

Lost Lands, Lost Heritage: Examining Displacement and Cultural Exploitation in Black
New Orleans and Native American Communities/Storyville's Shadows of Desire:
Unveiling the Plight of Black and Mixed-Race Sex Workers in New Orleans

Bryleigh P. Jackson

Newport News, Virginia

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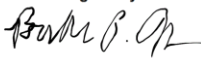
Harrison Ruffin Tyler Department of History

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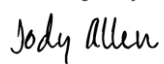
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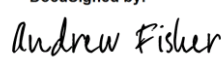
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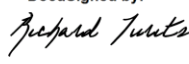
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DocuSigned by:

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Jody Allen, Assistant Professor, History
College of William & Mary

DocuSigned by:

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Andrew Fisher, Associate Professor, History
College of William & Mary

DocuSigned by:

833F8A087B934AF

Richard Turits, Associate Professor, History
College of William & Mary

ABSTRACT

Lost Lands, Lost Heritage: Examining Displacement and Cultural Exploitation in Black New Orleans and Native American Communities

This paper examines the displacement of Black residents in post-Katrina New Orleans, arguing it mirrors a continuation of the historical dispossession experienced by Indigenous peoples in the United States. While Hurricane Katrina served as the immediate catalyst, the research demonstrates a deeper, systemic pattern of racial exclusion. This paper traces a historical timeline, revealing how racist housing policies relegated Black communities to low-lying, flood-prone areas, mirroring tactics employed during Indigenous removal acts. Furthermore, the analysis uncovers the devaluation of Black-owned property, highlighting its parallels to the historical undervaluing of Indigenous land and eventual displacement. The paper also explores the role of environmental racism and religious narratives in justifying both Indigenous dispossession and the suffering of Black New Orleanians. By establishing these connections, the research contributes to a broader understanding of settler colonialism in America, demonstrating how its legacy continues to shape contemporary displacement patterns.

Storyville's Shadows of Desire: Unveiling the Plight of Black and Mixed-Race Sex Workers in New Orleans

This paper examines the mythologized reality of Storyville, New Orleans' infamous red-light district. While often romanticized as a cradle of jazz innovation and female liberation, the lived experiences of sex workers, particularly Black and mixed-race women, paint a far grimmer picture. This research dismantles the popular narrative of Storyville as a haven of free expression, exposing the harsh realities of exploitation and abuse faced by the women who lived here. Through analysis of historical documents, police records, and personal accounts, the paper unveils the pervasive presence of sexual violence, including rape, assault, and coercion. Furthermore, the research explores the racist and classist power structures that relegated Black and mixed-race women to the most vulnerable positions within the sex trade. By dispelling the myths surrounding Storyville, this paper sheds light on the oppressive dynamics that governed this segregated vice district. The research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of sex work in the early 20th century, highlighting the complex interplay between race, gender, and economic realities that shaped the lives of women in Storyville.

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A special thank you to my cohort friends, Jamie Lukow and Grace Brooks, for all the very-needed Mellow Mushroom and boba tea meets after class, I am deeply grateful to have met them both.

I would like to extend thanks to a few amazing people, starting with my wonderful parents and little sister, Rodney, Christy, and Alyssa for providing me with unmitigated support, love, and care. My parents' never-ending support has carried me to places I never thought I would go. I could not have done it without them. A thank you to my boyfriend, Joseph, for consistently showing up for me, loving me, and being a shoulder to cry on. Lastly, a special thanks to my godparents, Dan and Liz, for encouraging me to continue my education, supporting me, and believing in me. I am forever grateful for every one of you.

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmothers, Lillian and Delores, and my great-aunt whom I call grandmother, Anna Mae. Beautiful, willful women, I love you all.

Chapter 1: Intellectual Biography

When I submitted my application for William & Mary's M.A. program in December 2022, I was seven months out of college and working a job I knew was not my passion. I did not initially plan on returning to school anytime soon, but I realized I had to pursue my calling, as it was nudging me. To do so, I needed to obtain a master's degree, and since it had been my dream to attend William & Mary out of high school, I decided to take the plunge and apply. My desire to study history began when I was in high school. Having one parent from New Orleans and one from Williamsburg, two culturally rich and historically significant areas, it is unsurprising that history would be my calling. After receiving my B.A. in May 2022, I realized I still felt unfulfilled because I wanted to expand my research interests, including Louisiana Creole, New Orleans, and Gulf South histories.

When I started the program, I knew I wanted to do a paper about Hurricane Katrina, but I wanted to wait until I had a semester of grad school under my belt to do such a paper. Last semester, my research focused on the women of Storyville, a red-light district in New Orleans from 1897 to 1917. This paper, titled *Storyville's Shadows of Desire*, sought to unpack many of the myths of Storyville, highlighting the gruesome realities that many women in the district endured. A common theme I have noticed in history, especially history that men recollect, tends to leave out women's experiences. Storyville is looked at in popular history as the birthplace of jazz, a free-for-all place where many women could become 'entrepreneurs,' but this does not tell the whole story. Many women, especially Black women and other women of color, poor White women, and immigrant women were subjected to deplorable conditions, sexual and

physical abuse, and a tarnished reputation, making it harder for them to move up in life. To be associated with Storyville as a woman was to receive a scarlet letter.

Despite the horrors that women in Storyville endured, men were rarely, if ever, reprimanded for their acts of violence against these women and children. Learning about the significant presence of children who lived in this district greatly disturbed me, too. My goal with this paper was to highlight a story about women that often is untold and brushed off. The summer before I wrote this paper, I went to the former site of Storyville, which is now a mixed-income apartment complex, and I was overcome with emotions. I am deeply spiritual and felt an intense, heavy energy come over me as I walked around the former site. That was when I knew this was the paper I had to write about. One of my biggest goals as a historian is to recall the history of Southeast Louisiana correctly. Naturally, I ran into many roadblocks while writing this paper because of the clandestine nature of Storyville and the city tearing down what was left of history over 75 years ago. Still, I believe I got my point out there and effectively based on what I found. Newspaper articles, interviews, and archaeological findings were my most prominent anchor while writing this. Popular history narratives constantly romanticize New Orleans, and the recollection of Storyville was no stranger to this. Ultimately, *Storyville's Shadows of Desire* addressed both the misogyny of neglecting the stories of women in Louisiana and debunking popular history about Louisiana.

My second thesis was also very emotional for me to write. As the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina is fast approaching, I felt compelled to write about a storm that deeply impacted my loved ones. This past summer in New Orleans was deeply emotional, and something snapped in me when I overheard a conversation in

the French Quarter about Creole people. I was sitting in Jackson Square and was eavesdropping on different tourist conversations. I kept hearing people refer to Creole people as if we no longer exist or as if we are mystical and hard to find, and it reminded me of the way that Native American people are commonly spoken about, hence the myth of the vanishing Indian. The parallels and effects of settler colonialism felt eerily similar to me. I looked around the city and realized how different things have become. I did not hear as many Southeast Louisiana accents as I did before the pandemic, I did not see as many correctly done second-line parades, and I saw noise ordinances being enforced. I was shocked and sad. I do not recall New Orleans before Katrina, as it happened when I was four. However, as the years go by, the soul of New Orleans is slowly being stripped away and replaced by transplants. The pandemic exacerbated this, and I plan on expanding this subject in a book in which I will follow a timeline of events, but for the sake of the length of this paper, I focused on Hurricane Katrina. Another major reason I wrote this paper was to break down how it was not simply Hurricane Katrina that led to the displacement of 100,000 Black people from New Orleans; it was the culmination of decades of meticulous systemic oppression that caused it.

This paper, titled *Lost Lands, Lost Heritage*, looked at a history of how Black New Orleanians went from being enslaved to disenfranchised to removed, and now, are being replaced, and how this parallels with the struggles of Indigenous peoples in America. I also highlighted the subsequent cultural commodification and appropriation that many Black people are not benefitting from. It reminded me a great deal of what has been the continued plight of Indigenous peoples, especially the Biloxi-Chitimacha-

Choctaw tribe and the Houma tribe in Louisiana. My research methods for this paper heavily relied on government documents, newspaper articles, court cases, and personal accounts. I plan on presenting this paper next year at a conference in New Orleans hosted by the American Studies Association, as they are commemorating the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

Upon matriculation from William & Mary, I will complete an internship with the Historic New Orleans Collection this summer. I will catalog and archive various decorative art materials in New Iberia and New Orleans. The opportunity to do this internship is a dream come true, as my goal is to write a book on Southeast Louisiana history and to work in history down there. These past two semesters, I completed a fantastic apprenticeship in Special Collections as an Archivist Assistant. I worked extensively with Afua Ferdnance, who trained me and prepared me for this line of work. I look forward to my future endeavors, and I am deeply grateful to everyone I have worked with and all that I have learned at William & Mary for preparing me to do so.

Chapter 2: Lost Lands, Lost Heritage: Examining Displacement and Cultural Exploitation in Black New Orleans and Native American Communities

Definitions:

Settler Colonialism: Settler colonialism is an ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of indigenous peoples and cultures. Essentially hegemonic in scope, settler colonialism normalizes the continued settler occupation, exploiting lands and resources to which indigenous peoples have genealogical relationships. Settler colonialism includes interlocking forms of oppression, including racism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism.

Louisiana Creole: Creole has many different definitions, and Louisiana Creole is an ethnicity specific to the Creoles of Louisiana. It is for any race; in Louisiana, Creole generally means a person or people of mixed French colonial, African American, and Native American ancestry. For the sake of this paper, I am explicitly speaking on Black people from Louisiana who are Creole and Black Louisiana Creole culture.

Parish: In Louisiana, counties are called parishes. Note: Orleans Parish IS New Orleans, the terms are interchangeable. Most other parishes in Louisiana have multiple cities or towns in it.

Introduction

Upon the time Louisiana was purchased by America in 1803, over 5,000 Native Americans lived in the Orleans Territory, which is now known as Louisiana. The Louisiana Purchase itself was an extreme act of violence, as it was a decision that brought into question the very rights and sovereignty of Indigenous Louisianans.¹ The territory consisted of but was not limited to, the Houma, Biloxis, Chitimachas, Bayogoula, Okelousa, Choctaws, Chaouachas, Alabamas, Attakapas, Tunicas, Caddos, Apalaches, Opelousas, Coushattas, among many others.² The area that we now know as the Louisiana Natives once knew New Orleans as the Choctaw word ‘Bulbancha,’ which meant ‘a place of many tongues,’ and was the name that most Louisiana tribes commonly recognized it as.³ Over time, many Louisiana tribes near the modern-day Gulf of Mexico, Mississippi Valley, and Gulf Coast spoke in a language that was called Mobilian Jargon, considered a pidgin that all of the tribes in the area knew and one that European settlers came to know, primarily used for trade.⁴ Although this paper will mainly focus on modern New Orleans issues and histories, it is essential to keep in the back of our minds that it was and is Indigenous people who occupied these lands first. Their cultural influences remain relevant throughout the state, especially city, town, and parish names. Native Americans have heavily influenced Louisiana Creole culture, as

¹ National Archives. “Louisiana Purchase Treaty (1803),” May 20, 2021. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/louisiana-purchase-treaty>.

² American Library Association. “Indigenous Tribes of New Orleans & Louisiana.” <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/nola-tribes#:~:text=The%20original%20inhabitants%20of%20the,throughout%20what%20is%20now%20Louisiana>.

³ Perez, Frank. “What’s in a Name? Bulbancha and Mobilian Jargon.” *French Quarter Journal*, March 7, 2023. <https://www.frenchquarterjournal.com/archives/whats-in-a-name-bulbancha-and-mobilian-jargon>.

⁴ Perez, Frank. “What’s in a Name? Bulbancha and Mobilian Jargon.” *French Quarter Journal*, March 7, 2023. <https://www.frenchquarterjournal.com/archives/whats-in-a-name-bulbancha-and-mobilian-jargon>.

many Indigenous people in Louisiana themselves are Creole.⁵ Traditions such as Mardi Gras Indians, which began as a homage from Black New Orleanians to Indigenous New Orleanians who helped them escape slavery, continue to reflect the Indigenous influence in Louisiana. Though some of the tribes I listed are now considered extinct as a result of violent settler colonialism, despite erasure and genocidal attempts, Indigenous people are still alive and well throughout Louisiana, with a population of 31,657, according to the 2020 Census.⁶ Natives in Louisiana have always existed and continue to, through their resiliency.

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Southeast Louisiana, and the aftermath opened a can of worms of inequality that had festered in New Orleans for generations. The impact of Hurricane Katrina was monumental for everyone, and rebuilding was a challenging feat, but a closer look at the aftermath revealed a disturbing pattern. Black residents, especially single-mother households, had a more difficult time rebuilding and were displaced at far higher rates. Hurricane Katrina accelerated the death of Louisiana Creole culture⁷, the loss of a large chunk of the Black New Orleans population, and the rampant gentrification of New Orleans. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was not a random misfortune; it mirrored a long history of racial injustice deeply embedded in the very foundation of the United States. This parallel goes back to the legacy of settler colonialism. Settler colonialism rears its ugly

⁵ CSUN University Library. "Creole Culture in New Orleans, Louisiana," July 14, 2023. <https://library.csun.edu/SCA/Peek-in-the-Stacks/creole>.

⁶ Bureau, U.S. Census. "Louisiana's Population Was 4,657,757 in 2020." Census.gov, July 17, 2023. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/louisiana-population-change-between-census-decade.html>.

⁷ "Katrina May Be Death Knell for Creole Culture." NBCNews.com, September 8, 2005. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna9245108>.

head in copious ways, one of its primary facets being removal/displacement. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina exposed the historical fault lines of discriminatory practices in the state and country overall. The storm's impact was not coincidental; it accelerated the process of stolen land and the ongoing struggle for belonging.

Indigenous peoples in the Americas thrived in their lands for centuries, developing hundreds of varying cultures, spiritual practices, languages, and a deep reverence for the natural world. However, the arrival of European colonists ushered in an era of brutality. Through years of warfare, enslavement, forced treaties, and confinement onto reservations – often located on barren or undesirable land, Native American tribes were systematically stripped of their identities, land, and cultures. This essay explores this ongoing struggle, examining how the principles of settler colonialism have reverberated across generations and how the residual effects have impacted not only Native Americans but also Black New Orleanians. The dispossession, displacement, and commodification of Black New Orleanians and Creole culture have eerily similar tones to that of Indigenous people.

Author Tiya Miles, a history professor at Harvard University, wrote an article titled *Beyond a Boundary: Black Lives and the Settler-Native Divide*, and in this, Miles examines the role of Black Americans in the intersection of the settler-native divide. Miles explains the necessity of understanding the fact that Black Americans do indeed have a hand, whether it is direct or indirect, in the dispossession of Indigenous people's lands, but the logic behind it is not the same as that of European colonizers. She argues, "Black communities do indeed benefit from the dispossession of indigenous lands... Nevertheless, we can and should account for the desperate quest for survival in

the African American relationship with the settler state, particularly in the first generations to emerge from chattel slavery." ⁸

Black people were brought to the Americas to fuel the settler-colonial complex, and according to Miles, they had two choices: to either die or to make a home on Indigenous land.⁹ Following the end of slavery, Black Americans sought to survive by any means necessary. Disconnected from their ancestral lands by hundreds of years and lacking the resources to attempt to reconnect with Africa, the only option for most was to remain in America and participate in a colonial state. This was a choice, one that negatively impacted Indigenous peoples, but as Miles stated, "The Afro-settler is an exo-settler, pushed by exigencies of exodus and exile and (almost) always exogenous to the settler state."¹⁰ Despite being a participant in the settler states of the United States, for the sake of survival, Black Americans were never seen as fully part of it. Black Americans and Indigenous Americans have had a complicated relationship with one another in America, and the root cause of that is settler colonialism. This historical context resonates with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Miles' work highlights the power imbalances at play. Black communities, both historically in the West and post-Katrina New Orleans, faced exploitation by those in power. The inadequate response after the hurricane left them vulnerable to displacement by developers, mirroring the historical marginalization of Indigenous communities forced onto undesirable lands.

