differences in how my classmates and I approached, thought, and interpreted information and experiences which led to a better and more complete understanding and appreciation of New Orleans, as well as my classmates. In the end, I was inspired to continue my research of North Claiborne Avenue with Professor Brand that will trace Claiborne's history as a thriving Black urban sphere to the gentrification pressures in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Using critical race methodological approaches and community engagement, we will help build the framework for a digital humanities project on Black mecca histories and futures.



Paper Monument poster created by Nero Dotson and Angela Phung about Rev. Jerome Ledoux of St. Augustine church, the oldest catholic church founded by freed slaves.



Author Nero Dotson on Bourbon Street, second from right.

INTERVIEW WITH MADISON ROBERTS ON HER EXPERIENCE WITH THE STUDIO NEW ORLEANS: HISTORICAL MEMORY AND URBAN DESIGN

By Madison Roberts

May 2020

Madison Roberts graduated from UC Berkeley with a bachelor's degree in Urban Studies in 2019. She was a student in the 2019 Global Urban Humanities Undergraduate Studio on New Orleans, focusing on the relationship between historical memory and urban design. At the time of this interview she was an AmeriCorps volunteer working for the city of Salinas as Housing Resources Coordinator, and we asked her to share her GUH experiences in this short interview.



Chief of the Young Seminole Hunters and one of the best beadworkers in the world) at The Storybook Project, and envisioned a future Claiborne Avenue overpass with New Orleans-based landscape architect Austin Allen.

I really appreciated the ability to physically explore the culturally vibrant and historically rich city we had made our intellectual home for a semester. As an Urban Studies major, I'm fascinated by the ways in which the built environment's aesthetic design reflects and significantly shapes a city's political and social values. I interacted directly with this concept through the studio's collaborative research and visual projects.

Are there any moments from the New Orleans studio that stood out to you?

As an interdisciplinary studio, the program introduced me to peers from a variety of departments. Our diverse academic perspectives enriched the Paper Monuments and Critical Cartography modules. This was never more apparent than during presentations, when the same prompt would inspire wildly different interpretations— for example, a stunning light show narrative and an analytical GIS tool.

The best part of the trip was getting to walk in the Money Wasters Second Line, a Sunday tradition hosted by local community organizations. Like a traveling block party, the crowd grooves alongside a brass band and other performers while parading through historic neighborhoods, such as Treme and the 7th Ward. That was an experience I'll never forget. A few edible

You were one of the students in the 2019 GUH undergraduate studio focusing on New Orleans. Tell us a little bit about your experience in this course.

I applied to the GUH studio because of the Paper Monuments project, an effort to redefine memorialization in New Orleans to inform a more socially just future. Like New Orleans, my hometown in Virginia was slowly replacing the Confederate namesakes affixed to its high schools and street signs. The course had relevance to my own city, while also providing an immersive experience in another.

At the end of the semester, we traveled to New Orleans to visit many of the sites, neighborhoods, and individuals we had studied throughout the class. We toured the Paper Monuments exhibit at the New Orleans African American Museum, interviewed influential members of the community (like Demond Melancon, Big

highlights include beignets from Cafe Du Monde, sno-balls in Treme, and lunch at Lil Dizzy's!

Tell us about your current position as a Housing Resources Coordinator for the city of Salinas. Did the GUH studio course have any influence on your decision to pursue this position?

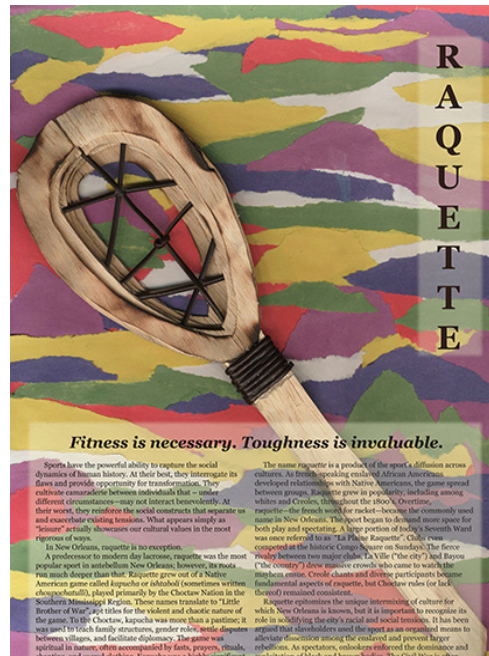
I am five months into my year of service as an AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA), a federally-funded program designed to alleviate poverty in the US. The agricultural community in Salinas suffers from a deteriorating and overcrowded housing stock, where low farmworker wages and a migrant workforce exacerbate California's housing shortage.

As the Housing Resources Coordinator, I support the City's organizational capacity to address its unique affordable housing challenges. I bridge the gap between the housing and planning divisions to facilitate farmworker housing construction, accelerate ADU production, and implement tenant protections, among other community development initiatives. Some of my current projects include a rental registration program, suitable development sites map, hotel-motel conversion ordinance, and downtown upzoning strategy.

When tasked with designing a monument for a city I had never been to, I struggled with the validity of my perspective. The GUH studio course taught me the critical thinking and self-awareness needed to approach problem-solving as an outsider. I learned to step back before stepping up, but felt empowered to pursue a program like VISTA.

Do you have any advice you would like to share with current GUH students who may be looking for jobs after graduation?

Ask everyone to coffee: professors, GSIs, relatives, previous employers,



Paper Monument poster about raquette, a New Orleans sport with Native American roots, by Madison Roberts and Gabrielle Clement

coworkers, family friends, neighbors, third connections on LinkedIn, everyone. Informational interviews hold the keys to years of honest, industry-specific insights you can't gain elsewhere. It can be nerve-racking to initiate the conversation, but I've never left a coffee chat without additional wisdom, connections, and direction. I learned about urban planning and policy-related AmeriCorps positions through, yes, a coffee chat! This is something you can do virtually while sheltering in place too.

I would also encourage current students to consider service programs like AmeriCorps or Peace Corps in addition to traditional entry-level positions. These organizations provide opportunities to gain valuable experience, dive into a new community, and most importantly, use your degree to make an immediate impact. Many, including VISTA, even offer scholarships you can put towards a graduate degree. Whether you're interested in sustainable development or youth education, there are many opportunities for GUH students to apply their interdisciplinary studies.

