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Sleeping with Storyville: The influence of media, race, and morality in New Orleans' red light district

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Sleeping with Storyville:
The Influence of Media, Race, and Morality in New Orleans' Red Light District

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Dedication

For my parents, without whom, I would not be where I am today.

For my sister and brother, and their laughter and emotional support.

And for Desi and Louis, whose companionship knows no bounds.

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Abstract:

In 1897, the red-light district of Storyville was officially consecrated in New Orleans, Louisiana. Storyville encapsulated centuries' worth of Southern cultural, social, and political values that culminated in the creation of a legally recognized district of vice. New Orleans was an economically situated city, profiting from the business and tourist routes provided by the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi River. Known throughout the nation for a plethora of negative attributes, such as disease, prostitution, and murder, New Orleans developed a national reputation as a city of immorality, which was only furthered by the creation of a red-light district.

In exploring the city's history of media fascination, murder cases, and notable women in the district, this thesis argues that Storyville was both created and destroyed due to the collision of moral reform and vice in the city of New Orleans. Specifically, the thesis focuses on the experience of three key women within New Orleans' culture of vice and how their positions and identities effected the development, growth, and destruction of Storyville over a fifty year period. Kate Townsend, Lulu White, and Willie Piazza are the three key figures discussed in this thesis, specifically how the concepts of race, gender, power, and morality interact with their positions within New Orleans and Storyville. Each of these women possessed power within Storyville that affected their public perception and the overall perception of the red-light district throughout its existence.

Introduction:

At the turn into the twentieth century, a conspicuous development in New Orleans, Louisiana, occurred in which city legislators designated several square blocks of downtown property to become a legalized red-light district, in which prostitution, gambling, and other forms of debauchery could flourish legally without major political or legal interference. The red-light district, known as Storyville, was established for approximately twenty years before federal government intervention caused the local legislature to dissolve the district. During its tenure as one of the South's most prolific tourist destinations, Storyville capitalized on the city's unique culture and attitudes towards interracial fraternization. Despite its major popularity throughout New Orleans, the state of Louisiana, and the entire U.S. South, Storyville's existence shattered following federal government intervention in 1917, and is now only remembered in New Orleans mythology.

In order to understand entirely how and why Storyville was created, the city's racial atmosphere must first be understood as it deeply influenced the creation of the district. Specifically, the city's development of racial laws and codes played an intimate role in setting the stage for Storyville's creation, starting nearly two hundred years prior to the district's consecration. The progress of the city's racial regulations over the course of its existence as first a colony and then as part of the United States prefaced the unique racial climate that took precedence in the late nineteenth century following the Civil War, which also heavily affected how race was viewed within the city.

Beginning as a French colony in the early eighteenth century, New Orleans was officially established in 1718 as a major port in French territory. The city quickly became one of the most envied locations in the New World among colonial empires. Due to its

location on the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi River, New Orleans was a prominent trade post for Northern furs and Southern plantation crops between the different colonial powers prior to the American Revolution. In 1768 when the French transferred power to Spain, Spanish influence seeped into the city's social and cultural atmospheres creating a unique combination of French and Spanish culture. Elements of this unique mesh of French and Spanish culture could be seen in the city's cuisine, architecture, language, and the development of new racial designations, such as Creole, which combines colonial heritage with that of Caribbean or African lineage.[1] New Orleans' international history also contributed to its cultural draw in the South. The exotic qualities of the city were exaggerated by the city's deeply rooted multicultural history, from French to Spanish, and deeply imbedded Caribbean connections. New Orleans' port location for several major world empires designated its importance and uniqueness early in its existence. Later, the city would be transferred to American dominion when Thomas Jefferson purchased the city as a part of the larger Louisiana Purchase in 1803, altering the American landscape permanently.

Throughout its existence as a colony and then a U.S. territory, Louisiana heavily regulated racial relations in all aspects of life, including but not limited to slavery, politics, and interracial relations. Before its official creation, New Orleans' racial relations were already regulated by the Code Noir, which provided rules and regulations concerning slavery and black/white relations.[2] As the territory shifted between colonial powers, both

[1] The creation and recognition of the Creole race would play an integral role in the development of racial attitudes in nineteenth century New Orleans as well as the overall development and creation of Storyville, as race was a crucial stipulation in the women employed within the district.
[2] Alejandro de la Fuenta and Ariela J. Gross, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black: Race, Freedom, and Law in Cuba, Virginia, and Louisiana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Spain and the United States implemented racially based policies to regulate racialized behavior and relationships.

Prior to the Civil War, New Orleans was home to one of the country's largest free black communities.[3] It was also home to thousands of enslaved individuals and runaway slaves, escaping from the Caribbean islands and other Southern locations. When the Civil War ended, the black communities in New Orleans only grew, encompassing many of the poorer districts in the city. Following the war, new social and political changes altered the traditional interactions between the white and black populations of the city. Black Codes and Jim Crow laws further limited and regulated black behavior within the city, changing how white inhabitants interacted with the newly emancipated black population.

In the antebellum era, New Orleans was already one of the nation's most diverse cities in terms of white population, free black population, and enslaved population. Due to the large number of free African Americans in the city, racial regulations and expectations between the white and black populations significantly influenced New Orleans' culture. On account of its geographic position on the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi River and its national reputation, New Orleans was a heavily traveled area for people of all races.[4] The combination of the previously existing free black communities and the influx of newly emancipated former slaves allowed the population of New Orleans to be more diverse than many major cities in the Southern United States. Although the Civil War caused considerable turmoil within both the city and the black communities, the end of the war created a newly freed population of African American individuals in the city. With an

[3] De la Fuenta and Gross, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black,* 116.
[4] Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Brothels, Depravity, and Abandoned Women: Illegal Sex in Antebellum New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

increasing black population combined with an increase in movement through the city, New Orleans quickly became a cultural destination for many throughout the United States and beyond.

Immigrants from Europe, Central, and South America flocked to the city in the late nineteenth century, contributing to the city's distinct racial diversity.[5] Several of these immigrants would later play an integral role in the development and creation of Storyville, including the ill-fated Kate Townsend, whose brothel would be an early example of those to come after the Storyville official ordinance. While the immigration to New Orleans was not a sole contributor to the unique diversity of the city, it did contribute to the overall exotic qualities of the city which assisted in the tourist-attraction throughout the Southern United States.

The transfer of international culture within New Orleans allowed the city to develop national recognition as a city of exoticism and eroticism as illicit activities prospered throughout the city.[6] As prostitution rates increased within the city, many local citizens complained the city had become too immoral and called for reform.[7] The immoral connotation of New Orleans was exasperated through the formation of Mardi Gras culture, which infiltrated several aspects of life, such as social, cultural, and sexual.[8] National media coverage of the happenings in New Orleans quickly created a dramatized and stereotyped outlook on the apparent carefree attitudes of the city's inhabitants.

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[5] Joy J. Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age: Politics and Urban Progress 1880 – 1896* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969).
[6] Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans 1865-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).
[7] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 121.
[8] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 126.

The creation of many of New Orleans' particular customs and traditions following the Civil War allowed for the city to become a major tourist attraction throughout both the Southern United States and the nation as a whole, as well as allowing the city to garner international attention as a major social destination. One of the major traditions that allowed this development to occur was the tradition of Mardi Gras, and the "good times" attitude that flowed alongside it.[9] The phrase 'Laissez les bons temps rouler' is affectionately known modernly as the motto for the city, particularly during Mardi Gras. While the phrase does not directly translate from the French, as it is a Cajun expression, it is a word-for-word translation meaning "let the good times roll," which encapsulates the carefree, casual, and good-tempered attitudes that surround the city's social, economic, and sensual activities.[10] While the exact origin of the phrase "Laissez les bons temps rouler" is unknown, the emotions and attitudes expressed by the phrase capture the essence of New Orleans natives' attitudes in Storyville at the turn into the twentieth century. The association of the 'good times' attitude with the overall New Orleans experience was accentuated through national newspaper recognition of the phrase "good times" that occurred within and outside of the city limits in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Newspapers throughout the United States published articles that described an abundance of carefree activities that occurred during the traditional Mardi Gras season along with illustrious occurrences that happened year-round. Closely associated to wanton pleasure

[9] Traditionally, Mardi Gras is a celebration in which people prepare for the sacrifices associated with the Catholic practice of Lent. In order to prepare for the sacrifices of Lent, Mardi Gras encourages people to celebrate the physical pleasures of life; it is often associated with alcohol consumption, nude or partially nude women, and physical pleasure.

[10] Although the phrase "Laissez les bons temps rouler" is a popular modern expression representing New Orleans, it was not popularized contemporarily until the early twentieth century, approximately the 1920s, as author and New Orleans native Rosary O'Neill writes in her book *New Orleans Carnival Krewes: The History, Spirit & Secrets of Mardi Gras* (Charleston: The History Press, 2014), 96.

and the many forms of gluttony that prospered in New Orleans, "good times" were not in short supply during Storyville's tenure as a legally recognized red light district.

While the influence of Mardi Gras was undeniably a factor in the development of the city's overall gluttonous and illicit reputation, the existence of a prominent prostitution-driven economy also demonstrates the city's growth in the late nineteenth century, specifically with the development of the legally recognized red light district of Storyville. During the Mardi Gras season, madams and brothel proprietors would often take advantage of the carefree attitudes strewn throughout the city, profiting from the influx of tourists to the area. Alongside Mardi Gras season came tourists escaping the northern winter weather, finding their way to the comforts of New Orleans' Southern hospitality. Along with warmer weather and sunshine, New Orleans offered "forms of legalized gambling, Mardi Gras festivities, few restrictions on the sale of alcohol, and access to Storyville."[11] Historian Alecia Long notes that "while many tourists…were escaping the cold, they were also indulging in pleasures of the flesh."[12] Saloon proprietors and brothel keepers would purposefully lower alcohol costs and encourage more illicit activities among their customers through the veil of Mardi Gras celebration, causing the tourists, mainly white men, to spend more money and engage in sexual activity with the women of Storyville.[13] This consumption of earthly pleasures was a major contribution to how the city was viewed, by both residents and outsiders.

Known throughout the United States as a city filled with alcohol, gambling, and prostitution, New Orleans garnered a major national reputation for several of the deadly

[11] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 169.
[12] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 169.
[13] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 166-179.

sins. Gluttony, greed, and most importantly lust filled New Orleans' downtown hemisphere, and heavily contributed to the development of Storyville. Located in downtown New Orleans, just a few blocks north of the famed French Quarter, Storyville possessed several well-traveled city blocks of New Orleans territory. At the time of its creation in 1897, Storyville's geographic position was already popular throughout the city as a place of prostitution and debauchery. One of its main avenues, Basin Street, was a prominent and popular location for dancehalls, saloons, and brothels due to its proximity to both the nearby ports and the French Quarter. Encompassing Basin Street, Customhouse Street, and Canal Street, Storyville's location was primarily chosen for its already preordained association with prostitution and gambling.[14]

Storyville's popularity grew from multiple factors that were experienced by the larger area of New Orleans. Due to the geographic position of New Orleans on both the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico, the city experienced an influx of immigration and tourism following the Civil War. Additionally, the development of Mardi Gras culture heavily inundated the city with a general carefree and gluttonous attitude towards alcohol, gambling, and sex. Throughout its Post-war development, the city of New Orleans gained a national reputation for crime, disease, murder, and prostitution, all of which contributed to the creation of Storyville in 1897. Local and regional publications, such as *The Daily Picayune,* published daily articles concerned with social, political, and economic changes within the city – often these same concerns would appear in newspapers across the nation, with news of New Orleans reaching New York, Chicago, and Boise. Notably, many of the national papers focused on the negative aspects of the city: disease, immorality, sin, and

[14] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 108.

murder. Many of the publications expressed concern or dissatisfaction with the state of the city, with several referring specifically to Storyville once it was consecrated.[15]

Prior to its official legislation, the district of Storyville was already profoundly populated by the city's most notorious madams and prostitutes, many of mixed race or African American descent. Stretching along Basin Street, from Customhouse to St. Louis Street, the area bustled with brothels, dancehalls, and saloons open to the public, but particularly frequented by men. Beginning in the late 1860s, Basin Street championed some of New Orleans' fanciest brothels – in both décor and services. The ill-fated Kate Townsend was the first of the city's profound madams, with her no. 40 Basin Street brothel nationally recognized as fanciful and luxurious. Following her death in 1883, several other brothel owners took the reins as the most notable madams in the city, specifically Lulu White and Willie Piazza. Both White and Piazza commandeered regional attention for owning and operating luxurious brothels in the same area as Kate Townsend's once famed establishment, as well as for being two mixed-race women that challenged the stereotypes of being both non-white and women.[16]

The goal of this thesis is to discuss the factors that contributed to the creation of the Storyville district, and determine that the racialized structure of New Orleans played a direct role in both the district's origin and destruction two decades later. Additionally, this thesis argues that the development and subsequent destruction of Storyville was ultimately the outcome of the involvement and position of New Orleans' madams and their predecessors, most ardently Kate Townsend, Lulu White, and Willie Piazza.

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[15] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 180.
[16] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 197-200.

Split into three distinct chapters, the thesis is organized thematically. Set in the 1870s through the 1890s, the first chapter focuses on the social and cultural atmospheres of New Orleans following the end of the Civil War. In the first chapter, the popularity and transformation of New Orleans is at the center of discussion. An analysis of contemporary newspaper publications reveals the generally dramatized and negative attitudes towards New Orleans that were common outside of the city. Prevalence of disease, crime, and immorality within New Orleans infiltrated newspapers across the nation, lending to an increasingly negative outside view of the city, diametrically compared to the popular mention of pleasure and sin found within the city's limits, creating a dichotomous view of life in New Orleans. This dichotomous nature was perpetuated by the simultaneous representation of New Orleans as a disease-infested city built on sin and a city that thrived within a culture of pleasure. Topics of scandal, sensationalism, and murder are the primary focus of the first chapter, as it observes Storyville's birth following the population growth and influx of illicit activities into the city following the Civil War, including the local prevalence of prostitution. Regional and national attitudes are discerned from multiple contemporary newspapers across the nation, leading to an increase in the city's popularity as a tourist destination. It is this distinct growth of popularity and of a nationally recognized bad reputation that is investigated in the first chapter through a tale of murder of one of New Orleans' most notorious madams at the time of her death.

Building onto the recognition of New Orleans as a place consumed by debauchery and sin, the second chapter focuses on the specific racialized culture that infiltrated New Orleans throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. Beginning in the antebellum era to establish historical context, the second chapter examines the development of racial

ordinances and Black Codes in the 1870s through early 1900s whilst also discussing two of the most influential and prominent madams in Storyville: Lulu White and Willie Piazza. Once again drawing from newspaper articles, particularly New Orleans' own *The Daily Picayune,* the second chapter analyzes the racial structure of the city, arguing that it heavily affected life in Storyville, specifically concerned with sex across the color line. The second chapter reflects on the influence of the racialized standards that structured the city, as race affected every aspect of life, particularly the sexual gratification of white men.

The third chapter offers a different perspective than the previous two, delving into Storyville's destruction, both physically and historically. With its official ordinance denounced in 1917, Storyville quickly disintegrated and was replaced shortly thereafter by a series of real estate ventures. Chapter three focuses on the abrupt end of Storyville, focusing on the reasons for dissolution, most prominently morality and race. Once again examining local and regional newspapers, primarily *The Times-Picayune,* the third chapter will also utilize determine how Storyville and its inhabitants were remembered historically.[17] The factors of race and morality are particularly critical in understanding Storyville's historical memory, as the concept of dark tourism is discussed and the exploitation of black and mixed-race women involved in sex work is vital in order to preserve New Orleans' tourism industry. Despite the district's heavy impact on the tourism industry in New Orleans, there is little to no physical evidence of the once famed red-light district in that geographic area in today's modern world. Additionally, while Storyville has been immortalized in secondary research and popular culture, the local legacy of the district is heavily placed only in the city's modern tourism industry, ghost tours.

[17] *The Times-Picayune* is a continuation of *The Daily Picayune.* Originally published as *The Daily Picayune,* the newspaper officially changed its name in 1908 and began publishing under *The Times-Picayune.*

Overall, the thesis aims to tell the story of Storyville – its rise, its peak, and its fall. Primarily focused from 1880 to 1920, the thesis peeks into the antebellum era as well as modern day in an effort to establish Storyville's broad stance in the overarching historical context. Most important to the third chapter, a look into present day New Orleans is necessary in order to determine the historical significance of Storyville. With newspapers as the main source of primary research, the thesis presents the formation of a unique racially structured red-light district that provided the city of New Orleans with a valuable economic and social asset.

To set the stage for the creation of Storyville, there must first be an understanding of the specific circumstances that arose in order for it to have occurred. Included in these circumstances are the antebellum New Orleans prostitution experience, the Civil War's influence, the city's geographic location, and a growing tourism industry. The historiography of New Orleans includes research on the antebellum era and the Civil War. Judith Kelleher Schafer's *Brothels, Depravity, and Abandoned Women: Illegal Sex in Antebellum New Orleans* details the experiences of prostitutes prior to the Civil War, noting associations of immorality, sin, and crime. Specifically, Schafer's work takes on a legal framework, analyzing court cases and subsequent newspaper articles chronicling the experiences of the "public women" and the lewd associations made with them by the general middle class.[18] When observing the entirety of the nineteenth century, Schafer's work demonstrates the progression and growth of prostitution throughout New Orleans' history until the Civil War. *Brothels, Depravity, and Abandoned Women* argues that prostitutes were targeted legally for several of the demographics they embodied, such as

[18] Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Brothels, Depravity, and Abandoned Women: Illegal Sex in Antebellum New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

being of a lower class and in many cases, for being non-white. From a different, post-war perspective comes Justin A. Nystrom's *New Orleans after the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom,* in which Nystrom discusses the effects of Reconstruction on the city's political, economic, and social structures, on an individual level.[19] Nystrom argues that although Reconstruction was a national occurrence that affected large populations and demographics, it was largely an era of political and social success and failure on a personal scale, as demonstrated through Nystrom's incorporation of a semi-biographical approach. Nystrom utilizes several male historical figures, both white and non-white, in order to illustrate the kinds of political and social changes that occurred in the city following the war. While prostitution is not at the forefront of Nystrom's argument, it occasionally is mentioned in association with lower social classes, non-white cultural backgrounds, and the negative political influence of having low moral standards. Nystrom's book offers insight into social interactions across the color line as the changing post-war environment affected most demographic groups within the South, by specifically newly freed African Americans. *New Orleans after the Civil War* discusses the negative moral implications of social interactions across the color line, delving into the social, economic, and political standards that were challenged following Emancipation during Reconstruction. The larger historiographical context of New Orleans, with and without prostitution at the forefront, is pertinent in understanding how exactly Storyville came to be.

