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Module Introduction

Trouble the Water represents collaboration between two filmmakers, Tia Lessin and Carl Deal, and their subject, Kimberly Roberts, a Ninth Ward resident and aspiring hip hop artist who stars in the film. The film incorporates eyewitness home video (approximately 15 minutes) shot by Ms. Roberts the day before and the day of Katrina into a broader feature-length personal account that illuminates powerful political issues as well as a shaming indifference to the populace of New Orleans by the government over two years. Of note is the musical thread that binds it all together. Through the narrative craft of storytelling and use of music, a syncretic insider's picture of Katrina emerges, a chronological lexicon of images in time and space.

Indeed, of particular interest is the way the film depicts a consistent defiance of the status quo by Ms. Roberts; while she realizes that she cannot fix the social order of things, the filmmakers have captured and amplified her voice on the screen as it challenges the system. This film is historically valuable just like the city it celebrates and the disaster itself. So, why is this city so valuable to its population and to those that visit and adore it? And, as so many non-residents like to ask, why should it be preserved?

The city of New Orleans is a national icon and unique cultural treasure that should be recovered, restored and retained. The pull to New Orleans is authentic community culture: the way we do music, the way we do food and the way we do our celebrations. Added to all of this is the way local artists and ordinary residents perform, how they do what they do with virtuosity, conviction and a commitment to expression that is the basis of what we refer to as the "soul" of the Crescent City.

New Orleans is one of the unique places in America where residents do what they do culturally because it is a part of their identity and they love doing it. In essence, if the tourists, for some reason, stopped coming, the music, foodways, parades, and other celebrations would continue with the same vibrancy. Most of the cultural traditions exist without external financial support anyway, and the most traditional artists do what they do through their own personal funds. The professional musicians are paid, but for the most part other traditional performing artists are not. The exceptions are an individual or an organization may acquire an occasional grant and some outside entity may come into town requesting authentic New Orleans culture, but those that provide these performances are few in number.

In the case of outside entities, they know the draw to their constituents is the city's vernacular culture. Therefore, when conventions come to town, most want a brass band or a second line parade, a group of Black Mardi Gras Indians, and even a few Mardi Gras floats.

In addition to the conferences and conventions, television and motion picture companies have made New Orleans a major film city. So even if you are not from or have never visited New Orleans before, if you are a consumer of popular culture, you can probably think of the various instances where New Orleans and its cultural richness have been used as the context. Several television series that have run on major networks come to mind. For instance, *Frank's Place*, a sitcom about a local restaurant, local people and their situations and a periodic mentioning of local foods had a long run. The community was well aware that the idea was based on the Tremé and Seventh Ward community restaurant, Chez Helene and its celebrity chef, Austin Leslie, who evacuated the city to Atlanta and subsequently died a few months after Hurricane Katrina. As a result of his death, his funeral was the first jazz funeral and second line to be held in New Orleans after Katrina.

Another example, *K-Ville*, was an hour-long series about a single-parent detective and the various crimes that he and his partner solved along with handling their personal life situations. In this show, the television viewer from New Orleans was guaranteed to see and recognize different areas of the city that had background appearances almost on every show. These two shows are no longer on the air, but *Lawman*, a reality show with Steven Seagal as a sheriff in Jefferson Parish and *Tremé* are weekly series that are currently being filmed and aired on major networks.

New Orleans' culture, music, culinary arts, and celebrations are also featured prominently on other television channels including the Discovery Channel, Travel Channel, History Channel and Food Channel. For example, it has been featured several times on the *Weird Food Show*. Furthermore, the Hollywood film industry has certainly embraced the Crescent City for context and backgrounds in many films—those that have failed, become blockbusters as well as those who have won Oscars. James Bond has been through a few times and in one episode he had to work through the mysticism of New Orleans. Similarly, the main characters in *The Big Easy* had to work through mysticism, a trait that is also prevalent in the city due to the historical fixation with the Afro-based religion, Vodun.

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In addition, national and international visitors make the annual trek to Mardi Gras and/or to the annual New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. This festival truly showcases the music and heritage of the belle of Louisiana. In essence, New Orleans offers the world an authentic, intact, living, and everyday culture. The Mardi Gras Indians will sew their suit patches, the social aid and pleasure club members will make their anniversary regalia, the brass bands will blow their horns and beat their drums and they all will march in the streets with their parades and celebrations whether tourists and other visitors come to experience them or not. In other words, New Orleans' artists will do the same performances whether they are doing it for themselves or for visitors. Tourists and other visitors feel very special when they can join in and partake of this vernacular authenticity, which New Orleans is famous for. This is what makes the Crescent City a national icon and unique cultural treasure that should be recovered, renewed, and rebuilt.

There are many reasons why consumers of popular culture, music aficionados, and tourists would want New Orleans to be rebuilt, but there are also many identifiable behaviors in the daily lives of the communities which speak to the aspects of culture that merit attention, from second line clubs to the Mardis Gras Indians.

Module & Thematic Foci

Overview of Unit

This curriculum unit uses the lens of culture to examine the rebirth, recovery and rebuilding of the city of New Orleans and specifically the Ninth Ward. It explores culture's impact on the city and how its residents make and consume their own culture—music, Mardi Gras Indians, social aid and pleasure clubs, and jazz funerals. It not only illustrates the effects that urban environment has on the production of culture, but also how culture has influenced the identity of the city as a cultural icon by the world. The main themes for this unit are divided into five lessons. They are as follows:

- Introduction & Background: New Orleans in Historical and Cultural Context
- Lesson I The Ninth Ward Community
- Lesson II Vernacular/Root Culture in the 9th Ward
- Lesson III Musical Culture as Format for Activism and Resistance Future of Musical Legacy
- Lesson IV Community Cultural Sustainability
- Lesson V Economic Role of the Cultural Sector in the New New Orleans

The structure of the lessons is flexible, but they all have the following components:

- Introduction and Background
- Objectives
- Set Up Prior to Class
- Set Up Day of Class
- Student Motivation/Guiding Questions/Opening Activity
- Follow Up assignments

Key Concepts and Vocabulary

Resource Materials and Bibliography

The curriculum is structured for university students and out of school adult users. For instance, individual units can be used for community, civic and religious groups. The lessons require a high reading level for the majority of the readings, but there are enough readings in each section so instructors can adjust them for various levels in case someone may want to use it in a high school or a community setting with lower level reading skills.

