

**THNOC PRIMARY SOURCES**

**FEATURED IN**

***The Trail They Blazed***

*The Trail They Blazed* is a traveling exhibition built collaboratively with the community that participated in the local Civil Rights Movement and those working to preserve its legacy. The exhibition highlights stories of boycotts, public school desegregation, the Congress of Racial Equity, the 1963 March on City Hall, the many people who supported the Movement, voter registration and education efforts, and activism in the Desire neighborhood.

For each of the stories below, explore the primary sources from THNOC's archive to learn more about the items and see detailed images. You can also access oral histories from the [NOLA Resistance Oral History Project](#), which feature recorded testimonies from individuals who were active in the fight for racial equality in New Orleans from the 1950s through the 1970s.

**Boycotts**

In the 1950s, the Dryades Street commercial corridor primarily served Black customers, but its white business owners refused to employ Black workers in their stores. Young activists from the Consumers' League of Greater New Orleans, fed up with the lack of job opportunities, organized a boycott of these businesses in the spring of 1960. Later that year, several of them formed a local chapter of the Congress of Racial

Equality (CORE) and brought their nonviolent actions to Canal Street to protest segregated lunch counters.

- **People in line for voter registration in Louisiana** (*THNOC*, [2019.0021.6](#))
- **Photograph showing CORE sit-in at New Orleans Woolworth's** (*THNOC*, [2021.0100.1](#))
- **Civil Rights "Don't Buy at Woolworth's" CORE flier** (*THNOC* [2020.0129](#))
- **CORE-lator newsletter** (*THNOC*, [2016.0090.1](#))
- **Restaurant integration** (*THNOC*, [2021.0205](#))

## **CORE**

The local chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was one of the most active civil rights groups in the region during the early 1960s. Led largely by students and young activists, New Orleans CORE participated in nonviolent, direct-action protests, registered voters across Louisiana, and pushed for enforcement of the federal ruling to provide integrated facilities for interstate travel by organizing bus trips known as "Freedom Rides" throughout the South.

- **"Freedom Now" poster issued by CORE** (*THNOC*, [2018.0234.6](#))
- **Interior of segregated streetcar No. 925** (*THNOC*, [1974.25.37.65](#))
- **Oretha Castle Haley** (*THNOC*, [2019.0236](#))
- **Freedom Riders integrate New Orleans bus station restaurant** (*THNOC*, [2021.0146](#))

## **Activism in Desire**

In 1970 the Desire neighborhood, long underserved by local government, became a hotbed for activism. In May of that year, organizers in Desire established a local chapter of the National Committee to Combat Fascism (NCCF), which was associated with the

Black Panther Party and advocated self-empowerment and self-defense of their community, demanded freedom and dignity, and provided community services. NCCF had been operating for only a few months before the New Orleans Police Department launched a series of armed assaults on the organization.

- **Desire St. Housing Project** (*THNOC*, [2006.0025.15](#))
- **Harold Holmes with NCCF sign** (*THNOC*, [2022.0051.2](#))
- **The Black Panther** (*THNOC*, [2020.0020.1](#))
- **Stay in the streets : demonstrate to support the N.C.C.F.!** (*THNOC*, [77-801-RL](#))
- **NOPD officers arresting a Black man at Desire projects** (*THNOC*, [2020.0086.1](#))
- **The Black Panther, Black Community News Service, January 17, 2019** (*THNOC*, [2019.0100.2](#))

### **School Desegregation**

In November 1960, six years after the US Supreme Court found segregation by race in public education to be unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education*, New Orleans's public schools began the process of integration for the first time since Reconstruction. That fall, four girls—Leona Tate, Tessie Prevost, Gail Etienne, and Ruby Bridges—integrated two elementary schools in the Ninth Ward.

- **View of Tessie Prevost and escorts entering McDonough 19 with policemen in foreground** (*THONC*, [1996.123.1.107.10](#))
- **Card from Mr. And Mrs. Richard March to "Dear Little Girls"** (*THNOC*, [MSS 799.66](#))
- **Several women picketing against the desegregation of schools** (*THNOC*, [1974.25.25.113](#))

### **Supporting the Movement**

Collaboration powered the Civil Rights Movement in New Orleans. Supporters throughout the community provided activists with safe spaces to meet, plan, and stay when visiting from out of town. They met, marched, resisted, voted, and sustained the work done by activists on the front lines.

- **Portrait of Lolis Elie** (THNOC, [2020.0084.35](#))
- **New Zion Baptist Church postcard** (THNOC, [2019.0039.18](#))
- **Oretha Castle Haley at an event** (THNOC, [2016.0172.1.48.5](#))
- **"Join hands for equality, join CORE" poster** (THNOC, [2022.0153](#))

### **The March on City Hall**

In the fall of 1963, following the success of the March on Washington, more than forty New Orleans civil rights organizations, civic groups, and church congregations came together to organize a Freedom March on City Hall on September 30, 1963.

- **Twomey, Elie, Davis, Morial, and Alexander** (THNOC, [2020.0084.8](#))
- **Oretha Castle Haley, New Orleans Freedom March** (THNOC, [2020.0084.2](#))
- **New Orleans Freedom March 1963** (THNOC, [2021.0207](#))

### **Voter Registration and Education**

In the Jim Crow South millions of African Americans were denied their constitutional right to vote due to unfair registration procedures, misinformation, and intimidation. To combat this, civil rights workers made voter registration a central part of their movement.

- **The First Vote** (THNOC, [1974.25.9.319](#))
- **People in line for voter registration in New Orleans** (THNOC, [2019.0021.6](#))

- **The right to vote / by James T. McCain, CORE Director of Organization; edited by Jim Peck; photographs by Bob Adelman (THNOC, [2019.0032.3](#))**
- **John D. Brown voter registration certificate (THNOC, [2019.0039.17](#))**
- **September 1963 arrest of voting rights protestors at New Orleans City Hall press photograph (THNOC, [2021.0180](#))**
- **People in line at New Orleans voter registration office (THNOC, [2019.0021.3](#))**

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