Introduction

Katrina's World: Blues, Bourbon, and the Return to the Source

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On Monday, August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall near New Orleans moving at a pace of 125 miles per hour. The dozens of levee breeches led to widespread flooding, more than one thousand five hundred deaths in Louisiana, and massive property destruction. The world was stunned by the five-day-long active abandonment of New Orleans and by four years of massive resistance to the demands of displaced residents to return. Considered both the worst natural and man-made disaster in U.S. history, Katrina fundamentally transformed the New Orleans region, Louisiana, and the Gulf Coast. This disaster, and the many social, political, racial, economic, and family disasters that followed also transformed the United States and its standing within the community of nations.

For many students, activists, and citizens of the world, the aftermath of Katrina presented a seemingly endless number of intellectual dilemmas. How could this happen in the wealthiest country in human history? How could so many desperately impoverished people exist in such a country? How could the government of that country so callously abandon and repeatedly abuse hundreds of thousands of its citizens in the middle of a disaster? Why was the most powerful military in the world unable or unwilling to act? Could stark-naked racism on a massive scale actually exist in a post-racial era led by those who have declared themselves "color blind?" How could a city so closely associated with pleasure, romance, and fantasy reveal what Acklyn Lynch has referred to as a "nightmare overhanging darkly?"[1]

Katrina, multiple wars, and the global economic depression have humbled the nation while simultaneously forcing upon us a desperate search for new social visions. Confronted by these crises, particularly the Katrina dilemma, the response from academic disciplines has increasingly become unintelligible. Additionally, much of what is offered are recycled remnants of the theories,

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polices, and practices whose very design ensures the reproduction of numerous forms of inequality. Moreover, the vast majority of the public, private, and nonprofit solutions offered in the wake of Katrina compounded the desperation of the distraught, displaced, and destitute. These polices, practices, and intellectual rituals were themselves impoverished by the subtle and brazen refusals to address long-standing social conflicts in the region.

I'm a ask you this one more time,
Is you crazy, deaf, or blind?
You don't see them folks, in them boats,
The kids without shoes. Man, it's people dyin'.

—Dee 1, "Freedom Land"

The disasters surrounding Hurricane Katrina revealed the impaired contemporary social vision of every segment of society. Despite mountains of communication and surveillance devices, America was still shocked by the revelations of impoverishment, racism, brutality, corruption, and official neglect in a place it thought it knew intimately. While some witnesses to the tragedy responded with a historic outpouring of concern, the response of others was to criminalize the victims, yet again. We have all been forced to ask, "What do we really know about ourselves?" Did we know we were witnessing the destruction of a global cultural center? Did we know that those impoverished Black communities were the center of this center? Do we know that these same communities have been at the center of national conflicts over freedom and justice for the last two hundred years? Do we know what they have lost? Do we know what we have lost? Do we know what will be lost if these communities are allowed to disintegrate? These are just a few of the fundamental questions still unasked in the highly contested intellectual debates on the future of the Gulf Coast in which every citizen has a stake.

Ain't gonna let nobody, Lordy,
Turn me 'round ! Turn me 'round! Turn me 'round!
Ain't nobody gonna turn us around.
It's like Sodom and Gomorrah down here,
We ain't turnin' into pillars of salt, ya heard me.

—K. Gates, "Freedom Land"

What does turnin' round, or turning back, mean in the aftermath of the multiple Katrina disasters? There is an omnipresent fear, rarely openly discussed in the literature, that the tortured past of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi is reasserting itself. No longer content to haunt the American psyche,

it aspires to be resurrected. Our fears are doubly heightened because the last four decades have been spent celebrating a freedom agenda that was only partially realized. Questions related to community sustainability, economic justice, human rights, cultural rights, monopolization, participatory democracy, racial justice, cooperative development, land reform, gender equality, and the conditions of the youth were consigned to the dustbin of history. Yet, through the eye of Katrina, we see the old dry bones of both the Freedom Movement and the plantation oligarchy walking again in daylight. The Deep South, the American storm center of social schism and human liberation for more than three centuries, has produced another system, another Southern dilemma. Fundamentally, the post-Katrina world is one in which we are destined to confront the social visions, paradigms, movements, communities of conscience, and leaders that we prematurely buried.

Bourbonism is just one of the many traditions that was discarded by scholars and activists. A French and Spanish dynasty, the House of Bourbon, ruled France from 1594 until Louis XVI was overthrown in 1792 by the French Revolution. One of the most enduring and telling legends associated with his reign was the reported response of his wife, Marie Antoinette, to the starvation of workers and peasants, "Let them eat cake." Although the dynasty was restored several times between 1815 and 1848, French bishop and diplomat Talleyrand concluded that every time they returned to power their famed indifference to human suffering lead them to create one disaster after another. For Holmes, the philosophy of Bourbonism was restored in Louisiana by "the ultraconservatives who considered any whisper of moderation as rampant pseudo-liberalism. Without pretense of subscribing to a noblesse oblige attitude, they identified closely with the propertied interests and espoused rabid racism." Many of the fundamental principles of Bourbonism have emerged on the national and global stage as neoliberalism. The "Let them eat cake" philosophy has now been repackaged as the "starve the beast" doctrine.[2]

Also repeatedly discarded and declared dead is the Blues tradition. Although the evolution of the Blues paralleled Bourbonism, this Southern, now global, knowledge system, epistemology, and development agenda absorbs everything it encounters in nature and humanity. Its principle concern is not the creation of a new hierarchy, but working class leadership, social vision, sustainable communities, social justice, and the construction of a new commons. Many of the fundamental principles of the Blues tradition of social investigation and development are often derided, censored, and, consequently, hidden in daily life until they reemerge during times like the present. They have also been preserved by the multiple cultural and social renaissances launched from the

region, Mississippi, the Deep South, and throughout the African-American Diaspora. Although the people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast have been repeatedly portrayed as primitives, in reality, they and the Blues tradition have been at the center of global innovations in philosophy, religion, culture, and social change since the 1830s.

