Tulane Talking to New Orleans Project
Anna Whalen and Joel Dinerstein
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Transcribed by Anna Whalen

(0:19)

AW Can you tell me your full name?

JD My name is Joel Dinerstein. I have a middle name but I don't usually use it.

AW Do you want to tell us your middle name?

JD Why?

AW You don't have to. Do you have any nicknames?

JD Not in active use. I mean, I've had a lot of nicknames but none of them really stuck. Well, within the family, actually, the only nick name that really matters is, and I don't usually, this is why, is, within the family my nickname is Jojo. And I mean my immediate family. And mostly the women, because that's what my mother called me. But otherwise, not really. I get called by my last name. People, there are always puns off my last name, but that's actually it's own long story that's probably not worth getting into. I'm trying to think if there are any, active.

AW Where did you get the nickname Jojo?

JD My mother used to call me that. It's just what she called me when I was a baby. It stuck. Well, I'm a DJ on WWOZ, and I got by Heavy D on the air. Which is partially a basketball nickname. I don't really play anymore, but in the 90's when I was in graduate school I played basketball all the time. So I'm a very good defensive player and I don't have much of a shot, so, I had various nicknames around Heavy D, so, that's why that's there. But no one else, that's just what I use, personally. And so then occasionally people call me that, who are from the station, or know it, sometimes, they mock me.

AW When did you start doing the show at OZ?

JD 2006, right after the storm. They lost about a third of their DJs, sort of just about what the city lost in terms of population. And I had been thinking about, I had been hoping to get on before the storm, and I'm friends with one of their DJs, TR Johnson, who runs the writing program, in the English faculty at Tulane. But there was sort of a schedule for that and I was gonna do it, but then after the storm I went up to see the program director and their midnight to three spots were almost all open, so I took that one. Well, I took the Monday, Tuesday morning technically, Tuesday midnight to three. And then this year I started, I moved to

the Monday morning set from six to nine a.m., starting about the second week in September.

AW Are you going to be able to keep that time once you start teaching again?

JD Yeah. I'll just, that's what I'll do. I'll teach around it. So yeah, I like that a lot better. Midnight to three was too tough for me.

AW Did you have DJ experience before?

JD No. This is what I love about New Orleans.

AW So how did you learn it all?

JD Well there's not that much to learn. I mean, I'm a jazz scholar, and so the knowledge I needed to DJ a jazz show I had. And basically I just learned by going up three times, once on TR's shows, once on this guy Catfish, who left after the storm, but not immediately, so he was still there. And they just let me sort of guest spot on their shows. It's really, it's just not, there's not that much to it. I mean there's, and the other thing is there's kind of a, it's not quite a mixing board, but it looks like a mixing board, and I had done some DJ-ing when I was young, just very little, and so it's like a mixing board, except you're just doing mics, and instead of doing sound and things that are like an equalizer, you're just doing sort of your voice, the record and stuff, and ads and setting stuff up. And it's actually not very difficult. But I hadn't, I mean, the fact that I was allowed to DJ on a fairly major station without any experience was kinda great. So, it's still kinda great.

AW What do you like to play on your show?

JD I like to play everything. I mean it's, yeah, I'm not sure if I have any other answer than that.

AW Could you name five artists that you played in your last show?

JD Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, I can say that there are jazz artists that I play regularly. I would say, Cannonball Adderley, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Lester Young, and Sonny Rollins. I mean they're all sort of predictable answers. I could name five more that I probably play as often, like Charlie Haden, who I didn't name. But you know, I mean, I love everything. I play a lot of swing stuff, because I did research on swing. I just consider all of the jazz world open for me to play, even though it's technically a contemporary jazz show. I don't really care.

AW When did you start listening to jazz?

