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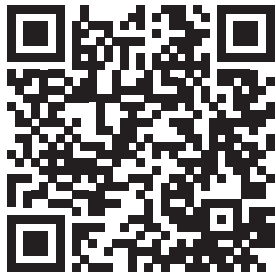
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Have a Sauce or a Loss? Submit here!

NSU and LSMSA plan Innovation Park; construction expected in late 2026



Photo by Madelyn Murphy

By Kallie Bourgeois
Editor-in-Chief
Heidi Gauthier
Sports Editor

Northwestern State University of Louisiana and the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts plan to break ground on Innovation Park within the next year.

Innovation Park will serve as a collaborative space for NSU and LSMSA students, intended to be an innovative and incubation center for small business and entrepreneurs to get ideas and advice.

According to NSU's website, this project is a part of the larger City of Natchitoches Master Plan that looks to connect NSU, LSMSA, the historic downtown district and the Natchitoches Regional Medical Center. This project is designed to spark economic growth, attract investment and create a more united community.

The project came to fruition when Laurie Morrow, executive director for economic development and university advancement, first came to NSU. She wanted to bring in more opportunities for business and industry, workforce development, customized training and partnerships.

"So, I was just very passionate about helping the people of these rural parishes that don't necessarily have the service here locally," Morrow said, explaining there's nothing within 70 miles that will provide this type of service. "It's really important to me that folks understand this is not just an agriculture-centric project, but a regional project."

Jill Leo, associate director of innovation at NSU, explained that this is a capital outlay project, meaning it will be funded through the state. According to the NSU website, the project total is \$18 million, with \$12 million being funded through capital outlay projects and \$6 million from private and federal sources.

"It is an 18-month construction project, so we will be looking at 2028. We plan to break ground at the end of 2026, and then hopefully we will finish in 2028," she said. Leo added that once the spring legislative session is complete in early March, documents should go out for bid in the summer and construction will begin this time next year.

Innovation Park will span across 12 acres of land, providing the New Family Makerspace with 10,450 square feet, Business Development Center with 11,350 square feet and Conference Center with 8,000 square feet.

The New Family Makerspace was named after Bill New, a graduate of LSMSA, who served on the foundation board and donated \$1 million toward the building, according to Leo. This space, which is primarily dedicated to LSMSA students, will feature hands-on activities, ranging from robotics, woodworking, art, photography, 3D printing and more. "This is really going to be able to enhance what they do on a day-to-day basis with the extra equipment, classrooms and whatnot," Leo explained.

Steve Horton, executive director of LSMSA, shared how the park will be a catalyst for economic growth

and education advancement in Natchitoches. "Innovation Park will help us integrate experiential learning into our curriculum in a sustainable way," Horton said. "Over time, we expect it to become a cornerstone of LSMSA's approach to education, where creativity, collaboration and innovation are as central as academic rigor."

Horton added that the Co-Lab within the facility will provide a space where ideas can move from concept to prototype, preparing students for a rapidly changing world. LSMSA students will be able to collaborate with peers and professionals, access advanced tools and learn the entrepreneurial process firsthand.

"Innovation Park aligns perfectly with that vision [to prepare students for a rapidly changing world] by fostering creativity, collaboration and real-world problem solving. It stands for the kinds of forward-thinking approaches we want to embed in every aspect of our educational model and mission," Horton said.

Leo explained that the Business Development Center will serve as the regional hub for not only Natchitoches, but the surrounding parishes. "This is not just for Natchitoches. We want this to be for all our surrounding parishes. We want them to come here, and to be able to help them because when they're successful, we're successful," Leo said.

The center will also house the local Natchitoches Eco-

economic Development Alliance, Natchitoches Chamber of Commerce and Bank of Montgomery, as well as co-working spaces and offices that will be available for rent.

Career Services will also be relocated to the Business Development Center, providing NSU students with resources for entrepreneurship. Several economic development organizations such as Louisiana Central, North Louisiana Economic Partnership, Entrepreneur Accelerated Program and more will put on workshops and programs.

