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The Challenge of Community: From Culture to Learning in New Orleans

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* The goals of community-centered courses in universities are
 * often in tension with ensuring that a community acquires
 * tools and knowledge useful to its own development and
 * preservation. In Community Cultural Development, an
 * undergraduate seminar taught at Tulane University, the
 * attempt was made to harmonize these goals through
 * creating profiles of elders and tradition bearers of the
 * Treme Community in New Orleans. Included are responses of
 * students to the class and their work in the community, along
 * with examples of the community profiles they created. This
 * work is framed by an overview of the course and its project
 * that places it in the context of emerging tensions in Treme
 * and the civic engagement movement in higher education.

Two central themes propel the following discussion. The first involves the challenges of teaching community-centered courses at a research university—even one such as Tulane that has publicly declared its commitment to community service as a required component of the undergraduate curriculum. The second addresses how to ensure that in the process of doing so a community acquires tools and knowledge useful to its own development and preservation. The dual imperatives of these goals, one focused on pedagogy, the other on community, often sit in an uneasy alliance, forcing the content of the classroom and the priorities of communities into a struggle

for dominance. The story told here is one of a generally successful détente, achieved through a combination of timing, chemistry, and planning. The more common narrative in my experience, however, is one of barely contained disarray, as students attempt to complete a semester-long community project—or perhaps just get their required hours in—while community groups try to fit untrained student help into short-term slots to address long-term needs. Add to this the additional time required of the professor to develop and maintain relationships with community partners, ensure that the bureaucratic requirements of the university are met, and integrate the uncontrollable variable represented by those partners into a coherent course—particularly one in the humanities—and one can reasonably wonder why anyone with any ambitions for an actual career in academia would bother.

Before answering this question, with the help of my students, let me describe what we did. “Community Cultural Development” was an undergraduate seminar offered by the English Department at Tulane University in the fall semester of 2007. This class was intended to fulfill a new “capstone” requirement and help students fulfill the new service learning requirement instituted post-flood. Those were its institutional motivations. My own reasons for developing and teaching this particular class were more complex. Briefly, these included the fact that issues involving cultural policy, the role of the arts in community development, and the relationship between aesthetic values and everyday cultural practices were not being addressed anywhere in my university’s curriculum at a time when rebuilding the city’s cultural infrastructure was imperative. In addition, artists were taking leadership roles in some community development organizations, and community-based arts were emerging as a curricular focus at other area universities. Teaching a course that would integrate the intellectual questions surrounding the role of the arts in community with an aligned community-based project seemed a necessary and obvious thing to do. The project this class undertook involved identifying and documenting the importance of cultural traditions and practices in the Treme

neighborhood of New Orleans. I and my collaborators, Pat Evans, a long-time community organizer and current head of the International Project for Non-Profit Leadership at the University of New Orleans, and Carole Rosenstein, formerly a Research Associate at the Urban Institute and currently on the faculty of SUNY Buffalo, believed that such work was a necessary first step towards enabling this community to use its cultural assets for its own benefit.

This class was a refreshing way to end my studies as an English major. Something that had been growing in me during the course of my college career was the feeling of paralysis. Having analyzed the human psyche through literature, and thereby analyzing also history, culture, and society, and through it issues of gender, race, relationships, all these things, I felt at times pointlessly educated and hopelessly useless. I was able to think plenty, but not do anything. —*Caroline Ng*

Since returning to New Orleans in January 2006, I had been searching for how best to integrate my work as a university professor with the now dramatic needs of a devastated city. Several criteria emerged as important to this decision: first, it was important to be able to build a research as well as a teaching agenda around any community-focused work. A genuine partnership, however, depends on all parties benefiting. Approaching my role in a community as disinterested benefactor to the needy masses, or alternatively, as benign exploiter of the laboratory of community in the service of student learning or the creation of new knowledge would not define me or my students as *partners* with our community. Second, and in part because of this, it was important to develop partnerships more or less aligned with my area of expertise. Thus, although the needs of the city in domains such as housing, health, and economic development were severe, they were not fields in which I had the right skills at this time. At the same time, the cultural sector was being marginalized, even ignored, in both the rebuilding plans of the city and the university's community-focused initiatives. As a humanist with publications in the fields of dance,

drama, and literary studies, for me a focus on the arts and culture made sense. Finally, my relationships with Pat Evans and Carole Rosenstein contributed community organizing and cultural policy expertise that made it possible to shape a project devoted to integrating community development with strengthening the arts and culture in neighborhoods. With their help, I wrote a proposal that won the project a small amount of funding from the Tulane Center for Public Service.