⁸ Miles, Tiya. "Beyond a Boundary: Black Lives and the Settler-Native Divide." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2019): 417–26. <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.76.3.0417>.

⁹ Miles, Tiya. "Beyond a Boundary: Black Lives and the Settler-Native Divide." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2019): 417–26. <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.76.3.0417>.

¹⁰ Miles, Tiya. "Beyond a Boundary: Black Lives and the Settler-Native Divide." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2019): 417–26. <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.76.3.0417>.

Furthermore, both groups experienced a loss of cultural identity due to displacement. Indigenous cultural practices were disrupted by removal from their ancestral lands, and Katrina similarly fragmented Black communities and threatened their cultural survival.

In *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang also break down the complexities of settler-colonialism as it pertains to settlers of color, and this provides the necessary framework for beginning to understand how Black Americans, who were formerly enslaved, fall into the settler-native-slave paradigm. “Not unique, the United States, as a settler colonial nation-state, also operates as an empire - utilizing external forms and internal forms of colonization simultaneously to the settler colonial project. This means, and this is perplexing to some, that dispossessed people are brought onto seized Indigenous land through other colonial projects. Other colonial projects include enslavement... In this set of settler-colonial relations, colonial subjects who are displaced by external colonialism, as well as racialized and minoritized by internal colonialism, still occupy and settle stolen Indigenous land. Settlers are diverse, not just of white European descent, and include people of color, even from other colonial contexts.”¹¹ This is imperative to keep in mind throughout this paper. Though this paper addresses the displacement and commodification of Black New Orleanians and Black Louisiana Creole culture through a comparative lens to that of the displacement and commodification of Indigenous Americans and Indigenous culture, the overall way that settler-colonialism has impacted these groups is different. However, while the historical context of displacement differs—both groups face similar struggles

¹¹ Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1: 6–7.

for survival and the preservation of their cultural identities and land—the very cultures deemed inconvenient or expendable are often later fetishized and commodified, their essence reduced to trinkets and tourist attractions. Settler colonialism follows various steps, but this paper focuses on displacement and denial of culture/simultaneous cultural commodification. This topic is significant to me as a person who is a Louisiana Creole and whose family was significantly impacted by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. This paper seeks to honor the legacies of both Indigenous Louisianans and Louisiana Creoles.

Before Katrina

Hurricane Katrina was not the cause of the displacement; rather, the response was the straw that broke the camel's back. From the city's inception, racialized housing policies relegated Black New Orleanians to less desirable, flood-prone areas. In a similar manner to the way that Indigenous Americans were relegated to the worst, most undesirable parts of the United States after colonization, formerly enslaved Black Americans throughout the Jim Crow era would face a similar fate.¹² Antebellum slave quarters morphed into post-emancipation, Jim Crow-era Black neighborhoods, further cemented by redlining practices that denied Black residents access to mortgages in White neighborhoods. Naturally, wealthier White Louisianans with more power chose to settle in spaces that were on higher ground. When slavery ended, newly freed Black New Orleanians found themselves frustrated with the lack of desirable living options. In the early 1900s, various enactments and zoning ordinances were enforced to keep

¹² Flavelle, Christopher, and Kalen Goodluck. "Dispossessed, Again: Climate Change Hits Native Americans Especially Hard." *The New York Times*, June 27, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/27/climate/climate-Native-Americans.html>.

neighborhoods segregated. In 1917, the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Buchanan v. Warley* stated that racial zoning was unconstitutional.¹³ Despite this, in 1912, the New Orleans government passed Act 117 of 1912, authorizing the city to withhold permits for White or Black houses.¹⁴ Then, in 1924, Act 118 prohibited Black people and White people from owning homes in the same neighborhood unless the residents of the majority race granted the outsider permission through written consent.¹⁵ In 1927, the Supreme Court case *Harmon v. Tyler* deemed these acts unconstitutional, and this zoning was forced to end.¹⁶ Despite this, zoning that was considered ‘colorblind’ and ‘neutral’ still felt the residual effects of these ordinances, as New Orleans neighborhoods continued to stay homogenous and segregated for decades to come.

Zoning ordinances became weaponized in different ways, and the language around new laws and ordinances was muddy and often did not explicitly state race. As time progressed, new zoning ordinances were enforced, called single-family zones. Reinforced by the 1926 Supreme Court case *Euclid v. Ambler*, which declared apartment complexes a ‘nuisance’ to family neighborhoods, they appeared nationwide.¹⁷ Single-family zones prevent duplexes, apartments, townhomes, and any other form of multifamily housing from being built in these zones. The single-family zone made it difficult for Black Americans and other non-White Americans to participate in homeownership for a few reasons. Single-family zoning was a new way to create residential segregation and restrict Black Americans to the worst parts of a city, and in

¹³ “*Buchanan v. Warley*, 245 U.S. 60 (1917).” Justia Law. <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/245/60/>.

¹⁴ *Land Development Co. v. City of New Orleans*, 13 F.2d 898 (E.D. La. 1926)

¹⁵ *Land Development Co. v. City of New Orleans*, 13 F.2d 898 (E.D. La. 1926)

¹⁶ *Tyler v. Harmon*, 160 La. 943, 107 So. 704 (La. 1926)

¹⁷ *Euclid v. Ambler Co.*, 272 U.S. 365 . <https://casetext.com/case/village-of-euclid-ohio-v-ambler-realty-co>.

the case of New Orleans' Black population, this meant being in areas that are regarded as wastelands, usually overcrowded and flooded easily. Many Black families, especially those who were lower-income, lived in multi-family homes, and because of this, they were blocked from the ability to accrue money from real estate.¹⁸ President FDR's New Deal created the Home Owners' Loan Corporation for homeowners who needed help with their loans.¹⁹ It ended up perpetuating racial inequality. While aiming to stabilize the housing market by offering loan refinancing, the HOLC created maps that rated neighborhoods based on risk. These ratings, however, went beyond just housing quality and infrastructure. Neighborhoods with high Black populations were overwhelmingly assigned the worst rating (D), regardless of the actual condition of the homes. This effectively shut Black families out of the program, hindering their ability to purchase homes and build wealth. The HOLC maps, with their discriminatory practices, reinforced segregation by confining Black residents to neighborhoods deemed undesirable, limiting opportunities, and further entrenching racial disparities in housing and wealth accumulation.²⁰ According to author J. Brian Charles, "A neighborhood earned a red color if African Americans lived in it, even if it was a solidly middle-class neighborhood of single-family homes."²¹

In 1934, the National Housing Act of 1934 was passed, another New Deal act that created the Better Housing Program and ultimately the Federal Housing

¹⁸ "Redlining." Federal Reserve History. <https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/redlining>.

¹⁹ Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company, 2018.

²⁰ Charles, J. Brian. "Federal Housing Discrimination Still Hurts Home Values in Black Neighborhoods." *Governing*, April 21, 2021. <https://www.governing.com/archive/gov-redlining-race-real-estate-values-lc.html>.

²¹ Charles, J. Brian. "Federal Housing Discrimination Still Hurts Home Values in Black Neighborhoods." *Governing*, April 21, 2021. <https://www.governing.com/archive/gov-redlining-race-real-estate-values-lc.html>.

Administration.²² This made it much easier for the middle class to have access to homeownership because the mortgage terms were much more forgiving, but they favored single-family, White homes. The FHA insured mortgages on terms more lenient than ever before: 20 percent down payments with fully amortized payments over 20 years. In 1944, Veterans Affairs loans were created as a part of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, aka the GI Bill of Rights.²³ This act guaranteed home loans to military veterans, but Black veterans were constantly denied loans, regardless of their discharge or credit, based on being Black. According to Data Center Research, "By 1950, the FHA and Veterans Administration (VA) were insuring half of the nation's mortgages. Neither would approve financing for black applicants regardless of credit risk, nor would they insure loans in neighborhoods providing housing for blacks. For New Orleans, this meant returning GIs of any race could not get federally backed mortgage credit in "central city, the Irish Channel, the Lower Garden District [or] the older sections of the city with historically racially mixed population patterns."²⁴

These redlined zones became breeding grounds for poverty and limited mobility. Similarly, Native American tribes were systematically forced onto undesirable lands—barren wastelands, floodplains prone to rising rivers, or deserts with limited resources. The Indian Removal Act of 1830, signed into effect by President Andrew Jackson, forced more than 60,000 Native Americans to resettle west of the Mississippi River,

²² Fritz, M. Justine. "Federal Housing Administration (FHA)." Encyclopedia Britannica, December 17, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Federal-Housing-Administration>.

²³ Seven Decades of Success: A Brief History of the VA Home Loan. <https://www.veteransunited.com/valoans/seven-decades-success-history-va-home-loan/>.

²⁴ The Data Center. "Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk," April 4, 2018. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/gnocdc/reports/TDC-prosperity-brief-stacy-seicshnaydre-et-al-FINAL.pdf>.

clearing land for White settlers to occupy parts of the country that were more desirable to live in.²⁵ This was a deliberate strategy employed by the government to weaken tribal resistance and sever their connection to their ancestral homelands, which held cultural and religious significance. Subsequent enactments, laws, and court cases, such as *Johnson v. McIntosh*, ruled that Indigenous Americans did not have the right to sell their land, hold no title, and only 'have a right of occupancy.'²⁶ Though this Removal Act was instituted in 1830, the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 kickstarted rampant removal for many Indigenous people on or West of the Mississippi River.²⁷ In Louisiana specifically, many tribes, such as the Caddo Nation, who once lived in Louisiana but now live in Oklahoma, were deeply impacted by this Act.²⁸ In 1794, when Louisiana was under Spanish rule, Governor Carondelet freed most Indigenous people in Louisiana from slavery, but those who were freed from slavery had to remain on tribal land. When the United States purchased Louisiana in 1803, all of this changed. Many Natives who stayed in Louisiana were forced to lose a large portion of their land if they wanted to stay, while some were not allowed to stay at all.²⁹

²⁵ Office of the Historian. "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations." <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/indian-treaties>.

²⁶ Native Voices. "Supreme Court Rules American Indians Do Not Own Land - Timeline." <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/timeline/271.html#:~:text=In%20Johnson%20v.,no%20title%20to%20the%20land>.

²⁷ National Archives. "Louisiana Purchase Treaty (1803)," May 20, 2021. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/louisiana-purchase-treaty#:~:text=In%20this%20transaction%20with%20France,size%2C%20expanding%20the%20nation%20westward>.

²⁸ Marasco, Sue. "Indian (Native American) Removal." 64 Parishes, December 20, 2012. <https://64parishes.org/entry/indian-native-american-removal>.

²⁹ Marasco, Sue. "Indian (Native American) Removal." 64 Parishes, December 20, 2012. <https://64parishes.org/entry/indian-native-american-removal>.

The Indian Removal Act isolated Native Americans, but in 1953 and 1956, the sinister Indian Relocation Acts did something more subtle. Where the 1830 Act forcibly relocated eastern tribes west of the Mississippi, often onto harsh, resource-scarce lands, the 1953 and 1956 Acts took a more subtle approach, cloaked in benevolence. It encouraged Native Americans to leave reservations for urban areas, promising vocational training and assimilation into White society. According to the National Archives, the 1953 and 1956 Indian Relocation Act ended a great deal of government support and federal aid to Indigenous communities and ended the protected trust status of Native land.³⁰ The 1953 and 1956 Act also limited healthcare and other social services for Indigenous peoples. While the 1830 Act used brutal force, the 1953 and 1956 Acts used the lure of opportunity to achieve the same goal: the elimination of distinct Native American communities, albeit through assimilation rather than outright removal.³¹ Redlining and removal/relocation acts aimed to confine marginalized groups to undesirable locations, limiting their opportunities and resources and ultimately contributing to their erasure. While the methods differed, the underlying goal remained: to disenfranchise, weaken, and ultimately remove a group deemed inconvenient or a threat to the dominant power structure.

³⁰ "American Indian Urban Relocation." National Archives and Records Administration. <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/indian-relocation.html#:~:text=In%201953%2C%20the%20U.S.%20Congress,a%20voluntary%20urban%20relocation%20program.>

³¹ "American Indian Urban Relocation." National Archives and Records Administration. <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/indian-relocation.html#:~:text=In%201953%2C%20the%20U.S.%20Congress,a%20voluntary%20urban%20relocation%20program.>

Hurricane Betsy

This extreme level of exclusion leads to limited spaces to live. Many Black New Orleanians built homes in the Lower Ninth Ward themselves. The Lower Ninth Ward, a part of New Orleans that is 98% Black and one of the lowest points in New Orleans, ultimately faced the most severe amount of devastation following Hurricane Katrina. The reality of the Black New Orleanians' plight becomes exceedingly clearer.³² In 1965, when Hurricane Betsy, a Category Four hurricane, hit New Orleans, the Lower Ninth Ward was the most affected. Hurricane Betsy was New Orleans' worst disaster since the yellow fever epidemic of 1905 and the worst hurricane to hit New Orleans until Hurricane Katrina in 2005.³³ The Lower Ninth Ward was one of the few areas that had a significant amount of Black homeownership during Jim Crow, considered the 'backatown', and it was one of the most undesirable places to live due to constant flooding.

Many Black residents, like Lucille Duminy, a survivor of both Hurricane Betsy and Hurricane Katrina, described hearing a bomb go off when the floodwalls of the Industrial Canal collapsed in 1965.³⁴ Though this has been constantly dismissed as a myth, there is a reason why many people believe it to be true. During the Great Flood of 1927, Governor O.H. Simpson later admitted to dynamiting the Mississippi River levee to save New Orleans, resulting in tens of thousands of people in surrounding parishes being

³² "The Forgotten People of New Orleans': Community, Vulnerability, and the Lower Ninth Ward." *The Journal of American History*. <http://archive.oah.org/special-issues/katrina/Landphair.html>.

³³ Remnick, David. "High Water." *The New Yorker*, September 26, 2005. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/10/03/high-water>.

³⁴ Rousseau, John E., "25,000 Homeless Being Cared for in Many Evacuation Centers," *New Orleans Louisiana Weekly*, September 18, 1965.

displaced.³⁵ In addition to this, the claims of the government intentionally destroying the Lower Ninth Ward were not unfounded. According to the Sewerage and Water Board report, government officials channeled the floodwater to gather higher in the Lower Ninth Ward. The account outlined a plan that engineers had to focus on a siphon running under the Industrial Canal and plan on containing the majority of the water in the Lower Ninth Ward.³⁶ In the Lower Ninth Ward, over 6,000 homes were flooded, the highest concentration of flooding in the entire city.³⁷ Following the destruction, the relief program that ensued was not a grant program, rather, it was a loan program offered by the Small Business Administration. Folks who lost everything had to utilize loans to replenish what they lost, causing them to be further impoverished and disenfranchised.³⁸ On the contrary, many residents were unable to receive even that, forcing them to relocate elsewhere or to make do with a flood-damaged, dilapidated home. There was no sense of urgency or concern for these citizens, and they reported being treated as an afterthought.³⁹ Betsy's wrath disproportionately impacted Black residents living in lower-lying, historically marginalized areas. These areas, often created through discriminatory policies that concentrated Black populations away from resources, were more susceptible to flooding and disaster. The response to Hurricane

³⁵ Bradshaw, Jim. "Great Flood of 1927." 64 Parishes, February 19, 2024. <https://64parishes.org/entry/great-flood-of-1927-adaptation>.