"In theory, the idea is that they would come talk to us, and we would kind of see what their need is. Maybe we can plug them into some of the programming that we're doing right then and there," Leo said. "Those are free resources. So, I think just depending on where they're at, we want to meet them where their needs are."

According to NSU's website, the Conference Center will be designed to support entrepreneurs, students and the community.

While the plan to begin construction moves forward, Morrow sees Innovation Park becoming a landmark for Natchitoches. "I envision this building as being the gateway to the city. Innovation Park is set to become a signature landmark for Natchitoches, where vision meets opportunity, where the next generation of creators, leaders and the entrepreneurs will develop the skills to shape the future," Morrow said.

Through NSU and LSMSA's collaboration, Innovation Park reflects a long-term plan to prepare students for future academic and career-driven paths both on and off its campus.

Photo by Madelyn Murphy



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Sweetie's Bar-B-Q and Blues House fires up success and flavor as a Natchitoches staple



Photo by Zoey Fitts

Sweetie's Bar-B-Q and Blues House, located at 203 Kyser Ave., is a fan favorite spot where many people come to enjoy their award-winning BBQ.

By Bella Scamardo
Reporter

Located at 203 Keyser Ave., Sweetie's Bar-B-Q and Blues House is a business where owner Daryl Walker's top priority is making food that tastes good. Sweetie's is not only a place where people travel from all across the region to dine, but it is also a place that harbors an atmosphere of belonging for Natchitoches residents.

Sweetie's is open every week Tuesday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Friday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. The inside of the restaurant is filled with more than enough tables for seating, features blues music playing in the background and showcases a wall of trophies that highlights Walker's accomplishments over the years.

"Cooking with my mom and dad when I was younger,

we cooked a lot of stuff back then: meat pies, crawfish pies and tea cakes," Walker described what inspired him to start his food business. "The love of cooking, as I got older, just stuck with me."

Walker always had a passion for cooking, even at a young age. At only 19 years old, he started his own construction business while continuing to hone his craft in the kitchen. "I was doing both. Construction during the week and on the weekends, I was cooking," he said.

The Covid-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for Walker to finally start his restaurant. He was determined not to let his chance at a business go to waste. "When Covid hit, I said, 'if I'm ever going to start a restaurant, I need to go ahead and do it now,'" Walker stated.

What began as a small business for Walker and his

wife, Trisha, soon developed into a more prominent food stop in Natchitoches. On top of already having established careers as a general contractor and mental health therapist, they worked alongside each other to create what is now known as Sweetie's.

Not only is Sweetie's a popular spot in its hometown, but it is also an award-winning business across the world. Natchitoches residents Daryl and Trisha Walker have won countless competitions across the globe, such as Memphis in May Ribs 4th Place World Champion, 1st Place Rib in Alaska and 1st Place Whole Hog in New York.

Sweetie's originally began as a food truck before Walker decided to buy a place for the permanent residence of Sweetie's. "We did about two years in a food truck, then I bought a building on Texas

Street. We stayed there for another two years, and then we moved here," he said.

Walker described the current location of Sweetie's as being directly situated in the blood vessel that runs through the center of Natchitoches: Keyser Avenue. It is one of the main roads connecting NSU to multiple businesses, such as fast food restaurants and grocery stores.

"Everything is going to pass through this way. People just gravitate to this place. They're curious. They want to know what it tastes like," he said.

Walker wants Sweetie's to offer his customers the chance to reminisce about their younger years when enjoying his cooking. "My mom, she had this cornbread dressing that she made, and I ate that all my life. It makes you think of good, warm

times," he said. "So when customers eat the cornbread dressing, it takes them back."

The cornbread dressing is one of the most popular items on the menu, though Sweetie's offers a large variety of menu items, from ribs and pulled pork to green beans, mac and cheese, sweet potatoes and more. Sweetie's even offers catering options for large events such as parties and social gatherings, bringing their food to anyone in the Natchitoches community. For more information on preordering, give Sweetie's a call at (318) 228-8592 or visit their website.