Right now, we are facing the coronavirus pandemic and everyone is staying at home to prevent more spread. Can you share (at least) one thing you are reading/listening/watching that is helping you get through the isolation?

If there's a bright side to be found in quarantine, it's the ability to disconnect from our increasingly digital world and reprioritize hobbies that our social and professional calendars tend to obscure. I'm loving the ability to take long walks with a podcast (Vox's The Weeds is a favorite), revisit half-finished writing projects, paint with watercolors, practice yoga, and read for pleasure. I'm currently digging into a few different books, including Annie Lowrey's Give People Money, Kiley Reid's Such a Fun Age, and Enrico Moretti's (Go Bears!) The New Geography of Jobs.



Student photos of study trip to New Orleans.

STUDENT WORK

Examples of Students' Paper Monument Posters

Vietnamese Refugee Migration

Vietnamese Cajun Crawfish - \$11.50

The Vietnamese Refugee Migration to New Orleans occurred immediately after the fall of Vietnam's capital, Saigon, in 1975. With sponsorship from the local Roman Catholic Church, a large portion of the population was also drawn to New Orleans by the promise of the southern Louisiana fishing industry.



Pho with Hot Sauce - \$9.50

The first waves of settlers moved into the East and the West bank. For the first 30 years, the close-knit community remained as somewhat of an isolated island, distanced from the rest of New Orleans by language and cultural barriers. While the earliest arrivals in this group mainly worked as unskilled laborers, over the past few decades, many opened their own businesses, including restaurants, bakeries, and small grocery stores.



Shrimp Po Boy - \$10.00

The proliferation of pho and banh mi restaurants throughout the city is proof of the degree to which certain elements of Vietnamese culture are being integrated and assimilated into greater New Orleans. The cuisine reflects this duality of cultures as many restaurants recreate traditional Vietnamese cuisine with local New Orleans flavor. The po' boy and banh mi, for example, both are rooted in the use of a French baguette. Locally, banh mi is sometimes referred to as the Vietnamese po' boy. Other examples include Crystal hot sauce being served with pho. Some of the most successful businesses have even integrated more broadly into greater New Orleans. Dong Phuong Bakery, for example, supplies many restaurants in the city with bread for banh mi sandwiches. They have gained national attention for their baked goods and was a winner of a 2018 James Beard Foundation America's Classics award. De and Huong Tran, Vietnamese immigrants to the United States, opened Dong Phuong in 1981. Along with several other Vietnamese restaurants, Dong Phuong has developed a loyal following in New Orleans as many of these places have begun to move out of the periphery and into the center. These eateries are just one example of how Vietnamese culture has been able to successfully weave in their cuisine and tradition into the larger culture of the larger city of New Orleans.





Situated in New Orleans East is the neighbourhood of Versailles – a working class enclave of nearly seven thousand Vietnamese Americans, most of whose origins date back to the fall of Saigon in the mid 1970s. Versailles, sometimes called Village de L'est, is isolated and fairly unknown in comparison to the concoction of neighbourhoods and culture that occupy the rest of New Orleans.

This sentiment felt particularly resonant to Versailles' residents after Hurricane Katrina. Members of the community worked arduously together to build their neighbourhood, with the creation of senior housing units, a community urban farm, and a cultural centre – all with minimal notable help from government intervention. Their efforts felt particularly relegated when mayor Ray Nagin proposed that toxic debris from Hurricane Katrina be dumped near a canal located two miles from Versailles, a waterway pivotal to this community that valued agriculture and green space. The landfill, named Chef Menteur, involved no environmental impact assessment, and sealed the ostracization of the neighbourhood within the greater framework of New Orleans.

Residents of Versailles were quick to demonstrate their resilience however. With many older members of the community immersed in rebuilding the neighbourhood and some unable to speak English, young second generation Vietnamese felt it was imperative to take action. In 2006, Versailles youth created the Vietnamese American Young Leaders of New Orleans (VAYLA), an activist group dedicated to bridging communication between older residents and local government, letting it be known that the neighbourhood of Versailles did not want a toxic landfill to pollute their community. With the marriage of legal action and local advocacy, protests chanted both in Vietnamese and English at City Hall, VAYLA was eventually successful, and in August 2006, Mayor Nagin withdrew the zoning waiver for Chef Menteur Landfill.

Today VAYLA's home is in a dynamic multicultural centre that empowers youth through positive social change. Vietnamese Americans in New Orleans established a new sense of pride in their identity, and more so in their determination after the community-led victory of VAYLA. In 2008, New Orleans native Anh Joseph Cao became the first Vietnamese American to be elected in congress - a crucial recognition of the significance of the Vietnamese community in New Orleans.

V.A.Y.L.A PROTEST OF THE CHEF MENTEUR LANDFILL

UPSTAIRS LOUNGE

ARSON ATTACK

On Sunday June 24, 1973, what started as a typical Sunday "beer bust" at the Upstairs Lounge evolved into a disaster when an arson attack struck the gay bar and eventually left 32 dead. Considering this was the worst death toll due to fire in the city's history, the public response was appalling; radio stars joked about it, churches refused memorial services, families would not retrieve their kin, and strangers commented, "I hope they burned their dresses off" and "it was only f*****-- why worry?" Within two days, the tragedy had left the news. For the victims, for their loved ones, and for others in their community, we honor their memory as it was not at the time.

Reverend Bill Larson

Bill Larson was a Pastor for the Metropolitan Community Church of New Orleans, a Christian church for queer people. The Upstairs Lounge had served as a meeting place for the church up until recently, when services began to be held at Rev. Larson's house. Rev. Larson's family refused to retrieve his body after his death, so MCC cremated his body. It was his friend, Rev. Richardson of St. George's Episcopal Church in New Orleans, who later held the memorial service for the victims; Richardson received hate mail following the service, and refused from holding another service, and watched as churches in the city refused to let the victims through their doors.

Ferris LeBlanc

Ferris LeBlanc of Redding, California, went missing in the early 1970s. Born to a family of twelve, his parents were overwhelmed; Ferris, a veteran of World War II, stepped in and raised some of his younger siblings, including Marilyn LeBlanc. When he disappeared, she was heartbroken and confused for decades. Only four years ago, she discovered he had been a victim of the fire. His family is still searching for his final resting place so he can be returned to California; he was buried in an unmarked plot and the documentation of his final resting place was lost during Hurricane Katrina.