³⁶ Sewerage and Water Board Report; Thomas R. Forrest, "Hurricane Betsy: Analysis of Organizational Response" (Working Paper #27, Disaster Research State University, December 1970), <http://udspace.udel.edu>

³⁷ Biennu, Germain. "Research Guides: Louisiana Hurricanes: Hurricane Betsy, 1965." Research Guides at Louisiana State University. <https://guides.lib.lsu.edu/Hurricanes/Betsy>.

³⁸ Horowitz, Andy. "Hurricane Betsy and the Politics of Disaster in New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward, 1965-1967." *The Journal of Southern History* 80, no. 4 (2014): 893–934. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43918106>.

³⁹ Horowitz, Andy. "Hurricane Betsy and the Politics of Disaster in New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward, 1965-1967." *The Journal of Southern History* 80, no. 4 (2014): 893–934. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43918106>.

Betsy is a reminder of how the legacy of settler colonialism in New Orleans continues to impact Black communities today and a foreshadowing of what Hurricane Katrina had yet to bring. It reflects that the leaders of New Orleans saw Black New Orleanians and their homes as disposable.

During Katrina

The levee breaches of Hurricane Katrina resulted in the deaths of at least 1,170 Louisiana residents, 50% of the deaths were Black Louisianans and over 75, and the storm displaced over a million residents along the Gulf Coast.⁴⁰ Surrounding parishes like St. John the Baptist, St. Bernard, Jefferson, and Plaquemines Parish were also devastated. When the levees broke on August 29, 2005, the first levee breach was on the Industrial Canal close to the Orleans and St. Bernard Parish line, and the Ninth Ward was the first area to be affected by this breach.⁴¹ It took the federal government days to respond to Hurricane Katrina, leaving civilians to fend for themselves, swimming through filthy water, and suffering from heat exhaustion. Those who did not or could not evacuate stayed in their homes or went to the Superdome or the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. Thousands of people were stuck in their attics and roofs and deceased bodies floated through the streets. Police officers treated Black survivors as criminals and the media labeled them refugees. White vigilantes shot Black people with no recourse.⁴² Black New Orleanians who were searching for food and water were

⁴⁰ Deaths Directly Caused by Hurricane Katrina. https://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Center-PHCH/Center-CH/stepi/specialstudies/2014PopwellRatard_KatrinaDeath_PostedOnline.pdf.

⁴¹ "Infrastructure Failure-Levee Failure ." Hazard Mitigation Plan, The City of New Orleans. <https://ready.nola.gov/hazard-mitigation/hazards/infrastructure-failure-levee-failure/>.

⁴² Thompson, A.C. "Post-Katrina, White Vigilantes Shot African-Americans With Impunity." ProPublica, December 19, 2008. <https://www.propublica.org/article/post-katrina-white-vigilantes-shot-african-americans-with-impunity>.

labeled as looters, while White New Orleanians who were doing the same thing were labeled as searchers.⁴³ A study done in 2011 found that 93% of the people stranded in the days following the storm were Black.⁴⁴

Stories of Black New Orleanians senselessly murdering and assaulting others made national news, despite these claims being highly exaggerated, continued to perpetuate and reinforce negative stereotypes of Black victims, and contributed to the lack of public concern and government assistance.⁴⁵ The myth of Black New Orleanians acting like "savages" during Hurricane Katrina was not just merely prejudice, it had deadly consequences.⁴⁶ These racist narratives dehumanized Black residents, making it easier for the public to distance themselves from their suffering and downplay the urgency of the crisis. Hundreds if not thousands of news articles labeled Black survivors as thugs and criminals, merely for behaving the same way everyone else was after being completely abandoned by the government.⁴⁷ Public apathy and disinterest grew as people believed the situation was under control or caused by the residents themselves. This dangerous narrative also justified excessive police brutality, with officers viewing Black citizens through a lens of suspicion and fear. The unarmed

⁴³ Mikkelson, David. "Fact Check: Were Hurricane Katrina 'looting' Photographs Captioned Differently Based on Race?" Snopes, September 1, 2005. <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/hurricane-katrina-looters/>.

⁴⁴ Khanjar, Niya. "Hurricane Katrina: Analyzing the Damage and Environmental Injustices Fifteen Years Later — Community Engagement, Environmental Justice & Health." *Community Engagement, Environmental Justice & Health*, October 6, 2020. <https://www.ceejh.center/blog/hurricane-katrina-analyzing-the-damage-ams7n-bfnhh-t3pgb>.

⁴⁵ Burnett, John. "At a Shelter of Last Resort, Decency Prevailed over Depravity." NPR, August 25, 2015. <https://www.npr.org/2015/08/25/431909047/at-a-shelter-of-last-resort-decency-prevailed-over-depravity>.

⁴⁶ Potow, Mark. "Radical Right Uses Katrina Tragedy to Depict Blacks as Savages." Southern Poverty Law Center. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2005/radical-right-uses-katrina-tragedy-depict-blacks-savages>.

⁴⁷ Shin, Paul H.B. "Thugs' Reign of Terror. Marauders Rampage after Troops Leave, Say Victims." New York Daily News, September 9, 2005. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2005/09/04/thugs-reign-of-terror-marauders-rampage-after-troops-leave-say-victims-2/>.

shooting on the Danziger Bridge reflected this; two civilians were killed, and four were injured, all of them were Black and had not committed any crime.⁴⁸ The police were lined up on the border of Jefferson Parish and Orleans Parish, halting the overwhelmingly Black population from leaving devastated Orleans Parish.⁴⁹ The perception of chaos fueled by these claims directly contributed to a slower government response, with officials less inclined to prioritize aid for a situation they believed was already out of control. The truth, of course, was that the majority of people were attempting to help one another. These false claims, however, had a profound impact on public perception and the government's response, highlighting the devastating consequences of racism in the face of disaster. Black New Orleanians were seen as a problem to be solved in the face of catastrophe, abandoned and disregarded by the government, and not a group that was seen as worthy of being helped.⁵⁰ The myth of meritocracy and racist narratives prevailed, eroding public empathy and justifying the prolonged response. Though different scenarios exist, the concept of marginalized people being blamed for their demise and for attempting to survive is a significant facet of settler colonialism. One example is the historical portrayal of the Lakota people during the Great Sioux War of 1876. Both groups faced a media firestorm that not only disregarded their suffering but actively painted them as the architects of their demise. In New Orleans, images of looting, thugs, and criminals, often sensationalized and lacking

⁴⁸ Hersher, Rebecca. "New Orleans To Pay \$13.3 Million Over Police Killings In 2005." *NPR*, December 20, 2016. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/12/20/506282657/new-orleans-to-pay-13-3-million-over-police-killings-after-hurricane-katrina>.

⁴⁹ Burnett, John. "Evacuees Were Turned Away at Gretna, La." *NPR*, September 20, 2005. <https://www.npr.org/2005/09/20/4855611/evacuees-were-turned-away-at-gretna-la>.

⁵⁰ Sweeney, Kathryn A. "THE BLAME GAME: Racialized Responses to Hurricane Katrina." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 3, no. 1 (2006): 161–74. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X06060115>.

context, fueled a narrative of Black criminality that overshadowed the desperate situation residents faced after the government left them to die.

Indigenous Americans throughout their history have been the subject of dehumanizing portrayals and public shaming for either defending themselves, attempting to survive, or repeating behaviors that would be acceptable if done by White people. For example, the Lakota people, who were fighting for their lives, were demonized in newspapers of the time as savages who initiated conflict with the US government.⁵¹ This narrative conveniently ignored the Lakota perspective of defending their sacred Black Hills from encroachment and the broken treaties that fueled their resistance.⁵² The disregard for the plight of both groups extended beyond the media and contributed to their degradation and programmed demonization. Black residents were left to die in the aftermath, their needs seemingly an afterthought in the face of a dominant narrative that minimized their suffering. The Lakota people saw their pleas for self-determination and respect for treaties fall on deaf ears, so they took matters into their own hands and were demonized for it.

After Katrina

The federal response to Hurricane Katrina was one of the government's biggest failures of the 21st century. The response was so botched that former president George W. Bush, amongst others, put out a report recalling the mistakes made during and after

⁵¹ RareNewspapers.com. "The Great Sioux War of 1876... Post Custer Massacre... ." <https://www.rarenewspapers.com/view/579687?imagelist=1>.

⁵² National Archives. "Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868)," September 7, 2021. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/fort-laramie-treaty>.

the storm.⁵³ Weather forecasters warned government officials that the storm would be catastrophic, but they did not adequately respond. Following Hurricane Katrina, a big chunk of New Orleans's population, regardless of race, was displaced. Many residents who stayed were overwhelmingly poor and/or Black, when they were finally evacuated five days after the storm, many were displaced and not told where they were being taken, and children were displaced from their families.⁵⁴ In 2000, the population of New Orleans was 484,674, 323,392 of which were Black New Orleanians and 128,871 were White New Orleanians.⁵⁵ As of 2024, the Black population is 216,866 and the White population is 123,390.⁵⁶ This is not to say that White New Orleanians did not struggle to return or lose a lot. Everyone suffered greatly. However, there has been a large discrepancy in the return and fund allocation for Black New Orleanians versus White New Orleanians since 2005. This paper segment focuses directly on the disparities between White and Black residents of New Orleans because they were the two largest populations and examples of the most significant discrepancies.

In 2015, ten years after Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana State University reported on a survey done by the Reilly Center's Public Policy Research Lab, and its findings reported on the racial disparity in how Black New Orleanians versus White New

⁵³ Chapter Five: Lessons Learned. "Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned." <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned/chapter5.html>.

⁵⁴ Reckdahl, Katy. "A Decade Ago, Katrina Deprived Thousands of Children of Their Education." *The Atlantic*, April 2, 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/04/the-lost-children-of-katrina/389345/>.

⁵⁵ Babb, Nathan. "'Baby Won't You Please Come Home:': Studying Ethnoracial Segregation Trends in New Orleans Pre and Post Hurricane Katrina." *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, May 5, 2021. <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/baby-wont-you-please-come-home-studying-ethnoracial-segregation-trends-new-orleans-pre-and-post>.

⁵⁶ New Orleans, Louisiana Population 2024. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/new-orleans-la-population>.

Orleanians felt about how much the city and state have recovered since Hurricane Katrina.⁵⁷ A whopping 80% of White residents said they felt the state of Louisiana has recovered, while 59% of Black residents said they felt the state has NOT recovered.⁵⁸ According to the 2004 American Community Survey, in 2005, Black residents made up 69% of the population of Orleans Parish, and White residents made up 28%. Within a year after Hurricane Katrina, 70% of the White population was able to return, and only 42% of Black residents were able to.⁵⁹

Returning Home

There are multiple reasons why Black New Orleanians have had a more challenging time returning to New Orleans, and they are not coincidental; they reinforce and exacerbate previous patterns seen in the ways that storms have impacted the Black population. One cause of this was the rebuilding program called Road Home. Through a partnership between the Louisiana Recovery Authority and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Road Home program was established, and it was supposed to assist homeowners with rebuilding their homes post-Katrina. It was the most significant home reconstruction project that the United

⁵⁷ "Views of Recovery Ten Years after Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita." Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, August 24, 2015. <https://www.lsu.edu/manship/news/2015/08/24-ten-years-after-katrina.php>.

⁵⁸ "Views of Recovery Ten Years after Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita." Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, August 24, 2015. <https://www.lsu.edu/manship/news/2015/08/24-ten-years-after-katrina.php>.

⁵⁹ The Data Center. "Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk," April 4, 2018. https://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/rigging-the-real-estate-market-segregation-inequality-and-disaster-risk/.

States had ever seen, with \$11 billion in funds being allocated for it.⁶⁰ Those who needed to rebuild their homes were awarded relief money based on the value of their home before the storm hit and how much it cost to repair it. Stuck in historically segregated, lower-valued neighborhoods, Black residents received less rebuilding assistance due to the program's reliance on pre-storm property worth. Intimidating bureaucratic processes and the threat of contractor fraud further hampered their efforts. Due to the failure to address pre-existing inequalities, Black homeowners were left with fewer resources and more challenges, ultimately making it harder for them to rebuild their lives and reclaim their place in New Orleans.⁶¹

Modern Indigenous Peoples in Louisiana

In comparison, many of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw and Houma Nation tribal members, two separate Indigenous groups located in Isle de Jean Charles in South Terrebonne Parish in the Louisiana Gulf Coast, going back to the 1950s, have constantly been fighting for their right to exist.⁶² They are considered one of the first climate refugees in the country due to the island they inhabited, which is now almost completely eroded. The state recognizes the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe, but it is not federally recognized, making it unable to receive funding from government organizations like FEMA. The Houma Nation is not federally recognized, but the state

⁶⁰ Perry, James. "The Road Home' Is a Road to Nowhere for Black New Orleanians." Planners Network, October 10, 2010. <https://www.plannersnetwork.org/2010/10/the-road-home-is-a-road-to-nowhere-for-black-new-orleanians/>.

⁶¹ "Implementation of the Road Home Program Four Years After Hurricane Katrina." The Data Center, March 14, 2014. <https://www.datacenterresearch.org/presentation/implementation-of-the-road-home-program-four-years-after-hurricane-katrina/>.

⁶² Note, some of the Houma Nation live(d) on this island, but they are more spread out throughout the state.

recognizes them. The Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana is one of the four federally recognized Indigenous tribes in Louisiana, but the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw collectively are not. The Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe moved to Isle de Jean Charles following the Trail of Tears and the Indian Removal Act in the 1830s, essentially pushed to an undesirable living space because of anti-Indigenous laws.⁶³ Isle de Jean Charles was once over 22,000 acres in the land, and as of the past few years, only 320 remain. Though it is stated that the government is not directly displacing the tribe, this could not be further from the truth; years of neglect and settler-colonial policies from the government have pushed them to an unlivable place. Big oil and natural gas companies that use harsh extractions have contributed to land erosion and the destruction of soil vegetation in Isle de Jean Charles.⁶⁴ In 2010, an oil rig called Deepwater Horizon exploded, and many Native Louisianians, especially those of the Houma Nation, because of their lack of federal recognition, suffered greatly and received prolonged assistance. Alternatively, a Louisiana tribe named the Atakapa Ishak is neither state-recognized nor federally recognized. They are located in Southwest Louisiana and were devastated by the oil spill, and since 2010, the tribe has been at risk of cultural genocide, according to one of the Atakapa Ishak tribe members.⁶⁵ Comparatively, Hurricane Katrina caused nearly 8 million gallons of oil to spill into bodies of water in

⁶³ Sutter, John D. "There's No More Land." *CNN*, April 8, 2016.
<https://www.cnn.com/2016/04/08/opinions/sutter-isle-de-jean-charles-louisiana-climate/index.html>.