Walker remains driven to continue his business because every day is different for him. "I want to challenge myself every day to make the food taste even better the next time somebody tastes it. That is really what motivates me," he said.

Providing a welcoming place for customers is one of Walker's many roles at Sweetie's, along with cooking and training his staff. Walker values hospitality and connectedness, especially within the walls of his restaurant.

"As far as the customers, I want to greet them every time they come in and just really see how their day is going. I make sure that I say something funny. Really, I just want to cater to their needs when they come in," Walker said.

As Walker looks to the future, he is sure that Sweetie's will remain a thriving business. "I see myself expanding, and I would like to expand this year. I had set a goal two years ago to have at least three or four restaurants in different parts. I would love to see some here and there," he stated.

For those looking for a restaurant that prides itself on serving food that tastes good and offers a welcoming place for all, look no further than Sweetie's Bar-B-Q and Blues House.

Photo by Zoey Fitts



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Use this form to share information with our newsroom. Tips can be submitted anonymously. Submitting a tip does not guarantee coverage. Do not submit false or malicious information. For emergencies, contact local authorities.





Hometown Hero: L.J. Melder

Photo by Anastasia Douglas

Natchitoches native, L.J. Melder shares his story as one of the last remaining World War II veterans in Louisiana.

By Anastasia Douglas
Podcast Anchor

Heroes are not the abstracts seen in cinema or the trinkets bought at a primary age. Heroes dedicate their lives, bestowing what bravery truly captures. True warriors could be living in the same city as you, without you knowing it.

In the oldest town in Louisiana, born on Sept. 9, 1927, lives L.J. Melder. Melder is one of the last remaining World War II veterans here in Natchitoches and in the state of Louisiana.

A Natchitoches native with the heart of a country boy that started his journey at Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Melder initially wanted to join the football team. After classes, whenever NSU held games,

he would be there cheering on his school. However, unable to land a scholarship, Coach Harry Turpin scored Melder for a job in the dairy.

During his younger years, Melder worked as a butcher boy, so transitioning to milking cows was not a problem. “Coming home from the dairy, I would bring home a big bucket of milk, and everyone would gather around to drink,” Melder laughed.

Never afraid of the challenge, Melder joined the U.S. Navy in 1945, excited and primed for the awaiting adventure. The soldiers moved in convoys on the ocean, and destroyer escorts surrounded them to protect submarines.

However, efforts weren’t successful, and Melder witnessed Japan losing their submarines at the Battle of

Midway. Soldiers weren’t the only battles Melder faced, with his ambitious excitement met with provocations as he saw brothers die right in front of him. With a career ending in 1947 as a destroyer escort on the USS Major Pacific, Melder was happy to return home.

Melder loves his hometown, with his favorite memories including roaming the city with friends and walking from campus to the movies, as activities in this period included walking around the city, not driving. “Movies at that time were 15 cents, and Coca-Cola cost nickels, which is completely different from prices today,” Melder said.

Enjoying his college days, Melder took on an interesting major upon returning to

Natchitoches. As a student majoring in business administration, Melder took classes in accounting, where he enjoyed doing balance sheets, spreadsheets and income statements. Thanks to his professors, Melder was able to practice at the home of his professor, bringing his wife with him. To this day, he continues his skills using spreadsheets for his enjoyment at home.

Melder says he is immensely proud of NSU and what it has become since he was a college student. He understands that times are drastically different, but is proud of the evolution that has occurred. When asked what advice he had for students, Melder said the key to success is to “study hard and learn everything that you can.”

Continuing the warm and inviting spirit, Melder looks forward to his 100th birthday in September 2027. “I will have a big party, where everyone is invited,” Melder said. With years of dedication and achievements, Melder spends his days with his wife and family, reminiscing about the happiness of the Natchitoches community.



Burning Conversations

If you are curious to hear more from L.J. Melder, watch this interview and many more on **Burning Conversations**, the official podcast for The Current Sauce.

