

January 11, 2023

WRITTEN IN THE STARS: CELEBRATING 100 LOUISIANA LUMINARIES ON DISPLAY AT THE LOUISIANA STATE ARCHIVES

BATON ROUGE, La. – Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin and the Louisiana State Archives are pleased to announce the opening of the 2023 exhibition, “Written in the Stars: Celebrating 100 Louisiana Luminaries,” along with its companion show, “Generations of Light,” a student art exhibition. The public is invited to be among the first to view the exhibition and art show by attending the opening reception and awards ceremony honoring the high school artists of “Generations of Light” on Thursday, January 12, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the State Archives. “Written in the Stars: Celebrating 100 Louisiana Luminaries” will be on display in the Louisiana Room and lobby Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Louisiana State Archives until December 8. “Generations of Light” will be on display in the Exhibitions Room until January 27.

The foundational concept for the exhibit is to feature the records housed in the Archives. The birth, death, and marriage certificates of dozens of historic figures document our state’s identity as the birthplace and melting pot for cultural creativity. “As the official keeper of Louisiana’s historic vital records, the Louisiana State Archives provides a window into the personal history of the larger than life individuals who have made their mark on the world and called Louisiana home,” said Louisiana State Archivist Catherine J. Newsome. “We are honored to have the public view the legend and memory of Louisiana’s citizens and brightest stars through the use of our records.”

“Written in the Stars” explores notable Louisiana-born historical personalities who made their mark in Louisiana and beyond. These personalities are organized by their zodiac signs, and viewers will identify and connect the traits which shaped these renowned figures to their own. The exhibition utilizes the collection of the state’s vital records from the Louisiana State Archives and artifacts loaned by private lenders and cultural heritage institutions, the exhibition offers a glimpse into the lives of some of Louisiana’s most iconic and trailblazing cultural figures.

This major exhibition shines a special light on the legacies of 49 Louisiana-born men and women of color, each who reached remarkable professional heights in the face of disenfranchisement, discrimination and racial violence. A rare piece in the show features an original edition of La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans (The New Orleans Tribune), the first Black daily newspaper in the United States, reporting the news of July 12, 1866. Published by a free man of color, Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez, the paper ignited a crusade for racial justice that reached far beyond the state's borders, with over 1,000 issues of The New Orleans Tribune printed in six years.



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A show-stopping piece on display is the final Mardi Gras suit of Big Chief Donald Harrison Sr. of the Guardians of the Flame, along with his sewing shears and staple gun. Coinciding with the launch of Carnival season, visitors will be reminded of the skilled artistry involved in New Orleans' Black masking traditions. At the same time, photographs and awards show the family man throughout his career path.

The stories of several New Orleans culinary figures are told through their utensils, cookbooks, recipes, and work garments. Original recipe cards and kitchen tools from the inventor of the doberge cake, Beulah Ledner Levy, show the progression of her thriving business, as do the cookbooks of cooking show television host Lena Richard and the chef's jacket worn by restaurateur Leah Chase.

Fine art by Caroline Dormon, Caroline Durieux, Clementine Hunter, John Gasquet, and George Rodrigue is featured in the Louisiana Room. "I Live in Two Worlds," a 2010 George Rodrigue Blue Dog painting, complements his bronze sculptural masterpiece from the 1970s, "Evangeline Standing," as part of the exhibit. The exhibit also includes personal belongings from Briarwood, the North Louisiana nature preserve of botanist, author and forester Caroline Dormon.

The student artists featured in "Generations of Light" used the exhibition as inspiration and produced pieces honoring one of the 100 luminaries. The exhibition and show curator Angi Cinquemano cites the generational link between both exhibits as "evidence of Louisiana's ongoing creative revolution."

Personal tours are available by request. For more information about the exhibit, follow the Louisiana Secretary of State on Instagram and Facebook @louisianasos, visit www.sos.la.gov or call 225-922-1000.

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