



IN OUR OWN VOICE

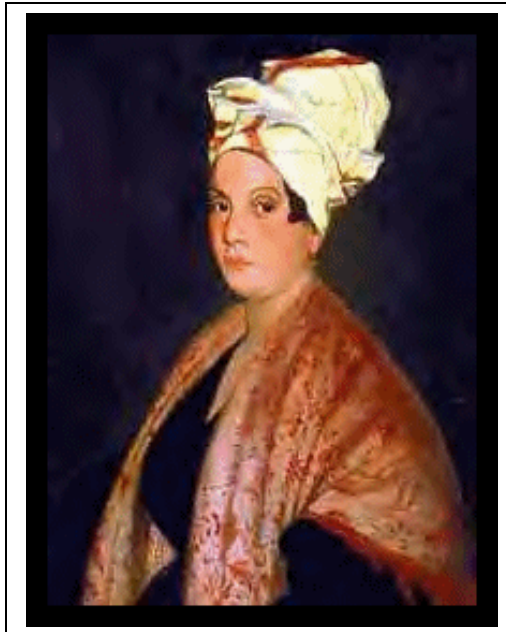
THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM & EDUCATIONAL CENTER

Les Femmes De Couleur Libres: The Free Women of Color in New Orleans

by Sue Gonda, Ph.D., Curator

The people of New Orleans are to collect insurance, clashes agencies, and landlord rent people are back in the city, but the French Quarter, relatively alive and grateful for visitors. Its you.

A unique group of people and New Orleans, a city built by French the 17th and 18th centuries. The free people of color, were of mixed European, African and American owners to free any slave who had freedom. Slaves earned money by when they were "leased out" to Also, thousands of free people of Domingue (Haiti) after Slave and early 1800s. By the 1850s,



(above) Marie Laveau the Younger, a free woman of color

rebuilding, despite inability between governmental gouging. Only 1/3 of the good news is that the untouched by Katrina, is wonderful history beckons

race relations formed in and Spanish colonists in *gens de couleur libres*, or heritage – any blend of Indian. French law required the cash to buy his or her keeping a portion of fees businesses in the city. color came from Saint- Revolts in the late 1700s Louisiana's free people of color owned over 2 million dollars worth of property. A

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fair number even owned slaves.

From plantation owners to hairdressers, free women of color helped build New Orleans. Unlike women of English east coast colonies, French Napoleonic law allowed women to own and operate their own businesses and retain profits. Today, Café du Monde, heart of the French Quarter, is evidence of women's business success. In the early 1800s, enterprising Rose Nicaud bought her freedom and began selling hot coffee to people at market or going to Mass. Other free women of color set up portable coffee stands with their unique recipes. The French added roasted chicory to their coffee when beans were scarce, and it was a talented woman indeed who roasted it for a perfect blend. New Orleans' chicory-laced coffee is now famous, and Café du Monde was founded during the Civil War (1862) with the blend. (Chicory returned during World War II as —Continued on p. 4

The mission of the WHMEC is to educate and inspire present and future generations about the experiences and contributions of women by collecting, preserving and interpreting the evidence of that experience.

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Summer and Fall 2006 Program Highlights



(above) Guests enter for the Women's Equality Day Fundraiser in August 2006. (above left) Members of a Girl Scout Troop from Poway type away during a Zine Workshop in October



(above) Gracia Molina de Pick explains the cultural traditions of Día de los Muertos at the museum's annual event. (below) A member of Hermanitas reads a poem about her mother at the event.



(above) SDSU Intern Jeff Leieritz looks over the Grrrl Zines Exhibit. (below) San Diego Museum Council Meeting and Public Relations Panel



Photos courtesy of Maureen Steiner, Ashley Gardner, Margarat Nee and Sarah Williams.

News from the Women's History Museum!

Our own **Sarah Hurd**, 2nd Vice President for External Affairs, was recently voted in as President of the **League of Women Voters, San Diego Chapter!** Sarah is pleased to bring the important work of the League of Women Voters to our community. She writes that she "will be focusing on educating the public about what the League does and why it's so valuable, in addition to striving to create mutually beneficial partnership within the community. I am looking very much forward to using my skills and talents to benefit the League and greater San Diego. I can hardly wait to see what we as a community will accomplish this year!"

Board member **Gracia Molina Enriquez de Pick** was honored with inclusion in the publication *Feminists Who Changed America, 1963-1975* (Bloomington, IN: University of Illinois Press, 2006). This book is the first comprehensive directory to document many of the leaders of the second wave of feminism in America. She traveled to New York on November 13 to help launch the book and participate in a symposium with Gloria Steinem, Heather Booth, Catharine Stimson and Muriel Fox on "Past Victories & Mistakes, Future Challenges."

