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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS

ESTABLISHED 2007

Vote tomorrow! Our freedom is tied together.

[Election day](#) is tomorrow, Saturday, May 16th.

Issues like voter representation, environmental conservation, and community development make me want to vote. People at my elementary & high school did look like people in my neighborhood, but not in my city as a whole. My biggest supporters are my family and friends. My neighbors in my neighborhood growing up were part of my community, but I see less of “The Village” in my neighborhood now. [I stood up for something I believed in](#) during the “No on 3” and the “No On All, Y’all” campaigns for the March 29th, 2025 election.

[These are my answers to the questions proposed by The Historical New Orleans Collection’s *The Trail They Blazed* exhibit.](#) On display in Loyola’s Monroe Library from January 22nd to April 18th, 2026, *The Trail They Blazed* presented first-hand accounts of the tremendous efforts during the civil rights movement to transform Louisiana from a Jim Crow stronghold into a more equitable place. The exhibit explored voter registration efforts, the work of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), activism in the Desire housing projects, and nonviolent protest campaigns including boycotts and the 1963 march on City Hall. For the closing reception on April 18th, I asked Loyola students to be tour guides for the exhibit: Andrea Landry ‘28, Amiyuh Tobias ‘27, Jordana Montegut ‘26, Lauren Stewart ‘28, Cortlyn Burke ‘27, Si Starks ‘27, and Colleen Clark ‘26. Keep [an eye on our JustSouth Monthly Spotify for a special podcast episode](#) to hear Amiyuh, Jordana, and Cortlyn discuss their experience.



Left to right: Scotty Wolffe, Colleen Clark, Amiyuh Tobias, Si Starks, Jordana Montegut, Lauren Stewart, Andrea Landry, and Cortlyn Burke from the closing reception of the Trail They Blazed on April 18th, 2026.

Young people are the future; we walk on the trail that activists from the Civil Rights era blazed.

In the Jim Crow South, Black Americans faced intimidation, misinformation, and unfair registration procedures such as poll taxes and literacy tests, which asked questions like, “How many bubbles in a bar of soap?” and had voters calculate their age down to the month, week, and day. **Millions of Black Americans were denied their constitutional right to vote because of discriminatory practices like these.** Activists from CORE and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) helped tens of thousands of Black Louisianans register to vote by teaching them how to pass literacy tests, offering transportation and childcare, and preparing for violence at the registrar.

As shown in [Louisiana Diary](#), **registering to vote in Louisiana was dangerous.** Facing arrest and police brutality, Black activists had to prepare nonviolent response strategies to the verbal and physical violence they would endure. They practiced hitting each other, verbally abusing each other, and blowing cigarette smoke in each other’s eyes, to ensure that they would not react to the segregationists waiting for them. A year before the [Freedom Summer of 1964](#), a special CORE team that included [Dr. Ronnie Moore](#), whose legendary voice is highlighted in The Trail They Blazed, set up a voter registration drive. When they were targeted by the state police who tear gassed a church, [they had no choice but to escape the town in the back of a hearse.](#) Activists were aware that the boycotts, freedom rides, sit-ins, picketing, and voter registration drives they were participating in could be lethal.

Black Americans were frustrated by insufficient access to public spaces, jobs, and educational opportunities, and broken promises of reforms by city leaders. After the

successful March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28th, 1963, civil rights organizations, civic groups, and church congregations in New Orleans came together to organize a Freedom March on city hall on September 30th, 1963. What started as 50 people culminated in 10,000 gathering at city hall. When they got there, civil rights leaders sang and gave speeches demanding full citizenship. After, Reverend A. L. Davis said, “We have to go back to city hall ... to tell them in no uncertain terms we were not heard on September 30. **37% of the population cannot be ignored.**”

Violence and terrorism followed activists during the Civil Rights era. [Bombs were dropped on Black churches](#). [Unarmed activists marching from Selma to Montgomery were confronted with intense violence](#) on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 7th, 1965. After years of fighting against disfranchisement, major legislation was passed: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that banned discrimination in public accommodations, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that extended protections to voters in the South, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 that made housing discrimination illegal.

The Voting Rights Act was paid for in [blood](#).

It's being gutted now. The [Louisiana v. Callais Supreme Court decision](#) eliminated section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, which [ensured that minority voters have representation in elected bodies](#). **By striking down Section 2, Black Americans' voting power will be diluted. And it already has been.**

Another [call to vote “No on All” is happening for this Saturday's, May 16th, 2026 election](#). Yet again, Louisiana legislators have written Amendments that are purposefully misleading, vague, and hard to understand. Amendment 3 says that it will give teachers raises; but the fine print explains that it would happen by liquidating educational trust funds. **Legislators are relying on confusing language that makes it harder for voters to make informed decisions.**

[The rest of the 2026 elections were postponed](#) by Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry. [Governor Landry said about the 45,000 ballots that were discarded when he postponed the primaries](#), “It's not a big deal. It's not my fault.... The failed narrative is that actually that people in Louisiana are racist... that basically we won't elect Black people. I mean, I disagree with that.”

[Louisiana has only elected four Black men to Congress since 1877](#). **No Black person has ever been elected to Congress from Louisiana representing a majority-white district.** [As Louisiana's map is gerrymandered, the only two majority-Black congressional districts will be dismantled and reshaped around predominantly white communities](#). House Rep. Cleo Fields (D) and the 6th District he represents will be erased. **Even when Black men are elected in our communities, their seats are not secure** – Calvin Duncan's position was eliminated altogether.

[38,681 people voted](#) for [Calvin Duncan](#) to be Orleans Clerk of Criminal District Court on November 15th, 2025. After surviving almost 29 years of wrongful incarceration, Calvin won the office honestly and democratically, only to see the position itself be eliminated before he could serve. The voices of those voters – their choices, their hopes, and their demands for representation – were silenced. [Louisiana did this during the Reconstruction era to P. B. S. Pinchback](#), who was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1872 but never allowed to take his seat.

Sixty-eight percent of the population was ignored during the Clerk of Court election. Thirty-seven percent of the population was ignored during the 1963 march on City Hall. The

frustrations and circumstances from 63 years ago are familiar. History repeats itself today.

If one community's voice can be erased, then none of our voices are safe. Our freedom is tied together. We are not free until all of us are free.

Governor Jeff Landry postponed elections and is standing by while Black voting power is being weakened through gerrymandering. The Supreme Court is not protecting our communities. [Attorney General Liz Murrill is not fighting for our voices.](#)

But we will fight for each other.

Vote tomorrow, Saturday, May 16th. [You can check your voter registration here.](#)

No on all, y'all!

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Published May 15th, 2026.

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