(5:14)

JD That is a good question. I just answered this for somebody recently, and I hadn't really thought about it for a long time. I was always a real music head when I was a kid, I mean, when I was a teenager. And I sort of went from what was folky stuff to rock'n'roll stuff. I didn't really know anything about jazz. I literally don't think I knew anything about jazz. I mean, it was, I lived in New York, it wasn't like foreign to me. But, two things happened fairly simultaneously. I can't recreate this at all. One was that there was a little, sort of moment in the 70's, when there were a couple of jazz songs that were top ten hits, top forty hits. Some of them were sort of jazz fusion, but some of them weren't, and one of them was by. So I was in college in the late 70's and one of them was by Chuck Mangione. Two of them were by Chuck Mangione. I bought one of his records, and it's kind of like pop jazz. That is to say, they are instrumentals, they have improvisation, but really, I mean, they're jazz, but they're sort of occupy the same space that smooth jazz would occupy now, right. It's not really cheesy in the same way that smooth jazz is, but, you know, it's jazz in that it's kind of got a sort of rhythmic feel like jazz, and there's some improvisation but real jazz all the instruments are improvising and having a conversation and that wasn't really happening. And another band was Spyro Gyra. And both of those bands were from western New York. And I went to college right in Buffalo, New York, which is the westernest city in western New York. And there was a great little jazz club in town called the Tralfamadore Café. It was actually a pretty well-known, named after Kurt Vonnegut's planet. And so I played those, I bought those records. Spyro Gira's record, and Chuck Mangione, and I played them fairly often, and I like them. And so that was the first introduction. My sister, I played piano, my sister's a year older than me, and she's, she actually still teaches music at a private high school, and she was beginning to be interested in jazz and has always been a little more than me. She went to Music and Art high school, the *Fame* high school.

AW Where's that?

JD It's in New York. But I mean the movie *Fame* is about Music and Art high school. And so the other, I said there were two things. One thing was that, and the other was that, I used to, back in the heyday of used records stores I used to buy my records used. There was one that I bought half my record collection at when I was a kid. It was three blocks from my house it was great. And I went upstairs, and I was in the jazz section, and there was a Thelonious Monk double record called *Live at the Five Spot*. And, I don't know why, it kind of spoke to me in ways I don't really understand. Like, I hadn't heard of him, or maybe I had heard of him but I didn't know anything about him. And at the time, whatever jazz piano I liked that I'd heard was, you know, fairly conventional and melodic. And I looked it up and it looked like it looked like it was a good price and it was brand new as a reissue, and I thought, and I asked the guy, which I rarely do at used records stores, because then you seem like you're a rube. I asked the guy, I said, "I don't know this guy. Should I buy this record?" And he said, without question, "Oh yeah, Absolutely." So I did. And, you probably don't know, but Monk changed the way everybody plays piano. And was a great composer, and the way

he played piano was just not, for lack of better terms, western or classical in any way.

AW Were you still playing piano at the time you bought this record?

JD Probably once in a while, but not really. But it wasn't for that. But it was probably that I knew enough about piano. But, it was so, and this happened to a lot of people when Monk first started playing in the 40's, it was so idiosyncratic and so original. I mean most people, people legitimately thought that Monk played wrong. They thought that he was, like the way people thought Jackson Pollock can't paint. And it's the same period, they thought he couldn't play. But he had a completely original conception of how to play the piano. And so, and it was compelling—I liked it, although I didn't know what I really liked and it was weird. And I basically tried to figure out, I tried to play it enough to like it, to not feel that it was disruptive, but the way in which you learn to look at a Jackson Pollock without saying "There's nothing in there. I don't know what it is." And I think that was, between that and John Coltrane, because Coltrane's music always spoke to me and always seemed very spiritual and deep and profound, on a way that I was instantly sort of into. And then Monk I had worked hard enough musically to understand with my ears, that the two of them sort of opened up everything else. And from then on, you know, here and there I went through jazz phases and not. But I was a rock critic when I was young, at the time. So I didn't spend a lot of time on jazz, but I did, I mean I was always sort of buying jazz records and listening to them, especially late at night.

AW And this was all before you'd ever been to New Orleans?

JD Oh, yeah. I was, like, I was, yeah, yeah, yeah.

(10:12)

AW Was your interest in jazz a factor in moving to New Orleans? Or was that mostly for academic reasons?

JD No. I mean, yes and no. I mean New Orleans really doesn't have a lot of jazz, this is a complete misnomer about, I mean, it's where jazz was born. But in New Orleans, all the genres mix. Like, what is funk and what is brass band music and what is jazz and all that all sort of, pretty much blur into each other in a lot of ways. So, I mean I grew up in New York, and New York was, has been the home of what is, sort of, innovative cutting-edge jazz probably since 1940. Maybe since 1935. So I was, you know, and I had gone to, I went to clubs a lot in the 80's. But I was sort of already deep into jazz in the 80's. When I went back to New York I used to go all the time. Because I knew a lot of the guys I liked were old, who knows how long they'd be there. The one time I went to see Miles Davis he cancelled because he was sick and he died the next year.

