



LOUISIANA: INVESTIGATING A FRENCH PIECE OF AMERICA

Globe Reporters is a French association whose goal is to connect **journalism** and **education**, to help pupils understand how media work and become better-informed citizens.

Globe Reporters first chose topics and places to explore, like Cameroon, Madagascar or Louisiana. This year, our class in Lycée Pierre Bayen, along with 16 other classes in France, decided to be part of this project and wished to study our distant cousin, the American state of **Louisiana**. We were grateful to have the opportunity to be part of the campaign entitled “Louisiana, in the heart of the Bayou” - except, of course, when we had to practice phonetics in class with our evil teacher [‘miste ‘bærie] ^^!



French reporter Marine Leduc.
Photo © Globe Reporters, 2024.

After meeting one of Globe Reporters’ journalists, **Raphaël Krafft**, who explained us his personal journey into journalism, we started organising our work: selection of the themes we wanted to examine, discussions and votes to reduce the number of investigations,

online research to identify potential interviewees... The result of our efforts was shared online with the other classes involved and with **Marine Leduc**, our Globe Reporters correspondent who then travelled over there to investigate, interview, record, upload while updating the website with raw journalistic material and her personal travel log.

We listened to the 40 interviews, translated some of them which had been specifically recorded in English for us and we were assigned individual tasks like making short videos about our favourite interview, analysing their interest, expressing our opinion. Eventually, we worked in groups to compose the articles collected in **the newspaper** you are holding. Abortion, slavery, LGBT rights, climate change, adaptive sports, etc.: the choice of the articles are ours only and if our teacher did help us complete, rephrase, and correct our productions, this is our work, and it is a nice way to conclude our school year.

Anissa F.

A few words about Louisiana

Louisiana used to be a **French colony** during the 17th and 18th centuries. It stretched from the **Great Lakes** to the **Gulf of Mexico**. It was sold to the United States of America in **1803** by **Napoleon**.

The **Cajun country**, also known as “**Acadiana**” or “**French Louisiana**” refers to the historically Francophile part of the state. The word comes from the Canadian French “**Acadien**” and the “**Acadia**” region in Canada. French Canadians had been deported by the British between 1655 and 1664 and some eventually settled in Louisiana, forming a strong French-speaking community there.

Louisiana played a major role during

slavery and the creation of the **Confederate States** during the **Civil War**. The state still bears the stigmata of its violent past and much of its inhabitation suffer systemic marginalisation.

Hurricane Katrina was a devastating category 5 tropical cyclone that hit the Gulf of Mexico in August **2005**. It dramatically flooded **New Orleans** and caused 1,836 fatalities.

Louisiana and **New Orleans**, its largest city, are teeming with a rich and **multicultural life**: **jazz** music, **creole** culture and cuisine, and **Mardi Gras festivals** and **carnivals**.