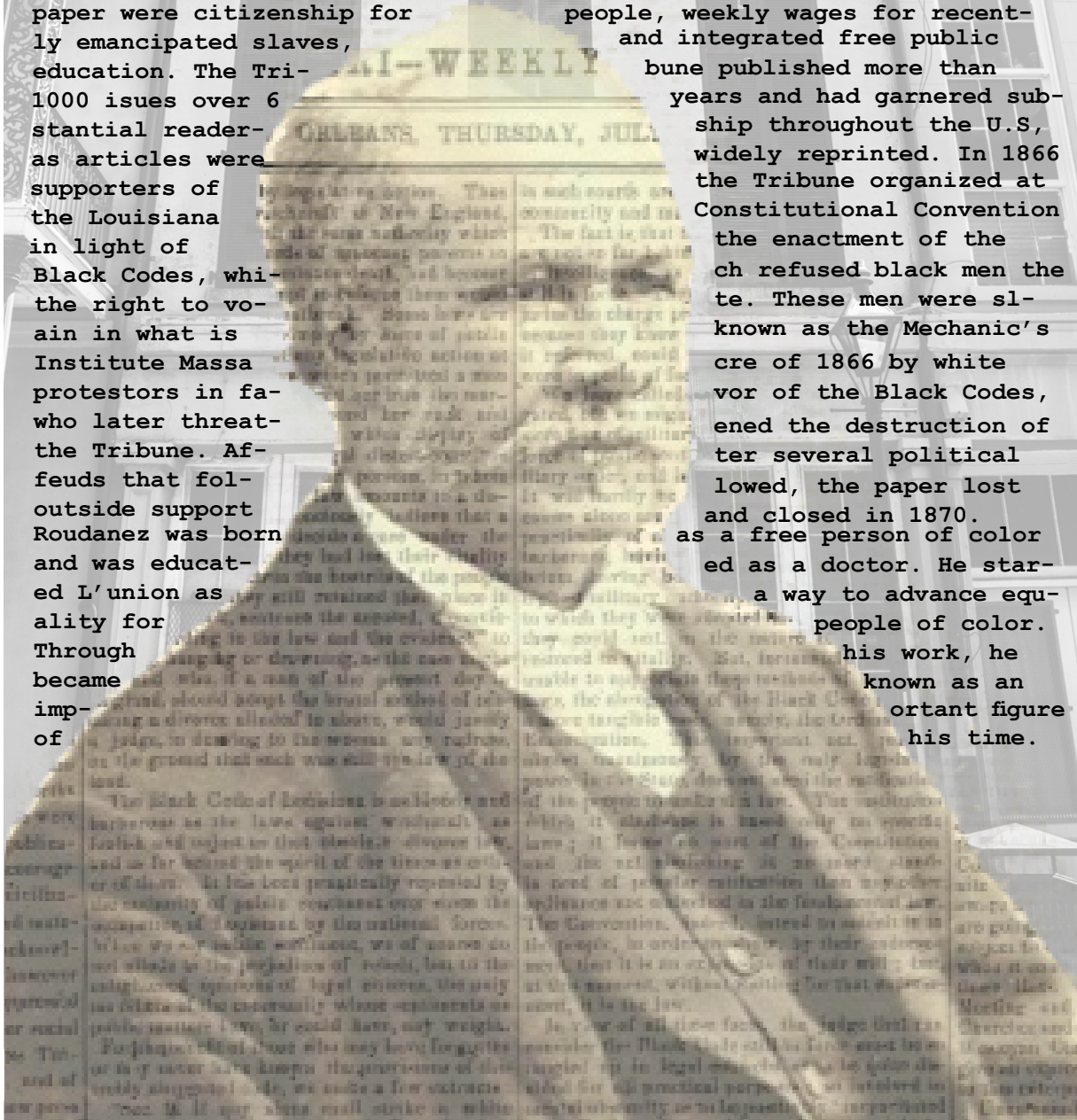
Unidentified Man

Today, two men still remain unidentified and unclaimed. We honor their memory, whomever they were.

A Tribune Tribute

L'Union was the first black newspaper to be published in Louisiana. It was founded in September of 1862 by brothers Jean Baptiste and Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez. It was a bilingual newspaper, publishing in both French and English three days a week.

When L'Union, failed in 1864 because of lack of support, Louis Charles began a new Union newspaper he called La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans (The New Orleans Tribune). He recruited editor Paul Trévigne of the former L'Union, and Jean-Charles Houzeau to publish the paper with him. Like L'Union, the newspaper was published in both French and English, making it the first bilingual black newspaper in the United States. The paper was considered radical for the demands it published during the high racial tensions of the United States's Reconstruction era. Some of it's requests that it preached on in the paper were citizenship for people, weekly wages for recently emancipated slaves, and integrated free public education. The Tribune published more than 1000 issues over 6 years and had garnered substantial readership throughout the U.S, as articles were widely reprinted. In 1866 the Tribune organized at the Constitutional Convention the enactment of the which refused black men the te. These men were sl-known as the Mechanic's cre of 1866 by white vor of the Black Codes, ened the destruction of ter several political lowed, the paper lost and closed in 1870. as a free person of color ed as a doctor. He star-ed L'union as a way to advance equ-people of color. Through his work, he became known as an imp-ortant figure of his time.



“Lyric Theater To Be Shaken By Jazz Tremors”

declares the front page of the *New Orleans State*, making its rounds on a crisp morning in 1925. Only this was not a prediction. It was Friday. The daylight hours would be spent in ardent anticipation. Tourists and local elite would flock to their nearest hotel or newspaper stand to secure a coveted invite, counting down the hours til the yolkly sun seeped in to the horizon, awaiting the curtains to draw and the doors to close on every white theater in New Orleans proper, itching for the real show to begin.

At 11 o'clock, the Lyric would open to throngs of people spilling from the corner where Iberville meets Burgundy in the French Quarter. At 11:15, one had best find themselves in a seat, or realistically, in the aisle standing shoulder-to-shoulder as the biggest and brightest stars in every shade of melanin took the stage. Slapping ivory, belting blues, and pounding out infectious rhythms, enrapturing an eager crowd of white people.