In funding news, the WHM is proud to announce that we were awarded a Community Grant in the amount of \$2,000 from **County Supervisor Ron Roberts** to purchase archival storage supplies such as mold- and dust-resistant boxes and shelving for our fragile and valuable archives. Archivist Devon Hansen and a crew of WHM staff and volunteers will work over the winter to redesign the on-site collections storage space. Many thanks to Supervisor Roberts!

The WHM is pleased to welcome two new administrative volunteers, **Silvia Ward** and **Gary Stephenson**. Silvia has tirelessly worked on setting up the museum's in-house accounting and payroll, and will soon work with volunteer accountant **Mandy Dahl** to install QuickBooks for the museum's records. Gary is a retired engineer and has been working hard to manage the museum's technology needs, web site and email accounts. Sarah Williams doesn't know what she would do without them!

Remember to mark your calendar for December 14! From 6:30-9pm the Women's History Museum will host the annual **Holiday Appreciation Party**—complete with food, museum tours and live traditional Filipino music!

Members and Donors Corner

Anna Andrade	Anne Ewing	Janet Lancaster	Judy Rosselli
Deborah Barry	Mary and Fred Fee	Denise Legrand	Amanda Roth
Hisae S. Batchelder	Lourdes Felix	Vicki Leon	James Royle
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Ginger Blackmon & Mary Logomasini	Barbara Fitzsimmons	Karan Mahaffey	Eileen Samuels
Maryanne Blinkhorn	Millicent D. Froehlich	Nancy March	Brina-Rae Schuchman
Winelda Blum	Councilmember Donna Frye	Maria Clara de Pilipinas	Bonnie Kime Scott
Rebecca S. Booth	Kay L. Furrer	Sorority	Christine Schultz
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Francine Busby	Kathryn Gestiehr	Anita Merritt	Elizabeth Smith-Chavez
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Laurie Carlock	Sue Gonda & Susan Cayleff	Florence Nemkov	Cindy Stankowski
Molly Cartmill, Sempra Energy	Lucy del Rosario Gonzales	Emma Jane Patton	Joan K. Stein (in memory of Dee Fuller)
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Susan Cayleff	Susan Haber	Deb Pedersdotter	Maureen Steiner
Evelyn L. Clarke	Devon Hansen	Gloria Penner	Elizabeth Stevens
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Your membership helps keep women's history alive! You can donate online through PayPal at www.whmec.org/

Archives Spotlight

by Devon Hansen, Ph.D., Archivist



As I reported in July, the museum and its amazing volunteers have been busy working to log all of our on-site archives. And I'm happy to report that the Archival Folder Project is almost completed! We've made it through a vast number of boxes, containing material ranging from Planned Parenthood photographs, to former San Diego state legislator, Lucy Killea's papers; from feminist buttons to textiles from the United Nations International Conference on the

Status of Women. Many thanks to all of the volunteers who served or are serving on this project—without their hard work, we could never have achieved so much so quickly.

Another huge "thank you" from the archival corner, as well: County Supervisor Ron Roberts' office has generously awarded the Women's History Museum with a grant so that we can purchase archive-appropriate shelving. This improvement will not only serve as one layer of protection

for our archives, but will also allow us to become better organized in our somewhat limited space.

As we wind up the Archival Folder Project, the museum is also working on obtaining museum software that will allow us to create a searchable database for the archives. We're as busy as ever in the Women's History Museum archives, and we're making some major headway—soon researchers and armchair historians all over the world can see our treasures!



Thank you, Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go!

The museum would like to thank the members of Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go (pictured at right—Margarat Nee, Kim Schwenk, Ari Perezdiez and GZAGG volunteer Emily) on a fabulous workshop series and temporary exhibit! Keep up with them at www.gzagg.org!



(Continued from p. 1) — a coffee substitute, as some of you may painfully remember.) One unique custom begun in 18th century French Louisiana was **placage**. *Placage* was an arrangement between the mother of a free woman of color and a white "protector" or pseudo husband. Mixed-race marriages were illegal, so *placage* became both a customary legal arrangement that benefited all parties.

Beautiful light-skinned young women were groomed by their mothers who wanted them to have a better life than themselves. They presented their daughters at "Quadroon" balls, debutante events. Frenchmen attended, searching for a long-term partnership. If a girl was attracted to a gentleman, her mother "interviewed" him for a suitable arrangement. He had to provide her a home, which she would own in her own name. He would furnish it, pay for servants, and promise that children would be well provided for. *Placage* was not the only opportunity for free women of color. The

majority married and had typical households for their time.

Discrimination came in a variety of ways. Whites and creoles of color conducted business together, but they did not socialize outside of business arrangements. Men in *placage* arrangements would be ostracized if they lived with a woman of color – they were visitors in her house only. To distinguish a 19th century successful free woman of color from white women, "colored" women by law had to cover their hair to signify their lower class. They cleverly began to sport elaborate many-pointed headgear—*tignons*, complete with feather and jewels, ironically making many of the women far more striking than the average white Euro-American. (See for example the photo on p. 1 for a portrait of Marie Laveau the Younger who, – (Continued on p. 5)

(Continued from p. 4)— along with her mother, was a powerful, influential vodoun queen and faith healer.)