Background Information:

New Orleans in Historical & Cultural Context

Louisiana is among the most culturally diverse states in the country. Predominantly Catholic, southern Louisiana is a part of the Gulf Coast and has been described as “South of the South” and the “Northern Caribbean.” These references are due to the Mediterranean-African roots and plantation past of the region that make it and New Orleans more akin to the societies of the French and Spanish West Indies than the rest of the American South.

There is a complex mix of Afro-French, Spanish, American Indian, German, Italian, Irish, Anglo, **Isleño**, Slavonian, and now Asian among other groups in the region. Because of this multiplicity of cultures, southern Louisiana is also called a “cultural **gumbo**” referring to the fact that all the groups in the region have blended to a certain extent—like the ingredients of the local dish—while maintaining distinctive “ethnic flavors.”

In contrast, Protestant northern Louisiana is culturally part of the upland and riverine American South. North Louisiana's mainly rural folk landscape was shaped by contact between Indian, Anglo—and African Americans in plantation, sharecropping and farmstead settings among the river bottomlands, piney woods and hills of the area. In this relatively isolated and more Anglo-influenced part of the state, the cultural groups are less overlapped than in south Louisiana. Thus the area has been compared to a “strip quilt” which is a whole piece made of many separate colored and distinct textured stripes.

To account for the subtlety and complexity of Louisiana's cultural mix and regional differences, it has sometimes been called “The **Creole State**.” Creole, from the Portuguese *crioulo* (‘native to the region’) originally referred to the European French/Spanish colonial population in Louisiana and the Caribbean region. The word later came to refer to the *gens libres de couleur* (free people of color) in Louisiana who were of mixed Afro-European descent. Today the term has many varied meanings, but usually refers to people of African, French, Spanish, and Indian descent in southern Louisiana.

The African cultural influence is by far the most influential in New Orleans. It has benefited tremendously from the presence of Africans in the colonial era. Since New Orleans was a major slave port, it had its pick of the most skilled African architects, iron workers, builders and other artisans. That's why most slave port

cities were laid out so beautifully, with exquisite architecture, iron work and craftsmanship.

The thread that binds the fabric of Louisiana culture is African. Foodways, folkways, music, dance, religion, ritual, language, vernacular architecture and style of creativity are among the many areas where this influence is evident.

In 1719, two hundred Africans were brought to New Orleans one year after it's founding. According to Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, African people had the skills and knowledge to make the newest French colony viable. Hall's research clearly illustrates the fact that the French deliberately brought people from the Senegambian region to their new colony because the Senegal Valley was similar to the Mississippi Valley, they specifically instructed the captains of the ships bringing the enslaved to "produce several blacks who knew how to cultivate rice" and also bring "three or four barrels of rice for seeding which they were to give to the Company [i.e., the Company of the Indies] upon arrival in Louisiana." Rice became the most successful food crop to be cultivated in the new French colony.

African cultural retention abounds in the region. For example, processions are an integral part of African culture and, in New Orleans, the **second line** is the archetypal expression of celebration. The second line is usually associated, outside of the area, with the jazz funeral tradition, which is only one place where it occurs. There are a variety of first lines – social aid and pleasure clubs, Mardi Gras Indian gangs, funerals, brass bands, and a variety of other, some newly created, celebrations. The name, "second line," describes the followers of the first line. These are the drummers, dancers and others who follow the primary activity and give it support. So, second line also refers to the type of dance, rhythm, organization and the procession it self. The second line and its reflection of Louisiana's Senegambian connection links us to a processional dance called the **Saba**.

In addition, Louisiana's Mardi Gras Indians reflect the influence of the American Indians. Specifically, the Plains Indians of North America are replicated in the generalized style of headpieces, also called crowns that are created. It is in the style of beadwork and suit construction where the African influence appears. The African continuum is illustrated by examples such as the work of Chiefs Bo Dollis (Wild Magnolias), Monk Boudreaux (Golden Eagles) and Larry Bannock (Golden Star Hunters) whose "Up-town style" suits reflect, in their beading technique, Nigerian influences.

The Mardi Gras Indians also retained the Bamboula, which describes a drumbeat and dance. For nearly one hundred and twenty years the Bamboula, associated with Louisiana Congo Square legacy, was kept intact within that tradition. Though it had disappeared from the memory of the general populace it had remained in use by drummers and second liners following the Indians and those musicians who are deeply rooted in the street culture. There are many other commonplace New Orleans musical links that

demonstrate elemental ties to African culture.

Other indicators of African influences are spiritual churches that represent the diversity of West African survivals that are considered a part of so-called mainstream traditions. We also find the mixing of religious practices such as Yoruba and Haitian Vodun with Catholicism.

African ironworkers are also responsible for much of the ornamental "lacework" that adorns the Vieux Carre (French Quarter) balconies. This is due to the Bakongo (or Kongo) influence, which is also the source of the blacksmith and Shango ironworker cults.

Gwendolyn Midlo Hall speaks of the diversity of ethnic groups brought to Louisiana and establishes a timeline of their arrivals that can be used as an indicator of the appearance of certain traits peculiar to particular regions of West Africa. The Senegambians, due to their need in the new colony brought music, culinary, and other cultural links that can be documented. Thus African culture has a solid footing in New Orleans historically from its founding and plays a prominent role in the making, continuance, and resilience of African American culture in the city.

Faubourg Tremé, one of the oldest communities in the state, located across from the French Quarter, a suburb of the original colonial city, was the home to the largest community of free black people in the South during slavery and was a hotbed of political activity. In fact, it is also known as the area where the first American Civil Rights movement took place. In Tremé, white and black, free and enslaved, rich and poor cohabited, collaborated and clashed to create a unique American culture. The town square referred to as "Congo Square," was an open-air market where music and dance flourished and provided the foundation for an improvisational style known as "jazz."