Over the course of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century historians began to dive deep into the women's and gender historiography, creating a branch of history

[19] Justin A. Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015).

dedicated to the study and understanding of sexuality, prostitution, and the intersection of class, race, and gender. One of the major works of this period is Timothy Gilfoyle's *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*, which chronicles the development of the commercialization of sex as an industry in New York City.[20] This work has been tremendously influential in several other historians' works that have grounded the historical study of gender, sexuality, and prostitution.[21] While Gilfoyle's work is on another of America's major cities, New York, its principles and argument that the commercialization of sex transformed prostitution in America is helpful in understanding the overarching tone of the nineteenth century and the involvement of women in major cities in the development of urbanized sex work. The broader notion of the commercialization of sex in the United States is displayed in the creation and legality of Storyville as New Orleans profited off of the regulation and commercialization of sex workers. The regulation and commercialization of sex in the nineteenth century was inherently connected to tourism and economic growth, as discussed by Gilfoyle, and demonstrated by the establishment of Storyville in 1897. Gilfoyle effectively places sexuality into the sphere of social history by displaying the relationship between urbanization, socialization, reformation, and morality in nineteenth century American ideals and standards.

In connection with that, Cynthia M. Blair's *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* also displays the development of

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[20] Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

[21] Gilfoyle's work has been cited in numerous monograph examining the broader subjects of prostitution, sexuality, and the commercialization of sex. His work has been applied to broad historical interpretations as well as specific historical studies relating to Storyville, such as the work of Emily Epstein Landau and Alecia P. Long.

urbanized sex work; however, Blair focuses on the relationship between race and sexuality.[22] Specifically, Blair discusses the intimate connections between sexual promiscuity, sexual commerce, and racial biases within Chicago, concluding that the connection between black women and sexual commerce was deeply imbedded in the concept of respectability. The relationship between respectability and prostitution is one that is particularly influential to the understanding of Storyville, as traditionally, a respectable woman was one that was married, had children, and ran a successful household. Prostitution, as understood through Blair's work and others, created a significant challenge for women in the field who desired respectability. In both Chicago and Storyville, respectability is also interwoven with racial identity and social class. Blair's work is particularly crucial in understanding the role of race in the development of Storyville, as many of the brothel proprietors and prostitutes that inhabited the area were either black or of mixed race. *I've Got to Make My Livin'* specifically focuses on factors of respectability and power, both of which played a critical role in the social position of the women that inhabited Storyville. Power and respectability denoted a woman's role and position in society, and women such as Kate Townsend, Lulu White, and Willie Piazza challenged traditional notions of women's respectability and power in the South by occupying economic and political roles within the red-light district. Both power and respectability are crucial in understanding the creation of Storyville and its most notorious residents.

Understanding that race played a crucial part in both New Orleans history and the creation and dissolution of Storyville, secondary research concerning race is not lacking. Most influential to this particular study were Grace Elizabeth Hale's *Making Whiteness:*

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[22] Cynthia M. Blair, *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn of the Century Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940 and Glenda Gilmore's *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920.*[23] Hale's work particularly outlines the racial specifications for living in the South at the turn of the century, arguing that whiteness was a social construct, perpetuated through social and legal societal standards. Covering topics such as Jim Crow and the influence of race on the culture of the South, Hale's work provides insight into the racialized stigmas that perpetuated throughout the South, including New Orleans, revealing that the racist structures of everyday life and the racist depictions of African Americans in culture and literature served to establish ideals of white identity. Racial identity is an important aspect when considering the relationship between gender and prostitution, particularly in the South, where race played an integral role in everyday life. Gilmore's work explaining the development of racial identity in the era of Jim Crow is particularly influential in understanding the racial implications of a major southern city such as New Orleans. In a similar fashion, Glenda Gilmore's work shines light on the deep involvement of gender in the institution and implementation of Jim Crow laws in the South, particularly revealing the formation of different gender roles by black women in Post-Reconstruction North Carolina. While neither of these books is specific to New Orleans or Louisiana as a whole, they both illuminate the larger racial connotation of living in New Orleans at the turn of the century through explanations of racial identity and social significance of race in a post-war nation, particularly through the analysis of contemporary news sources.

[23] Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998) ; Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

Much of the existing secondary research concerning Storyville addresses the relationship between sexuality and social standing. One of the most notable sources that analyze the relationship between sexuality and the socio-cultural atmosphere of Storyville is Alecia P. Long's *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans 1865 – 1920,* which discusses the different roles of women in New Orleans society, particularly the roles of madams and prostitutes. Long describes the roles of women in the context of social space, arguing that the women of Storyville represented an immoral subset of women within Southern society while addressing the larger connotation and effects of race and socioeconomic classification. Specifically, Long addresses the relationship between sexuality and social standing as she discusses the social, economic, and political role of prostitutes.[24] Long argues the social segregation of sex workers within the confines of Storyville denoted the larger societal views of promiscuity and immorality. Long utilizes an economic perspective in addition to legal testimonies to argue that sexuality and social standing had a deep impact on New Orleans commerce.

More recently, Emily Epstein Landau's contribution to the historiography, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* discusses at length the relationship between sexuality and race; specifically, her argument focuses on a patriarchal approach.[25] Landau discusses Storyville's creation and existence as it encapsulated racially charged morality that supported the growth of white male power in the American South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Landau plainly states the book is about sex and its role in challenging societal norms and establishing

[24] Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans 1865 – 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).
[25] Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

morality in New Orleans, specifically the utilization of sex by black and mixed race women in order to cater to the racialized stereotypes held by white men. Landau argues that the public nature of Storyville and the women that were employed in the district challenged societal norms by placing interracial sexual escapades into the public sphere where it was advertised and flaunted amid Southern society. Additionally, Landau reveals that it was the racial exploitation of the black and mixed race women working in Storyville that allowed for the district's success, drawing white men to the restricted district to fraternize across the color line. Landau's contributions to the historiography is the most useful as she utilizes a gendered and racial approach to analyze Storyville's rise to fame.

In addition to the scholarly works in the historiography, such as Landau and Long's contributions, many publications about Storyville are by popular literary presses meant for a more general audience rather than purely scholarly readers. Most popular is Herbert Asbury's *The French Quarter: An Informal History of the New Orleans Underworld.* Originally published in 1936 and republished several times thereafter, Asbury's book provides a captivating look into the creation of Storyville and the lives that resided in it.[26] *The French Quarter* observes Storyville through an intimate, albeit non-academic, perspective in which Asbury tells the tales of prostitutes, murder victims, and the criminals that lived in the restricted district. While some of Asbury's tales are supported by information from other texts, including primary and scholarly secondary evidence, his popularized accounts cannot and should not be solely relied upon for providing historical accuracy. The contributions from these popularized sources such as Asbury's work, provide insight into the interest in the topic of Storyville, or at least prostitution and

[26] Herbert Asbury, *The French Quarter: An Informal History of the New Orleans Underworld* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1936).

sexuality. Additionally, the existence and popularization of Asbury's work displays a keen interest in the New Orleans sex industry and demonstrates that the topic fascinates both academics and non-academics, just as New Orleans captured the attention of readers nationwide with its tales of murder, crime, and sex. When considering the variety of secondary research and writing on the subject, the historiography benefits from a wide scope of both historical and popular lenses that have examined the topic and garnered readership.

While there are some sources that provide insight into the relationship between race and sexuality, there are limitations to the sources. Specifically, the early documentation on Storyville is almost exclusively delivered by men, with a severe absence of primary sources created by women. Within the early historiography, the most notable is the work of E.J. Bellocq, a photographer whose images contained portraits of the women that inhabited Storyville's district. While *Storyville Portraits from the New Orleans Red-Light District, Circa 1912* was published following the photographer's death, the book's authorship is credited to E.J. Bellocq.[27] In addition to Bellocq's photographs, which were taken throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, *Blue Book* publications were written, produced, and distributed primarily by men. Blue Books were a kind of advertising publication distributed throughout Storyville in popular avenues of travel or saloons in order to advertise the specific products, establishments, and services offered throughout the district. Despite the lack of women-created primary sources, the women that inhabited Storyville have seemingly always been the focus of historiographic research. However, historiographic analysis of sexuality, gender, and social standing is a fairly recent addition.

[27] E.J. Bellocq, *Storyville Portraits from the New Orleans Red-Light District, Circa 1912* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970).

This work attempts to fill the space connecting sexuality, gender, and race in a historical perspective that builds onto existing scholarship through an extended discussion on these three particular kinds of identity. Additionally, the secondary sources that do exist in conversation with race and sexuality in Storyville are limited in how they use the primary sources; one focuses solely on *Blue Books*, another on portraits of the prostitutes taken in the 1910s.[28] The works of Emily Epstein Landau and Alecia P. Long each thoroughly utilize contemporary newspaper publications and the *Blue Books* of Storyville, and analyze these sources as evidence of historical memory and the overall role of race, sexuality, and morality in the formation and subsequent dissolution of the restricted district. The work of both Landau and Long each confront different aspects of racial identity, and sexuality, focusing on the interplay of those two elements in the development of the red-light district; however, neither author confronts morality as a distinct factor into the formation of the district. Morality is a center-point in both authors' works when considering the destruction and memory of Storyville, while the discussion of the formation and growth of the district in the early 1900s focuses on the influence of sexuality and race as contributing factors. While race and sexuality are undeniably two major factors in the creation of the district, concern for morality is noticeably lacking from their analyses. Through a combined analysis of these sources, and others, the thesis attempts to bridge the gap and determine the specific circumstances that led to the peculiar moral and racial circumstances of Storyville, which is a question not yet addressed by the existing historiography.

[28] Pamela Arceneaux, *Guidebooks to Sin: The Blue Books of Storyville, New Orleans* (New Orleans: The Historic New Orleans Collection, 2017) ; Mollie Le Veque, *Images of Sex Work in Early Twentieth Century America: Gender, Sexuality, and Race in the Storyville Portraits* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

Additionally, the role of sensationalism in the growth and success of Storyville is at the forefront of the thesis, as newspaper publications are the primary source by which Storyville's reputation is determined. Sensationalism plays a critical role in the development and destruction of the restricted district, and demonstrates that the creation of a legalized red-light district in the South was influenced by numerous factors and cannot be solely attributed to the growth of vice in the late nineteenth century. The sensationalism of vice was integral to Storyville's consecration, particularly in the decades following the Civil War as communication networks throughout the South were integrated and there was an increased importance placed on societal communication and entertainment through media sources.[29] In utilizing both local and national newspaper publications to demonstrate the public's fascination with New Orleans and subsequently Storyville, the thesis includes the element of sensationalism alongside the conversation of morality, vice, and reform to determine that the national media spotlight of New Orleans contributed to the creation, success, and destruction of Storyville as a legalized red-light district.

[29] Michael Ayers Trotti, *The Body in the Reservoir: Murder and Sensationalism in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 33-44.

Chapter One:

Mayhem in the Media: New Orleans' National Reputation

Various screams filled the halls of the no. 40 Basin Street mansion on the morning of November 3, 1883, when residents of the house discovered Kate Townsend's lifeless body strewn across her bed with several stab wounds to her chest, neck, and face.[30] Witnesses quickly called for police to investigate. The murder of Kate Townsend, well-known throughout the city as a madam, brought her brothel to the attention of investigators, news outlets, locals, and tourists. The news of Kate Townsend's murder spread quickly through the region, and subsequently the entire nation. Both local and national newspapers published articles pertaining to the monstrous crime, leading to national recognition of Townsend's death and the subsequent trial. The crime was sensationalized throughout the United States for years following the incident, which brought more public attention to the city's sociocultural qualities and developments, particularly those associated with crime, prostitution, or other illicit activities. Townsend's death specifically highlighted the crime rates of New Orleans and the prominence of violence within the city. While Townsend was far from the only brothel owner in New Orleans, her roles in social and political spheres made her and her death recognizable throughout the South. As news of the murder and subsequent trial circulated throughout the nation, publications concerning New Orleans increased across the nation as the city's criminal and venereal characteristics garnered fascination. Alongside Kate Townsend's violent murder, New Orleans rose in fame for a

[30] "Carved to Death: Terrible Fate of Kate Townsend, At the Hands of Treville Sykes, With the Instrumentality of a Bowie-knife. Her Breast and Shoulders Literally Covered with Stabs," *The Daily Picayune,* November 4, 1883, America's Historical Newspapers; "A Dreadful End. Treville B. Sykes Murders His Mistress," *The Galveston Weekly News,* November 8, 1883, America's Historical Newspapers.

number of other reasons as well, including overall crime rates, various epidemics, and a distinct racial climate.[31] The intentional focus of media on the negative aspects of life in New Orleans prompted a spectacularly negative outside view of the city centered on immorality, exasperated by sensational crimes such as that of the murder of Kate Townsend.

The death of Kate Townsend set New Orleans as a subject for national entertainment in the late nineteenth century. Her prominence in New Orleans and Southern society displayed the mobility and importance of prostitutes in the Southern economic and social atmospheres. While New Orleans was rebuilding itself following Confederate defeat in the years after the Civil War, women such as Kate Townsend took advantage of the changing social and racial standards in order to create a lifestyle that was previously out of reach. In the decades following the end of the Civil War, New Orleans was saddled with a prominent national reputation as a scandalous city filled with temptations of the flesh. News of Kate Townsend's death in 1883 only furthered this reputation when the news of the madam's death reached major cities across the United States, thus implicating New Orleans as a city filled with venereal intention and murder.

In the years following the Civil War, the turmoil in New Orleans was ever growing. Due to rising crime rates, increasing levels of prostitution, and growing rates of alcoholism and gambling within the city, New Orleans garnered the fascination of national presses throughout the 1870s as the city rebuilt itself. The publicity surrounding Kate Townsend's death in the 1880s reflected New Orleans' relationship with national media, which had evolved during Reconstruction. The Reconstruction Era in New Orleans was a time that

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[31] Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans 1865 – 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).

encompassed the turmoil caused by both Confederate and Union forces occupying the city during the war. The shift in power during the war highlighted the city's ability to adapt to changing circumstances as inhabitants of the city experienced military occupation. Following the end of the Civil War, New Orleans' cultural and racial atmospheres were exacerbated by the abolition of slavery nationwide and the influx of immigrants to the city. This era of Reconstruction allowed the city of New Orleans to rebuild the social, cultural, and political atmosphere that had suffered as a result of the Confederacy's defeat.[32]

Although the events of the Civil War occurred twenty years prior to the death of Kate Townsend, and thirty years before New Orleans created the red-light district of Storyville, the overall failure of the war in 1865 held severe repercussions that affected the city's development decades later. Captured in spring of 1862 by Union forces, New Orleans had held a key advantage to whoever controlled the city, namely for its proximity to both the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico as methods of both militaristic and economic transportation. The drastic shift in power during the Civil War, from Confederacy to Union, left insecurity in the political and social atmospheres of the city, as the region experienced shifts in population and trade.[33] In March of 1864, *The Daily Picayune* published an article that describes the severe population changes since the beginning of the war; most notably the disparity between female and male citizens of New Orleans due to male enrollment in the Confederate armed forces.[34] The stark population changes, accompanied by

[32] Justin A. Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).
[33] Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War.*
[34] "More Females than Males," *The Daily Picayune*, March 13, 1864, America's Historical Newspapers.

sociocultural changes, led residents of the city to develop anxieties concerning the role of New Orleans in the future of the South.[35]

In addition to the sociocultural anxieties spurred by population and economic changes, New Orleans and its middle and upper class residents experienced political unease as well, particularly the white residents of the city. Following the end of the war in 1865, the city of New Orleans lacked a distinct leadership style, as communicated through the city's main newspaper, *The Daily Picayune*. Five years following the end of the war, New Orleans' leadership was still in question, as the city's governor was "so often…in connection with acts of fraud, corruption, and lawlessness."[36] Published in New York City, the lengthy article spanned three columns in the newspaper, a spacious spread, displaying the national fascination with the lurid activities of politicians of the South. The lucrative description in the article described the scandalous nature of the New Orleans governor's involvement with the city's prostitutes and numerous instances of adultery.[37] Four years later, in a number of articles published in the fall and winter of 1874, *The Daily Picayune* expressed concern for "the Louisiana Question." Although the paper never explicitly stated what the "question" was, the articles reference President U.S. Grant's plan for instituting a governor in the state that would accurately reflect the "real choice of the people."[38] Concerned with the growing fascination with crime in New Orleans, "the Louisiana Question" was brought up once again, this time in Chicago, in which *The Inter Ocean*

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[35] Nystrom, *New Orleans after the Civil War* ; Alejandro de la Fuente and Ariela J. Gross, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black: Race, Freedom, and Law in Cuba, Virginia, and Louisiana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 124–184.
[36] "New Orleans Gossip: The Amours and Barbarities of a Carpet-bag Senator – A Complete Indictment by his Wife – He is the Companion of Prostitutes – Two Cases of Divorce in "High Life" – The Developments," *Pomeroy's Democrat,* January 19, 1870, America's Historical Newspapers.
[37] "New Orleans Gossip," *Pomeroy's Democrat,* January 19, 1870, America's Historical Newspapers.
[38] "President Grant's Position on The Louisiana Question. A More Practical Solution," *The Daily Picayune,* October 9, 1874, America's Historical Newspapers.

stated that "it is time the people of New Orleans indulged in other amusements than murder."[39] Politically motivated moral reform seems to be the center of 'the Louisiana Question', as the articles that refer to it have an intent focus on the need to reduce crime rates in the city, particularly "intimidation, murder, and bloodshed."[40]Along with issues of crime and morality, 'the Louisiana Question' is heavily inundated with racialized language noting the growth of the Democratic party due to the influx of freedmen.[41] Political division within the city associated with race and morality centered on the troubles of the Reconstruction era and the drastic changes that occurred within it.

