Southern Mutual Help Association, Inc. (SMHA)
June 2026

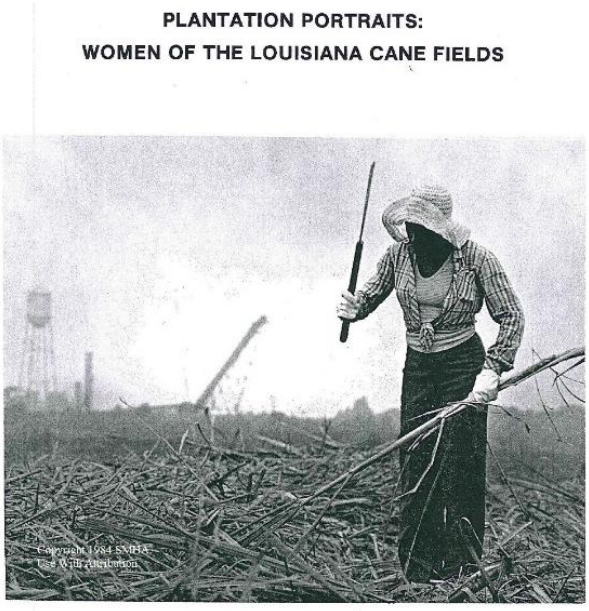
SMHA continues our mission to "build strong, healthy, prosperous rural communities". Rural America and Rural Louisiana have always been at the heart of what we do whether it be small communities, farmers or fishers. It is critical to have a prosperous economy, better health and is essential to preserve the culture of Rural America and Rural Louisiana.

Health Care

SMHA has continued our work with the Hopkins Street Economic Development District (HSEDD) commissioned by the Louisiana legislature. President Lorna Bourg is the advisor to the local commission. This is a community of 10,000 of the 30,000 population of the City of New Iberia. SMHA is the advisor on the health clinic previously determined by charrettes held decades ago to improve the health of women and children and persons of color. HSEDD is committed to economic revitalization, sustainable development and improved quality of life for New Iberia's historic West End.

Plantation Portraits – Women of the Louisiana Cane Fields

SMHA is currently partnering with Dr. Phebe A. Hayes, Founder and President of the Iberia African American Historical Society, to reproduce SMHA's 30 year book – "*Plantation Portraits – Women of the Louisiana Cane Fields*" to renew what is true concerning the status of women in agriculture. Women have historically been "not seen and not counted." This partnership includes several poet laureates and writers and will show how together the women row by row planted the sugarcane economy, and they WILL BE SEEN AND COUNTED.



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L-R: Poet *Suzanne Wiltz*, SMHA's President *Lorna Bourg*, 2019 Louisiana Poet Laureate *John Warner Smith*, SMFS President & IAAHS President *Phebe Hayes*, and Educator *Karen Dugas*.