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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Xavier University of Louisiana Mourns Sybil Haydel Morial: XULA Alumna, long-time staff member, mother to one New Orleans Mayor and wife to another

New Orleans – The Xavier community mourns the passing of Sybil Haydel Morial, a member of the class of 1952 and a long-serving administrator at Xavier for 28 years. She was 92 years old.

An activist, Civil Rights champion, and purveyor of class and graceful leadership, Haydel Morial was shaped by her lived experience of growing up in New Orleans in the '30s and '40s, a time when Black folks weren't free to move about at leisure. That, coupled with her curiosity, led her to carve out change, not just for herself but for many others who benefited from her zest and spunk.

“Our love and prayers go out to the family of Sybil Haydel Morial. We remember her generous life and legacy and the deep, lasting connections that she and her family have maintained with Xavier University of Louisiana over many decades; we are inspired by her activism, leadership, steadfastness, and commitment to serve,” said Reynold Verret, Ph.D., President of Xavier University of Louisiana. “She has been [a] neighbor to many, as taught in the parable of the Samaritan. A member of Xavier’s class of 1952 and an administrator here for 28 years, our university has been greatly blessed by her intellectual and personal gifts that manifest not only on this campus but throughout New Orleans, Louisiana, and worldwide. Her gift to all is enduring, and she will be sorely missed.”

While Haydel Morial began her higher education at Xavier, she completed her undergraduate studies at Boston University, at the same time Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. worked on his doctoral degree. Haydel Morial relished life outside of Deep South segregation and politics in Boston, but New Orleans still tugged at her roots. Upon the Brown V. Board of Education decision, she returned to her beloved hometown and successfully enrolled in Tulane University for two courses until they noticed ‘Negro’ checked off on her registration forms – she was asked to leave and later rejected from nearby Loyola for the same reason. This further fueled her dreams for an inclusive environment. She returned to Boston to finish her graduate studies and began her professional life.

In 1955, she married fellow Xavierite Ernest “Dutch” Morial ('51), who at the time had just become an example of Civil Rights as he had been the first African American to receive a law degree from Louisiana State University the year before wedding Haydel Morial. He would later continue to make history as New Orleans’ first Black mayor. “Dutch,” with his fearless activist wife at his side, began a career of prominence in civic engagement in the fight for equity and equality.

Racial rejection continued to rev Haydel Morial’s quest, and upon being disqualified from membership in the League of Women Voters, she and several other women formed their own organization, CiCulSo (Civic, Cultural, and Social Organization). The organization evolved into the Louisiana League of Good Government –a racially inclusive group of women that pursued voting rights and ensured voter rolls included Black people. As tensions rose in the '60s, Haydel Morial fought even harder. In 1963, she filed lawsuits against the Orleans Parish School Board for enforcing a law that prevented Orleans Parish teachers from advocating for integration or belonging to associations that favored integration. A New Orleans Public Schools teacher, she offered cultural awareness as a Civil Rights champion and community organizer.

In 1977, Haydel Morial returned to Xavier University of Louisiana, where she served for 28 years, retiring in 2005 as Vice President for External Affairs. Throughout the decades, the Haydel Morial family has been deeply connected to Xavier in various capacities, encompassing time, talent, and treasure.

In an interview for [The Xavier Story Project](#), Haydel Morial reflected on the significance of returning to New Orleans in the wake of civic uprisings and Xavier's legacy.

"Even though we loved the freedoms of the North, we all wanted to go back to the South to be a part of the change when it came. And we did," said Haydel Morial.

Haydel Morial also talked about her beloved historically Black university and the cultural hub it was, from creating opera opportunities for Black singers to being a haven for the Freedom Riders, among other significant civic engagement and equitable efforts.

Her great legacy will continue to inspire the next generation of leaders and agents of change, and she was a shining example of Xavier's mission to promote a more just and humane society that is instilled in every Xavierite.



The Xavier community is deeply saddened by the passing of

SYBIL HAYDEL MORIAL, '52

Activist, Civil Rights champion, and purveyor of class and graceful leadership

November 26, 1932 - September 4, 2024

100
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About Xavier University of Louisiana

On the cusp of celebrating its first 100 years of service, Xavier University of Louisiana remains America's only historically Black and Catholic University and is ranked among the top HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) in the nation. Recognized as a national leader in STEM and health sciences, Xavier has historically produced 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 among the country's top producers of African American pharmacists.

Established almost a century ago in 1925 by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a place for African Americans and Native Americans to receive a quality education, Xavier has since expanded its programs in nearly every industry, including the arts, sciences, business, education, pharmacy, and political science. More recent additions in STEM-based master's programs and undergraduate options in robotics, bioinformatics, engineering, data science, neuroscience, and genetics, have provided Xavier students (3,181 students) an unbeatable experience of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities, and life experiences. Xavier students collaborate with world-renowned faculty and experts in their fields to produce award-winning research and notable work. The winning Xavier formula provides students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls,

developing all who choose to learn at the institution into the next generation of leaders and agents of positive change. Blessed with a mission to promote a more just and humane society, Xavier is leading the way to a brighter future for all. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana, visit www.XULA.edu or contact the Marketing and Communications Department at (504) 520-5214 or XULANews@XULA.edu.