Map of Louisiana, © FreeWorldMaps.net

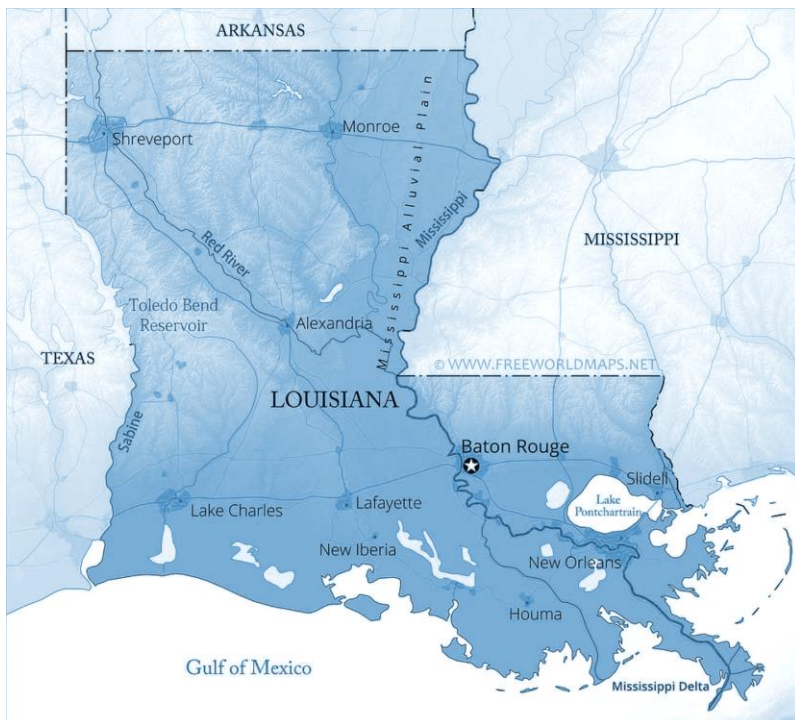


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Acknowledgments

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The students want to express their appreciation for **Marine Leduc's** work and dedication in Louisiana.

For more information:

Globe-reporters.org



7 errors game solutions

- 1) The cap n' bell hat of the jester in the middle **turned from pink to blue.**
- 2) The jester in the middle has **more teeth.**
- 3) The jester in the middle has **more teeth.**
- 4) The miniature jester sceptre **shifted his eyes.**
- 5) The jester's hand has an **extra finger.**
- 6) The number on the **white sign** on the right has changed.
- 7) **The person leaning on the wall** on the right has disappeared.



Climate change endangers bayou



Bayou landscape near Houma, © Globe Reporters 2024.

A milieu at risk

The bayou is the typical southern area near the Mississippi River. It features shallow waters, numerous streams, lakes and wetlands rich with wildlife. Unfortunately, this exceptional place is now in danger. Indeed, climate change and oil disasters are steadily undermining its fragile balance.

Natural or human threat?

To begin with, by human activities have been threatening the bayou for decades. Indeed, global warming has been causing massive floods in some areas due to the unusual water quantity brought by rain, storms and hurricanes. To respond to this phenomenon, the authorities have built canals, levees and dams to better control its effects. However, these constructions severely damage the natural site and, they actually offer a limited protection. Without proper solutions, the bayou may very well disappear in the near future.

Taking action

Windell CUROLE is a biologist of South Lafourche Levee District, a governmental organism for the protection of the bayou “Lafourche” and for the neighbouring area, has a realistic point of view on the topic: “We have to decide which area we can save, and which we can’t.”

There are different forms of actions that can be developed to preserve the bayou. On the one hand, the authorities can keep on building levees and other protective infrastructures. On the other hand, marshes can be restored so they can fulfil their original purpose, that is to say absorb rising waters and prevent land loss.

However, protecting all areas may prove to be a superhuman task against destructive hurricanes and rising temperatures.

Line M.
Félicie D.
Amel A.

Preserving Creole folktales

Louisiana's culture and folklore are a rich combination of its complex past. The former French colony still speaks Cajun French, but it also has strong Native American, African and Caribbean roots. **Barry Jean Ancelet** is a Professor at the Louisiana University in Lafayette who has specialized in the tales and lore of his native state. The oral tradition has kept alive many stories from its many origins: monsters, witches, werewolves, giants. This is, he says, what may seem difficult for other people to understand. He feels **American, Louisianan, Creole** and **Cajun** all at once. His complex identity is also his richness.

All the culture in Louisiana is **Creole**, says Barry Jean Ancelet because it is the result of all the different identities that have merged here. The stories we share in Louisiana show this richness. They also illustrate some universal features of storytelling: the French tale of Petit Jean

What is "Creole"?

