

From The Chair

**HI FAMILY. I’M PASTOR SHARON, CHAIR OF THE
2016 SMOOTH SAILING WITH BLS FAMILY REUNION
IN _____ ARIZONA**

We’ve been hard at work planning for the several days our family will come together next year and have identified efforts we hope you will want to be a part. Become a sponsor, volunteer on the BLS website or email us to submit an article, head one of several multi-media efforts to inform the family, and/or fundraise (E-bay, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) Let’s together continue our tradition of ever building family and celebrating and documenting our rich heritage for future generations. Here’s what settled so far:

Date: July 22-24, 2016

PRICE: TBD

Location: WILD HORSE PASS RESORT AND CASINO (1)

**BE A SPONSOR OF THE BLS FAMILY REUNION
WE’LL LINK YOUR WEBPAGE HERE (2)**

**NOTE: ALL FAMILY ACHIEVERS/VOLUNTEERS,
ATHLETES, DOCTORS, EDUCATORS, ENTERTAINERS,
ENTREPRENUERS, INDIAN CHIEFS, LAWYERS,
MINISTERS, TECHIES, WRITERS, ETCS**

MEET THE FAMILY, (page 2) is reserved to showcase family, achievements, interests, skills, abilities, and talents. So tell us who you are; write an oral history about a family member;

AND/OR

VOLUNTEER or PROVIDE RESOURCES for planning and staging a successful 2016 BLS Family Reunion.

Visit the BLS website or email Riley Austin-Rochester and list your achievements/interest/skills/abilities, or if you want to volunteer.

OUR UNIQUE AND RICH HERITAGE

REFLECTIONS

When I began thinking about what I should write, I found myself reflecting upon past reunions. In fact, I went back to our very first reunion which was held the summer of 1985. Lena, my grandmother, was about to celebrate her 85th birthday. Some of you or your family members may have been there to celebrate with us. It was a huge success, and if we had not missed a year in our reunion schedule, this year would have been the (30th) thirtieth year anniversary. Then, our main focus was Baptiste and Sampson branches, but I foresee expanded participation for our Lavalais branch. I’d enjoy seeing just how we all fit together. In order to do this, I am appealing to all branches (Batiste, Sampson, and especially Lavalais), to share your knowledge of our family’s history. We will then write about it or publish your writing in this newsletter.

Let me share with you what I know. My grandmother, Bertheline Lavalais was the daughter of Phannie and Philjuance Lavallais/Lavalle. She was the twelfth child of sixteen children. Her brothers were Arthur, Joseph, Edward, Jules, Willie, Johnnie, Narcies, Louis, and Lester. She had several sisters: twins, who were younger than she, Cora and Corrine; and other sisters Mary Victoria, Inez, and Rosa. For many years, it appears that they lived in the same ward as the Baptiste. In fact, they lived so close together, that two brothers ended up marrying two sisters. Jules married my grandmother Lena, and Clabert married her older sister, Rosa.

Are any of these names familiar to you? I’d love to hear from you! We’ll compare and consolidate notes to re-establish the three branches as one community while preserving our history and rich heritage for future generations.

Also, I’d love to have you join us next year in Arizona to celebrate who we are as a unique people in the context of the broader American and African-American experiences/traditions.



- FIND GERTRUDE (TRUDY) WILLIAMS ON FACEBOOK, ON THE BLS WEBSITE, OR EMAIL HER -



BUILDING FAMILY -----CELEBRATING HERITAGE

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[ENTREPRENEURS: SPONSOR THE BLS FAMILY REUNION. WE'LL LINK YOUR WEB PAGE HERE. \(2\)](#)

CREOLE: OUR LANGUAGE RECOGNIZED WORLDWIDE

COMING SOON- ORIGINS OF OUR CREOLE LANGUAGE

LOUISIANA

BIRTHPLACE OF OUR ANCESTORS. Can you find Avoyelles (ah-voile) Parish?

Share your maps, descriptions, and pictures of Louisiana landscapes.



Mary Catherine Batiste Thompson is the 11th child of Lena Lavallais and Jules Batiste. One of three surviving siblings and youngest of eight girls and three boys; who is she? She is aunt to nieces and nephews older than she. Named after her paternal or maternal grandmother, she was born at 4 pm in Mansura, Louisiana. 4pm in Creole (quatre) is pronounced, "Catra" thus her middle name Catherine was fashioned for the hour of her birth. Her First memory of her family was her 7th birthday. She had no idea that her birthday was on December 5. Year redacted to protect her privacy. Her sister Rose asked rhetorically, "do you know what today is? No she replied. Rose said, "It's your birthday." Needless to say, she called her Sister "Mama." Rose was only 12 at the time. She could always count on her sister for help and advice. Her sense of style and color and fashion is the result of the sister she called "Mama." Mary remembers her yearly birthday calls and \$10.00 gifts she received from her sister. She loved her sister and told her so after every telephone call. Most of all Mary attributes her family values and privacy to her sister Rose Mary Batiste Williams. Newsletter contributor: Linda Felder (Submit articles to Riley Austin-Rochester or visit BLS website)

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