Producing Africa at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival

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The gangly teenager in the black frame glasses saunters up to the camera with a lively step. His image flashes across the screen then is gone (Fig. 1). But the laughter in the audience suggests something else. I thought I recognized the young man, but I wasn't sure, so I asked the filmmaker later. In a broad, knowing smile, he confirmed my speculation. But did everyone in the room recognize him too? Or were they laughing because of the incongruity of his presence? What is this white young man doing here, among the deeply etched faces and dignified dance steps of the African American elders leading the procession? And why does his presence prompt laughter?

Growing up in New Orleans in the early 1960s, Quint Davis was introduced to the working class African American performance traditions of second-line parades, jazz funerals, and Mardi Gras Indians by photographer Jules Cahn, who was a friend of the family. The films of Jules Cahn, now archived at the Historic New Orleans Collection (HNOC), contain several images of a young Quint, at perhaps fourteen years old, bespectacled, wearing long shorts and a plaid shirt, dancing at parades. At around the same time this footage was made by Cahn, Davis's image was also captured by photographer Lee Friedlander, then in New Orleans working on a project on New Orleans jazz musicians. The music historian and archivist Dick Allen brought Friedlander to the parades, just as he had brought countless others before him (Friedlander 1992). Cahn brought the young Davis, initiating him into a world of black music, tradition, and dignity that most whites in New Orleans ignored or avoided. This footage appears in Royce Osborn's film *All on a Mardi Gras Day*—a film that focuses squarely on the black performance traditions that developed in counterpoint to the dominant carnival traditions historically orchestrated by the city's white elite (see also Smith, this issue). Davis is one of only two white men who appear in the Osborn film. His is thus a notable presence in a documentary whose major actors, cultural historians, carnival experts, and cultural workers are all African American. In documentary films about black culture, white faces are more likely to appear as the historians or other experts than as the research subjects. Osborn's film cleverly reverses the gaze with this wink at documentary filmmaking tradition. Davis's cameo as a wiry young second liner arouses knowing smiles among the viewers of the film who know this history. Decades later, Davis would become the producer of one of the most successful music festivals in the world, a major cultural institution in its own right, a landmark site for the display of Louisiana's cultural heritage, and a powerful economic engine in the city with an economic impact greater than Mardi Gras.

In the years since the founding of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival in 1970, Mr. Davis has become not only its executive producer, but also the public face of the festival, often appearing on stage to introduce major acts or to close out a major stage and often giving interviews about the festival and heading up press conferences on its annual music lineup. Because of the festival's scale, overwhelming success, and influence, it has become a touchstone for discussions around the cultural economy of the city and debates around the commodification of music, culture, and heritage (see Regis and Walton 2008). And while the festival is a complex organization with a broad diversity of participants and social actors, Mr. Davis has also become the focus of festival critics, who sometimes seem to blame him personally for any festival policy or decision with which they disagree. In fact, what surprised me when I first began researching the festival in the early 2000s was the frequency with which New Orleanians referred to Mr. Davis as "Quint" as if they knew him personally, when they

1 Quint Davis circa 1963, marching with the Eureka Brass Band.
PHOTO: STILL FROM FILM FOOTAGE BY JULES CAHN,COURTESY OF THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION

had often never met him. The personalization of the festival in the figure of one person, of course, erases the complexity of a seven-day event involving hundreds (if not thousands) of workers and volunteers and running a production company that operates year-around, presenting events as different as Superdome half-time shows, Essence Festival, and the Bayou Country Superfest. As an anthropologist who studies the festival and its relationship to the city, I am struck by this common confusion of the personal and the institutional. And yet, in some ways, because of the festival producer's deep love for New Orleans music and culture, it is personal. In interviews with media (as well as this anthropologist) and on the production company's web site, the work of creating the festival is clearly grounded in the producer's personal life experiences and commitments (see, for example, www.fpino.com "who we are"). When I first interviewed Davis in 1999 and asked about the role of second-line parades at the festival, he said, "What you are talking about is central to my entire existence." The way Davis and others talk about parades has to do with the way many New Orleanians understand power, knowledge, and how to get things done. Embodied knowledge, personal relationships, and patron-client ties remain central to day-to-day life in the city. It softens the hard edges of bureaucracy, and it is also a shorthand for representing social dynamics.

This paper begins with the figure of Davis as a starting point for a consideration of the intertwined strands of personal and collective heritage that come together in the project of bringing African performers to Jazz Fest. The festival represents music, culture, and heritage. But in its forty-plus year history, it's also become a site for the creation of heritage. As I shall show, the personal and the collective intertwine in the public dialogues about African and African American music and culture—framed in terms of Diaspora and African heritage at the Festival.[1] Since its beginning, one of the central themes of festival was to reconnect roots and branches of American music, so that, for example, gospel, blues, and traditional jazz were shown to be related (and generative of) later popular music styles of rock, soul, and R&B. At some point, the roots of gospel, blues, and jazz were further extended across the Atlantic to Africa. While this reframing of roots and heritage in transatlantic perspective no doubt reflected the personal interest of festival producers and the distinctive history of New Orleans, it is also a reflection of the festival's long encounter with cultural

2 The scale of the festival is evident in this photo taken from Acura stage during a performance by Bon Jovi, Saturday, May 2, 2009.
PHOTO: SCOTT AIGES

3 Shona soapstone sculpture by "African Authentics" of Chelsea, Massachussets.
PHOTO: HELEN A. REGIS

activists who saw the current predicament and potential futures of black New Orleans as tied up to with Africa. These intersections—both temporal and spatial—involve economic and political structures—the means of production—as well as public history and personal biography. After an exploration of the festival's history and contemporary landscape, we turn to a moment in the history of the festival to examine more closely how African heritage is produced in diasporic dialogue at the festival. Central to this drama are the strategic ways the past (personal biography and regional, national, and transnational histories) is invoked to underwrite relationships in the present. Much of the significance of this conversation comes from the way social actors create the temporal framework for their encounter. While they alternately embrace, or resist being told, what heritage they can claim for themselves, individuals and collectivities aspire to self-determination, and to enhance their capacity and freedom to create (and produce future heritage) in the present.

DISPLAYING AFRICAN HERITAGE

Since its founding in 1970, the festival has hosted numerous African musicians, dancers, and artists, including such luminaries as King Sunny Ade, Ali Farka Toure, Baaba Mal, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and many African-centered artists from the Diaspora, from Natchez, Mississippi-born guitarist Olu Dara to Brazilian carnival marching group Ile-Aye and Guadeloupe-based roots kreyol language ensemble Kan'nida. Many of these groups have played on the festival stage named after the city's legendary Congo Square, the site of the festival's first founding years and a widely mythologized sacred site.

Today, Jazz Fest is a seven-day festival, drawing 400,000 visitors into the city from the East Coast, the West Coast, Europe, Japan, and beyond (Fig. 2).[2] Glancing at the program on any given day, one might choose between a bluegrass-infused singer-songwriter duo on the Lagniappe Stage, a traditional jazz orchestra like Don Vappie and the Creole Jazz Serenaders in the Economy Hall tent, a popular jam band at the Gentilly Stage, Nicholas Payton in the Jazz Tent, Bruce Springsteen at Acura, and so on. Or you could take a break from the music to find refreshing rose-mint ice tea to accompany the famous seafood combo that includes delectable crawfish beignets, oyster patty, and crawfish sack (that is, crawfish etouffee spooned into a crepe that is tied up into a bundle and deep fried). Seasoned participants have widely diverging strategies for navigating the multitude of offerings, with those who prize their freelance improvisational style (going where the music calls them) in contrast to those who prefer to camp out at one of the big stages for the entire day, and others who meticulously plan their itinerary, including their drinks, snacks, and meals, and pathways between stages and craft areas scattered throughout the racetrack. There is now a Jazz Fest app to facilitate this process. But even the most compulsive planners are bound to be sidetracked by one of the many parades of social club members powered by brass bands or percussion-driven Mardi Gras Indians as they snake their way through the infield crowds in full regalia.