This proposal initiated the *Living Cultures Project*, a mechanism for gathering resources and knowledge about and for neighborhood-based cultures in New Orleans. Although New Orleans is an internationally treasured center for the arts and culture, and cultural tourism is a key focus of the city's economic redevelopment plans, planning efforts have overlooked the role of the arts and culture in strengthening neighborhoods and building communities. New Orleans neighborhoods hold the roots of its precious cultural traditions and have important cultural assets in their Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs and other community-based organizations. These associations are vital to ensuring that the city maintains the kind of dynamic, living culture that not only feeds a thriving cultural and tourist economy, but also directly benefits its citizens. While these goals are acknowledged in official planning documents, strategies have not been articulated for implementing and sustaining community-focused cultural development initiatives. As a small first step in rectifying this oversight, one intended to give voice and visibility to the individuals that hold in their memories and practices the living cultural traditions of New Orleans, my students spent the semester in conversation with long-time residents or former residents of a single, historic New Orleans neighborhood. They created profiles of these individuals that will be returned to them to contribute to this community's ability to shape its own public identity for its own purposes. Several of these profiles are appended to this essay.

The syllabus created for “Community Cultural Development” included readings on community arts, cultural policy, the role of culture in development, and the relationship between art and citizenship. It required students to lead class discussions, write four short reflection essays on their work in the community and two more or less traditional academic papers. Students focused their community work on a rapidly changing neighborhood in New Orleans called Treme. Our goal was to collect personal narratives and information about the cultural traditions of this community from residents and former residents who were seen as culture bearers, elders, and leaders. This information would then become part of an archive for the community to use in pursuing its own goals of preserving and strengthening its cultural traditions—partially, perhaps, through the development of cultural heritage tourism programs that would bring resources back to those creating and maintaining these traditions.

Speaking with Benny Jones, founder of the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, the Treme Brass Band, the Black Men of Labor Social Aid and Pleasure Club, and a participant in various other cultural organizations throughout the city, reinforced how dedicated those culture bearers really are. Playing music isn’t about the money or the fame, but primarily about the community, the culture that lives in the streets, in the music clubs, in the pews of the churches, and deeply governs generations of lifestyles of the people who participate. —*Ivana Staiti*

Treme is a historically African American—actually what we in New Orleans would call “Creole”—community just north of the French Quarter. While scholars have engaged in detailed debates about the meaning and composition of the Creole population in New Orleans, on the street the term is used to refer to a mostly middle-class, Catholic, sometimes lighter-skinned, group of African American citizens with multi-generational roots in the city. In addition, while Treme has been described as the oldest continuous community of free people of color in the United States, it has always been home to whites as well. It was

first settled in the early nineteenth century on land originally owned by Claude Treme, and became known for its concentration of tradesman, artisans, and musicians. In the 1960s the community was decimated by two urban redevelopment projects—a new raised interstate that divided it in two and destroyed the tree-lined African American business district along Claiborne Avenue, and the demolition of a ten block area just north of Rampart Street (Campanella 215). Eventually, this area became home to a theater and park which includes the historic Congo Square (where during slavery African Americans were permitted to drum and dance). Long-time residents of Treme are still upset about these losses, which are exacerbated by the fact that currently the park remains closed to the public—two years after the flood waters receded. Nevertheless, the Treme community remains rich in cultural assets, including Congo Square. It is home to the New Orleans African-American Museum of Art, Culture, and History, the Backstreet Cultural Museum, the Treme Community Center, the offices of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival Foundation, and St Augustine Church, the first African American Catholic Church in the city. Much of its housing stock is historic, and because of its proximity to the French Quarter and the fact that it suffered only moderate flooding after Hurricane Katrina, it has become an attractive neighborhood for affluent home buyers.