The volume attempts to ask, how do we comprehend and enact social change when these two supposedly long-dead traditions have entered the room without permission? The burden of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama history is not carried lightly. Brilliance often flashes brightly, just as suddenly disappears, and then reappears decades later. To understand the region, the reader will have to explore the subterranean caverns that shelter the wellsprings of dreams during the seasons when hope can't be found. To change the region, expertise in the arts of social, economic, political, cultural, and spiritual reconstruction is required. While this might seem like too much to ask, the narrative below attempts to demonstrate that many individuals, families, communities, racialized ethnic groups, and indigenous nations have traveled the tortuous roads of Deep South enlightenment. Their sacrifices on that hallowed ground were for all of humanity and all of humanity is responsible for ensuring that their return home is not delayed. The people of the Gulf Coast are once again demanding of the world a new commons and a new vision for humanity.

What is now southeast Louisiana was a continental crossroads long before the European conquest, but by the 17th century a French colonization plan for the region was designed by Louis XIV, the Sun King, to block the North American expansion of the British and Spanish empires.[3] The French soon formed alliances with the Natchez and Chickasaw nations based on a robust multicultural assimilation program that still resonates: intermarriage, integrated settlements, festivals, galas, spectacles, and a preoccupation with fashion, cuisine, language, and celebrity designed to "gently polish" indigenous people into Frenchmen.[4]

New Orleans was founded in 1718,[5] and by 1731 Africans outnumbered Europeans in Louisiana two to one.[6] According to Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, the first African nations to arrive shared many cultural and religious practices, including the Vodun, while the Bambara who arrived between 1726 and 1746 also preserved their institutions: a "profound knowledge" system; governance based on life-long associations; and the griot tradition.[7]

To control the attempts by Africans to recreate communally organized societies, Governor Bienville introduced the Code Noir in 1724, a paradigm of racial policy and planning innovation that continues to influence public

policy. One of the goals of the code was to halt forms of torture such as the rack, mutilation, and dismemberment in favor of "more humane" instruments such as rods, ropes, shackles, and being branded with the fleur-de-lys. Also banned were the common practices of enforced hunger and alcoholism, the denial of clothes and medical care, the sale of spouses and children, and the disposal of the elderly.[8] In 1729, an attempt by the French to create tobacco plantations on lands seized from their allies ended with the Natchez Rebellion which was then followed by an eleven-year war of annihilation. Not only had Africans participated in the Natchez revolt, intermarriage and mixed Native American–African maroon settlements fundamentally inverted the French assimilation project.[9]

New Orleans was latticed with resistance networks that linked enslaved and free Blacks with maroon colonies established in the city's cypress forests swamps. The Superior Council responded by enacting a new African assimilation policy that included promoting baptism, god-parenting by whites, the preservation of family units, hiring out, and the recognition of African holidays.[10] Yet, the Bambara Conspiracy of 1731 signaled the beginning of a multiethnic confederation composed of Africans, the Natchez, the Chickasaws, the Illinois, the Arkansas, and the Miamis dedicated to demolishing plantation slavery and to building sustainable communities. This alliance transformed Louisiana into the North American center of rebellions by the enslaved for the next one hundred and thirty years. Finally, wars with the British and the indigenous nations, between 1754 and 1763, forced France to transfer Louisiana to the Spanish.[11]

The Spanish colonial plan for Louisiana, 1765-1803, introduced several innovations but the colony was still economically and politically dominated by French Creole planters. The Catholic Church remained a central institution and several orders owned both plantations and enslaved persons.[12] By the late 1700s, sugar and cotton production were expanding rapidly and rising export earnings were used to purchase manufactured goods, food, and enslaved Africans.[13] Several groups of free immigrants arrived during this period: Spanish soldiers, Arcadian (Cajun) refugees, the Isleño, and Anglo-Americans.[14] The number of free persons of color in Louisiana grew to fifteen hundred by the end of the eighteenth century, the largest such population in the United States.[15] Yet, according to Hall, the re-Africanization of the region was also occurring. Hall attributes the rapid socialization of the Fon, Mina, Ado, Chamba, Kongo, Mandinka, and the Yoruba to the prevalence of Senegambian (Bambara and Wolof) traditions." Senegambia had long been a crossroads . . . An essential feature of the cultural materials brought from Senegambia, as well

as from other parts of Africa was a willingness to add and incorporate useful aspects of new cultures encountered."[16] Maroon communities and fugitivism flourished as did the syncretic religious tradition of elevating to the status of saints Afro-Creole heroes in the battle against the plantation slavery regime, as in "When the Saints Go Marching In."[17] At the same time, the ideology of republicanism spread outward from the French and Haitian Revolutions of the 1790s, and thousands of free and enslaved Haitians eventually arrived in New Orleans. The Spanish watched in horror as the perpetual Louisiana rebellion was joined with the perpetual Haitian Revolution.[18]

After crushing the egalitarian impulse of the French Revolution in 1799, General Napoleon Bonaparte immediately sought to reestablish France's plantation slavery empire in the Western Hemisphere. In 1800, a nearly bankrupt Spanish empire returned Louisiana to the French. Napoleon planned to use revenues generated by the re-enslavement of Haiti to finance the occupation of the massive Louisiana territory. According to Anthony Maingot, a free Haiti created a "terrified consciousness" among the rest of the plantation blocs in the Americas and Europe. France would eventually lose nearly 40,000 troops in the failed attempt to reconquer Haiti. With his imperial dreams for the Hemisphere shattered, Napoleon rushed to sell the entire 828,000-square-mile Louisiana territory to the United States for $15 million in 1803.[19]

The Louisiana Purchase was followed by the rapid entry of Anglo-American Southerners into the territory. Peter Kastor suggests that the Anglo-American Plan rested on at least four pillars. "With the federal administration in Louisiana under assault, federal policy makers renewed their efforts to co-opt white Louisianans, contain American troublemakers, reinforce racial supremacy, and promote national security."[20] By 1810, New Orleans was the fifth largest city in the United States; the preeminent financial center of the Lower Mississippi Valley; a supply center for western migration; and the main shipping point for cotton destined for the textile mills of New England and Europe. New Orleans also became a center for mercenaries, assassins, filibusterers, and coup plotters intent on establishing plantation regimes in Mexico, Latin America, Central America, the Caribbean, and Texas.[21]