By the mid-1870s, the physical reconstruction of the city was underway alongside the political and economic reconstruction. Advertisements for events, products, and entertainment in New Orleans were flourishing throughout the nation, as presses in New York, Cincinnati, Galveston, and Dallas published articles pertaining to the many draws of New Orleans. For example, the *New York Herald* published a lengthy article in January 1870 describing a series of "Amusements" that city-goers could experience in New Orleans, including French theatre, orchestra performances, and opera for "an evening of rare and splendid entertainment."[42] The following year, in 1871, *The Galveston Daily News* raved about the theatre opportunities in New Orleans, flaunting that the entertainment there is "novel and far more beautiful than any ever shown in Galveston."[43] As entertainment opportunities grew in New Orleans, product advertisements also increased, allowing the Crescent City to become a major destination for merchants and tourists in the South.

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[39] "The Louisiana Question," *The Inter Ocean,* January 18, 1875, America's Historical Newspapers.
[40] "The Louisiana Question," *The Inter Ocean.*
[41] "The Louisiana Question," *The Inter Ocean.*
[42] "Amusements," *New York Herald,* January 30, 1870, America's Historical Newspapers.
[43] "Galveston: New Orleans, Theatre," *The Galveston Daily News,* February 12, 1871, America's Historical Newspapers.

In nearby Galveston, Texas, *The Galveston Daily News* published an article containing a detailed account of product price comparisons between New Orleans and Galveston – hinting at the financial competition between the two cities.[44] Of the products listed, cotton unsurprisingly was a central focus. However, gin and bourbon also received a generous amount of attention, as alcohol consumption in New Orleans was a popular incentive to travel into the city – either for trade opportunities or entertainment.[45] Internal presses of New Orleans also published numerous articles advertising the allures of the city, including an article in *The Daily Picayune* that flaunted the city's "Bourbon whiskies, gin, brandy, etc [*sic*] constantly on hand for sale."[46] The draw of tourists to New Orleans was a way to spur economic growth within the city's local vendors and sources for entertainment, particularly in the French Quarter district that was filled constantly with heavy foot traffic from the nearby ports and train stations.[47]

In addition to the increased draw of tourism in the decades following the Civil War, New Orleans also became a popular destination for immigrants and migrants from other countries and areas of the United States. Despite the city's loss of population during the war, the city's location on both the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico made it a popular migration destination, allowing the city's population to recoup its losses. Immigrants flocked to the city from far off locations such as England, Ireland, Canada, and Germany, as seen through census records.[48] Of those immigrants, the then anonymous Kate Townsend was one of them.

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[44] "Prices," *The Galveston Daily News*, February 26, 1871, America's Historical Newspapers
[45] "Advertisement," *The Galveston Daily News,* June 24, 1870, America's Historical Newspapers
[46] "Advertisement," *The Daily Picayune,* June 29, 1872, America's Historical Newspapers.
[47] Anthony J. Stanonis, *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism: 1918 – 1945* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2006).
[48] U.S. Census, Kate Townsend, accessed February 3, 2020, www.ancestry.com.

The year that Kate Townsend first arrived to New Orleans is unclear. Both historians and popular authors speculate that she arrived in the mid to late 1850s, and spent time throughout the 1850s and 1860s working on Canal Street as a prostitute.[49] Through her experiences, Kate Townsend learned the trade and developed relationships with political entities in New Orleans along with wealthy business owners within the city. In the early 1860s, Townsend began operating her own brothel at no. 40 Basin Street.[50]

Townsend's arrival in New Orleans prefaced many of the changes that took place in the city. Throughout her tenure as a madam on Basin Street, she developed a deeply ingrained reputation within the city's social atmosphere – particularly due to the women she employed. As seen through census data, Townsend was the head of the household and employed numerous women in her establishment indicating her financial prowess as a madam in the city. Townsend first appeared in the Louisiana Census in 1870, where she is listed as the head of the household, and twenty-two other people are listed as residents of the home. The 1870 census document lists seventeen women and five men as residents of the house. Of the women documented as residents of the house, thirteen have their occupation listed as courtesan, insinuating their position as a prostitute that caters to wealthy, elite clientele. The ages of these women range from eighteen to thirty-one, while Townsend's age is listed as thirty. The remaining residents of the house include six domestic servants and the two children, who do not have occupations listed.[51]

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[49] Troy Taylor, *Wicked New Orleans: The Dark Side of the Big Easy* (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2010); Herbert Asbury, *The French Quarter: An Informal History of the New Orleans Underworld.* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1936).

[50] "Carved to Death: Terrible Fate of Kate Townsend, At the Hands of Treville Sykes, With the Instrumentality of a Bowie-knife. Her Breast and Shoulders Literally Covered with Stabs," *The Daily Picayune*, November 4, 1883, America's Historical Newspapers.

[51] U.S. 1870 Census, Kate Townsend, accessed February 3, 2020, www.ancestry.com

As employees in one of the most prominent brothels in New Orleans at the time, all of the women who are listed as courtesans also have their race denoted as white, while the domestic servants have their race listed as either black or mulatto. Former racial regulations left over from the antebellum period still remained in New Orleans in Kate Townsend's brothels. Prior to the Civil War, New Orleans had one of the nation's largest free African American populations and had developed a community of free blacks within the city.[52] Once considered a destination for free blacks throughout the Southern United States and the Caribbean islands, New Orleans' growing population included a significant percentage of African Americans when compared to other major cities in southern states. While race regulations were active in the city's legislation in developing a kind of hybrid legal system after the Civil War, following Townsend's death in 1883, the city's new madams, prostitutes, and clientele witnessed a shift in how different races interacted with one another.

Soon after her presumable arrival in Louisiana, the *New Orleans Times* began publishing articles pertaining to Kate Townsend and her affairs in the city. First mentioned in 1867, in relation to Legislative Acts and Legal Proceedings of the city, *The Daily Picayune* articles alluded to Townsend's involvement in New Orleans' crimes. One article published in the *New Orleans Times* on August 14, 1867, refers to an incident in which Kate Townsend was charged for "assault and battery" and would have to give a "bond of $250…or go to prison."[53] Three years later in 1870, Kate Townsend is mentioned in conjunction with a fatal stabbing, where James White stabbed a man named Gus Taney.[54]

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[52] De la Fuente and Gross, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black,* 49 – 53.
[53] "Wrestling Match," *New Orleans Times,* August 14, 1867, America's Historical Newspapers.
[54] "Fatal Stabbing Affray. Gus Taney Mortally Wounded," *The Daily Picayune,* July 31, 1870, America's Historical Newspapers.

This particular incident highlighted the association between Kate Townsend, her establishment, and physical crimes. Located at no. 40 Basin Street, Kate Townsend's residence was known throughout the city as a "Maison Dorée," or golden house, as noted in *The Daily Picayune.*[55] Described as palatial, Kate Townsend's residence garnered attention as a "house of ill fame" due to its association with prostitution and gambling.[56] Over the course of the 1870s, both Kate Townsend herself and her luxurious establishment gained fame in New Orleans which multiplied exponentially when she was abruptly murdered in 1883.

In the days following her death, Kate Townsend's brothel was one of the most lavishly decorated in the entire city of New Orleans. The publication mentions the "magnificent étagère, upon which were statuettes, the work of renowned artists," that was surrounded by the "finest linen wear and bed clothing."[57] Kate Townsend's establishment was remarked as a demonstration of wealth as the walls were covered in "costly oil paintings" and the beds were laden with lace and silks.[58] The furnishings, rugs, and curtains were some of the best available in New Orleans. Alongside the house furnishings and décor, the ladies in Kate's employ were required to wear proper evening dress when not with a client. Similarly, the patrons of the establishment were also required to wear proper formal dress when they spent evenings with Ms. Townsend's courtesans.[59]

Kate Townsend's brothel was especially known for catering to her clients' desires both discreetly and luxuriously. A publication in *The National Police Gazette* out of New

[55] "The City. Fall in the Barometer," *The Daily Picayune,* December 1872, America's Historical Newspapers.
[56] "Police Dirty Linen," *The Daily Picayune,* October 4, 1881, America's Historical Newspapers.
[57] "Carved to Death," *The Daily Picayune.*
[58] "Carved to Death," *The Daily Picayune.*
[59] "Carved to Death," *The Daily Picayune.*

York City, described the brothel as supplying "a life of licentiousness" to visitors through the "large number of beautiful women" that took up residency in the home.[60] While other similar establishments throughout New Orleans, in particular the French Quarter, also provided lovely women and catered to clients' desires, it is Kate Townsend's establishment that became notorious for its luxurious, yet ill-famed standard of clientele and services. While Kate Townsend's establishment was known for its lavish style and accommodation towards guests, Basin Street as a whole was famously known for its scandalous environment within the city.

Several newspapers, in articles concerning her murder, commented on Townsend's overall role, wealth, and position within the city. *The Galveston Weekly News* proclaimed Townsend as "one of the most familiar figures seen on the streets of New Orleans", declaring Townsend as recognizable through her physical stature and financial worth.[61] Townsend was renowned for her financial and real estate assets, allegedly having accumulated "$200,000 in the city."[62] As a woman with financial and social recognition, Townsend possessed social and economic power, so much so that some publications alluded to her wealth as a contributory factor in her murder, citing that her killer, William Sykes, "had always been jealous of her."[63] In associating a position of power and wealth with a now brutally murdered woman, the media dramatized Townsend and clearly connected her power as a woman with her ultimate murder. By associating the murdered

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[60] "A Jealous Pimp: He Kills His Mistress to Keep Her from Shaking Him," *The National Police Gazette,* November 24, 1883, America's Historical Newspapers.
[61] "A Dreadful End," *The Galveston Weekly News.*
[62] "A Dreadful End," *The Galveston Weekly News;* By today's standards, Townsend's real estate properties would be valued at approximately $5,160,000.
[63] "A Jealous Pimp," *The National Police Gazette.*

Townsend with her scandalous but luxurious brothel, the media sensationalized both her death and the kind of promiscuous power that she once held.

At the time of her death in November 1883, Townsend was well-known throughout New Orleans as a prominent member of the New Orleans demi-monde.[64] Her violent death made national news, as headlines in major U.S. cities declared her death a tragedy and declared her "Queen of the Southern demi-monde" and the "Queen of the Courtesans."[65] Articles published throughout the United States reiterated her position as queen of the demi-monde in the months following her death. As queen of the demi-monde, Kate Townsend held social power. The question therein lies on the kinds of power that can be held by a 'queen of courtesans.' As a luxurious brothel owner and madam, Kate Townsend held social prowess and influence on local politics. Through the accumulation of "a large amount of property, including real estate, [Townsend] was reputed to be worth $200,000."[66] Kate's monetary wealth contributed to her social standing in New Orleans, as noted in several articles following her death:

> Kate Townsend was one of the most familiar figures seen on the streets of New Orleans. She was enormously large, and, though fat to coarseness, still retained a young-looking and handsome face. She was worth over $200,000 in real estate in this city, and it was only last year that she went before a notary, and in order to evade the law of concubinage [*sic*], which says that but one-tenth of all the property left can be willed to a stranger, sold her estate to Sykes, giving him the money to

[64] Originally a French term during the nineteenth century, the term demi-monde refers to the class of women that had questionable moral standards or occupations. Many members of the American demi-monde were associated with prostitution, courtesans, or madams. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the demi-monde as "the class of women of doubtful reputation and social standing, upon the outskirts of 'society'". "Demi-Monde," Oxford English Dictionary, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/49696?redirectedFrom=demimonde#eid

[65] "Murder of the Queen of the Southern Demi-Monde," *Plain Dealer,* November 8, 1883, America's Historical Newspapers.; "A Evil Legacy in Dispute," *The Sun,* November 10, 1885, America's Historical Newspapers.

[66] "A Jealous Pimp," *The National Police Gazette.*

> pay for it. She was a friend to all of her kind, and could be relied on to stand by them in the hour of trial and trouble.[67]

Considering Townsend's monetary wealth and real estate value, her standing in the social hierarchy of New Orleans was higher than that of the average prostitute or madam. Townsend's brutal murder brought attention to the illicit activities in New Orleans through national media coverage. In addition to the emphasis placed on her death, brothel, and profession, many publications placed emphasis on the growing accounts of violence in New Orleans during this time period.[68]

In late nineteenth-century New Orleans, news of a murder was not profound as the city was full of violent events that captured the attention of both local and national news receptacles on a regular basis. Cases of stabbings and shootings were an almost daily occurrence in New Orleans, making the city known throughout the United States as an area of rampant violence and illicit activities. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, *The Daily Picayune* published news reports of violence in the city, particularly in areas near the French Quarter such as the area where Kate Townsend's brothel operated. In a column entitled "The City," *The Daily Picayune* often listed the various crimes that occurred within the city limits of New Orleans.[69] The column was published on the second page of the newspaper, often taking up two or three columns of space on the paper. Although many of the descriptions of crimes were brief, the number of listings present in the publications made violence in New Orleans seem like a common and popular occurrence. Oftentimes,

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[67] "Wages of Sin: Prominent Prostitute of New Orleans Foully Murdered by her Paramour," *Plain Dealer*, November 5, 1883, America's Historical Newspapers.
[68] "Wages of Sin," *Plain Dealer.*
[69] "The City," *The Daily Picayune,* March 12, 1870, America's Historical Newspapers. This publication is one of many articles documented with the same title by the same newspaper – "The City" was the name of the news column seemingly responsible for categorizing and reporting on daily crime, criminals, and punishments.

the publications would list the wanted criminal and the crime they were accused of committing, along with the applicable punishment – either a fine or a jail sentence.

Occasionally these cases of everyday violence made national news. On May 6, 1871, the *New London Democrat* in New London, Connecticut, published a brief article describing the "indiscriminate" shooting of pedestrians in the streets of New Orleans.[70] In the years following the Civil War, New Orleans garnered a national reputation as a city filled with murder, prostitutes, and illness. Recognizable through news of various crimes and epidemics, primarily yellow fever, newspaper articles published outside of Louisiana focused on the negative connotations of the city, warning readers against visiting a city so entrenched with disease and violence. Local publications, while also containing news of crime and illicit activities, often concentrated more on the positive aspects of life in the French Quarter and surrounding areas.

Newspapers across the nation published articles pertaining to life in New Orleans, as the city grew following the Civil War. Outward attitudes concerning the city were moreover negative, as focuses shifted from the crime rates in the city to rampant illnesses and to severe political corruption. During the late 1870s, a wave of yellow fever swept through New Orleans, making the epidemic national news. One article published out of the *Springfield Republican* in Springfield, Massachusetts entitled "Walking Cases of Yellow Fever" describes the number of residents in New Orleans that were diagnosed with the illness during an epidemic in 1878. The article mentions that "this stalking death is not an uncommon feature of life in New Orleans during…an epidemic."[71] Following the title of

[70] "Life in New Orleans," *New London Democrat,* May 6, 1871, America's Historical Newspapers.
[71] "Walking Cases of Yellow Fever," *The Springfield Republican,* October 5, 1878, America's Historical Newspapers.

the article, it is mentioned that the description of the epidemic is borrowed from *The Indianapolis Herald,* allowing readers to infer that the news of the yellow fever in New Orleans is national news. The article articulates that cases of yellow fever in New Orleans were particularly dangerous due to the unwillingness of the patients to remain in their own chambers, instead roaming the city streets "with the seal of death" on their lips.[72]

Known throughout the country via newspaper publications as a violent and illicit city, by the 1890s New Orleans had developed a nationwide reputation for being a city full of murderers, prostitutes, and corrupt politicians. In the decades following the Civil War, New Orleans became nationally known for being a safe haven for illicit activities. In addition to the city's rich history of murder and violent crime, gambling and prostitution were both on the rise in the late nineteenth century. Brothels, dancehalls, and saloons were popular in New Orleans as places for a variety of entertainment sources including the company of others and illegal gambling. Several brothels, including the establishment once owned by Kate Townsend, were known throughout both the city and the South as places that catered to men with specific desires in women. As New Orleans developed in the late nineteenth century, the area surrounding Basin Street became explicitly known for prostitution, gambling, and alcohol-related incidents. [73]

Encompassing several city blocks from Basin Street to Canal Street, city officials recognized the influence of illicit activities on the city and in the late eighteen-nineties, official legislation was drawn up to curtail the trouble caused in the district.[74] Due to its

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[72] "Walking Cases of Yellow Fever," *The Springfield Republican,* October 5, 1878, America's Historical Newspapers.
[73] Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans"* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 39-43; Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans 1865 – 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 102-110.
[74] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 39.

proximity to the popular French Quarter, Basin Street experienced heavy foot traffic from both travelers and city residents. Located just a couple of blocks north of the French Quarter, Basin Street, Canal Street, and Customhouse Street marked the borders where illicit activities could flourish within the city.[75] Home to several of the most frequented and luxurious brothels in the city, Basin Street profited from the institution of prostitution and the exploitation of the women that engaged in promiscuity.[76]

The idea that New Orleans was a safe haven for crime was only furthered in the 1890s when the legalized red-light district of Storyville was created. Legally recognized in July of 1897, Storyville, New Orleans, was a district specifically designed to regulate and contain prostitution and other illicit activities without disrupting the surrounding businesses and community.[77] Originally, Storyville was created in local legislation as a way to regulate the sex industry and the individuals involved in it. The district's namesake, Sidney Story, was a city councilman known throughout New Orleans as a man of high society. In an article published in *The Daily Picayune* in 1896, approximately a year before Story's legislation for the red-light district was approved, Sidney Story was described as "a very popular young man and is connected with the best people in this city and state."[78] While no articles found in *The Daily Picayune* expressly stated the public's reaction to the legislation surrounding a red-light district, Mr. Story created the district as a response to public outcry that the city of New Orleans had been taken over by rampant prostitution. Mr. Story's legislation did not legalize prostitution outright; instead, it created a specific

[75] Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana. Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 3, 1887, Map, https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn03376_003/.
[76] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 39-40.
[77] Stanosis, *Creating the Big Easy,*104-110 *;* Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 39-41.
[78] "[Illegible] Men Who Will Own Themselves," *The Daily Picayune,* April 17, 1896, America's Historical Newspapers.

region of the city where illicit activities could be limited without running amuck throughout the entire city. Before becoming known nationally as "Storyville", the district had no official name. Originally, Storyville was simply referred to as "The District" in its legislation and community conversation; however, as its popularity and notoriety grew, inhabitants of "The District", and of New Orleans, began the nickname of "Storyville" due to the district's association with the man who created its legislation, Sidney Story.[79]

In the decades leading up to Storyville's creation, most of the city's major brothels and dance halls were found in and around Basin Street, Canal Street and Claiborne Avenue, close to the famed Kate Townsend establishment. This area specifically had been constructed over the years to house an assortment of brothels, saloons, and dancehalls that each contained some kind of illicit activity. Many of the established brothels on Basin Street were created in the 1860s through 1880s as prostitution became more prevalent throughout the city.[80] Local newspapers such as *The Daily Picayune* claimed Basin Street was a place "almost exclusively inhabited by prostitutes," yet despite its inhabitants, another article describes the "luxurious furnishings" found within the street's establishments.[81] Over time, the culture of Basin Street and its surrounding areas seeped into the geography of the city, creating a designated district for prostitution and illicit activities.