⁶⁴ "The Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Community and Their Land."
<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/biloxi-chitimacha-choctaw-community-and-their-land/>.

⁶⁵ Culture. "Oil Spill Threatens Native American 'Water' Village," June 9, 2010.
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/100608-us-oil-gulf-indians-video>.

Southeast Louisiana from multiple oil refineries, disproportionately impacting Black neighborhoods.⁶⁶

Going back to 1965, many residents noticed a large amount of land loss following Hurricane Betsy and a more violent climate.⁶⁷ Hurricane Katrina also exhausted the loss of land, contributing to further land loss for the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe and other tribes like the Houma Nation and the Pointe-au-Chien tribes. It is estimated that 4,500 Native Americans lost everything in Southeast Louisiana in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, and the Louisiana government has widely disregarded them, their struggles rarely making the news.⁶⁸ The myth of the disappearing Indian concept extended on towards the end of the paper, and the idea of ‘real’ Indians versus ‘fake’ Indians contributed to this lack of media coverage.⁶⁹ Because many tribes in Louisiana are not federally recognized, many received little, if any, assistance from the government. Specifically, the Biloxi-Chitimacha, the Point-au-Chien, and the Houma Nation did not receive FEMA aid or aid from the U.S. Bureau for Indian Affairs because of their lack of federal recognition.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Khanjar, Niya. “Hurricane Katrina: Analyzing the Damage and Environmental Injustices Fifteen Years Later — Community Engagement, Environmental Justice & Health.” *Community Engagement, Environmental Justice & Health*, October 6, 2020. <https://www.ceejh.center/blog/hurricane-katrina-analyzing-the-damage-ams7n-bfnhh-t3pgb>.

⁶⁷ Tribes & Climate Change. “Tribe: Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians.” Accessed May 10, 2024. https://www7.nau.edu/itep/main/tcc/Tribes/gc_choctaw.

⁶⁸ Collins, Robert. “Missed By The Mass Media: The Houma, Pointe-Au-Chien, And Hurricanes Katrina And Rita”. *American Indian Culture And Research Journal* 32 (2): 43-53.

⁶⁹ Collins, Robert. “Missed By The Mass Media: The Houma, Pointe-Au-Chien, And Hurricanes Katrina And Rita”. *American Indian Culture And Research Journal* 32 (2): 43-53.

⁷⁰ Cultural Survival. “US Tribes Aid Families in Wake of Hurricane Katrina.” <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/us-tribes-aid-families-wake-hurricane-katrina>.

Isle de Jean Charles is virtually unlivable at this point, and the Louisiana government has been making provisions for the tribe to be able to resettle in a place called New Isle. However, despite this, the tribe filed a civil rights complaint against the state, citing “serious and ongoing racial and ethnic discrimination.”⁷¹ One of the chiefs of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe, Albert Naquin, said that he believes the state decided to move out of the new city, and he says, “The state stole our plan to get the money, and now they are running off with it.”⁷² Additionally, this sentiment has been reiterated by the Choctaw Nation Chief Deme Naquin, who said, “We were mistreated as Native American Indians. We worked together to get the federal grant, but once the money was awarded, the state pushed us out.”⁷³ The Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe has been battling with the state since the move. Once the Office of Community Development received the money for the resettlement, the tribe was cut out of the planning process, with the fate of this new town still hanging in the balance.⁷⁴ Louisiana’s government consistently works to displace, uproot, and dispossess its Indigenous population by mismanaging funds and breaking promises that ultimately put Native populations in poverty or force them out.

⁷¹ Baurick, Tristan. “Louisiana Tribe Files Civil Rights Complaint over State’s New Isle Resettlement Project.” NOLA.com, December 22, 2023. https://www.nola.com/news/environment/tribe-files-civil-rights-complaint-over-resettlement-project/article_30ec67a4-a118-11ee-a364-cf243cee3308.html.

⁷² Jarvie, Jenny. “On a Sinking Louisiana Island, Many Aren’t Ready to Leave.” *Los Angeles Times*, April 23, 2019. <https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-jean-charles-sinking-louisiana-island-20190423-htmlstory.html>.

⁷³ Jarvie, Jenny. “On a Sinking Louisiana Island, Many Aren’t Ready to Leave.” *Los Angeles Times*, April 23, 2019. <https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-jean-charles-sinking-louisiana-island-20190423-htmlstory.html>.

⁷⁴ “Displaced Louisiana Tribe Files Civil Rights Complaint against State’s Office of Community Development.” EarthRights International, February 20, 2024. https://earthrights.org/media_release/displaced-louisiana-tribe-files-civil-rights-complaint-against-states-office-of-community-development/.

Disparities

Homeowners in historically White neighborhoods received significantly more money than those in historically Black neighborhoods, and this was true for homes of the same age, square footage, amount of damage, and land.⁷⁵ For example, according to the Data Center, “A Policy Link study of Road Home data concluded that an astounding 81 percent of recipients in New Orleans and 69 percent of those in other parishes who planned to rebuild did not have sufficient funds to cover repairs even when taking into account insurance and Road Home grants. Because grant awards were based on pre-storm home values rather than total repair costs, the average gap between damage estimates and rebuilding funds was \$36,000. Gaps were larger in lower-income and African American neighborhoods. For example, in the Lower Ninth Ward, the average gap was \$75,000.”⁷⁶ Following these discrepancies, in 2008, the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center filed a lawsuit against the Louisiana Recovery Authority and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, citing a violation of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. HUD agreed to settle in 2011, but by that time, the process to come back was too little, too late.⁷⁷

Another cause of displacement was eminent domain, which went hand-in-hand with the dissolution of housing projects. However, the eminent domain impacted other

⁷⁵ The Data Center. “Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk,” April 4, 2018. https://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/rigging-the-real-estate-market-segregation-inequality-and-disaster-risk/.

⁷⁶ “Implementation of the Road Home Program Four Years After Hurricane Katrina.” The Data Center, March 14, 2014.

⁷⁷ “Case: Road Home.” Legal Defense Fund. <https://www.naacpldf.org/case-issue/road-home/>.

parts of the city, too. Mirroring historical urban renewal projects, in 2008, the city decided that eminent domain was going to be used to demolish almost 300 homes and usurp land to build a Veterans Affairs and LSU hospital in Mid-City.⁷⁸ The neighborhood that was demolished for the building of these hospitals was almost 80% Black and was in a historic neighborhood.⁷⁹ Following Hurricane Katrina, many Black residents in this neighborhood worked tirelessly to rebuild their homes, and considering that this was a landmark neighborhood, many of these homes were generationally passed down and were sacred. On another note, the building of the LSU hospital essentially replaced Charity Hospital, and Charity Hospital was notable for assisting many Black and poor residents, which directly contributed to healthcare disparities.⁸⁰ Many homeowners in the neighborhood filed a lawsuit against the city because the amount they were given following the demolition was insufficient and not equivalent to the amount of money the land they were living on was worth.

Lack of flood insurance was another issue. Many Black residents, especially those in lower-income brackets, did not have flood insurance for multiple reasons. Firstly, in areas like the Lower Ninth Ward, the coverage was extremely expensive and more than many could afford. According to the Data Center, many homeowners were unaware that they were in a floodplain because of the outdated maps that mortgage

⁷⁸ Tidmore, Christopher. "Historic Black Neighborhood to Be Sacrificed in New Orleans." Los Angeles Sentinel, December 11, 2008. <https://lasentinel.net/historic-black-neighborhood-to-be-sacrificed-in-new-orleans.html>.

⁷⁹ U.S. Decennial Census, 2000, Census Tract 49, Block Group 3.

⁸⁰ Rubenfire, Adam. "Charity Hospital Replacement Opens a Decade after Katrina." Modern Healthcare, January 30, 2009. <https://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20150808/MAGAZINE/308089949/charity-hospital-replacement-opens-a-decade-after-katrina>.

banks and insurance companies were using.⁸¹ Many residents did not have flood insurance because those that did either, one, did not have enough insurance to cover the total loss, or two, had insurance previously, but when they had damage, the insurance did not help them.⁸² Many members of my family who reside in the area reported receiving minimal, if any, assistance from their flood insurance companies. According to the Data Center, “When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005 and the levees failed, the exclusionary and isolating housing policies of the previous century left New Orleanians particularly vulnerable to the coming floodwaters. Only 42 percent of African Americans were homeowners pre-Katrina, as compared to 56 percent of white households. The roughly 100,000 African American renter households in the city were much more susceptible to long-term displacement in the event of a disaster or prolonged evacuation...68 percent of African Americans facing displacement, as opposed to 43 percent of whites.”⁸³

Another cause of displacement was the dissolution of public housing. When public housing began in New Orleans, it was segregated from the beginning, following the passage of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937.⁸⁴ New Orleans was one of the first cities in the country to have public housing to provide housing for lower-income residents.

⁸¹ The Data Center. “Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk,” April 4, 2018. https://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/rigging-the-real-estate-market-segregation-inequality-and-disaster-risk/.

⁸² Bullard, R.D. & Wright, B. (2009). Introduction. In Bullard, R.D. & Wright, B. (Eds.). *Race, place, and environmental justice after Katrina: Struggles to reclaim, rebuild, and revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast*. (p. xxiii). Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

⁸³ The Data Center. “Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk,” April 4, 2018. https://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/rigging-the-real-estate-market-segregation-inequality-and-disaster-risk/.

⁸⁴ The National Plan to End Poverty. “Housing Act of 1937,” March 30, 2020. <https://nationalpovertyplan.org/timeline/housing-act-of-1933/>.

When it began, two housing projects were for White residents and four were for Black residents.⁸⁵ In 1941, the projects known as the New Orleans Housing Authority opened the Big Four for Black residents: Lafitte, Magnolia, Calliope, and St. Bernard. St. Thomas and the Iberville Projects, built over the former red-light district that was closed in 1917 and demolished in 1939, Storyville.⁸⁶ Following the next few decades, more housing complexes were built in the city, and by the 1970s, following White flight and desegregation, most projects were predominantly Black and poor, being notable for their deplorable conditions and neglect.⁸⁷ By the 1980s and 1990s, the already terrible conditions had deteriorated, and crime was out of control in these projects, with 40% of New Orleans' murders taking place within them.⁸⁸ Crime became so out of control in many projects that police officers would sometimes not come when called, in fear for their lives.⁸⁹ Despite complaints from residents, the Housing Authority of New Orleans put minimal effort into renovating and improving these housing projects. Despite these issues, public housing was difficult to secure in the city. By the early 2000s, over 5,000 families were housed in public housing, with a waiting list of almost 20,000 people. HANO was extremely mismanaged, and because of this, since 2002, HUD was

⁸⁵ Mahoney, Martha, "Law and Racial Geography: Public Housing and the Economy in New Orleans," *Stanford Law Review*, 42 (May 1990), 1251–90.

⁸⁶ The Times-Picayune - NOLA.com. "1941: The First Public Housing Complexes Are Built in New Orleans." https://web.archive.org/web/20111117003947/http://www.nola.com/175years/index.ssf/2011/11/1941_the_first_public_housing.html.

⁸⁷ Long, Alecia P. "Poverty Is the New Prostitution: Race, Poverty, and Public Housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans." *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (2007): 795–803. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25095141>.

⁸⁸ Staff, From Times, and Wire Reports. "NATION IN BRIEF : LOUISIANA : '89 Killings a Record for New Orleans." *Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 1989. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-12-19-mn-498-story.html>.

⁸⁹ Jumpshare. "Times-Picayune_1987-03-08_4.Png." <https://jumpshare.com/v/PO3FUqK5d7gvEdCdeuaM>.

responsible for many of the public housing decisions in New Orleans.⁹⁰ It is essential to remember this as the federal government, not just the local government, also had a hand in demolishing these housing projects. Regardless of these issues, these projects were home to many people, and the loss of them displaced thousands.

Years before Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans officials had already intended to eliminate public housing. Many of the housing projects, especially the historically White ones, were built on pieces of land that, over the years, many developers saw as attractive.⁹¹ For example, in 2001, the New Orleans Saints owner and others suggested tearing down the Iberville Projects, despite thousands of people living in it, to build a new Saints stadium.⁹² In 2004, Pres Kabacoff, a well-known developer in New Orleans, suggested partially tearing down the Iberville Projects to promote more tourism and to reinvigorate the city.⁹³ He envisioned creating an “Afro-Caribbean Paris” on Canal Street, despite this plan pushing out the people who fit that description. Kabacoff was not authorized to do this in 2004; however, he eventually got his wish in 2011, when Iberville was turned into a mixed-income community.⁹⁴ These are just a few examples:

⁹⁰ Quigley, Bill, and Godchaux, Sara. “Locked Out and Torn Down: Public Housing Post Katrina”, June 8, 2015. <https://billquigley.wordpress.com/2015/06/08/locked-out-and-torn-down-public-housing-post-katrina-by-bill-quigley-and-sara-h-godchaux/>.

⁹¹ Gratz, Roberta Brandes. “Who Killed Public Housing in New Orleans?” *The Nation*, June 2, 2015. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/requiem-bricks/>.

⁹² Greg Thomas, *The Times-Picayune*. “Saints Want to Raze Iberville Development, but Morial Says Favored Stadium Site Is Off-Limits.” *NOLA.com*, June 29, 2001. https://www.nola.com/sports/saints/saints-want-to-raze-iberville-development-but-morial-says-favored-stadium-site-is-off-limits/article_7c4b782e-37ea-5cad-8794-2c7fde977faf.html.

⁹³ Long, Alecia P. “Poverty Is the New Prostitution: Race, Poverty, and Public Housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans.” *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (2007): 795–803. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25095141>.

⁹⁴ Long, Alecia P. “Poverty Is the New Prostitution: Race, Poverty, and Public Housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans.” *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 3 (2007): 795–803. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25095141>.

the desire to tear down housing projects in New Orleans was brewing years before Katrina, and the devastation from the storm made it easier to complete this task.

In 2006, many displaced housing tenants filed a class-action lawsuit against the plan that HUD had to reduce the number of housing units from over 5,000 to 2,000.⁹⁵ In 2007, there was an eruption of protests between former project tenants and allies and the New Orleans City Council following their unanimous decision to tear down the remaining housing projects.⁹⁶ Former tenants were locked out of their apartments, many unable to retrieve their belongings, and lied to about what was going to happen next. Ultimately, the city decided to tear down 4,500 housing units and replace them with mixed housing.⁹⁷ Despite the protests and the number of people who needed public housing, HANO and HUD authorized the demolition of thousands of public housing apartments with no regard for those who needed it and false promises of replenishing the units. Following the decision to move towards mixed-income housing, many Black residents found themselves in a worse position than before. Federally-issued housing vouchers became the primary tool for low-income residents to find housing.⁹⁸ In 2010, over 90% of voucher users were Black, and surveys and audits completed by the

⁹⁵ WFMYStaff. "Lawsuit Alleges HUD Plan For New Orleans Housing Discriminates." *WFMY*, June 28, 2006. <https://www.wfmynews2.com/article/news/lawsuit-alleges-hud-plan-for-new-orleans-housing-discriminates/83-403324233>.

⁹⁶ NPR. "Violent Housing Protests Erupt in New Orleans." *NPR*, December 21, 2007. <https://www.npr.org/2007/12/21/17528960/violent-housing-protests-erupt-in-new-orleans>.

⁹⁷ Nossiter, Adam, and Leslie Eaton. "New Orleans Council Votes for Demolition of Housing." *The New York Times*, December 21, 2007. https://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/21/us/nationalspecial/21orleans.html?_r=1&ref=us&oref=slogin.