KNWD DJ LIST

Tuesday:

Strike Up the Band: Cale Arceneaux (11am-12pm)

Yapology: Kai Meyers, Elliot Castleberry, Mckayla Courtney, (12pm-1pm)

Exhibit A: Jasper Robinson, (1pm-2pm)

News 91.7: Cale Arceneaux, Cypress Sulfsted, J’Niya Hill, (3pm-4pm)

Behind the Curtain: Carter Ball (6pm-7pm)

Wednesday:

Sideline Talk: Mackenzie Honor, Kobie McCormick, Kierra Nelson (12pm-1pm)

Pitchforked: Lawson Richard (3pm-4pm)

Live with Liv: Olivia Lubbert (4pm-5pm)

Pink Hour: Peyton Longlois (9pm-10pm)

Thursday:

Smell ya Later: Rannon Jett and Ayden Slack (12pm-1pm)

Rolling 20’s : Jeremy Wade (1pm-2pm)

Power Glove Power Hour: Jude Latiolais (5pm-6pm)

AyeelItsBryce:ON AIR : Bryson Lewis (6pm-7pm)

Friday:

Schrodinger’s Station: Elliot Castleberry (1pm-2pm)

Dark Blue: Morgan Vaughan (3pm-4pm)

Try Not To Laugh KNWD: Avis Vincent (5pm-6pm)

Talk First Think Later: Torin Merchant, Olivia Lubbert, Chris James (6pm-7pm)

Another Day Another Show-tune: Jaime Perdue and Mckayla Courtney (7pm-8pm)

Saturday:

Noise Complaint: Violet Hawkins (10pm-11pm)

What goes into student athlete success at NSU?

By Heidi Gauthier
Sports Editor

On game day, the spotlight focuses on the athletes, but much of Northwestern State University of Louisiana's athletic success is built in moments that the fans do not see. At NSU, staff members form the backbone of the athletics department, providing medical care, academic support and structure to ensure student-athletes are supported and able to perform their best.

According to an article by Knack, "Institutions that embrace flexible, accessible, and student-first support models will not only see improved academic outcomes but also stronger student engagement and retention."

Jason Smelser, director of strength and conditioning, oversees the performance, training and nutrition of NSU student-athletes while managing the university's strength and conditioning staff.

Smelser is responsible for the performance aspect of Demon football and supervises strength and conditioning coaches for all NSU athletic programs. His role extends beyond the weight room, with nutrition planning, wellness monitoring and sports science playing key roles in the athletic department.

Nutrition is a major component of the performance program. Smelser and his staff help ensure athletes are properly fueled to meet the demands of their sport.

"Through their wellness reports, we monitor their

sleep hygiene, hydration and how their body feels to make sure they are performing well," Smelser said. "We take into account key performance indicators, which are their speed, strength, power and more."

For most athletic programs, Smelser said training and nutrition plans can be individualized for each athlete. With larger programs such as football, athletes are grouped by position to tailor training and nutrition to the physical demands of their role.

Employed through Natchitoches Regional Medical Center, Kalevi Pajuluoma, director of sports medicine, serves as the primary link between NSU Athletics and the hospital. He oversees orthopedic injuries across all sports and works directly with the Demon football program as its head athletic trainer.

NSU athletics works closely with two orthopedic physicians, Dr. Theodore Knatt and Dr. Theodore Jordan, for injuries that go beyond the sports medicine staff's capabilities.

"The most common injuries we see in NSU athletes are ankle injuries, hamstring strain and sometimes impingement in the shoulders. We do a range of motion testing to see where there are deficits," Pajuluoma said.

Pajuluoma explained that his team works with the strength coaches and head coaches to ensure the athletes remain safe and healthy. "If an athlete does get injured, my job is to evaluate it and diagnose it," Pajuluoma said.

"If they have past injuries, we make sure that we are rehabbing those or doing maintenance exercises to prevent more injury."