Module Concepts

- Why is New Orleans so culturally distinct from other parts of the American South?
- How is New Orleans culturally important to America?
- What role does historical memory play in cultural sustainability post Katrina?
- Do communality and traditionality have a prominent place in post Katrina New Orleans?
- How and in what ways have race and demographics informed the cultural rebuilding efforts in New Orleans?
- How important is the restoration of cultural traditions, like the social Aid and Pleasure Club parades, Jazz Funerals and the Mardi Gras Indian processions, to the rebuilding efforts?
- Will the cultural economy help sustain the "New" New Orleans?

Module Objectives

- Help students to understand why New Orleans is referred to as the most African city in the United States;

- Encourage students to gain an understanding of New Orleans cultural contributions to the larger society;
 - Continue the critical inquiry into the cultural issues, which have emerged in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita;
 - Investigate the dialog and learn about the new vision for the city;
 - Encourage students to ask the larger questions and to think critically.
- Module Goals**
- Understand the historical context leading to the challenges faced by 9th Ward residents;
 - Develop a respect and understanding that transcends stereotypes of a minority community and cultural group;
 - Recognize and validate the experiential knowledge and views among residents of a community as seen through the film.

LESSON I

Introduction & Background:

The Ninth Ward Community

Originally a cypress swamp, the Lower Ninth Ward, referred to as “the Lower Nine” by most residents, was the lower portion of plantations that stretched from the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain. Desperate for property but unable to afford housing in other areas of the city, African Americans, who were formerly enslaved Africans, risked flooding and disease to move in the area. Finding employment in the nearby industries was another motivation for settling in this remote area. Immigrant laborers from Ireland, Italy, and Germany came here for similar reasons.

In 1897 a Southern railway map showed routes and connections through New Orleans. Through information gathered from the Greater New Orleans Data Center, we find that in 1899 legislation was passed for drainage and pumping systems, but it was not until between 1910 and 1920 that the city installed sufficient drainage systems. The Jourdan, Tupelo, and Florida Avenue Canals were constructed in preparation for the Industrial Canal, which was the main conduit to connect the Mississippi River to Lake Ponchartrain in 1923. Of course, this main waterway further isolated the Ninth Ward community from the city proper.

In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Lower Nine is one of the communities that is targeted for major bulldozing because its location at the lowest part of the Mississippi River flood plain puts it inevitably in harm’s way. Neighborhood leaders believe that city officials and their allies in the development community have been targeting the Lower Nine for upscale redevelopment for many years. The national press described the pre-Katrina Lower Nine as “ramshackle and poor.” However, that is not the entire story.

The Lower Ninth consists of two distinct neighborhoods, Holy Cross and the Lower Ninth Ward. Holy Cross is located between the levees of the Industrial Canal and the Mississippi River and stretches as far down to the east as the St. Bernard Parish Line and as wide as St. Claude Avenue to the north. The Lower Nine is bordered by the Industrial Canal to the west, the Southern Railway

Railroad and Florida Avenue Canal to the north, the St. Bernard Parish line to the east, and St. Claude Avenue to the south (see Table 1).

Figure 1: Map of New Orleans highlighting the Lower Ninth Ward

Before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Lower Nine was a solidly working-class neighborhood with strong family ties and a high home-ownership rate of about 60 percent. Homes are often mortgage free because they were handed down through generations. There was a mix of well-constructed shotgun cottages and bungalows, with brick homes and an occasional larger Victorian home fitted along a fine weave of interlocking streets.

Figure 2: Map of Lower Ninth Ward

The porches and yards of the homes extended into the streets of the Lower Nine and people walked about, talked, and visited each other in these spaces. The neighborly community provided the pedestrian-friendly connections that minimized the need for car ownership. Mass transit was readily available and within walking distance.

Objectives:

- Gain an understanding of the historical and cultural background of New Orleans
- Gain an understanding of the historical background of the Ninth Ward community
- Place the Ninth Ward community in the context of New Orleans post Katrina
- Learn how the Ninth Ward fared in comparison to other communities in New Orleans post Katrina

Set Up Prior to Class:

Students should read and give some thought to the following articles/book chapters: Blassingame, Hall, Jackson. In addition, they can bring in and/or suggest other readings.

Set Up In Class:

Professor should pose the following questions:

- How much of the news did you watch concerning New Orleans and the Gulf Coast during Hurricane Katrina?

Table 1 The population in the Lower Ninth Ward, Orleans Parish and Louisiana

Total Numbers (2000)	Lower 9thWard	Orleans Parish	Louisiana
Population	14,008	484,674	4,468,976
Total households	4,200	188,251	1,656,053
Ethnicity			
Black	98.3%	66.6%	12.1%
White	0.5%	26.6%	62.6%

(U.S. Census Bureau: 2000)

- Did you know much about this region prior to Hurricane Katrina?
- Did you know much about New Orleans prior to Katrina?
- Is anybody from New Orleans? If so, what community?
- Have you visited or lived there before?

Student Motivation/Guiding Questions/Opening Activities:

- Do you know anything about the Ninth Ward?
- Do you remember any of the media focus on the Ninth Ward?
- When did the media begin to focus on the Ninth Ward?
- What was your first impression of the Ninth Ward?
- What do you conclude after viewing the population chart and the map?

Follow-Up Assignment(s): 1) Students will keep a journal on their thoughts, insights from reading and experiences with assignments for each lesson; 2) Students will do a Ninth Ward search on the internet to see what appears and write a two (2) page assessment on what they found on five of the most interesting sites; 3)

Key Concepts & Vocabulary

Creole—*missing text*....

Gumbo—a local south Louisiana dish. Though many lay claim to the best known food in Louisiana’s culinary galaxy, *nkombo*, the West African word for “okra” is the root for the modern term “gumbo”. Jambalaya and gumbo share similarities to West African

dishes such as *dchebuchin*, which are common to the Senegambian home of many enslaved Africans brought to the colony.

Ward—city territories delineated for voting divisions. New Orleans is divided into seventeen.

