

**BLERD
20FEST!
NEW 25
ORLEANS**

PRESS KIT

WHAT IS BLERDFEST!?

There has been exponential growth in the popularity and influence of “Nerd” culture in recent years – a culture defined by its passionate pursuit of unique interests in **Geekdom**, **the Arts**, and **Academia**.

Representations of that culture often exclude the Black *experience*, the Black *stories*, and the Black *Storytellers*.

We, as Black Nerds, or “**Blerds**,” are trying to change that.

BLERDFEST!, the Gulf Coast’s first & only *Black Nerd Festival*, is about *representation*, *education*, and *inclusion*. It is *for us*, *by us*, *about us*.

We will be returning Saturday, May 17, 2025, 11 am - 6 pm
McDonogh 35 College Preparatory High School
4000 Cadillac St, NOLA, 70122

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OUR MISSION

We had our first event in 2019, fueled by the idea that in a city known worldwide for its epic festivals, Blerds shouldn't have to hop on a plane and spend their money elsewhere to celebrate their own culture. COVID deferred our '20-'22 dreams, but we re-emerged from that unexpected hiatus in 2023 with a renewed focus on helping to facilitate the growth of this energetically unique community.

We are dedicated to creating a safe space for all POC to geek out about Nerd culture, to promoting the pursuit of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) to our community's youth, to showcasing Black professionals in Blerdy fields, and to creating events that *entertain, educate, encourage, and enrich* all members of our community.

We are to many Cons what  PBS is to .

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Supported by a grant from the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, in cooperation with the Louisiana State Arts Council, as administered by Arts New Orleans. Funding has also been provided by the National Endowment of the Arts.

10% OF PROCEEDS GO TO:

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WHO IS BLERDFEST!?

TRUE



PLANNING COMMITTEE

CEO: AWARD-WINNING, INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED ARTIST WITH 30+ YEAR CAREER AS A DESIGNER, PROFESSOR, LECTURER & PRODUCER OF PUBLIC ART PROGRAMS...

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RETURNING MAY 17, 2023

LUISA FUENTES, ESQ



PLANNING COMMITTEE

COO: MANAGING ATTORNEY FOR A FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER ADVOCATING FOR ABUSE SURVIVORS; HAS ALSO PERFORMED IN COMMUNITY THEATER; LOVES TO BAKE...

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HANNAH BEACHLER



PLANNING COMMITTEE OSCAR WINNER

CREATIVE CONSULTANT: IN 2019, SHE BECAME THE 1ST BLACK PERSON & 1ST WOMAN TO BE NOMINATED & TO WIN AN OSCAR FOR PRODUCTION DESIGN...

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DR. CRYSTAL BOBB-SEMPLER



PLANNING COMMITTEE

EDUCATIONAL DIRECTOR: EXPERT IN THE USE OF COMMUNITY LITERACY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY PRACTICE TO IMPROVE READING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS...

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JALEESA JACKSON



PLANNING COMMITTEE

PROJECT MANAGER: ACTIVIST; NON-PROFIT COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT; CO-FOUNDER & CO-CAPTAIN OF WOMEN OF WAKANDA; COSPLAYER...

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DR. JENNIFER BAGNERIS



PLANNING COMMITTEE

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR: GRANT WRITING, FUNDRAISING, AND EVENT PLANNING CONSULTANT FOR LOCAL NON-PROFITS; FEMINIST; WRITER; EDUCATOR, DOULA...

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WHO IS BLERDFEST!?

PARIS WILLOUGHBY



PLANNING COMMITTEE

OPERATIONS MANAGER; AUTHOR; COMMUNITY COORDINATOR; CREATIVE STYLIST; EDUCATOR; HISTORIAN; POLICY ANALYST; STUDIO ARTIST...

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JASMINE WALKER



PLANNING COMMITTEE

ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR; NOLA NATIVE; EX-MUSIC EDUCATOR; SEWIST (AKA SHIRATORI HIME COSPLAY); SHE'S MADE COSTUMES FOR ENTIRE PARADE KREWES...

