

Resource Set: Huey Long
By Simon Drakeford, Tulane University

As a bright, argumentative, and ambitious boy from Winn Parish, Huey Long knew exactly what he wanted to be: first a lawyer, then a civil servant, then governor, then senator, and finally a candidate for president of the United States. He had two simple messages that shaped Louisiana for years: “every man a king” and later, “share our wealth.” He purposefully made enemies from the old political machines of New Orleans to the Oval Office itself, and often came out the victor with the backing of his army: the people of Louisiana who felt they had been left behind by the elites in Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C., and chose Long as their prideful, rapacious, and fearless champion. Long’s aspiration to replace his Democratic rival Franklin Roosevelt as president of the United States was never fulfilled, as a gunman assassinated him in 1935 in the new state capitol building that Long had had built.

Long’s detractors painted a portrait of an abrasive dictator who was out more for himself than for the people he claimed to help, employing corruption and violence to achieve his selfish desires. But Long’s supporters excused his power-grabbing when they saw what he did with it: he provided textbooks to Louisiana schools, build thousands of miles of new bridges and roads, expanded and reformed the Louisiana State University system, and fought for the redistribution of wealth during the Great Depression. Aside from being a shrewd politician, he was a master orator who approached Louisianans like no one had before. Despite the massive outflow of anti-Long propaganda, Louisiana voted Long into the Governor’s mansion and the Senate overwhelmingly, and FDR later credited Long with the New Deal policies that provided directly to the American people.

The items in this group include propaganda from both the pro- and anti-Long camps, which highlights the vast disparities in his reputation among different groups. “The Truth Will Bury Huey Long” pamphlet lists testimonials to Long’s corruption and demagoguery, and the “anti-Long Medal” commemorates the time someone assaulted Long in a New York country club bathroom. In contrast, “Louisiana’s Future” calls for the continuation of Long’s populist policies after his death, and the sheet music for the pro-Long campaign jingle “Every Man a King” was co-written by Huey Long himself. The “Huey P. Long Letter” was written by Long to a prominent New Orleanian asking for his help in promoting his “Share Our Wealth” redistribution initiative. The photo of Huey Long leaving his father’s farm depicts a young but ambitious man dead set on fulfilling his lifelong goals by any means necessary. Also included in this collection is a first-edition copy of the novel *All the King’s Men* by Robert Penn Warren, which tells the story of Willie Stark, a Louisiana politician (based directly on Huey Long), and his relationship with a reporter who becomes his right-hand man.

The Truth Will Bury Huey Long
[MSS 112.2](#)

Huey P. Long Letter
[91-30-L](#)

Louisiana's Future
[1980.77.21](#)

Anti-Long Medal
[1984.28.18](#)

"Every Man a King" sheet music
[86-899-RL](#)

Huey P. Long Leaving His Father's Farm . . .
[1974.25.27.261](#)

All the King's Men
[76-286-RL](#)