These “Midnight Follies” answered the prayers of whites who advocated for a separate but equal society, but craved black entertainment. Also known as “Jim Crow Frolics,” these performances were exclusively for white audiences and required a printed invitation for admission. In accordance with Jim Crow protocol, frolics were only allowed to take place after every white theater in town had closed for the evening.

Featuring an array of performances, the walls of the Lyric vibrated well into the morning, with the final ovation narrowly escaping sunrise. Nationally-renowned jazz bands, bronze beauty choruses, contortionists and the like, guaranteed a house filled to capacity with hundreds turned away at the door. Every act was accompanied by John Robichaux’s preeminent six-piece orchestra with himself on the violin, the gifted Margaret Maurice on the piano, Alphonse Picou mastering sax and clarinet, alongwith Andrew Kimble, the esteemed cornetist, spotlight-snatching drum solos by Arthur (Zutty) Singleton, and finally, John Lindsey, who brought the house to tears the moment he picked up his trombone.

The Lyric tickled and captivated audiences for just short of a decade beginning in 1919 when white business partners Luke Boudreaux and Clarence Bennett ventured to reclaim the historically white theater as a space to showcase high-quality black talent. The Lyric wasn’t solely a place for whites to feed on black culture and stereotype-inflated comedy. The theater was first and foremost a place of black entertainment for black audiences, hosting black-only shows throughout the week with admission subsidized by revenue from the Midnight Follies. Apart from the owners, America’s largest and finest colored playhouse was ran entirely by people of color. It was a place where black artistry was celebrated and given center stage to be deafeningly loud, in an era of social and political silencing of blacks.

Theater For The People

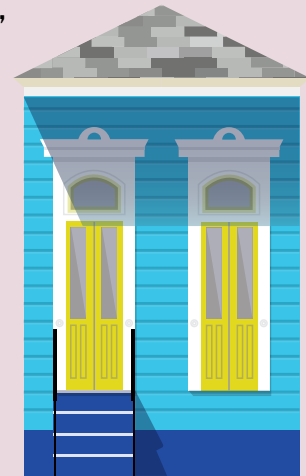


ODE TO A SHOTGUN HOUSE

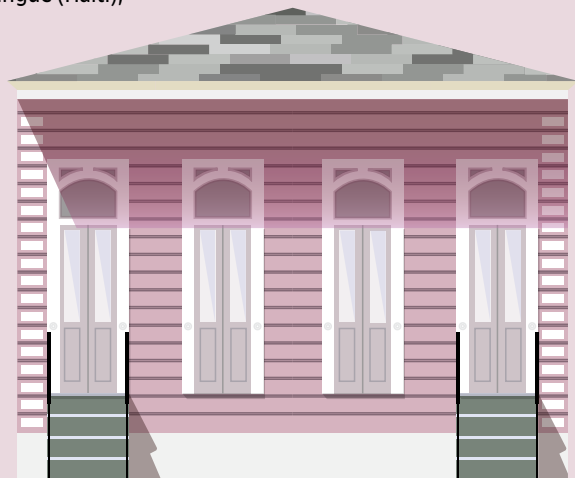
NEW ORLEANS IS HOME TO MANY SITE-SPECIFIC FORMS OF ARCHITECTURE, ART, AND CULTURE—AMONG THESE RESIDES THE SHOTGUN HOUSE.

What exactly is a shotgun house?

A quintessential piece of the urban landscape that is in danger of disappearing. An emphasis on elongating the floorplan of the shotgun house dominates this typology; this type of residential, or vernacular, architecture rapidly began to dot the cityscape in the mid 19th century. The shotgun house was typically constructed in African-American neighborhoods largely because this housing typology was economically feasible: construction of a one-story house with a one-room width required relatively inexpensive materials as opposed to the construction of larger housing types. African-Americans who lived in New Orleans, as elsewhere in the South, largely made up the working-class due to racist Jim Crow laws that successfully suppressed the population from rising to upper level jobs.



The shotgun house typology further carries with it racial/class implications because it has been traced to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, making the journey from Haiti to West Africa and eventually to New Orleans from Saint-Domingue (Haiti), sometime in the mid 1800's. The construction of shotgun houses—of which there are two-bay, four-bay, and the camelback add-on extension—flourished up until around the beginning of the 19th century. In present day, Post-Katrina New Orleans, shotgun house typologies have a continued association with the black body—this is seen as unfavorable in the eyes of upper-echelon housing developers who are overwhelmingly in favor of building multi-level apartment complexes. It is no coincidence that with the displacement of the pre-Katrina New Orleans black majority comes the push to rid the city of these historic structures. With the diasporic exile of many native New Orleans in the aftermath of the hurricane, the desire by racial capitalists to rid the urban landscape of significant architectonics has followed.



The shotgun house cannot only be seen as a signifier of the perseverance of the African-American community, but also as an emblem of cultural heritage. It is important to preserve the vernacular architecture that took form within the urban landscape in order to make the culture of previous years available for future generations. Gentrification threatens the survival of numerous shotgun houses within the city of Post-Katrina New Orleans, as many homeowners were unable to afford the cost of rebuilding because of political/social obstacles that were meant to impede the majority from returning to the city.



Through the effort of coalitions, such as the New Orleans Preservation Resource Center, the fate of many shotgun houses—and similar building types—have been saved from the hands of the wrecking ball. Conservation efforts are crucial in order to preserve and continue the legacy of the shotgun house within New Orleans well into the next century. Furthermore, by allowing housing developers to rid the built environment of historic shotgun houses is not only an attack on the culture of black New Orleans but is also a direct affront to the memory of a diasporic exile.



RAQUETTE

Fitness is necessary. Toughness is invaluable.

Sports have the powerful ability to capture the social dynamics of human history. At their best, they interrogate its flaws and provide opportunity for transformation. They cultivate camaraderie between individuals that – under different circumstances—may not interact benevolently. At their worst, they reinforce the social constructs that separate us and exacerbate existing tensions. What appears simply as “leisure” actually showcases our cultural values in the most rigorous of ways.

In New Orleans, raquette is no exception.