One of the sites for all of these activities is the area within the fair grounds known as Congo Square. At a recent festival, the Congo Square marketplace included a broad variety of artisans and vendors. Shona soapstone sculpture from Zimbabwe was on display in one booth (Fig. 3), while in another, contemporary batik clothing from Nigeria was on offer by vendor Nnamdi Ibenagu of Chapel Hill, North Carolina (Fig. 4). Binta Diabu of New Orleans offered "Zulu, Mbukishi & Mbunda basketry; central and southern African Tribal art" while Abdoulaye Gueye and Darou Rakhmane of New Orleans offered "ceremonial Statues from West & Central Africa." Suzy Cameleon of On the Road to Marrakech sold "handmade Moroccan leather handbags" and Bilali Sunni-Ali of Atlanta Georgia sold "handmade Fulani hats, Kuba cloth, oils, incense, trade beads, & jewelry from Mali and Burkina Faso" (Fig. 5). While some vendors clearly serve as importers and curators, with their festival booths serving as a mobile gallery, others sell their own handiwork, like Andaiye Alimayu of King & Queen Emporium, New Orleans, offering hand-dipped incense, oil, and handmade, beaded jewelry. Henry O.

4 Contemporary batiks offered by Nnamdi Ibenagu's "spirit of courage."
PHOTO: XIOMARA CASTRO

5 Bilali Sunni-Ali's display in Congo Square features trade beads, cloth, and a credit card machine.
PHOTO: HELEN A. REGIS

Colby of the Timbuktu Art Colony sold handmade jewelry while Abdou Diouff of Aziz Fashions constructed "afrocentric patterns on mudcloth & linen." The marketplace includes Africans who have developed import-export businesses in the US drawing on their personal networks and business acumen; US-based sculptors, painters, photographers, and artisans, who produce work in some way inspired by Africa and the diaspora; as well as Miami- or New Orleans-based curators, who import handcrafted objects from Latin America and the Caribbean, especially Haiti. Noteworthy are those vendors whose work interjects a folk aesthetic or a modernist key into contemporary diasporic dialogues.[3] Both the Congo Crafts and the music stage feature contemporary as well as traditional artists. In recent years, the stage has increasingly hosted artists such as R&B luminary Solomon Burke, Gogo legend Chuck Brown, and soul superstars Earth, Wind, and Fire, as well as Soul artist Cee Lo Green, Wyclef Jean, contemporary R&B artist Ne-Yo, conscious hip hop sensation Lupe Fiasco, and jazz bassist and singer Esperanza Spaulding with her crossover venture Radio Music Society.

On the festival grounds, text panels recount the origins of Congo Square as a market and space for cultural performance on the edge of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century city:

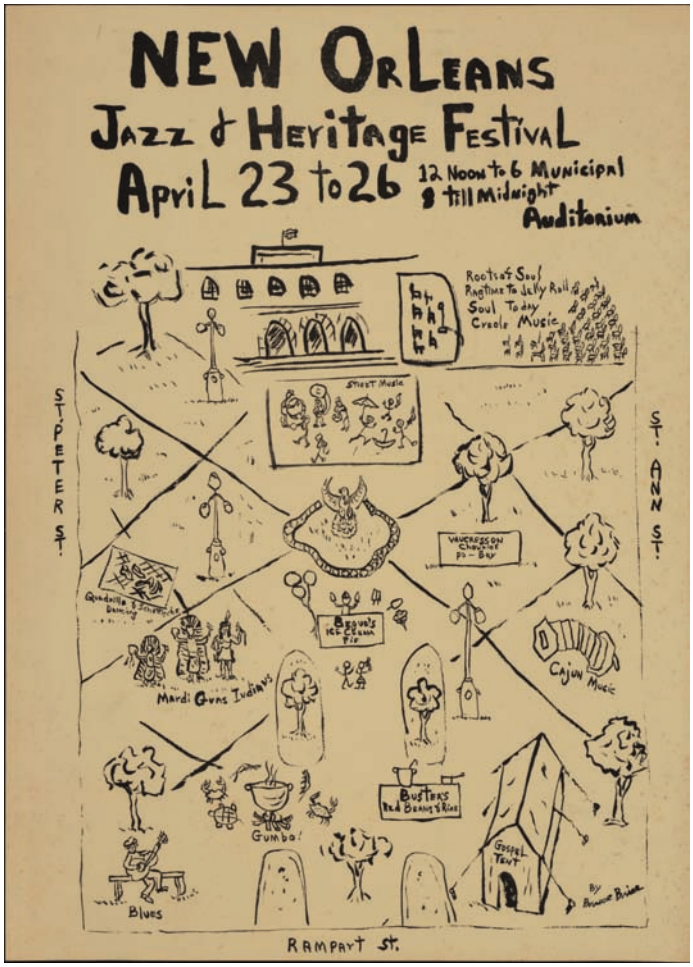
> A thriving market existed at Congo Square on Sunday afternoons; and market women, following the tradition of marketing modeled in their homeland of Africa, conducted most of the transactions.… Some of these female entrepreneurs eventually earned enough money to purchase freedom for themselves and their family members. The same spirit of cooperative economics, collective work, and community responsibility, flourishes with the artists and vendors of today's Congo Square African Marketplace (2009 Festival panels).

In this way, the Festival's Congo Square invokes the historic Congo Square and perhaps even claims a genealogy for its distinctive intersections of culture and commerce. But that link is also rejoined by social activists, historians, poets, and entrepreneurs, many of whom are African American. For many, the festival is also a focus of social activism, which employs Africa as a symbol of self-determination, empowerment, and decolonization of consciousness. Thus, the Congo Square space in particular is the site of multiple racial projects, such as Pan-Africanism, African-centered artistic creation, and economic development. The creative arc that links historic Congo Square to the Festival's contemporary black marketplace is dynamic, evolving, and vibrant, infused with new aspirations anchored in collective memory (see Evans 2011, Sakakeeny 2011).

OUT OF CONGO SQUARE

In its inaugural year of 1970, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival was held in Congo Square, a hallowed place in the history of the genesis of jazz and American popular dance, yet one that had been submerged by dominant narratives for much of the twentieth century (Fig. 6). When the first festival was held there, its official name was Beauregard Square, after the Confederate general. But in spite of official fiat, it continued to be known as Congo Square well into the twentieth century (Evans 2011:20). For many New Orleans intellectuals, music lovers, and civil rights activists, Congo Square was a touchstone—a sacred site—often credited as the birthplace of jazz and African-American dance. Those who were at the 1970 festival recall ruefully that the musicians on stage outnumbered the audience.[4] But it was also full of special moments: Mahalia Jackson spontaneously singing "A Closer Walk With Thee" with the Eureka Brass Band and jazz lover Woody Allen sitting in on clarinet with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band (Offbeat 2001; Clifford and Smith 2005:9–10). It was also adjacent to the French Quarter and within walking distance of several downtown neighborhoods—a logical place to hold an outdoor music festival and heritage fair. Rampart Street, once the edge of the colonial city, long served as a border zone between the tourist section and the rest of the city, including the now mostly African American neighborhoods of Tremé and the Seventh Ward.