When community activist Al Harris led a tour for my class through the neighborhood, he pointed out not only the prevalence of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century houses, but also the high level of ongoing renovation of these buildings. One newly renovated Creole cottage, he told us, was now on the market for upwards of \$300,000. In the words of a website sponsored by the New Orleans business community as a way to attract new residents to the city, “as gentrification moves relentlessly out from the French Quarter, Treme is being seen more and more as a diamond in the rough. . . . Treme is a neighborhood in transition, which smart investors have already begun to realize” (www.makeneworleanshome.com). Gentrification brings with it benefits and problems. While a more affluent population can lead to a reduction

in street violence and other problems associated with poverty, it also forces changes in social norms and expectations regarding public behavior and use of space. As existing residents are priced out of their housing, the cultural traditions that give the neighborhood its distinctive identity leave with them. The cultural ambiance that helped make the neighborhood attractive to outsiders in the first place is thus threatened by the influx of these new residents. At the same time, those newcomers may find the idea of living in a community steeped in rich cultural traditions more appealing than embracing their actual practice, adding another threat to their survival.

This possibility became reality on October 1, 2007, when two musicians were arrested in Treme for parading without a permit. In an incident alluded to by several of the individuals my students spoke with, a street procession led by a brass band, in memory of another musician from the neighborhood, was halted by police in response to “unspecified complaints.” According to coverage in the local newspaper, “Monday, at about 8 p.m., nearly 20 police cars swarmed to a Treme corner, breaking up a memorial procession and taking away two well-known neighborhood musicians in handcuffs” (Reckdahl). Long time residents of the community understand that this manner of honoring the dead is deeply ingrained in their common traditions, and they respect the use of public space in their neighborhood for these processions. As an Op-Ed column by local journalist Jarvis De Barry explained, reflecting on a 2001 memorial parade in his neighborhood: “Had the crowd of people following the trumpeter down the center of Treme Street secured a parading permit? No more than you’d secure a permit to send a card to a bereaved friend or express your sorrow with a phone call.” The police disruption of such gatherings follows a pattern of conflict between communal uses and governmental control of public space that preceded Katrina. In Treme, however, demographic changes have exacerbated the problem, increasing long-time residents’ fear for the future of this and other cultural traditions that define the identity of their community. Moreover, this particular incident made it more likely

that my students—all of them easily recognizable as outsiders in this community—would be greeted with increased suspicion.

The biggest surprise for me was that my interviews went much better than expected, and I was pretty impressed by the wealth of information.

Coming into the interviews with both Fred Johnson and Barbara Lacen Keller, I was worried that my classmates and I would be met with suspicion and even hostility. If I were a long-time member of a historic New Orleans neighborhood, particularly one which has been having recent difficulties with outsiders who do not understand the cultural traditions of the community, I'm sure that I would be pretty wary of a couple of Tulane students coming in to interview me for their class.

—Julie Dabrowski

While several of the individuals we would have liked to include in our project declined to participate, because Pat Evans had strong relationships with trusted community members, we lost fewer than I had feared. The outrage that followed the arrest of these musicians, moreover, contributed to the creation of a new taskforce by the New Orleans City Council charged with reconciling the importance of such cultural expressions to the city's recovery with the concerns of the police to maintain public order (Eggler). I could not have planned a more powerful illustration of the ways in which cultural practices serve as catalysts and symbols for larger social processes. The juxtaposition of abstract dilemmas facing us in the classroom—cultural change versus preservation, for example—with their actual manifestation in this neighborhood, organically connected the intellectual with the practical domains of our work. This is, in my view, the ideal towards which civically engaged teaching and learning should aspire.

This ideal also defines for me the location of courses such as this in the context of a research university such as Tulane. The work of this class took place in what Donald Stokes has termed "Pasteur's quadrant." While Stokes is concerned with the sciences, his analysis, as Judith

Ramaley has argued, is relevant to the university as a whole. In the sciences, some research is done purely for the sake of the knowledge it creates, with no consideration of its usefulness in the world. Other research is undertaken for the opposite reason. In this case only the usefulness of its application justifies the work. Between these two extremes lies the example of Louis Pasteur, who not only wanted to understand the processes he explored “for their own sake,” but also was highly motivated by his desire to apply that knowledge to real-world problems. Likewise, this class was not solely devoted to community engagement in Treme. We struggled throughout the semester with large conceptual issues—from the benefits and liabilities of cultural globalization to the relationship between aesthetic values and social status. My impression was that most of this class had had few opportunities in their college careers to grapple with such questions. At the same time, we were confronted constantly by the need to see and respect the implications of our answers to such questions for the lives and experiences of actual people in an actual community. We did not have the luxury of pursuing our intellectual interests in complete abstraction for the world beyond the classroom, but neither were we so constrained by the practical that we could not reflect on the abstract issues of value and choice that culture embodies.