Daily efforts to resist the plantation bloc took the form of escape, maroonage, new alliances, rebellions, and the formation of multiethnic and multiracial groups of bandits, pirates, and refugees. Consequently, the first act of the territorial legislature was to create the Black Code of 1806, a militarization of race relations that defined enslaved Afro-Creoles and African Americans as real property/real estate and eliminated the limited rights won during the previous regimes.[22] The in-migration of more than six thousand free persons

of color and enslaved Haitians increased the city's Black majority and intensified the movement for a new commons.[23] On January 8, 1811, Haitian-born Charles Deslondes and 500 others in St. John the Baptist Parish launched the largest revolt of the enslaved in United States history after enduring, according to Pierre, "being thrown into cauldrons of boiling sugar or being buried from the neck down and having their faces smeared with syrup to whet the appetites of the ants." In March of 1829, another revolt was launched from St. John the Baptist Parish.[24]

In response to the increased cotton production in the Deep South, hundreds of thousands of African Americans were separated from their families throughout the upper South and "sold down the river" to New Orleans during what can be conceptualized as the "Second Middle Passage," the "Second Trail of Tears," and the "Second Slavery."[25] Upon arriving at the largest human auction block in the world, they were warehoused before being sold to the most brutal workplaces in the known world. According to W. E. B. Du Bois, the system of "slavery in Louisiana differed from the southern South, and many slaveholders frankly made it their policy to work the slaves to death and buy new ones."[26] Hence abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe set *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Louisiana and, in her 1854 defense of the novel, she denounced the leadership's acceptance of "absolute despotism" and torture as a way of life.[27]

During this period, African Americans gave birth to one of the most significant cultural movements in U.S. history. Eight decades before the Harlem Renaissance, there was the New Orleans Renaissance. First, free Afro-Haitians and the native-born free Afro-Creoles established benevolent societies, cultural organizations, and published the first African-American literary anthology. Second, the arrival of Afro-Haitians revitalized the Vodun community and its campaign against the plantation regime.[28] Third, the arrival of enslaved Congolese resulted in what Fandrich has called the "Kongolization of New Orleans," including the introduction of distinct civil traditions, cultural practices, dances, shrines, language arts, healing practices, and theologies.[29] Fourth, African Americans brought to the city their revolutionary Black Christian social gospel, communal theories, and the Spirituals, a song movement that bounded the fifteen-foot walls of the local auction houses.[30] Finally, all of these movements contributed to the multiple Black and Native American plots and insurrections which roiled New Orleans.[31]

By 1860, New Orleans was the largest city in the South and the key to the prosperity of the globally significant Mississippi Valley. It had also become one of the centers of Southern plantation bloc imperialism, which projected New Orleans as the hub of a plantation slavery empire encompassing the western

territories of the United States, California, the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico, and Brazil. Immediately after Abraham Lincoln won the presidential election of 1860, Louisiana governor R. C. Wickliffe called the legislature into emergency session and denounced Lincoln's election as a threat to "the peculiar institution of the South."[32]

In an attempt to decapitate what was considered the "Wall Street of the Confederacy," the Union Army sailed up the Mississippi River and captured New Orleans on April 25, 1862. Ten months after the occupation began, 29 percent of those enslaved on Orleans Parish plantations had escaped. When Union troops marched through the other parishes during the fall and winter, more than two hundred African Americans per day joined their ranks. The enlistment of fugitive and free men swelled the number of Blacks in the ranks of the Union's Louisiana army to 15,000.[33] Yet Union troops controlled only twelve parishes in southern Louisiana while the other thirty-five remained under Confederate control. In addition, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation did not abolish slavery in occupied areas. Consequently, some Unionists launched a campaign to forcibly push Blacks out of the city and back onto the surrounding plantations.[34]

Southeastern Louisiana became the test case for Lincoln's Southern Reconstruction Plan. The 1864 legislature abolished slavery, created a segregated public school system, excluded several classes of rebels and continued to ban Black suffrage.[35] Lincoln's appeal to Congress to recognize Louisiana as a restored state in February 1865 was denounced by African Americans and white abolitionists as a betrayal of the promise of suffrage and human rights. On April 11, 1865, two days after the official end of the Civil War, Lincoln defended his Louisiana Plan in his last speech and four days later he was assassinated.[36]

Upon assuming the presidency in April 1865, Vice President Andrew Johnson declared a general amnesty for rank and file Confederate soldiers. He also pardoned most of the rebellion's leadership and returned their property.[37] Dominated by ex-Confederates, the Louisiana legislature elected in 1865 voided the Constitution of 1864 and passed what W. E. B. Du Bois considered to be "among the worst of the Black Codes" in the South which "virtually reenacted slavery."[38] Meanwhile, the Union Army refused to intervene in the purges and killings occurring throughout Louisiana during Presidential Reconstruction. When the legislature attempted to restore the antebellum constitution of 1852, and with it slavery, Republicans proposed reconvening the convention of 1864 in order to force Congressional intervention. According to Du Bois, the "prospect of such a consummation was

too much for the Louisiana Bourbons and they determined to meet it by reopening civil war."[39] When the convention met at the Mechanics' Institute on July 30, 1866, more than 137 unarmed leaders and spectators, the vast majority of whom were African Americans, were massacred and hundreds more were wounded by police firing squads and white mobs.[40] A year later, the U.S. House of Representatives' Select Committee on the New Orleans Riots concluded that Mayor John T. Monroe organized the massacre, which was pre-approved by President Johnson.[41] For his role in the Mechanics' Institute Massacre and other actions, Johnson became the first president to be impeached by the House of Representatives.

