HANDOUT
Lesson 1 of College Curriculum

Jazz may have been a luxury (entertainment) in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, but in New Orleans it was a necessity—a part of the fabric of life in the neighborhoods. And it still is.

—Bruce Boyd Raeburn, Curator, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University, "An Introduction to New Orleans Jazz"

New Orleans culture is of a piece. You can't really lose one part of without losing the whole thing. The music is part of the parades, and the basis of the dancing that you see, or do, at the parades. The parades are part of the rhythms of the year, and of life—the anniversaries, holidays, birthdays, and funerals. They wind through the streets of the neighborhoods where people live. . . . It amounts to a kind of cultural synthesis in which music is food, and food is a kind of choreography, and dance is a way of dramatizing the fact that you are still alive for another year, another funeral, another Mardi Gras. This is true at all levels of the society, but the maintaining and restating of that fact is a matter of spiritual life and death especially among the city's poorest African American residents, among whom so many of New Orleans's most recognized and important cultural expressions arose in the first place.

—Tom Piazza, *Why New Orleans Matters*

The scene could be Africa. In fact, it is nineteenth-century New Orleans. Scattered firsthand accounts provide us with tantalizing details of these slave dances that took place in the open area then known as Congo Square—today Louis Armstrong Park stands on roughly the same ground—and there are perhaps no more intriguing documents in the history of African-American music. Benjamin Latrobe, the noted architect, witnessed one of these collective dances on February 21, 1819, and not only left a vivid written account of the event, but made several sketches of the instruments used. . . . Although we are inclined these days to view the intersection of European-American and African currents in music as a theoretical, almost metaphysical issue, these storied accounts of the Congo Square dances provide us with a real time and place, an actual transfer of totally African ritual to the native soil of the New World.

—Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz*

Although the present day Indian gangs are best known for their fabulous costumes at Carnival time, their most far reaching contribution of New Orleans is in the world of music. It was the African drumming traditions carried on within the gangs that combined with the brass marching band traditions in New Orleans which led to the development of jazz. There are still extensive connections and cross memberships between the Indian gangs and the traditional brass bands of New Orleans; many of the drummers were members of, or closely associated with, the gangs. You can't find a traditional "second-line" parade or jazz funeral in New Orleans where you won't find numerous members of the Indian gangs backing up the band, gathered closely behind the drummers with percussion instruments. This is a creative combination which hasn't changed at all over the years. The beat and lyrics of the gangs have inspired the music of Jelly Roll Morton, Smiley Lewis, Sugarboy Crawford, Guitar Slim, Professor Longhair, James Booker, Mac Rebennack, Fats Domino, the Neville Brothers, and countless others.

—Michael Smith, "Mardi Gras Indians: Cultural and Community Empowerment"

In the early twentieth century, New Orleans was a place of colliding identities and histories, and Louis Armstrong was a gifted young man of psychological nimbleness. The city and the musician were both extraordinary, their relationship unique, their impact on American culture incalculable. . . .

In New Orleans around 1900, the freedmen and their descendants were discovering common ground at Funky Butt Hall, in storefront churches and in street parades and funerals. These were Armstrong's early training grounds, places where the musical culture that had been formed during slavery, the African-American musical vernacular, was preserved. The world "vernacular" (from the Latin verna, *meaning "slave") carries associations of class; it is everyday music made and appreciated by lower-class people—indeed, enslaved people. And it is mainly music made with no recourse to notation, existing purely in an oral (or aural) tradition. Armstrong lived a childhood of poverty, on the margins of society, and this position put him right in the middle of the vernacular traditions that were fueling the new music of which he would eventually become one of the world's greatest masters.*

—Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*

Louis Armstrong: Cultural Icon?

- Why do you think Spike Lee chose to use a Louis Armstrong recording for the opening credits of the film? What is Armstrong's symbolic importance to the city?
- In what ways did the early musical and other cultural practices of African Americans and Creoles influence Louis Armstrong's musical development?
- What was Armstrong's social and economic background? How did that influence his artistic development?
- Why was Place Congo (Congo Square) chosen as the centerpiece for what became known as Louis Armstrong Park?
- Why is Armstrong considered such an important figure in the development of jazz?
- Would Armstrong's contributions have been possible without the influence of New Orleans?
- What makes a performer a cultural icon? Are cultural icons important to Americans' sense of who they are as a people and a nation?