⁹⁸ The Data Center. "Expanding Choice and Opportunity in the Housing Choice Voucher Program," July 7, 2015. https://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/expanding-choice-and-opportunity-in-the-housing-choice-voucher-program/.

Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center identified discriminatory barriers.⁹⁹ In 2009, a GNOFHAC audit found that “landlords either refused to accept vouchers or imposed insurmountable requirements for voucher holders in 82 percent of the 100 rental tests conducted in the greater New Orleans area.”¹⁰⁰ Additionally, the report found that several landlords who claimed not to accept vouchers accepted them from White women but not from Black women.¹⁰¹ HANO has a history of being unresponsive and ineffective, deterring many landlords from participating in the voucher program.¹⁰² In 2014, another audit done by GNOFHAC reported that 44% of Black residents in mixed-income neighborhoods received less fair treatment than their White counterparts.¹⁰³ Housing choice and mixed-income ended up causing more Black and low-income residents to have a more challenging time finding housing than they previously did. Hurricane Katrina marked the virtual end of public housing in New Orleans, resulting in many poor, overwhelmingly Black residents moving elsewhere. Despite the displacement of thousands of families, upon the completion of the demolitions, conservative Baton Rouge representative Richard Baker remarked, “We

⁹⁹ The Data Center. “Expanding Choice and Opportunity in the Housing Choice Voucher Program,” July 7, 2015. https://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/expanding-choice-and-opportunity-in-the-housing-choice-voucher-program/.

¹⁰⁰ The Data Center. “Expanding Choice and Opportunity in the Housing Choice Voucher Program,” July 7, 2015. https://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/expanding-choice-and-opportunity-in-the-housing-choice-voucher-program/.

¹⁰¹ The Data Center. “Expanding Choice and Opportunity in the Housing Choice Voucher Program,” July 7, 2015. https://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/expanding-choice-and-opportunity-in-the-housing-choice-voucher-program/.

¹⁰² Evans, Desiree. “4 Years After Katrina: Housing Crisis Continues, Low-Income Renters Face Discrimination.” Facing South, August 21, 2009. <https://www.facingsouth.org/2009/08/4-years-after-katrina-housing-crisis-continues-low-income-renters-face-discrimination.html>.

¹⁰³ Evans, Desiree. “4 Years After Katrina: Housing Crisis Continues, Low-Income Renters Face Discrimination.” Facing South, August 21, 2009. <https://www.facingsouth.org/2009/08/4-years-after-katrina-housing-crisis-continues-low-income-renters-face-discrimination.html>.

finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it. But God did."¹⁰⁴

Essentially, 'cleaning up' public housing meant removing Black people out of it.

Religious Victim Blaming/Justification

When Hurricane Katrina happened, people throughout the country found a way to place blame on the victims. This was an especially prominent rhetoric amongst evangelical White Christians. Though many churches and pastors nationwide supported Hurricane Katrina victims and participated in clean-up efforts and revitalization, this sentiment of victim-blaming amongst famous televangelists and pastors became a growing issue. New Orleans has been no stranger to religious demonization throughout the years. Dating back to the 1700s, many enslaved Black people in New Orleans were accused of practicing by White people of practicing witchcraft and Voodoo, regardless of whether this was true or not, and were punished severely for it.¹⁰⁵ A few months after Hurricane Katrina, Reverend Franklin Graham stated, "This is one wicked city, OK? It's known for Mardi Gras, for Satan worship. It's known for sex perversion. It's known for every type of drugs and alcohol and the orgies and all of these things that go on down there in New Orleans. There's been a black spiritual cloud over New Orleans for years. They believe God is going to use that storm to bring revival."¹⁰⁶ This sentiment was echoed by many prominent televangelists, such as Pastor John Hagee and Pat

¹⁰⁴ Evans, Desiree. "4 Years After Katrina: Housing Crisis Continues, Low-Income Renters Face Discrimination." *Facing South*, August 21, 2009. <https://www.facingsouth.org/2009/08/4-years-after-katrina-housing-crisis-continues-low-income-renters-face-discrimination.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Newman, Christopher L. (2023) "Savages and Sable Subjects: White Fear, Racism, and the Demonization of Creole Voodoo in New Orleans in the 19th Century," *Madison Historical Review*: Vol. 20, Article 6.

¹⁰⁶ NBC News. "Hurricane Katrina: Wrath of God?," October 5, 2005. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna9600878>.

Robertson of the 700 Club.¹⁰⁷ Pat Robertson blamed the storm on abortion and said that the United States is paying for Hurricane Katrina because “We have killed over 40 million unborn babies in America.”¹⁰⁸ A Black Baptist pastor, Dwight McKissic, also blamed Voodoo for the plight of Hurricane Katrina victims. He said, “They openly practice voodoo and devil worship in New Orleans...God’s wrath may have howled in Katrina’s winds because New Orleans thumbed his nose at the Almighty.”¹⁰⁹ Gay people, as per usual, were also blamed for Hurricane Katrina. A conservative Christian website titled *Repent America* reported that New Orleans was ‘rightfully’ destroyed a few days before Southern Decadence.¹¹⁰ Southern Decadence is an LGBTQ+ costume party and parade that occurs towards the end of the summer in the French Quarter. It became easy for people from various angles to blame Katrina victims. The LGBTQ+ community, Voodoo, Mardi Gras, and all of New Orleans’ supposed ‘waywardness’ made it easy for many religious leaders to blame the victims of Hurricane Katrina for what happened to them. Public empathy for victims was eroded from various mediums, as mentioned earlier.

Similarly, this follows a pattern of victim blaming that Indigenous people faced during active colonization. Though very different circumstances, colonizers deemed Indigenous peoples as ‘wayward’ and ‘uncivilized,’ their spiritual practices and cultures

¹⁰⁷ Hudson, John. “Pat Robertson Blames Natural Disaster Victims.” *The Atlantic*, January 14, 2010. <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2010/01/pat-robertson-blames-natural-disaster-victims/341489/>.

¹⁰⁸ CBS News. “Pat Robertson Controversies,” January 13, 2010. <https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/pat-robertson-controversies/>.

¹⁰⁹ Walker, J. (2015). God, Gays, and Voodoo: Voicing Blame after Katrina. *Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal*, 41(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56816/2471-0032.1082>

¹¹⁰ Hurricane Katrina. “Repent America.” https://www.repentamerica.com/pr_hurricanekatrina.html.

not being considered worthy of saving. Even today, many people beg the question, ‘Why didn’t Native Americans just assimilate?’ This narrative must be firmly rejected. Settlers viewed Indigenous people in one of two ways: a problem to be removed or one to be solved, and that solving meant assimilation.¹¹¹ Indigenous people who refused to assimilate to Christian European standards were blamed for their struggles. Even seemingly ‘benevolent’ and ‘friendly’ Christian and government leaders pushed Native Americans to assimilate, asserting that they would be ‘punished’ if they chose not to.¹¹² For example, Puritan and former governor of Massachusetts, John Winthrop, argued that Native Americans who resisted Christianity were defying God and deserved their fate.¹¹³ He asserted that the diseases that killed many Indigenous people in New England thirty years before he moved there were sent by God to make the land purer.¹¹⁴ Indigenous people, through genocidal laws and movements like Manifest Destiny, were blamed for their resistance to Christianity, as colonizers framed Manifest Destiny as ‘God’s will,’ and by this logic, Indigenous people stood in the way of this.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ “President Ulysses S. Grant and Federal Indian Policy (U.S. National Park Service).” <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/president-ulysses-s-grant-and-federal-indian-policy.htm>.

¹¹² Heise, Tammy. “Religion and Native American Assimilation, Resistance, and Survival.” Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion, November 20, 2017. <https://oxfordre.com/religion/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-394>.

¹¹³ Mark, Joshua J. “John Winthrop.” World History Encyclopedia, January 14, 2021. https://www.worldhistory.org/John_Winthrop/.

¹¹⁴ Mark, Joshua J. “John Winthrop.” World History Encyclopedia, January 14, 2021. https://www.worldhistory.org/John_Winthrop/.

¹¹⁵ Scott, Donald. “The Religious Origins of Manifest Destiny, Divining America, TeacherServe®, National Humanities Center.” <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/mandestiny.htm>.

Gentrification and Cultural Commodification

New Orleans's pulse thrives off a vibrant expression of Creole culture. From the mournful beauty of jazz funerals to the infectious energy of Mardi Gras parades, this cultural heritage draws tourists in droves, and the city heavily profits from this. However, a closer examination reveals a dissonance between the city's embrace of Black Creole aesthetics and the lived experiences of its Black residents. The town is happy to commodify Black Louisiana Creole cultural expression, translating it into tourist trinkets and festival attractions while simultaneously displacing and suppressing Black New Orleanians. Many traditions in New Orleans have become increasingly watered down, the speaking of Creole in the city has declined, dialects have changed, and transplants have replaced the original population.¹¹⁶ Decades of discriminatory housing policies, coupled with a historical disregard for environmental justice, have relegated Black New Orleanians to under-resourced neighborhoods. Formerly predominantly Black neighborhoods like the Treme, Irish Channel, Black Pearl, and Bywater, according to the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority's Market Value Analysis, as of 2015, are now the most expensive in the city to live in.¹¹⁷ One thing all of these neighborhoods have in common is their high elevation. Neighborhoods with a lower elevation, like the Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans East, and parts of the Seventh Ward, became overpopulated and poorer following Hurricane Katrina, as these were more undesirable

¹¹⁶ Blum, Eliana. "A Requiem for the Most Changed Neighborhoods: Gentrification in NOLA." Where Y'at New Orleans, December 18, 2019. <https://www.wheremat.com/a-requiem-for-the-most-changed-neighborhoods-gentrification-in-nola>.

¹¹⁷ The Data Center. "Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk," April 4, 2018.

neighborhoods to live in and more accessible to obtain housing in.¹¹⁸ Formerly predominantly Black neighborhoods that were on higher ground are also now predominantly White. Still, when they were predominantly Black, the property value of said neighborhoods was significantly lower. These neighborhoods now contain healthier grocery stores and new streetcar lines, which were never present when the neighborhoods were predominantly Black. Additionally, Black residents who still live in these neighborhoods often live in homes that have been passed down generationally but are quickly becoming priced out because of the high cost of living in said neighborhoods.¹¹⁹ According to the Data Center, the 2020 Census reflects that following gentrification and displacement, many Black New Orleanians are more likely to live further away from job centers and industries that pay a living wage.¹²⁰ The average rent in Bywater, as of 2024, is the highest in the city, at a whopping \$2,284.¹²¹ According to the Data Center, “Recent analysis on the racial wealth divide in New Orleans reveals the enduring effects of segregationist housing policies because home equity is the largest portion of most Americans’ wealth. As of 2014, the median property values for white-owned homes (\$300,000) are twice that of blacks (\$150,000).⁹⁵ Nationally in 2011, the typical (median) white family had fifteen times the wealth of the typical black

¹¹⁸ The Data Center. “Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk,” April 4, 2018.

¹¹⁹ The Data Center. “Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk,” April 4, 2018.

¹²⁰ The Data Center. “Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk,” April 4, 2018.

¹²¹ RentCafe. “What Is the Average Rent in New Orleans?” <https://www.rentcafe.com/average-rent-market-trends/us/la/new-orleans/>.

family. Historic discrimination in lending, home sales, zoning, and deed restrictions drives the glaring racial discrepancies in family wealth.”¹²²

AirBNBs and short-term rentals have profoundly impacted the housing market in New Orleans and have contributed to many residents, significantly lower-income Black residents, being pushed out of their neighborhoods.¹²³ As of 2022, 75% of the short-term rentals in New Orleans were illegal, meaning there are almost 5,000 illegally operated short-term rentals in the city.¹²⁴ This means that nearly 5,000 homes are unavailable for citizens to live in, and many of these are operating in historically predominantly Black neighborhoods.¹²⁵ According to Louisiana Fair Housing, in historically Black parts of the city, Mid-City, the Seventh Ward, Fairgrounds, and Bayou St. John, the rent went up over 20% in 2021. In additional findings, over 500 residents, mostly Black, have been evicted from their homes, which now serve as short-term rentals. Though the city has regulated short-term rentals in some ways, developers and hosts have a strong hand in New Orleans’ economy. Despite fervent complaints from residents, short-term rentals are still pricing residents out and targeting historically Black

¹²² The Data Center. “Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk,” April 4, 2018.

¹²³ “These 7 Numbers Show Why Short-Term Rentals Are Bad for New Orleans Locals, Especially Black Neighborhoods – Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center.” <https://lafairhousing.org/these-7-numbers-show-why-short-term-rentals-are-bad-for-new-orleans-locals-especially-black-neighborhoods/>.

¹²⁴ “These 7 Numbers Show Why Short-Term Rentals Are Bad for New Orleans Locals, Especially Black Neighborhoods – Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center.” <https://lafairhousing.org/these-7-numbers-show-why-short-term-rentals-are-bad-for-new-orleans-locals-especially-black-neighborhoods/>.

¹²⁵ “These 7 Numbers Show Why Short-Term Rentals Are Bad for New Orleans Locals, Especially Black Neighborhoods – Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center.” <https://lafairhousing.org/these-7-numbers-show-why-short-term-rentals-are-bad-for-new-orleans-locals-especially-black-neighborhoods/>.

neighborhoods. Short-term rentals have become the final nail in the coffin of the displacement and erasure of Black New Orleanians.¹²⁶

Cultural appropriation is often dismissed as an issue that Black and Indigenous people should embrace, but how can you embrace someone else usurping your culture when you are demonized for participating in it? When you are pushed out of the place in which you built the culture? White-owned businesses profit handsomely from this cultural appropriation, while the very communities these symbols represent grapple with the realities of dispossession and marginalization. Both Indigenous peoples and Louisiana Creoles have been made to assimilate throughout their existence, which resulted in the loss of language and other cultural traditions, just for them to be appropriated by people outside of their cultures. This is another facet of the exploitation faced by Black Creole New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina. If you go into the French Quarter and see a second-line parade, chances are you are witnessing a watered-down, soulless, tourist-friendly version being led by an out-of-town wedding. Second-line parades have West African roots, and they were brought to Louisiana by enslaved Africans, beginning to mourn death and celebrate life.¹²⁷ Over the past century, they have evolved by Black New Orleanians and take on different meanings. Still, there is a particular way they are supposed to look, and they hold deep cultural significance. Voodoo, once a religious practice that Black Louisiana Creoles were demonized for, has now become reduced to tarot cards with racially ambiguous women on the cover and

¹²⁶ Ciardullo, Maxwell. "The City Council Must Stand up for Our Neighbors and Culture." *The Lens*, March 20, 2023. <https://thelensnola.org/2023/03/20/the-city-council-must-stand-up-for-our-neighbors-and-culture/>.

¹²⁷ Turner, Richard Brent, *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans, New Edition: After Hurricane Katrina*. Indiana University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2005rqb>.

tourist-friendly voodoo dolls being sold in the French Quarter by an owner who is from Massachusetts. Native Americans have been subject to this for centuries. Instances such as White 'hippie' culture, non-Natives dressing like Native Americans for Halloween, tribal prints, and miscellaneous items with artificial Native symbols on them reflect this, despite Indigenous peoples never benefitting from this.¹²⁸ At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Indigenous peoples, especially children, were forced to cut their hair, change their attire, and disconnect from their heritage and culture just for the descendants of those people to, in later years, appropriate their culture, gaslight them, and profit off it.¹²⁹ These are just a few examples, but cultural commodification and erasure have eroded the social fabric of Black Creole culture and Indigenous culture, turning iconic landmarks into commodified experiences sanitized for outsiders. This disconnect, profiting off cultural heritage while neglecting the communities that built it, exposes a bitter truth: the soul of a culture too often becomes a souvenir. In contrast, the people who created the culture suffer.