In a procession that opened the first Festival, Mardi Gras Indians led the way through the French Quarter, marched up Canal Street and then down Rampart through the gates of Armstrong



6 A poster for the first New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival held at Congo Square (then officially Beauregard Square) and the Municipal Auditorium. Poster designed by Bruce Brice.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF BRUCE BRICE AND THE LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM

Park and into Congo Square. Mr. Davis told me that this was the first time Mardi Gras Indians had paraded outside of the established events of Mardi Gras and St. Joseph's Day. The Indians, he said, were at the heart of what the festival was all about. And yet at that time, "Indians" were still largely ignored, misunderstood, and widely feared in many sections of the city (see Becker, this issue). Reweaving the links between the roots and branches of American popular music were central goals of the "heritage fair," the outdoor portion of the festival. This was intended to valorize black music and culture and to honor the black musicians whose creative genius was often overlooked, thus contributing to a vindicationist project that was explicitly anti-racist. It was also central to George Wein's vision for how to brand his New Orleans event as distinctive from his Newport and New York festivals.

FESTIVAL AS RACIAL PROJECT

In his memoir, *Myself Among Others: A Life in Music*, Wein (2003) recounts that he was asked three times by local businessmen to produce a jazz festival in New Orleans. But the first two efforts, in 1962 and 1964, were preempted by the recognition that the city was "not ready" to host a desegregated event where not only would black and white musicians be permitted to play together on stage, dine in city restaurants, and stay in the same hotels, but where the audiences also would be mixed. Wein, who was married to an African American, was unwilling to move ahead until city leaders had changed their position (Clifford and Smith 2005:3, Wein 2003:352–58). But city leaders (astonishingly, in retrospect) did not believe that jazz could be a selling point for marketing the city and thus were unwilling to invest financially in the creation of a jazz festival. They were also mostly unwilling to risk losing their segregationist patrons. Finally, in late 1969, Wein received an invitation that stuck and set about courting advisors and organizers (Wein 2003:360). It was Dick Allen, the curator of the jazz archives at Tulane, who introduced Wein to Allison Miner and Quint Davis, two young people who were knowledgeable about New Orleans music and who were recruited to work on the festival.

Davis, who graduated from high school in 1965, came of age at the height of the civil rights movement, and like many music aficionados of his day, became fascinated with the black musicians whose artistry had inspired soul and rock musicians. Davis and Miner's passion for the music and their personal relationships with musicians throughout the city made their participation invaluable. As Allison Miner remembers it in the book *Jazz Fest Memories*, she and Quint did most of the fieldwork for the festival, recruiting performers from barrooms where Mardi Gras Indian practiced and churches where gospel choirs performed.

> The festival was a labor of love. Quint and I didn't even get paid. George took us out to dinner to all the finest restaurants in town. We loved every minute of what we were doing. We were committed to the music and knew we were doing something worthwhile, something that counted, something that would be a lasting memorial to the people and the music that they were making (Miner 1997:20).

Miner remembers the challenges of organizing a desegregated festival with whites and blacks both onstage and in the audience.

> At that time no one else was "out and about." Integration laws had just been passed, and people like Allen and Sandra Jaffe were getting arrested for having black people in Preservation Hall. So here we were, two young people trying to put on a multiethnic music festival, and that had never been done before in the Deep South city of New Orleans (Miner 1997:20).

Growing up in a city that was no longer legally segregated but that was still largely socially, economically, and professionally so, Davis had found that black communities were welcoming to those who loved and demonstrated respect for their culture and traditions. The intercultural intimacy he had experienced at countless social club parades, jazz funerals, and Mardi Gras Indian gatherings would have generated powerful feelings of solidarity and connection with other participants (Regis 1999). For this reason, the critiques of the festival's production structure, which became sharper as the festival became more successful in the late 1970s, shocked Davis. Some of these critiques examined the racial asymmetry at the intersection of culture and commerce—with mostly white producers, mostly black performers, and mostly white audiences. As New Orleans became a majority-

7 Congo Square entrance archway circa 2009. Designs by Douglas Redd and members of the Congo Square collective.
PHOTO: HELEN A. REGIS

black city in the 1970s and 1980s, the city's increasing reliance on cultural tourism intensified the public display and commodification of black and Afro-Creole cultures (Souther 2006, Gotham 2007). As long as the festival remained small and its numbers were in the red, it hadn't attracted much scrutiny. The success of the festival changed this framework, shifting the scale of interpersonal negotiations and opening up the "bargain" to a much wider evaluation and scrutiny by participants and nonparticipants. As Wein recounts in his memoir, he was called to a meeting in the Saint Bernard housing project,

> deep in the bowels of New Orleans's black ghetto … A cloud of violent energy hung in the air as I entered a small cement-block room. Thirty or forty African Americans, mostly male, were standing about … The man in the dashiki spoke: "We're going to force you to take more blacks on to the board of directors. You have been ripping off black culture. The community is not benefiting nearly enough by what's happening" (Wein 2003:371).

The tone in this account is revealing of the producer's racial anxieties. As Wein remembers it, the activists, who called themselves the Afrikan American Jazz Festival Coalition (but are often referred to as "Koindu," after the festival space they created) demanded that a greater number of African Americans be part of the decision-making and management of the festival, a challenge for producers who felt that they already had an excellent team who worked well together. More, "there were intimations of racism toward Quint and me … The atmosphere grew toxic" (Wein 2003:373). Wein, who describes himself as "a Jewish kid from Boston" reflects, "my outsider status actually served as a plus, since I was not a part of New Orleans's southern white establishment" (Wein 2003:360, 375). He never had any illusions that his role as a producer came with certain structural tensions. But Davis, who grew up in New Orleans and had long personal relationships with many of the musicians and performers at the festival, may have felt differently.

Kalamu ya Salaam, a participant in the 1978 meetings, was already known as a writer, activist, and editor of the *Black Collegian* (Michna 2011). Salaam recalls that the owner of the beer distributorship for the Festival (Neal Kaye, Sr.) was on the board of directors and that at the St. Bernard meeting, they poured Schlitz beer out on the ground (Salaam 2004). This gesture demonstrated the seriousness of the activists. In an interview with festival historians, Salaam objected to the characterization of their actions as a boycott (Salaam 2004). "We were gonna *disrupt*. Don't get us confused with the NAACP. We were gonna shut it down!" Salaam explains the principal argument of the coalition. "We were saying, "You're not gonna have a major event, and make money off of black culture, and not include black people in the decision making process." Clearly, this threat of disruption would have alarmed not only the festival producers but also the sponsors, whose brands were associated with the Festival. By pouring out the beer, they were showing that, if their demands were not met, they would cut into the profits generated by the festival. Salaam explains that the festival had to take them seriously because of their history of successful actions, including the boycotts on Canal Street, the 1969 student takeover of Southern University, protests against police brutality, and demonstrations to free Gary Tyler, among others.[5]

> We had a track record. And I have no doubt they checked. We had a track record of what some people would term … "militancy." And they'd look up and all of a sudden, they were dealing with a bunch of militants. Not just one or two people saying "give me a cut" (Salaam 2004).

Several of the Festival Foundation board members agreed with the activists' goals, even if they disagreed with their methods. "I didn't want to be part of an organization that was just there to put on a big party. It seemed to me that there was a real need we weren't really addressing," said Marion Greenup Kelly, who had joined the board in 1977 as one of the first African Americans (Greenup 2008). At the time, she was working in City Hall as deputy director of the Human Relations Committee under Mayor Moon Landrieu's administration. Emilio "Monk" Dupre, who was also a board member in the 1970s, remembers

8 The 1991 Congo Square poster was created by John Scott and produced by Planet Publishing. Scott told Kalamu ya Salaam in a 1993 interview: "I've always wanted to make art that moved … My people move. Black people are not static … Instead, they move and they dance with their eyes and their hands. You see them in the street. We say more about who we are with the way that we walk than almost any other people" (Salaam 1993).
PHOTO: COURTESY OF JIM SCHEURICH AND PLANET PUBLISHING/MAGCO

> They [argued] everyone was making money off the festival except black people, which was pretty much true. You had small vendors like Sonny [Vaucresson], nothing major … I think Koindu opened some of the white board members' eyes to what racism was all about …And New Orleans was in a state of flux at the time. I don't know if the city knew where it was going with the whole racial thing.