Closure

Watch the opening segment and closing credits of the film. Why did Lee choose performances not only of songs about New Orleans, but recorded by artists closely associated with the city (Armstrong and Fats Domino)? Would this film have been nearly as effective without the use of music? Can New Orleans have as strong an identity post-Katrina without music playing

HANDOUT
Lesson 2 of College Curriculum

Poverty in New Orleans Pre-Katrina

	Black	*White*
Total population	68%	28%
Families below poverty level	31%	5%
Homeowners	43%	62%
Renters	57%	38%
Households without cars	35%	15%

The table is an adapted version of data from The Brookings Institution, http://www.brookings.edu/metro/20050920_povertynumbers.pdf

That the poor are invisible is one of the most important things about them. They are not simply neglected and forgotten as in the old rhetoric of reform; what is much worse, they are not seen.

—Michael Harrington, *The Other America* (1962)

After seeing who escaped the flood and who remained behind, it's impossible to ignore the shocking breadth of the gap between rich and poor. It's as if we don't even see poor people in this country anymore, as if we don't even try to imagine what their lives are like. . . . To be poor in America was to be invisible, but not after this week, not after those images of the bedraggled masses at the Superdome, convention center and airport.

—Eugene Robinson, "No Longer Invisible," *The Washington Post,* September 9, 2005

It takes a hurricane. It takes a catastrophe like Katrina to strip away the old evasions, hypocrisies and not-so-benign neglect. It takes the sight of the United States with a big black eye—visible around the world—to help the rest of us begin to see again. For the moment, at least, Americans are ready to fix their restless gaze on enduring problems of poverty, race and class that have escaped their attention. Does this mean a new war on poverty? No, especially with Katrina's gargantuan price tag. But this disaster may offer a chance to start a skirmish, or at least make Washington think harder about why part of the richest country on earth looks like the Third World.

—Jonathan Alter, "The Other America: An Enduring Shame," *Newsweek,* September 19, 2005

This is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one Black, one White—separate and unequal.

—Kerner Commission, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,* 1968

For a brief moment last year in New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina brought America's poor into the spotlight. Poverty seemed on the government's agenda. That spotlight has now been turned off. "I had hoped Katrina would have changed things more. It hasn't," says Cynthia Duncan, a sociology professor at the University of New Hampshire.

—Paul Harris, "37 Million Poor Hidden in the Land of Plenty," *The Observer,* February 19, 2006

Because it is right, because it is wise, and because, for the first time in our history, it is possible to conquer poverty, I submit, for the consideration of the Congress and the country, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. . . . Today, for the first time in our history, we have the power to strike away the barriers to full participation in our society. Having the power, we have the duty. . . . We are fully aware that this program will not eliminate all the poverty in America in a few months or a few years. Poverty is deeply rooted and its causes are many. But this program will show the way to new opportunities for millions of our fellow citizens. . . . and this program is much more than a beginning. Rather it is a commitment. It is a total commitment by this President, and this Congress, and this nation, to pursue victory over the most ancient of mankind's enemies.

—Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" Speech, March 1964

The Black-White racial paradigm was also pressured by an enduring question among social analysts that was revived in the face of Katrina: is it race or class that determines the fate of poor Blacks? Class certainly loomed large in Katrina's aftermath. Blacks of means escaped the tragedy; Blacks without them suffered and died. In reality, it is how race and class interact that made the situation for the poor so horrible on the Gulf Coast. The rigid caste system that punishes poor Blacks and other minorities also targets poor Whites. Even among the oppressed, however, there are stark differences. Concentrated poverty doesn't victimize poor Whites in the same way it does poor Blacks. . . . In New Orleans, 53 percent of poor Blacks were without cars while just 17 percent of poor Whites lacked access to cars. The racial disparity in class effects shows up in education as well. Even poor White children are far less likely to live in, or to attend school in, neighborhoods where poverty is highly concentrated.

Moreover, one must also account for how the privileges of Whiteness that transcend class open up opportunities for poor Whites that are off limits to the Black poor. . . . This is not to deny the vicious caste tensions that separate poor and working class Whites from their middle-class and upper-class peers. . . . I simply aim to underscore the pull of racial familiarity that is often an unspoken variable, and sometimes the crucial difference, in the lives of the White and non-White poor. It is bad enough to be White and poor; it is worse still to be Black, or brown, and female, and young, and poor. Simply said, race makes class hurt more.

—Michael Eric Dyson, *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*

those living in public housing? What about those living below the poverty line? Are there specific policies that can or should be implemented to bring these people back to New Orleans?

