

## Speaker series brings awareness to Native American issues

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Tribal communities in the Deep South, such as the United Houma Nation and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, have struggled with social issues as a result of historical discrimination and segregation enforced by state and federal policies for decades.

This spring, the Tulane University [School of Social Work](#) is hosting a special three-part Native American Speakers Series to promote awareness of current tribal struggles as well as provide insight into the strengths and advocacy efforts of indigenous populations for healing and hope in contemporary society.

"The series is an opportunity for Tulane students, faculty and staff members to engage with local tribal leaders and learn more about the native perspective on cultural diversity and civil rights," says Elaine Wright, director of the [Office of Global Programs](#) at the school. "It's a unique chance to learn more about this often underrepresented group in our country."

The first lecture, at noon on Tuesday (Feb. 16), will feature Harold Comby, deputy director of public safety for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, who will discuss "Cultural Diversity and Healing Among Mississippi Choctaw Indians." Comby has spent the past 15 years in public safety for the Mississippi Choctaw Indians.

On March 17, Lora Ann Chaisson, a Tribal Council member of the United Houma Nation and program manager for the Institute for Indian Development, will discuss "Impact of Civil Rights and Federal Recognition on the Houma Nation." Chaisson called the 1964 Civil Rights Act "a key moment in her tribe's history."

The final speaker is Gary Ben, a member and analyst with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribal Government, who will speak on April 12 about "A Choctaw's Journey and a Life with Meaning."

Each hour-long event will be held in Room 343 at the Tulane School of Social Work, 127 Elk Place in downtown New Orleans. All the lectures are free and open to the public.

*Joseph Halm is marketing/communications coordinator for the Tulane School of Social Work.*