The national outrage generated by the Mechanics' Institute Massacre led to a large Republican majority in Congress and the launching of Radical Reconstruction. The Reconstruction Acts passed in 1867 turned ten Southern states into military districts and required new constitutions that enfranchised African Americans but excluded many who participated in the rebellion. The Louisiana Constitution of 1868, which adopted several strong civil rights clauses, ended efforts to fix low wages, integrated public schools, and excluded Confederate leaders from voting or holding office.[42]

Blacks created numerous political, and self-defense, organizations and launched campaigns for farm homesteads, public office, integrated streetcars, and schools. Several also held significant positions: lieutenant governor, state treasurer, secretary of state, superintendent of public education, Congressman, state senators, state representatives, and the governor's office for forty-three days. Yet, in New Orleans, Black workers were increasingly "bulldozed," ethnically cleansed, from entire occupations and economic sectors, and more than two thousand Black children, women, and men were expelled from the city and forced back onto plantations.[43] Organizations such as the Knights of the White Camellia, the Ku Klux Klan, and an Italian organization, "The Innocents," were created to terrorize Black voters and workers. After the disputed governor's race of 1874, armed Democrats in New Orleans attempted a coup that served as a model for the overthrow of Reconstruction in the South.[44] Led by the plantation bloc elite and former Confederate generals, the Boston, Pickwick, and Louisiana Clubs dominated the economic life of the city and the Mardi Gras carnival which they used as rehearsals for revolution.[45] Successors of the Knights of the White Camellia, the White League terrorized the country side and committed several massacres, including the 1873 Colfax Massacre of 100 to 300 Black men and the 1874 Coushatta Massacre of five white Republican officials.[46] In New Orleans, on September 14, 1874, more than 8,400 members of the Crescent City White League at-

tacked and defeated the 600 members of the integrated Metropolitan Police and the 3,000 members of the Black militia. Known as the Battle of Liberty Place, order was restored only after federal troops intervened.[47] Du Bois concluded that the "so-called Reconstruction in Louisiana was a continuation of the Civil War, with the Negro as pawn between the two forces of Northern and Southern capitalists."[48]

After both the Republican and Democratic candidates claimed victory in the 1876 race for governor, the Democrat, former Confederate General Francis T. Nichols, launched a successful coup by deploying three thousand members of the White League to attack and seize the Cabildo.[49] Classical Bourbonism was founded upon several militarizations. The ruling bloc's "starve the beast" plan cut government expenditures to below antebellum levels. Blacks were "bulldozed" from homes, farms, work places, public spaces and the voting booth. The Louisiana legislature's passage of the 1890 Separate Car Law was used by the U.S. Supreme Court in its *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling of 1896 to militarize race relations and public space throughout the nation.[50] The militarization of labor relations resulted in the suppression of biracial unionism and major strikes led by dock workers in New Orleans and to the massacre in Thibodaux of thirty of the six to ten thousand Black cane workers who went on strike in 1887.[51] Labor was stolen on a massive scale by a convict lease system that was so brutal that the *Daily Picayune* suggested in 1884 that anyone sentenced to more than six years should be given the death penalty as a humanitarian gesture. In the Bourbon death economy, the lack of public services resulted in yellow fever, small pox, and cholera epidemics devastating the city as well as an astounding Black infant mortality rate of 450 per 1000.[52]

The Black community responded by using cultural movements to construct distributive and cooperative networks that were also designed to develop leadership and to support community planning and social movements: societies and benevolent associations; churches, second lines, pleasure and social clubs; brass bands, the Mardi Gras Indians, etc.[53] During the 1890s, disillusioned Blacks, Democrats, Cajuns, Republicans, workers, small farmers, and several sugar planters formed a populist alliance to challenge Bourbon rule and to improve rural life, incomes, education, and democracy. In the primary election of 1896, the race for governor was defined by widespread fraud and voter intimidation. Before the legislature could certify the election, the militias of the populists, the Democrats and the state were already deployed. While the Democratic State Central Committee denounced the populists as a "monster" that was attempting to uplift the "great horde of ignorant blacks who yearn for social equality," Henry Hearsey, the publisher of the *New Orleans*

Daily States, simply stated that "dictatorship" was "the most suitable form of government for Louisiana."[54]

During the November general election of 1896, thugs and militias were unleashed on the populist movement and their supporters. Hair concludes that nowhere "in the South did Populism encounter so many obstacles or as much brutality." This mobilization was followed by the creation of several new Bourbon institutions, including a number of voter disenfranchisement provisions in the Constitution of 1898. By 1904, the number of Black registered voters declined by 96 percent, while the number of white voters decreased by 35 percent, and Louisiana essentially became a one-party dictatorship.[55] During this period, New Orleans would once again become the national epicenter of social schism and cultural renaissance.

After refusing to be harassed and beaten, African-American activist Robert Charles eventually killed four police officers and wounded more than a dozen other white pursuers between July 23 and July 27, 1900. New Orleans descended into chaos and at least two dozen African Americans were killed by white mobs rampaging through Black neighborhoods. The incident both radicalized Blacks throughout the nation and provided a model for the urban race riots of the early twentieth century. National human rights leader Ida B. Wells-Barnett denounced the Bourbon elite for its slow response in calling out the state militia: "Killing of a few Negroes more or less by irresponsible mobs does not cut much figure in Louisiana. But when the reign of mob law exerts a depressing influence upon the stock market and city securities begin to show unsteady standing in money centers, then the strong arm of the good white people of the South asserts itself and order is quickly brought out of chaos."[56]

At the same time, however, Blues traditions were reasserted in ways that sustained Black communities and communicated their ideas and practices to the United States and the World. Thomas Brothers notes that at this moment of despair for African Americans, "[Buddy] Bolden's star was rising."[57] Countering Bourbon intellectual and social authoritarianism, the New Orleans Jazz Renaissance led by Bolden would come to be described as the voice, sound, and mind of freedom, and democracy, as it traveled along the path to becoming a global institution.