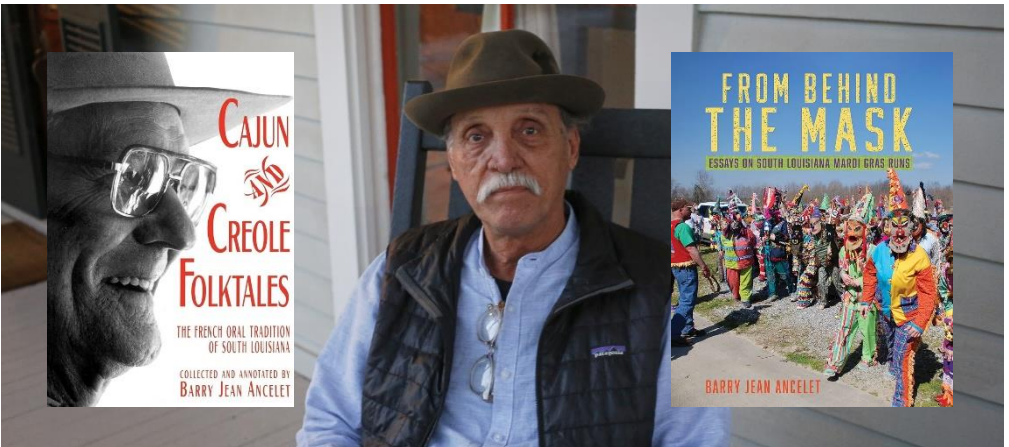
The word 'creole' has complex origins in **French** and **Portuguese** and has multiple meanings. In the American context, it used to refer to the people **born in a colony**. Later, it became a synonym for a **mixed ethnicity** that combines different cultural influences.

against the giant, for example, is very similar to the tale of the rabbit against the hyena from west Africa.

It is vital for everyone to learn about the stories from their own country, he recommends. It can be enriching for our imagination and identity to listen to relatives and share their tales.

Lisa L.
Aliyah M.
Isaure C.

Professor and writer Barry Jean Ancelet in the Roy House Center of Louisiana Studies in Lafayette University, posing with some of the books he has published. © Globe Reporters, 2024.



Beware the Rougarou

Louisiana remains a vibrant centre of cultures and histories, where tales like those of the Rougarou continue to influence and reflect the complex identities of its inhabitants. But who is this mysterious Louisiana creature? On the one hand, we are going to talk about Louisiana's legends. On the second hand, we are going to talk about the Rougarou and his symbolism.

First, Louisiana's rich culture is rooted in a complex mix of French, Acadian, Native American, and African traditions. **Barry Jean Ancelet**, a professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and an expert on Louisiana folklore, highlights the importance of oral tradition in preserving this unique culture. "Here, people have continued to tell stories rooted in the past", he says.

The **Francophonie** in Louisiana, although a minority in an English-speaking context, has preserved its stories and songs through the generations. This oral tradition is particularly valuable in a region where, historically, French education was forbidden.

What is "Francophonie"?

The Francophonie or Francophone world refers to people and organisations around the world who use the French language for private or public purposes.

Among the many legends of Louisiana, the Rougarou (from the French "Loup-garou") is a mythical creature similar to the werewolf that occupies a very special place. According to Barry Jean Ancelet,



The Rougarou of Louisiana

Picture recreated by Elona, after @tavomonster

"the Rougarou has become a metaphor for multiple identities, because it changes". This creature symbolizes the internal struggles and identity conflicts faced by French-speaking Louisianans, navigating between different cultures and languages.

Ancelet explains that the stories of the Rougarou, once frightening, are now evolving into symbols of ecological resistance: "The Rougarou has become a kind of hero, a symbol of resistance to preserve the environment."

Today, the Rougarou remains an important figure in Louisiana culture. Now it has become an entertainment subject, used for costumes at Mardi Gras and legends are sung at festivals. It no longer scares children as it used to.

Maëlyne D.
Marie-Lou P.
Elona M.

Proud in Louisiana

Many Americans are worried about the possible election of Donald Trump because that would severely threaten LGBT+ rights in the USA and more particularly in the deep south.

Frank Perez, co-founder and the director of the LGBT+ Archives Project Association works to preserve queer history in Louisiana, and seeks to uncover LGBT+ records that have been hidden or undocumented. “Until recent decades, being gay or lesbian or trans or bi, was not something that people wanted to admit or document, because to do so in the United States could mean that you were fired from your job or arrested and put in jail or perhaps put in a mental institution [...] and so a lot of that history is still hidden, and so we want to unhide it.” he explains.

Furthermore, in Louisiana there are many organizations supporting the LGBT community such as the nonprofit group “No Age” that organizes social events for the elderly or the activist committee called “Forum for equality” that endorses political candidates. These organizations are very helpful for the **LGBTQIA+**

community since its members are victims of much prejudice and hatred. Louisiana is a state that is still perceived as very homophobic because the population is very religious and conservative. Same-sex marriage, for instance has only been legal in Louisiana since the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in 2015 and the attacks on the trans-identify are increasing.

