

Slavery? What slavery?

In the Deep South, there are many ways of commemorating the past

Photographs by
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RIGHT

Bettye Jenkins and her granddaughters, Lee and Sarahn, wear 18th-century antebellum dress at the family home in Natchez, Mississippi, capital of the cotton industry until 1863. Descendants of a plantation owner, they open their home to tourists on the Natchez Pilgrimage Tour, which focuses on the splendours of aristocratic life







**FAR LEFT**

An African-American man applies “blackface” make-up, a hallmark of minstrel shows, ahead of the Zulu Parade in New Orleans. The parade was established at the turn of the 20th century by black working-class men in response to the segregated Mardi Gras celebrations. Blackface is worn as an attempt to seize racist symbols and invert them

TOP

Clad in plumed hats and capes, members of the Bunch Club and their guests gather for the annual carnival dance at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, New Orleans. Established in 1917, most of its members are descendants of “free people of colour” — those of mixed African and European heritage who were not enslaved, but who formed a powerful middle class during the antebellum period. Today the club is made up of bankers, doctors and lawyers from the city’s wealthier suburbs

BOTTOM

Guests in their finery attend the Grand Ball of His Majesty Rex at the Sheraton Hotel, New Orleans — one of the highlights on the social calendar of the southern white elite. The Rex organisation was formed in 1872 by white businessmen who staged some of the most elaborate parades of Mardi Gras. Since then it has expanded to include a lavish ball hosted by the King and Queen of Carnival, and dukes and duchesses from a tongue-in-cheek royal court







A car parades through the streets of Tremé, New Orleans, as part of a “second line” of revellers who follow the brass band — the “main line” — at a parade. Tremé is thought of as the first black neighbourhood in America: a place where free persons of color, and eventually slaves who obtained, bought or bargained for their freedom, were able to acquire and own property; and the birthplace of jazz and the civil-rights movement. The neighbourhood’s Second Line parades continue to celebrate how it shaped African-American culture



ABOVE Dancers from John McDonogh High School, New Orleans, perform during Black History Month

BELOW A colourful member of the Guardians of the Flame, one of several “tribes” who masquerade as Mardi Gras Indians. The tradition began among African-Americans in New Orleans in the 1880s, to celebrate the bonds forged between African and Native Americans during slavery





ABOVE Ser Seshsh Ab Heter-Clifford M. Boxley dresses as a Union soldier at the Forks of the Roads, the site of a historical slave market in Natchez, Mississippi. For more than 20 years Boxley has campaigned to have the site incorporated into the city's national historical park

BELOW Maypole dancing on the Natchez Pilgrimage Tour, a celebration of white aristocratic life