Between 1917 and 1928, New Orleans was considered one of the most conservative cities in the South due to the small number of interlocking boards of directors that rigidly controlled the city's political, economic, and cultural institutions: major banks, the state Democratic Party's Central Committee, railroads, law firms, shipping firms, planters, the White League, the elite clubs,

and their Mardi Gras krewes. Drawn from these elements, the nine lifetime members of the Board of Liquidation of City Debt controlled the city's revenue, bonds, budget, social expenditures, property taxes, and its insurance, water, sewer, and utility rates from 1880 to 1995.[58] Internally, opposition declined as the former populist strongholds in the northern parishes fell under the sway of a reborn Ku Klux Klan after 1920.[59] Externally, the derogatory term "Banana Republic" came to be used to describe the Bourbonization of Haiti, the Caribbean, and Central America. These nations exported bananas, coffee, and sugar to New Orleans while the Bourbon elite exported to them coups, military dictatorships, white supremacy, corruption, massacres, and extreme labor exploitation.[60]

While jazz musicians migrated to Chicago, many other Black Louisianans migrated to East St. Louis between 1916–17 to both escape oppression and secure good paying industrial jobs. During the East St. Louis Riot or massacre of 1917, an estimated 100–300 African Americans were killed and six thousand were displaced. The tragedy transformed Black America. Marcus Garvey of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) delivered a speech on the incident that propelled him onto the world stage. Garvey blamed the tragedy on the Bourbon New Orleans Board of Trade, which he claimed worked in collusion with East St. Louis officials in an effort to force the migrants back to Louisiana. For Garvey, Black disunity allowed such outrages to occur and therefore his program focused on communalism, Pan-Africanism, repatriation, cultural autonomy, and community self-defense. This agenda resonated deeply in New Orleans and the local division became one of the UNIA's most influential.[61]

During the Great Flood of 1927, over the objections of the mayor, the head of the Army Corps of Engineers, the governor, and the president of the United States, three members of the Board of Liquidation decided to dynamite levees in St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes in order to save New Orleans. City officials placed approximately half of the 10,000 displaced persons in a New Orleans warehouse; the Bourbon suggestion of creating "concentration camps" was resisted. Bourbon control over the reparations commission led to widespread hunger and the denial of 90 percent of the claims. In a prophetic rebuke, the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, the conservative voice of the Delta plantation bloc, condemned the Bourbon bloc in an editorial entitled "New Orleans Babbitry":

> If New Orleans is ever flooded the world will not know unless there is some outside newspaper man there. The newspapers of New Orleans have not told their own people the

> actual situation . . . Many of the leaders of the town had much rather take a chance at loss of life and destruction of property than face the possibility of the grain market slipping a couple of notches, the price of cotton falling 50 to 100 points, or New Orleans stocks going under the least of a strain.[62]

The actions of the Bourbons and the Mississippi Delta planters during the flood fundamentally radicalized a generation of African Americans.[63] In addition, it reignited populism in Louisiana and fueled Huey Long's victory over Governor Oramel H. Simpson in 1928. Long targeted the New Orleans Bourbon bloc, its bankers, its "lying newspapers," the New Orleans Ring political machine, and Standard Oil, the world's largest oil corporation.[64] According to political scientist V.O. Key, on the eve of the Great Depression, the Louisiana oligarchy (the leaders of the cotton, sugar, oil, timber, banking, merchant, shipping, railroad, and utility sectors) was unrivaled in the South and "was a case of arrested political development….The tears of the people of Louisiana had in reality lasted for generations."[65] Long initiated several populist social programs designed to break the Bourbon bloc grip financed through the taxation of oil firms.[66] Long's election to the U.S. Senate in 1932 provided a national platform from which to attack Roosevelt's support for large banks and his failure to redistribute wealth. The Louisiana Blues agenda had once again returned to the national stage. In 1934, he launched the "Share Our Wealth Campaign" and soon claimed 27,000 clubs with 7.7 million members. Breaking with the Southern "lily white" model, he encouraged Black membership and political activity because you "can't help poor white people without helping Negroes."[67] As he prepared to challenge Roosevelt in 1936, Long accused the Bourbon bloc of seeking his demise just prior to his assassination in September of 1935.[68]

The Bourbon bloc used New Deal funds to enrich itself even as African Americans were denied relief.[69] New Orleans's Black population also had one of the highest death rates in the country, with tuberculosis and pneumonia taking a great many lives.[70] In response to Bourbon starvation policies during the Depression, the intimately related Spiritual Church and Mardi Gras Indian movements pursued the principles of working class cooperation, mutual aid, redistribution, leadership development, women's leadership, access to public space, and a reverence for African, African-American, Native-American, and neighborhood saints.[71] Also, during the 1930s, the citywide Federation of Civic Leagues emerged to train potential voters and the NAACP was revitalized by a women's movement.[72] Now based in New Orleans, the Louisiana Farmers' Union (LFU) was successfully organizing sharecroppers into unions. Several

members were also advocating armed self-defense in the face of increasing physical and economic attacks.[73]

During World War II, the Bourbon bloc sought to profit from the war mobilization while simultaneously preserving the existing racial regime. Its work was greatly assisted by the elimination of large sections of Black rural working class communities by Roosevelt's Agricultural Adjustment Act. Those African Americans who found their way to New Orleans, or to the centers of war production, were typically denied both employment and relief. Tens of thousands of African Americans were effectively expelled from the state through the use of discriminatory employment practices, an educational spending blockade, the manipulation of racially segregated housing markets, governmental budget cuts, hunger, and through the use of officially sanctioned violence and terror.

On the other hand, the radical social movements of the 1930s and the "Double V" movement of the 1940, signaled a watershed moment in the evolution of the Blues tradition. White employers suddenly found the 14,000 Black women in domestic service to be too "'independent,' 'impudent and impertinent,' 'rude and undependable,' 'sassy,' and 'unappreciative.'" Rumors of Eleanor Clubs, Disappointment Clubs, Aggravating Clubs, and the formation of a union among the Black women caused panic within these households.[74] The *Louisiana Weekly* aided numerous mobilizations including a new interracial union movement. Also, the Southern Negro Youth Congress established a branch in the region.[75] Ernest Wright and Elizabeth Sanders led the People's Defense League (PDL) which launched numerous voting, anti-police brutality, and union organizing campaigns.[76] Tensions mounted in New Orleans after rumors circulated that Blacks were planning an armed uprising on May 1, 1943.[77] At the height of the war, the *Louisiana Weekly* argued that "The victory must be complete if it is to be at all. We must overthrow Hitlerism within as well as Hitlerism without." Adam Fairclough notes that soldiers "clashed with military authorities; civilians argued with bus drivers and policemen; and shipyard workers walked off the job. Blacks were speaking and acting in a way not seen since Reconstruction."[78]