What is “LGBTQIA+”?

L = “Lesbian” / **G** = “Gay” / **B** = “Bisexual”,
T = “Transgender” / **Q** = “queer” / **I** =
 “Intersex” / **A** = “Asexual”. The + sign can
 be added to refer to other members of
 the non-heterosexual community that
 are not represented by the acronym.

On a positive note, Louisiana has a rich history of gay carnivals (in June) and LGBT Mardi Gras (in January/February.) These events have grown very popular and echo the positive progress of LGBT+ rights over the past years. However, Frank Perez warns: “Don’t take your rights for granted because they can easily be taken away.”

Lilou M.
Lalie G.

The LGBTQIA+ flag floating in the French quarter, aka “Vieux Carré”, in New Orleans. © Globe Reporters 2024.



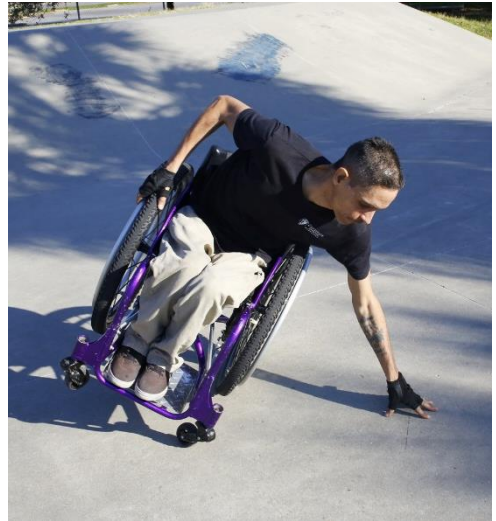
Adaptive sport is sport

Sports are central in our society and almost everyone relates to the issue. However, just like any human activity, sport has its obvious weaknesses and dark sides. Women's sports and disability sports, for instance, are not as advertised as they should be. **Tony Torres** is a WCMX (Wheelchair motocross) athlete and an American football player who owns TNT360, a business manufacturing custom wheelchairs for sportsmen and sportswomen. Thanks to adaptive sport, he says, he has become "an independent person."

People should not oppose **adaptive sport** and sport. Thanks to adaptation, many popular sports can be practiced by able-bodied and disabled people alike. Tony "moved of central Louisiana because the opportunity is here and immense in New Orleans. They have tennis or football," which can be played by disabled people. The rules are slightly different, but the concept of the game is the same. There are more than 70 adaptive sports and new high-adrenaline sports are being created, like **WCMX** (wheelchair motocross adapted from skateboarding and BMX performance) a new freestyle sport practiced by Tony.

All the praised values of sports can be embraced by athletes with a disability: efforts, passion, discipline, resilience, commitment, excellence, and even competitiveness. Official events, like the Louisiana State University Adaptive Sports Championship or the Special Olympics Louisiana (SOLA), are here to support adaptive sports competitions locally, nationally and internationally. Specific associations like Move United or Gumbo help promote these events in Louisiana and in the whole of the USA as well as the creation of adaptive federations.

Unfortunately, to be fair, there is still progress to be made. Even the coming



Tony is showing our Globe Reporter Marine Leduc a few WCMX tricks. ©Globe Reporters, 2024.

Paralympics in August will probably not attract as much audience as the Olympics games, just like the previous editions. It is however noteworthy that the French Olympic Committee created a specific variation of the 2024 Phryge mascot representing the adaptive competition. It is vital to be more open-minded and more receptive to disability, especially with young people trying to fit in, to make their way into life, concludes Tony Torres.

Gaëtan M.
Augustin S.

Painful memories

Imagine being taken from your home or your country to a strange land for free and forced labour. How could anyone survive such a horrendous situation? We are about to travel back in time to a world when **slavery** was a "legal" practice in the USA and in Louisiana more particularly. Where did slaves come from? How negative has the impact of slavery been on the territory and its people? Do African American people still suffer from discrimination?