The myth of the vanishing Indian, a phenomenon that perpetuates the myth that Indigenous people no longer exist in America, has been prevalent since the beginning of colonization and is still a pervasive issue.¹³⁰ It is a genocidal myth that attempts to erase Indigenous people from America and cast them off as if they are a story of the past or, even worse, a fairytale. In America, over 500 tribes still live and thrive in all 50

¹²⁸ Fowler, Sarah. "The Commodification of the Native in the 21st Century." *Global Societies Journal* 1, no. 1 (n.d.).

¹²⁹ Fowler, Sarah. "The Commodification of the Native in the 21st Century." *Global Societies Journal* 1, no. 1 (n.d.).

¹³⁰ The Pluralism Project. "Myth of the 'Vanishing Indian.'" <https://pluralism.org/myth-of-the-vanishing-indian>.

states, with cultures that are still vibrant and alive. This myth became popularized following Manifest Destiny and promoted “the idea that American territorial expansion by white settlers was both inevitable and preordained by God.”¹³¹ On December 3, 1833, President Andrew Jackson released his Fifth Annual Message to Congress, and in it, he remarked his sentiments towards Indigenous peoples; “That those tribes can not exist surrounded by our settlements and in continual contact with our citizens is certain. They have neither the intelligence, the industry, the moral habits, nor the desire of improvement, which are essential to any favorable change in their condition. Established in the midst of another and a superior race, and without appreciating the causes of their inferiority or seeking to control them, they must necessarily yield to the force of circumstances and ere long disappear.”¹³² This message echoed throughout the United States and reinforced the idea that not only are Indigenous people inevitably going to die out, but they must because they are the ‘inferior’ race who must be dealt with. In the media, various movies, such as *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), perpetuate this. There are many problematic elements of this movie, one of the most being how *The Last of the Mohicans* promoted the idea of the inevitable death of Native Americans, reinforcing the idea that they were ‘savages’ that needed to be tamed.¹³³ Some forms of media, such as Lydia Huntley Sigourney’s poem “Indian Names,” a poem that laments the loss of Indigenous peoples but does not accurately portray them,

¹³¹ White House Historical Association. “The Myth of the Vanishing Indian.” <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/the-myth-of-the-vanishing-indian#:~:text=The%20Myth%20of%20the%20Vanishing%20Indian%20was%20a%20national%20self,bo th%20inevitable%20and%20preordained%20by.>

¹³² Miller Center. “December 3, 1833: Fifth Annual Message to Congress,” October 20, 2016. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-3-1833-fifth-annual-message-congress.>

¹³³ Brantlinger, Patrick. “FORGETTING GENOCIDE: OR, THE LAST OF THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS.” *Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (1998): 15–30. doi:10.1080/095023898335591.

had seemingly good intentions but missed the mark and continued to reinforce the myth of the vanishing Indian.¹³⁴ This type of literature falls under the umbrella of the mystification of Indigenous people, relegating them to an ancient story or myth. Another example of the myth of the vanishing Indian is football team names, such as the former NFL team, the Redskins, and the current NFL team, the Chiefs. There is a comfortability in keeping these names because many Americans view it as 'tradition' and a way to 'remember the Indians,' even though they are still very much here in America. Media and ideas like this have continued into the 21st century, with many Indigenous people still reporting the shock they receive when they tell someone they are Indigenous and are met with the response, "I thought you all were gone."¹³⁵

Similarly, Louisiana Creoles have been subject to the myth of vanishing and mystification. Many people speak of Louisiana Creoles in one of two ways: they either think we have entirely disappeared, or we are all extraordinarily light-skinned and live in the swamp. Though Louisiana Creole culture has been attacked through things such as language loss by being forced to speak English, and there is an ongoing fight to keep the culture alive, Louisiana Creoles are still alive and well throughout Louisiana, from the Gulf to the Acadiana region. Creoles are still here. When looking at the theme of the vanishing Indian and how it began in the media in the 1800s, the vanishing of Black Louisiana Creole culture also started in the 1800s in popular media, particularly in

¹³⁴ Representative Poetry Online. "Representative Poetry Online."
<https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/content/indian-names>.

¹³⁵ Hedgpeth, Dana. "Native Americans Dispel Myths during Heritage Month: 'We're Still Here.'" *The Washington Post*, November 19, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2021/native-american-heritage-month-were-still-here/>.

Louisiana literature.¹³⁶ The mystification and vanishing theme is less prominent because there are significantly fewer Louisiana Creoles than Indigenous peoples, but there are still similar themes. Questions like ‘Who were the Creoles’ and ‘Do Creoles still exist?’ are prevalent throughout the internet and in daily conversations.¹³⁷ One of the biggest examples is the fetishization and mystification of Voodoo and Marie Laveau. The perception of Voodoo in America has historically been negative, especially from the perspective of White Christians.¹³⁸ Historically, Voodoo was used as a scapegoat for the ills of the South, especially in Louisiana; even Black Louisianans who did not practice voodoo could be blamed for it when bad things happened.¹³⁹ Consequently, Marie Laveau is often depicted as a mystical and fetishized figure, especially by historians who sensationalize Voodoo. Still, during the time she was alive, though she was revered by many, she was stereotyped by many as dark and evil. Marie Laveau was a Voodoo practitioner and a free mixed-race Creole woman of color who served her community through healing. Despite this, she has been constantly misrepresented in literature going back to the 1800s and has consequently become dehumanized. In 1982, the band The Misfits attempted to exhume her grave.¹⁴⁰ Later, in 2013, an

¹³⁶ Furlanetto, Elena. 2023. “Vanishing Creole in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic: The United States, Panama, and the Caribbean”. *Oltreoceano - Rivista Sulle Migrazioni*, no. 21 (February):109-19. <https://doi.org/10.53154/Oltreoceano66>.

¹³⁷ Quora. “Who Were the Creole People?” <https://www.quora.com/Who-were-the-Creole-people>.

¹³⁸ Newman, Christopher L. (2023) "Savages and Sable Subjects: White Fear, Racism, and the Demonization of Creole Voodoo in New Orleans in the 19th Century," *Madison Historical Review*: Vol. 20, Article 6.

¹³⁹ Newman, Christopher L. (2023) "Savages and Sable Subjects: White Fear, Racism, and the Demonization of Creole Voodoo in New Orleans in the 19th Century," *Madison Historical Review*: Vol. 20, Article 6.

¹⁴⁰ “Punks Arrested for Cemetery Invasion - UPI Archives.” n.d. UPI. <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1982/10/24/Punks-arrested-for-cemetery-invasion/8349404280000/>.

unknown person spray-painted her tomb with pink paint.¹⁴¹ Because of these events, since 2015, people who do not have a relative buried there cannot visit St. Louis Cemetery 1 (where she is buried) without a tour guide. Viewers unfamiliar with New Orleans were introduced to Marie Laveau in *American Horror Story: Coven* in 2013, and many of the depictions of Marie Laveau are false and harmful. Following the release of this season, an uptick in interest in New Orleans became noticeable, and the language around Louisiana Creole people's identity became strange, with many people describing a desire to make a pilgrimage to New Orleans to 'see if they can meet people who had a Creole grandmother.' The connections between cultural commodification and erasure between Louisiana Creoles and Indigenous peoples are strong.

Conclusion

Settler colonialism is at the root of America's inception, and Louisiana's settler colonial complex runs deep. From the beginning of colonization to the Louisiana Purchase to now, the constant battle for agency, land, and rights has been an ongoing one for both Native Americans and Black Louisianans. The experiences of Indigenous peoples in Louisiana and those of Black Louisianans have been different, and both groups have distinct histories and cultural differences, but many more overlaps can be seen when analyzing the similarities and revealing the stark parallels between the ongoing marginalization of Native Americans and Black New Orleanians. Hurricane Katrina was a natural disaster whose aftermath was exacerbated by man-made

¹⁴¹ Webster, Richard. 2014. "Voodoo Priestess Tomb Not So Pretty in Pink." *St. Augustine Record*. January 16, 2014. <https://www.staugustine.com/story/lifestyle/faith/2014/01/17/voodoo-priestess-tomb-not-so-pretty-pink/16130428007/>.

oppressive systems and responses and was the cause, not the effect, of exposing how Black communities were left to endure a disproportionate burden, similar to the historical abandonment and displacement of Native Americans deemed unfit for White expansion. The weaponization of environmental racism is reminiscent, just as Native American homelands were sacrificed for resource extraction or many were relegated to undesirable parts of the land considered 'unsuitable' for White settlement, many Black neighborhoods in New Orleans were relegated to flood-prone areas, and when they were on higher ground, their land was sought after and much of, eventually taken.

This paper goes beyond merely reciting historical wrongs, illuminating commonality between seemingly dissimilar groups, and creating a sense of solidarity. The displacement of Black New Orleanians is not simply a consequence of a single storm; it is the culmination of decades of discriminatory and exclusionary policies and a disregard for the cultural and historical significance of Black communities. Similarly, the environmental challenges faced by Native American tribes are not merely unfortunate coincidences or a 'long-time-ago' thing; they are rooted in a long and current history of dispossession, genocide, and the relegation of Indigenous peoples to lands deemed expendable. The stories of Black New Orleanians and Native Americans should not be told and analyzed in vain. Tourists flocking to places in Louisiana to experience vibrant expressions of Black Creole and Indigenous cultures, often packaged into superficial and fleeting festival attractions, the very communities that create these traditions face marginalization and disenfranchisement. This disconnect is deeply exploitative. Celebrating a culture while simultaneously pushing its creators to the periphery is a profound injustice. The richness and complexity of Creole Black and Indigenous

Louisianans are not just what they produce but who they are and what they represent as people. The paradox of loving the culture but hating the people is one rooted in genocidal theory and is one that is unsustainable. It is necessary to honor the humanity of the culture's creators and the cultural contributions of Black and Indigenous Louisianans. True reconciliation requires dismantling the structures of settler colonialism that continue to marginalize both Black New Orleanians and Native Americans. This necessitates a multifaceted approach – from revising discriminatory housing policies to prioritizing environmental justice initiatives that empower these communities to participate in decision-making that affects their lands and futures to receiving federal recognition; both groups would benefit significantly from these things. Acknowledging the shared experiences of displacement and recognizing the profound contributions of both Black and Indigenous communities is the beginning of rectification. This paper illuminated the fact that settler-colonialism rears its methods in various ways. Although the experiences of Black Americans and Native Americans have been vastly different, many overlaps can be seen, especially between Native Louisianians and Black Louisianians. Unpacking the effects of settler colonialism is complex and requires a multifaceted approach, one that I hope this paper contributed to.

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Chapter 3: Storyville's Shadows of Desire: Unveiling the Plight of Black and Mixed-Race Sex Workers in Post-Reconstruction New Orleans

Introduction:

In the waning years of the 19th century, against societal shifts and moralistic objections, New Orleans bore witness to the creation of Storyville. This place would eventually etch itself into popular American history. Born out of an effort by city officials to corral and regulate the burgeoning vice industry that had permeated the city, Storyville emerged in 1897 as a designated red-light district. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a red-light district as 'having numerous houses of prostitution.' The ordinance that established Storyville designated a specific area within the city that bounded the zone by four streets: Basin Street, St. Louis Street, North Robertson Street, and Iberville Street; this area became the exclusive zone for ordained vice. Contrary to popular belief, Storyville was not in the French Quarter; it was behind it, placed between Canal Street and St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, where New Orleans legends like singer Dr. John and Voodoo practitioner Marie Laveau are buried.

Storyville was named after Sidney Story, a city alderman who championed the idea of a district being specifically made to corral vice into one space. At the time of its creation, Storyville was the country's only designated and decriminalized red-light district. Its establishment was not merely a response to the moralistic sentiments of the time but also a pragmatic endeavor to maintain some semblance of control over the thriving yet chaotic world of adult entertainment. In early New Orleans history, the role of prostitution was a complex and layered phenomenon, deeply intertwined with class and racial dynamics. For women across various social stratification, engaging in sex

work often represented limited economic opportunities and societal constraints for them. In higher social classes, discreet forms of prostitution, often under a courtesanship, offered some women a pathway to financial independence and a semblance of social mobility. However, the stigma associated with their profession could still lead to ostracization. At the same time, the names of male pimps and consumers were often hidden and protected; the names of women became automatically tarnished when their names were associated with the district.

Additionally, women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds faced a harsher reality. In the more marginalized communities, particularly among Black, mulatto, and mixed-race women, systemic racism compounded the challenges, relegating them to the lower end of both the district and New Orleans society. The racialized gaze of the era subjected Black women to additional layers of discrimination and exploitation within the sex trade. The bodies of Black women were sought after for the sexual gratification of White men, as Black men were not allowed to participate in Storyville's sex industry. Black women, especially mixed-race and light-skinned Black women, were heavily fetishized and sexualized despite not having equal rights in society.

Prostitution has historically been ingrained in the cultural relevance of New Orleans. Before the establishment of Storyville, New Orleans had a long history of dealing with prostitution in various ways. In the 19th century, the city's approach to prostitution was created with a combination of tolerance, regulation, and periodic attempts at suppression. Before this, prostitution was not confined to a single designated district, as would later be the case with Storyville. Instead, various areas of the city, including the French Quarter and places within the vicinity of the port, hosted a

concentration of brothels and establishments catering to those seeking the services of sex workers. There were a few known vice districts in New Orleans before Storyville. One was behind the French Quarter, where Customhouse (now known as Iberville Street) crossed Basin Street and Franklin Avenue. Another was in what is now the Central Business District (CBD) and was known as The Swamp District. The last well-known one was two blocks long on Gallatin Street in the French Quarter, now known as French Marketplace. The smaller vice districts lacked the explicit delineation and regulation that Storyville would later have, which allowed them a more decentralized and fragmented approach to the sex trade. In these districts, the economic significance of vice activities and the cultural diversity of the city created the material conditions to make prostitution more acceptable. However, these areas also faced periodic opposition and regulatory efforts, which reflected the ongoing tension between the economic benefits and moralistic concerns associated with the sex trade in New Orleans. The creation of Storyville marked a departure from these scattered districts, representing a more formalized attempt at managing the complexities of the sex industry within a defined and regulated space for twenty years. Due to many complaints throughout the city, leaders knew it was time to decide the fate of the growing vice industry. Despite immense opposition, the sex industry brought the city an offer it could not refuse: heavy tourism and revenue. However, leaders understood that many of New Orleans's citizens and tourists were not pleased with the visibility of prostitution, so the decision to create Storyville began to form, a district that employed over two thousand sex workers.