Salaam explains that the coalition's actions were part of a larger effort to challenge entrenched patterns of white dominance and exclusion: "I was there, because at that time, anything that went on in the city, black people should be part of … [in terms of] decision making and participation. And not just participation at the largesse of someone else." The coalition's efforts became visible in the 1979 Festival. "When Koindu became part of Jazz Fest it was *legally* a *partnership* because the jazz fest had no say-so about the decision makers of Koindu," Salaam recalls, "So part of what Koindu was set up to do, was to do *its own selection method* and thereby ensure that black folk could participate in it." The 1979 Festival program book explains the purpose of the Koindu Area:

> KOINDU seeks to correct a legacy of paternalism which had non-Blacks speak for and determine the authenticity and work of African culture. At KOINDU the creators of African and African-American culture will perform, explain and evaluate their own cultural works. Everyone is welcomed to share, and no one is allowed to dominate.
>
> KOINDU marks the continuation of the conscious affirmation of the importance and quality of African contributions to world culture (Festival Program Book 1979:60).[6]

As Marion Greenup reflected on this period:

> George and Quint and FPI really had to deal with [the view that] this could not [be] simply a celebration that didn't have more lasting effects for the community. And I didn't think they were really opposed to it once they kind of were faced with the inevitable. It seemed to me that they rose to the occasion. But not without a lot of hurdles on both sides. I think Koindu and the Congo Square was one of the first signs that the Festival had broadened its interest (Greenup 2008).[7]

THE ART OF KOINDU

While the threat of disruption from the Afrikan American Jazz Festival coalition pushed for structural changes in festival organization and decision making, it also had a dramatic impact on the physical landscape of the festival. Longtime festival artist Nan Parati remembers that when she joined the Festival staff in the 1980s, "the only real serious gorgeous art was happening in Koindu" (Parati 2009). Douglas Redd, who became the lead artist for the Koindu (later Congo Square) area, worked with a team of artists and builders to design the gates that serve as the entrance to the area (Figs. 7, 16). In a conversation with Kalamu ya Salaam in 2006, Redd remembers how they came to build the arch:

> We really wanted people to understand, to feel … that once they walked into the gate, they were in a different environment, they were in a different country. And I think that that's the effect it had on most people … It was almost like you needed a passport to get through that gate! (Salaam 2006).

Reflecting on his work in those years, and especially at Koindu and later Congo Square, "The design work was always African-based … It was a way to introduce traditional African art, traditional stories into our contemporary setting." Redd explains:

> Everybody was looking to Africa and trying to find a context in which to live and do their work. The thing you always heard about Africa was that artists were an essential part of the community. That in Africa the art [had a function] (Salaam 2006).

Redd, who had travelled to Africa, was aware that in reality, African art didn't always conform to the imagination that he had of it in his youth. "It was part of the fantasy you have about Africa, right, everything that was created was created for a purpose." But he had experienced this sense of purpose in his work with New Orleans cultural organizations that proliferated in New Orleans in the wake of the civil rights movement. "Tambourine and Fan and the second-line groups gave me a way to feel and understand that, cause you were creating for the community."

Parati, who is known at the Festival for her distinctive hand-lettered signs, recalls that the Koindu-Congo artists were work-

9 Dizzy Gillespie performed with Bongo Joe at the 1971 Jazz Festival held in the original Congo Square. Michael P. Smith's black and white photos of the early festival are on display throughout the festival grounds, anchoring the contemporary festival in an impressive history (and genealogy) of performance.
PHOTO: HELEN A. REGIS

ing on another level. She remembers the collective energy of their work site, "That was Doug Redd and his crew [who] later on became known as the "Congolians" … Doug Redd and Coach [Collins Lewis] and all those guys who would literally camp out there and work on Congo and make this fabulous stuff … and they'd stay up all night working and they were just amazing." Redd attributes this collaborative work ethic to his apprenticeship in community-based arts with Tambourine & Fan, the Bucket Men and the Sudan social clubs, and Mardi Gras Indians (Salaam 2006; see also Breunlin and Ehrenreich, this issue, for the Mardi Gras Indian connections of Tambourine and Fan). The Koindu artists' imagination about Africa was filtered through Pan-Africanist and black nationalist aesthetics with a long lineage in social movements, going back to Marcus Garvey and the UNIA (United Negro Improvement Association). The emblematic pan-African Red, Black, and Green Flag that was adopted by the UNIA in 1920 (Martin 1986) was on frequent display at Koindu. Redd recalls that "everything I did, during that period, was red, black, and green." The designs created at Koindu eventually transformed the look of the entire festival. Parati credits the Koindu artists with demonstrating the importance of visual art in the built landscape of the festival: "everything else around the rest of the Festival was more just signage. That is all I was really doing. We didn't start doing art until much later on" (Parati 2009). Redd remember the impact of Koindu in this way:

> I think what it did is it sparked for them the understanding that signs were important and design work and color and image … So you look at Jazz Fest today, in terms of the images and things they put up, I think that's a direct result of the stuff that we started in Koindu (Salaam 2006).

The 1978 actions and resulting conversations brought about substantial and lasting changes in the festival. The diversified board of directors took a different role as new members challenged old ways of doing things, and, as Wein recalls, "many of the white board members joined in the militant energy on the board" which soon had a black majority. In the late 1980s, the Koindu area was incorporated into the Festival's central production structure and was renamed Congo Square, but the idea of Congo Square as an autonomous space continues in many initiatives both inside and outside the festival (Fig. 8). The Festival's Congo Square functions today as both a thriving site of economic exchange and cultural performance and a site of memory (or, after Pierre Nora, a *lieux de memoire*) for the original Congo Square, which is evoked in numerous ways during the festival (Fig. 9). Congo Square vendors today are an eclectic mix of up-and-coming artists and veteran participants, many of whom are "pioneers," African American elders who were involved in the 1978 actions that led to the creation of Koindu.

Ultimately, African and African-Diaspora heritage became pervasive in the Festival landscape. An African Heritage stage became the site of extended conversations about community concerns, artistic endeavors, and Africa-centered educational programs. The activism and African consciousness which transformed the festival are still in evidence today not only at the festival but in venues throughout the city. One of those sites continues to be Congo Square, the location of the 1970 Jazz & Heritage Festival. As musician and activist Luther Gray put it: "We want to once again resurrect Congo Square. Create a new art and a new music for the African people of today" (Gray 1992). Since 2007, The Jazz & Heritage Foundation has produced the Congo Square Rhythm Festival there, hosting a plethora of traditional African drumming, dance, and contemporary African-US ensembles such as Ensemble Fatien (Evans 2011:129). As founder of the Congo Square Foundation, Gray helped to nurture alliances between activists, researchers, educators, archivists, and performers, employing research about the Square and African heritage more broadly, to reinvigorate contemporary performance, and craft visions of the future.[8]

As the divisions of labor within the Festival began to shift,

much of the local community outreach was now being performed by members of the Foundation or the expanding and diversifying staff.[9] In time, Davis became known for producing high-profile national events, such as presidential inaugurations and the Essence Festival, and for brokering exchanges on a national and international scale, bringing major national and international artists to the festival. In the 1990s, he initiated a series of cross-cultural exchange pavilions at the festival to feature the music, crafts, and cultural performance of world regions connected to Louisiana's cultural heritage. Africa and the Diaspora were central to this initiative, with the first year being devoted to Haiti (Fig. 10), the second year to Mali. Participants in these cross-cultural exchanges are encouraged to consider historic linkages and ancestral connections between their countries and Louisiana as well as contemporary ties. In this way, the cultural exchange pavilion exemplifies a central aspect of Festival discourse about heritage. As in most Festival displays and performances, heritage is consistently oriented toward Africa and the African Diaspora, though it has also featured Native American, Caribbean, and Latin American heritage. However, other heritages that have played an important role in southern Louisiana (Italian, Irish, German, Vietnamese, Croatian, Arab, French, Jewish, or English) are downplayed or sidelined entirely. In some ways, like Zulu, the Festival shapes how New Orleanians imagine Africa while its representation also reflects that imagination, which is continually reshaped though artistic, social, and political interventions, emerging primarily from African-American communities.