When confronted by the growing alliance among African Americans, national unions, and progressive movements, the Bourbons pushed for the expulsion of these groups from the rural areas and then from the economic and political life of the urban areas between 1945-1954. The rural population in Louisiana declined by 286,000 persons during the 1940s and by another 334,000 persons during the 1950s. Numerous African-American rural communities collapsed during this period while starvation and flight to the cities

became central narratives of Black Louisiana life.[79] Enclosure and expulsion also defined urban life in the areas of employment and housing. Due to pressure from the Bourbon bloc and its allies on the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Senate Internal Security Committee, the Louisiana Civil Rights Congress, the Louisiana Committee on Human Rights, and the Southern Conference for Human Welfare were forced to disband and the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) purged its ranks of progressives and radicals.[80] In Louisiana, the Dixiecrat movement against the civil rights agenda in the Democratic Party received strong support as did right to work legislation designed to cripple the union movement.

This was also, however, the age of the New Orleans Rhythm and Blues Renaissance. Local artists, once again, voiced the moods and aspirations of African Americans throughout the nation and, according to Jeff Hannusch, between "the years 1950 and 1970, New Orleans had a commanding position as one of the largest sellers of single records in the United States."[81] Additionally, in 1948, New Orleans native Mahalia Jackson became a national presence after she recorded the best-selling gospel record of all time, "Move on Up a Little Higher." Court challenges, voting, and retail boycotts increased as did voter registration rates and educational spending. However, for Blacks, New Orleans was still rigidly segregated and schools and housing were severely overcrowded.[82]

The Louisiana branch of the regional White Citizens' Council movement, the Association of Citizens' Councils of Louisiana, became the largest mass segregationist organization in the nation by 1956 with between 50,000 and 100,000 total members and with more than 25,000 in New Orleans.[83] This "Massive Resistance" movement was a new racial militarization designed to suppress civil rights and expel Blacks from the region. The legislature spent much of the next three years passing bills designed to preserve segregation and disenfranchisement.[84] It also launched a successful campaign to purge thousands of Black voters from the rolls and it created two intelligence agencies to intimidate activists.[85] A global scandal erupted in 1960 when Black children in New Orleans began scavenging for food in garbage dumps after 22,000 of them had been purged from the welfare rolls.[86] New Orleans Council leaders also created a "reverse freedom ride" program to provide free transportation to any Black person willing to leave the state. In 1960, a violent school desegregation crisis erupted in the city and in 1963 the state took the unprecedented step of seizing the membership lists of the NAACP, effectively destroying the organization.[87]

New Orleans rhythm and blues musicians, such as Fats Domino, continued to gain national and international audiences while the New Orleans sound, incorporated into Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti," "Long Tall Sally," "Lucille," and other pioneering rock and roll songs, once again transformed U.S. music and culture. A center for Southern activism, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was founded in the city on February 17, 1957.[88] In 1959, the New Orleans' Consumer League launched a boycott of stores on Dryades Street that refused to hire Blacks.[89] Students from Southern University helped found the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in New Orleans during the summer of 1960.[90] Several local members such as Doris Jean Castle and Jerome Smith also led boycotts and participated in the Freedom Rides.[91] Finally, when activists from the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) arrived in rural Louisiana in the 1960s, they received assistance and protection from local factory workers, veterans, and farmers who later formed a local of the Deacons for Defense.[92]

After launching a massive intimidation campaign in Bogalusa, sixty miles north of New Orleans, the Original Knights of the Ku Klux Klan were directly challenged by the armed Deacons. By 1965, this ongoing conflict over discrimination, voting, and the right to self-defense created profound crisis in the state and in the national civil rights movement. It was Selma *and* Bogalusa that forced the passage of the Voting Rights Act signed by President Johnson on August 6, 1965. The celebration was short-lived for African Americans in Louisiana. First, the Bogalusa conflict continued to intensify. Second, many recent migrants who fled oppression in the state participated in the then largest urban rebellion in United State history, the Watts Rebellion of August 11–15, 1965. Finally, Hurricane Betsy struck New Orleans on September 9, 1965 with 110 mile per hour winds. After the collapse of a levee, approximately twelve to fourteen feet of water covered the predominantly African-American Lower Ninth Ward and one hundred eighty-five thousand persons were forced to seek shelter in the city due to the lack of an evacuation plan. Overall, more than eighty lives were lost and the region suffered $1 billion in economic damages.[93]

Additionally, during the 1960s, the urban fabric of the city was torn asunder to construct concrete barriers between highly politicized African-American residents and the predominantly white residential and business districts of the city. Other barriers were constructed between the Black communities and the white flight suburbs in Jefferson and St. Bernard Parishes. The romanticism of "good race relations" continued to mask the reality of New Orleans during a period in which several local Black communities were sealed in

concrete. This occurred based on the planned abandonment of many Black working-class neighborhoods and through the valorization of elite business districts, elite institutional sites, and middle, and upper class, white residential neighborhoods. Also, local, state, and federal resources were used to subsidize the projects launched by neo-Bourbon redevelopment planners, real estate developers, construction firms, banks, and political leaders who led the urban growth regimee.[94]

After the restoration of voting and other civil rights, The *Louisiana Weekly* noted that the Black community had been "plunged into a sea of political maneuver."[95] Significant gains were made in civil service employment and federal anti-poverty programs provided needed services. The strong Black electoral support for Maurice Landrieu as mayor (1970–78) and Edwin Edwards as governor (1972–1980, 1984–1988, and 1992–1996), newly elected Black officials, and spiking oil prices yielded civil rights gains, expanded economic opportunities, and a highly fratricidal system of Black political patronage. However, the new biracial Democratic Party didn't fundamentally alter the regional neo-Bourbon political economy.[96] Arnold Hirsch argues that in "New Orleans' reified system of ethnic patronage, politics remained—as elsewhere—essentially conservative and incapable of fundamentally altering conditions for the city's poor masses."[97] Consequently, the Black student movement in state was often violently suppressed. Also, after the New Orleans Chapter of the Black Panther Party started a free breakfast program in the Desire development in 1970, Chief of Police Joseph I. Giarusso responded in true Bourbon fashion. He believed that the attempt to alleviate hunger was particularly dangerous because it turned the minds of the youth against white authority.[98] The chief and 600 NOPD officers with armored vehicles were prepared to assault the Panther headquarters on the morning of November 19 until three to five thousand men, women, and children stood between them and refused to move.[99] During this time, there was another renaissance combining Soul and Funk music movements with the Black Arts movement.