In the mid to late 1890s, middle class white residents of New Orleans began calling for reforms to be made through the local legislature. An 1896 article published in *The Daily Picayune* outlines the reform efforts made by several prominent Louisianan legislators,

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[79] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 102-104.
[80] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 11, 40.
[81] "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings", *The Daily Picayune*, January 10, 1888, America's Historical Newspapers; "Advertisement," *The Daily Picayune*, May 8, 1897, America's Historical Newspapers.

including those that proposed reformative laws for New Orleans business districts.[82] Complaints were filled by inhabitants of the city to "reorganize government," including municipal boundaries.[83] As residents of the city recognized the impact of the district on life in New Orleans, namely the rapid popularization and spread of prostitution throughout the city, concern for social welfare among the city's middle class grew heavily in the 1890s. As unrest in the city's social circles grew louder, public outcries were heard and recognized by New Orleans politicians, leading to the official legislative ordinance proposed by Sidney Story in 1897.[84]

Encompassing parts of Basin Street, where Kate Townsend once ran her luxurious brothel, Storyville was strategically located to allow for patrons and prostitutes to travel easily throughout the district and outward into the city. Geographically located close to the French Quarter and the ports of the Mississippi River, Storyville's location provided ample access to the city's major transportation vessels. The area, already widely known as one that catered to those with a taste for the illicit, was located in an area of heavy foot traffic in addition to New Orleans' streetcars and trains. The heavy presence of foot traffic and transportation allowed the district to be heavily visited by both natives of New Orleans and visitors to the city. Storyville was described as "inviting to the boats and seamen that docked close to the vice district in order to partake in the sex trade" according to historian Richard Campanella.[85] In one article published in *The Daily Picayune,* a Swedish visitor named Ericson "had hardly finished in the work of dropping his ship's anchor when he

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[82] "Louisiana's Legislators: The Men Who Make the Laws for the People," *The Daily Picayune,* July 21, 1896, America's Historical Newspapers.
[83] "Louisiana's Legislators," *The Daily Picayune,* July 21, 1896, America's Historical Newspapers.
[84] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 103-105.
[85] Richard Campanella, *Cityscapes of New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), 31-38.

made a break for the red-light district."[86] The article noted how quickly Ericson was to make for the district of Storyville after docking his vessel, implying that the district was not very far from the city docks.

Proximity to popular avenues of travel was accentuated through Storyville's success and the district's own methods of advertising. Blue Books were integral to the economy and success of Storyville. Distributed regularly, Blue Books were known as a kind of guidebook for tourists, advertising the many corporeal pleasures offered in Storyville: from physical pleasure to alcohol to cigar sales. In addition to a plethora of illustrations of strictly women, Blue Books also contained advertisements for alcohol and cigars. One advertisement found within the sixth edition of the Blue Book publication promotes "Barbarossa Bottled Beer", the "most exquisite bottled beer in the world."[87] The accompanying illustration is a standard beer bottle with the brewing company's logo. However, the advertisement is unique in that it is accompanied by a nude woman that appears behind the bottle. The advertisement is the only example given within *Guidebooks to Sin* that contains a nude woman, despite that many of the advertisements are for prostitutes or brothels. Advertisements found throughout the Blue Books all but explicitly state the association between prostitution and other physical vices such as gambling and alcohol consumption.

When Storyville was first created, the goal of local government was that the allowance of a red-light district would assist in the regulation of prostitution and the services provided within the sex work industry. Known for some of the most elaborate and

[86] "In the Dives," *The Daily Picayune,* March 10, 1901, America's Historical Newspapers.
[87] Billy Struve, "Blue Book," 1907. 6th edition, as accessed through *Guidebooks to Sin: The Blue Books of Storyville, New Orleans* by Pamela D. Arceneaux, 89.

lavish brothels and saloons in the city, Storyville garnered popularity throughout New Orleans and neighboring states as a place full of sinful fun and beautiful women. Many of the women employed in the district were experienced prostitutes and resided in the brothels that employed them. In addition to women that were strictly sex workers, the area also housed a number of dancers and performers that occasionally dabbled in sex work. Hundreds of women inhabited the establishments throughout the district, each with a purpose and a madam to work for.[88]

Prior to Storyville's official existence, Kate Townsend set the standards for prostitutes and madams in the city. As one of the most lavish and exquisite in the city, Townsend's no. 40 Basin Street brothel set the stage for what would come twenty years later upon Storyville's arrival. In the early 1880s, around the same time as the sensational death of Kate Townsend, Lulu White arrived in New Orleans. Upon Storyville's creation in 1897, Lulu White became known as one of the most notorious madams of Storyville. A woman with a mysterious past, Lulu White was a mixed race woman who moved to New Orleans in her young adult years, though it is unknown how old she was when she arrived. Allegedly born in Selma, Alabama, according to historians, Lulu White was popularly known throughout New Orleans as a madam and a criminal from the 1880s to the 1920s for her multiple arrests in the city.[89] The first article that recognizes White in *The Daily Picayune* was published in 1881 and described her involvement in an altercation in which she was stabbed.[90] Seven years later, in 1888, Lulu White was documented on the other side of the altercation when *The Daily Picayune* stated her arrest for petty larceny.[91] There

[88] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 18-20; Asbury, *The French Quarter.*
[89] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 132.
[90] "Revolver and Razor," *The Daily Picayune,* June 11, 1881, America's Historical Newspapers.
[91] "Misdeeds and Mishaps," *The Daily Picayune,* May 10, 1888, America's Historical Newspapers.

are numerous other incidences reported by local New Orleans publications that declare Lulu White's involvement in various crimes ranging from larceny to assault.

White had been arrested for numerous crimes throughout her tenure in New Orleans, including "operating a disorderly house," "selling liquor without a license," and "stabbing with intent to murder."[92] Several articles published in *The Daily Picayune* described Lulu as a woman not to be trifled with, including one that described her as "a female of immoral imposes."[93] In addition to her notoriety as a criminal, Lulu White had nicknamed herself "the diamond queen," allegedly due to her love of jewelry.[94] The same article that dubbed her of "immoral imposes" commented that she lived up to her moniker of "Diamond Queen" as she appeared in court "dressed in almost nothing but sparklers."[95] In an effort to dress the part, Lulu decorated herself with expensive jewels and beads, allowing the public to witness her monetary wealth. As a testament to her style, Alecia P. Long notes in her book *The Great Southern Babylon* that Lulu White claimed her house as a pleasure resort of the South. Similar to Kate Townsend in the 1870s, Lulu White supplied a lavish lifestyle to patrons who could afford to pay as well as an assortment of women that fit a variety of tastes. Lulu White was publically known for owning and operating one of Storyville's most prestigious brothels and dancehalls in the early 1900s, Mahogany Hall.[96]

Noted as one of the most popular locations in Storyville, Mahogany Hall was officially regarded as a parlor. Located at 235 Basin Street, Mahogany Hall was supposedly

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[92] "Arrest records," New Orleans Police Department, Lulu White, Documented 1910-1917, storyvilledistrictnola.com
[93] "Federal Grand Jury Indicts Lumberman for Trespass and Timber Cutting on Government Land," *The Daily Picayune*, November 5, 1909, America's Historical Newspapers.
[94] "Storyville, New Orleans," Last modified 2014, storyvilledistrictnola.com.
[95] "Storyville, New Orleans," Last modified 2014, storyvilledistrictnola.com.
[96] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 208–209.

the most lavish of the saloons and parlors located within the district. Decorated with extravagant chandeliers in lush furnishings, the Hall was supposedly built from marble which displayed its luxury prominently. In a photograph taken in the early twentieth century of Mahogany Hall's interior, a contemporary fireplace accompanied by two high-back chairs is shown in the background while in the foreground there appears to be three or four fanciful planters or statuettes that adorn the entryway.[97] A four-story building with windows facing Basin Street on each level, Mahogany Hall contained a number of individual parlors that served to entertain white male patrons in a variety of ways, including gambling, alcohol, or dance shows. Upwards of 40 to 45 women were employed at Mahogany Hall at any given time, each of whom worked for Lulu White. Many of the women employed at the Hall as prostitutes or dancers were of mixed race, with a portion being of creole descent. Mahogany Hall, in its lavishness, was known famously as an octoroon hall.[98]

New Orleans was famous for being made up of many races and racially mixed inhabitants, many of whom were the patrons and inhabitants of Storyville. At the turn into the twentieth century, *The Daily Picayune* published an article concerned with the city's population growth – particularly the "ignorant and brutal negro population."[99] This particular article notes that in many of the Louisianan parishes, "the negroes are from eight times to ten times more numerous than the whites," implying the large populations of African Americans in both the city of New Orleans as well as the state of Louisiana as a

[97] "Storyville, New Orleans," Last modified 2014, storyvilledistrictnola.com.
[98] "Advertisement," *The Daily Picayune,* October 19, 1907, America's Historical Newspapers; "Advertisement," *The Daily Picayune,* September 14, 1913, America's Historical Newspapers; Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 20.
[99] "The New State Registration," *The Daily Picayune,* March 30, 1900, America's Historical Newspapers.

whole. *The Daily Picayune* also published numerous articles concerning the "negro denizens" of Storyville throughout the early 1900s.[100]

While many brothels and saloons were specific to one race, whether it was white, black or mixed race, many establishments employed women of different races and allowed them to work side-by-side. The contrast between races within different brothels and dancehalls made for a unique experience for patrons looking for a specific type of woman. In some circumstances, Storyville establishments had prostitutes separated by race; however, white patrons could enter and relish the entertainment provided by any of the employed women, regardless of the city's racial regulations. In contrast, black male patrons were not allowed in Storyville's brothels located within the district's legal borders. Although New Orleans had a black population, many of whom frequented the geographic area of Storyville, black men could not partake in the entertainment provided in Storyville's brothels due to racial segregation. Storyville was created for the white patrons.[101] In Anthony Stanonis' book *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918–1945,* he claims the creation of Storyville "perpetuated sex across the color line as a titillating adventure for white men who wanted to verify for themselves the beauty of the city's mixed race women."[102] Popularly known as a city containing an abundance of immigrant and mixed race women, New Orleans' unique racial population contributed to Storyville's popularity across the Southern United States.

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[100] "Police Graft," *The Daily Picayune,* September 8, 1905, America's Historical Newspapers.
[101] Historians such as Emily Epstein Landau and Alecia P. Long regard the existence of "Black Storyville", a neighborhood a few blocks from Basin and Canal Street that contained brothels and parlors that catered to African American Men. Much of the literature that includes portions on "Black Storyville" do not give it the same amount of attention as the legally established Storyville set by Sidney Story.
[102] Anthony J. Stanonis, *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism: 1918 – 1945* (Athens, Georgia: Georgia University Press, 2006), 8.

Due to the unique employment of mixed race women in Storyville, many white men flocked to New Orleans to sexually experiment with prostitutes of different races and ethnicities within the district. Many of the South's most popular brothels and saloons were found within Storyville's borders, specifically the brothels and saloons that employed quadroon or octoroon women.[103] Some historians, such as Judith Kelleher Schafer and Anthony Stanonis argue that the reason behind the quadroon and octoroon's popularity in brothels was the intimate desire felt by white men. In her book *Brothels, Depravity, and Abandoned Women: Illegal Sex in Antebellum New Orleans,* Schafer describes the want of white men to experiment with other races as well as experience the thrill of being intimate with an "exotic woman."[104] Even before Storyville was established, a similar conundrum occurred throughout the nineteenth century in which quadroon and mixed race women were especially popular amongst white patrons in the brothels located on Basin Street and Canal Street.

Among the city's most affluent madams, Kate Townsend and Lulu White flourished in the New Orleans' social atmosphere. Separated by nearly two decades of time, the two women held similar standards in their brothels and social roles which allowed them to become two of the more influential madams in the city's vast history of prostitution. In the time between the two women's reign as 'queens' of the New Orleans demi-monde, prostitution grew within the city. Due to the national recognition of Kate Townsend and her role in New Orleans society following her death, the city garnered more and more

[103] An octoroon was a term noting the racial classification of a person, specifically a woman. Similar to a quadroon in which the person is a quarter African American according to parentage, an octoroon is an eighth African American, noting that one of their great-grandparents would have been African American. Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 107-121.
[104] Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Brothels: Depravity, and Abandoned Women: Illegal Sex in Antebellum New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 31-46.

national attention as an unsavory city filled with insatiable sensual appetites. Captured by women like Lulu White, Kate Townsend's legacy carried on through the madams of Storyville, as their establishments exhibited opulence. While the two women are never known to have met, the impact of the women is undeniable as the confines and expectations of Storyville were exemplified through their brothels and the women they employed. In conjunction with the unique racial situation of New Orleans, white men were able to publically have physical relations with women of color.

While there were other illicit districts throughout major cities in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the existence of Storyville presents a unique situation in which race and sexuality combined to form an unprecedented legalized district of prostitution that acted as a tourist attraction throughout the Southern United States. Furthered by the luxurious brothels offered by madams such as Lulu White, New Orleans' attitudes towards the relationship between prostitution and race was unlike any other district in the United States as Storyville evolved through the early twentieth century.

Chapter Two:

From Code Noir to Black Codes: Sanctions of Race in the Red-Light District

Throughout the nineteenth century, the culture surrounding New Orleans' racial relations experienced massive shifts in how inhabitants of the city viewed physical relations between men and women of different races. Indubitably, the chaos of the Civil War was the cause between the major shifts that occurred within the city's racial boundaries.[105] The emancipation of the enslaved population following the end of the war in 1865 led to an imbalance in racial stigmas, allowing white men to mingle more explicitly and publically with women of color than what was previously acceptable in the Crescent City.[106] Both before and after the Civil War, the state of Louisiana had publically prohibited any kind of sexual or illicit relations between the white and black populations; however, following the war, the city's growing social and illicit atmospheres witnessed the blurring of racial lines, which allowed the white and black populations to mingle publically in brothels, saloons, and boardinghouses.[107] Particularly in the decades following the Civil War, the brothels in New Orleans catered to a wide variety of specialties, including catering to many white men's desires of being intimate with a woman of color.[108] The changing circumstances that arose in New Orleans in the late nineteenth century allowed for this

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[105] Justin A. Nystrom, *New Orleans After the Civil War: Race Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).
[106] Joy J. Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age: Politics and Urban Progress, 1880 – 1896* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969).
[107] Alejandro de la Fuenta and Ariela J. Gross, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black: Race, Freedom, and Law in Cuba, Virginia, and Louisiana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[108] Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2013).

unique atmosphere to culminate in the last decade of the century, with the creation of one of the nation's only legally recognized red-light districts, Storyville.

During the antebellum period, New Orleans was home to the largest slave market in the southern United States, due to its proximity to both the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi River.[109] Over decades in the early nineteenth-century of increasingly large amounts of slave migrations from Maryland and Virginia down the Atlantic Seaboard, New Orleans was, in many ways, the terminus.[110] Alongside the South's growing appetite for enslaved workers, the slave market in New Orleans grew. In forming the city's prolific slave market, free black communities also developed within the city's limits – creating a place in which escaped slaves or free African Americans could congregate.[111] By the time the Civil War began, the city was comprised of approximately 11,000 "free colored," creating one of the largest free black communities in the southern United States.[112] Meanwhile, the white population of New Orleans was approximately 149,000, and the population of enslaved individuals at approximately 14,500.[113] While still a significantly lower percentage of the population than white individuals, the percentage of free blacks in the concentrated area of New Orleans signified a collective that was oftentimes the subject of state laws.

Due to the large population of free blacks and enslaved individuals, racial ordinances in the city were traditionally based on racial regulations that infiltrated the southern United States as a way to control black behavior towards the white population.

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[109] De la Fuenta, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black,* 178-185.
[110] Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Perseus Books, LLC, 2014).
[111] De la Fuenta, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black.*
[112] U.S. Census, *Population of the State of Louisiana, Parish of New Orleans, 1860,* 4, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-16.pdf
[113] U.S. Census, *Population of the State of Louisiana, Parish of New Orleans, 1860.*

Beginning in the early-to-mid-1700s, Louisiana upheld a Code Noir, instituting both protections and limitations on black individuals. Following Louisiana's transition to an American state, the development of racially targeted laws continued into the nineteenth century. The Code Noir, first instituted during French rule in 1685 and reintegrated in 1724 offered certain protections to enslaved individuals – notably the ability to petition in cases of abuse and the option of manumission.[114] Throughout its early history, New Orleans changed colonial hands several times, each time implementing a new set of racial standards, all of which contributed to New Orleans' unique racial hierarchy.

