



Dr. Phebe Hayes

Fellow the Center for Louisiana Studies, 2020–2025

Following a long and successful career as a professor of Communicative Disorders and as Dean of the College of General Studies at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Dr. Hayes has emerged an important voice in Louisiana Studies and in the Acadiana community as the Founder and President of the Iberia African American Historical Society (IAAHS). Founded in 2017, the IAAHS seeks to explore, understand, and make accessible the full story of African American history and culture in Iberia Parish and rural southern Louisiana in general, with a particular focus on the often neglected contributions of African Americans to the region's civic life. Dr. Hayes' work has already led to numerous successes, including the creation of historic marker honoring, Dr. Emma Wakefield Paillet, Louisiana's first black female physician.

Read Dr. Hayes' full biography.

To learn more about the Iberia African American Historical Society, [click here](#).

Read more about Dr. Hayes' work:

- [A Legacy Remembered, Acadiana Lifestyle Magazine](#)
- [Lettres d'amour: Uncovering History, Acadiana Profile Magazine](#)
- [New Iberia trailblazer honored as first African American woman to receive medical degree in LA, KLFY](#)

THE IBERIA AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY **A Louisiana Nonprofit Corporation**

CHARTER BOARD MEMBERS

Phebe Hayes, Ph.D.

Founder

Dr. Phebe Hayes, a life-long resident of Iberia Parish, retired from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette after 26 years of service (Professor of Communication Sciences & Disorders, 1986-2013; and Dean of the College of General Studies, 1998-2013). Dr. Hayes is the descendant of West African ancestors who were enslaved on local plantations. Four of her ancestral grandfathers fought for their freedom as members of the United States Colored Infantry (USCI) formerly, the *Corps d'Afrique*, and one fought as a member of the Union Navy. Following retirement, Dr. Hayes began researching the history of African Americans of Iberia Parish from the pre-colonial Louisiana period to the end of the Jim Crow era of segregation. What she found was exciting and demanded to be shared with the Iberia Parish community.

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Phebe Hayes

IAAHS Founder

Fellow of the Center for Louisiana Studies

Dr. Phebe Archon Hayes, a native and life-long resident of Iberia Parish, is a descendant of West Africans enslaved on area plantations during the antebellum period. Several of her male ancestors, including Jean Jeanlouis, Peter Jenkins, Alphonse Manuel, Marcel Mitchel, and Bernard Hypolite fought for emancipation during the Civil War either as members of the United States Colored Infantry (formerly, the Corps d'Afrique) or the Union Navy. Dr. Hayes' research has led her to trace her ancestors to area Attakapas district plantations that originally included parts of present-day St. Martin and St. Mary parishes.

Dr. Hayes retired from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 2013 following 26 years of service. At UL Lafayette, she was a member of the Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders faculty (1986–2013) eventually achieving the rank of Professor. She served as Dean of the College of General Studies from 1998 to 2013. Prior to university teaching, Dr. Hayes worked in the Iberia Parish Public School System for 10 years as a Speech Therapist. She served as Master Therapist of the Speech Therapy staff her final year in the school system. Following her retirement from UL, Dr. Hayes realized a dream of her young adult life when she was offered and accepted a one-year visiting professorship at her undergraduate alma mater, Xavier University of New Orleans in the Department of Speech Pathology & Audiology (2015–2016).

The majority of Dr. Hayes' elementary and secondary education was completed in the segregated public schools of Iberia Parish. She was a member of the last freshman class (1968–1969) of the historic, all-Black Jonas Henderson Sr. High School that was closed due to the forced desegregation of the public schools in Iberia Parish. She graduated from New Iberia Sr. High School in 1972. Dr. Hayes received an undergraduate degree in Speech Pathology & Audiology from Xavier University of New Orleans (1976); a second baccalaureate degree in Speech Pathology & Audiology from the College of Education, University of Southwestern Louisiana (now University of Louisiana at Lafayette) in 1978; a Master's Degree in Communicative Disorders from the University of Southwestern Louisiana in 1982; and a Ph.D. in Communication Sciences & Disorders from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge (1993).

