

For Immediate Release:

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Library To Host African American Genealogy Classes

Natchitoches, LA, January 26, 2023 – The Natchitoches Parish Library (NPL) will be hosting an African American Genealogy series to help individuals learn more about their family histories. The seminars will feature four expert speakers, each offering a unique insight into the genealogy of African Americans and some common challenges associated with research.

On February 4th, Gaynell Brady will give an introduction to African American genealogy from 2-3 PM at the NPL Main Branch. Attendees will have the chance to ask Brady questions about the information presented. This introductory class is geared toward people who have not built a family tree and are interested in learning the basics of genealogy and family history research. In this presentation, participants will gain knowledge about the U.S. census, newspapers, and using museums and libraries for research.

“After emancipation in January 1863, many African Americans lived and worked on the same plantations where they were formerly enslaved,” says Brady. “Navigating African American genealogy can be very challenging. Moreover, searching for maternal ancestors who were recently enslaved can be tedious and difficult. Yet, locating your relatives and building a family tree for future generations is worth the research and challenges.”

On February 7th, Jari Honora will be at the Northeast Branch from 6-7 PM to discuss how to use the Freeman's Bureau as a resource for genealogical research. The presentation will review the sources that researchers can use to document African American families, especially the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (established by Congress in 1865) to provide food, medical care, education, and oversight of labor arrangements for freedmen and refugees in the South.

“The records produced by the Freedmen’s Bureau offer unparalleled clues as to the former ownership and movement and life events of newly freed African Americans in the first five years after the Civil War,” said Honora. “(This is) one of the challenges of African American genealogy...identifying the last owner who enslaved your ancestors prior to the Civil War. If and when that individual is identified, the challenge becomes doing dual research on both the enslaved family and the enslaver’s family to determine when and how the enslaved people were bought, sold, mortgaged, donated, or rented.”

On February 16th, Ja'el Gordon will be at the Main Branch from 5-7 PM to speak about Antebellum history, descendant genealogy, and using DNA for research.

At the final seminar, on February 25th from 2-3 PM at the Main Branch, Alex Lee will teach attendees how to start a genealogy project and talk about how far that can take you.

This series is a great opportunity to learn more about your family history and gain the skills to explore your unique genealogy. The NPL encourages all interested individuals to sign up for these events, either by messaging on the NPL Facebook page or by calling 318-238-9224 so that a reminder message can be sent before the events. As you learn from experts in the field of ancestral studies you might be surprised by what it may reveal about yourself in the present.

For more information on NPL classes and events, you may follow the NPL on social media or visit natlib.org.

PHOTOS:

-NPL Logo.jpg

-All Programs.jpg

Attendees are encouraged to register for each class they are interested in so that they may receive reminders as each date approaches.

-Gaynell Brady.jpg

Gaynell Brady is an educator and museum professional who is passionate about learning, genealogy, and museums. She currently serves as the Owner/Educator at Our Mammy's LLC, where she teaches families about genealogy and African American history. In her role at Our Mammy's, she develops and implements hands-on history and genealogy lessons for children using historical research from her family tree.

-Jari Honora.jpg

Jari C. Honora, a Certified Genealogist®, is a New Orleans native and proud Louisiana Creole with roots dating back more than two centuries along Bayou Lafourche and the German-Acadian Coast. He has two decades of experience researching families and institutions in south Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. He works as a Reference Associate in the Williams Research Center of the Historic New Orleans Collection.

About the Natchitoches Parish Library

Knowledge. Connection. Community. The Natchitoches Parish Library serves the public and community through its competent and friendly staff by providing services and programs aimed at meeting the informational, recreational, and educational needs of our patrons. We seek to provide a beneficial and usable collection of information and activities to connect Natchitoches Parish residents to the world.