

SEVENTH WARD SPEAKS

OUR HISTORY STARTED CLOSE TO THE RIVER, AND THEN it moved out to the Seventh Ward, Pontchartrain Park, and New Orleans East. One of my big gripes about New Orleans is that the city didn't put up any monument to any African American until the 1970s. Growing up, I just thought we didn't have the opportunity to do anything, but then you go back through the history and you see our accomplishments like the Citizens' Committee. The only monuments we do have are our institutions—St. Augustine's, the Couvent School at Touro and Dauphine—and the houses that these guys built. The neighborhoods.

When we first moved in this block, there weren't any other people of African descent, and some of the neighbors started a petition against my parents—"Well, we don't have anything against you but it may change the neighborhood." Then the Canatella's invited my parents over for the weekly rosary, which was a sign of welcoming them. Later, when I started doing all this research into its origins, I realized how many people of African descent actually built these houses—lived in them and had businesses. It just gave that whole thing a different perspective.



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