Following retirement from university work, Dr. Hayes used research skills acquired over years of graduate study and work to explore her own family history. That research led her to discover primary records that provided evidence of the true history of Blacks who lived in Iberia Parish (from Reconstruction to the end of the Jim Crow era of segregation). She found evidence of Iberia Parish Blacks who were activists, public servants, philanthropists, professionals, and more during the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras. Sadly, much of that history was suppressed by racist leaders of the day whose aim was to erase any evidence of Black success during the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras. Dr. Hayes understood the importance of these records to the development of a true and inclusive history of Iberia Parish. Just as importantly, she recognized the need for the creation of an organization that would focus on reclaiming, preserving, and teaching that history.

In the spring of 2017, Dr. Hayes founded the Iberia African American Historical Society (IAAHS) for the purpose of researching, disseminating, preserving, and commemorating the history of African Americans in Iberia Parish. The organization was incorporated by the State of Louisiana on August 02, 2017 and on February 23, 2018 IAAHS was approved by the federal government as a nonprofit (501c3) organization. Dr. Hayes is President of the 9-member board of directors and co-editor of its new annual journal to be launched Spring 2020. As president, she has prepared and submitted applications for state historic markers which were approved:

- (1) To honor Louisiana's first Black woman physician, New Iberia native, Dr. Emma Wakefield Paillet; and
- (2) To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the 1944 expulsion of all the Black doctors and NAACP leaders from Iberia Parish.

(3) To commemorate one of Iberia Parish's earliest schools for African Americans and Booker T. Washington's historic visit to the school in 1915.

The Wakefield-Paillet marker is located in the historic district of New Iberia on Main Street in Bouligny Plaza; and the 1944 Expulsion marker is located in the vicinity of the parish courthouse at 500 French Street. The marker commemorating the history of Howe Institute will be installed in 2021 at its original site (now, the Iberia Parish Courthouse).

In 2018 Dr. Hayes prepared and submitted an application to the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH) on behalf of IAAHS for a Rebirth Grant to teach the community about the 1944 Expulsion of the doctors and NAACP. The grant was funded.

Dr. Hayes has made several local and state presentations on the history of African Americans in Louisiana and Iberia Parish (including such organizations as Leadership Lafayette Academy (2020); the Beauregard Keyes House, New Orleans (2019); the 2018 Louisiana Association of Museums Convention, Baton Rouge; the 2018 National Humanities Convention, New Orleans; the National Park Service Acadian Cultural Center, 2019). She has been featured locally and state-wide in newspaper articles and podcast, radio and television interviews.

Dr. Hayes is currently a member of several nonprofit organization boards and organizations including: The Bayou Teche Museum of New Iberia, The Vermilionville Living History Museum of Lafayette, The UL Ernest Gaines Center, The UL Roy House, and the St. Luc French Immersion Advisory Board (Arnaudville, LA). She has served as a consultant/advisor to The Shadows Along the Teche (New Iberia) and is newly appointed to the Iberia Parish Tourism Commission (2019-2020). Dr. Hayes is a member of the state-wide genealogy organization, Le Comité des Archives de La Louisiane. In 2016 and 2017 she organized Le Comité's Summer African American Genealogy seminars. She arranged for the 2016 Summer seminar to be held at The Whitney Plantation in Wallace, LA and the 2017 Summer seminar to be held at the UL Ernest Gaines Center. Her past board memberships include the Board of Trustees of the Episcopal School of Acadiana (2002-2005), Woman's Foundation Inc. (2004-2010), Bayou Girl Scouts Council (1999-2002), and others.

Honors and recognitions include, life-time member of the National Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi (2002-present); one of Acadiana Lifestyle Magazine's "Most Interesting People of 2020"; one of Acadiana Profile Magazine's Trailblazers of 2019; 2012 Outstanding Alumni of the UL College of Education; and others.

Dr. Hayes is currently preparing manuscripts for publication about the history of African Americans in Iberia Parish, including a book of poetry and prose she is co-authoring with poet Margaret Simon on the life of Dr. Emma Wakefield. She is also working on manuscripts about the history of NECO TOWN (one of Iberia Parish's historically Black communities settled by Black families at the end of the Civil War); and about the early Black doctors and dentists of Iberia Parish. Recently two of Dr. Hayes' essays have been published ("Emma Wakefield-Paillet, MD: The First African American Woman in Louisiana to Earn a Medical Degree and Practice Medicine", 64 Parishes, Fall 2019) and ("Uncovering History: Discovering the Roles of African Americans in New Iberia's and Louisiana's Past and Healing the Present and Future", Acadiana Profile Magazine, Feb/March 2020).



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