

A Brief History of The Gardens at 1653 N Robertson Street from 2007-current



2007-2008: The Porch Cultural Organization & University of Kansas

2007 Donated by Nagin administration to NHS
 2007-2008 NHS works with The Porch Cultural Organization, run by [Willie Birch](#) and [Ron Bechet](#), who still support the project to create a community garden. [The University of Kansas Architecture](#) school added a shed and shade structure costing ~\$53,000. The space hosted afterschool programming and monthly events called 7th Ward Speaks curated by Nat "The Plug" Williams.



2009-2013: The Porch After School Program & Garden Club

The Porch places the property in the care of its next door neighbor Jackie Sumell and Emily Posner. Contractual leases were agreed upon between NHS, The Porch and New Orleans Food & Farm Network (NOFFN). The garden continues to grow food for the neighborhood, introducing after school programming and a salad club.

- 2009 Jay Z's Shawn Carter Foundation donates \$2,000
- 2010 Emily Posner fundraises and completes poison ivy remediation, \$3,000
- 2011 Emily and Jackie crowdsource and complete fire remediation \$2,500
- 2013 Emily & Jackie fundraise for 7th Ward Garden Club, \$4,000





2013-2015: 7th Ward Boys & Girls Garden Club

Under the supervision of Emily Posner & Jackie Sumell the garden continued to operate as a safe space and sanctuary for kids in the Lower 7th Ward; including after school programming, garden club, chess club and also hosting birthday parties and community celebrations. The gardens also provided healthy food and sustenance to the neighbors, including Miss Joyce Montana, who adored the garden.



2014: First Solitary Garden Built

On the one year anniversary of [Herman Wallace's](#) passing, the first [Solitary Gardens](#) was built on site and dedicated to The Angola 3. This Solitary Garden was grown in collaboration with Albert Woodfox who was incarcerated in his 44th year of confinement. Solitary Gardens is internationally renowned, widely celebrated, and has received funding from Nathan Cummings Foundation and Soros Foundation (\$9,000).



7thwardsunshinegarden
Seventh Ward



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2016-2018: 7th Ward Sunshine & Rainbow Garden

The garden maintained its community commitments but changed names becoming the 7th Ward Sunshine and Rainbows Garden Club which continued afterschool programming and summer garden camps. Images from 7th Ward Sunshine [Instagram page](#).



2018-2020: A Garden to DYE For

Through Antenna Gallery's Platform Fund (\$6,000), another caretaker of the property, Kelsey Reynolds began "A Garden to Dye For" for children in the neighborhood. The programming included natural dye and weaving workshops. Following damage from Hurricane Zeta, the shade structure was removed for safety reasons.



2020- Ongoing: The Abolitionist's Sanctuary

Through generous funding of Kaepernick Publishing (\$20,000), the gardens emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic as [The Abolitionist's Sanctuary](#), a space dedicated to restorative justice, community programming and exploring the various ways that plants teach us about alternatives to incarceration. We recently added a pond supporting wetlands education. As part of the larger [Growing Abolition](#), The Sanctuary works in tandem with [The John Thompson Legacy Center](#), formerly RAE, located around the corner at 1212 St Bernard Avenue. We plan to dedicate The Sanctuary to the life and legacy of [Albert Woodfox](#) shown here in the gardens with young organizers from the Mississippi Freedom Caucus who, like many, have been deeply affected by his NY Times best-selling autobiography [Solitary](#).

