



Contact: Regi Reyes

(504) 520-5240 | [rreyes@xula.edu](mailto:rreyes@xula.edu)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Two renowned musicians, including Xavier Professor, to shed new light on New Orleans as the home of the blues**

**New Orleans, La** – For several years, renowned New Orleans musician Dr. Michael White, a professor of Spanish in Xavier University of Louisiana’s Department of Languages, and guitarist, singer, actor and author Chris Thomas King have conducted independent research on the origin of one of the most popular and influential original American music forms, the blues. On Sunday, October 16, the two will challenge universally accepted beliefs and shed new light on the genre in a joint presentation of discussion and performance.

Held at 3 p.m. on Xavier’s campus in the University’s McCaffrey Ballroom on the University Center’s third floor, Dr. White and King will talk and perform in the program *New Orleans: Home of the Blues*. Their research has concluded that Louisiana, particularly New Orleans, is the most likely birthplace of the blues. Dr. White and King are using their performance to call for the reconsideration of the importance of New Orleans in blues history.

Beyond the performance of Dr. White and King, the event will also include performances by vocalist Topsy Chapman and Dr. White’s Original Liberty Jazz Band. Admission is free and open to the public.

The blues has extended beyond its late 19th-century origins to become a foundation for several musical styles, including all forms of jazz, boogie-woogie piano, rhythm & blues, and rock & roll, while also influencing other musical genres. The blues continues to have its own unique style evolution, with blues songs and structures remaining ever-present through radio, live performances, television, advertisements, and films.

Widely acclaimed jazz clarinetist and the Rosa and Charles Keller Endowed Chair in the Humanities/New Orleans Music and Culture at Xavier, Dr. White has been a leading figure in traditional New Orleans jazz for over forty years. He has made more than one hundred recordings, composed multitudinous songs, traveled extensively for his music and has received numerous awards and honors. Dr. White has also appeared in various films and is a protagonist of the newly released documentary “City of a Million Dreams.”

Dr. White aims to show that, although New Orleans is rightly known as “the birthplace of jazz,” the city should also be considered among the nation’s major blues capitals based on its early blues singers, published music and key musical elements found in early jazz.

“Many early generation jazz musicians called all of the music ‘blues’ or ‘ragtime,’” **explained Dr. White.** “We don’t generally think of Louis Armstrong this way, but from the perspective of being a composer, accompanist, singer, and instrumentalist, he is very much a blues artist.”

King, the Grammy Award-winning blues guitarist and singer, is also a well-known actor who has been featured in several films, including “Oh Brother Where Art Thou,” “Soul of A Man,” “Ray,” and “Kill Switch.” King will present material from his years of research and his recently released book “The Blues: The Authentic Narrative of My Music and Culture,” which calls for a rethinking of the generally believed origin of blues music as the Mississippi Delta. His extensive investigation into Mississippi and Louisiana history and music, as well as early blues and jazz recordings, have led to several new theories about the sources of early blues music. Since the early Mississippi artists didn’t record until the 1920s, King believes that some writers may have created a false narrative about the origins of blues and its early practitioners to suit their own cultural misperceptions about African Americans.

“There were no people living in that part of the Delta during the time that folklorists claim as the origin place of the blues,” said King.

The latest installment in the Xavier University of Dr. White’s long-running “Culture of New Orleans” lecture series, the program on Sunday will highlight aspects of the city’s unique culture by combining authentic practitioners and scholars in discussion and performance.

For further information on this program, please email Dr. Michael White at: [mwhite@xula.edu](mailto:mwhite@xula.edu)

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### **About Xavier University of Louisiana**

*Xavier University of Louisiana, America’s only historically Black and Catholic University, is ranked among the top three HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) in the nation. Recognized as a national leader in STEM and health sciences, Xavier produces more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Additionally, Xavier’s College of Pharmacy is also among the top producers of African American pharmacists in the country.*

*Established in 1925, by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a place for African American and Native Americans to receive quality education, Xavier has since expanded its programs in art, business, education, biological sciences, chemistry, pharmacy and political science. More recent additions in robotics, bioinformatics, engineering, data science, neuroscience and genetics, in addition to new STEM-based master’s programs, have provided Xavier students (2,749 undergraduates and 849 graduates) an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities and life experiences. Xavier students collaborate with world-renowned faculty, who are experts in their fields, to produce award-winning research and notable work. The winning Xavier formula*

*is to provide students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls, thereby facilitating a more just and humane society for all. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit us online at [www.xula.edu](http://www.xula.edu) or contact Regi Reyes at (504) 520-5425 or [rreyes@xula.edu](mailto:rreyes@xula.edu).*



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