

The New Orleans

AVANT-GARDE[©]

CELEBRATE WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

by Phyllis Parun

On Sunday, March 3, 2013, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority held a march in Washington, D.C., to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1913 Woman Suffrage Parade in Washington, D.C. Many of my generation's mothers were in their teens when the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving women the right to vote, passed. *"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."* It was Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who drafted the amendment, introducing it in 1878. Forty-one years later in 1919, the Congress submitted the amendment to the states for ratification, which passed on August 26, 1920.

In the 1970s, as young women in our 30s my generation, known as the "second wave feminism," never had two thoughts as to how long we would continue being a political force in the United States. Yet here we are, prime-time women still fighting for women's rights and now increased in numbers by two successive younger generations, with all races and political positions joined together in one unified voice. In March, 2013, the Violence Against Women Bill passed.

Margaret Sanger, suffragette, having watched her own mother die of too many pregnancies, devoted her entire life to the cause of contraceptives and pregnancy rights, founding The Birth Control



Woman Suffrage Parade, March 3, 1913

courtesy of Library of Congress

Society, now known as Planned Parenthood, thus becoming the "mother of birth control." Along with financier Katharine Dexter McCormick, Sanger brought the birth control pill to market in 1957, it finally being approved by the FDA in 1960.

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) written by Alice Paul, a suffragist leader, was introduced to Congress for the first time in 1923. It took until 1972 to pass both Houses of Congress, then went to the state legislatures for ratification but failed to ratify before the June 30, 1982, expiration date largely because conservatives opposed the ERA.

The following states have not yet ratified the federal ERA: Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Utah, and Virginia. In 2012, supporters attempted to revive the Equal Rights Amendment via a petition on the White House website.

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

"The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article."

"This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification".

The work ahead: **Ratify the ERA!**



5th Annual Femme Fest, 2013

Celebrating the Art of Women

Women's Caucus for Art Louisiana Chapter (WCA/LA) holds its 5th annual showcase of the art of Louisiana women. The exhibit is a statewide, non-juried visual art exhibition.

Location: The Mid-City Theatre, 3540 Toulouse St.

Artists' Reception: March 16, 4-6 p.m.

Duration: March 7 – April 19

HOLIDAY APOCALYPSE POEM #3

by Laura Mattingly

flung
 the freedom of failure fabulates us
 the round dream-wing yawning, all the green things agree, and
 also the Indians
 totaling notions close- in on the "payment due" clause and the
 "rendered services"
 parenthesis and quotations use guerilla tactics in the forests of
 trees that the tractors are hiding
 it's a magic trick, and the tallest in the world have simply
 vanished
 all the women with beautiful voices have run up into the
 mountains
 where they cry and cackle, sing and spell, make the other
 magic, intricate highly skilled fixing of what the fathers *really*
 fucked up, which is almost everything
 some mountains are closer, a royal st. corner, little girls with
 freshly sprouted legs and curls at their napes run up and down
 the hallway lined with candles, their small forms cast redwood-
 tall shadows into the doubts of whether the pianist will ever
 feel real again
 the services have been rendered, the neck wrung, the stars
 named, the scalps removed, the forests felled, muscles
 underground colored in coal dust, we have felt and refused to,
 scuttled and skittered, and littered and littered, powered
 bicycles with nuclear windmills, and browsed the garnet shop
 ad nauseum
 what else, what possibly else
 oh yeah, the madwoman comes back from North Carolina and
 screams in the middle of town, her voices multiplying
 ALL THE GOLDFISH ARE ON FIRE PLEASE PUT
 THEM OUT
 So we do



©Laura Mattingly. Laura Mattingly is the author of the *Book of Incorporation* published by Language Foundry (2012) and *How to Become Black Water*. Her poems have been in "Big Bridge", "The New Laurel Review", and "Maple Leaf Rag". She performs at open mics around town and does monthly shows at the Abbey Bar on Lower Decatur Street with musician Stella Lithe.

r é d a c t i o n

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FRINGE FESTIVAL

by Evelyn Rodriguez

The heartchild of director Kristen Evans, the New Orleans Fringe Festival is an experimental theater extravaganza that has burst comedy, drama, dance, circus and other performances throughout the Marigny and Bywater neighborhoods for the past five years. I met Kristen at an interactive installation at the house gallery, which happens to convert into the Fringe Fest box office, in the spring of 2008. She was exuberant and delighted to bring the first Fringe to New Orleans that November. Her exuberance translates into an original offering which grows and encompasses more homegrown sideshow events each year, including parades, yard tours and art markets.