I think [this course] fits very well into the English major. If you’re an English major, what sort of jobs are you going to next – one where you have to present yourself and give interviews. Maybe not give interviews, but definitely a communication-based field, so you need a stepping stone of sorts. Also, when I was doing the interview transcription, I heard voices, I saw syntax, I noticed details – all the sorts of things you learn in creative writing classes. It also covers things that English majors don’t get to do a lot of in college – economics, sociology, and a broader overview of the world that you’re headed out into. It’s a lot more practical than a course like *Jane Austen*. —*Ada Bidiuc*

Ada's comment comes from a longer conversation we had during class one day about whether a course such as this one belongs in an English Department. This question arose from an earlier conversation with another student, Emily Hohenwarter, who had interviewed a few of us for a feature story she was preparing for a journalism class. She had asked me whether I thought it problematic to list "Community Cultural Development" as an English class. I wanted to know what the rest of my students thought.

I took the class to fulfill a requirement, but stayed in it because the coursework genuinely piqued my interest. It's not often that so many disciplines are integrated and combined with one-on-one time with outside communities. Because of this, I'm very glad to have stumbled into Community Cultural Development. —*Emily Hohenwarter*

While my colleagues in the English Department have been generous in permitting me to teach courses that focus more on civic engagement than on literary analysis, I often worried that the canon-focused understanding of literary studies still dominant in the discipline would create pressure to shift my teaching back in this direction. Perhaps the new value assigned community service after the disaster of 2005 has shifted our collective perspective, or perhaps the momentum of the civic engagement movement in higher education has become strong enough to provide the necessary legitimacy. In any case, for the students in this class, the disciplinary purity of its content and approach was clearly not an issue.

I don't think I've ever been in a two and half hour class before that has more to talk about when it's over. We've had three articles to talk about before, and we've gotten through half an article in two and a half hours, just because there are so many branches and so many webs, and things to grasp onto that aren't in the article. There were ways to argue for the author, or against the author, and eventually we got to incorporate it with real-life experience. We got to experience a different community

that was not examined in writing by someone else who saw, analyzed, and then wrote. We actually got to do the seeing and analyze on the fly.
—Todd Springer

That fact should teach those of us in the Humanities disciplines something about how to reclaim the public legitimacy of our fields. The powerful connections students saw between classroom and community, and the ways in which they benefited from this interaction, however, tell us little about how, or whether, the community experienced comparable benefits. Unless substantive follow-up occurs, I doubt that it did.

As outsiders and students, we do not have the resources, power, or time to actually help sustain the culture and the people of Treme. Although our motives are good, we must take a step back and realize that what we are doing served the purpose of allowing people's voices to be heard.
—Natasha Mamuel

If we do not build on the work done in this class in ways that are community directed, it will end up constituting yet another example of the short-term engagement endemic in university service learning programs. Were this to occur, it would not be because those of us involved lacked commitment. It would be because the institutional structure of universities, including curriculum, research expectations, the type and focus of staff support for civic engagement, and the inability to register the value of relationship-building and project development with non-academic organizations finally place too many obstacles in the way of sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships. Until and unless it no longer requires extraordinary risk and effort on the part of professors to pursue serious, equitable civic engagement, such work will remain marginal and inadequate—at least in research universities.

The future, though, is more hopeful than the previous paragraph suggests. National networks of professors, administrators, and staff in higher education have emerged that advocate articulately and persistently for civic engagement as a core strategy in pursuing the educational mission of colleges and universities. Moreover, scholars have developed increasingly sophisticated and nuanced ways of describing the ways in which publicly engaged work contributes to the knowledge creation at the heart of their research agendas. George Sanchez's Boyle Heights Project, for example, explored the history of a multi-ethnic Los Angeles neighborhood by engaging residents and former residents in the co-creation of that history. Such a strategy can create rich scholarship while simultaneously altering how universities and communities understand their relationship (Sanchez). Acting on a similar insight into the potential power of civic engagement for both learning and knowledge-making, Nancy Cantor, Chancellor of Syracuse University, initiated a campus-wide examination of how what she calls "scholarship in action" should be understood and rewarded at this institution (Phelps). The national sweep of *Imagining America's* examination of tenure and promotion policies in light of public scholarship, meanwhile, will create a common knowledge-base and language for discussing this crucial obstacle to a more widespread practice of civically engaged research and teaching in the arts, humanities and design disciplines (Ellison). As Ira Harkavy, Director of the Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania, once told me, solutions to these common concerns are finally local. While I can learn from the experience of George Sanchez in L.A., what works in New Orleans may not be quite the same. Likewise, the tenure and promotion policies that Syracuse University develops to reward civically engaged scholarship and teaching may not fly at Tulane. The same flexibility and sensitivity to context required by successful community partnerships will be required to develop the array of courses, policies, programs, and institutional structures that will support effective civic engagement practices across the diverse