AFRO-ATLANTIC DIALOGUE: ORI CULTURE DANCE CLUB OF BENIN

The ambition of connecting American music to its African ancestral roots across the Atlantic is one that has animated many musical programs at the Festival. Building on J. Roland Matory's concept of Afro-Atlantic dialogues (2006:155), I consider a specific cultural exchange and genealogical reckoning between New Orleans and Benin that took place at the 2009 Festival. That year, members of Ori Culture Dance Club, along with representatives from the Ministry of Culture, travelled to New Orleans for panel discussions and performances at the Festival (Fig. 11). To explore these issues further, I now turn to one ethnographic moment in this exchange, as the following section drawing my 2009 field notes.

> It is Thursday, April 30, 2009, at the Allison Miner Music Heritage Stage. When I walk upstairs to the Music Heritage Stage, the conversation is already underway. On stage is interviewer Gabou Mendy, with several representatives from Benin: The Director of the Ori Culture Dance Club, Laurent Hessou is there, as well as Oscar Kidjo, a representative from the Ministry of Culture, and Alex Amoussouvi, who seems to be playing the role of translator and all-around cross-cultural interpreter [Fig. 12]. Mendy, a long-time New Orleans resident born in the Gambia, is a physician and a frequent participant in conversations about African music and culture in New Orleans, as well as the long-time host of the "Spirits of Congo Square" show on WWOZ community radio. As I take my seat, Mendy seems to be in the middle of an insider conversation with the representatives from Benin about what happens when folk culture and music are recontextualized in radically different public forums. Glancing around me, I notice that the audience is composed almost entirely of dancers, musicians, visual artists, film makers, journalists, and scholars—aficionados or creators of African Diaspora history, culture, and performance. In the audience of 20 to 30 people, there were few casual onlookers. The stage, located on the second floor of the grandstand, is a fair walk from the festival's biggest music stages, where bands like The Neville Brothers or Bon Jovi might perform. We were a select group whose keen interest in African music and dance impelled us to wrest ourselves from the gravity pull of spicy food, cold beer, and vibrant music in the fairgrounds' infield. This isolation points to a central disjunction between the festival producer's view, shared with other festival insiders, that African cultural heritage is at the heart of the festival, and the demographic and spatial reality that suggests it is marginal. Tens of thousands of festgoers could easily go through an

(opposite)
10 The 2011 cultural exchange pavilion focused on Haiti.
PHOTO: GOLDEN G. RICHARD III/ HIGH ISO MUSIC

(this page)
11 Members of Ori Culture Dance Club perform during the 2009 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. The Louisiana Heritage Stage backdrop orchestrates a visual layering of music and dance, with the iconic silouette of a traditional second line procession, including a brass band and members of a social aid and pleasure club, wielding umbrellas and ostrich plume fans.
PHOTO: HELEN REGIS

entire festival weekend without being aware of this cultural exchange or its relevance to the larger gathering.

Mendy begins the formal part of the panel by asking the Ministry official to explain the significance of their participation in this cultural exchange:

Kidjo: I'm pretty sure that part of our people from Africa came to New Orleans and they brought something with them, which has finally become part of New Orleans and American culture. It is very important thing for us to come over here and see what is left of the first heritage they brought from Africa and compare to what we've brought, actually, to New Orleans ….

In this framing, "part of our people," the eighteenth and nineteenth century ancestors are merged (from "they" to "we") in the last sentence, as the Minister of Culture collapses the past into the present in order to make the 2009 meeting between Beninois performers and Black New Orleans an encounter of ancestors and their descendants (Sutherland 1999). Further, the current delegation claims the power to "see what is left" (the remnants and survivals of diffusion, a la Herskovits).

The director of Ori Culture Dance Club, in his remarks, takes us in a very different direction, as he emphasizes that his troupe began with contemporary dance, and it was only after winning a gold medal in Canada at the *Jeux de la Francophonie* in 2005 that they began to extend their repertoire to traditional dance. I was struck by this emphasis, because several of the group members, with whom I spoke informally on the festival grounds, also immediately volunteered that they did contemporary dance (Fig. 13). There seemed to be some resentment about the way they were being "framed" at Jazz Fest—in the "savage slot," as it were (Trouillot 1991). As embodiments of the past of Black New Orleans, Beninois are asked to perform only traditional dances on the festival stage, thus being cast into a strictly ancestral role. A similar point is made in the documentary film *Movement (R)Evolution Africa: A Story of an Art Form in Four Acts* (Frosch and Kovgan 2008). The film makers document the US tours of contemporary African dancers and choreographers as they encounter American audiences and the expectations of colleagues and fans in the Diaspora. Germaine Acogny, Artistic Director of Jant-Bi, Senegal, observes: "I know that Americans, especially African-Americans, they like traditional dance—they want their roots. But we can also invent a completely new dance." Beatrice Kombe, a choreographer from Cote d'Ivoire, makes a similar point: "All these traditional movements people saw in the 1960s, we are using them, but in a new way … Because we are a people of the twenty-first century, we are not people of the eighteenth century." She concludes, "My themes are really about the present—things that are happening now."

As Kamari Clarke has suggested, "The dialogue between black American heritage tourists and revivalists and African-born practitioners is embedded in relative fields of power, the contours of exchange tend to be unequal and asymmetrical" (2004:112). Similar asymmetries obtain for African artists who are interpolated into the diaspora. Thus Ori's festival performance is produced by and for a very particular audience with specific expectations. Their music and dance form are an intervention in local debates about festivity, blackness, diaspora, and the work of culture in what is often called "the most African city in America."

Significantly, both the panelists and the interviewer are actively and quite deliberately involved in acts of translation. As the Ministry official explained, "some dances are performed [in Benin], when, for example we have a new baby born and we bring the new baby out and show it to the moon. *We saw it in Kunta Kinte. We still have those types of rituals there.*" Thus, in his explicit reference to the movie *Roots*, the official actively adopts the Black American perspective on "African culture" as roots. The discussion ends with the Ministry official inviting everyone in the audience to come to Benin to see for themselves and to learn from the masters and owners of these traditions—in

12 Benin panel Dr. Gabou Mendy, Oscar Kidjo, Alex Amoussouvi, and Florent Hessou. Allison Miner Music Heritage Stage. April 30, 2009.
PHOTO: ERICA STAVIS, COURTESY OF THE JAZZ & HERITAGE ARCHIVE VOLUNTEER PHOTOGRAPHER PROGRAM

effect inviting us all to come and be initiated—a form of cultural heritage/spiritual tourism. Alex, acting as the translator, adds his own spin on this, making the implication plain:

> It is calling you to come and learn those dances too. In other words, those dances can only be performed in the shrines in the different communities. And for you to be able to apprehend, understand totally the secrecy of those dances, you have to be initiated. And so you are invited to come [laughs]. So we are inviting you to come and learn more of those dances.