A predecessor to modern day lacrosse, raquette was the most popular sport in antebellum New Orleans; however, its roots run much deeper than that. Raquette grew out of a Native American game called *kapucha* or *ishtaboli* (sometimes written *choupchatulli*), played primarily by the Choctaw Nation in the Southern Mississippi Region. These names translate to “Little Brother of War”, apt titles for the violent and chaotic nature of the game. To the Choctaw, *kapucha* was more than a pastime; it was used to teach family structures, gender roles, settle disputes between villages, and facilitate diplomacy. The game was spiritual in nature, often accompanied by fasts, prayers, rituals, chanting, and sacred clothing. *Kapucha* was a highly significant aspect of Choctaw culture for hundreds of years prior to the arrival of Europeans and African Americans in North America.

The game is played on massive fields ranging from a few hundred feet to a mile wide with goal posts at either end. There are no boundaries and few rules. Each player, of which there can be between 20 and 300 on a team, carries two wooden sticks with spoon-like nets. The objective: to pass a two inch leather ball over the opponent’s goal using only the sticks. Injuries are common. Fitness is necessary. Toughness is invaluable.

The name *raquette* is a product of the sport’s diffusion across cultures. As french-speaking enslaved African Americans developed relationships with Native Americans, the game spread between groups. Raquette grew in popularity, including among whites and Creoles, throughout the 1800’s. Overtime, raquette—the french word for racket—became the commonly used name in New Orleans. The sport began to demand more space for both play and spectating. A large portion of today’s Seventh Ward was once referred to as “La Plaine Raquette”. Clubs even competed at the historic Congo Square on Sundays. The fierce rivalry between two major clubs, La Ville (“the city”) and Bayou (“the country”) drew massive crowds who came to watch the mayhem ensue. Creole chants and diverse participants became fundamental aspects of raquette, but Choctaw rules (or lack thereof) remained consistent.

Raquette epitomizes the unique intermixing of culture for which New Orleans is known, but it is important to recognize its role in solidifying the city’s racial and social tensions. It has been argued that slaveholders used the sport as an organized means to alleviate dissension among the enslaved and prevent larger rebellions. As spectators, onlookers enforced the dominance and exploitation of black and brown bodies. The Civil War is often cited as the cause for raquette’s decline in popularity, as complacency toward racial hierarchy was no longer accepted. Gradually, raquette was obscured by whiter and more “Americanized” sports, such as baseball. And as the Choctaw were pushed further and further from their land, presence of their culture in mainstream New Orleans life was erased.

Kapucha remains alive and well in Choctaw communities, with a World Series held at the annual Choctaw Indian Fair. However, *raquette* preserves and reflects a specific time in American history. What do the sports of today tell us about our values and tensions?

Born in 1939 in Tennessee, Oretha began calling New Orleans her home at the age of 7. Growing up in an environment supportive of civil rights movement, she enrolled in Southern University of New Orleans, where she would shortly become a co-founder of a chapter of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), a national civil rights group. Along with three other members, she became part of the CORE four, known for their commitment and direct action. As a result of sit-ins, boycotts, and protests she was arrested multiple times, most notably at the 1960 Woolworth protest where the group was charged with “conspiracy to commit criminal anarchy”, and a lunch counter sit in at McCrory’s Diner.

Despite facing various threats to her safety, Oretha was well known for the strategies she had as an organizer, leading her to become the president of CORE for three years. She lent her home as a rest stop for the freedom riders, leading for the place to be known as the “freedom house”. While her courage was evident in all of her actions, it is most notable in her voting rights work in rural Louisiana. Oretha also led campaigns for Dorothy Mae Taylor, the first African-American woman legislator in Louisiana’s State Legislature, and fellow activist Rudy Lombard.

Throughout her life, her work addressed numerous issues such as employment opportunities, education, voter rights, and health care. Working with members of the community she emphasized the importance of civilians in movements and the need to be informed. Oretha’s use of local and national networks were crucial in laying the groundwork for larger scale initiatives through grassroots and direct organizing. Her bravery, strength, and ability as an organizer is evident in her dedication towards bettering her community and fighting for equal rights.



Oretha Castle Haley

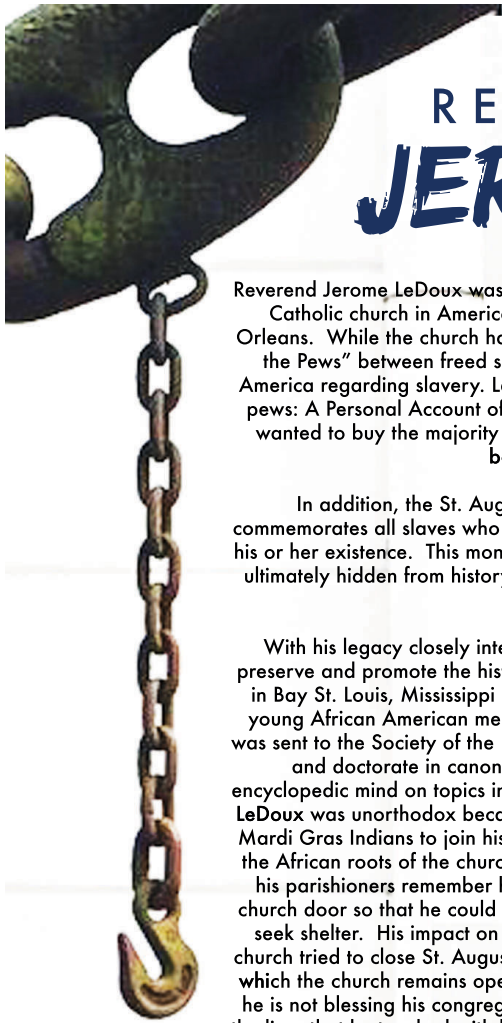
KATE M. GORDON AND THE SOUTHERN SUFFRAETTES

Seldom when the American suffragettes are brought up do people think of the women of the American South as main proprietors of the cause to augment women's right to vote. The women of the Portia Club, based in Louisiana, however organized women of the American South to fight for the augmentation of rights for women in the United States. The women rallied behind the resolve "That the entrance of women into the wage-earning world is beneficial to civilization." Since the prevailing ideology of the time was that women are inferior to men, the women were forced to meet in secret. The Portia Club would meet at each other's houses to discuss ways to organize without relying on the money of their husbands or fathers. They recognized that money is the key to influence, so they decided to raise funds themselves. One plan for fundraising was "Self Denial Week" which was the first week of June in 1908. Each woman was "asked to deny herself some luxury or undertake some special money-raising scheme" to earn money for the cause.