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WANKEETA JACKSON



PLANNING COMMITTEE

ORGANIZATIONAL CONSULTANT; NON-PROFIT LEADER; FOUNDER OF WOMEN OF WAKANDA, A BLACK WOMEN-CENTERED COLLECTIVE; ENTREPRENEUR; COSPLAYER...

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VALENCIA PLEASANT



PLANNING COMMITTEE

GENERAL MANAGER; K-8 MUSIC TEACHER; SMALL BUSINESS OWNER; EVENT PRODUCER; MEZZO-SOPRANO WITH OPERACRÉOLE AND THE NEW ORLEANS OPERA...

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DR. SONITA SINGH



PLANNING COMMITTEE

COMMUNITY LIAISON; FOUNDER OF AN ORG THAT USES AI TO ADDRESS POVERTY; LSU RESEARCH PROFESSOR; CO-CAPT. OF WOMEN OF WAKANDA; AVID COSPLAYER...

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KIMMIE THOMAS, JD



PLANNING COMMITTEE

IGL FOUNDATION

TECH CAREER SPECIALIST; HEAD OF SEVERAL NON-PROFITS; THRIVES IN TEACHING LAW, GAMING CAREER PATHS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND BUSINESS RELATIONS TO YOUTH...

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PAST EVENTS

We've averaged 250 Attendees/year to our first three events (our target attendance for 2024 is 500). The following is a sample of our offerings:



INTERVIEW: Oscar-winning Production Designer Hannah Beachler showed us how she and Ryan Coogler designed the world of Wakanda.



ACTIVITIES: A Cosplay Throwdown, video & table gaming tournaments, and hands-on workshops were just a few of the ways to engage.



PANEL: Local Journalists, Poets, and Writers weighed in to answer the question: What is AFROFUTURISM and where is it taking the Black community?



KIDS' CORNER: Microsoft sponsored a workshop where the littlest Blerds could play video games or explore the world of coding.



PANEL: Award-winning Content Creators and Industry Professionals discussed how the representation of Blerd culture has evolved.



VENDORS: Our Vendor Hall offered comic books, toys, games, costumes, clothes, and other Blerdy merch that we can't live without.

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OUR GUESTS

Our Invited Guests have included **Academics, Actors, Artists, Cosplayers, Filmmakers, Musicians, Writers** and other POC Creatives, with a particular focus on the Entertainment Industry. The following is a sampling of projects on which they've worked:

12 YEARS A SLAVE

A DIFFERENT WORLD

AMERICAN HORROR STORY

AVATAR

BATMAN

BEYONCÉ LEMONADE

the book of CLARENCE

BLACK ADAM

BLACK DYNAMITE

BLACK LIGHTNING

BLACK PANTHER

#COLOR PURPLE

COMING TO AMERICA

CREED

DAREDEVIL

DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

DJANGO UNCHAINED

Do THE RIGHT THING

THE EXPANSE

THE FALCON AND THE WINTER SOLDIER

FEAR THE WALKING DEAD

FINAL DESTINATION

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

Genius: Aretha

GODZILLA

THE GRUDGE

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

HARLEM

I'M A VIRGO

ANNE RIDE'S INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE

IRON MAN

JOKER

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

LUKE CAGE

MS MARVEL

NCIS: NEW ORLEANS

THE PURGE

QUEEN SUGAR

RAISING DION

ROOTS

SPIDER-MAN

STAR TREK

THE SUICIDE SQUAD

TILL

TREME

TRUE DETECTIVE

the twilight saga

Waiting to Exhale

THE WIRE

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PRESS COVERAGE

The following is a sampling of the coverage we have received from TV, radio, print, and online news outlets, which have a combined audience in the millions:



TV: 50,000/NIGHT
ONLINE: 1.4M/MONTH



LISTENERS:
100,000/WEEK



LISTENERS:
40,000/WEEK




VIEWERSHIP:
54,400/NIGHT



PRINT: 77,565/WEEK
ONLINE: 3.8M/MONTH



PRINT: 60,000/MONTH
ONLINE: 291,666/MONTH



CIRCULATION:
98,000/WEEK



IG FOLLOWERS: 20,600



CIRCULATION:
36,000/WEEK

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MEDIA INTERVIEWS

7:46

WWOZ INTERVIEW



MAY 16, 2024: NEW ORLEANS MUSIC SHOW'S MICHAEL DOMINICI TALKS WITH BLERDFEST!'S CREATOR TRUE...