landscape of higher education. My work this semester with the students in Community Cultural Development affirms, however, the powerful potential of civic engagement to strengthen learning in the service of our shared communities.

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Bruce Barnes

By Emily Hohenwarter



Photo Credit: Ivana Staiti

Bruce Barnes isn't a born-and-raised New Orleanian, but he's embraced the Big Easy, his adopted city, as if he were one of its lifelong residents. Barnes, a ranger at the National Jazz Park on North Peters Street in the French Quarter, has become entrenched in New Orleans tradition since his arrival—he's a lead member of the Treme district's Skull and Bones Society,

and as his alter-ego Sunpie, with his band the Louisiana Sunspots, Barnes has played to acclaim all over the nation with regular New Orleans Jazz Fest appearances.

"I grew up in the woodlands of Arkansas and moved here in 1987. I was fresh out of Huggies Supremes," Barnes says about his move to New Orleans. "I came here as a park ranger, and I wanted to be a professional musician and work in the wetlands. Live out my dreams in New Orleans. I quickly realized that my university was going to be on the corner of Orleans and Claiborne Avenue. That's where I went to school at. It was mostly night classes, but I had day classes also."

For Barnes, this place where he received his informal education in music and culture — the Treme neighborhood — is a vital vein of traditions in New Orleans. But he's not opposed to the changes that he's seen take place over the years. For Barnes, "gentrification" is not a bad word; it's just part of inevitable change, which can manifest itself as either good or bad for the community.

"If you want to change, vote for change," Barnes says in response to what he feels is the overuse of the word 'gentrification'. You want

to vote people in who understand you culturally. You have to keep a dialogue alive.”

Although Barnes embraces change, he does support upholding cultural traditions. Within the Northside Skull and Bones Gang, in which Barnes is second chief, customs dating from more than 100 years are kept alive through specific dress styles, behavior and membership requirements.

“This is a gang that’s been around since about 1819,” Barnes says, mentioning that the exact date of the group’s founding is unknown. “We dress as skeletons. We make paper mache heads. We’re skeletons from head to toe. We have fun while we’re doing it. We go in people’s houses. We wake up the Treme neighborhood Mardi Gras morning. Death is unexpected, believe me.”

The Skull and Bone Gang does more than just startle sleepy Treme residents before dawn on Mardi Gras morning. “We make noise. We play percussion instruments, I sing songs. I’ve composed some skull and bones songs,” Barnes says.

Keeping in line with tradition, there are certain requirements for membership in the gang. Women, for example, aren’t allowed in the group. “It’s an African-American men’s group. If you try to do things in a traditional way, sometimes it’s hard to explain to people that it’s not about exclusion, it’s about keeping up the tradition,” he says, referencing the men-only composition of the gang. “I don’t try to be a Baby Doll. But I love me some Baby Dolls, don’t get me wrong.”

Also, to maintain its autonomy, the Skull and Bones Gang does not conform to Mardi Gras Indian traditions. “When we see Mardi Gras Indians coming, we greet them,” Barnes says.

“We mess with them. They try to make you run through their protocol, but we don’t do that. We do what we want to. You can’t tell death what

to do. We always respect the chief for who he is, but run through their protocol? No.”

Besides his experience as part of the culturally-rich Skull and Bones Gang in Treme, Barnes has also experienced New Orleans—and the Treme neighborhood—as a musician. An accomplished drummer, accordionist and legendary harmonica player, Barnes sees the city as an ideal shaping ground for young artists.

Barnes, like other New Orleans immigrants, benefited from his adopted city’s laid back, inclusive atmosphere. He now considers New Orleans home. “One of the beautiful things about New Orleans and the Treme neighborhood is that the musicians, people who are culture bearers, are easily accessible,” he says. “They were very willing to pass along their knowledge, traditions, things that were really a part of that neighborhood. Really all over the city.”