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New Orleans 9th Ward, days after the floodwaters have receded, in a scene from Trouble the Water. Courtesy Elsewhere Films.

LESSON II Vernacular/Root Culture in the Ninth Ward

Introduction & Background:

In the opening chapter of *Trouble the Water*, just a couple of days before the hurricane, we see that Kimberly Roberts and her husband are not leaving their home like many others in the Ninth Ward that they come in contact with through the camera's lens. They say in the film that they didn't have the funds, or a vehicle in which to leave, like tens of thousands of their neighbors. The other major reason why people did not evacuate is that New Orleanians are more rooted in place with a sense of belonging to family, neighborhood, and traditional associations than most U.S. citizens. According to the U.S. Census (2000b), 77.4 percent of New Orleans residents were born in Louisiana and have lived there for the majority of their lives. Therefore, it is understandable why tens of thousands of the 500,000 residents did not evacuate.

It is easy, even in the devastation left by the hurricanes, to understand how the Ninth Ward represents the idea of community and how vernacular networks can assist in recovery. Being involved in place-based traditions like the Black Mardi Gras Indians or second line clubs can alienate a person in host communities during a period of sanctuary, but as soon as the networks are functioning again, people have a strong tendency to look towards home.

The Lower Ninth Ward (the Lower Nine) is a community with many vibrant cultural traditions and known and unknown artists. The rock-and-roll legend Antoine "Fats" Domino Jr. continued to be a resident in the Lower Nine when he gained fame. Among his numerous awards are the Grammy's Lifetime Achievement and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Awards. The fact that he still chooses to live in the Lower Nine when he could have easily moved elsewhere speaks to the sense of being rooted and belonging to a known community. In addition, the internationally known trumpeter, vocalist, and bandleader Kermit Ruffins grew up in the Lower Nine. He cofounded Rebirth Brass Band, is the leader of the Barbeque Swingers, and occasionally performs with his Kermit Ruffins Big Band (Jackson 2006).

There are several social aid and pleasure clubs and Mardi Gras Indian tribes in the Lower Nine, and some residents are affiliated with both traditions. The social aid and pleasure clubs parade at least one Sunday during the year to celebrate each one's founding anniversary. The members, both men and women, parade in uniform or color-coordinated outfits and regalia with a brass band and usually many second liners—supporting community members that dance along and follow the organizations as they parade through the streets. The Mardi Gras Indians also dress in colorful suits and usually come out at least three times during the year—Mardi Gras Day, St. Joseph's Day, and Super Sunday. Similarly, they also have their supporting second liners. It is easy, even in the devastation left by the hurricanes, to understand how the Lower Nine represents the idea of community (Jackson 2006).

Objectives:

- To identify the various artistic expressions in the community
- To identify the cultural icons in the community
- To understand the inclusive concept of art and culture
- To recognize the value of vernacular cultures
- To understand culture as a returning factor
- To understand what fosters community identity and social connections that make collective action possible

Set Up Prior to Class

Read assigned readings on New Orleans culture; check web sites on the Jazz and Heritage Festival and Mardi Gras; if you have participated in one, write a two (2) page paper about what you saw, tasted, smelled, heard and felt. In addition, include in the last part of the paper what you think has happened to these cultural institutions since Katrina.

Set Up Day of Class

- Have you been to Mardi Gras? Pre and/or post Katrina?
- What was the experience like?
- How many types of Mardi Gras celebrations are practiced in New Orleans?
- Have you ever been to the Jazz and Heritage Festival? Pre and/or post Katrina?
- What was the experience like? What were you most impressed with?
- Have you been a participant in a second line parade? If so, explain that experience.

Student Motivation/ Guiding Questions/Opening Activities

- Scenario--You are heavily involved with your church and you are displaced by a hurricane. Do you lament until you make it back to your city or work with the church that is in the city where you are displaced?
- Scenario—You are involved with a local organization that continues a tradition from year to year that was started many generations before you. The tradition only happens in your city. After being displaced by a hurricane you have to live in another city. Do you try to continue the tradition where you are, teach others in your new community about the tradition, try your best to start the tradition in this foreign setting, or just give up and try to forget it? Explain the pros and cons of each position.

Follow-up Assignment(s):

- Investigate examples of how arts and cultural participation are important elements of community life and essential components of the community-building process. Concentrate on the less institutionalized ways in which communities experience arts, culture, and creativity. Present these in class.
- View other films focusing on New Orleans culture.

Key Concepts & Vocabulary:

Mardi Gras Indians-- The Black Mardi Gras tradition emerged as a celebration exclusively practiced by African Americans who drew on Amerindian and West African motifs and music to create a unique folk ritual that is indigenous to New Orleans. Many of the participants are of mixed African and Indian ancestry. It is not known exactly when the tradition started; however, it was first documented in the late 1700s.

Second liners--supporting community members that dance along and follow the organizations as they parade through the streets. You will find second liners parading with social aid and pleasure clubs, jazz funerals, Mardi Gras Indians and other parading groups during Mardi Gras.

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Lesson III Musical Culture in New Orleans as Form of Activism & Resistance

Introduction & Background

African American music is a manifestation of African American culture and it serves a communication function within this tradition. It constantly expresses the world views of African Americans and the social and historical environments that shape these views. Consequently, the music is in a constant stage of evolution encompassing many different genres and styles. New Orleans' African American music—jazz, blues, gospel, rhythm and blues and all its various manifestations as well as hip hop—demands attention. Understanding the music tremendously aids the understanding of the culture. The music has been one area of the culture that has been consistently developed and self-consciously perpetuated by the people and for the people of New Orleans. However, it is internationally loved.

The overwhelming crowd at the annual Jazz and Heritage Festival illustrates this concept. This festival officially started in 1970 with about 300 musicians and volunteers who outnumbered the audience. In 2010, the festival boasted an enthusiastic and faithful audience of nearly 400,000.