BLERD 20FEST! NEW 24 ORLEANS

2:09

WDSU INTERVIEW



MARCH 31, 2023: WDSU NEWS 6'S GINA SWANSON GETS THE INSIDE SCOOP FROM BLERDFEST!'S PLANNING COMMITTEE...

BLERD 20FEST! NEW 23 ORLEANS

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13:56

WWOZ INTERVIEW



MARCH 27, 2023: NEW ORLEANS MUSIC SHOW'S MURF REEVES TALKS WITH BLERDFEST!'S CREATOR TRUE...

BLERD 20FEST! NEW 23 ORLEANS

6:13

WRNO INTERVIEW



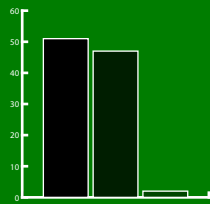
MARCH 26, 2023: THE WEEK IN GEEK'S DAVID D2 PICKS THE BRAIN OF BLERDFEST!'S CREATOR TRUE...

BLERD 20FEST! NEW 23 ORLEANS

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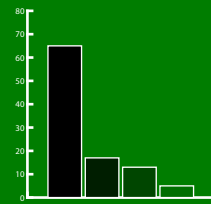
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ATTENDEE DEMOGRAPHICS



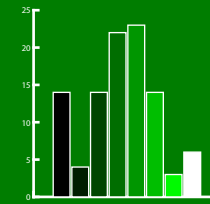
GENDER

- Female: 51%
- Male: 47%
- Non-binary/Other: 2%



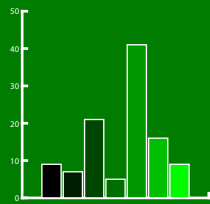
HOME CITY

- NOLA: 65%
- Near NOLA (e.g. Destrehan; Gretna; Hammond; Slidell): 17%
- Other Louisiana (e.g. BR; Shreveport): 13%
- Out of State (e.g. FL; TN; NY): 5%



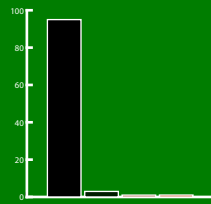
AGE

- 0-12: 14%
- 13-17: 4%
- 18-24: 14%
- 25-34: 22%
- 35-44: 23%
- 45-54: 14%
- 55-64: 3%
- 65+: 6%



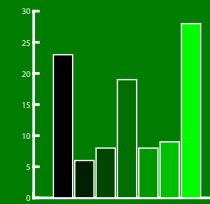
EDUCATION

- Some high school: 9%
- High school grad: 7%
- Some college: 21%
- Associates: 5%
- Bachelors: 41%
- Masters: 16%
- Phd+: 9%



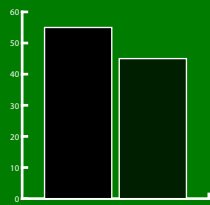
RACE/ETHNICITY

- Black/Black+: 95%
- White: 3%
- Arab/M. Eastern: 1%
- LatinX: 1%



ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

- <\$20K: 23%
- \$20K-\$29K: 6%
- \$30K-\$39K: 8%
- \$40K-\$49K: 19%
- \$50K-\$59K: 8%
- \$60K-\$69K: 9%
- \$70K+: 28%



INTENTION

- Out-of-town Attendees who came to NOLA for other reason: 55%
- Out-of-town Attendees who came to NOLA for the event: 45%

KEY STATS:

- **EDUCATION:** Attendees hold BAs at 17.2% higher than the national average; MAs at 22.69% higher; and PhDs at a whopping 343.34% higher.
- **INCOME:** 38% of Attendees have household incomes above NOLA median, with the largest percentage at or above \$70K.

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH
FOR YOUR INTEREST!**

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