



ARTISTS AND CULTURE BEARERS OF NEW ORLEANS

STRATEGY HARAMBEE

DECEMBER 2018

"Pulling together to lift up the root culture of New Orleans"



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AS ARTISTS AND CULTURE BEARERS WE ARE ...



VISUAL ARTISTS Storytellers
Leaders **CREATORS** **CHIEFS**
Composers and Arrangers
MUSICIANS **A C T O R S** **SINGERS**
Community Collaborators **ORGANIZERS** **Planners**
DANCERS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS
EDUCATORS **POETS AND SPOKEN WORD ARTISTS**
Undisputed Hustlers
...AND SO MUCH MORE

TRIUMPHS

- ◆ Cathartic healing art that addresses community needs
- ◆ Defeated culture killing noise ordinance
- ◆ Leading a band of 16 women at Preservation Hall in a ground-breaking performance
- ◆ Working collectively with amazing artists
- ◆ Rich landscape of culture bearers and nonprofits serving children
- ◆ Development and writing of the production voices of Congo Square and collaborating with New Orleans and New York artists
- ◆ It's a spiritual culture – we can all express ourselves and talents
- ◆ Having support and opportunities from organizations and institutions such as the Center for Contemporary Arts, New Orleans Arts Council, Junebug, and Ashe' Cultural Center in helping artists create and present work in the city
- ◆ Selling a song to Treme – the TV show
- ◆ Getting to see the art have a direct effect on our folks
- ◆ Breakthroughs in entering performance spaces
- ◆ Forging relationships that made opportunities possible
- ◆ In January 2019, Kumbuka will celebrate 28 years of existence
- ◆ Louisiana premiere traditional African / African American Dance
- ◆ Mardi Gras Day, Super Sundays and the relationships gained through these cultural events
- ◆ Being able to work with people in the community and share my art and teaching
- ◆ Opportunities to influence children culturally
- ◆ Organizing NODCC
- ◆ Receiving a film production grant
- ◆ The experiences of touring, performing, and speaking

CHALLENGES

- ◆ Inequitable practices in educational institutions
- ◆ Inability to find affordable performance spaces
- ◆ Challenge in getting national platforms or recognition for New Orleans artists
- ◆ Not having the opportunities to come together across culture disciplines in a true discourse
- ◆ Difficulty getting district, schools and CMO leaders to understand the value of arts in children's lives
- ◆ Having to lose a gig at [Buffa's] because a part of their ongoing lawsuit limited the music arbitrarily to a duo on Thursdays and my band was a quartet
- ◆ Failed to pass culture friendly noise ordinance
- ◆ That some don't understand the culture, don't appreciate our talents and take us for granted
- ◆ Lack of unity in the hip hop community
- ◆ Booking difficulties
- ◆ Disparities in how New Orleans artist are compensated at home versus when they travel to other places
- ◆ Lack of radio play, especially for local hip hop artists
- ◆ Exclusion of hip hop artists in black spaces
- ◆ Having the financial support to continue work as an artist and teacher of arts
- ◆ Lack of application of artistic principles, concepts and pedagogy in city policy
- ◆ Kumbuka will celebrate 28 years without a physical home
- ◆ Recognition of the gentrification of the neighborhoods in which the artist and culture bearers have traditionally presented their work
- ◆ People in institutions do not value art and are not interested in learning
- ◆ Lack of financial support for root cultures
- ◆ No central space for root culture
- ◆ Lost relationships both business and personal that result from the displacement and unfriendly arts environment in the city
- ◆ Lack of economic resources
- ◆ Inequity in funding resources
- ◆ Lack of a free or affordable rehearsal spaces in the city
- ◆ Being broke!
- ◆ Seeing the very real distrust New Orleanians have of organizations
- ◆ Getting ripped off for money