The election of Ernest Morial as mayor of New Orleans in 1977 is often viewed as the beginning of the golden age of Black political progress. According to Whelan, Young, and Lauria, Morial pushed the Bourbon bloc to loosen its control over government: "Since the turn of the century, members of the oligarchy had ruled the city from their positions on the many nonelected boards and commissions which govern major areas like the port, the lakefront, sewage and water, and the city debt. In 1979, Morial took on the Board of Liquidation, City Debt, which was self perpetuating, by encouraging a lawsuit to end the board's racially restrictive membership."[100] Elements within this

leadership group initially celebrated his support for their downtown, tourism, and economic projects along with his ability to secure federal funds.[101] Yet, the golden age was short lived. A former White Citizens' Council and Louisiana States' Rights Party supporter, Republican David Treen was elected governor in 1979. Immediately after taking office, he was confronted by rapidly declining oil revenues. In response, Treen adopted the historic Bourbon/neoliberal policy of simultaneously slashing social spending, cutting taxes and expanding business subsidies.[102]

With the lowest property tax rate in the nation, local governments in Louisiana are heavily dependent upon the state for funds to support basic social services, health care, and education while the state is dependent upon oil taxes and federal spending. President Reagan's budget cuts compounded the crisis and federal aid to New Orleans fell from $123 million in 1980 to $65 million by 1982.[103] As a result, the city's services and infrastructure crumbled[104] and its work force was rapidly reduced by a third.[105] New Orleans and the rest of Louisiana soon entered a prolonged economic and political crisis from which they have yet to recover.

The crisis also opened the door for the slow restoration of Bourbonism, even though the city was governed by a succession of African American mayors: Ernest Morial (1978–1986), Sidney Barthelemy (1986–1994), Marc Morial (1994–2002), and C. Ray Nagin (2002–2010). In general, advances were limited as the state became increasingly conservative. Edwards was followed as governor by a cotton plantation scion, Democrat turned Republican, Charles "Buddy" Roemer (1988–1992). Between 1996–2004, the state was governed by Murphy James "Mike" Foster, Jr., a Republican sugar planter whose grandfather, Murphy J. Foster (1892–1900), "personified Bourbonism" according to his official state biography. This restoration required the revitalization of several historic Bourbon institutions. A progrowth coalition provided public subsidies for Bourbon controlled economic sectors and projects.[106] The repeated reduction of life-supporting social services fostered out-migration, incarceration, and dependency.[107] A perpetual program of tax cuts and business subsidies redistributed wealth upwards while mass pauperism, hunger, and homelessness were naturalized. Housing policies such as neighborhood abandonment, redlining, and the demolition of public housing were used to simultaneously reverse middle class white flight and increase working class Black flight.[108] The public school system quickly became both the worst in the nation and a pipeline to prison. Authoritarian solutions to social problems such as racial profiling, police abuse, and mass incarceration were also naturalized.[109] Major instances of electoral fraud signaled the restoration of the disenfranchisement

institution.[110] New Orleans also excelled at the privatization of public assets, the expansion of the low wage economy, restrictions on Black business and professional development, the militarization of public space, and the use of racial panics to reorganize the political economy and public policy.

This slow restoration was nearly completed when Republican David Duke entered the political arena. A child of the New Orleans White Citizens' Council movement, he founded the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in 1974 and the National Association for the Advancement of White People in 1980.[111] Duke was elected to the Louisiana legislature in 1989 as the Republican representative for Metairie. His ability to garner the majority of white votes in the state for his 1990 bid for the U.S. Senate and his 1991 bid for the governor's office was viewed as a threat to African-American human rights, Bourbon economic interests, political stability, the color blind rhetoric of the national Republican Party, and to the position of the United States in the global community.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Black community mobilized against the Bourbon restoration whether it took the unvarnished form of the Duke campaigns or the polished form offered by African-American leaders. It also launched a new renaissance designed to rebuild a sense of community. The revitalization of the Brass Band, second line, and Mardi Gras Indian traditions reached across the centuries, while the Bounce and Hip Hop movements signaled the presence of unbounded energy and determination among the youth.[112] The Bounce movement was partially founded upon a 1990 song by MC T. Tucker, "Where Dey At," that contained the chant "*Fuck David Duke, Fuck David Duke, I say I say.*" This chant harkened back to critiques of the plantation bloc found in the Calinda song and dance tradition perfected on Congo Square during the eighteenth century. Despite all of its complexities and tragedies, New Orleans has remained a warehouse of knowledge, a source of inspiration, and a guide for building socially just and sustainable communities.[113]

In different ways, the essays in this volume shed new critical light on what I have called the dialectic of Bourbonism and the Blues. Articles in the first section, on the histories of race, gender, sex, and class explore the national and regional discourses used to mask the daily violence faced by African American women and girls in New Orleans. Lisa Ze Winters examines the national literary tradition of romanticizing interracial relations in antebellum New Orleans and how it naturalized, and continues to hide, multiple forms of daily brutality. LaKisha Michelle Simmons reviews the discourses and silences surrounding the murder of fourteen-year-old Hattie McCray by a police officer in 1930. The lack of accountability for the loss of life is also one of the key silences that define the post-Katrina Gulf Coast.

