ANNUAL REPORT

2015-2016



The Historic New Orleans Collection





LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Friends,

From its inception, the Historic New Orleans Collection has sought to fulfill our founders' mission to preserve New Orleans, Louisiana, and Gulf South history through meaningful, impactful interactions with the public, and in 2025–26 we reached new milestones in how we achieve that goal. Our groundbreaking exhibition *Making It Home: From Vietnam to New Orleans* provided the first major exhibition devoted to Vietnamese immigration to the city. It was made possible by close collaboration with members of that community, connecting us to new audiences and shining a light on a part of New Orleans history that is often treated like a footnote.

In May we found global exposure in the form of a papal revelation, when HNOC Family Historian Jari C. Honora uncovered the New Orleans Creole roots of the newly named Pope Leo XIV. This piece of news quickly traveled around the world, putting our name in countless newspapers and eventually earning Honora the title of Louisianian of the Year by the *Times-Picayune* | NOLA.com.

HNOC's First Draft blog took top honors in its category at the New Orleans Press Club's Excellence in Journalism Awards, with Director of Publications Nick Weldon also taking first place in political reporting for his story on Louisiana's history with the Voting Rights Act. Weldon also won second place in feature writing for a piece on the Freedom Rides, connected to the exhibition *The Trail They Blazed*, and Curator Kelley Hines took third in environmental writing for her story on native grasses, connected to our exhibition *A Vanishing Bounty*. In January the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities named HNOC's *Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration* Exhibition of the Year. These awards validated our commitment to excellence both inside the museum and in the wider world.

Indeed, throughout our growth we have maintained our high standards on an increasing number of fronts—exhibitions, publishing, public programs, community engagement, education, and preservation. Currently, our ongoing work to renovate and reimagine the 533 Royal Street campus is the most ambitious expression yet of our vision for carrying on Kemper and Leila Williams's passion for Louisiana history and preservation. We are honored to be expanding their creation into the world-class museum they knew our city deserves.

None of this far-reaching work would be possible without community support. For while we are committed to excellence and growth, we are equally bound to the values of fiscal responsibility and sustainability. Through the generosity of donors, sponsors, and members, HNOC can continue to be a leader in New Orleans's historic, cultural, and architectural preservation.

In partnership,

Daniel Hammer

President and CEO
The Historic New Orleans Collection



VIET ROOTS

IN CRESCENT SOIL



TO MARK THE 50TH anniversary of the fall of Saigon, the Historic New Orleans Collection presented *Making It Home: From Vietnam to New Orleans*—a bilingual exhibition honoring the journeys of Vietnamese refugees who built a community here. The show drew from Viet Chronicle, an oral history project HNOC launched in 2016 to document refugee resettlement experiences in the metro area, particularly New Orleans East. The voices of community elders and their first-generation children were at the heart of *Making It Home*, people who arrived with Vietnamese traditions and, over time, wove them into the rhythms of South Louisiana life.

In conjunction with the exhibition, HNOC celebrated the ways those traditions continue to thrive. The Rising



Dragon Lion Dance Team held roaring courtyard performances, while New Orleans celebrity chef Nini Nguyen stopped by to discuss and sign her cookbook *Đặc Biệt*. The museum café spotlighted Dough Nguyener's specials made with produce from Veggi Farm Co-op, a Vietnamese-run farm in New Orleans East. An after-hours event paired readings from local Vietnamese author E. M. Tran's *Daughters of the New Year* with objects on view in the exhibition, and our concurrent HNOC Student Writing Contest drew entries from across the country reflecting on migration.

MAKING IT HOME

50+ Hours of Oral Histories Recorded

500+ Student Writing Contest Entries

3 Museum Conference Awards

LIVING THE MOVEMENT

FROM THE 1950s THROUGH the '70s, brave Black New Orleanians fought to dismantle Louisiana's Jim Crow status quo—resisting violence, mob intimidation, and relentless threats to forge a future built on justice and equality. Sponsored by the Edgar "Dooky" Jr. and Leah Chase Family Foundation in partnership with the Urban League of Louisiana, *The Trail They Blazed* documented seven fronts in that struggle, told in the words of the activists who lived it. Featuring oral histories recorded by HNOC since 2016, alongside historic photographs, objects, and interactive displays, the exhibition was designed from the outset to be accessible to children—honoring a request from the featured activists who collaborated in its curation.