Fringe Festivals are orchestrated in cities all over the world, having begun in 1947, when eight theater groups turned up uninvited to perform at the then newly formed Edinburgh International Festival.

I partook of eight shows -- a daunting schedule for four days. I chose shows that fuel inspiration and inform my own creative projects, including a variety that display different production aesthetics and budgets -- from raw grittiness to polished; from one-man shows to ensembles. This can be gleaned by the production values of the postcards, posters, and flyers themselves.

All in all, the best way to pick shows is to trust your gut instincts. Go see your friends and acquaintances in their shows. Ask other people in line what else they're seeing. Go see shows that feel opposite to what you "normally" tend to see. Pick one show at random and surprise yourself. Check out NolaDefender.com's extensive reviews. The full schedule is online beforehand in *Gambit* (free weekly at newsstands across the city). Fringe Festival is an ebullient buffet; there's no right or wrong way to fill your plate.

FACTOID

The Women's Caucus for Art (WCA) was created on January 28, 1972, at the San Francisco convention of the College Art Association (CAA).

"In the forty years since the Women's Caucus for Art (WCA) was conceived in 1972, opportunities for women in the arts and knowledge about the accomplishments of women artists throughout history have expanded dramatically ... due to the activism and the dedicated efforts of feminist organizations such as WCA... For four decades, WCA members have worked to recognize the contributions of women in the arts and to educate the public about them, as well as to expand networking, exhibition and leadership opportunities for women." [<http://www.nationalwca.org/aboutwca/history.php>]

"The Women's Caucus for Art was born in anger and nurtured by challenge and innovation for many years thereafter. Following a series of major upheavals in Europe and the United States, never-ending wars ... left widespread feelings of dissatisfaction... The Civil Rights movement, begun to end racial discrimination in America, had raised awareness of many other kinds of discrimination in the educational system, employment and housing, and in the military forces where racial segregation both of the African Americans and the Japanese Americans had forced them into concentration camps on doubts of their patriotism." [Karen Frostig and K. A. Halamka. *Blaze: Discourse on Art, Women and Feminism*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing (2007), 37]

2012 LADYFEST: WHAT AN ADVENTURE IT WAS!

by Laura Mattingly

The Wednesday, November 7th, event was held in fellow literary event coordinator Jenna Mae's home on St. Roch Avenue. She wanted the event to have the feeling of a salon, so a few local artists, including painter Jamie Chiarello, displayed their work. We offered food and drink for donation, red beans and rice, vegetables and desserts. The women who performed on Wednesday were musician Stella Lithe, Megan Harris as poet and MC, and other poets Heather Tammany, R.K. Powers, Lee Meitzen-Grue, Alexandra Reisner, Megan Burns, Laura McKnight, and Sandra Grace Johnson.

The Friday, November 9th, event had a much different feel to it. We used Buffa's lounge back room on Esplanade Avenue as a venue to take advantage of their sizable stage, food and affordable drinks. The crowd was impressive! Over a hundred people attended the event, and the entertainment spanned four hours. Writers and performers included musician LadyBabyMiss, singer and poet Jessica Ruby Radcliffe, and other poets Chyana Bwyse Bradley, Gerryl Robinson, Kim Vodicka, Gina Ferrara, Lauren Marie, Ayanna Molina-



Jessica Ruby Radcliffe, Laura Mattingly, Jenna Mae

Mills, Kate Smash, Kelly Jones, Sunday Shae Parker, Trisha Rezende, Sam Jasper, and Whitney Mackman.