AW So you never saw him?

JD So I never saw him. It was my mistake. But, you know, the point being that when you're a professor, you don't get a choice in what job you take. That's just not how the academic job market works. So I had been in grad school in Austin, Texas, which is nine hours from here, and I had never been to New Orleans until I was, I dunno, 35. Which shocked me, you know. I had actually, literally made vacation trips built around music. First time I went to Austin I went because I knew Austin was a great music scene. And when I go to other cities I check out music. And I just, one day when I knew friends of mine were going to New Orleans and they asked me and I went, and I thought, "How is it that I've never been?" It was like a serious oversight. So then I went and I fell in love with New Orleans the first 24 hours I was here, which happens to a lot of people. So I came back sort of once a year, for the next six or seven years.

AW And you were still living in Austin at the time?

JD Yeah, most of those, the first five of them I was in Austin. I came once for, the first time I came here I came here with friends. Then I came once for Jazz Fest and once for Mardi Gras and once because my then girlfriend's sister lived here and once, I think, to, no, and then I think I missed a year. And then when I got my PhD I had a small research grant in my Post Doc, and I came down to do research. Once at the Hogan Jazz Archive. Actually, both times at the Hogan Jazz Archive. So, you know, then I was applying for jobs, and I applied, there was a job at Tulane and I applied and was lucky enough to get it. But, I considered that not exactly, I considered that a gift from the gods, with a small "g". It's like, you know, to do what I do, and I don't really mean just about jazz, I mean I'm a scholar of African-American culture and literature and you know, to get a job in a place that has both a living tradition of African-American culture and a musical tradition, you know, I thought was rare and unusual, and therefore, I took it metaphorically as a gift from the gods.

AW What are some of the other great music cities you've visited?

JD Well, I mean Austin's a great music city. They advertise themselves as the live music capital of the world and New Orleans people often get mad at that, but I actually think, well I thought this when I lived in Austin, that in terms of how much live music is available on any given night, and in terms of the caliber of the average musician playing that music, Austin may have that better than almost anywhere. However, I don't know how you argue that against, I mean Austin's not as big a city as New York and L.A. and Chicago, which probably would have a good argument too, but Austin builds itself out of that because music is what it sells, I mean music is what it has. It has good restaurants and everything else, but, so I say that having lived in New York, and I know that there's a lot of live music in New York on any given night, but, and a lot of it's good, but I just mean, you know, to walk into a given club in Austin and not know what kind of music is

there and what to expect, unless you hate the genre that you're walking into, the music will be of a fairly decent level. And I'm not sure that's true everywhere. Now New Orleans, what New Orleans has that Austin doesn't, on every level, including music, is, on the one hand, soul, for lack of better terms, and on the other hand, it's like, the music scene here is much more interesting than in Austin. Meaning the actual, sort of, performer-audience interaction, the actual sort of experience at a given club, to me is much more unique and interesting than in Austin, which is still your basic sort of spectator model. New Orleans you go to a club and see music and, you know, suddenly you're involved, because that's what the performers do. And that's what I think, but, I do think Austin has its own claim. New York's a great music town, obviously. But New York's Jazz clubs, for example, most of them cost thirty bucks and a two-drink minimum for a set of music, which is a lot of money. And has been a lot of money for a long time, and they mostly get by on Japanese tourists, and rich people. I only single out the Japanese because they love jazz. What else is a great music city? I have found really good places to see music all over the country. L.A. probably is, but I've spent some time there but not enough to know.

(15:55)

AW Have you been to the Bay Area?

JD I have, but, and I've been to great shows in the Bay Area, but I've just never spent enough time there to know what the music scene is.

AW Did you go to Yoshi's?

JD I didn't go to Yoshi's. I need to, you know, that's really, that's funny you should mention it, I always, I was there for the first time in twenty years last summer. But it was for a wedding and there wasn't a lot of free time. But I should've gone to Yoshi's. Have you?

AW I saw Charlie Hunter there, and Taj Mahal there.

JD Nice, nice.