New Orleans has produced an extraordinary number of fine musicians from the birth of traditional jazz in the late 1800s to the revival of rhythm-and-blues in the 1970s and the rise of new forms of bounce and hip hop in the 1990s and 2000s. The reason for this legacy is somewhat complex, but the major factor is musical family lineages—past and present. New Orleans' music, its performance and appreciation is handed down from one generation to another like a precious family heirloom. There were and still are many musical families in the city from traditional jazz to hip hop. This list includes names like Humphrey, Tios, Hall, Manettas, Neville, Moore, Lastie, Marsalis, and Lil Wayne just to name a few.



Kimberly performs her song, "Amazing." Courtesy of Elsewhere films

Marsalis, and Lil Wayne

In being products of their environments, the creative energies of these artists are guided by familial, cultural, social, historical, and economical forces that encompass their daily existence. The genre of rap music, which traces its beginnings to African culture, derives its structure, content, language, and style from the folk style of informational communication that makes use of rhythm and rhyme. Rap, in serving a social and entertainment function,

became popular initially among teenage boys and young men as the basis for competitive "fast-talk" and spontaneous storytelling and boasting with "street warrior" posturing. Rap was transfused into contemporary America through signifiers on the streets, youth playing the **dozens** (trading insults), radio disc jockeys, and through groups like the Last Poets, an Afrocentric political group that incorporated musical sounds with their resistance poetry in the 1960s. The culture of rapping draws on a variety of cultural forms and, thus, demonstrates how the creative process in African America is dependent on and shaped by prior traditional forms, concepts, and practices.

Their song lyrics, influenced by experiences, comment on and respond to the social and political realities that define the nature of African American life in New Orleans. Lyric themes like Lil Wayne's "Tie My Hands" among others, represent the broad range of responses to the various social environments that reflect the diverse character of contemporary African American life in New Orleans—pre and post Katrina.

Lil' Wayne Tie my Hands Lyrics:

[Robin Thicke talking]

*We are at war with the
universe, the sky is falling
And the only thing that can save us now
Is sensitivity and compassion*

[Singing]

*Daa da da, da da da daa da da
Daa da da, da da da daa da da [Talking]
But I know one thing's for sure
I'm gonna get my kicks before it all burns down*

Lil Wayne] Yeah

*Some say tragedy's hard to get over
But sometimes that tragedy means it's over
Soldier, from the academy league of rollers
I deny being down though they seem to hold us
My, shoulders are strong I prove 'em wrong
I ain't doing nothing but moving on
Let the truth be known
But they talked that freedom at us
And didn't even leave a ladder, damn*

[Robin Thicke]

*I work at the corner store
We all got problems, problems
No one's gonna fly down low
No one's gonna save us now
How you feel you're not alone
We're all just jealous, jealous
We don't reach the sky no more
We just can't overcome, no*

[Chorus: Robin Thicke]

*You tie my hands what am I gonna be?
What have I done so bad?*

*What is my destiny?
You tie my hands what I am I suppose to see?
What have I done so bad?
What am I gonna be?
[Lil Wayne]
I, knock on the door, hope isn't home
Fate's not around the lucks all gone
Don't ask me what's wrong ask me what's right
And I'ma tell you what's
life, and did you know?
I lost everything, but I ain't the only the one*

*First came the hurricane, then the morning sun
Excuse me if I'm on one
And don't trip if I light
one, I walk a tight one*

*They try tell me keep my eyes open
My whole city underwater, some
people still floatin'
And they wonder why black people still voting
'Cause your president still choking
Take away the football team,
the basketball team
And all we got is me to
represent New Orleans, shit
[No governor, no help from the mayor
Just a steady beating heart
and a wish and a prayer*

*[Robin Thicke]
These friends they come and go
But I got family, family
These kids so fast they grow
They learn so quickly now
That there's nowhere to go
That there's no future, future
Don't make this here so low
And we can't overcome, no*

[Chorus]

*[Lil Wayne]
And if you come from under that
water then there's fresh air
Just breathe baby God's got a blessing to spare
Yes I know the process is so much stress
But it's the progress that feels the best
'Cause I came from the projects
straight to success and you're next
So try they can't steal your pride it's inside
Then find it and keep on grinding
'Cause in every dark cloud
there's a silver lining I know...*

*[Lil Wayne talking outro]
Yeah, yeah, yeah*

*See right now we just riding on love
A shot in the dark
We ain't tryin to do nothing but hit the heart
We need love
That's all y'all, that's all*

[Chorus x2]

*Yeah, Born right here in the USA
But, due to tragedy looked on by the
whole world as a refugee
So accept my emotion
Do not take it as an offensive gesture
It's just the epitome of my soul
And I must be me
We got spirit y'all, we got spirit
We got soul y'all, we got soul
They don't want us to see, but we already know*

Hip hop styles (in New Orleans, styles like bounce, sissy bounce, etc.) are in constant evolution, and the frequent stylistic changes that evolve in this tradition have been interpreted to represent the so-called “faddish” or “trendish” nature of the music. The problem with this interpretation is that it does not consider the functional role of African American music. New forms of hip hop music styles are created during each decade when established performers alter their styles to reflect shifts in values, attitudes, and behavior and when new artists of a different generation create their own styles. Song lyrics, therefore, can be used to document the different ways in which African American youth responded to their current environment and experiences.

Hip Hop and racial activism have become non-violent outlets for the frustration of young African Americans in New Orleans. The young hip hop artists are frustrated with their political, economic and social plight in the city post Katrina and they take out their anger and frustration with lyrics. They attack the system, politicians, FEMA, Army Core of Engineers, Red Cross, black-on-black crime and sometimes each other. They make valuable statements and sometimes even suggest solutions to alleviate some of the problems. Cue up Trouble the Water to the scene before “Amazing” by Kimberly Rivers Roberts a.k.a. Black Kold Madina, and pay special notice to how the song, Amazing, is set up, and how that impacts your understanding of its lyrics.



[1:15:50 Chapter 10]:

This song is an amazing record of Roberts' life which she says in the film she wrote when she was seventeen.

Hip Hop and activism have become therapeutic to young African Americans and have become helpful in the trauma intervention and the healing process. Hip hop artists, like other activist groups, get a set of ideas over to young people, saying there is something desperately wrong with the system and our community and this is what we can do about it.