- Is it in the best interests of poor people and citizens from other social classes to return to New Orleans, or are they better off making a new start in other cities? Is it better to distribute poverty rather than concentrate it in one place? Compare the attitudes of the woman in the film who takes her children to a new home in Utah with those of Lower Ninth Ward resident Michael Knight.
- Using the data from the Census Bureau's 2005 community survey, compare the demographic, social, economic, and housing statistics for the New Orleans metropolitan area before and after Katrina. (Please note: This survey extends beyond the limits of the city of New Orleans and covers the overall New Orleans metropolitan area, including the suburbs.) There are four separate tables; you must click on the link for each one separately. Data can be compared in such categories as race, household and per capita income, families living at the poverty level, housing units, renter-occupied vs. owner-occupied housing, and many others. Based on this data, what conclusions can you draw about the differences between the populations of pre- and post-Katrina New Orleans?
- Review the Bullard article ("Katrina and the Second Disaster"). Based on your readings of the articles and viewing the film, what evidence is there to support the idea that business owners and others are making a deliberate effort to rebuild New Orleans as a more affluent, less African American city? Do you agree or disagree that the city should take extra steps to ensure that New Orleans should be rebuilt along pre-Katrina demographic lines? Why or why not?
- In Act IV, Chapter 5 ("A Signature Moment"), what is Tanya Harris' attitude about how the rest of the city views the Lower Ninth Ward? Does she believe that most city officials and business owners want residents to return to this neighborhood? Why or why not? Do you agree with her perspective? Why or why not?
- If post-Katrina New Orleans is to resemble pre-Katrina New Orleans demographically, what steps should be taken to ensure that many of the pre-Katrina problems experienced by New Orleans do not reappear, such as high crime and poverty rates and low levels of educational attainment? Is discussion of these issues ever used as a proxy for talking about race?
- Can physically repairing the city heal the wounds from Katrina? Similarly, how important is the restoration of cultural activities such as Mardi Gras to the rebuilding effort? Do you agree with Gralen Banks' assessment in the film that hosting Mardi Gras in 2006 was a vital part of the city's recovery efforts, or should the resources have been spent on more basic services, such as rebuilding homes and schools? Do festivities such as Mardi Gras anesthetize New Orleans residents to the real problems of their city? What effect do you think Mardi Gras celebrations will have upon the city and its problems and its poor?

HANDOUT
Lesson 3 of College Curriculum

There is no way to imagine America without New Orleans and this great city will rise again.
—George W. Bush, *When the Levees Broke*

Without Black people New Orleans would be a bad version of Disneyland. The history and culture of New Orleans comes out of the suffering, the creativity of Black people. To have a New Orleans without Black people would be to have nothing.
—Dr. Calvin Mackie, *When the Levees Broke*

New Orleans is not New Orleans without the mix of people that were here before. And it would not be the kind of city that I think most people would treasure.
—New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin, *When the Levees Broke*

Yet if the post-Katrina city were limited to the population previously living in areas that were undamaged by the storm—that is, if nobody were able to return to damaged neighborhoods—New Orleans is at risk of losing more than 80% of its Black population. This means that policy choices affecting who can return, to which neighborhoods, and with what forms of public and private assistance, will greatly affect the future character of the city.
—John R. Logan, Brown University, "The Impact of Katrina: Race and Class in Storm-Damaged Neighborhoods"

The greatest tragedy of Katrina may well be not the flooded homes and looted shops, but an essential population scattered to the four winds. These were poor, uneducated people; but they were the lifeblood of the Big Easy, and they carried in their traditions and cuisine and mannerisms and habits of speech a kind of urban genetic code that made New Orleans what it was. Now they are gone off to Houston and Atlanta, Chicago, Baltimore and a hundred other towns and cities, part of the largest internal migration in America for a generation. . . . Our armies are posted in foreign lands to help rebuild societies from the ground up. What we can do for Baghdad and Basra we must do for the Lower Ninth Ward, Treme, Bywater and other places destroyed by the hurricane, where the real battle for New Orleans will go on long after the television cameras are gone.
—Thomas Campanella, Professor of Urban Planning and Design, University of North Carolina, "How to Rebuild New Orleans," Salon.com, September 30, 2005

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin . . . predicted that displaced African-American residents will return to the rebuilt city and it "will be chocolate at the end of the day." "This city will be a majority African-American city. It's the way God wants it to be," Nagin said. "You can't have it no other way. It wouldn't be New Orleans."
—"Evoking King, Nagin calls New Orleans 'chocolate' city: Speech addresses fear of losing Black culture." *The Times-Picayune,* January 17, 2006

included in the handout for Program 2 of the Adult Curriculum on page 46). What overall conclusions about the effects of Katrina on women are supported by these statistics? How do these statistics compare to those cited by Joni Seager for the Kobe, Japan, earthquake or the Southeast Asian tsunami? How might you account for these differences?