Throughout its colonial existence, and its tenure as an American state, Louisiana consistently was inundated with some kind of racial regulations or cues. Due to its complex history with colonial empires, the slave trade, and the large free black population, the Crescent City was uniquely situated with three prominent colonial influences which created a vibrant cultural, political, and racial history. Due to its cultural impacts from various colonial powers, trade influences, and merchant activities, New Orleans grew steadily in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, becoming one of the South's most populous areas by the mid-nineteenth century. Once a part of both the French and Spanish Empires, New Orleans' international history seeped into many aspects of everyday life in the city, most notably in the cuisine, language, and racial ancestry.[115]

The presence of the Creole race is particularly important in recognizing the unique racial characteristics of New Orleans in the late nineteenth century. As defined by

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[114] De la Fuenta, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black*, 19 - 21; The Code Noir, while primarily regulating slavery and those involved in it, also offered regulations concerning the practice of Catholicism and Judaism within the French colonies.

[115] Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Brothels, Depravity, and Abandoned Women: Illegal Sex in Antebellum New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 1-10.

historians, Creole refers to an individual of both colonial and African descent, specifically Colonial French, but the term has been loosely applied to other colonial descendants as well.[116] The most notable aspect of the recognition of Creole as a race independent of white, mixed, or black is that it usually denotes a correlation between Caribbean ancestry or African enslavement.[117] In New Orleans in the late nineteenth century, to be Creole meant to be of mixed race of both white and black parentage; however, not all mixed race individuals native to New Orleans were labeled as Creole. The specification of the Creole race separate from the broader term of mixed race implies a specific ancestry and connection to slavery.

The presence of Creoles in New Orleans and the larger state of Louisiana did not complicate the understanding of racial regulations. As far as the law was understood, all black and mixed race persons, including Creoles, were under the purview of racial regulations. Over time, these antebellum regulations shifted more from offering protections to providing limitations to behavior and actions. Originally offering protections for black individuals to have Sundays free of work or the ability to travel, over time the regulations became stricter towards limiting the behavior of non-white citizens.[118] For instance, a Louisiana law passed in 1830 prohibited the immigration of free people of color into the state due to a recent arrest of a free black merchant in New Orleans.[119] As the antebellum period continued, regulations towards free blacks and enslaved individuals worsened due to the stark increase in fugitive slaves that took refuge in the city.[120] The existence of racial

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[116] Donald E. DeVore, *Defying Jim Crow: African American Community Development and the Struggle for Racial Equality in New Orleans, 1900-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 87-103; Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 70-84.
[117] DeVore, *Defying Jim Crow*, 70-84.
[118] De la Fuenta, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black,* 141-145.
[119] De la Fuenta, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black,* 141-143.
[120] De la Fuenta, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black,* 154-156.

ordinances, whether officially denoted or not, deeply maintained the regulation of African descendants in the New World up until the Emancipation Proclamation in America in 1863. While the end of the Civil War brought a kind of freedom for previously enslaved individuals, it also brought a new kind of racially-motivated laws and ordinances, Black Codes.

Instances of Black Codes in New Orleans specifically targeted behavior black, mixed, and Creole individuals within the state of Louisiana. As discussed in *Becoming Free, Becoming Black*, by historians Alejandro de la Fuenta and Ariela J. Gross, Black Codes in New Orleans were in some ways similar to those in other locations in the United States, such as Virginia; however, the authors demonstrate the Black Codes in New Orleans differed greatly from other racial regulations in areas where slavery was present, such as Cuba. Often times Black Codes were used to regulate social, economic, political, and religious activities. Instated by both State and local legislature, Black Codes regulated relationships formed between people of different races, particularly relationships of a romantic or sensual nature.[121]

While racial relations were always prevalent in New Orleans, following the Civil War, legal regulations pertaining to romantic relationships between different races were passed in the state of Louisiana. In the decades following the end of the war, the *Daily Picayune* published numerous articles pertaining to the laws concerning miscegenation. In July 1874, the *Daily Picayune* published an article "Criminalities" which described local crimes and the criminals associated with them. The first subject of the article displays the city's prevalent racialized attitudes towards those of African descent: "John Davis, the most

[121] De la Fuenta, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black,* 140-156.

perfect profile of a gorilla ever seen, has a face such as would have convinced any ministry of the truth of the Darwinian theory, and the fallacy of Republican institutions that make Davis a citizen."[122] The second subject of "Criminalities" makes clearer reference to the attitudes towards miscegenation, as a local couple, Richard and Fanny Karey, also known as "the miscegenation couple" were described as able to "commit any crime or obscenity they felt like" and were a "nuisance to the whole of Algiers."[123] Additionally, in August 1886 *The Daily Picayune* published "Spirit of the State Press: What the Louisiana Papers Have to Say on Matters of Public Interest" in which the "evils of miscegenation" are described as "a crime which should be driven from the country and [the people] are in favor of imprisoning every person guilty of this crime."[124] This particular viewpoint is a republication from another Louisianan paper, *The Trinity Herald*, out of Catahoula Parish, Louisiana. However, the article also contains quotations from a number of Louisiana newspapers, suggesting that the negative views of miscegenation were quite widespread throughout the entire state, including the city of New Orleans. Two months later, in October 1886 *The Daily Picayune* published another article, of the same title, suggesting it is a monthly feature. In the October publication, the subject of miscegenation once again took precedence as a republication from *The Ouachita Telegraph* stated miscegenation as "a menace to the purity of the Anglo-Saxon race" and "must be suppressed as white supremacy and the purity of the Anglo-Saxon blood depends upon it."[125] Negative views of miscegenation and black/white relationships perpetuated throughout the latter half of the

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[122] "Criminalities," *The Daily Picayune,* July 29, 1874, America's Historical Newspapers.
[123] "Criminalities," *The Daily Picayune*.
[124] "Spirit of the State Press: What the Louisiana Papers Have to Say on Matters of Public Interest," *The Daily Picayune,* August 9, 1886, America's Historical Newspapers.
[125] "Spirit of the State Press: What the Louisiana Papers Have to Say on Subjects of Public Interest," *The Daily Picayune,* October 25, 1886, America's Historical Newspapers.

nineteenth century as Black Codes and legal legislature were passed in the state of Louisiana.

Despite New Orleans' unique racial structure in which the population of African-Americans was greater than in other cities in the Southern United States, Black Codes were heavily inundated with regulations, prohibitions, and consequences for actions taken. To further add to the increasingly stark racial hierarchy that emerged in the South following the Civil War, Black Codes were accompanied by Jim Crow laws which asserted further racial segregation in social, political, and economic circumstances. While not as specifically binding as Black Codes, Jim Crow laws also denoted behavioral actions and consequences for the African American community throughout the entire United States South and beyond. One article published in *The Times-Picayune* described Jim Crow laws associated with church-going, stating that "we all have our own social circles, and the negroes are getting their own parlors."[126] Another article addresses the racial segregation of streetcars within the city, claiming that the separation of the cars will give "an accommodation to the races."[127] Within these Jim Crow laws, regulations pertaining to sexual relations between the races were also amongst the behavioral actions outlined. In 1914, *The Times-Picayune* published "Tells How Negro Insulted A Girl", describing the social expectations of black men interacting with white women, particularly in public environments, where fraternization is socially unacceptable.[128] The article tells the story of a white woman who, after receiving a job in an executive department, was given a desk

[126] "Negro Baptists," *The Times-Picayune,* July 22, 1905, America's Historical Newspapers.
[127] "JIM CROW LAWS: Attorney Charbonnet Gets Information From Other Cities," *The Times-Picayune,* April 14, 1912, America's Historical Newspapers.
[128] "TELLS HOW NEGRO INSULTED A GIRL: Federal Clerk, With Desh [*sic*] Adjoining White Woman, Asks to Call on Her," *The Times-Picayune,* March 7, 1914, America's Historical Newspapers.

next to "negro," and that he gave her a note "asking if he might call on her."[129] The woman, upset that the man would assert himself in such a way, reported the incident to a superior, to which he responded "is the negro still living?", alluding to the possibility that he may have been killed for his overture towards a white woman.[130] The overall tone of the article is in desperate support of segregation in order to avoid these kinds of incidents and relations that cross the color line. Despite the carefree attitudes that encapsulated New Orleans, the regulation of black and mixed raced individuals was heavily implemented at the turn into the twentieth century.

In addition to legislature banning miscegenation in the 1870s and 1880s, one of the most prominent examples of these racial regulations came with the ordinance that recognized Storyville as a red light district in 1897 and the ordinance that ended its existence twenty years later. At the time it was created, Storyville was categorized as an area for prostitution to occur while being regulated in the city's economic and political atmospheres. Members of the New Orleans City Council saw the Storyville ordinance as a way to uphold moral standards and regulate the sinful behavior that ran rampant in the city. "In the Interest of Public Morals" was an article published in *The Daily Picayune* in June of 1900, three years after Storyville was officially consecrated.[131] The article announces the city's opposition to the ordinance that created the district, citing the "disreputable persons" and "depraved classes" that inhabit the area.[132] The opinion expressed in the article relates the persons engaged with prostitution to a disease, stating that "[the ordinance] was intended to gather up the members of a most immoral class scattered

[129] "TELLS HOW NEGRO INSULTED A GIRL," *The Times-Picayune.*
[130] "TELLS HOW NEGRO INSULTED A GIRL," *The Times-Picayune.*
[131] "In the Interest of Public Morals," *The Daily Picayune*, June 16, 1900, America's Historical Newspapers.
[132] "In the Interest of Public Morals," *The Daily Picayune.*

through the city, and to corral or quarantine them in an area whose limitations were specifically designed."[133] The word 'quarantine' specifically has a contagious connotation, and by associating these women of low morals with a contagion, *The Daily Picayune* effectively attaches negativity to the district of Storyville. Although the article never cited race as a reason behind the negativity towards the ordinance, it does mention the want for "segregation" and to "empty Storyville of its population and…of vices and abominations."[134] Though heavily associated with the illicit activities of the district and the venereal behaviors exhibited within its limits, Storyville was also heavily associated with race in city newspapers. In 1899, two years following the district's creation, *The Daily Picayune* published an article implying that a "colored waiter" in one of the Storyville saloons, had intentionally short-changed a man "taking in the sights of Storyville" after stopping in for a drink.[135] The customer of the saloon, a white man, claimed that he was drugged and robbed of $65 while in the company of a stranger. The article states that the black waiter "objected" to the event in question, and sets a tone of mistrust amongst the employees and dwellers of Storyville. Much of the negativity surrounding Storyville stemmed from both the immoral qualms inhabitants had, as well as the racial implications of having black employees in many of the saloons, brothels, and dancehalls that filled the district.

However, the ordinance that defined Storyville also had a racial clause which stipulated African American men could not engage in illicit activities within the district with any prostitute, specifically those of Caucasian race. Proposed in 1897, Storyville's

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[133] "In the Interest of Public Morals," *The Daily Picayune.*
[134] "In the Interest of Public Morals," *The Daily Picayune.*
[135] "Saw Storyville. And Left $65 in the Hands of Saloon Companions," *The Daily Picayune,* March 13, 1899, America's Historical Newspapers.

ordinance included a provision that designated a smaller, separate area for the illicit activities of African American men, which would become known by historians as "Black Storyville."[136] Racial regulations within Storyville were recognized by the inhabitants and incoming customers. However, one of Storyville's main draws for incoming merchants and travelers, was the employ of quadroon, octoroon, and creole women. Historian Anthony Stanonis recognizes this pattern in his book *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918-1945*. Stanonis observed that a major draw of Storyville was the distinct employment of mixed race women and the desire of white men to fraternize with them.[137] This historical phenomenon is also recognized by several other Storyville scholars including Emily Epstein Landau and Alecia P. Long as they denote Storyville's popularity among prominent white men in the South. Both Landau and Long partially accredit Storyville's success as a red-light district to the instinctive draw of white men to the district to fraternize with the mixed race prostitutes.[138]

New Orleans' deep history of sex across the color line from the antebellum period carried greatly into the formation and success of Storyville. While interracial sex was socially frowned upon and received negative attitudes publically, it still remained one of the major draws for the district and many brothel owners profited off of the lucrative nature of interracial sex. The sexualization and eroticism associated with black and mixed race women was a holdover from the antebellum period, in which enslaved women often fell prey to white men, either through rape or sexual coercion.[139] Sexual violence and overt

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[136] Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex. Race, and Respectability in New Orleans 1865-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).
[137] Anthony J. Stanonis, *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918-1945*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2006).
[138] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon.* ; Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).
[139] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*, 10-12.

sexualization of non-white women in the antebellum era carried over into post-war New Orleans through the continuation of interracial relations despite legal and social regulations. In addition to the overt sexualization of them, mixed race women were also the subject of several stereotypes that affected their stance by social standards.

Many divisions within the larger category of mixed race women existed in New Orleans. As previously discussed, the category of Creole denoted a person's connection with colonial powers, while categories such as quadroon or octoroon simply denoted how much of a person's 'blood' was tainted with non-white genes. In an article published in Kansas City, Missouri, by *The Kansas City Times* in 1890, the persona of a "placee" is described.[140] A "placee" according to the article described a woman of mixed race that was indistinguishable from "the whitest lady in the land."[141] Usually of mixed race, a quadroon or an octoroon, a placee was unique to New Orleans society in which they were often "very handsome and wealthy" and "scorned the ordinary negro or mulatto."[142] While the placee women were not associated with the working women of Storyville, marriage between a placee woman and a white man was also forbidden, as it was considered a case of miscegenation which was illegal in Louisiana in the late nineteenth century.

Racialized stigmas against mixed race and African American women was not a new phenomenon by the time of Storyville's development in the 1890s. The over-sexualization of mixed race women has a long and arduous history in the United States, particularly in the South due to the deeply imbedded traditions brought on by centuries of slavery and Orientalist tendencies. The sexualization and fetishizing of non-white women was

[140] "New Orleans Placee Girls: A Curious Social Institution Left From Slavery Days," *The Kansas City Times*, December 14, 1890, America' Historical Newspapers.
[141] "New Orleans Placee Girls," *The Kansas City Times.*
[142] "New Orleans Placee Girls," *The Kansas City Times.*

embedded in the idea of the "exotic" and was directly linked to the societal limitations attributed to the sexuality and gender expression of white women.[143] While socially unacceptable for interracial relationships to occur among the freed populations, white slave owners would often rape and sexually abuse their female slaves as both a form of punishment and for their own personal satisfaction.[144] The dichotomous nature of the portrayal of the mixed race or African American woman in the South gives a glimpse into the motivations of white, male slave-owners; this same population of white, male slave-owners would later become one of the main clienteles for the brothels in Storyville. At the same time that aristocratic white men used mixed race women to satisfy their own sexual urges, aristocratic white society economically, politically, and socially benefitted from the racialized ideologies that proliferated throughout the South.

When slavery ended in the South, the sexualization of mixed race and African American women only grew. Anthony Stanonis describes in his book how white men would travel to New Orleans, specifically to have physical relations with quadroon, octoroon, or Creole women, in part due to the scandalous and exotic nature of interracial sex.[145] Stanonis claims that activity in Storyville "perpetuated sex across the color line as a titillating adventure for white men who wanted to verify for themselves the beauty of the city's mixed race women."[146] Societal pressures from the newly formed Jim Crow laws assured that the black population of New Orleans would adhere to new social standards; however, the desire for mixed race and African women still existed throughout the city, a

[143] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 37-55.
[144] Kelleher Schafer, *Brothels, Depravity, and Abandoned Women,* 17-30.
[145] Stanonis, *Creating the Big Easy.* 8.
[146] Stanonis, *Creating the Big Easy,* 8.

fact that caused brothels and bordellos in Storyville to carefully select beautiful quadroon and octoroon women for employ, in order to capitalize on the sexual desires of white men.

Stories of Creoles in New Orleans were often published in the local newspapers, along with some popular literature of the time. One article in *The Daily Picayune* described the "peculiar complexion which denotes the presence of mixed blood" as it described an older woman who "might have been beautiful once, for her face, though worn and shriveled, showed soft lines and delicate curves."[147] Despite the lasting social stigma from the antebellum period, beauty was often associated with Creole women, as seen through publications throughout the late nineteenth century in *The Daily Picayune.* In October of 1894, *The Daily Picayune* published an article describing the charming qualities of New Orleans, a stark outlier among the numerous publications that portrayed the city as ill-fitted with depravity and disease. The article, entitled "The Crescent City: New Orleans Considered as a Charming Summer Resort," referred to the Creole women as enticing, as they wore "negligee gown[s]…a garment to be spoken of only in whispers."[148] Oftentimes when Creole women were mentioned in the paper they took on one of two particular stereotypes: the illicit seductress, or the untidy half-breed. Sometimes, these two descriptions would coincide with one another, revealing the dichotomous nature of attitudes towards mixed race women. Just a few lines below the description of the enticing negligee, the same article suggested that the same woman would have piles of blouses, illustrating the untidiness that often accompanied Creoles.[149] The stereotype that Creoles,

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[147] "Old Matthieu: The "Cross-Man" of Abita," *The Daily Picayune,* December 14, 1890, America's Historical Newspapers.
[148] "The Crescent City: New Orleans Considered as a Charming Summer Resort," *The Daily Picayune,* October 14, 1894, America's Historical Newspapers.
[149] "The Crescent City," *Times-Picayune.*

and also mixed race people in general, were untidy seeped into the general attitudes of the time and were farther widespread than the city of New Orleans.

In an article titled "The House Over the Water: A Wayside Tale of Panama", Creoles are described as having "the most hospitable hearts in all the world", yet several lines down, the same article states that "[Creole women] may be untidy" and uneducated but would "give you the mantilla off her head and neck".[150] The article holds two distinct attitudes towards Creoles, specifically Creole women: that they are angelic in their kindness but at the same time are unkempt and uneducated. Another article published in Baltimore, Maryland, titled "Some Queer Superstitions: Strange Beliefs that Prevail Among the Negroes and Creoles of Louisiana" described the "occult influences" and "superstitious negroes" of the South.[151] This particular article alludes to the more mysterious and nefarious qualities of Creoles and "negroes" as it describes Voodoo practices and superstitious acts popular with Creoles in Louisiana.[152] The Baltimore article holds a tone heavy with fear and discomfort with the possibility that Creoles in Louisiana are practicing supernatural dark magic. Despite negative attitudes of perceived untidiness and superstition held against the general Creole population, as described in newspaper publications, due to the imbedded racial stigmas of the time, Creole women were sought after by white men throughout the Southern United States, in tune with the stereotype of illicit seductress.