In addition to the thousands of students who engaged with the show on museum field trips, HNOC also brought a traveling version of the exhibition to local schools, universities, and libraries across the city. HNOC was honored to welcome seven civil rights trailblazers to the exhibition's 2025 opening reception, including Leona Tate (below), one of the first Black students to desegregate New Orleans's all-white schools in 1960. Tate signed copies of her children's book *Small Shoes, Great Strides: How Three Brave Girls Opened Doors to School Equality.*

THE TRAIL THEY BLAZED

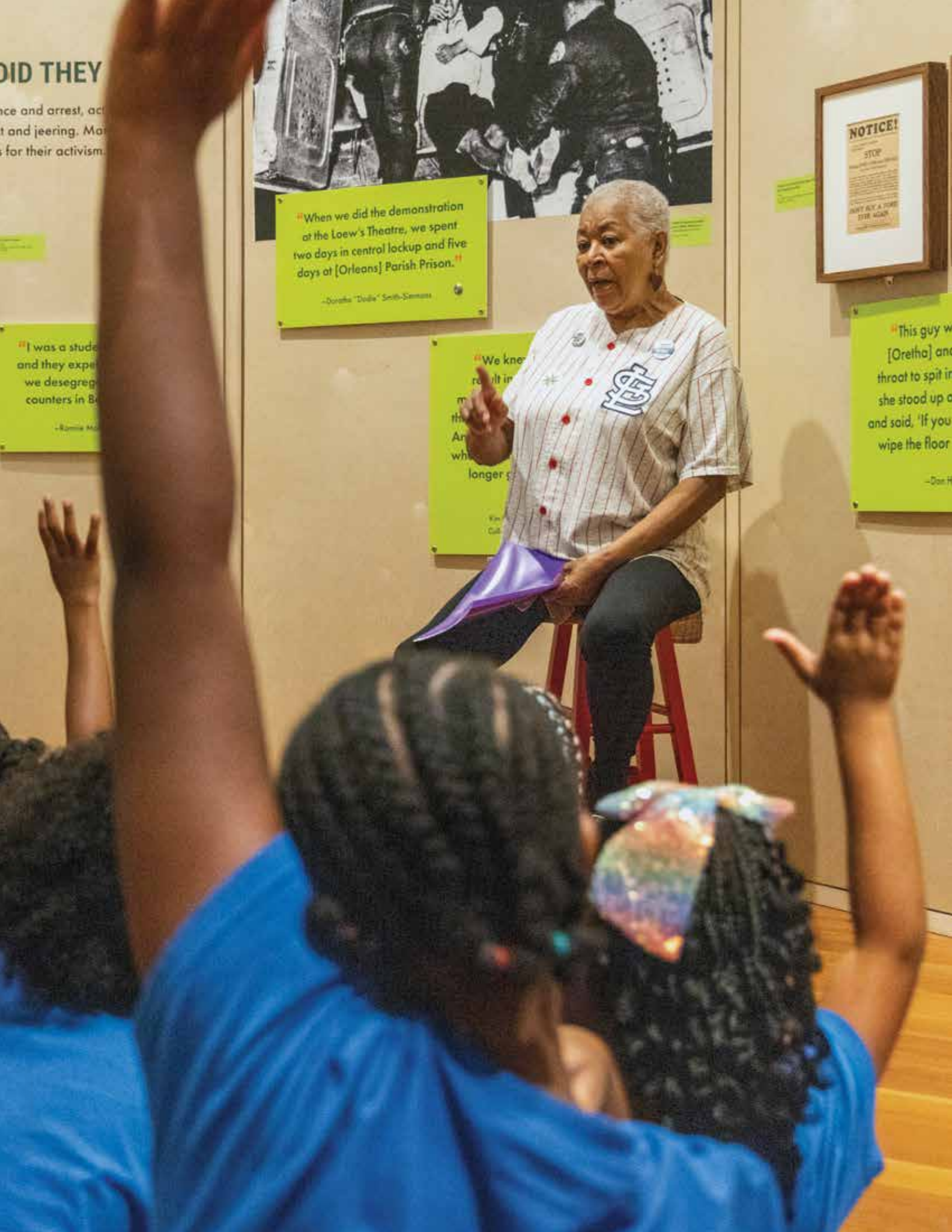
71 Field Trips Hosted

3,415 Student Field Trip Visitors

9 Traveling Exhibition Appearances

30 Civil Rights Trailblazers Interviewed




DID THEY
"When we did the demonstration at the Loew's Theatre, we spent two days in central lockup and five days at [Orleans] Parish Prison."
–Dorothe "Dodie" Smith-Simmons
NOTICE!
STOP

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE



HNOC HAS LONG SOUGHT to engage new and existing audiences through thoughtful, informative, fun events and programs, and 2025–26 was a high-water mark in our output and diversity of offerings. We produced or coproduced over 60 events ranging from concerts and film screenings to multiday symposia and lectures. Some were the most recent iterations of long-running programs, such as the Musical Louisiana concert at St. Louis Cathedral or the Food Forum, which focused on the role of restaurants in our culinary history. We leaned into our audience's interest in genealogy, conducting a sold-out workshop on researching family history, and found new ways to blend entertainment with history, as in our concert and lecture celebrating the 19th-century Creole poetry anthology *Les Cenelles*. HNOC's investment in telling diverse stories about all aspects of New Orleans and Gulf South culture has helped drive an overall increase in visitation for the year, as well as new memberships.



60+
Programs and Events

496
New Memberships

5,525
Total Attendees

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS





PRESERVATION IN ACTION

OCTOBER 2025 MARKED a major milestone in HNOC's campaign to restore, renew, and reimage our 533 Royal Street campus, as we officially entered the construction phase. After two years of planning, archaeological excavation, and exploratory demolition, we embarked on the exciting, sometimes painstaking effort to bring our plans to life.