Julia Davis, director of enhanced academic programming, is another staff member who plays a key role

in helping student-athletes. Davis oversees academic support for soccer, volleyball and both

the men's and women's track and field programs. She also works closely with student-athletes who require learning accommodations or additional academic structure.

In a study from Taylor and Francis Online, "Student-athletes highlighted academic support staff, access to knowledgeable insiders (such as lecturers and fellow students), as well as study halls and tutoring services, as key structural supports for managing both academic and athletic commitments."

NSU provides academic support tailored specifically to student-athletes. In addition to campus-wide resources available to all NSU students, student-athletes have



Photo Submitted by Jason Smelser
Jason Smelser, director of strength and conditioning and Demon football head athletic trainer, helps NSU athletics stay healthy and excel in their sport.

access to free tutoring across multiple subjects, a study hall, a computer and printer

in the athletic fieldhouse, learning disability evaluations and accommodations and exam proctoring with permission of professors.

"These resources give them a guideline so they are not struggling academically. It lets them know that the staff understands that it is hard being a student-athlete, but we want to help them and see them succeed," Davis said.

Traveling to away games often causes student-athletes to miss in-person class time. Davis and her staff communicate with professors about absences due to sporting events and help student-athletes with time management during the season.

This balancing act extends beyond athletics and academics, with NSU's student-athletes often overwhelmed by the demands of their social lives as well, a struggle for many young adults adjusting to the demands of college.

"One of the biggest challenges that student-athletes face is time management," Davis said.

To address this, Davis meets individually with

athletes who are struggling with time management and helps them create realistic schedules that allow them to succeed both in the classroom and in their sport.

Davis also addresses a common misconception about student-athletes. "Student-athletes' schedules are hard, but we will hold them accountable. Sometimes they just need extra support and thankfully, the university helps provide that support for them," Davis said.

All NSU Athletics' staff members play a key role in helping student-athletes succeed both in their sport and in the classroom. While fans see the results on gameday, much of the success is built behind the scenes. NSU athletics relies on a collaborative effort to ensure that student-athletes are supported in every aspect of their college experience.



Photo Submitted by Jason Smelser
Jason Smelser, director of strength and conditioning and Demon football head athletic trainer, helps NSU athletics stay healthy and excel in their sport.

The unsung impact of Black musicians and the history that shouldn't be forgotten

By Emma Bolduc
Reporter

Music is one of the most universal and familiar art forms. However, even though most know what music is, they may not be aware of the origins of its various diverse genres, especially music created by people of color. It is increasingly important to highlight the history of music created by Black artists, as well as the influence it has had on the world of music as we know it.

Before emancipation, enslaved Black individuals would use music as an act of rebellion against the brutality of their lives. These could range from music in the fields to religious hymns.

Shane Thomas, Northwestern State University of Louisiana choral activities director, discussed one way that enslaved individuals used music to better their lives. “Music was a message to one another, so instead of saying, ‘Tomorrow at midnight, we are going to the river,’ they would use

[commonly known] music, and they would immediately pick it up,” Thomas said. Music, in this case, was used to shield any rebellious plans from the plantation owners or any bystanders.

After the 13th Amendment’s passing in 1865, which banned the ownership of slaves, similar rebellions through music continued to occur in different modern genres, preserving the resisting themes used before. These themes were still abundantly present because, although Black Americans

were free, it was in technicality alone, as they were still not seen as truly equal.

This ‘separate but equal’ mentality was a direct result of the idea of social hierarchy attempting to be preserved by the public, despite the 13th Amendment being passed. Longstanding debates of equality transpired as a result of the social versus government decision occurring over many years, which resulted in the inevitable passing of the 14th and 15th Amendments. Despite the ferocity of said debate, the progression of music production by Black artists thematically reporting these struggles still persisted.

Bridget Morton, author of “Strategies and Resources for Teaching with Library of Congress Primary Sources from the TPS Consortium,” elaborated on the innate racism within the artistic landscape. “Minstrel shows were the first places after the end of slavery that Black performers were allowed to share their art with the public,” Morton said.