The Future of the Musical Legacy

With “dozens of musicians who relocated temporarily now say(ing) they don’t plan to return, in part because they’re making more money elsewhere,” signs of significant musical diaspora are already beginning to appear. While “dozens” does not seem like a significant amount of musicians in the overall musical landscape of the country, it is still too early to tell how many more musicians will eventually relocate to other cities. For example, four years later, the programmer for the Gospel Stage at the Jazz and Heritage Festival had difficulty finding gospel groups in the city to perform in the local slots on the program. Many groups were not entirely back and living in the city. People had to travel distances from other cities to complete their group membership to perform. Gospel has had a very strong and vibrant legacy in New Orleans since the early 1930s and now there is a distinct void. In addition, many of the church choirs are not performing because many of the churches are still not up and running. Some have combined with others to temporarily have somewhere to worship while their church is being renovated or reconstructed.

In addition, many musicians have remarked that New Orleans, as a whole, has not had the best reputation for the treatment of its musicians. Pianist/singer Henry Butler, who evacuated to Monroe, Louisiana, is quoted as saying:

There are some things that have to happen that will allow the music to help rebuild the city...The city, as good as the music has been over the last century, doesn't treat it's musicians well. Better distribution of the money is necessary. Some of the musicians are not going to go back there. There are cities making a big push to entice New Orleans musicians to stay, like Austin, that have good economics and don't mind sharing some of the benefits with people who are contributing to the spirit of that city. We may actually wind up there” (Koransky, et.al. 2005).

The current situation in New Orleans is such that there is simply not enough affordable housing for all of the displaced citizens to return. While some residents have been able to rebuild and repair to return, many still have not. Some neighborhoods were obliterated by the hurricane and subsequent flooding. One such neighborhood, the Ninth Ward, was home to countless New Orleans musicians. Being a predominantly African American neighborhood, there seemed to be a severely disproportionate number of African American musicians especially two years after the hurricane. Now, more have come back four years later, but not all. The lack of African American musicians in the city is something that will prove to be severely detrimental to the future of the music. For it has always been the African American musicians who have developed the New Orleans sound in jazz, blues, rhythm and blues, gospel, and hip hop. In addition, they have continued to pass down the traditions and techniques to subsequent generations. As one musician stated, “New Orleans music relies on the ‘funkiness’ that comes from the huge populations of diverse black folks.”

Whether or not the displaced African American musicians who lack functional housing in their home city will return, they are currently spreading the New Orleans musical sound to the parts of the country in a significant manner. For instance, the city of Houston, Texas which accepted an overwhelming number of displaced Ninth Ward residents, seems to be a new breeding ground for New Orleans style music. According to Cheryl Keyes, a professor in the UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology:

A large part of the youth culture in ...New Orleans is the marching band and brass band tradition...However [Bruce] Raeburn, curator of the Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane University in New Orleans, notes that the destruction of neighborhoods such as the Ninth Ward due to Katrina and its aftermath makes it difficult for marching and brass bands to pick up where they left off...Some have resorted to setting up new marching and brass band traditions in cities such as Houston, to which they have been forced to relocate (Humphrey 2006).

While this proves that nothing will stop New Orleans musicians from carrying on their musical traditions no matter where they end up, this does not necessarily bode well for the musical future of the actual city.

Wilson “Willie Tee” Turbinton, a keyboardist and composer with many New Orleans groups, including the Gators and Wild Magnolias...fears that a rebuilt New Orleans will lose the culture's authenticity...’You can erase a lot of the real breeding grounds of the culture when you clean up an area---that maybe needed to be cleaned up’. ...But you don't allow the people who were the pulse of the community to come back in (Drucker 2005)

The general consensus of most musicians is that the city will eventually come back physically and musically, but there was no certainty as to when, how, or to what extent. The culture of the city, the same culture which fosters the music and which the music fosters in return, will eventually draw the musicians back to their home, provided they could find a place to live.

**Since these earlier comments, there has been a strong move by prominent musicians, who believed if they build them, they will come. Therefore, to alleviate the housing problems for many musicians and other artists, the Musicians Village has been established by Harry Connick, and Ellis Marsalis under the auspices of Habitat for Humanity. It is the delicate relationship between the music bearers and the city itself that has fostered the music we know as New Orleans music. After all, it is the spirit of struggle that birthed New Orleans music in the first place. Only the future will tell if the systemic struggle in the aftermath of Katrina and Rita will continue the music in the same vein or somehow catapult it into innovative changes, for better or worst.

Objectives:

- To understand New Orleans’s distinct musical legacy
- To fully comprehend the circumstances surrounding the birth of the city’s African American musical traditions and how this celebrated legacy was reflective of a cultural heritage shaped by the poetics of racial and social inequity
- To understand how music encapsulates both the essence of place and the lived reality of its inhabitants
- To understand how the human spirit and experiences are often immortalized in the lyrics and melodies of song
- To illustrate how the Hip Hop artists and culture are being employed as a tool to protest the severe social and racial inequalities unveiled in the wake of the hurricane.
- To understand the New Orleans’ musical diaspora and related issues

Set Up Prior to Class:

- Read Berry (Chapters 1,3 and 4), these chapters will give students more historical background on the music while simultaneously placing them in the neighborhoods, specifically the Ninth Ward, with musical families.
- Read the newspaper accounts of various New Orleans’ musicians
- Search and read articles on New Orleans’ Hip Hop in scholarly journals, newspapers and music trade magazines. Listen to recordings of Hip Hop artists from New Orleans.
- Listen to the (NOLA-originated songs) from Trouble the Water and observe how they are incorporated into the film.