As stewards of the seven historic buildings making up the 533 Royal campus, HNOC takes seriously its responsibility to preserve these architectural treasures. To that end, we took an up-close view of details and building features that most people take for granted. Working with specialized masonry contractors, we undertook a monumental effort to tuck and repoint all the historic masonry onsite, removing old mortar and replacing it with new, brick by brick. Workers took up the flagstones in one of the courtyards, numbering and individually wrapping each one. After state-of-the-art stormwater management infrastructure is added to the site, the flagstones will be reinstalled according to the exact pattern in which they were laid. Videographers documented this work, sometimes using time-lapse capture, so that the public can appreciate and enjoy the satisfying nitty-gritty of preservation in action.

533 RENOVATION WORK

532 Flagstone Pavers Cataloged

15,000 Man-Hours of Masonry Repair Work




EBONY
POWER100

PUTTING THE POPE'S CREOLE ROOTS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

LESS THAN TWO HOURS after a plume of white smoke at the Vatican announced the confirmation of Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost as Pope Leo XIV, HNOC Family Historian Jari C. Honora broke a global story about the new Holy Father's family history. Though born and raised in Chicago, Pope Leo's maternal grandparents were New Orleans Creoles of color, Honora found. After he posted his findings to Facebook, news outlets came calling, putting HNOC and Honora at the center of worldwide interest in the papal announcement. HNOC formally reported Honora's findings on its blog, First Draft, and our communications team facilitated media requests from around the world. "This discovery is just an additional reminder of how interwoven we are as Americans," Honora told the *New York Times*.

For his impact in amplifying New Orleans history, Honora was named the 2025 Louisianian of the Year by the *Times-Picayune* | NOLA.com, and he was listed in *EBONY* magazine's Power 100 of 2025.





"CREOLE POPE" NEWS

1000+ Media Mentions

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$3,000,000+

Anonymous

$1,000,000+

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$500,000+

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AUDITED FY 2026 FINANCIALS

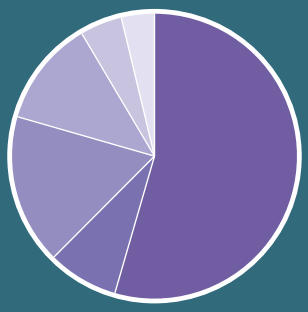
APRIL 1, 2025–MARCH 31, 2026

ASSETS

Unrestricted	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	$20,947,246
Investments	$426,830,690*
Real Estate	$105,462,257
Mineral Interest	$423,165
Shop Merchandise	$197,436
Fixed Assets	$350,944
Total Unrestricted Assets	**$554,211,738**
Restricted	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	$49,886
Investments	$8,636,067
Total Restricted Assets	**$8,685,953**
Total Assets	**$562,897,691**

OPERATING SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Net Investment Return	$24,751,052
Individual Contributions	$3,528,705
Institutional Contributions	$517,421
Other Income	$1,100,089
Retail Sales	$778,434
Royalties	$309,175
Rental Income	$242,684

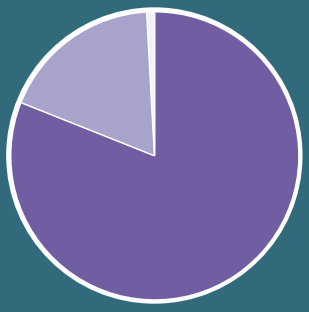


Total Revenue

$31,227,560

NET ASSETS

Endowment	$457,056,124*
Real Estate	$105,462,257
Other Assets	$548,380



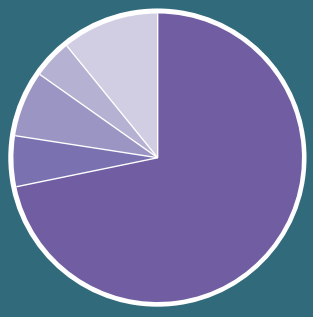
Total Net Assets

$563,066,761

*Market Value

EXPENSES

Museum	$15,349,883
Publications	$1,211,673
Research Center	$1,571,134
Gift Shop	$931,172
General and Administrative	$2,321,380



Total Expenses

$21,385,242

For further information about the Historic New Orleans Collection financial reports, please contact Mandi Cambre, director of development, at mandi.cambre@hnoc.org or (504) 598-7173.

HNOC BY THE NUMBERS

2025–26 was a great year for engagement, with a total of more than 540,000 interactions.

102,052 Total Visitors

5,525 Program and Event Attendees

1,596 WRC Researchers and Visitors

3,165 Field Trip Attendees

156,841 Social Media Followers

273,574 First Draft Blog Views

142 Employees

14 Buildings in the French Quarter

15 Interns





YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

AT THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION, every object, every name, every story is part of something bigger. Together, they help us understand who we are. Your support ensures that our cultural heritage is preserved and shared in ways that educate, challenge, and inspire.

When you give to HNOC, you are helping students imagine new futures. You are supporting exhibitions that spark conversation, reflection, and inspiration. You are investing in research that brings forgotten voices and events into the light.

Learn more
hnoc.org/support

The Historic New Orleans Collection