WORDS AND MUSIC CONFERENCE

by Evelyn Rodriguez

Sometimes many a stranger descends upon New Orleans at once. Be they from Bolivia, Spain, Norway or various states of the Union. What galvanizes all these pilgrims at once is often a gathering -- a congregation of affinities.

Creative babies have a genesis story: this one begins in 1990 at a birthday party for the late William Faulkner coinciding with the opening of the Faulkner House Books in the French Quarter. The 27-year-old future Nobel Laureate rented rooms on the ground floor in 1925 inside the same space that houses the bookstore today. From the mingling at this party an informal society, the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Society, coalesced. In 1991, Society and Conference founder Rosemary James conceived of a literary contest pairing winning writers with agents in person as well. "Winning the prize was instrumental to getting published. It sent a signal that this is a writer to pay attention to," said bookstore owner and James' husband, Joseph DeSalvo.

The purpose of the Words and Music Conference held at the historic Monteleone Hotel in New Orleans at the end of November is three-fold: to promote the culture of New Orleans, to support emerging writers and to improve the literacy and foster appreciation of literary arts in youth,

typically through partnerships and programs such as BIG READ. James believes it's more important than ever to support emerging writers so that we will continue to have stories to read in the future, and to celebrate literature.

I avoid lecture-style conferences in general; however, there was an intimate salon nature to the entire event that I found a pleasure to participate in. Care and attention to warmth and Southern hospitality exuded, from fresh beignets from Cafe du Monde at an opening panel where cafe owner Karen Benrud welcomed us to New Orleans, to the finale champagne farewell overlooking the St. Louis Cathedral garden inside the beautiful apartment where Rosemary and Joseph reside. The boutique nature hosted just under 150 attendees -- a number conducive to establishing life-altering kinship with fellow writers, agents, publishers and faculty that you are likely to bump into again.

Exhausted by a brimming day of presentations and panels beginning at eight a.m., I nearly skipped the evening program which became the highlight of the event for me: James developed the idea of a tribute to Ernest J. Gaines' work as a theme,

applied for an NEA grant, introduced Gaines and Mayfield to each other and commissioned the original jazz composition by Irwin Mayfield performed by his 18-piece orchestra. Mr. Gaines and Cicely Tyson, the actress who portrayed Gaine's character Miss Jane Pittman on television, were in attendance. The mutual respect and admiration of writer and musician poured forth in medium of "words without walls," as Irwin Mayfield distilled it into the medium of music. Invigorated by the enthusiastic exchange, the evening peaked in a soiree on the second-floor of the historic Napoleon House (a bohemian Creole space I'd always wanted to behold myself) that bustled right through midnight.

When asked how he judges whether he will read past the first page of a work, author Oscar Hijuelas reflected: "Either this person is either typing intelligently or pouring their heart and soul... I only read the latter." Precisely how I judge conferences too -- and this one oozed heart and soul.

Evelyn Rodriguez is a renaissance cultural catalyst, transmedia storyteller, reality games developer, mystic and galactic nomad who considers New Orleans her second home. Find her at evelynrodriguez.typepad.com

ACKNOWLEDGING NEW ORLEANS WOMEN CULTURERS



Roselyn Lionhart, producer/organizer,
Lady Fest New Orleans



Helen Gillet, French cellist,
at Bacchanal



Andrea Gereighty, poet,
and Phyllis Parun, author/publisher



Michaele Harrison, singer,
at Café Istanbul



Lee Meitzen-Grue, poet and editor,
The New Laurel Review



Delia Nakayama and Peter Nu, songwriters/musicians,
at Alvar Art Nites



The Honeypots, songwriters/musicians,
at Alvar Branch Library



Lauren Swinney, actress,
reading at Bacchanal on her 90th birthday



Pat Jolly, photographer/curator, Artmoor Exhibit,
"Beyond Epiphany," at Rosa Keller Branch Library



Helen Krieger, writer,
at Alvar Art Nites



Monica McIntyre, songwriter/cellist,
at Café Istanbul



Spontaneous prayer healing, inspired by
Monica McIntyre's song, "Waiting"