Now comes the turning point in this presentation, for me, a longtime Jazz Fest observer who is fascinated by the intriguing contradictions between hierarchy and community continually performed inside the festival gates. A member of the Beninois party attempts to thank the festival producer:

> Amoussouvi: Before you continue, I would like to really thank somebody here, he is the one who did everything to bring us here—
>
> Mendy: [interrupting]: I'd like to say something here.
>
> Amoussouvi: Please, okay then, when you're ready.
>
> Mendy: I do remember when this gentlemen was at MASA [Marché des Arts du Spectacle Africains] in Abidjan and next trip he told me, "Well, I'm going to Benin."[10] And he's been going to Benin since, then, for the last six or seven years, basically. I am talking about our beloved Quint Davis, our producer of FPI, and producer of this festival. Quint has found an interest in Benin that is very, very close to his heart. And that interest was not by accident, because born and raised in New Orleans, there is something …When you say, Benin, New Orleans comes in next. When you say Benin, Haiti comes in next. When you say Haiti, New Orleans comes in next. So there is a connection.
>
> And that was the next thing, first of all, I want to thank Quint for making this possible. I want to thank the Ministry of Culture for also making this possible.
>
> Mendy [turning to Alex]: So you can now say what you wanted to say.
>
> Amoussouvi [ruefully]: Well, you have now said everything! …
>
> Kidjo: I want to add something. Don't forget that Mr. Quint Davis has been initiated in Benin. And he has the level, the level of a high priest in our country, which is not an easy thing to do. And it's not easy to become a high priest. And Mr. Quint Davis is one from New Orleans, and it's very important, it's very very important.

This awkward moment between Mendy and Amoussouvi and startling revelation illustrate a critical dimension to the event. Ori Culture Dance Club's participation in the festival was understood by the panelists as part of dialectic of reciprocity and patronage, and was produced through their personal relationships with Mr. Davis.

When I met with Quint Davis in the weeks leading up to the 2010 Festival, he spoke of his vision to develop a cultural exchange between New Orleans and musicians, dancers, and other artists from Benin. Talking with Davis in his home, it became clear that his interest in Africa extends beyond music, as his modernist home is filled with African masks and sculptures, as well as paintings by Miami-based Haitian American painter Edouard Duval-Carrié. The home conveys a passion for all things African and a practice of collecting, which has played out over decades.

Davis spoke of the powerful diasporic connections between Benin and New Orleans:

> So the eight million Africans that went down that road to the beach where they built the gate of no return went to Brazil, Haiti, Martinique, and ultimately New Orleans. The one thing that is consistent to all of those … is Voodoo … Candomble … Santeria ... And I think New Orleans was the only city in North America that had a thriving practice of Voodoo throughout those years and throughout the community.[11]

But the knowledge of these connections is not only based on historical descriptions, it is confirmed through embodied knowledge of ritual processions that share key aspects of performance, and an unmistakable feeling of connection. Davis then went on to describe an experience he had in the Slave Museum in Whydah, a coastal town that once served as the primary slave trading port for the kingdom of Dahomey:

> When I was there, I was in the Slave Museum in Wydah, and I heard a band, like a brass band, sort of, and I could hear it from inside the building and I got all agitated, and they were like "its nothing, its nothing." [But I thought:] "Bullshit, bullshit." So I went running down the steps out of the building and across the street, and it was a Jazz Funeral … A child had died, it was a little car with a coffin, it was mothers and people following behind carrying stuff and there was a little horn band walking behind them … I saw other funeral processions where it was the coffin, the family, umbrellas, palm fronds, and drummers, lots of drummers and they were processing toward the burial. That's how jazz was born.

For someone like Davis who grew up going to jazz funeral processions and social club parades led by brass bands, the feeling of excitement generated by hearing a brass band going by leading a procession creates an irresistible desire to drop any and everything to follow that procession, and to be swept up in the moment. In New Orleans, second line parades organized by benevolent societies or social aid and pleasure clubs and funerals

13 Members of Ori engage in cross-cultural exchange with individual festgoers in between performances, 2009.
PHOTO: HELEN A. REGIS

14 Sagbohan Danialou and George Porter, 2010
PHOTO: COURTESY OF DOUG SCHNEIDER PHOTOGRAPHY

with music, two performance traditions anchored in the African American community since at least the 1880s, are widely credited with fostering and nurturing the music that gave birth to jazz (Regis 1999). In his narrative, Davis explicitly makes the connection between this experience of a funeral procession and the origins of jazz in New Orleans to this funeral procession in Whydah, Benin. He also reveals that his immersion in African culture parallels his earlier immersion in the working-class African American traditions of New Orleans.

Davis emphasized the importance of building relationships with people in Benin, something that takes years, to create a musical and cultural exchange such as the one which has begun at Jazz Fest. Personal relationship with individuals are the foundation of larger structural and institutional relationships. Davis has been travelling to Benin since 2003 and has travelled there regularly ever since. He has become a sponsor of the annual festival of Vodun, now known as the National Cultural Heritage Festival of Benin, held every year on January 8–10. Each year that he succeeded in bringing a group of musicians, he was further strengthening relationships between his organization and his interlocutors in Benin, including specific musicians, spiritual leaders, traditional political authorities (such as, for example, the king of Allada), and officials in the Ministry of Culture, and even including the president. The breadth of these relationships reflects both the importance of cultural tourism in Benin's economy and the reach of a festival producer, who can provide potential access to US audiences and US markets for Beninese music and cultural exports (including potential US tourists, who might travel to Benin).

One of the key individuals who has facilitated the producer's rapport with Benin counterparts, is Alex Amoussouvi. Davis explained that Amoussouvi is

> something we've never had before, he is the official Jazz Fest talent coordinator of Benin and Togo … And so he does everything. He's brilliant … he went to college in Russia, and graduated with a degree in international relations. He speaks I don't know how many languages.

When Alex Amoussouvi and I met during the 2010 Jazz Fest, he explained that he studied international relations and was set to pursue a career as a diplomat when the fall of the Berlin Wall precipitated a dramatic series of changes, including the advent of multiparty politics and the dramatic restructuring of the economy along neoliberal lines, leading to the disappearance of public sector job opportunities in Benin. He began to reinvent himself, drawing on his language skills and his knowledge of cross-cultural issues to start a career in culture and tourism, organizing trips, itineraries for study groups, and facilitating international exchanges. It was in this way that he met Davis on one of his first trips to Benin, and their collaboration grew from there.

As Paulla Ebron shows in her ethnography of Gambian griots (or *jali*) and their local and international networks of performance and patronage, "*jali* negotiated with [foreigners] on terms congruent with their understandings about the making of relationships of patronage and power through performance" (2002:125). Music producers and concert promoters, are both implicated in political economies of roots and heritage, and interpolated by African performers into relationships structured by differential access to capital, mobility, and the means of production.[12]

Steven Feld has written of the role of popular musicians in curating, producing, and promoting African popular musics, in some cases, under their own labels (such as Peter Gabriel's Real World, David Byrne's Luaka Bop, and Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart's Planet Drum productions). These musicians have provided both patronage and validation, as well as access to new markets for musicians who may well be stars in Senegal, Benin, or South Africa, but have yet to find a global audience. In this way, Paul Simon introduced Ladysmith Black Mambazo of South Africa to US audiences in his immensely successful 1986 *Graceland* album (Feld 2005a:239). The album, which sold millions of copies, was "an international market breakthrough for the South African musicians whose local pop styles (Soweto township jive, *mbaqanga*, *kwela*, *mbube*, *isicathamiya*) form the instrumental

15 Quint Davis with club member and parade designer Kevin Dunn, parading with the Original Four Social and Pleasure Club at a memorial procession for Michael P. Smith and Snooks Eglin at the 2010 Jazz Festival.
PHOTO: JEFFREY EHRENREICH

and general musical basis for much of the record's distinctive sound" (Feld 2005a:239). Like Simon, Gabriel, and Byrne, festival producers can play a powerful role as tastemakers, both connecting artists with new audiences and sometimes even introducing adventurous festgoers who may be devoted fans of one genre to another musical form entirely. The multistage format of such a festival encourages sampling, while the effervescent atmosphere of the festival could make audiences more receptive, particularly if they trust music producers to present them with fantastic new music. More, among festival attendees are other music producers, film makers, and festival organizers from throughout the world, who might well invite a Jazz Fest artist to participate in their own projects.