The ordinance creating Storyville designated a condensed area within the city limits where brothels, saloons, and gambling dens could operate openly. Sex workers and women considered 'lewd' were forced to live and work in this district, as living or working elsewhere could have resulted in their arrest. It took very little for a woman to be considered 'lewd' in this era. Any woman who gambled, drank, had premarital sex, or was even presumed to be associated with sex work could be labeled as lewd. In 1900, the Supreme Court case *L'Hote v. New Orleans*, 177 U.S. 587, created Ordinance No. 13,032, which set the parameters for Storyville. Here is an excerpt: "That from the first of October, 1897, it shall be unlawful for any public prostitute or woman notoriously abandoned to lewdness to occupy, inhabit, live, or sleep in any house, room, or closet, situated without the following limits: South side of Custom House street from Basin to Robertson street, east side of Robertson street from Custom House to St. Louis street, south side of St. Louis street from Robertson to Basin street. Provided, that no lewd woman shall be permitted to occupy a house, room, or closet on St. Louis Street. Provided further, that nothing herein shall be so construed as to authorize any lewd woman to occupy a house, room, or closet in any portion of the city. 2. That it shall be unlawful for any person or persons, whether agent or owner, to rent, lease, or hire any house, building, or room to any woman or girl notoriously abandoned to lewdness or for immoral purposes outside the limits specified in section 1 of this ordinance. 3. That public prostitutes or notoriously lewd and abandoned women are forbidden to stand upon the sidewalks in front of or near the premises they may occupy, or at the alleyway, door, or gate of such premises, or to occupy the steps thereof, or to accost, call, or stop any person passing by, or to walk up and down the sidewalks, or to walk up the city

streets indecently attired, or in other respects to behave in public as to occasion scandal, or disturb and offend the peace and good morals of the people..." This containment sought to confine the perceived "ills" of society to a defined space, allowing the rest of New Orleans to project an image of moral rectitude. However, the motivations behind Storyville's creation were varied, and not all were rooted in moralistic reasons.

Storyville was not relegated solely due to moral concern; instead, it reflected a city grappling with significant changes in economic interests, political maneuvering, and the cultural dynamic shifts that defined it during this period. However, the fall of Storyville was inevitable. Storyville shut down in 1917 due to a combination of factors, but the main push was the Navy's demands for Storyville's closure. There is a naval base in Belle Chasse, about thirty minutes from New Orleans. When the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, there was an abysmally low amount of men who volunteered for the war, especially in New Orleans, thus creating the need for the Selective Service Act of 1917 (also known as the Draft Act), passed by Congress on May 18, 1917. The Draft Act made prostitution within ten miles of a military base illegal. Many men who joined the Navy and got stationed in New Orleans frequented Storyville and paid for services. Because of this, the Navy forced Storyville to shut down, primarily because of the high amount of venereal diseases that many soldiers caught. There were various efforts to get Storyville shut down before this, but the Navy was essentially the straw that broke the camel's back.

The closure had significant effects on the women working in the district, as it disrupted their livelihoods and, because being associated with Storyville was essentially

a scarlet letter, it was challenging for them to find work elsewhere and created a continued cycle of illegal prostitution. The district, operating with laissez-faire governance, presented opportunities for women to amass financial independence when traditional avenues were often closed. Women who thrived in the district's clandestine economy could accumulate wealth, invest in businesses, and even become entrepreneurs in their own right. However, this supposed autonomy was intertwined with the exploitative underpinnings of the sex industry. The economic empowerment of these women existed within a precarious framework where agency was limited, and societal stigmas persisted. The nature of their work, often under the control of pimps, madams, or brothel owners, reflected the fine line between economic autonomy and systemic exploitation. Working within poor conditions and doing degrading work, most women who worked in Storyville were still impoverished, and success was rare. The financial success of some women in Storyville should be viewed through a lens of nuance, especially because this was not the reality for most women, and understanding the implications of societal constraints and gendered power dynamics. It serves as a reminder that economic agency, even when achieved in unconventional ways, does not always equate to genuine liberation.

New Orleans is, and has always been, a city that is easy to romanticize. The phenomena known as Disneyfication, defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as 'the transformation (as of something real or unsettling) into carefully controlled and safe entertainment or an environment with similar qualities,' is something that New Orleans is no stranger to, and Storyville is no exception. Popular history and romanticized depictions of Storyville have often perpetuated a distorted image of the district,

portraying it as a glamorous and liberated paradise for women. Fueled by the seduction of jazz, the mystique of the French Quarter, stories of female entrepreneurs, and the bohemian atmosphere, these narratives tend to downplay the exploitative and oppressive conditions faced by women and girls, especially those who were poor and of color, in Storyville. Storyville is fondly remembered in popular history as the birthplace of jazz and a free-for-all for 'fun' behavior, but these oversimplifications and false remembrances minimize the struggles of the women and children in the district. Popular history narratives must be debunked to respect and acknowledge the realities of life that the women and children of Storyville endured.

Involvement of Children

Copious findings from archaeologists, newspapers, Census records, and other primary sources provide undeniable evidence that children were present in Storyville. One of the most famous children to live in Storyville was acclaimed jazz artist Louis Armstrong, whose mother was a sex worker. The disturbing film *Pretty Baby*, starring Brooke Shields, was not far from reality. Beginning in 2012, students at the University of New Orleans (UNO), under Dr. Ryan Gray, an anthropology professor, excavated in a courtyard where Storyville used to be. Many of the items the students uncovered were artifacts commonly found in red-light districts, but some of their discoveries were more jarring. In their findings, at least six children's toys, such as child tea cups, a doll head, and a toy carriage, were found in the same vicinities as syringes and guns. Storyville was designated strictly as an adult-only zone, but this was not the case. In more disturbing connections that children had to the district, according to Census records, in 1900, almost two hundred children were living in Storyville. Every person working in

Storyville did not live there, nor was everyone accounted for, so the number of girls exposed to the district could have been much higher.

New Orleans historian Al Rose described a lucrative business within Storyville involving children: the selling and 'deflowering' of prepubescent girls was a common way that parents would make money. In his book *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated Account of the Notorious Red Light District*, he conducted anonymous interviews with women, children, and men involved with or worked in Storyville. He interviewed a woman called Violet, who was a 'trick baby' and started when she was six years old. In the interview, she described her experiences; here is a brief excerpt: "One time Cora one of the girls had a john and she was sucking him off. It was nothing new to me. I seen it plenty of times before but only lately I'd be in the room while they were doing it. I said 'I can do that.' So we took turns...Then he fucked her while I felt his balls...I made five dollars for my end of that one, and then I started turning tricks myself by blowing. I was still only ten more years old and not very big so I didn't fuck. It was two more years more before I did that. So I was a virgin for two years." According to Violet, this was a common occurrence for underaged girls in Storyville and was considered normal. Her mom was also a prostitute, and many young girls whose mothers were prostitutes also were pushed into sex work. For these young girls,

A school for Black children called the Robertson School was located within the district, despite children not being allowed in it. Black children were directly exposed to these horrors, even while in school. It also meant that these children's mothers were most likely sex workers. The city's apathy regarding a Black school being in Storyville

reflected an overarching attitude that the city had not only toward children of lower statuses but especially toward Black children; there was very minimal concern for their well-being.

In 1903, a newspaper article addressed a crucial victory in the removal of homeless children from Storyville. With a push from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the organization was able to garner enough support to get the city to act and step in to remove the last of the children. Then, in 1904, The Willard Women's Christian Temperance Union issued a petition to Mayor Paul Capdevielle in which they requested the city to enforce the laws that prohibited children from occupying the district. An excerpt from the article stated, "The petition states that petitioners saw young girls and boys in the drinking places in that section waiting upon customers. They earnestly request that steps toward doing away with this evil be taken." In the district's heyday, passersby could see children engaging in adult behavior, which was well-known throughout the city. For years, city officials blatantly ignored the wanton disregard for the law, and it showed that only certain children were considered worthy of being protected. The sheer fact that these children were even in Storyville is disconcerting. Many of the children in Storyville were considered 'undesirable,' the majority of them being children of color, immigrants, and poor Whites.

Many citizens became increasingly frustrated with the lack of ordinance enforcement in the district. According to the Times-Democrat, in December of 1902, a group of citizens and the police board had a meeting and a call to action regarding the number of ordinance violations and unlawful brothels that emerged outside of the ordained zone. Ordinance violations were an ongoing issue in Storyville. In May 1912,

according to an unnamed citizen in the Times-Democrat, “The Storyville ordinance is so flagrantly violated in this city that it needs no government.” On the same page, many residents were voicing their frustrations and disturbance at the number of children that were visible in Storyville and the fact that illegal sexual acts were not contained to the district.

Countless newspaper publications highlighted the resistance and push for intervention that many citizens and local organizations advocated for. The reality of both pedophilia and child endangerment is often left out when discussing Storyville. It is imperative to note and contextualize the material existence of children forced to work and live in Storyville. Though it is apparent that some of these organizations were puritanical, the validity of their criticisms of the involvement of children remains relevant. The lack of regulation and enforcement preventing children from living in the district reflected New Orleans's attitude towards those considered ‘less’ in the city.

The Women of Storyville

The majority of the district was only open for White men to participate in, but Black and mixed-race women were the object of desire. Sexual experiences with Black women were sold as exotic, giving White men power over the agency and bodies of Black and mixed-race women. Black and mixed-race women, especially those who were light-skinned and racially ambiguous, were sought after and considered tempting but were not treated equally in Storyville or in New Orleans in general. The focus on the district's cultural contributions, such as the birth of jazz, has overshadowed the harsh reality of Black and mixed-race women and girls working in its shadow. Storyville brothel owners and madams like Lulu White and Willie Piazza, mixed-race Black women are

often hailed as successful, entrepreneurial women, with very minimal critical analysis of their complicity in the continued exploitation and fetishization of Black and mixed-race women. Lulu White's brothel was called Mahogany Hall but was more commonly called Octoroon Parlour, and it was a brothel where sex with light-skinned and mixed-race Black women was sold to White men. By emphasizing the colorful characters, alleged autonomy, vibrant nightlife, and laid-back attitude, these sensationalized portrayals romanticize the struggles of women, particularly those engaged in sex work. This narrative not only obscures the systemic issues of gender inequality, racism, and exploitation prevalent in Storyville but also risks glossing over the genuine hardships and accurate history of women and girls who lived and worked in a space where their entire existence was ruled by racism, commodification, objectification, capitalism, misogyny, and the male gaze. Not only were their lives led by exploitation, but their legacies are often disrespected by reductionist narratives within popular history. It is imperative to unravel the layers of myth and nostalgia surrounding Storyville to reveal the nuanced and challenging experiences of the women who existed at the intersection of pleasure and exploitation in turn-of-the-century New Orleans.

A word that I will frequently use is 'misogynoir,' and the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines misogynoir as "hatred of, aversion to, or prejudice against Black women." This word is specific to the Black woman's experience as misogyny is a phenomenon that affects all women, misogynoir affects explicitly Black women. In this paper, I seek to draw connections between the commodification and control of Black women's bodies as a response to the abolition of slavery and a shift in culture, a reflection of the larger scope of racism and misogynoir, conveying the level of which

sexual experiences with Black women and mixed-race Black women were desired and fetishized by White men, despite the lack of humane treatment and discrimination they received. I will also dispel the popular myths surrounding Storyville by discussing the poor conditions, misogynoir, racism, fetishization, misogyny, exploitation, and subjugation that Black and mixed-race women and girls endured. Additionally, I will discuss the legacy of Lulu White's Octoroon Parlour, the role she played in the objectification and fetishization of light-skinned and mixed-race Black women, and address the harm of the way Lulu White is fondly remembered in popular history, especially in Black women's history.



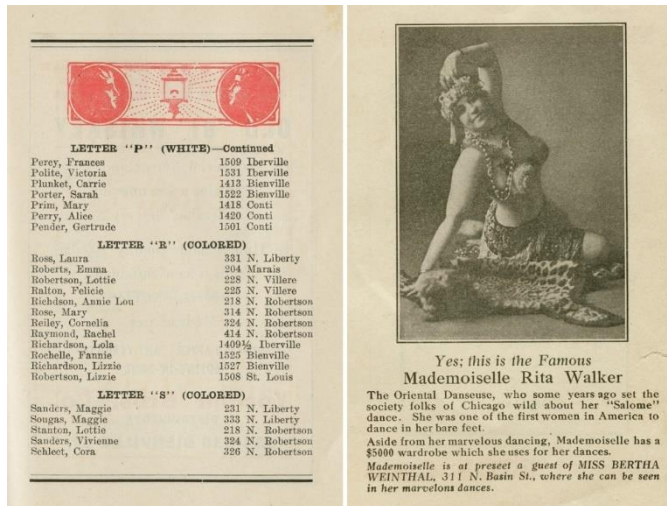
On the left is a present-day map of what used to be Storyville, and on the right is a vintage map of Storyville.

Crib Women

According to the 1900 Census in New Orleans, Black and mixed-race prostitutes made up almost forty percent of the population of Storyville, despite Black women making up a much smaller percentage in Orleans Parish. In 1897, the combination of the Jim Crow Era and sexism put many Black women in a difficult financial position.

Many poor Black and mixed-race women were pushed into prostitution because they had no other option for survival. This red-light district became a breeding ground for the intersection of sexism and racism. The White male demand for access to sex with Black and mixed-race women was massive, thus creating a large market in Storyville for the commodification of Black women. Though Black and White women worked together in Storyville, Black and mixed-race women still were not treated equally. Many Black women, especially those who were of darker complexion, were subjected to subpar and borderline inhumane conditions in spaces called cribs. Cribs were small sections of a room, often only consisting of a used mattress on the floor, infested with rats, roaches, diseases, and trash. They were also the only places Black men were allowed to purchase services. At times, cribs were used by White women, but cribs occupied by White women often had slightly better conditions. Some crib spaces were interracial, such as the cribs between Villere and Liberty Street, but cribs North of Liberty Street had the highest number of Black prostitutes. Storyville's designated spots for White and Black prostitutes were noted through ordinances and Blue Books. Storyville was not entirely segregated. However, there were many rules; for example, White and Black prostitutes were technically not supposed to work together, but they often did. Blue Books provided customers with the name, race, and address of a sex worker, which, unfortunately, ended up being akin to a scarlet letter for the women of Storyville, especially after the closure of the district. However, they provide valuable information in correspondence to where most Black prostitutes were concentrated. The demand for Black and mixed-race sex workers continued to go up as time progressed, evidenced by the amount of Black women listed in Blue Books. By the year 1910, the demand for

Black prostitutes, including monoracial, biracial, quadroon, and octoroon Black women, had increased significantly. None of this, however, translated to liberation or humane treatment for Black women.



Example of a page from a Blue Book, courtesy of The Historic New Orleans Collection.

The cost of rent in cribs was less than that of parlor houses, but the price was still extremely high for the deplorable conditions they endured. Cribs in Storyville were nicknamed 'fifty-cent joints.' Despite this, landlords would take advantage of monopolizing high rent because there was no regulation. Sexual services from crib women were considerably cheaper and more accessible to lower-middle to middle-class White men because the women were considered 'less desirable.' In cribs, women usually worked for themselves and did not have a pimp or madam to watch over them. Even though pimps and madams were exploitative as well, they offered some sort of protection to the women working for them. If the sex workers could not make money because they were bruised and unable to work, the pimp or madam would not make money. Therefore, pimps and madams protected their workers from abusive johns to continue pulling in a profit.