2. Using statistics from the above report, *The Women of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast: Multiple Disadvantages and Key Assets for Recovery. Part 1: Poverty, Race, Gender and Class* (www.iwpr.org), do the following:
   - **a.** Compare the percentage of poor women in pre-Katrina New Orleans aged 65 and older to the percentage of poor men aged 65 and older. [p. 3]
   - **b.** Compare the percentage of families with children under age 18 that are headed by females in the pre-Katrina New Orleans area with the comparable figure for the United States as a whole. [p. 3]
   - **c.** Compare the percentage of men and women living below the federal poverty line in pre-Katrina New Orleans city [p. 5]
   - **d.** For families with children living below the poverty line in pre-Katrina New Orleans, compare the percentage that are headed by married couples with those headed by women [p. 6]
   - **e.** Compare the average median earnings of African American women working full-time in New Orleans to those working in Houston [p. 9]

HANDOUT
Lesson 5 of College Curriculum

It was low-income African American women, many single mothers among them, whose pleas for food and water were broadcast around the world from the Superdome, women more than men who were evacuated from nursing homes, and women more than men whose escape of sorts was made with infants, children and elders in tow. Now we see on nightly TV the faces of exhausted women standing in seemingly endless lines seeking help of any kind. In the long run, as we have learned from studies of past disasters, women will be at the heart of this great city's rebirth, and the emotional center of gravity for their families on the long road to the new normal. They will stitch the commemorative quilts, organize community festivals and hurricane anniversary events, support their schools and faith-based organizations and relief agencies, and compose and sing many of the Katrina songs to come. Though not this simple, it is often said that men rebuild buildings while women reweave the social fabric of community life.

—Elaine Enarson, *Women and Girls Last? Averting the Second Post-Katrina Disaster,* Social Science Research Council, November 15, 2005

And yet there is another equally important and starkly apparent social dimension to the hurricane disaster that media coverage has put in front of our eyes but that has yet to be "noticed": This disaster fell hard on one side of the gender line too. Most of the trapped survivors are women. Women with children, women on their own, elderly women in wheelchairs, women everywhere—by a proportion of what looks to be . . . somewhere around 75 or 80 percent. . . . The gender gap is no surprise, or shouldn't be. Disaster is seldom gender neutral. In the 1995 Kobe, Japan, earthquake, 1.5 times more women died than men; in the 2004 Southeast Asia tsunami, death rates for women across the region averaged three to four times that of men.

—Joni Seager, "Natural Disasters Expose Gender Divides," *Chicago Tribune,* September 14, 2005

Law enforcement authorities dismissed early reports of widespread rapes in New Orleans during the lawless days following Hurricane Katrina. But a growing body of evidence suggests there were more storm-related sexual assaults than previously known. . . . One of the victims is Ms. Lewis, a 46-year-old home health-care worker from New Orleans East, who asked that her first name not be used. . . . Lewis and others had taken refuge in the Redemption Elderly Apartments, in the Irish Channel section of New Orleans. On that first night after the storm, the city had lost power, and she was sleeping in a dark hallway, trying to catch a breeze. It was there, she says, that an unknown man with a handgun sexually assaulted her. She insists other women were raped in the same apartment building over the next four nights, but her claim could not be checked out.

"Some bad things happened, you know. There was nobody there to protect you," Lewis says. . . . Lewis says that later in the week, national guardsmen forced evacuees out of the building at gunpoint. They were finally able to leave the city on Saturday. She says she tried to report the assault at the time, but authorities weren't listening.

—John Burnett, *More Stories Emerge of Rapes in Post-Katrina Chaos,* NPR, December 21, 2005

Gender inequality plays an important role in the level of vulnerability to natural disasters and their consequences. Women are more vulnerable during disasters because they have less access to resources, are victims of the gendered division of labor, and they are the primary caregivers to children, the elderly and the disabled. This means that they are less able to mobilize resources for rehabilitation, more likely to be over-represented in the unemployed following a disaster, and overburdened with domestic responsibilities leaving them with less freedom to pursue sources of income to alleviate their economic burdens. It is most often the women who go without food in order to feed their families during a disaster, also. In addition to these issues, women are often the victims of domestic and sexual violence following a natural disaster.

—Rochelle Jones, *Gender and Natural Disasters: Points to Ponder,* Disaster Watch