Kate M. Gordon was one such activist, born in New Orleans, who was a leading advocate for women's right to vote under the pretense that women deserve a say on how New Orleans uses its tax money since many women were property tax payers. She founded the Women's Sewerage and Drainage League as a place for women to discuss how they believe New Orleans should deal with the imposing obstacles on the city. Although her bond measures did not pass because of conservative opposition, her activism helped pave the way for the passage of women's suffrage.

Gordon was the national corresponding secretary for the National American Woman Suffrage Association from 1901 until 1909. Gordon was a staunch states' rights supporter, and thus stood in opposition to the Nineteenth Amendment because it was too federally focused.





REVEREND JEROME LEDOUX

Reverend Jerome LeDoux was a Catholic Priest for the historic St. Augustine Church, the oldest Black Catholic church in America founded by freed slaves in 1841, which is located in Tremé, New Orleans. While the church has always been a place for people of all races to worship, the "War of the Pews" between freed slaves and the local White people reflects the complicated history of America regarding slavery. LeDoux authored the church's historic accounts in the book, *War of the pews: A Personal Account of St. Augustine Church in New Orleans*. While the local White people wanted to buy the majority of the pews to prevent slaves from worshipping God, the freed slaves bought the most pews for slaves to worship.

In addition, the St. Augustine Church is home to the Tomb of the Unknown Slave which commemorates all slaves who suffered horrific deaths without proper burials or acknowledgement of his or her existence. This monument honors the slaves who were purposely forgotten, neglected and ultimately hidden from history in which the plaque reminds the public that New Orleans' ground is holy from the bodies of enslaved people.

With his legacy closely intertwined with the church, he devoted his life to God as he strived to preserve and promote the history of the St. Augustine Church. He attended St. Augustine Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi at age 13 because it was the only seminary in the nation that trained young African American men to become priests. After he became an ordained priest in 1957, he was sent to the Society of the Divine Word in Rome where he earned his master's degree in theology and doctorate in canon law. While speaking seven languages, his friends described his encyclopedic mind on topics including music, history, religion, and the personal details of individuals. LeDoux was unorthodox because he embraced different cultures and music. For example, he invited Mardi Gras Indians to join his service. Further, he blended jazz and gospel music to fully represent the African roots of the church. In addition to his dedication to cultural inclusion and appreciation, his parishioners remember him for his kindness. LeDoux would sleep on the ground close to the church door so that he could greet the homeless and drug addicted individuals who would knock to seek shelter. His impact on the church and local society was deeply rooted. When the Catholic church tried to close St. Augustine Church and reassign him, the local people vigorously protested in which the church remains open today. Reverend LeDoux passed away on January 9, 2019. While he is not blessing his congregation with his intellect, wisdom, and kindness, his legacy lives through the lives that he touched with his inclusive global and spiritual view.



NOLA BOUNCE



On a 1991 night, people pile into the appropriately named Ghost Town Lounge. Ricketty walls, black metal gate hanging halfway open, the club stands precariously at the corner of Edinburgh and Eagle Street in Hollygrove. Neighborhood conflicts have made the room tense as DJ Tucker, backed by DJ Irv, takes the stage. He had mostly played at block parties and bars in St. Thomas before this. Their opening set is met with an unreceptive crowd. Then, DJ Tuck calls out “Gert Town, Pigeon Town, Hollygrove, Where they at?”. The crowd perks up at the chance to show some neighborhood pride. The call and response went over the Triggerman beat, sampled from Drag Rap by the Showboys; a New York block party jam that becomes a building block for Southern Hip Hop. Simple but poignant bars were pumped in through the mic, out through the subwoofers, and on this night, two record turntables spun beats and hometown pride into fresh, visceral energy. Ghost Town Lounge was activated, and a subgenre of hip hop was born.

Though bounce music was initially dismissed as just a fad, by 1994, it was undeniable that the spread was beginning to reach beyond New Orleans. Beyonce’s “Formation” borrows from beats and chants of Bounce. Lil’ Wayne was coming of age at the time DJ Tuck took the stage and calls back to his New Orleans roots in songs like “Bounce” feat. 2 Chainz.

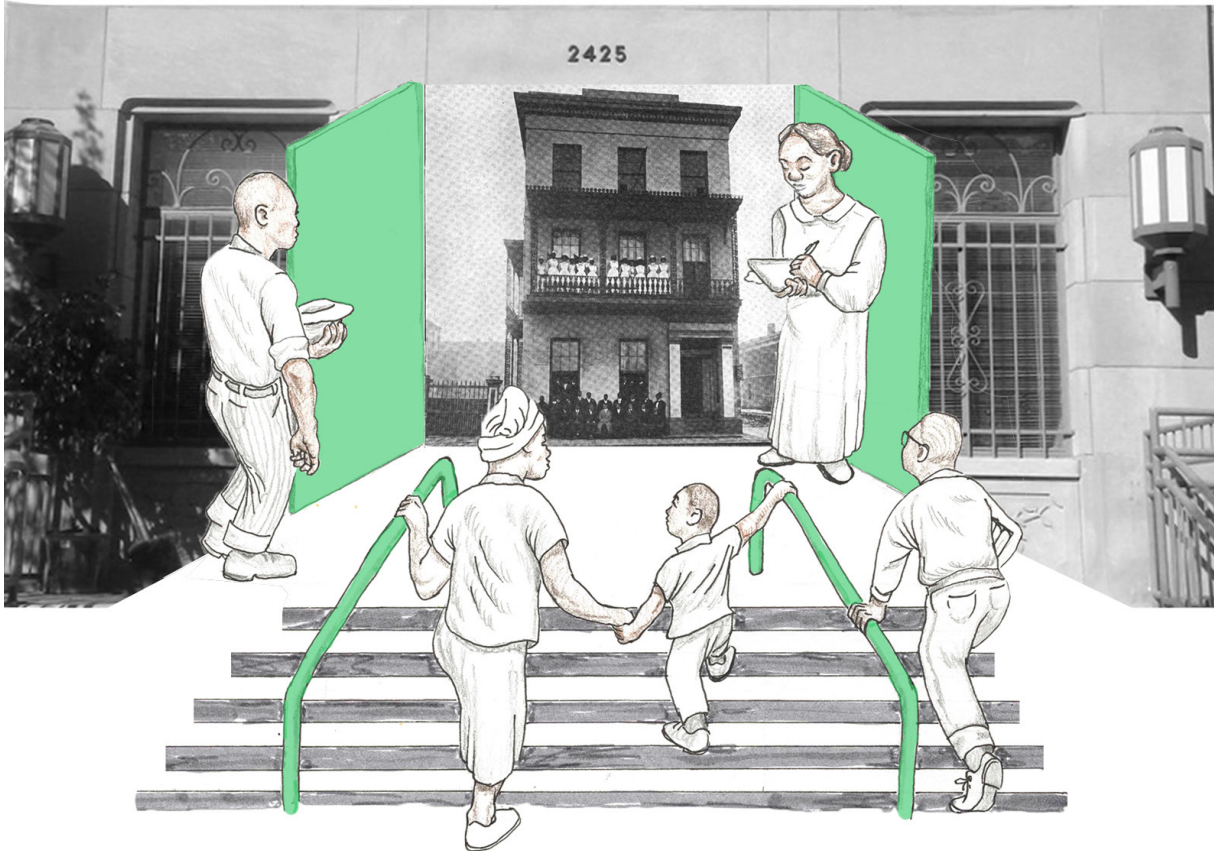
Big Freedia, also known as the Queen of Bounce, has woven the post-Katrina LGBTQ+ movement with her career as a Bounce musician and entertainer. The rise in popularity called for an urgent and informal historicization of the subgenre. Though DJ Tuck felt secure in his title as the father of bounce, producers and other artists disagree. DJ Jimi insists that the genre coined its’ name from his song “Bounce (for the Juvenile)”, and on the other side of town from the Ghost Town Lounge, DJ Lowdown was also back spinning the Triggerman.

