

Sample CMS Manuscript Pages – 1

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS

**CREOLES OF COLOR IN NEW ORLEANS:
SHATTERED DREAMS AND BROKEN PROMISES**

**AMERICAN HISTORY FROM
RECONSTRUCTION TO THE PRESENT
HISTORY 320**

JANUARY 23, 2000

**BY
KAREN BATTLE**

2"

There is no state in the Union, hardly any spot of like size on the globe, where the man of color has lived so intensely, made so much progress, been of such historical importance and yet about whom so comparatively little is known. His history is like the Mardi Gras of the city of New Orleans, beautiful and mysterious and wonderful, but with a serious thought underlying it all. May it be better known to the world someday.

←1"→

Alice Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color in Louisiana"¹

←1"→

As early as 1815, with promises of compensation from General Andrew Jackson for participation in the Battle of New Orleans, the free Black people of New Orleans patiently awaited the fulfillment of their strong desire for equality with Whites. Dubbed "free persons" or "Creoles" of color, the group remained--for nearly two centuries--in the difficult "center" position in New Orleans society:

Block →
quotation
indented
4 spaces

They shared neither the privileges of the master class nor the degradation of the slave. They stood between--or rather apart--sharing the cultivated tastes of the upper caste and the painful humiliation attached to the race of the enslaved.²

With slaveholders and well-established property owners among the class, many free Blacks identified their interests with those of the governing White society. The result was the separation of the

Rule →
above
footnote

¹Alice Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color in Louisiana," in The Works of Alice Dunbar-Nelson, ed. Gloria T. Hull (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 322.

²Charles E. O'Neill, S.J., foreword to Our People and Our History, by Rodolphe L. Desdunes (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), ix.

1/2" \updownarrow 3/4"
3 \leftarrow 1" \rightarrow

educated and propertied free Blacks from the majority of their race, with whom they shared a common legal status.³

As the years dragged on and the size and wealth of the free Black population of New Orleans continued to grow, strong dissatisfaction with the Creole example of uplift and opportunity to those still enslaved began to emerge in the White community. In an address to the Louisiana legislature in 1857, Governor Robert C. Wicliffe proposed a somewhat unrealistic solution to the free Black "problem":

Public policy dictates that immediate steps be taken at this time to move all free negroes now in the State when such removal can be effected without violation of the law. Their example and association have a most pernicious affect [sic] upon our slave population.⁴

In January of 1860 a group of about one hundred free Blacks from surrounding rural parishes, who felt that conditions could only worsen, left for Haiti from the port of New Orleans. Free Black New Orleanians, however, failed to see any reasoning in such an action. Possessing a combined estimated value of about \$20 million of the city's wealth, the Creoles of color decided to stick it out and prepare themselves for the long and arduous struggle for what they felt was theirs by right of birth.⁵

³Donald E. Everett, "Demands of the New Orleans Free Colored Population for Political Equality, 1862-1865," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, April 1955, 43.

⁴Quoted in Brenda Marie Osbey, "Faubourg Tremé: Community in Transition, Part 2," New Orleans Tribune, January 1991, 13.

⁵Ibid.

2"

There is no state in the Union, hardly any spot of like size on the globe, where the man of color has lived so intensely, made so much progress, been of such historical importance and yet about whom so comparatively little is known. His history is like the Mardi Gras of the city of New Orleans, beautiful and mysterious and wonderful, but with a serious thought underlying it all. May it be better known to the world someday.

←1"→

Alice Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color in Louisiana"¹

←1"→

As early as 1815, with promises of compensation from General Andrew Jackson for participation in the Battle of New Orleans, the free Black people of New Orleans patiently awaited the fulfillment of their strong desire for equality with Whites. Dubbed "free persons" or "Creoles" of color, the group remained--for nearly two centuries--in the difficult "center" position in New Orleans society:

Block →
quotation
indented
4 spaces

They shared neither the privileges of the master class nor the degradation of the slave. They stood between--or rather apart--sharing the cultivated tastes of the upper caste and the painful humiliation attached to the race of the enslaved.²

With slaveholders and well-established property owners among the class, many free Blacks identified their interests with those of the governing White society. The result was the separation of the educated and propertied free Blacks from the majority of their

Note →
number
raised
½
line
and
reduced

race, with whom they shared a common legal status.³

As the years dragged on and the size and wealth of the free Black population of New Orleans continued to grow, strong dissatisfaction with the Creole example of uplift and opportunity to

NOTES

1. Alice Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color in Louisiana," in The Works of Alice Dunbar-Nelson, ed. Gloria T. Hull (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 322.

2. Charles E. O'Neill, S.J., foreword to Our People and Our History, by Rodolphe L. Desdunes (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), ix.

3. Donald E. Everett, "Demands of the New Orleans Free Colored Population for Political Equality, 1862-1865," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, April 1955, 43.

4. Quoted in Brenda Marie Osbey, "Faubourg Tremé: Community in Transition, Part 2," New Orleans Tribune, January 1991, 13.

5. Ibid.

6. Everett, 44.

7. Ibid., 45.

8. Ibid., 46.

9. Virginia R. Dominguez, White by Definition (Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 135.

10. John W. Blassingame, Black New Orleans: 1860-1880 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 131.

11. Brenda Marie Osbey, "Faubourg Tremé: Community in Transition, Part 3," New Orleans Tribune, August 1991, 15.

12. Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston, eds., Dictionary of American Negro Biography (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), 534.

WORKS CITED

- Blassingame, John. Black New Orleans: 1860-1880. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.
- Desdunes, Rodolphe. Our People and Our History. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973.
- Dominguez, Virginia R. White by Definition. Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986.
- Dunbar-Nelson, Alice. "People of Color in Louisiana." In The Works of Alice Dunbar-Nelson, edited by Gloria T. Hull. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Everett, Donald E. "Demands of the New Orleans Free Colored Population for Political Equality, 1862-1865." Louisiana Historical Quarterly, April 1955, 43.
- Logan, Rayford W., and Michael R. Winston, eds. Dictionary of American Negro Biography. New York: W. W. Norton, 1982.
- O'Neill, Charles E., S.J. Foreword to Our People and Our History, by Rodolphe L. Desdunes. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973.
- Osbey, Brenda Marie. "Faubourg Tremé: Community in Transition, Part 2." New Orleans Tribune, January 1991, 13.
- . "Faubourg Tremé: Community in Transition, Part 3." New Orleans Tribune, August 1991, 15.
- . "Faubourg Tremé: Community in Transition, Part 4." New Orleans Tribune, September 1991, 14.
- Wall, Bennett H. Louisiana: A History. Wheeling, Ill.: Forum Press, 1990.