Lawson Ota teaches French at the Alliance Française High School in New Orleans and founded the tourism company *Tours by Marguerite* – he is quite familiar with this southern state whose economy thrived thanks to slavery.

Slavery began during the early 18th century in Louisiana – it was introduced by French colonists! The slaves were brought by ships from Western Africa (Senegal, Gambia...) and the journey was

terrible: slaves were kept in the hold of the ships, tied-up, and systematically abused, whether verbally or physically and even sexually. Sadly, starvation and illnesses were also common on board. The situation was not any better once they were sold to their masters because of the terrible labor in the plantations and their appalling living conditions.

Because of its location near the Mississippi river, New Orleans, Lawson Ota explains, became a central hub for the domestic slave trade in the south. Today, 60% of the population of New Orleans is African American and most certainly the descendants of enslaved Africans. Thus, it is vital to preserve the memory of this past. Surprisingly enough, the State of Louisiana does very little for this preservation which is mainly funded by private organisations. There should be more fundings to celebrate the history and the influence of the African culture.



Lawson Ota in The Louis Armstrong Park in the Tremé neighborhood, New Orleans – This particular place, called 'Congo Square' is considered the birthplace of jazz because slaves used to be allowed to play music and dance there on Sundays. Photo © Globe Reporters 2024.

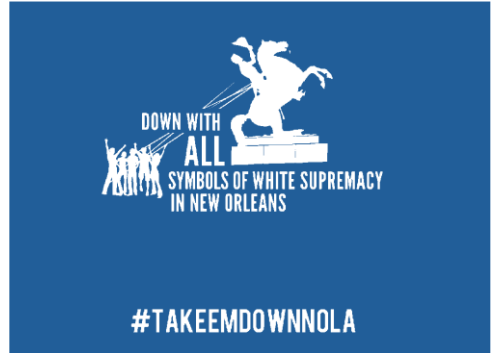
At the end of the American Civil war, which was the deadliest conflict in American history, slavery was finally abolished, in 1865. reminds historian **Joseph Dunn**. However, most of the emancipated slaves stayed in the plantations because of poverty and marginalization and above all because of the implementation of the Black Codes and Segregation. Social inequality has continued ever since.

Organizations like **Take em down NOLA** (**New Orleans Louisiana**) have been committed to the removal of white supremacy symbols in New Orleans: statues of slave traders and Confederate monuments must be taken down, white supremacists street and school names must be changed, they say. **Lawson Ota** considers this is a step in the right direction: “Worshiping these figures was a crime against all those who fought for freedom.”

“African Americans felt insulted by these statues”

Progress is on the way. Lawson Ota believes that movements and protests like **Black Lives Matter** are the symptomatic fever showing that society is close to being cured. The majority of Americans are progressive and want race and gender equality, he believes.

Inès B.
Garmai K.
Anissa F.



2021 Take Em down NOLA Facebook campaign for the removal of racist symbols. © Take em down NOLA



Confederate slaveholder Robert E Lee statue at Lee Circle New Orleans being removed from atop the column, 2017. © Infrogmation.

Native Americans at risk

Pointe-au-Chien Tribe is a French-speaking Native community living in Southern Louisiana who may be descendants of historical Tribes such as the Chitimacha and the Biloxi. Their **indigenous community** is composed of about 800 members, but their very existence is now at stakes: after hundreds of years of marginalization and survival, they are now facing **new dangers** with climate change, rising water and catastrophic events. In 2021, Hurricane IDA destroyed most of their community and made them climate refugees. However, the tribe keeps on working on the **preservation of their culture** and identity with the creation of a **French School** in 2023 in the Pointe-au-Chêne bayou.



All pictures are © Globe Reporters, 2024.

Lilou D.
Zoé L.

Deepwater disaster

20th April 2010: a massive oil rig called **Deepwater Horizon** exploded in the Gulf of Mexico creating an oil slick that endangered the whole ecosystem off the coast of Louisiana. It was a considerable problem for the 'Pelican State'. Our Globe Reporter Marine met **Tommy Michot**, a retired Cajun biologist that worked for the Institute for Coastal and Water Research, to find more about this disaster.