In 1961, Al Rose interviewed a woman he called Carrie, whose true identity is unknown. She was a dark-skinned Black woman who worked in Storyville when she was younger. She claimed to be a crib woman years ago. Carrie was from a poor neighborhood on Canal Street, near where Louis Armstrong grew up. When Rose asked about her family, she stated that she believed her mother was a prostitute, and she had not had contact with her father in decades. She had nine children while working as a prostitute, and she alluded to them being present in the cribs. In this interview, Carrie recalled her experiences as a crib woman in Storyville and described the sexual traumas, poor conditions, lack of protection, abysmally low wages, and the foul treatment she received from both White and Black men. The following excerpts are from Carrie's interview with Rose. In this specific excerpt, she described the amount of rent that she paid to use a crib, the price increases over time, and how much money she was paid by men per sexual service. "In dem days all on Rob'ts'n Street was watcha call cribs, see! Oh you knows whut dey is. Well beginnin' I paid twenny cents a day rent. Latuh on it go up to thutty-fi' cent, and den t' fifty cent. I stayed deah on Rob'ts'n Street fo' yeahs an' yeahs an' den d'law run us out... Mos'ly, fo' plain fuckin' on a weekday night, I use' t' get twenny-fi' cent. Ten cents in d' daytime. We chawged fifty cent, mos' always fo' suckin' off an' seven'y-fi' cent fo' lettin' d' prick come in our ass. We didn' hawdly get no call fo' nothin' else..." In another excerpt, she described a violent experience she had on the Fourth of July with a group of White men who forcibly shoved a firecracker into her vagina and then forced her to perform oral sex on them, while a police officer watched and laughed. "One time on d' Fo'th of July, a bunch o' white pricks grab me outten ma crib and ca'y me t' d' cohnuh. Dey taken off all ma

clo'es and dey tie ma han's an' feet t' d' light pole. Den one of 'em stick a big salute (firecracker) up my cunt an' anothan one up ma ass an' he light both a dem! Shit! I done some holla'in! A fuckin' police, he standin' right deah an' he laughin'...Den dey tells me to blow 'em all an' dey says dey ain't gon' gimme a cent an' dey tells me lucky dey din' blow up ma cunt..."

Throughout the remainder of the interview, she continued to describe the deplorable experiences she had as a dark-skinned Black crib woman; being raped, battered, assaulted, and dehumanized was normalized. According to Carrie, when she was unable to get a crib in the district, she would prostitute near Frenchman Street, where many Black men paid for her services, unlike Storyville, where they were often unable to participate. In one excerpt, she described an abusive Black pimp that she worked for who got her kicked out of Storyville because he was attempting to own a space in the district, something that Black men were not allowed to do. "Aft' while, ah got a stiddy man. A dawk skin woikin' man. A cawpintah...One time I buy him a box back suit, an' you know what he do? He punch me in d'head and tell me he don' need no suit, he need money. Aft' dat I jes' give him mah money... He took dat money an' he put it in d'postal savin's-like a bank dat was. Well, it wa'n't long aft' dat, de fuckin' son of a bitch police run us out'n d' Dist'ict. An' it look lak Carrie is in real trouble. Den dat man come an tel' me he done kep' dat money in d' postal savin's an he done taken an' bought a barroom uptown." Carrie's response to this was anger and frustration, as not being allowed in the district made her financial circumstances strained, as the cycle of prostitution persisted for her and many other women who were caught in this web. It is incredibly rare and difficult to find interviews with women who were involved in Storyville

because of the consequences that came with that association, so most women sought to keep the nature of their past involvement in the district private. Even though many women's names were listed in the Blue Books, many attempted to distance themselves from this past. This account by Carrie offers a glimpse into the horrific and inhumane experiences and conditions faced by a dark-skinned Black woman who worked as a crib woman. The darker and more 'undesirable' a woman was, the less concern there was for her well-being; even on a symbolic level, a woman like Carrie had no protection; being in Storyville offered her slightly more protection than working the streets on Frenchman, but her fate was riddled with exploitation and degradation, regardless of where she was. For women like Carrie, there was no escape from the cycle of being a prostitute, and these women had to fend for themselves. Crips were known not only for offering women minimal to no protection and agency but also for having filthy conditions. As I mentioned earlier, most of the women who worked in cribs were typically Black, particularly dark-skinned Black women, as well as women who were from lower social classes. Within cribs, women had to share their space with other sex workers, so there was a lack of privacy. The conditions were starkly different from those of women who were sex workers in parlours; though the material conditions for parlor women were significantly better, the subjugation, lack of liberation, and objectification still permeated both ends of the spectrum.

Parlour Women and the Legacy of Lulu White

The experiences of parlor women were quite different from those of crib women, and these are the women who are often mentioned in discussions about Storyville. For the sake of this section, I will specifically focus on the lives of Lulu White's parlor women

in Mahogany Hall (also known as the Octoroon Parlour), formerly located at 235 Basin Street. Lulu White (born Lulu Hendley) was born circa 1868 in Selma, Alabama (despite her claiming to be born in the West Indies) and was one of the most famous madams of Storyville. Lulu White, the Diamond Queen of New Orleans, led a mystery-filled life, especially after Storyville. White was a mixed-race, light-skinned Black woman and was one of the first Black female entrepreneurs and millionaires, very rare for the time. White herself was a sex worker before her success and was known for committing crimes, such as attempted murder, robbery, and violating Prohibition laws. Lulu White is often fondly remembered for being a mixed-race Black woman who defied the odds of her time, fighting against Jim Crow and becoming successful despite the status quo, but White was no hero. Though her brothel gained notoriety for its extravagance, jazz band performances, and success, it is still imperative to remember that Lulu White was a pimp who exploited women for her gain.

According to the Times-Democrat, in 1909, Lulu White and Dr. John M. Koelle, a White doctor at the German Protestant Bethany Home, were arrested for soliciting a minor for immoral purposes. According to the report, a fifteen-year-old biracial Black girl named Marie Gaudette was solicited by Lulu White to have sex with Dr. Koelle. When Gaudette was found in White's parlour, upon further investigation, Gaudette's testimony stated that White brought her into White's parlour to have sex with Dr. Koelle. This was not White's first time getting caught up in a solicitation scandal with young girls. In 1905, White was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for traveling with three young girls through state lines and violating Alabama's quarantine laws. They were en route to Atlanta, despite the girls stating that she told them they were going to New York. These

are just a few documented instances of White trafficking young girls and being involved with shady business involving teenagers. Not only was White complicit in perpetuating the rampant sexualization and dehumanization of mixed-race and light-skinned women, but she also was complicit in the involvement of teenage girls in this district. Though it is evident that Lulu White encountered severe racism, this still does not erase her wrongs.

In terms of racism, she was targeted in 1911 for violating the Gay-Shattuck law, a law that prohibited Black and White people from drinking alcohol in a bar together and prohibited women and Black people from holding a liquor license. When she was described in newspapers, she was often described as a 'Negro woman' or a 'Negress', reflecting the racist and misogynistic realities of her time. White was frequently targeted and arrested more than White madams and pimps because she disrupted the social order of the time by being a mixed-race woman who owned and ran one of the most profitable businesses in the city and undoubtedly had the most successful brothel in Storyville, despite her success and barrier breaks, her legacy should be viewed through a critical lens.



Mugshot of Lulu White in 1920.

Lulu White's Mahogany Hall was one of the only interracial parlors in Storyville and primarily featured mixed-race Black women who were octoroon and quadroons, but light-skinned Black women, racially ambiguous women, and sometimes White (though they were advertised as quadroons to make them appear more exotic) were also present. The majority of the other parlors in Storyville were segregated. White's Mahogany Hall, similar to other prominent mixed-race parlours of their time, sold a fantasy to wealthy White men, as services from women in parlours were more expensive because these women were seen as more 'desirable' than their counterparts who frequented cribs. Most women who provided services in parlours were White, light-skinned, or mixed-race. Parlor women lived in objectively better material conditions than crib women. Most upscale brothels and parlours like Mahogany Hall were furnished with ornate jewelry, fine china, and luxurious furniture. Many jazz artists got their start at Mahogany Hall, including Louis Armstrong, who recorded his homage to Mahogany Hall in 1929 with a song titled *Mahogany Hall Stomp*. Kid Ory, Jelly Roll Morton, and a few other jazz artists were known for performing in Mahogany Hall, making it an iconic space in New Orleans history. In Mahogany Hall's heyday, between forty to fifty sex workers and other female entertainers were employed there at any time. Despite the beautiful exteriors and interiors, women's lives in parlors were not as luxurious as they appeared to be. The lives of women like Victoria Hall and Estelle Russell, famously known in Mahogany Hall, were shrouded in sexualization and dehumanization, being in a space where their worth was determined by how racially ambiguous and sexually desirable they were in the eyes of predatory White men.

Mahogany Hall and other Octoroon Parlours, similar to it, allowed White men a space to fetishize, sexualize, and objectify mixed-race Black women, further perpetuating the Jezebel stereotype. The Jezebel stereotype is one of the three stereotypes that are often used to describe Black women. The Jezebel stereotype weaponized against light-skinned and mixed-race Black women, especially those with voluptuous physical features. It is a stereotype that promotes the idea that Black women are hypersexual, with an insatiable sexual appetite, and therefore, inherently promiscuous, making it acceptable to sexualize them. This has been a phenomenon since enslavement; many light-skinned Black women who were free during slavery were often the concubines of wealthy White men, who would usually meet at Octoroon Balls and give sexual services to them as an exchange for their financial support for themselves and their children. These occurrences were not mutually exclusive, as mixed-race Black women were often seen as freaks of nature, not whole people, who only existed for the sexual gratification of men, be they White or Black men; opportunities for these women were limited, and wealthy White men had three things to offer: their Whiteness, their wealth, and their sexual appetite for Black and mixed-race women. Therefore, these Octoroon Parlours served as a direct extension of the White male gaze on the bodies of Black and mixed-race women, continuing to perpetuate harmful, dehumanizing, and sexualized stereotypes against them.

Octoroon Parlours greatly resembled the racial dynamics of the Antebellum Era, with mixed-race women sexually satisfying and being at the beck-and-call of White men in exchange for financial independence. In a time where women, especially non-White women, had minimal opportunity to become successful, it is easy to see why Lulu White

and countless other women leveraged the White male gaze to their advantage. However, this still came at the expense of other women. White herself being a racially ambiguous Black woman who deliberately distanced herself from her Blackness and used it to her advantage when it benefitted her, directly profited and benefitted from selling the fantasy of mixed and ambiguous Black women to White men. It has been proven that White was from Alabama and was a descendant of enslaved people, but she marketed herself as an octoroon from the West Indies who did not have a drop of African-American blood in her. Despite this, Lulu White was never fully able to escape her Blackness, especially not in the eyes of White lawmakers and officials in both the local and state government. White capitalized off her and her sex workers fitting the stereotype of 'tragic octoroon' and ran with it.

Lulu White used Blue Books, Red Books, and brochures as a means to advertise the racially ambiguous women in her brothel. Historian Emily Landau theorized that White's temporary success was a result of her being able to use racial ambiguity and manipulation of the image of mixed-race women to her advantage. She created a space where "An affiliation with Lulu White and Mahogany Hall could be used to 'prove' that a person was 'colored' and *not white*. With these ads, moreover, we see how Lulu White and others capitalized on the transformation of 'octoroon' from a racial category to a sexual one." White's brochures provided a description and short biography about the women that were in her brothel and essentially sold them as an idea and an object to be fetishized.

As I mentioned before, White was notorious for manipulating and weaponizing her racial ambiguity when it benefitted her. Right before the closure of Storyville in 1917,

when the city was under pressure from the Navy, there was a change that was about to take place; the city was attempting to push the non-White sex workers into a district uptown. The district uptown was known for being rough and was not an ideal place for someone with the success of White to conduct business. The new ordinance was attempting to make Storyville an entirely White district. Lulu White and a few other mixed-race madams fought this case and won it. In the case of *Lulu White vs. The City of New Orleans*, she filed a case against the city to prevent them from forcing her out of and selling her property. In the petition, White identified herself as being of the Negro race, claiming that the city was attempting to come in between her and her workers' employment and that these attempts to remove her were discrimination and a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. Additionally, she cited the amount of losses that she would take. Ultimately, she won this petition, but the effects did not last long. Storyville came to a halt for everyone towards the end of 1917, and she attempted to cling to her business by flipping the switch and stating that she was not of Black American descent but was actually from the West Indies. Despite her attempts, the district completely shut down by midnight on November 12, 1917. It is widely unknown what happened to Lulu White after Storyville, but most historians have drawn the conclusion that she continued to run an illegal brothel after Storyville's closure, and she died on August 20, 1931. Ultimately, White's temporary rise and fall reflected a stark change in racial and gender dynamics in New Orleans and the South in general.

Conclusion

The reality of Storyville versus its role in popular history is nothing new. Since its beginnings, New Orleans has been intriguing to most Americans. Historians, tourists,

and researchers alike find New Orleans intriguing, and for good reason. However, as a person whose ancestral ties are deeply rooted in Southeast Louisiana, I find recognizing the humanity and realness of the people from here urgently important, as doing the opposite results in sensationalism and eventual dehumanization. Storyville was a district riddled with racism, abuse, poverty, violence against women and children, child endangerment, sexual abuse, rape, exploitation, and filth. Storyville is falsely remembered as a carefree place for women and the birthplace of jazz. The average woman's life in Storyville was not glamorous, many suffered greatly at the hands of men. The minimizing of the racism, sexism, and violence that occurred in Storyville reflects a more significant overarching issue in the field of history: the tragic and dehumanizing experiences of marginalized women are not taken seriously enough.

As a teenager in the French Quarter, I recall seeing a tour about Storyville that made me question the tour guide. The tour guide (obviously not a local) was conveying an exciting story filled with jazz and the supposed liberation of women. The standard view of Storyville: groups of beautiful women dancing naked, having consensual sex, and doing whatever they wanted while a jazz band was in full swing. The lie of women's liberation deeply disturbed me as I learned more about the district; there is no liberation when your only great options as a poor woman are to either get married or become a prostitute, both intrinsically tied to a man. From there, I began to criticize a large portion of the romanticized media and historical analysis of New Orleans, especially on the lives of Black and mixed-race women in New Orleans. Much of the history of Storyville has been cleaned up to push a more palatable narrative. Because over ninety-five percent

of it was demolished and destroyed to build the Iberville Project (which has also since been demolished), it is easy for most to absorb a romantic view of the district.

Storyville was a multi-million dollar industry for the city of New Orleans. Though Storyville provided women the opportunity to make money, it is apparent that, for most women, the amount of cash was minimal; the dangers, abuse, filth, diseases, and societal stigma that came with being a Storyville sex worker were abysmal. There was no escape or other option for many women, especially young women and girls who were born in Storyville or had mothers who worked in Storyville. The plight of Black and mixed-race women in Storyville reflected that of an extension of slavery, considering that only White men were allowed to participate, and yet, Black and mixed-race women made up a high percentage of the population; it shined a light on White men's appetite for Black and mixed-race women, despite even viewing them as fully human. Despite there being a lack of opportunity for women of color, I still found it necessary to address the legacy of Lulu White because her role in trafficking and prostitution often gets glossed over by the notion that she was a successful woman of color in the early twentieth century. While that is true, the harm she caused should not be overshadowed by the legacy she held. Viewing history through a rosy lens is very easy, making us reminisce about 'the good ol' days.' However, this erases the reality of life for those negatively impacted by the evils of the past. Popular history becomes harmful when analyzed incorrectly, and New Orleans has been on the receiving end of romanticized history for years. As time has progressed, how New Orleans' history is analyzed has become more scholarly and less sensationalized, but there is still a long way to go.

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