The minstrel shows of old eventually morphed into the more modern and commonly known genres of jazz and blues. These genres, while very beautiful thematically and musically, were a social taboo of sorts for the consumption of Black music by white individuals.

“Articles in the newspaper started getting printed about the moral decay of the influence of jazz music [on society],”

John Dunn, NSU fine arts professor, described.

Again, all of this was reinforced by racism fueled by a solely bitter resolve. However, this would not stay this way forever, and eventually the genre of gospel—another Black-created musical genre—shot up in popularity.

The ‘King of Rock’ himself, Elvis Presley, used the basis of the gospel genre to skyrocket his career into what most thought was original and never-before-seen musical genius. Once again, a white male took credit for a genius that was really sourced on the backs of a still-marginalized group.

After the closing of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, the ‘separate but equal’ mantra that systemically reinforced racism was overturned, leading to greater—but still not true—equality for Black citizens. However, socially, this was still rebelled against, even after federal courts passed the ruling.

The emergence of the genre of hip hop decades later showcased this still prevalent racism with thematic themes similar to those of the past, with a new rhythm and faster beat. This symbolism showed that, though the passing of time into the modern age had occurred, the same issues of racism were still occurring.

Kendrick Lamar’s half-time show in 2025 showcases this exact phenomenon. Yes, the fact that he can freely rap on a stage compared to, say, 150 years ago is an amazing show of our progress as a society. However, his song choice as well as visual imagery reflect the deeper meaning and the whole purpose of this written piece.

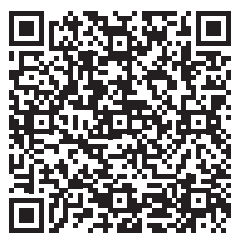
The first thing seen by the audience is the famous actor Samuel L. Jackson dressed up as Uncle Sam, a prominent symbol for America. Jackson, a fourth of the way

through the performance, starts correcting Lamar on music and even goes so far as to call his music “ghetto.” This ironic display was quite humorous, though was used to show the control that society had over—and the judgment against—early Black artists who founded the current popular genres.

Lamar’s dancers were clad in the colors of the American flag, even forming the shape with their bodies during the performance. The Black Wall Street Times noted the intentionality of this design, saying, “The choreography and visuals made references to mass incarceration, reparations, and the concept of revolution, all intended to reveal the brutal nature of the so-called American ‘dream.’”

It is important to note that music showcases the world in a sociopolitical sense, and it is impossible to separate the two. These hard beginnings are important to understanding the context of this art form and further draw awareness to how far we have come as a society to bridge this gap in equality. As best said by Thomas, “Those themes and all those horrible things still permeate to this day [and that] culture can’t be separated [from music] and we hear that.”

Photo by Raph_PH on Flickr
Kendrick Lamar commanding the spotlight with every verse, honoring Black musicians throughout history.



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How Catholic history impacts Louisiana's biggest holidays

By Phillip Voorhees
Viewpoints Editor

Illustration by Eddie Carran

Mardi Gras and Valentine's Day have been celebrated for generations. Where did they come from, and how did they evolve into the holidays we know them to be today?

As soon as Christmas is over, our local Walmart's seasonal aisles become split into two sections: one with a pink and red color scheme, and one with green, purple and gold. In 2026, Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras are only three days apart. These holiday traditions have made similar journeys—transitioning from Catholic feasts to secularized celebrations.

The titular “Valentine” was a saint from the third century A.D., though accounts disagree on the specifics of his life. The story goes that Emperor Claudius II of Rome made it illegal for soldiers to be married. Saint Valentine was a priest who facilitated marriages for the soldiers, and was killed on February 14, 270 A.D., according to Encyclopedia Britannica.

However, other sources claim that Valentine's Day was named in honor of a different bishop from Terni. This is not unusual: many stories about saints derive

from oral tradition and folk tales, rather than historical documentation. Nevertheless, honoring the lives of saints is a crucial aspect of Catholic tradition.