The event is considered **the largest marine oil spill in history**. The oil spill spread over 60.000 square miles! The consequences on the environment have been dreadful and affected many species

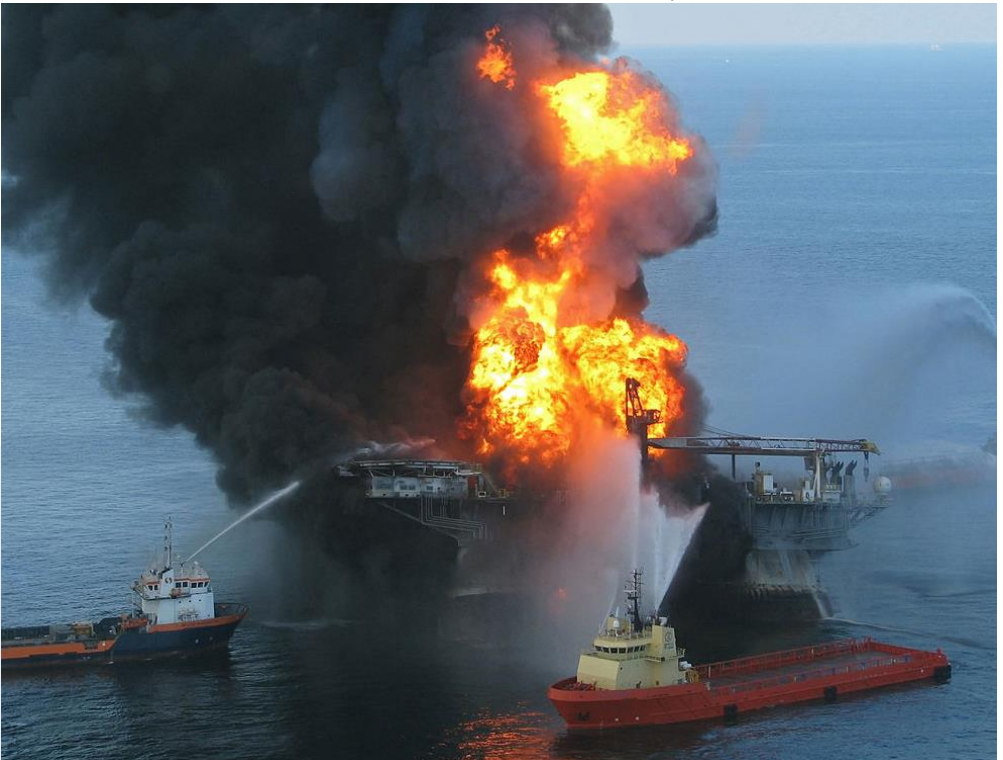
of **plants** and **animals**, including the **human cleaners** who worked months long on the beaches.

Indeed, against this disaster, the population tried to find solutions to clean the coast. Local inhabitants volunteered to help clean birds and collect oil on the shore. Time was a challenge because of the urgency of the situation.

Sadly, the government did very little, **Tommy Michot** says, to prevent other future oil disasters.

Rachel V.-L.
Nora T.

© Unknown author - US Coast Guard, Deepwater Horizon fire - Public Domain.



Boo! Here comes Voodoo

Voodoo is often associated with spooky dolls, dark magic, zombies, charms and many weirder things. However, Voodoo is actually much more than that. It is a complex practise involving spirituality, religion, culture, and even cuisine, as clearly explained by **Grete Viddal**, an independent scholar specialized in Voodooism

The syncretic religion was born in West Africa and was deeply influenced by Catholicism. Later, it spread to the Caribbean and America because of the slave trade. There are many variations of Voodoo in Cuba (Santería), Haiti (Vodou), and in the United States (Hoodoo).



Inside a Voodoo spiritual temple in the French Quarter, New Orleans. © Globe Reporters, 2024.

The great practice of Voodoo

The dark reputation of Voodoo originated from the stereotypical description of Haitian culture in popular magazines that were quickly appropriated by Hollywood

films in the 1930s. Voodoo is totally different from the caricature created in the media. People come to it for spiritual counsel and psychological support. Voodoo can also be a place for celebration (weddings and funerals alike) and its rituals help its followers to unite and better understand their place in the world.

The terrible Voodoo doll



© imgbin.com.