When most hip-hop was centering individual narratives, Bounce was unique in the focus of collective shared experiences. The presence of housing projects, displacement of marginalized people, the city’s history of public music performance, and the many realities that living in a city with deep socio-political factors that continually racialized people and spaces, are all important contexts that Bounce arose in. Local artists and producers, radio stations, and community members, all contributed to the birth of Bounce music, creating a force so powerful, we see elements of the subgenre in popular U.S. media persist to this day.

ARTIST: Daniel Olea

STORYTELLER: Angela Buencamino

FLINT GOODRIDGE HOSPITAL



Affordable Black Care

Ever since its creation in 1896, the Phyllis Wheatley Sanitarium has made affordable care a priority. The institution had wards dedicated to patients who weren't able to pay. During its first expansion in 1932, the Flint Goodridge Hospital of Dillard University used small grants from charitable groups, private organizations, and government agencies to continue providing services to impoverished people of color. During this time the hospital introduced the revolutionary "penny-a-day" insurance program where patients who paid a penny every day were guaranteed 21 days of hospitalization per year. As the needs of the community changed overtime, the hospital was there to address the citizens and serve as an anchor for the community. Their dedication to affordable healthcare showed the belief that quality healthcare should be a fundamental right in our society.

Black Training and Education

The hospital offered training for young black physicians who had graduated from medical school but were barred from practicing in white hospitals. Under the Mr. A. W. Dent superintendent administration, a postgraduate course for physicians in the South was established. In the 1950's a grant was given to set up the School of Anesthesia through the Edward G. Schleider Foundation, one of the few southern institutions that offered black people training along with care. Its affiliations with Dillard University and the Orleans Parish School Board allowed the training programs to not only be legitimized on a professional level but to flourish. In the 1960's there were around 344 physicians, with doctors in a variety of specialties.

Black Ownership

At the heart of this institution lie black women and their struggle for education, workforce training, and healthcare in the wake of Jim Crow segregation. Sylvania Williams was a middle class black woman who grew up during Reconstruction. She served as the founder and president to the New Orleans chapter of the Phillis Wheatley Club. The club advocated for elevating women of color through educational institutions. By having membership fees of about five cents a month, the group was able to start the Phyllis Wheatley Sanitarium and Training School for Negro Nurses. Here, there were free wards for those who couldn't afford to pay, and training for nurses and physicians when they were barred from getting experience in white hospitals. The foundation of the Flint-Goodridge Hospital was an institution by black women for black people and it is important to remember and honor that creation.

In the 1960's major institutions began integrating and this included more. In the hospital's final years, a group of forty seven black doctors, two dentists and one pharmacist had attempted to purchase the hospital. The investment banker who helped them try to save the hospital said that the sale to a national enterprise was a part of a continuing demolition of black owned businesses. The importance of this space cannot be understated. Today there are large racial disparities in quality of healthcare and education, and anchor institutions such as the Flint-Goodridge Hospital served to help advance black people in a world that sought to systematically bar them from opportunities.



In a time when race intermingling was largely condemned in New Orleans, its red light district was a famous exception. From 1898 to 1917, the 13-block area of Storyville was set aside as a pressure valve for vice, cordoned off by the city council in an attempt to limit it in other parts of the city.

RUBY BRIDGES

"Don't follow the path.

Go where there's no path and begin the trail."

Wisdom is a gift but has nothing to do with age. That was probably the case with me."

Ruby Bridges was six when she became one of the first Africa-American child to integrate a white Southern elementary school on November 14, 1960. As a first grader, she was escorted to class by her mother and U.S. marshals due to violent mobs and was the only black student to enroll in the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans.

Bridges was born in Tyertown, Mississippi in 1954, and moved with her parents to New Orleans when she was 4. By the time she was ready to enter school, the city of New Orleans was ordered to desegregate in 1960. Despite the efforts of the Supreme Court of the United States to declare racial segregation in public schools as unconstitutional, several Southern states still had no black students enrolled in public schools with white students. As a result, the federal judge ordered that New Orleans public schools desegregate at the beginning of the 1960 school year. A test was given to African-American students by the New Orleans school board as a means to determine the 'brightest applicants' who qualify part-take in the integration program of the formerly all-white schools. Bridges passed the test and was later selected for enrollment at the city's William Frantz Elementary School. "It was a very hard test," said Bridges, "Only six of us passed it but the two who were supposed to go with me to William Frantz dropped out" - so Bridges went by herself.