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[150] "The House Over the Water. A Wayside Tale of Panama," *The Times-Picayune,* August 7, 1904, America's Historical Newspapers; A mantilla refers to a silk or satin head-covering primarily worn by women of Spanish descent, including Creole women.
[151] "Some Queer Superstitions: Strange Beliefs that Prevail Among the Negroes and Creoles of Louisiana," *The Sun,* December 4, 1890, America's Historical Newspapers.
[152] "Some Queer Superstitions," *The Sun.*

Public opinions of Creoles in New Orleans were not limited to newspaper publications. One popular novelist, George Washington Cable, published novels and short stories in the later decades of the nineteenth century containing descriptions of everyday life in New Orleans in the nineteenth century. For example, Cable's *The Grandissimes,* a novel published in 1880, told the story of the Grandissime family and their experiences as a mixed race family in the early-nineteenth century. A familiar portrayal of class and race relations in New Orleans to readers, *The Grandissimes* exposed the horrors of slavery and the complications of living as a mixed-race individual.[153] George Cable's work often contained romantic plots of women finding love, while also vividly describing the multicultural impact of living in New Orleans, with the influence of Creole, Native American, African American, and immigrant cultures combining within the city. Similarly, another of Cable's works, *Madame Delphine*, published in 1881, described a case of miscegenation, in which a mixed race woman attempts to arrange the marriage of her daughter to a Creole elite.[154] Many of Cable's works pertained to the experiences of Creole individuals in Louisiana, illustrating a city full of racial diversity.[155] Through enveloping readers in stories of mixed race characters and romantic matches, Cable promoted a kind of integration among the different races of the South – namely between white and black Americans. A few years following the publication of *Madame Delphine*, Cable published a series of short stories confronting social change such as prison reform and racial equality, after which he was heavily criticized and effectively exiled to the North. In challenging the

[153] George W. Cable, forward by Suzanne Jones, *The Grandissimes* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1988).
[154] George W. Cable, *Old Creole Days* (1879; repr.:New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951).
[155] Creole refers to a person of mixed race, usually of European and black descent, in the Caribbean. In Louisiana, the term specifically adheres to those of mixed colonial French, African American, and Native American ancestry.

contemporary racial biases and laws, Cable promoted interracial relationships among New Orleanians, and Southerners in general, which was quite taboo in the nineteenth century, and Cable was ultimately punished for that. Although these works were fictive, critics of the stories remarked on the striking similarities of the details to reality.[156] After reading Cable's work, critics often responded negatively due to Cable's tendency to create favorable experiences for his non-white characters.[157]

Cable's works are particularly interesting due to the involvement of race as a primary undertone in his writing. Through the combination of different cultures and viewpoints, many of Cable's works took on a notion of racial equality which reflected heavily on the larger racial themes of New Orleans during this time period. At the time of publication, many southerners were opposed to Cable's work, due to the heavy racial undertones and positive outlook on interracial relations. During the time of publication, public and romantic interactions between different races were social violations, as exhibited through anti-miscegenation laws and media publications that applied negative views to non-white citizens. Originally published in *Scribner's Monthly*, a popular literary periodical of the late nineteenth century, many of Cable's stories, including "Madame Delphine," were widely read throughout the United States but particularly in the South.[158] Entranced with stories that displayed positive interactions across the color line, Cable's work challenged the conceived stereotypes concerning Creoles and interracial relationships. Despite the social and political upheaval surrounding race in the South, the positive tones and storylines of Cable's works gave a larger audience a different

[156] Philip Butcher, *George W. Cable* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc, 1962), 62.
[157] Butcher, *George W. Cable*, 33-35.
[158] Butcher, *George W. Cable.*

perspective on life within New Orleans, compared to the city's national reputation as a city filled with disease, illicit activity, and crime. In spite of the efforts of George Cable to describe New Orleans as a place of love and equality, this was a difficult feat due to all of the negative press, sex, murder, and corruption that ran rampant in New Orleans, Louisiana, which painted an entirely different view of racial regulations and socially acceptable interracial interactions.

Within the city's social and political dynamics, segregation and newly developed Jim Crow laws were sanctioned and regulated through the city's public ordinances. However, interracial relations in the city did not always abide by the racial ordinances imposed by local laws and standards. Particularly, prostitution and interracial sexual relationships within the city's red light district often ignored the racial ordinances – or functioned despite the regulations. While interracial relations between white men and mixed race women were popular in Storyville, there was a district-wide ban on black male patrons to the brothels and bordellos.[159] There were several instances of racial subjugation in Storyville, most prominently the fact that white men could fraternize with the employed women, usually quadroons or octoroons, yet black men were not allowed to interact with any of the employed women, unless they were employed by the madam as a servant. This in turn led to the creation of the aforementioned area of "Black Storyville" that existed several blocks away from the ordinance of Storyville in the uptown portion of New Orleans.[160] While white men were often invited or solicited to enjoy the sensual comforts of the district without regulation, black men were not afforded the same luxury and were confined to experiencing brothels and sexual relations with prostitutes in the singular

[159] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 137-139.
[160] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 139.

location outside of the official bounds of Storyville, which oftentimes were less-than establishments without all of the pizazz of main Storyville.[161] However, women of different races experienced Storyville differently. For the purposes of this analysis, focus will be put onto the experiences of the women employed in Storyville – the madams and the prostitutes, in particular two of Storyville's most notorious and competing brothel owners: Lulu White and Willie Piazza.

As Storyville developed in the late nineteenth century, brothels and saloons often advertised services provided by women of specific races, including Creole, quadroon, and octoroon. Along Basin and Canal Streets, specialized brothels, dancehalls, and saloons had been built following the Civil War, including the one previously owned by Kate Townsend prior to her death. Hers, like many others, catered to the desires of white men, which often meant fraternization with women of mixed race descent.[162] Townsend, like many of her successors, employed mixed race women, Creoles, quadroons, and octoroons, as prostitutes in order to capitalize on this desire. In addition to the women employed at these establishments, many of the madams and brothel proprietors were of mixed race, including two of the most prominent women in Storyville at the time of its creation, Lulu White and Willie Piazza.

Although her exact arrival in New Orleans is unknown, Lulu White quickly garnered attention as one of the most popular madams in the city in the late 1880s. Popular with the local newspapers as a mischievous criminal and vixen, Lulu White was frequently mentioned in the *Daily Picayune* throughout the 1880s and 1890s due to her connections with various crimes. Standing as the accused in many of the cases, Lulu was associated

[161] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 139.
[162] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 168.

with physical assaults in cases of shootings and stabbings, as well as petty theft and larceny in cases of robberies.[163] In many of the articles published on her crimes and arrests, Lulu White's race was consistently mentioned in a way that associated her race with the crime itself. Labeled a "negress" and "negro woman", mention of White's race in the articles seem to associate non-white citizens as destined criminals, as if her race directly affected her criminal status.[164]

The New Orleans police department often arrested White in connection to these various crimes, yet she was more-oft-than-not acquitted of the crimes and released back to her establishment of Mahogany Hall in Storyville. A mugshot taken of Lulu White in the 1910s displays White as a heavy-set woman with dark hair, styled in a short curly bob.[165] A woman approximately in her late forties at the time of the photograph, White had been arrested numerous times throughout her time in Storyville for multiple crimes including "operating a disorderly house," "selling liquor without a license," and "stabbing with intent to murder."[166] Her arrest records were made public, and several articles published in the *Times-Picayune* described Lulu as a woman not to be trifled with, including one that described her as "a female of immoral imposes."[167] Despite her claim to fame through various crimes, White also ran one of the most luxurious and popular brothels in Storyville,

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[163] "Revolver and Razor," *The Daily Picayune,* June 11, 1881, America's Historical Newspapers; "Misdeeds and Mishaps," *The Daily Picayune,* May 10, 1888, America's Historical Newspapers; "Thieves at Work: In A Negro Den," *The Daily Picayune,* May 24, 1888, America's Historical Newspapers.
[164] "Revolver and Razor," *The Daily Picayune;* "Charged with Larceny," *The Daily Picayune,* May 21, 1895, America's Historical Newspapers.
[165] "Arrest records," New Orleans Police Department, Lulu White, Documented 1910-1917, storyvilledistrictnola.com.
[166] "Arrest records," New Orleans Police Department, Lulu White.
[167] "Federal Grand Jury Indicts Lumberman for Trespass and Timber Cutting on Government Land," *The Times-Picayune*, November 5, 1909. America's Historical Newspapers.

located at 235 Basin Street, just a few blocks down from the ill-fated Kate Townsend's property.

Officially regarded as a parlor, Mahogany Hall was one of the most lavish saloons located within Storyville's confinements. A four-story building with windows facing Basin Street on each level, Mahogany Hall contained a number of individual parlors that served to entertain male patrons in a variety of ways, including gambling, alcohol, or dance shows.[168] Although Mahogany Hall was utilized both socially through dance shows and as a bar, the Hall was primarily utilized privately by prostitutes to cater to male clientele.[169] Upwards of 40 to 45 women were employed at Mahogany Hall at any given time, each of whom worked for Lulu White who was known throughout New Orleans to have had the most beautiful and desirable octoroon women under her employ.[170] Supplying patrons with the variety of unique services, Mahogany Hall's women worked as dancers as well as prostitutes, entertaining patrons in both sexual and nonsexual services. As many of the employed women were of mixed race, Mahogany Hall catered to the dichotomous desire of white men to interact intimately with non-white women. Despite standing social standards of miscegenation, the discretion offered within both Mahogany Hall and Storyville as a whole offered visiting men the opportunity to fulfil their fantasies within a legalized district.

Lulu White's involvement in Storyville contributed to the overall popularity of the district. Through her provision of a luxurious and lavish establishment that offered a variety of women and services, Mahogany Hall was a centerpiece to Storyville's overall success.

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[168] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon;* Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 138.
[169] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 190-193.
[170] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 190-191.

However, Lulu White was not the only madam in Storyville to cater to the wealthy, while male crowds that journeyed to Storyville for the same kind of experience. Her main competitor and rival, Willie Piazza, owned a bordello only a couple of blocks away from Mahogany Hall.

Little is known about Willie Piazza's life prior to her arrival in New Orleans in the mid-1890s. Historian Alecia P. Long chronicled Piazza's life in *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865 – 1920,* as she described Piazza's involvement in Storyville's development.[171] As one of the most influential brothel proprietors of Storyville, Piazza advertised her bordello as a place of luxury, where white men could sensually interact with mixed race women. At the height of its popularity, Willie Piazza's bordello was only rivaled by one other in Storyville: Mahogany Hall, owned by Lulu White. Both White and Piazza's establishments were high-end and catered to primarily white, male customers. Many similarities erupted between White's Mahogany Hall and Piazza's luxury bordello.

Most recognizable as a connection between the two women was that both of them were of mixed race, although it has been noted that Willie Piazza popularly passed herself off as white, not as mixed race.[172] In falsifying her racial identity, Willie Piazza took advantage of the racial ambiguity of the South. Racial notations such as mulatto or octoroon would lower a woman's social and economic standing, and by labeling herself as white, Piazza bypassed negative racial connotations of the turn of the century South. Despite their racial status, both women achieved higher social status in New Orleanian society due to their lavish establishments and their exploitation of the barrier of the color-line. Both

[171] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon*.
[172] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 135.

women's establishments advertised the services of mixed race women, specifically octoroon and quadroon women. In both establishments, the services of Creole women were also advertised in the same exotic sense as the other mixed race women, which catered to the desires of visiting white men. While Caucasian women were in the employ of both White and Piazza, both women's reputations were born out of their relationship with mixed race prostitutes and white patrons.

The importance of race was categorized in Storyville through many different avenues. Not only was race a prominent feature in the media's publications concerning Storyville, but it was also featured prominently throughout the districts own guidebooks that advertised various services, products, establishments, and women that could be found in the district. Blue Books were notoriously published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in New Orleans.[173] Originally, Blue Books began as a kind of advertisement for tourists to explore the different saloons, parlors, and shops that adorned the streets of Storyville. In addition to advertisements concerning locations for services or entertainment, Blue Books also advertised the women that worked in the establishments of Storyville. Advertisements in the books sometimes included photographs or drawings alongside descriptions of services, locations, or products. Oftentimes the Blue Books were sold in small corner markets or saloons, such as Lulu White's, to promote the madams and their prostitutes that resided in the district.[174] Throughout Storyville and the nearby French

[173] Historian Emily Epstein Landau notes that "the term 'Blue Book' itself registered in several different ways: any official colonial or governmental publication is commonly called a 'blue book'; French tourist guides were "Guides Bleus"; and 'the blue book' was a list of the most prominent members of society, featuring young debutantes." Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 112.
[174] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 111-114.

Quarter, Blue Books were circulated amongst merchants and tourists as the red-light district gained popularity throughout New Orleans and the South.[175]

Adorned with rather innocuous covers, the Blue Books served as miniature guidebooks to Storyville, with the internal contents much more scandalous: listing madams, prostitutes, locations, and products found within Storyville. Historian Emily Epstein Landau points out that in the lists of prostitutes in Blue Books, the race of the woman would be noted next to their advertisement, in which a "W" stood for white, a "C" stood for colored, and an "Oct." meant an octoroon.[176] Many of the Bluebooks offered photographs or illustrations of the women or services offered in Storyville. In one image of Rita Walker, a known prostitute and dancer in Storyville, she is shown wearing an intricately decorated outfit, adorned with jewels, beads, and tassels.[177] The outfit, made up of a bra-like top and mid-thigh length skirt, bares her mid-drift, chest, arms, and legs. While her breasts are covered, the position of her body is posed suggestively, accentuating her chest, bosom, and bare navel. The image exudes luxury – a key feature of brothels in Storyville. Describing her as "The Oriental Danseuse," the advertisement stated that she was a guest of Bertha Weinthal, a madam who ran an establishment at 311 North Basin Street, within Storyville's geographic limits.[178] By labeling her as the "Oriental Danseuse,"

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[175] Pamela D. Arceneaux, *Guidebooks to Sin: The Blue Books of Storyville, New Orleans* (New Orleans: The Historic New Orleans Collection, 2017). *Guidebooks to Sin* is the only scholarly work that has a pure focus on the Storyville Blue Books, including a large variety of reproductions, photographs, and illustrations that were originally found in the publications. It is important to note that Blue Books were not directly accessible for the purpose of this research and thus all reference to the Blue Books is done so through *Guidebooks to Sin,* and thus is inherently biased based on that publication's choices for which information and illustrations to include and which to omit.

[176] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 111.

[177] Billy Struve, "Blue Book," 1913 – 1915. 10th ed., as accessed through *Guidebooks to Sin: The Blue Books of Storyville, New Orleans* by Pamela D. Arceneaux, 103.

[178] A danseuse refers to a female ballet dancer ; Struve, "Blue Book," 10th ed., as accessed through *Guidebooks to Sin,* 103.

the pamphlet is connecting a sense of exoticism with the image of Rita Walker. This orientalism is accentuated through the erotic and exotic nature of her outfit, along with the racial ambiguity of her person. The association of orientalism with Rita Walker as a dancer, and prostitute in Storyville, furthers the emphasis placed on race in promoting scandalous sexual and sensual relations across the color line. In addition to describing her as a danseuse, the advertisement makes a somewhat cheeky remark in describing her movements as "marvelous dances."[179] On the page of the Blue Book that is across from her image, Bertha Weinthal's brothel is advertised as having "pretty women, good times, and sociability."[180] Juxtaposed with the inviting image of Rita Walker, the association between the two pages was undoubtedly a purposeful notion. The advertisement of a woman and her body alongside an advertisement for a brothel, of which she was a guest, was a tactic used throughout the Blue Books in order to advertise the sex industry in Storyville.

Through the city's main publication, *The Daily Picayune,* and the extensive distribution of Blue Books throughout New Orleans, Storyville's reputation as a place that blurred the racial lines became a part of its national recognition, and its overt popularity at the turn into the twentieth century. Due to national coverage of the district, often involving headlines of pleasure and scandal, Storyville garnered national attention as a destination for many. In those headlines, race played an integral role in attracting visitors to the district.

Overall, race played an important role in a woman's success and their apparent moral standards, particularly in New Orleans. Race determined levels of respectability, sexualization, and desirability, as displayed by the sexualization and commercialization of

[179] Struve, "Blue Book," 10th ed., as accessed through *Guidebooks to Sin,* 103.
[180] Struve, "Blue Book," 10th ed., as accessed through *Guidebooks to Sin,* 103.

interracial sex in Storyville. As demonstrated through the orientalist quality of Bluebook advertisements and the exoticism surrounding octoroon and Creole women during Storyville's existence, the race of a woman in sex work determined her value. Alternatively, the racialized view of women that worked in Storyville also contributed to the traditional and idealized role of the white woman in the nineteenth century. Through dramatizing and sexualizing specifically non-white women, the men that frequented Storyville set racialized standards for middle-class and elite white women. The stipulation of race was integral in the development and sustainability of Storyville, as the district depended on the exotic quality of interracial sexual encounters in order to economically thrive. Additionally, the combination of sexual and racial stigmas contributed heavily towards Southern and American ideals of morality, sin, and respectability.

The existence and success of Storyville demonstrated the scandalous quality of race and promiscuity across the color line, which madams and proprietors exploited and benefitted from. However, Storyville's existence only lasted a mere two decades due to government interference and a growing presence of the pressure to reform the moral standards of America's cities. Twenty years after it was consecrated, Storyville was dissolved seemingly overnight in November 1917.