Set Up in Class:

- Play opening scene when the group travels back to New Orleans two weeks after Katrina. Was the music appropriate? Why or why not? 00:12:17 – 00:14:07 (CHAPTER 2)
- Musical performance scenes where Kimberly Rivers Roberts a.k.a. Black Kold Medina performs her songs: “Amazing” and “Bone Grizzle.” Discuss each song and the context of the film where it is performed. 01:15:53 – 01:19:30 (CHAPTER 10) 01:27:50 – 01:29:38 (CHAPTER 12)
- Last scene where the Free Agents Brass Band plays and leads the protest march to City Hall. Why is the band so important? 1:29:38 – 1:30:58 (CHAPTER 12)
- Music for closing credits: “Trouble the Waters”

Putting New Orleans’ hip hop music and artist in the national context:

Is there a distinct regional sound in the American Hip Hop world? Is there a distinct New Orleans’ Hip Hop sound? How are the New Orleans’ Hip Hop artists different from artist outside the region? What are the other styles of hip hop in New Orleans? How do they differ from each other?

Student Motivation—Guiding Questions/Opening Activities

Play three examples of songs from other hip hop artists in New Orleans. Watch the scenes in Trouble the Water where songs are performed by Black Kold Madina , as well as the last scene of the protest marchers being led by the Free Agents Brass Band. Discuss these scenes and answer the following questions:

- Why is the music so important to the film? Would you change any songs or do you have other suggestions of what could have been played during a particular scene? Why?
- How do the songs respond to the government’s handling of the worst hurricane disaster in American history? Give examples in the lyrics.
- How do the lyrics provide a provocative portrayal of an old oral tradition that embraces a legacy of resistance? Can you think of any other historical genres of music that did the same thing?
- Hip Hop artists from around the country use their music as a medium to articulate the frustration and hopelessness felt by the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Discuss some of them and the message that was expressed. How were their sales? Did the songs make it to the charts in the music industry? Why or why not?
- Why was the last scene with the Free Agents Brass Band leading the protest marchers to City Hall so significant?
- Think of other artists who have responded to the New Orleans’ Katrina disaster. What genre of music did they perform? What is the title of the song? What is the lyrical focus? Were they effective?

Follow Up assignments

The musicians provided a testimony of horrific events that occurred in the days following the storm, lending a critical voice that emphasizes the discrimination and blatant bigotry that exists in America. What other musicians can you speak of that have responded to the plight of New Orleans post Katrina? What other cultural expressions can you find that responded to this traumatic event? Did you view any art exhibits (paintings, photography, sculptures) or read any literary works (poetry, short stories, dramatic scripts, etc.)? Write a critical review of one event (2 Pages).

Key Concepts & Vocabulary

Playing the dozens—an oral tradition and game of verbal dueling in African American urban street culture.

Rap/ Hip Hop

Bounce

Second line-this is a group of marching dancers who parade along side and in back of brass bands, second line clubs and Mardi Gras Indians.

Second line beat- this rhythm is a parade-time back beat on the drums that usually is played in brass bands when they are marching in the streets of New Orleans.

Second line clubs- organizations that are descendents of benevolent societies who have their anniversary parades each year on a designated Sunday.

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Lesson IV Community Cultural Sustainability

Introduction & Background

The cultural assets of New Orleans are rooted firmly in the communities. Perhaps more than any other ethnic group in the city, African Americans have shaped the core of vernacular culture. Traditionally resistant to change and outside influences, New Orleans' communities have undergone an enormous social and economic upheaval during the wake of Hurricane Katrina and Rita. There is no indication that this will cease in the near future. Where do the arts and culture fit in this picture of communities in change and transition? Everywhere. Because of the nature of ritual and other numerous celebratory events, art and culture are part of the daily life of citizens who live in these communities.

Louisiana is noted for the strength of its traditional cultures. Many residents tend to stay in the same neighborhood for six or seven generations, which is very unusual in today's highly mobile society. It is one of the states that has a very high retention rate of native-born residents, which holds especially true for New Orleans. Therefore, many of the annual events including Mardi Gras, second line club and church anniversaries and the Jazz and Heritage Festival, all serve as family friend reunions.

After Hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana diaspora communities became stronger and larger in numbers throughout the United States. Those who were able to evacuate and select their destination, most likely are in a diaspora community or at least with family or friends. These tend to use their cultural networks to relocate and have the support of family and friends. It is the cultural network that is more likely to determine whether they stay. Residents are more likely to return to New Orleans if they are well rooted in the culture, although it may take years. On the other hand, those who did not have a means to evacuate or an option for their destination often did not end up in a diaspora community. However, the less cultural connections and less vernacular networks that exist, the less likely New Orleans' residents will make a transition into the new community.

Employment is probably the most important factor that could override the cultural connection or disconnection. People are challenged, no matter how much they want to return, if they do not have employment. By the same token, some traditions can be easily relocated (i.e. church affiliations, foodways) where as others cannot and are heavily location-based. A case in point is the Mardi Gras Indian tradition.

The Mardi Gras Indian tradition emerged in the late 1700s and is exclusively practiced by African Americans who draw on Amerindian, West African and Caribbean motifs and music to create a unique folk ritual. In the early decades, the tribes physically

fought and carried real weapons. In recent decades, resolution of conflict on a physical level has been transferred to rivalry on an aesthetic level through improvisational music, informal dance and ornate full-body masks. A number of these masks were lost in the floodwaters of the Ninth Ward. Many of the Indians are working class residents of the Ninth Ward and will probably continue to celebrate Mardi Gras wherever they are located or return for the event each year, like a family reunion—blood as well as Indian. However, it is less likely that they will continue to participate and pass the tradition down to their children without a diaspora community that supports the tradition. It is not a tradition that only happens one day of the year. For many of the Indians, it is ingrained in their everyday life. If you “play Indian” you are an Indian in your community throughout the year. When you are not there where people recognize you, you have lost a large part of your identity. This is a good example where culture and life intersect.



Trouble the Water subjects Scott Roberts and Brian Nobles chart their route out of Louisiana in a scene from *Trouble the Water*. Courtesy Elsewhere Films.

Various forms of the arts invite people to tell their stories and listen to the stories of those around them and provide gathering places for sacred and secular ritual—cultural and spiritual touchstones that are sources of community revitalization and neighborhood revival.