The Gulf Coast's uniquely rich cultural traditions, institutions and organizations were marginalized during the debate over Gulf Coast reconstruction. Many activists and policy makers ignored these historic community pillars in favor of generic and recycled policies and plans. The authors whose works are within the music and performance section are concerned with how the indigenous foundations of sustainable development continue to blossom despite official repression, commodification, and cultural appropriation. As Joel Dinerstein walks with one of the first second line parades held after Hurricane Katrina he witnesses a mobile community engaged in community building, the liberation of public space, political speech, spiritual healing, and resistance. Eric Porter examines the "progressive and regressive ways" that second lines, social and pleasure clubs, brass bands, and Mardi Gras Indians are used in the restructuring of neoliberal New Orleans. In her interview, Cherice Harrison-Nelson, Queen of the Guardians of the Flame Mardi Gras Indians, explains the educational and human rights significance of the Mardi Gras Indian tradition and how it is restoring intergenerational bonds after the disaster. Johari Jabir argues that New Orleans native and gospel music icon Mahalia Jackson left a musical archive whose gospel blues ethos challenges the state's narratives of disempowerment and disposability. Zenia Kish examines the ways in which the Hip-Hop and Bounce musical genres were used to both relink the Katrina diaspora and create a new national community by narrating "the experiences of exile and persecution, expendability and community, vulnerability and renewal." Jordan Camp views the works of New Orleans poet and activist Sunni Patterson as an indigenous alternative to the mass criminalization of impoverished African Americans supported by the discourses of the "neoliberal racial regime of security." This work is followed by Patterson's powerful and historic poem on the disaster, "We Know this Place."

Activism and social movements in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region have taught many lessons to the United States and the world over the course of three centuries. Following Hurricane Katrina, the region was turned into a site for enumerable neoliberal policy experiments that are now being deployed throughout the nation in response to the current economic crisis. Consequently, the volume's third section addresses several ways the region is educating the world about the current state of activism, institutions, nonprofit practices, and social movements. Catherine Michna examines the pre-Katrina transformative educational movement designed to incorporate local and family histories into the curriculum of what was deemed the worst public school system in the nation. The initiative promoted forms of student, parent, teacher, and community leadership that counter the institutionalization of

the neoliberal charter school movement after Katrina. Trushna Parekh reviews the epic post-Katrina conflict between the parishioners of St. Augustine, the oldest African-American church in New Orleans, and the Archdiocese of New Orleans. As Parekh demonstrates, a multiracial coalition resisted the disposal of the church building, its renowned priest—Father LeDoux, its programs, its African cultural practices, its jazz services, and the Tomb of the Unknown Slave.

In her interview, New Orleans activist Shana Griffin discusses how institutionally organized reproductive violence made working-class African-American women extremely vulnerable in multiple ways before and after the Katrina. Yet, she claims that the same women are the only foundation possible upon which to build a sustainable city committed to social justice. Rachel Luft describes two generations of post-Katrina social movements and their paradigmatic shifts: from "disaster exceptionalism" theories to theories of the disaster of daily life; from either service provision or organizing to a combination of both; from civil rights to international human rights standards; and from individual reactions to disaster to new forward-looking forms of community-wide planning.

Many cities and regions around the nation have become increasingly dependent upon the low wage tourism development model. Often devastating social consequences are associated with the growing influence of this sector. Anna Hartnell argues that New Orleans excels at a form of tourism that packages the lived experience of historically oppressed communities for the comfortable consumption of the privileged. Post-Katrina tourism compounds this social practice by using environmentalist narratives to strategically silence the living voices of the displaced and the efforts to rebuild destroyed communities. Lynnell Thomas discusses tourism in New Orleans as a form of racialization that reinforces "the myths of racial exoticism and white supremacist desires for a construction of blacks as artistically talented but socially inferior." Post-Katrina tourism simultaneously places New Orleans's African-American communities within a narrative of racial exceptionalism, or "color blindness," while silencing the realities of racial and class inequalities.

Many communities, residents, and activists along the Gulf Coast have been driven literally insane trying to understand a reconstruction process defined by illusions, mirrors, traps, roadblocks, compounded tragedies, and large doses of humiliation. Jeffrey Lowe and Todd Shaw provide a highly textured analysis of how Alabama and Mississippi communities have tried to comprehend and challenge often hidden neoliberal agendas. Changes in the national will are required to change the disempowering relationship between communities and

their organizations, on the one hand, and the political leadership, foundations, and federal agencies, on the other. The 2-Cent song "Freedom Land" gives voice to the misery, worries, anger, and social vision of New Orleans young people caught in a place defined by abandonment, blindness, coldness, and authoritarianism. And as I argue in the special issue essay, "Les Misérables of New Orleans," the dominant post-Katrina development model in New Orleans traps poor and vulnerable people and strips them of their assets. Sustainable and socially just development is dependent on the elimination of these policies, their replacement with cooperative institutions, and the re-imagining of the leadership potential of people now deemed disposable.

Taken together, the essays in this volume suggest that the nation's long and historic engagement with the Gulf Coast has entered a new era. The nation has once again become a student in a classroom where difficult lessons are taught. The Katrina crisis provides new epistemologies, theories, methods, policies, programs, and plans for communities confronted by the "let them eat cake" ethic of the neo-Bourbon/neoliberal agenda. One principle lesson taught is that our engagement with the region, its people, and their social visions are unavoidable. Another lesson is that we have a responsibility for the displaced that cannot be escaped. A third lesson is that the people of the region have already prepared the ground for a new and more equitable future for the nation as a whole.

The landmark sculpture on the front cover is known as "Spirit House." This 20-foot-tall shotgun house, an "urban tabernacle," was created by two sculptors, the nationally known John T. Scott, who died in 2007, and his former student Martin Payton. Numerous symbols, stories, and drawings documenting the history and visions of African Americans in New Orleans are found throughout the aluminum structure. The drawings and ideas of children from neighboring schools were also incorporated into the sculpture. Dedicated in 2002, the work also symbolizes the cross-generational African-American commitment to building a global center for cultural and spiritual enlightenment, and social justice. The photograph on the back cover was taken during Super Sunday 2009 by music historian Ned Sublette.[114]

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