Chapter Three:

"Red Lights Go Out": Storyville Says Goodbye

As the clock struck midnight the night of November 12, 1917, the red light district of Storyville was official closed and dismantled by local government. Word of the closure quickly spread throughout the United States, as the once famed red-light district left thousands of women destitute and out of work. Due to the development of a nearby military base, the government ordered the closure of the district in order to prevent military men from frequenting the nearby brothels and fraternizing with known prostitutes, putting themselves and the reputation of the military at risk due to the association with immorality, venereal disease, and other illicit activities. Although the closure of Storyville meant the technical end to the famed red-light district, the city's development continued to grow and so bloomed the beginning of New Orleans' modern tourist attraction. With the dissolution of the district came a series of changing circumstances for the women who once inhabited the area, as well as for the geographic location itself. In the years following the termination of the district, New Orleans underwent a series of construction changes that altered the city blocks where Storyville once stood, destroying the physical history of the district. Additionally, with the destruction of the city blocks and once luxurious brothels and dancehalls came the relocation and fall of some of Storyville's most notorious inhabitants, including Willie Piazza and Lulu White. Over the course of the twentieth century, the memory of Storyville lived on through other avenues of New Orleans culture; however, much of the remembrance of the district lies in the exploitation and misremembrance of the women that once lived there.

With a strengthening interest in World War I, the United States' Navy ordered the creation of a new naval base in New Orleans.[181] Under naval regulations, prostitution could not be regulated within five miles of a base.[182] Storyville's location mere city blocks away from the port where the military base was sanctioned meant that the district would have to go. Formally, the U.S. Navy ordered it was within the interest of public health that sailors and soldiers not frequent areas of prostitution in order to maintain a strong moral compass, which would not have been attainable with the existence of Storyville.[183] These ideas were expressed in a two-piece consecutive installment published by *The Times-Picayune* mere days before the ordinance closing Storyville took hold. Written as a series of letters by a Mr. Frederic J. Haskin, "Social Hygiene and the War" argued for the dissolution of vice in major cities across the United States. Specifically focused on the topic of public health, Haskin wrote:

> The prevalence of venereal diseases has long been a world problem in hygiene, the solution of which is made exceedingly difficult by prudery and politics. From a scientific viewpoint, these diseases constitute the one great group of communicable maladies against which civilized society has built no organized defense.[184]

Two paragraphs later, Haskin continued:

> The devastating effect of venereal disease upon the efficiency of armies has been terribly demonstrated in Europe during the present war. Although exact figures are not available, it is stated on good authority that one of the powers engaged had more soldiers incapacitated by these diseases than by the casualties of battle during the early stages of the war. Another reliable report is that seventy thousand cases of

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[181] "Social Hygiene and The War," *The Times-Picayune*, November 9, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers; "Social Hygiene and the War" was a two piece consecutive installment published by *The Times-Picayune* on November 9 and 10 to bring attention to the outstanding presence of vice in the city and the government's policy concerning military camps in proximity to legalized vice districts. The particular article cited here acts as a disclaimer to the two installments of "Social Hygiene and The War" stating that while the topic is generally kept out of publications, the special circumstance of war has made it impossible for the publication to avoid the topic any longer.

[182] "Social Hygiene and The War I: A Revolutionary Policy," *The Times-Picayune,* November 9, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.

[183] "Social Hygiene and The War I: A Revolutionary Policy," *The Times-Picayune.*

[184] "Social Hygiene and The War I: A Revolutionary Policy," *The Times-Picayune.*

> venereal disease existed at one time in one of the Allied armies, while 40 percent of the some of the Entente regiments were infected.[185]

With such an emphasis on the perceived threat of venereal disease, Haskin argued for the closure of all legalized vice districts in the nation due to the rapid spread of syphilis and gonorrhea.[186] In his second installment of "Social Hygiene and The War," Haskin also associated vice districts with alcoholism and bootlegging, threatening the moral stance of military men. "Bootlegging was a thriving business, in spite of the fact that the state was dry, and soldiers were found to be acting as agents for the bootlegger," wrote Haskin, making clear association between brothels and bootlegging, later stating in the paragraph that evidence of bootlegging was found in a popular "house of prostitution."[187] The claim that military personnel should have a strong moral compass was challenged by the temptation of the active sex industry in New Orleans, along with the heavy presence of alcohol consumption and gambling within the district – two other sources of immoral quarrels. Although New Orleans was never stated in Haskin's publication in *The Times-Picayune,* anyone familiar with the city would recognize his description found in the second installment:

> Thus the most important success of the closing, by ordinance, just about to become effective, of the segregated district in a great Southern city. This segregated district was one of the last large ones remaining in the United States. It was provided by a very old city ordinance and strongly supported by local political influence. More than a thousand women live in this district, which was the size of a small village. It published an annual "blue book," in which all of these women were listed, together with their portraits and a description of their charms. Prostitution was here literally a leading industry, and the segregated district, with its noise and color, its strange

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[185] "Social Hygiene and The War I: A Revolutionary Policy," *The Times-Picayune.*
[186] "Social Hygiene and The War I: A Revolutionary Policy," *The Times-Picayune.*
[187] "Social Hygiene and The War II: What the Cities Have Done," *The Times-Picayune,* November 10, 1917. America's Historical Newspapers.

> aggregation of many races, its air of mysterious and expensive vice, was one of the show places of the city.[188]

In Haskin's publication, Storyville is referred to in detail, but never by name. However, the recognizable features mentioned in his description were unmistakable. The "very old city ordinance" refers to the 1897 law which created the "segregated district."[189] By referring to Storyville as a segregated district instead of by name, Haskin distanced himself from the immoral qualities of the district, as well as protecting New Orleans from public shame, as he simply referred to the city as "a great Southern city."[190] Haskin's reference to a "strange aggregation of many races" also is a recognizable feature of New Orleans due to the large populations of non-white people that resided in the city.[191] The description of a "strange aggregation of many races" also alludes to the media's focus on race and racial boundaries, and by including that description in his piece on social hygiene, Haskin attributed the collection of different races within Storyville with something that needs to be cleaned, which maintained the racially motivated views of the time.[192] New Orleans had received decades worth of negative press, and to display the immoral qualities of the city's 'social hygiene' would only worsen public opinion of the city. Additionally, one of the most recognizable features of the publication that labels Storyville as the segregated district is the mention of the "blue books" that listed descriptions of women and "their charms."[193]

Due to the Blue Books prominence in Storyville and the local economy, they would have been easily recognizable and associated with the restricted district, even if Storyville was not explicitly stated. For Haskin to explicitly mention Blue Books in his "Social

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[188] "Social Hygiene and The War II: What the Cities Have Done," *The Times-Picayune.*
[189] "Social Hygiene and The War II: What the Cities Have Done," *The Times-Picayune.*
[190] "Social Hygiene and The War II: What the Cities Have Done," *The Times-Picayune.*
[191] "Social Hygiene and The War II: What the Cities Have Done," *The Times-Picayune.*
[192] "Social Hygiene and The War II: What the Cities Have Done," *The Times-Picayune.*
[193] "Social Hygiene and The War II: What the Cities Have Done," *The Times-Picayune.*

Hygiene and the War" series, it was a direct reference to Storyville and the greater area of New Orleans. In conjunction with the mention of Blue Books with the comment on the strange aggregation of race, Haskin makes a distinct connection between the racially muddled New Orleans and the immorality of a designated red-light district and its inhabitants.

While never actually naming New Orleans as the city of vice depicted in his articles, people recognized the description and claimed it "heralded the city's shame all over the land."[194] Seemingly, in a reaction to the Haskin publications, Miss Joan Gordon claimed that while Haskin did not name New Orleans as the city he was referring to, his description was unmistakable as being any other city than New Orleans, and that amid the local suffrage movement, Haskin had smattered the shame of the city "across the length and breadth of the United States."[195] In her reaction to Haskin's publication, Joan Gordon was highly concerned with the portrayal of New Orleans on a national level amidst the country's suffrage movement. Specifically since Haskin's commentary was apparently released following great victory for suffragists in New York. Haskin's attention to the amount of vice within New Orleans threatened the success of suffragists in the city, as his commentary highlighted the perceived social and moral failure of women in the South. Gordon's reaction to the Haskin publications was concerned with the overall appearance of New Orleans in the media, and if that negative portrayal would prohibit the success and victory of Southern suffragists; specifically, because Joan Gordon and other local

[194] "SAYS CITY'S SHAME HAS BEEN HERALDED ALL OVER THE LAND: Miss Gordon Calls Era Club's Attention to the Haskins' Vice Letters," *The Times-Picayune,* November 11, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.
[195] "SAYS CITY'S SHAME HAS BEEN HERALDED ALL OVER THE LAND," *The Times-Picayune.*

suffragists had taken a public stance against vice, and Haskin's commentary brought additional, unwanted attention to the subject.

Haskin's dramatic representation of the district filled with diseased women and illegal bootlegging added to the worsening perception of New Orleans, and in particular Storyville. In Shreveport, Louisiana, vice was increasingly berated as "the conscience of the manhood of Shreveport is rising above the sordid indifference which has permitted to grow up here a leperous spot, which has sent its poisonous virus over the city and even beyond."[196] In a different newspaper out of Shreveport, Louisiana, the "suppression of vice" is called for as part of a "comprehensive social hygiene program."[197] Both of these articles suggest a dramatic increase in the concern for vice within cities, particularly with the moral and social connotations of vice districts. Apprehension concerning the growth and spread of vice, especially during a time of war, caused locals to reevaluate their societal view of vice, going so far as to say:

> To abolish the restricted districts in the cities of the United States is just as much of a necessary war measure as the conservation of food or the mobilization of our industries. The question before us here in Shreveport is: Shall we clean up or be cleaned up?[198]

Located approximately three hundred miles away, Shreveport's growing concern for the elimination of vice closely relates to the New Orleans battle with the same moral issues. The presence of war in American society had caused Americans to enter a new phase of moral reform, specifically targeting vice as it could taint the success of military forces and

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[196] "No Contract with Vice," *Shreveport Journal* republished in *The Times-Picayune,* November 11, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.
[197] "Suppression of Vice," *Shreveport Times* republished in *The Times-Picayune,* November 14, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.
[198] "Suppression of Vice," *Shreveport Times* republished in *The Times-Picayune.*

war efforts at home.[199] As New Orleans and nearby locales called for social reform in the days prior to Storyville's closing, issues of morality, beyond the morality of soldiers, were made known, but not contested.

Thirty days prior to Storyville's dissolution, the women of the district were informed of the impending ordinance and told they would have to either leave the district or remain but no longer offer their services as prostitutes or madams.[200] Gertrude G. Dix challenged the closing of the district, claiming that the new ordinance was unconstitutional due to the severe loss of property and damages that she would suffer if the ordinance were to take place. A judge declared that it was both constitutional and legal within the police's power to enforce.[201] The judge deemed that "all who wished to remain were given that privilege, under the condition that the business they were in be discontinued."[202] As the courts determined that it was within the power of the police to enforce the closure of the district, it was made clear that the women would be removed if they earned their "livelihood in an illegitimate manner, but they will not be molested if they earn their living in a proper way."[203] *The Times-Picayune* determined, in conjunction with the judge's ruling and police enforcement, that "during the past two weeks the majority of the women moved to other places, but there are a number who believed that there was still a change to continue."[204] Clinging to the hope that the district would not be destroyed, a stark few women remained in Storyville after its closure, but not for a lack of trying.

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[199] Anthony J. Stanonis, *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism: 1918 – 1945* (Athens: Georgia University Press, 2006), 106-120.
[200] "COURT REFUSES TO ENJOIN DISTRICT CLOSING: Judge King Says Ordinance is Within Police Power of the City," *The Times-Picayune,* November 13, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.
[201] "COURT REFUSES TO ENJOIN DISTRICT CLOSING," *The Times-Picayune.*
[202] "COURT REFUSES TO ENJOIN DISTRICT CLOSING," *The Times-Picayune*.
[203] "COURT REFUSES TO ENJOIN DISTRICT CLOSING," *The Times-Picayune.*
[204] "COURT REFUSES TO ENJOIN DISTRICT CLOSING," *The Times-Picayune.*

A couple of weeks prior, a group of women from the Federation of Women's Clubs inquired on how to help the women involved in the closure of Storyville.[205] Pertaining to the different patriotic duties of women within the Federation of Women's Clubs, women expressed patriotism through food rationing, saving sugar, and boasting on their sons' enlistment in the war effort. Connected once again with the American war effort, women were concerned for the wellbeing of the women displaced by the closure of the district. Another woman, Mrs. William Lamb "asked what the clubwomen intended to do for the women who might need help when the restricted district was closed in accordance with the ordinance."[206] Mrs. Lamb was particularly concerned with the fact that the removal of the women may render many homeless. The women of the Federation of Women's Clubs expressed concern and volunteered themselves to help their community in an effort to display patriotism during a time of war. Evidenced by months of public conversation concerning the morality of the city, tied together with prohibition and vice, New Orleans' society approached its tipping point concerning the existence of Storyville and presence of prostitution in the city.

Months before the government closed the district, in January 1917, an article in *The Times-Picayune* determined that Storyville inhabitants had faced unfair landlordism and changes must be made in order to protect the district. Citing individual residences labeled as "cribs", the article designated the closing of several Storyville residents in order for the

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[205] "PARKER'S APPLEALS FOR FOOD SAVING STIR CLUBWOMEN: First and Second Districts of Federation Ask Change of Convention Date," *The Times-Picayune.* November 1, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.

[206] "PARKER'S APPLEALS FOR FOOD SAVING STIR CLUBWOMEN," *The Times-Picayune,* November 1, 1917.

city to relocate inhabitants of the district.[207] Noted as a "crusade" to protect Storyville, the article describes the district as being "scattered with vice," and attempts to argue that the price for the properties at auction would not hold much more than the comparative income from the current tenants' rent payments.[208] Issues surrounding Storyville's existence in the growing city of New Orleans was a prevalent topic of interest in the months preceding the district's official closure in November 1917.

Between the months of January and November, Storyville was a contested subject, as displayed through publications in the city's main newspaper, *The Times-Picayune.* Over the span of eleven months, the "restricted district" was mentioned nearly two hundred times.[209] Occasionally the articles would be in reference to the development of the war and the nearby naval base; however, the main topic of conversation was moral standards and the efforts to 'clean' the city.

Both people residing in and outside of the city called for reform of the vice district. Calls to "clean up" the city were not uncommon in *The Times-Picayune,* particularly in the "Letters from the people" column, in which subscribers could publish their own thoughts concerning a multitude of social, political, and economic issues. In these columns, morality took center stage. Even in the years prior to Storyville's dissolution, pleas from common people were oft published in this column. One from June 1914 desperately calls for New Orleans to "eliminate the restricted district of our city!"[210] Later, in January of 1917, "A

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[207] "CITY WILL CONTROL SEGREGATED AREA UNDER NEW SYSTEM: Jackal Landlordism is to Be Abolished and Storyville to Be Protected," *The Times-Picayune,* January 24, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.
[208] "CITY WILL CONTROL SEGREGATED AREA UNDER NEW SYSTEM," *The Times-Picayune.*
[209] Through an intensive search of *The Times-Picayune* in America's Historical Newspapers, articles referring to Storyville, the 'restricted district', and New Orleans' 'vice district' were published quite often, referring to the moral quarrel within the city. The exact number of articles referring to Storyville over this time period is an estimation, due to the nature of the search.
[210] "Letters From the People," *The Times-Picayune,* June 8, 1914, America's Historical Newspapers.

'Clean-Up' Suggestion" from a writer in Biloxi, Mississippi, boasts that they "are glad to notice the authorities are compelling the women of the underworld to move back into the restricted district," referring to the recent growth of brothels and prostitution in the city.[211] In a different mention of "the clean-up", a writer from Tulsa, Oklahoma, wrote in to *The Times-Picayune* stating that "where there is no 'restricted district', the district extended to anywhere and any place within the corporate limits of said city or town. While admitting that New Orleans is not a resting place for angels, it is far from the worst of places."[212] This particular article both rejoices in the reform of the city, while also appreciating the existence of the red-light district as a means to contain the illicit activities within the city, as it noted that cities without a designated area for them tend to be overcome with vice throughout its limits.

Throughout the course of 1917, issues of morality were present when the restricted district was mentioned in the papers. In April, another Mississippian wrote to *The Times-Picayune* and plainly stated that "[they] recommend the total abolition of the restricted district and providing for the unfortunate inmates thereof, as is done for the insane, deaf, blind and poor, until they can saved to themselves, and redeemed to a life of righteousness."[213] By associating the women of the district with people who possess mental and physical disabilities, the author is directly referencing the inability of these women to conform to traditional society, if not by choice, but by some kind of divine retribution due to their immorality. The association between prostitutes and those with physical and mental disabilities suggests a physical or mental defect on behalf of the women employed in

[211] "A 'Clean-Up' Suggestion," *The Times-Picayune,* January 24, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.
[212] "The Clean-Up," *The Times-Picayune,* February 5, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.
[213] "Commend Orleans Reforms," *The Times-Picayune,* April 22, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.

Storyville, and voids the women's personal choices, economic circumstances, or class affiliation. Instead, prostitution is aligned with physical defects, as if it is an unpreventable condition of life. Additionally, the heavy religious overtones of the mentioned 'life of righteousness' deepens the act of prostitution and sex work to sin.

While many of the articles focus on the morality of the district itself and the women who inhabited it, there are a couple that stand out as criticizing the men that frequented the district. Citing a recent court case in which a public official, a mayor, voted against the abolishment of the district, *The Times-Picayune* noted that "there is but one of two reasons why men want to keep it (the restricted district) going. One is to make money. The other is that vile men may gratify their hellish lusts."[214] The article points out the mayor was "the self-constituted champion of the red light, 'red light,' according to the court, meaning the restricted district."[215] It is inferred by his position of power and protection of the district, that the mayor was a white man. While the article does not reference the race of the mayor in question, it does mention the races of individuals involved in other court cases described, most notably black citizens. In the case discussed prior to the mayor's involvement with the restricted district, a "small negro boy" was killed.[216] The emphasis on race in the case of the death of a small boy suggests that race still factored heavily into public perception of crime. As previously noted in Frederic Haskin's "Social Hygiene and the War", race played an integral role in Storyville's existence, particularly its "strange aggregation of many races."[217] Knowing that Storyville was primarily composed of mixed race women,

[214] "SUPREME TRIBUNAL FIXES DEATH UPON SLAYER OF SHERIFF: Public Officials Not Libeled by Criticism," *The Times-Picayune*, February 13, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.
[215] "SUPREME TRIBUNAL FIXES DEATH UPON SLAYER OF SHERIFF," *The Times-Picayune.*
[216] "SUPREME TRIBUNAL FIXES DEATH UPON SLAYER OF SHERIFF," *The Times-Picayune.*
[217] "Social Hygiene and The War II: What the Cities Have Done," *The Times-Picayune.*

the aforementioned mayor's involvement in protecting the district suggests a protection of the fraternization over the color line. By associating men, particularly powerful white men, that go into the district with having insatiable lust for these women, *The Times-Picayune* aimed the conscious of morality at the district itself, its inhabitants, and its primary customers.