Fred Johnson

By Ada Bidiuc



Photo Credit: Ada Bidiuc

We met Fred Johnson, head of New Orleans’ Black Men of Labor and a prominent member of the community of Treme on a November night, at his offices near the Quarter. He was willing to grant an interview to two rather green and overeager Tulane students, Miss Dabrowski and I, to talk about the heart of his city – the neighborhood of Treme.

Mr. Johnson’s voice resonated, measured and commanding, his vowels painting pictures. He wasted no time assuring us that art, music and a sense of community were not going

to disappear from the Treme. He discussed the historical origins of Treme's culture in the segregated South, and his own background.

"The culture we grew up in is perhaps one of the cultures that's held and maintained by the indigenous people, the poor people, because of segregation.

"It forced people to become very artistic and very self-sustainable because they were not accepted in other environments. So you had to work in your environment and be creative and make thing enjoyable and pleasurable and very artistic to the eye. So you worked in your neighborhood. My cultural experience goes back to the early sixties, when I was old enough to follow the Mardi Gras Indians. So we grew up in that neighborhood having Mardi Gras based on segregation."

For Fred Johnson, community and business are inseparable. The birth of the Black Men of Labor actually came about after the death of musician Danny Barker, when another Treme society – The Bucket Men – buried Mr. Barker and decided to bring jazz back to the street, where it had started. He spoke about the importance of elaborate burial rites in the African American community in New Orleans, and the roots of brass band music. The character of the Treme, however, was formed by very diverse influences – from African art to rural southern art forms. Social and Pleasure Clubs, groups formed to foster different interests in the community, adopted and created various forms of cultural expression according to personal preference.

"In social and pleasure clubs," said Mr. Johnson, "some people mimicked white people and wanted to square dance or do-si-do and that kind of stuff, and then you had other people who wanted to go to the street with a street band. So, contrary to what people say, all people are different whether you're white or black– not all white people like the same thing, all black people don't like the same thing. Some of us like to do this, some of us like to do that. Some of us like it hot, some of us

like it cold. So you had a very healthy mixture of what came out of that Treme area.”

In response to our questions about the future of these unique traditions in the Treme, Mr. Johnson discussed gentrification, the physical and socioeconomic change in the architecture and layout of the community, and the discouraging disparities between groups that want to resume their way of life and are able to, and those who face too many obstacles in reclaiming their homes.

In regards to the newcomers filling Treme, we asked if he believed new traditions would form from these fresh influences, or if Treme would have to fight to preserve the old ways. Mr. Johnson was adamant about the necessity for continuity and respect for the practices that define the neighborhood.

“If you move into a neighborhood and you’re not familiar with the culture of that neighborhood and a brass band come up the street at 8 o’clock at night you’re gonna have problems with it. You’re going to say, ‘this is not why I bought a house in this neighborhood.’ It’s not going to kill it, you just figure out another way to do it.”

As the interview concluded, Fred Johnson seemed weary. When we had arrived, he was just exiting another meeting; now it was late at night, and another group of New Orleans folks were waiting to speak to him. Despite the vast amount of work Mr. Johnson faces in rebuilding his community during this upheaval, he remained optimistic, forceful and uncompromising about his vision, and about the sacred nature of tradition.

“I think that some things in life work in opposites. Now, what you got to be clear about is that the record says: nothing stays the same, everything must change, nothing stays the same. The young become the old, because mysteries do unfold. Because that’s the way of time. Now, changes, you’re going to have changes. You gonna have young guys

who don't want to play traditional music. Will there be a tradition? Yeah. Depending on what era you came out of, you gonna look at that and say, that's not the tradition – but it's going to be the tradition according to those that are trying to keep it at that time. If you look in any culture, you will see, with the old people coming out and the young people coming in, they don't have the aspiration to keep the old guard, they want to go to the new guard. You see. So in that exchange is the loss."

Mr. Johnson continued: "So when you say, will the culture die, no, the culture won't die. Will it change? Yes. Die? No."

We exited with a feeling that forces beyond our control and understanding were at work, shaping the lives of generations to come – people whose community was being reborn before our very eyes. The Gulf breeze ruffled the tops of the palm trees; the sound of music came from Chartres as we walked to our car. A few levels up, in a glass-walled building where a few office lights shone like far away ships on a dark sea, Fred Johnson went to his next meeting. Tremé took one more step forward.