AS ARTISTS AND CULTURE BEARERS WE VALUE

- ◆ Financial compensation for the time, energy, expense of art and culture bearers that maintain events and experiences that contribute to the city's tourism revenue such as our Mardi Gras Indians
- ◆ Each other – though we represent different disciplines
- ◆ The people that drive the identity of New Orleans
- ◆ Respect and integrity, especially from the people that lead within systems
- ◆ Our time as a resource
- ◆ Strategy that has a generational impact whether 10 years or 50 years down the line
- ◆ Grassroots organizing
- ◆ Those actions that can be implemented that will benefit the whole/collective
- ◆ Inclusion, engagement, and leadership in any planning processes or public policy that may impact our culture
- ◆ Those that make the effort to consult the culture
- ◆ Equitable tourism
- ◆ Sharing the benefit and not just the burden of maintaining New Orleans' culture
- ◆ The lives we inspire, the joy we bring and the ability to weave that into our conversations
- ◆ Respecting the indigenous ethnic history
- ◆ Decision makers that engage artists and culture bearers as leaders in a meaningful way (not just the awards, but the policies and investment)
- ◆ The practice of not just using the face of the artist without opportunities for them to contribute head and heart as well
- ◆ True artists' spaces that are free or affordable and open for all artists use
- ◆ Arts and culture as part of the standard educational curriculum for all students
- ◆ Generational and intergenerational continuity
- ◆ Authenticity of culture not cultural appropriation
- ◆ A city that demonstrates support for arts and culture through policies and practices
- ◆ Creating spaces and opportunities for the next generation of emerging artists
- ◆ Cultural preservation of traditions
- ◆ Equity as a policy and practice not just a trendy term
- ◆ Unity and organizing



OUR VISION

A strong, connected community that offers cradle-to-grave support, love, and nourishment for artists and creators

That institutions will be held accountable to respect the community (i.e. charter schools)

Artists being able to make a living doing their art and not have to be oppressed by institutions

Positions of leadership and decision-making

Artist and culture bearers will no longer be an afterthought

The culture of New Orleans being self-determined based on the struggles and victories culture bearers and artists who have created the uniqueness of New Orleans

A community of unified and organized artists

A New Orleans where artists are compensated in a way that is fair with regards to their contribution to the City and allows them sustainability in their career

A New Orleans where artists and culture bearers are able to self-actualize because they are able to access everything they need – housing, community resources, income, transportation etc.

A New Orleans where a grandmother, grandfather, and grandchildren can be in the same cultural space at the same time and its totally culturally and spiritually appropriate for all

Art and culture as a welcomed, integral part of policy making, budget creation, urban planning, development, and educational curricula in the City of New Orleans

Being valued by all and respected as a driver of the spirit of New Orleans

Culture, in all its many meanings, will be the central pillar and a driving force of the city's plans, choices, funding allocation, projects, and decisions

People who create art and culture being valued and recognized equitably as contributors and receivers of a growing economy

Full economic, social, political equity for the cultural community

Arts and culture are integrated and valued holistically in schools

New Orleans as a city that truly pays respect to the root culture that has propelled the city to prominence

A city where sustainability and quality of life is a reality for artists and culture bearers

A CULTURAL MASTER PLAN SHOULD ...

- ◆ Protect us
- ◆ Reflect us
- ◆ Be driven by us (root culture)
- ◆ Support and advance equity
- ◆ Reflect a shared vision
- ◆ Not reinforce a hierarchy
- ◆ Be a rebuttal to the systems of oppression
- ◆ Create and facilitate spaces for artist leadership and creativity
- ◆ Not sell us without sharing with us
- ◆ Build on best practices from other states and countries
- ◆ Message the values of artist and culture bearers
- ◆ Reinforce cultural integrity
- ◆ Go beyond tourism strategies

PROCESS FOR DEFINING A CULTURAL MASTER PLAN MUST INCLUDE

- ◆ Learning opportunities open to all artists and culture bearers
- ◆ Intergenerational engagement
- ◆ Opportunities to educate others including decision-makers
- ◆ Sustainability that includes economics, policy, and leadership sustainability
- ◆ Studying other culturally rich countries where government provides strong cultural support and investment
- ◆ Defined policy agenda
- ◆ Opportunity to learn how to serve on boards and run for office for artists and culture bearers
- ◆ Space to learn from personal experiences of artists' struggles to sustain
- ◆ Community organizing