For example, Sagbohan Danialou, the veteran Beninois artist who performed at the 2010 festival, has had a long genre-defying musician career that spans Benin, Nigeria, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire and draws on Afro-beat, Funk, and Benin's indigenous vodun rhythms, has been referred to as "West Africa's Best Kept Secret" (VoodooFunk 2008). But of course, he is not a secret, but rather a "music legend" in his home country of Benin. An accomplished multi-instrumentalist, Danialou is the subject of a recent documentary *L'Homme Orchestre* by Nicolas Moncadas (available on YouTube). On the eve of his departure from Benin to play at Jazz Fest in his first US appearance, Danialou's bass player was taken ill. He thought they would have to cancel their performance, but Davis arranged for beloved New Orleans bass player George Porter to play with the band. Porter, a member of the renowned Meters, is considered to be one of the originators of Funk. And thus, the Jazz Fest performance became a trans-Atlantic funk reunion (Fig. 14). The producer was able to orchestrate this diasporic reunion through his knowledge of the music, his personal relations, and his imagination of the significance of the diasporic dialogue.

ON DIASPORIC BELONGING

During the 2009 Benin panel discussion, the ministry official initially seemed to be framing his remarks in terms of North American notions of belonging, grounded in biologically based racial identities and elevated by intentional kinship claims to Africanness. In doing so, he actively appropriated the Herskovitsian discourse of survivals and retentions in building rapport with diasporic subjects. But working against any egalitarian Pan-Africanism, the official also asserted the spiritual/ritual dominance of Africans in this dialogue. Peter Sutherland (1999) has analyzed a similar dynamic in diasporic imagination in a Benin Vodun festival, in which Dagbo Hou Non sought to bring members of African Diaspora (particularly African Americans) "back" to Benin as tourists to invest in the country's neo-liberalizing economy (see also Hasty 2002).

In the division of labor constructed in the panel, African Americans are positioned as consumers of heritage or, at best, keepers of remnants of African culture in the new world—survivals to be evaluated by the African visitors. The Africans, again in the official's intervention—are those who control sacred knowledge and initiation ceremonies, and who are thus in control of the terms of diasporic dialogue. However, in the Ori director's complaint and in the translator's invitation to come be initiated are evidence of the material differences that structure this "Atlantic Dialogue" unambiguously underwritten by the American Jazz Fest producer. The interviewer, Gabou Mendy, and the Beninois' own invocations of patron-client ties to the (white) festival producer interrupts the Pan-African reverie of kinship and cultural continuity. Or does it?

Music writer Keith Spera (2009a), in a profile of the festival producer, aptly sketches the larger-than-life character of Davis:

> Forty-six years ago, a blond teenager in glasses, a plaid shirt and blue jeans cropped below the knee stood out as he strutted in a second-line parade. Four months ago, still blond but now 61, he took part in a celebration in the small West African nation of Benin. As the drumming and dancing reached a crescendo, he dropped to all fours to "pop the gator," a particularly unhinged form of late-night New Orleans self-expression.

In the photo caption published in the *Times-Picayune* newspaper, Davis is said to be "teaching the locals" how to do the gator (a move in which the dancer hugs the ground in mock copulation). This photo, taken by Beninois photographer Justin Saavedra, catches Mr. Davis dancing in a Vodun ceremony. That he shared these photos with a journalist (and this anthropologist) is suggestive of their importance in his personal narrative as material evidence of his personal trajectory. Like the Friedlander photograph discussed above, it demonstrates an active embodied participation in African cultural heritage. As with the Minister of Culture's disclosure, the photo counters the racialized constructions of community membership, Black Atlantic affiliation, and cultural ownership highlighted in other contexts, including those of the 1978 Afrikan American Jazz Festival Coalition which led to the creation of Koindu as a semi-autonomous Black Art space within the festival.

As for producer Quint Davis, his own embodiment of diasporic dialogue is manifested in his onstage performance with

16 Congo Gates designed by Douglas Redd and constructed by Bill Darrow of Stronghold Studios and the Festival art department in 2000. The mask is adapted from the famous sixteenth century ivory pendant worn by the Oba of Benin (in contemporary Nigeria).
PHOTO: SCOTT SALTZMAN, COURTESY OF STRONGHOLD STUDIOS

Ori at Jazz Fest but also in sharing of his own New Orleans dance moves (like the gator) with African dancers. Thus, he dances an African dance in New Orleans and a New Orleans dance in Africa. That the gator is viewed as an "African-derived" dance is just another layer in the dialogue.[13] These public performances—which are then re-performed in the journalist's account—would seem to publicize the producer's ties to a community in Benin to which he evidently feels a profound personal connection. In Benin, Davis might be perceived by a casual observer as a "white" man, but his personal cultural heritage (growing up in New Orleans, going to second line parades with Jules Cahn, and learning the gator at a high school dance) is already, to a significant extent, African.[14] It is here that Prita Meier's and Peter Probst's recent work on hybrid heritage in Africa provide a useful perspective. Peter Probst's work on the Osun Grove in Osogbo, Nigeria, suggest that part of what is required in the study of African heritage is a shift in frame from the hybridity of objects to the "hybridity of subjects producing such objects" (2009:36). With this in mind, it is possible to see the figure of the festival producer, and other actors in this drama, as hybrid subjects, with complex connections to languages, cultures, musics, and places—multidimensional relationships that are flattened, or erased, when viewed from the perspective of a black-white binary (Fig. 15). Prita Meier's work on home displays of Swahili heritage in the form of photography, porcelain dishes, and other objects in East African cities of Lamu and Mombassa is suggestive. According to Meier, "layered assemblages of prestige objects have long played an important role in coastal east African identity politics and constitute a particular category of display meant to signal the oceanic transcultural identity of local merchant and land-owning elites" (2009:11). In a city like New Orleans, the display of African art, wearing African cloth, and listening and dancing to African music are all ways of crafting a cosmopolitan, diasporic, or African-centered identity. In the context of an event like Jazz Fest, where festgoers choose between drinks, food, crafts, and listening to music by one of six thousand musicians on twelve stages over seven days, choosing to forgo one of the headliners at the larger stages to listen to a relatively unknown group of African musicians is a mark of distinction and a performance of personal identity. As a festgoer myself over a period of twenty years, I often recognize familiar faces standing, dancing, or grooving near the front of the stage for African acts. Some of my friends make it a point to see every African band that comes to town and Jazz Fest is no exception. The music provides them (and us) with a way to reconnect with our travel experiences, or to imagine future journeys. "Certainly, how heritage is invented, imagined, and made visible by groups and individuals in Africa has been reconsidered in important new ways recently by focusing on the contexts of heritage production, but how are locally defined public and private narratives and performances related?" (Meier 2009:16) The performance of African heritage explored in this essay represents precisely one of these intersections between private narrative and public performances, though here Meier's insights are extended to the context of diaspora.