The **Voodoo doll**, for instance, is not as dreadful as people think. Contrary to common belief, these effigies are never used to harm but to heal and protect people. Furthermore, they actually come from the European tradition of witchcraft ‘poppets’ confusingly mixed with the Kongo statues called Nkongi.

The Louisiana voodoo is a complex religion combining belief, spirituality, philosophy and rituals. Its purpose is healing and understanding, and the stereotypes conveyed about it mainly comes from general ignorance and colonialist prejudice. It is important, Grete Viddal stresses in her interview by Globe Reporter Marine Leduc, to respect Voodoo as we would respect any religion. Would?

Iris P.
Eléonore V.
Maëlan T.

Fighting abortion ban

While France is securing a fundamental right for women within its very own Constitution, some American states are aggressively attacking abortion rights and taking a worrying leap backwards. What difficulties are women in Louisiana currently facing in this matter?

First, according to **Victoria Coy**, the director of the Coalition for Reproductive Freedom interviewed by Globe Reporter Marine Leduc, following the mandate of the former president Donald Trump, the Supreme Court turned conservative in June 2022 and decided to overturn the **Roe V Wade** ruling. As a reminder this 1973 ruling had guaranteed the right to abortion in all states of the country.

Consequently, each state can now choose its own laws regarding abortion rights. For example, states like Texas, Missouri, Tennessee or in our case Louisiana, which are very conservative, have banned and criminalized abortion whereas other states like California or Texas have chosen to keep abortion legal. Indeed, as Marine realised as she was touring Louisiana, there are “a lot of huge billboards or anti-abortion associations”. Thus, some women in Louisiana are forced to go to Florida (where the right for abortion is still under debate) or to New Mexico. Moreover, more recently a hearing was held on March 26 in 2024, to discuss new restrictions for the access to the abortion pill in Louisiana.

On top of that, women, whether they are pregnant or in need of medical care, have very little access to practitioners because gynaecologists and other specialist



Never again - People demonstrating Against abortion ban, ©Pexels.com, 2023.

doctors are leaving for other states. Also, some physicians now refuse to meet patients in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy to avoid abortion accusations in case of miscarriage, with no regard for the patients' health.

The situation is all the more upsetting than the “people who want to destroy reproductive rights are a small group” Victoria Coy concludes.

Eve P.
Luisa C.
Isaline L.

“Hollywood on the bayou”

Louisiana used to be a cinematic place and hosted a long list of major film and television stars over the years. However, the industry being in constant evolution, the question is: has the situation changed? Between blockbuster productions and independent filmmaking, **Clint Bowie**, the artistic director of the **New Orleans Film Society**, explain the new cinematic landscape in the state.



2008 New Orleans Film Festival poster
© Globe Reporters

Louisiana is undoubtedly rich with its smaller local projects, like the film *time*, by New Orleans-based director Garrett Bradley, which was acquired by Amazon Studios and was nominated for the best documentary feature Oscar two years ago.

However, thanks to the unique tax incentives voted in 2002, Louisiana has become an attractive and thriving place for the cinema industry. Bigger budget productions like *Green Lantern* (Martin Campbell, 2011), *The Strange Case of Benjamin Button* (David Fincher, 2008) or *Captain Marvel* (Anna Boden, 2011) for example were shot here in the “**Hollywood South**”.

Louisiana is now the *fourth-largest* movie production location in the country combining small-budget local films and larger national blockbuster movies. Indeed, such different projects should not be opposed, as “the two have really grown in tandem.” concludes Clint Bowie.



Célestine I.
Zélie C.



Above: Marvel's Spider-Man, illustration by Zélie C.
Right: Louisiana film stickers © Globe Reporters

Mardi Gras!

The **Mardi Gras** holiday, also known as **Carnival season**, is celebrated in Southern Louisiana and more particularly in New Orleans before the beginning of **Lent** (the Christian season of fasting) in February or March. It is a period of celebrations, parades and balls. It can also be a moment of fun and confusion!

Can you spot the **7 errors** between these two photographs of the 2011 New Orleans Parade? Good luck!



© Carol M. Highsmith



Too hard? Find the answers on page 3!



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