While her father was initially opposed to the decision, fearing that it might lead to succeeding problems for the family, her mother saw this decision as an opportunity for a better education, and to pave the path for many other African-American children. Little did Bridges and her family know that she would be paving the road to civil rights, simply by her brave act of walking to school.

Among the people who gathered at the school to taunt her, "They didn't see a child." Bridges said, "They saw the change, and what they thought was being taken from them. They never saw a child." As federal marshals escorted Bridges on her first day of school, she was met by an angry mob of whites who yelled racial slurs and death threats at the seemingly oblivious Bridges. She marched along "like a little soldier," and thought it was Mardi Gras. Consequently, parents of white students boycotted the court-ordered integration and took their children out of school leaving Bridges as the only remaining student in her class for the entire school.

It is noted that under the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court ruling, public schools for both white and African American students were required to support 'separate but equal' school facilities. Yet this was not the reality, as many black public schools were not maintained at the same standards as the white public schools - leading to the demand for the Plessy ruling to be upheld and reexamined. This case also called into question whether segregation was constitutional, and if so, called for equal and fair conditions in African American schools? Bridges' brave march thereby shone light on the greater order of desegregation by the Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. In face of the significant backlash from white New Orleans residents, William Frantz Elementary School in the Lower Ninth Ward, a predominantly low-income neighborhood, opened their doors to integration.

Through a critical lens, the history of Ruby Bridges embodies the class, race, and the societal and educational reality in the United States, and specifically New Orleans. The act of integration also underlines the notion of 'power that lies in the weak' by demonstrating the capacity of children of the society to acquire an active voice of resistance. In other words, Bridges' story portrays young children as democratic agents of civic competence. Her vulnerability as a colored young girl juxtaposed the oppressive circumstances that sought to dominate and subjugate her voice. As a response, she redefined the terms of her educational by rejecting the predetermined spatial division through the simple act of "walking".

Her re-appropriation of the fixed material reality at Frantz Elementary also exemplifies the resistance of the younger NOLA generation towards institutional hegemony - by actively re-shaping and molding the nexus of political and educational apparatus.

Today, Bridges, encompassing a unique commodity of living history, founded the Ruby Bridges Foundation in New Orleans to promote tolerance through education. She captured her first-grade experience in her book *Through My Eyes* (1999), and continues to illustrate to the young community that the path to peace lies in the awakening of Americans to their own history full of muted voices.



CLUB MY O MY

In the 1930s

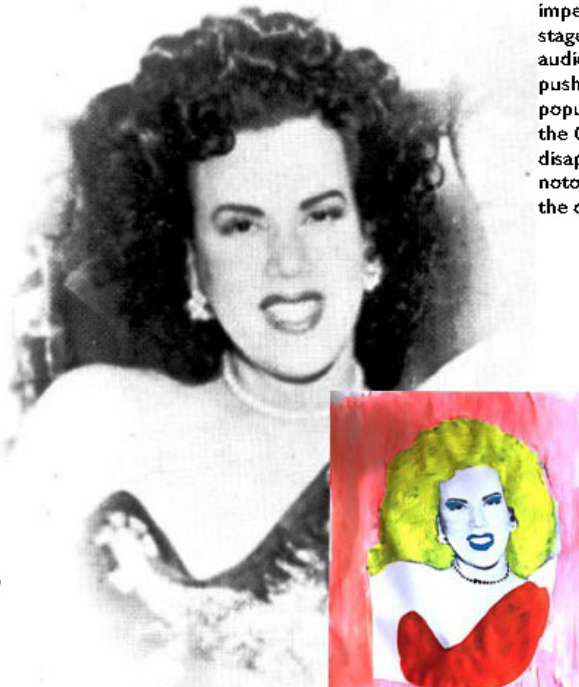
Club My-O-My opened on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain away from the lively, but heavily surveilled streets of the French Quarter. The club was a haven for female impersonators and early drag queens. It was well loved and visited by tourists and locals of New Orleans until 1972 when it was burned down and briefly relocated before its door were shut for the last time.

Club My-O-My enabled uncommon forms of gender appearance and early American transgender culture to be accepted by the public gaze outside of Mardi Gras. Since the 1700s, Mardi Gras has allowed for the reversal of social norms, creating an avenue of expression reflected in New Orleans's queer history. At the turn of the 20th century, crossdressers and female impersonators who found sexual freedom during Mardi Gras brought their identities with them to the private sphere of clubs and bars. As gay bars and same-sex activities became more common during 1920's Prohibition men, gay and straight, were dressing as women, displaying feminine behavior, and began performing on stage.

Club My-O-My stands out as a gay bar. The entertainers were advertised and presented as men. They were female impersonators not "queens" or transgender individuals, although it is known that many were gay. All entertainers were titled "Mr.," like Mr. Pat Waters and Mr. Gene La Marr. The tagline for Club My-O-My was "The World's Most Beautiful Boys in Woman's Attire." Although pushing against the boundaries of gender expression and identity these early drag queens were working as entertainers performing for mostly heterosexual crowds of celebrities, locals, and tourists. As stated by Bobby Lane, a once impersonator at Club My-O-My, "It's the asshole of show business, but it's still show business." The performers, such as Jimmy Callaway, Bobby Drake, Gene La Marr, and Carmen Navarro, would sing live to the crowds, recite joking monologues, wear beautiful outfits, and entertain club guests at their tables.

Even though Club My-O-My was progressive during its time and its acceptance as a nationally recognized drag club and queer space is remarkable, it is still important to acknowledge that Club My-O-My operated within wider systems of oppression. Club My-O-My for most of its existence was segregated and was a Whites-only venue for both guests and performers. A place of perhaps sexual and gender acceptance, Club My-O-My ultimately excluded and worked within a social system that continues to harm queer black communities across the United States. By offering a public gaze of white gender non-conformation, acknowledgement of queerness within communities of color was excluded. The lack of attention and value given to queer people of color and black drag queens has continued to be a huge issue, even in the days of RuPaul's Drag Race and a popular acceptance of drag culture.

In its prime, Club My-O-My offered a space of amusement. The female impersonators who strutted the stage and enthralled their audiences were icons and pushed the boundaries of popular entertainment. While the Club's stories have mostly disappeared, remnants of its notorious past can be found in the drag bars of today.



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