CONCLUSION

Jazz Fest as an institution produces African heritage through an Afro-Atlantic dialogue that both builds on and supports specific personal and collective identity claims, outlines specific genealogies, and orchestrates transatlantic "reunions" such as that evoked by the panelists, embodied by musicians and dancers, and performed through exchange with specific sites, such as those between Whydah, Cotonou, and New Orleans.[15] At least some of those identity claims are at odds with each other, as spiritual communities, racial notions of belonging, and those based on cultural performance may simultaneously bring into being different Atlantic dialogues and enable different identities. The processes that underwrite this production of African heritage are not reducible to US racial binaries, and yet they are nearly always informed by them, as well as efforts to transform or transcend them; they are not reducible to political economy, though they are deeply intertwined with patron-client ties and material aspi-

rations and differential access to the means of production; they are grounded in specific representations of history, while seeking to create opportunities to produce specific futures. In the Festival's cultural exchange with Benin, one can glimpse a moment in the production of Africa in New Orleans. Through this initiative, two of the biggest ports of the transatlantic slave trade, a major transshipment zone and slave markets—sites eclipsed long ago in globalized economies—are now reconnected through personal relationships, narratives of heritage, public performances, and the cultural economy of festivity. But the history of Koindu/Congo Square reveals other patterns. For some African American activists, Jazz Fest has been an exemplary site for the commodification of black music and culture, but also a potentially productive site for activism, cultural critique, and profit-sharing. While festival signage recalls Congo Square as an eighteenth and nineteenth century site of cultural performance, preservation, creativity, and resistance, in narratives that highlight the agency of free women of color as well as enslaved Africans in seeking freedom, it erases more recent histories of struggle and social action. The activists who created Koindu in the 1970s drew on Africa and the memory of Congo Square as a weapon for political and social action in the present (Fig. 16).[16] As Kalamu ya Salaam (2004) told oral historians about his work with the festival, "my nostalgia quotient is zero."

Douglas Redd, the lead artist in creating the festival landscape of Koindu, went on to become the co-founder (with Carol Bebelle) of Ashe Cultural Arts Center, an autonomous black art space that hosts theater, poetry readings, film screenings, and visual arts exhibits, as well as community meetings. In the wake of Katrina, Ashe became one of the major sites for organizing recovery projects and a launching point for interventions focused on culture, housing, and the right of return. As the Festival itself was transformed by the 1978 actions of the coalition, the nonprofit Jazz & Heritage Foundation increasingly became a site for seeding innovative cultural and educational programs through community partnership grants that funds artistic and creative work, documentation project, community festivals, music programs in schools, and other initiatives. The Foundation itself now produces a series of festivals, including the annual Congo Square Rhythms Festival, and an annual symposium on social and cultural issues of concern to students of African and African-Diaspora culture, further extending Afro-Atlantic dialogues. Thus, the political and moral claims made by the Koindu activists—that jazz was a black cultural creation and thus black people should have a role in both producing and profiting from its commodification—have resounding legacy in the ongoing dialogues about African cultural heritage of New Orleans.

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Notes

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1 Several innovative studies trace the circulation of African art, memories of the slave trade, and the revitalization of Yoruba religion and Vodun in contexts of diaspora heritage tourism (for example, Apter 2005, Barbash et al. 1991, Clarke 2007, Forte 2009 and 2010, Holsey 2008, Probst 2009, Scott 1991, Steiner 1994, Sutherland 2002). Together, they sparked many of the interpretations in this essay. Micaela di Leonardo's (1993) lucid discussion of the ongoing relevance of political economy and feminist anthropology in an era of cultural studies helped me to orient my own research focus on the relations of production at the festival. The initial draft contained extensive discussion of Randy Matory's (2006) discussion of trans-Atlantic dialogues, which inspired my focus on the Benin panel as generative site for the ethnography of African heritage production at the festival.

2 The figure of 400,000 for festival attendees comes from Jazz & Heritage Foundation archivist Rachel Lyons (personal communication, October 12, 2012). Festival Productions, Inc. talks about the all-time high attendance of 2001 in these terms: "In 2001, the Festival celebrated Louis Armstrong's centennial, and the total attendance eclipsed 650,000, shattering records for virtually every day of the Heritage Fair, including the all-time single-day attendance record of 160,000" (nojazzfest.com/history, accessed October 28, 2012).

3 All quotes from the 2012 online schedule at nojazzfest.com/crafts.

4 At the time, the primary money-making events of the Festival were the evening concerts held in the Municipal Auditorium. The daytime event held at the square was called the Louisiana Heritage Fair. However, popular memory refers to the Fair as the "Festival" and this usage is followed here.

5 Gary Tyler was a young African American male who was convicted of murder in St. Charles Parish near New Orleans at the age of 16 and became the youngest person on death row in the United States in 1975, when he was convicted by an all-white jury in a case involving coerced testimony and fabricated evidence (Nossiter 1990). When Louisiana's death penalty was declared unconstitutional, he was resentenced to life in prison in Angola penitentiary, where he is still serving out a sentence. His conviction has been characterized by the journalist Adam Nossiter as a "legal lynching" and by civil rights attorney Mary Howell as "permeated with racism all the way through" (Nossiter 1990; Allen 2006). Amnesty International considered him a political prisoner. UB 40 and Gil Scott-Heron have written songs about him (Nossiter 1990). Tyler inspired massive marches in New Orleans and throughout the country in 1977.

6 Salaam later served as Executive Director of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation from 1983–1987.

7 The origin of the term "Koindu" is explained in the 1979 program book. "KOINDU, the word, was shared with us by Professor Ali Sisay, a member of the African-American Jazz Festival Coalition. Professor Sisay was born and raised in Sierra Leone, West Africa and presently resides in New Orleans" (Festival Program Book 1979:60).

8 Ulysses Ricard, archivist at the Amistad Research Center, was the stage manager for the Folk Heritage Stage at the 1992 Festival, where he interviewed Luther Gray about Congo Square. Freddi Williams Evans, author of *Congo Square: African Roots in New Orleans*, is a scholar whose work is oriented to supporting cultural activism at the Square as well as advancing scholarship. Other historian-archivists who have played similar roles include Florence Borders and Brenda Square at the Amistad and Marcus Christian at Dillard. I am grateful to Rachel Breunlin for this insight about Christian. In 1993, Congo Square was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Evans 2011:163). Sunday afternoon drumming circles, led by Luther Gray and others, continue to take place there to this day.

9 The nonprofit Foundation is today clearly

distinguished from the for-profit companies (especially FPI—Festival Productions Inc.) that produce the festival annually, but that distinction wasn't so clear in the 1970s and individuals moved frequently from production to foundation roles. Since 2004, FPI has coproduced the Jazz Fest with AEG Live.

10 MASA is primarily (80%) financed by the l'Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie and the government of Cote d'Ivoire (www.masa.francophonie.org).

11 Quint Davis, conversation with the author, New Orleans, April 3, 2010. All quotes from Mr. Davis come from this interview unless otherwise noted.

12 Like Paulla Ebron's *jali* (or griots), our panelists from Benin are aware that their traditions are transformed in significant ways when they are recontextualized in a transnational area and they are not passive recipients of this transformation process; they have an active and entrepreneurial role in creating "African culture" (Ebron 2002:125).

13 "African-derived dance"—my observation of this perception is grounded in many years of seeing the gator performed at second-line parades (see Regis 1999).

14 See Spera 2009a, where Mr. Davis recounts learning this dance in high school.

15 As this article was going to press, I became aware of Steven Feld's (2012) *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra*. Though it was not possible to incorporate its significant insights into this essay, I am sure that Feld's account of race, class, nationalism, and diasporic intimacy in the long conversations between US-based jazz musicians and African musicians will shape future work on Atlantic dialogues in music and beyond.

16 Even the neo-traditional designs of Douglas Redd evince a political sensibility that troubles nostalgia (Fig. 16). While students of African art will recognize the hybrid heritage implicit in the mask, as Portuguese traders framing the crest contributed to the wealth of the Kingdom of Benin (Nigeria), in the context of the Festival, these Congo Gates speaks to the beauty of African art but also to a legacy of African American militancy.

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