Mardi Gras, French for “Fat Tuesday,” celebrates the final day of indulgence before the solemn liturgical season of Lent. “Lent is a time of preparation for Easter,” Patrick Clay, a Fellowship of Catholic University Students missionary at Northwestern State University of Louisiana's Catholic Student Center, said. “Fat Tuesday is the last day before Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent. It's a last hurrah before a time of penance.”

The date of Mardi Gras varies each year. New Orleans news outlet WWL explains the calculations involved in the holiday's date: Mardi Gras is always 47 days before Easter, which always takes place on the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring.

Why do these ancient Catholic traditions have so much significance in our region? Religious demographics vary across the country, but Louisiana has long been a hub of Catholicism.

“They call it the Bible Belt; there are more Catholics down south,” Clay said. “The harvest is abundant,” as the Bible says.”

At Natchitoches' Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, a placard explains the spread of Catholicism in Louisiana. According to the placard, “Catholicism has played a central role throughout the history of the Cane River Region, with its emergence rooted in French and Spanish colonial-era claims to the territory. The establishment of Fort St. Jean-Baptiste in 1716 as a French military outpost led to the establishment of a Catholic presence in the area.”

When these holidays were brought to America,

they took on new meaning as various cultures mingled with one another. Louisiana culture as a whole combines aspects of French, Spanish, African and Native American traditions, and Mardi Gras is a clear example of this.

It is from this blend that we get famous Mardi Gras parades, balls and costumes. American consumerist culture was also applied to both Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras, creating the more materialist traditions of mass-produced cards, candy and beads.

Our views of these holidays have morphed over time and are nearly unrecognizable from their origin. To some people, these changes make the holidays more exciting and modern; to others, it disrespects what the holidays originally represented.

Harry Hoben, a freshman music education major, said, “I doubt that even a few people know that [Valentine's Day] is a feast for a saint.

It's been so choked with commercialism that its only meaning today is to buy nice things for your partner.”

Junior English major Jamie Perdue agrees that the holidays should be treated with more reverence and less indulgence. “Maybe we can rethink the overdrinking and overbuying and waste when it comes to any commercialized holiday,” she said, “It's our job as people to take care of ourselves and our planet.”

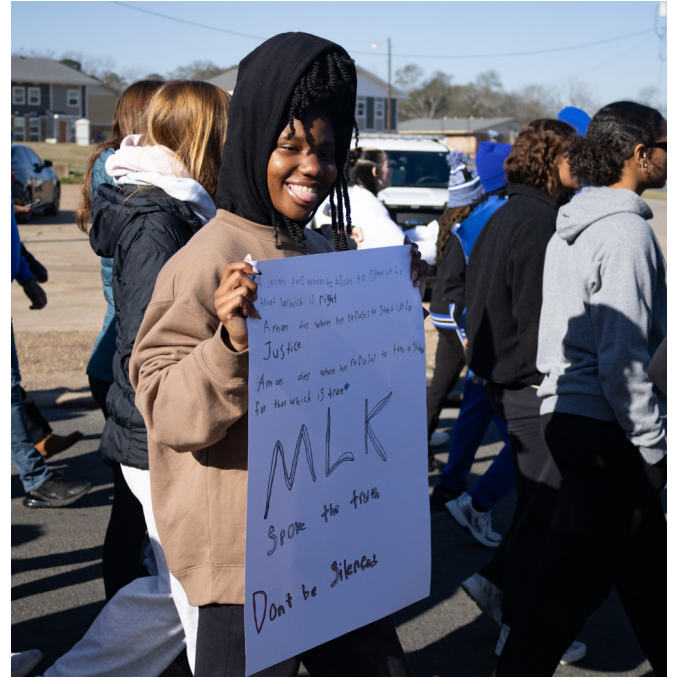
However, the changes are not all bad. Even though the holidays are mostly divorced from their religious origins, they are still fun celebrations that bring people closer together. It is important to find a balance between enjoying ourselves on these holidays while acknowledging and respecting their history.