Through months of residents and non-residents pleading for moral reform, with some pushback from New Orleans locals, the ordinance that closed Storyville took effect in mid-November. Despite local attempts to protect the district and its residents, Storyville was ordered to close, leaving hundreds of women in the district without official work. The day following the district's dissolution, newspapers across the country published news of the fall of the red light district. In nearby Macon, Georgia, *The Macon Daily Telegraph* declared that "Storyville is no more", which established that the famed red light district had officially closed.[218] The article directly cites the involvement of the Navy department in the closure of the district: "New Orleans' legalized vice district has been commonly known for years, officially went out of existence at midnight tonight, when an ordinance passed by the City Commission Council at the request of the Navy department, became effective."[219] The abrupt closure, according to *The Macon Daily Telegraph,* left "approximately 750 women…in the section", with another "200 [that had] left the city or moved to other quarters."[220] Although the precise number of women in the district is not known, there are several discrepancies in newspaper publications that place the number of evacuated women in the hundreds to thousands.

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[218] "'STORYVILLE' IS NO MORE: New Orleans' Notorious Vice District is Put Out of Existence," *The Macon Daily Telegraph*, November 13, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.
[219] "'STORYVILLE' IS NO MORE," *The Macon Daily Telegraph.*
[220] "'STORYVILLE' IS NO MORE," *The Macon Daily Telegraph.*

While *The Macon Daily Telegraph* maintained a more modest estimation of 200 women that already left the district, Iowa's *The Daily Gate City* published that "two thousand woman are estimated today already to have left the city."[221] The remark of two-thousand women is not unique to the Iowa publication. The *Evening Capital News* out of Boise, Idaho, also stated that two-thousand woman had left the district after the "ordinance…passed out of existence at midnight."[222] In a clever play on words, *The Topeka State Journal* out of Topeka, Kansas, published "Red Lights Go Out" the day following the district's closure, reporting that "luxurious resorts and hotels alike were closed at 12 – at the request of the navy department."[223] The "luxurious resorts and hotels" probably referred to establishments such as Lulu White's Mahogany Hall which flaunted material luxury within its walls. However, it is interesting that *The Topeka State Journal* choose to highlight the closing of the luxurious establishments rather than the common saloons, brothels, and dancehalls that were prominent within Storyville. Perhaps in an effort to upscale the district, the publication shifted focus away from vice and towards the loss of luxury. Publications concerning Storyville, even prior to the official designation of the district, usually were associated with material wealth. This trend is particularly noticeable in the 1880s when Kate Townsend was brutally murdered in her establishment and most of the articles published that detailed her death also had some mention of her wealth, possessions, or monetary estate. The long-lasting association between Storyville and luxury reveals a deeply materialistic aspect of Storyville's culture. The fascination and

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[221] "Storyville Closed Up," *The Daily Gate City and Constitution-Democrat,* November 13, 1917, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers.
[222] "Restricted District at New Orleans Closed," *Evening Capital News,* November 13, 1917, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers.
[223] "'RED LIGHTS' GO OUT: 2,000 Women leave District as Luxurious Resorts Are Closed," *The Topeka State Journal,* November 13,1917, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers.

obsession with portraying a life of luxury was deeply rooted in how madams such as Lulu White and Willie Piazza ran their establishments and also in the expectations of the district as portrayed in the Blue Book publications. Advertisements for alcohol, cigars, and women deepened the connection between a life of pleasure and luxury and the culture of Storyville. This life of pleasure and luxury also contributed to the culture of sin that engulfed Storyville, as lust, greed, and gluttony were physically displayed by the establishments, as noted by the numerous contemporary publications that mention the material wealth of the district.

As Storyville circled the drain in 1917, the notorious women that ran the district attempted to make a stand several months before that ordinance took hold. Both Lulu White and Willie Piazza took claims to court, arguing the ordinance removing them from the district was unconstitutional. First, Lulu White declared the "ordinance interferes with her vested rights" as a property owner, citing the cost of both her building and furnishings.[224] In a similar fashion, Willie Piazza also took her claims to court, which *The Times-Picayune* noted the following day. Piazza also noted that removal from the district was unconstitutional, due to her property rights and ownership in the district.[225] Both women of color, White and Piazza each won those lawsuits in March 1917; however, that would not prevent the loss of their establishments and way of life several months later.

Following the closure of Storyville, Lulu White's grand Mahogany Hall was forced to close under the ordinance that disbanded prostitution in the city. Lulu White's Mahogany Hall had flourished in the 1890s through 1910s; however, the Hall lost its prior reputation

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[224] "LULU WHITE ASKS INJUNCTION," *The Times-Picayune,* March 2, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.
[225] "SEEKS TO ENJOIN AUTHORITIES: Woman in Restricted District Objects to Police Order for Her Removal," *The Times-Picayune,* March 4, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers.

and was forcibly closed by the local government. Articles published in *The Times-Picayune* in 1917 and 1918 listed the Hall's luxurious furnishings up for auction.[226] Advertised as "the sale of the year," Mahogany Hall's property auction listed "diamonds, mirrors, pianos…furniture, carpets, and other household effects in large quantities estimated to have cost above $100,000.00."[227] The article advertised an auction of Lulu White's trinkets, including "crystal chandeliers, music boxes … and costly ornaments in China and Bronze."[228] Expensive items such as jewelry, "valued at about $25,000" and "parlor sets costing as high as $1500" were also advertised as a part of the auction.[229] Lulu White's establishment had been closed approximately one year before the auction took place.

Known during its peak as a house of luxury, Lulu White's Mahogany Hall displayed its standards clearly through its ornamentation. Decorated with extravagant chandeliers and lush furnishings, the Hall supposedly had marble interior which displayed its luxury prominently.[230] In a photograph taken in the early twentieth century of Mahogany Hall's interior, a contemporary fireplace accompanied by two wing-back upholstered chairs are shown in the background while, in the foreground there appears to be three or four fanciful planters or statuettes that adorn the entryway.[231] The lavishness of the interior of the Hall spoke to Lulu White's dedication to provide the best of the best for her customers. From the photograph, many of the luxurious furnishings featured were probably

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[226] "ATTENTION FURNITURE BUYERS---THE SALE OF THE YEAR!," *The Times-Picayune,* December 18, 1918, America's Historical Newspapers.
[227] "ATTENTION FURNITURE BUYERS---THE SALE OF THE YEAR!," *The Times-Picayune.*
[228] "ATTENTION FURNITURE BUYERS---THE SALE OF THE YEAR!," *The Times-Picayune.*
[229] "ATTENTION FURNITURE BUYERS---THE SALE OF THE YEAR!," *The Times-Picayune.*
[230] "Souvenir Booklet – The New Mahogany Hall", Storyville, New Orleans, http://www.storyvilledistrictnola.com/
[231] "Souvenir Booklet – The New Mahogany Hall", Storyville, New Orleans.

sold following the closure of the district and subsequent auction of the property's furnishings.

At the time of its construction, Mahogany Hall reportedly cost Lulu White approximately $40,000 in materials and labor.[232] However by the end of its existence as a brothel in Storyville, the Hall was sold for approximately $11,000, a loss of approximately a million dollars by today's standards.[233] Many of the accompanying brothels and parlors were also shut down abruptly, with the *Times-Picayune* advertising a liquidation of assets. Artwork, carpets, furniture, and household goods were sold quickly in 1918 from Mahogany Hall and surrounding locations as Storyville's establishments were forcibly closed or converted. The publications surrounding the closing of Storyville sensationalized the luxury that once thrived in the district, similar to how media portrayed Kate Townsend and her establishment following her death. Both the articles surrounding Townsend's murder and those concerning the closure of the district have an intent focus on monetary value and the lavish lifestyle supported in the area. In many articles concerning her death, Townsend's financial value was associated with her notoriety, stating that "she had amassed a fortune at her nefarious occupation."[234] The association between Townsend and her wealth was similar to how Storyville was associated with lush furnishings and expensive décor. Additionally, both events were heavily published about both in and outside of the city of New Orleans, causing national sensationalism and dramatization. In

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[232] "Souvenir Booklet – The New Mahogany Hall", Storyville, New Orleans.

[233] "Souvenir Booklet – The New Mahogany Hall", Storyville, New Orleans. ; At the time of Mahogany Hall's original construction, estimated in the late 1890s, $40,000 would equate to approximately $1,260,000.00 in the year 2020, as opposed to the value when sold of $11,000 which would equate to approximately $219,000.00 in the year 2020. Meaning that Mahogany Hall was sold for a loss of almost a million dollars by today's monetary values.

[234] "A Dreadful End. Treville B. Sykes Murders His Mistress," *The Galveston Weekly News,* November 8, 1883, America's Historical Newspapers.

the case of Kate Townsend, both her murder and her financial assets were sensationalized, while Storyville's closure was dramatized as a loss of luxury, an unfortunate casualty of America's involvement in World War I. Sensationalism engulfed New Orleans through tales of murder and vice. While Storyville was a financial gateway for many women such as Lulu White and Willie Piazza, both of whom possessed monetary wealth and luxurious lifestyles, it also possessed key characteristics which guaranteed a sensationalized media perspective at the time of its closure: sex, alcohol, and gambling.

After Storyville's closure and Mahogany Hall's possessions auctioned off to the public, Mahogany Hall's neighboring establishment, Lulu White's Saloon, which had been listed as a liquor establishment, was converted into a soft drink bar after Storyville's closure due to the upcoming regulations of Prohibition.[235] The Saloon continued to operate under the management of Lulu White throughout the 1920s despite the loss of Storyville and its legal protection. Historian Emily Epstein Landau notes that Lulu White was arrested several times throughout the 1920s for continuing to operate a brothel out of the Saloon and for selling liquor during Prohibition.[236] Despite the official closing of the district and the loss of legal protection, prostitution and brothels continued to operate throughout the city as a part of New Orleans' active culture, although it had moved underground.[237]

Following its closure, the neighborhood that was once Storyville served more as a source of entertainment and became popular for dance halls and speakeasies as the Great Depression loomed over the city. As the 1930s came along, many of the buildings and properties along Basin and Canal Streets had fallen into disrepair, with crumbling walls

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[235] "Souvenir Booklet – The New Mahogany Hall", Storyville, New Orleans.
[236] Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 194-197.
[237] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 197.

and structural issues. By the mid-1930s, many of Storyville's former establishments were demolished in order to make way for the construction of the Iberville Projects. Located where Storyville stood, the Iberville Projects were a part of the New Deal era politics that attempted to revitalize the city.[238] Created in an effort to supply affordable public housing to New Orleans, the Iberville Projects were a series of apartment-like structures with housing for hundreds of residents. The construction of the Iberville Projects meant the ultimate destruction of the buildings that were once a part of Storyville. With many of the buildings already closed or in disarray, the demolition of the former Storyville neighborhoods was swift and occurred over the span of a couple of years in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[239] After the demolition of Storyville's once famed brothels and parlors, local government attempted to reclaim the district with the Iberville Projects, but in doing so, the city lost a vital element of its rich and intimate history. With the swift destruction of what was once Storyville, New Orleans culture was indubitably altered.

The overnight order on November 13, 1917, to forcibly close Storyville drastically changed the culture and memory of New Orleans. The once defining characteristics of the city disappeared seemingly overnight as city government closed brothels, auctioned off the brothel's signature furnishings, and transplanted the women who resided in the area within weeks of the closure. In an effort to reclaim the city from rampant prostitution, city government dissolved the red-light district in order to provide moral and social reform. After twenty years of a regulated sex industry, New Orleans' sexual culture was addressed and effectively changed. While some may argue that twenty-first century New Orleans maintains a culture built on debauchery and sinful behavior, Storyville's influence has

[238] Long, *The Great Southern Babylon,* 232.
[239] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness,* 232.

largely been lost to history. Survived by the work of historians and New Orleans ghost tours, Storyville's physical memory remains now as reproductions of images and stories. Remnants of Storyville can be found in New Orleans throughout the city, but as Emily Epstein Landau wrote, "Storyville no longer exists in any physical reality."[240]

[240] Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 206.

Conclusion:

In its twenty year existence Storyville championed luxury and the promise of fraternization across the color line. Imbued with scandal and vice, Storyville flourished in the unique set of circumstances that arose following the end of the Civil War and was dissolved due to American involvement in a global war. Framed by violence, Storyville's existence was also ladened with morality and a call for societal reform. From its conception to its dissolution, Storyville's purpose was to corral and regulate vice within the city of New Orleans, namely prostitution.

After years of being in the national spotlight for scandalous and negatively based stories, New Orleans' government officials began taking steps to remedy the city's national reputation and created a designated red-light district; however, with the United States' involvement in another war, societal notions for reform were strengthened and the district was closed, the women were displaced, and soon after that Prohibition was instilled throughout the nation. With American concern with morality on the rise, Storyville was never going to survive in the twentieth century amidst the Progressive Movement. Calls for moral reform were happening on a national scale amid suffrage success and the national war effort.[241] The direct connection between moral reform and the construction of a nearby naval base is the historic excuse for the dissolution of the restricted district; however, an equally influential aspect of overall morality was closely related to the closure of the district, as seen through the onslaught of publications in *The Times-Picayune* documenting citizens' pleas to metaphorically clean up the city. With the passing of the 1917 ordinance,

[241] Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 207-210.

Storyville collapsed quickly and left little trace of existence in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The question many historians confront in the historiography is how Storyville is remembered, or more importantly, why it was forgotten when it represented so much of New Orleans culture in the South during a time of extreme change. The location of the district was predetermined by the city's history with vice and tourism, and the creation of the district only benefitted the city's economic system, drawing in male tourists from across the South to experience the thrill of sex across the color line. Factors of race, promiscuity, and social standing were intimately related in Storyville, and in the decades before it was consecrated. The deeply connected factors of race and gender contributed to the formation of the restricted district long before Sidney Story proposed the legislature. With the ingrained racial structure left over from the antebellum era, sex across the color line between a white man and black or mixed race woman was something with a troublesome, racist past which ultimately culminated in the exploitation of non-white women in Storyville in order for establishments to profit off of the sexual fantasies of white men who indulged in the scandalous act of fraternizing with a non-white woman. For most, these fantasies were rooted in power and respectability, in which the white men held the power and the women involved lost their respectability.

Power is another key theme in understanding the development of Storyville. In many instances, it was the women in charge who held the power in the district: Lulu White and Willie Piazza among two of the most notorious. Both women were non-white, and both women held tremendous power in the social, economic, and political role of Storyville. Within that power, Lulu White had a reputation as a criminal and maintained racial

ambiguity throughout her entire tenure in New Orleans. It speaks to larger patterns of women and power that Lulu White and Willie Piazza both were repudiated throughout the South, along with their ill-fated predecessor Kate Townsend. The role of women in the formation and culture of Storyville was vital for its creation and success, as these women catered to men's desires specifically in order for their establishments to succeed financially. The ability to cater to white men as a non-white woman speaks to the sense of power that these women had in running their establishments. However limited that power may be, seeing as though even they could not stop the closure of the district in 1917.

New Orleans, and the South as a whole, has a long and arduous history with race and racial stereotypes seeping into social relations. From the French colonial Code Noir to the Reconstruction-era Black Codes and the formation and perpetuation of Jim Crow laws in the South, Storyville cannot be represented without a discussion of race and its importance in the district's success. From Lulu White taking advantage of her racial ambiguity to the explicit employ of mixed race women in Storyville, race was a prominent factor in Storyville's existence. Closely tied with conceptions of morality, a woman's race determined her place in Storyville as many of the known prostitutes were of mixed race or Creole women. The influence of race in Storyville is inescapable as sex across the color line was one of the district's main draws for visiting customers.

Race in New Orleans was a complicated facet of life, due to the amount of racial regulations that existed in the city, as expressed through Black Codes and Jim Crow laws. In many cases, racial regulations were closely related to moral standards of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Just like race, morality was closely related to the district's success and subsequent closure; however, morality was more of an external factor

while race was more centralized within the district's existence. In the end, it was a constant push for a more moral society that ended the district's reign as the South's notable red-light district.

With a strengthening interest in World War I, the United States' Navy ordered for a naval base in New Orleans. Under Naval regulations, prostitution could not be regulated within five miles of a base, leading to the shutdown of Storyville. Formally, the U.S. Navy ordered that it was within the interest of public health that sailors and soldiers not frequent areas of prostitution in order to maintain a strong moral compass, which would not have been attainable with the existence of Storyville. The claim that military personnel should have a strong moral compass was challenged by the temptation of the active sex industry in New Orleans. Despite local government that attested the naval order, Storyville was ordered to close, leaving hundreds of women in the district without official work.

Following the end of the district, Storyville was effectively physically destroyed within a decade. Although the end of Storyville was swift, its impact on the birth of modern tourism within New Orleans has lasted into the twenty-first century with the popularization of dark tourism and ghost tours, which profit off of the historical renderings of some of Storyville's residents and stories. One of New Orleans' most popular methods of tourism in the twenty-first century is the implementation of ghost tours throughout the city that concentrate on some historical and some fictional people and events. New Orleans' Haunted History Tours offer tours throughout the city that visit sites of murder and "spine-chilling spots in the French Quarter."[242] These tours often associate historical events with

[242] "Haunted History Tours: New Orleans Ghost Tours," accessed via hauntedhistorytours.com.

mythological and fictional creatures, such as vampires, creating a problematic representation of New Orleans history.

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