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

- ◆ Get the people to the table that don't see or understand the value
 - City officials
 - Schools
 - Businesses
 - Tourism Infrastructure
- ◆ Youth – they are often missing from the table, so they should be a part of any planning moving forward
- ◆ Baba Jerome Smith as a respected connector
- ◆ Consider how youth of all ages can be engaged i.e. elementary, middle school, high school, and college students
- ◆ Youth that are not part of programs or connected to organizations (there is a level of disenfranchisement we must overcome through meaningful engagement)
- ◆ Covenant house
- ◆ Battle of the Boys
- ◆ Elders across every creative discipline or art and culture (i.e. music, writing, story tellers)
- ◆ Service industry workers because of the connection between the service industry economy and cultural and arts economies (the people that service the shows, but can't afford to attend)

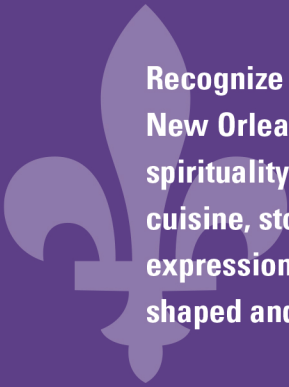
REQUESTED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- ◆ Opportunities to leverage resources, power, and influence
- ◆ Best practices from cities that have gone through the planning process, i.e. lessons learned from the City of Los Angeles
- ◆ Mapping of all boards or decision-making bodies that impact arts and culture in New Orleans (e.g. Alcohol Board has the ability to make decisions about live music in venues)


TOPICS AND ACTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING(S)

- ◆ **What ways city impacts arts**
- ◆ **Entities and who are the players**
- ◆ **Be specific about who we are**
- ◆ **What is New Orleans culture (what disciplines are part of this master planning process)?**
- ◆ **Identify what cultural areas have a group speaking for them and which do not**
- ◆ **Create a certain centralized identity that provides an infrastructure for support (For example the Mardi Gras Indians provide a significant tourism boost, but do not receive adequate investment)**
- ◆ **Organize a business structure that can promote / support funding, policy and decision-making**

TIPS FOR DEMONSTRATING VALUE AND RESPECT FOR ARTISTS AND CULTURE BEARERS IN NEW ORLEANS




Recognize that root culture in New Orleans embodies the heritage, spirituality, traditions, music, dance, cuisine, stories, and other artistic expressions of its people that have been shaped and passed down for generations.

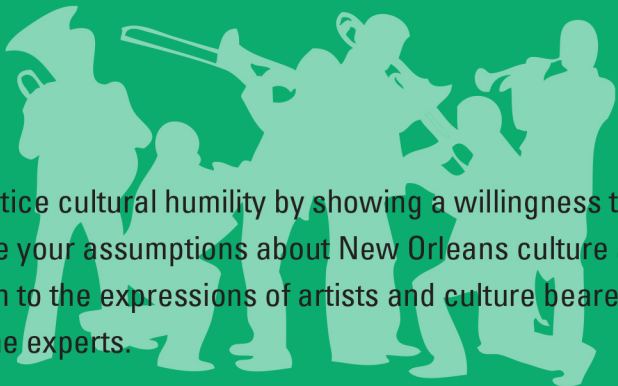


Appreciate what has been created, give credit to the creators, and ensure that artists and culture bearers have an equitable share of any benefits derived from their work.

Artistry and root culture touches every aspect of New Orleans, from housing to tourism, to transportation and infrastructure, therefore artists and culture bearers should be prominent and present in public decision-making.




Appreciate the time, energy, commitment, and investment that artists and culture bearers make to keep New Orleans culture alive. This is most often done through great personal and financial sacrifice with little to no investment from those that benefit from the work.



Practice cultural humility by showing a willingness to set aside your assumptions about New Orleans culture and listen to the expressions of artists and culture bearers as the experts.

Before retelling a story or sharing another's work, ask how they would like to be acknowledged and what is the best way to maintain the authenticity in carrying it forward.



**REMEMBER, WITHOUT THE CULTURE THERE IS NO IDENTITY.
WITHOUT THE PEOPLE THERE IS NO VESSEL.
WITHOUT THE ARTISTS AND CULTURE BEARERS
THERE IS NO SOUL.**