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Sumptuary law is “a law common in the 13th to 15th centuries to prevent extravagance in private life by limiting expenditure for clothing, food, and furniture.” This law was imposed by rulers of the time to curb the expenditure of the people.

A tignon is “a piece of cloth worn as a turban headdress by Creole women from Louisiana.” It was usually made from a large piece of cloth material to form a head covering and resembled what most people know as a turban.

Sumptuary law and the history of the tignon relate to each other more than we think because of the history in New Orleans. The tignon laws were passed in 1786 by Governor Esteban Rodríguez Miró and aimed to prohibit ‘creole women of color from displaying excessive attention to dress in the streets of New Orleans’. With this law in place, it mandated that they must wear a tignon to cover their hair. This law was put into place because during that time period there was a growth in the black population in Louisiana which was previously under Spanish rule. This sumptuary law was made in hopes that “it would control women ‘who had become too light-skinned or who dressed too elegantly, or who competed too freely with white women for status and thus threatened the social order.’” Creole women were starting to be seen as a threat and the governor tried to maintain the “racial economy of slavery”. In response to these new laws, the women decided to turn their tignon into statements. They started to decorate them with jewels and feathers to catch the eye of others. They didn’t let the law stop them from expressing themselves.