

Public Abstract

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Title:She's the Four-leaf Clover In The City Katrina Turned Over: The Historical Sister Gertrude Morgan and Her Post-Hurricane Katrina Specters

This thesis addresses the historical Sister Gertrude Morgan of the 1960s and 1970s with her post-Hurricane Katrina specters, which individuals familiar with her and the national media created. Morgan was an artist, musician, street preacher and prophet, lived and ministered throughout the city of New Orleans. Through her artwork, music, preaching, and literal interpretation of the apocalyptic books of the Bible, she placed herself and New Orleans within the biblical text, playing a significant role in the coming apocalypse. DJ King Britt, the New York Times, commemoration efforts, and Preservation Hall owner Benjamin Jaffe each created a Morgan specter by drawing upon a specific element of Morgan's identity in the search for a symbol for "authentic" New Orleans culture. This research project attempts to re-create the religious worldview of Morgan through an analysis of her artwork and music and then identifies tensions between the historical Morgan and the post-Katrina specters. Despite these tensions, the historical Sister Gertrude and her specters remain connected. Today's specter creators' search for authentic New Orleans by adapting Sister Gertrude runs parallel to Sister Gertrude's efforts to make New Orleans sacred through her religious worldview. The process happening in both cases is similar. Not only does this research call attention to reviving New Orleans culture post-Katrina, it furthermore explores the function of cultural heritage in the New Orleans rebuilding process.