The standard indicators currently being collected on Katrina recovery include very little data directly related to arts, cultural assets and resources in New Orleans. This puts the cultural sector at a significant disadvantage to other policy areas where good indicators are readily available and

continue to be collected. By the use of ethnographies and oral histories in neighborhoods like the Lower Ninth Ward and Tremé, one can see how the cultural sector is critical to the work of rebuilding in three significant ways: creating and housing expressions of cultural memory, contributing to community development and sustainability, and supporting location-based arts and culture. Indeed, rebuilding New Orleans should have center stage and the cultural sector should have a significant role to play.

Objectives

- To understand why New Orleans is a tourist destination and an American icon
- To discover the effect that massive relocation of Hurricane Katrina evacuees have had on authentic New Orleans culture
- To understand why some cultural traditions will simply spread while others will die out
- To discover what is the future of foodways, language, religious ritual, Mardi Gras traditions, lifestyles, etc., that are unique to New Orleans

Set Up Prior to Class

- Read Walter Robinson's 2005 article in Artnet magazine, Hurricane Katrina and the Arts.

Set Up in Class

- Do you agree or disagree that the city should take extra steps to ensure that New Orleans' culture should continue to thrive and be vibrant. Why or why not?
- What steps should be taken to ensure that the vernacular culture lives?
- How important is the restoration of cultural activities (i.e. Mardi Gras and social aid and pleasure club parading) to the rebuilding effort?

- Should resources spent on Mardi Gras 2006 been spent on more relevant and basic services?

Student Motivation—Guiding Questions/Opening Activities

Students should try to think like a researcher that has worked in New Orleans before Katrina and attempt to think about and answer the following:

How can research help inform the recovery, rebuilding and transformation of New Orleans –post Hurricane Katrina and Rita? What can you do? How can you involve your students?

Important areas of cultural inquiry should include the following:

- How and in what ways do the people inform the cultural traditions of a city like New Orleans?
- What characteristics of New Orleans may disappear in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Rita without specific and conscious attention?
- What actions at the community level are informing the future social construction of New Orleans' cultural milieu?
- After conducting ethnographic and oral history interviews, can you predict what will happen culturally in the future?

Follow Up Assignments

Think of a project you can do as a student to help sustain the culture of New Orleans. Think of a genre and/or a specific artist or group of artists that you would like to help. Describe the project in detail. In addition, if you think you will need funding, write a small grant proposal to a relevant agency to acquire the necessary funding. You have to come up with a sound argument for what you want to do and why there is a necessity to do it, your timeline, targeted audience, expected results, means of assessment, personnel and budget.

Key Concepts & Vocabulary

Placed-based traditions
Mardi Gras Indians

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Lesson V The Economic Role of the Cultural Sector in the New New Orleans

The economic effects of Hurricane Katrina were far-reaching. By April, 2006, the Bush Administration has sought \$105 billion for repairs and reconstruction in the Gulf Coast region, making it the costliest natural disaster in United States history. As of January 2010, the Federal Government had allocated more than \$70 billion for the recovery and rebuilding of Louisiana, and spent approximately \$50 billion. This does not account for damage to the economy caused by potential interruption of the oil supply and exports of commodities such as grain. The hurricane had also affected the casino and entertainment industry, as many of the Gulf Coast's casinos were destroyed or sustained considerable damage following the hurricane.

Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of local residents were left unemployed, which will have a trickle-down effect as fewer taxes are paid to local governments. Before the hurricane, the region supported approximately one million none—farm jobs, with 600,000 of them in New Orleans. It is estimated that the total economic impact may reach as high as \$200 billion.

How does the cultural economy fit into this context? Culture is a critical resource for Louisiana's economic development in the 21st century. Louisiana's cultural enterprises are a major employment engine for the state economy. According to the Cultural Economy Initiative, they provide nearly 144,000 jobs, accounting for 7.6 percent of Louisiana's employment. They are growing significantly faster than the economy at large, especially in the emerging entertainment industries.

Objectives:

- To assess the cultural challenges facing New Orleans today and in the future
- To explore tested models from other cities/regions for making New Orleans's cultural structure stronger and more equitable in the future
- To explore ways of using systems of support—local people and anchored community organizations- for collective action
- To facilitate the use of art and culture programming as an economic driver
- To explore more ways to resurrect and strengthen the continuum of opportunities for cultural expression
- To learn about the actual use of arts and culture in community rebuilding

Set Up Prior to Class:

- Read the Urban Institute report "After Katrina" (<http://www.urban.org/afterkatrina/>)
- Check on the National Community Building Network (NCBN) and see what programs they have for rebuilding in relationship to arts and culture. Can they apply to New Orleans?
- Do an online search for cultural programs in other Gulf Coast cities that have suffered from natural and manmade disasters (i.e. Galveston, Gulfport, Tallahassee). What have they done

to revitalize their vernacular cultural sector? Can any of their models or programs be applied to New Orleans?

Set Up In Class:

- Present cultural revitalization models or programs that are being used in another city and explain how they can be utilized in New Orleans.
- Report on your findings with the NCBN programs and other selected community-building initiatives around the country.
- How does one gage with consistent measurement the city's cultural vitality? How can you tell if conditions are steadily improving or not?

Student Motivation- Guiding Questions/Opening Activities

- The federal government and the tourism industry are the main players who will likely control the purse strings for the lion's share of rebuilding. Discuss the importance of advocacy on behalf of the poor and disenfranchised—pointing out longstanding inequities and the importance of demanding to be at the decision making table. Who or what organization(s) should take on this advocacy role? Why?
- Much of New Orleans' culture was built on poverty. Many of the artists, artisans and other tradition bearers that live in the lower- income communities are often central to producing New Orleans' culture and potentially deserve special attention and consideration in programs and grants. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Follow- Up Assignments

Some local people in the cultural scene fear that emphasizing cultural tourism in rebuilding will result in a Disneyland version of New Orleans without places like the Ninth Ward, Orleans East, Tremé and other lower-income neighborhoods that give the city its character. Should New Orleans' place most of the cultural rebuilding efforts in a New Orleans Jazz Park, more casinos and resorts, or invest more in the anchored cultural organizations and local artists? Why? Conduct a survey of twenty (20) people asking this same question and why they gave their particular answer. Report on your results.

Key Concepts & Vocabulary

Cultural vitality; social capital; creative economy

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