Until the Civil War, New Orleans' free people of color prospered; as more Anglo "Americans" entered New Orleans, customs changed. Anglos believed the Creole culture was uncivilized and did not see people of color as a "third race," but rather "merely Negroes" with few to no rights, regardless of economic status.

Some Creole families of color moved to France after the 1860s, where they were more accepted. Many families, "white" in appearance, passed for white in other parts of America. Perhaps most sad is that

New Orleans, home to this unusual and rich history of race relations, was the birthplace of formal segregation that characterized the South through the 1960s. The 1896 Supreme Court case that established "separate but equal" was brought by a "colored Creole" named Homer Plessy. In 1892, Plessy—who was seven-eighths Caucasian—took a seat in a "whites only" car of a Louisiana train. He refused to move to the car reserved for blacks and was arrested. The result: the landmark case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* that established legal segregation.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Profiles of the people who make the museum a special place...

Chloe Lunn

Chloe Lunn is a San Diego native and graduate of UCSD with a degree in creative writing. She is a freelance journalist and hopes to study documentary film-making in the future. Chloe is strongly dedicated to gaining funding for the Museum to honor the women that have paved the way for our equality, and ensure that their stories are highlighted to inspire the next generation of women leaders.

Global Women's Issues:

The Case of Abortion in Central and South America

by Sarah Williams, Ph.D., Executive Director

In late October of this year, Nicaragua's Congress voted to ban all abortions, including those which would save the mother's life. The measure had the support of previously pro-choice Sandinista lawmakers, including the once revolutionary Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega who is now a devout Catholic.

Nicaraguan president Enrique Bolaños has proposed prison sentences from 10 to 30 years for women who have abortions as well as those who perform the procedure. However, the Central American nation's Congress voted instead not to increase penalties.

The bill has received widespread criticism from women's rights groups, especially the Managua-based Women's Autonomous Movement, and words of caution from international groups such as the United Nations and the European Union.

With the exception of Cuba which allows abortions within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, Latin America in general has fairly strict anti-abortion laws. The largely Catholic countries of El Salvador and Chile ban all abortions. The South American nation of Columbia legalized abortions for severely malformed fetuses, rape, incest or when the mother's life is in danger.

Upcoming Events at the Women's History Museum

December 9, 2006 ~ WHM at the Peace Resource Center Holiday Bazaar! See www.prcsd.org.

December 14, 2006 ~ Holiday Appreciation Gathering! **Live Music! Food! Mid-Winter Cheer!**

December 31, 2006 ~ Nominations close for the 6th Annual Women's Hall of Fame

March 8, 2007 ~ International Women's Day

March 3, 2007 ~ The WHM hosts the Women's History Month Stage at San Diego Indie Music Fest

March 24, 2007 ~ 6th Annual San Diego County Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

President's Message—A Letter from Olivia Puentes-Reynolds

Much has happened in the last quarter—much of which to be proud!

The number of volunteers greatly increased and volunteer professional staff positions are nearly filled, providing the museum with opportunity to engage in successful programming and stronger infrastructure. The Día de los Muertos event, Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go workshops and the Women's Equality Day Fundraiser celebrations were excellent, and the Holiday Thank You Party will be as well. Recently, the Strategic Plan for 2007 was approved. Larry Baza agreed to be the first male on the Board of Directors, and Judy Forman has agreed to serve as Honorary Chair of the Building Committee.

The Directors consented to include in the Strategic Plan a

Preamble that states, in summary, that a core Museum value is equality and that all staff, directors, trustees and volunteers are equal and are of equal value; secondly, that we will never forget that the Museum was built by local women during the 1960s and 1970s who worked together to provide a safe place where their grandmothers' heirlooms would be appreciated.

Lastly, I am completing my two-year term as President of the Museum having served on the Board since 1999. Over the past two years, we have finished the Museum remodel, completed the recommendations of the Museum Assessment, revised the By-Laws, recruited Trustees, Directors and Volunteer Professional Staff, reorganized the files, become an active member of the

Museum Council, began the process of museum accreditation and constituted the Building Committee. Also, through the receipt of grant funds, we have local recognition as a significant institution in the San Diego community. We have you and all who have contributed to thank for this: our members, our benefactor Bill Hawkins and those from years past who dedicated themselves to women's history.

I am very pleased that my colleague Ashley Gardner will be serving as President in the coming year as we all continue to work together toward our mission of preserving and interpreting women's history. It has been my honor to serve you.

Olivia Puentes-Reynolds
President



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AND EDUCATIONAL CENTER
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We're on the web!
Visit us online at
www.whmec.org

The WHM was incorporated in 1983 and features exhibits, archives, library, oral histories and educational programs dedicated to women's history.

Hours of operation are:
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Saturdays 12:00pm - 4:00pm
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