“There can be a balance. It's good to get together and celebrate. Even drinking alcohol isn't wrong, but I wish people understood the why,” Clay said. “There is

a reason why we have the season of Lent. As Catholics, we don't suffer just to suffer; we follow Jesus, who suffered for 40 days and nights. People forget the meaning behind it.”

Perdue said, “Everything, in general, is harmless fun. People will do what they do no matter what, and I can't and shouldn't control how anyone else celebrates a holiday ... In terms of Mardi Gras in particular, it's my opinion that daytime Mardi Gras parades should be better about being more child-friendly. Other than that, let people have their fun!”

Everybody brings their own interpretations to holidays, and it is important to have respect for other traditions. Learning about the origins of the holidays we celebrate can connect us to our local culture and deepen our appreciation of the celebrations.



Black History Month

Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other.
Use the word bank.

N	E	L	S	O	N	M	A	N	D	E	L	A	B	L	U	E	S	P	E
I	X	K	N	N	P	W	R	F	H	K	K	L	B	S	V	Z	T	Q	Y
Q	M	S	S	L	A	V	E	R	Y	D	Y	S	T	Y	W	A	P	T	H
B	A	R	A	C	K	O	B	A	M	A	E	R	I	Y	V	B	I	K	T
S	E	G	R	E	G	A	T	I	O	N	E	T	Y	F	E	L	Y	K	J
F	R	E	E	D	O	M	I	H	S	Y	Q	N	B	M	A	W	C	S	F
T	P	V	H	F	A	F	J	R	F	M	U	X	Y	U	G	J	S	O	W
L	D	S	N	B	Z	D	V	E	Q	R	I	D	Q	N	O	E	X	Y	A
G	K	S	X	A	W	M	L	X	V	P	T	E	L	U	B	M	J	G	C
Z	H	K	H	R	M	D	W	I	M	A	Y	A	A	N	G	E	L	O	U
U	R	P	F	T	D	B	G	X	B	U	Y	O	Z	U	Q	E	Z	E	V
M	A	R	T	I	N	L	U	T	H	E	R	K	I	N	G	V	Z	Z	T
E	N	H	G	M	L	E	J	T	O	Q	R	Z	E	Z	Y	E	Z	F	B
Z	W	H	X	S	J	Q	E	F	T	Z	Q	A	Y	R	E	X	S	O	X
V	Y	S	J	H	V	U	O	T	Z	E	G	V	T	U	U	B	S	C	X
S	J	O	K	I	K	V	S	A	E	C	I	H	P	I	A	E	G	S	R
E	M	Y	T	S	M	Y	J	T	O	N	K	R	B	F	O	N	N	S	F
K	K	E	X	F	N	B	R	H	I	P	U	V	R	N	S	N	P	W	J
Q	G	X	C	A	Z	J	G	R	N	C	K	J	X	A	E	O	Z	C	A
C	I	V	I	L	R	I	G	H	T	S	E	E	X	I	H	Y	X	L	G

Word Bank

1. Martin Luther King
2. Civil Rights
3. Equality
4. Liberation
5. Equity
6. Harret Tubman
7. Nelson Mandela
8. Slavery
9. Maya Angelou
10. Jazz
11. Barack Obama
12. Segregation
13. Justice
14. Blues
15. Freedom
16. Juneteenth

Sudoku

9			5			6	7	
						3		5
3		2	6	8		4		1
	4				6			
		9		1	8			4
					5	2		
8			9					7
1		4	3		2		6	
	9				4	1		3

Mardi Gras Crossword

Solve the clues in each Mardi Gras theme.

Down

1. A type of music often heard during Mardi Gras.
2. The city famous for its Mardi Gras celebrations.
3. Special clothes worn for the occasion.

Across

4. A big celebration with music and dancing.
5. A big decorated vehicle in the parade.
6. A fun gathering with friends and family.
7. A delicious fried pastry covered in powdered sugar.
8. The person who rules over the Mardi Gras festivities.



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