AW It's also expensive and there's a two drink minimum, but

JD Well when I'm traveling, it matters less, you know. And I mention that about music because, you know, in the 80's when I was going to see jazz, it was like, one of the things that was most jazz gigs, even for really famous guys, they would play literally Tuesday to Sunday. And they got better, I mean, in a sense they were playing, it's not always their regular group and they got better every night, and you could always stay for more than one set if the place was half empty. So, the best night I always found was Sunday, because Sunday night's not a night most people go out, they've been together all week, so they were playing at their

best, and usually nobody stayed for more than one set on Sunday nights. So you get the second set free if you pay the minimum, so, basically I would often go out Sunday nights to see jazz in New York. But I've seen, and assumed there to be very decent music scenes in Richmond, Virginia, where I spent a couple days a long time ago, and thought that was pretty good. And Chicago for sure, although I've seen, I go to Chicago to see specific things, like I've been to blues clubs in Chicago and I've been to jazz clubs in Chicago, but, you know, one thing that Austin has is Austin has, like, a scene around music, and Chicago probably does, I just don't know it. When I went cross-country a real long time ago what we would do no matter where we stopped was I would just, like, go into the convenient store and ask the kid who was working there, you know, "Is there any live music anywhere near here?" and, or, not even near her, just, and we'd often find ourselves in weird places. And it was great, I mean it's a good way to go cross country, because, you know, sometimes it's just the lounge band at the local Holiday Inn, which can be interesting if you only do it once. You know but sometimes you find, like, we were in some place like Davenport, Iowa, and there was this giant warehouse with this very 80's REO Speedwagon kind of band, and they had, like, this giant, I can't even think of an analogous club in New Orleans because we don't have that kind of space, but it had like pool tables, and a video arcade, and a restaurant, and like, I hated that kind of music, sort of 80's power ballad sort of stuff, but suddenly I knew why it made sense. Like this was its audience. And you know, that's what you learn, traveling and seeing music. It's like, this music was made, it's a Midwestern, loud music with a story. I don't know, somehow it made sense to me.

AW So you did a trip cross-country—when was that?

JD Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, I don't know. 85, 86, I think 86.

AW Was there a specific purpose?

JD Yeah, well that trip, well, I mean I've been across the country two or three times. Usually it's for a purpose, but not always. That trip was because my friend Jay in New York had to return a car to his girlfriend in Denver, and he didn't have a license, or his license had lapsed.

AW Sounds like *On The Road*.

JD Yeah, right. No, it wasn't quite that good. And the car didn't have a horn, which was fascinating. Its horn was broken. So I developed a coping mechanism, in which whenever, when I was in a situation in which I would hit the horn, which I did anyway, I would say, "Don't do it pal," and that was like, just a psychological way of me dealing with the fact that I didn't have a horn, because not having a horn, for me, as a New Yorker, was tough. So that time we just, you know, were doing that. The first time I drove cross country my friend, my best friend from childhood, was going to University of San Diego for law school and so I drove

out with him and wound up staying in San Diego for a year. San Diego music scene, I was, I worked as a rock critic for that scene, but that wasn't, that was a scene, but it was a small scene, and I don't think it's any better, it's probably better than it was, but, it's not a music town.

(20:13)

AW It was more reggae, right?

JD I don't know, you probably know better than me at this point.

AW At least the music that I know of that comes out of like San Diego and there is, seems more like surf rock and dub.

JD Yeah, I hope so. And that's different cause at that point-

AW But it also might be just what I've been exposed to.

JD At that point, it was like punk and power pop. It was like the early 80's and they had their own sort of scene that actually produced a couple interesting groups. But it was very, there were a very few bands and a very small scene. And it wasn't a music town. I mean, music towns, New Orleans in particular, you know, even when there's no music, there's music. You know, it's like you feel it, it's around, you know. And that's kinda true in Austin, in some parts of Austin. But the Bay Area I'm sure has a great music scene, I just never spent, I went to a club that I think is now gone, but was famous. What the hell was the name of that club? I mean it was a rock club, it was small, fairly well known. I'd remember the name if you knew it.

AW Was it the Independent?

JD No. It was the I-something. The I Beam. Is that still there?

AW I don't know it.

JD Ask around. It was a big club, like in the 90's. But I don't know if its still there. But I had a good time there. So, you know, but anyway, as it, this whole thread started because I was, you know, I had done vacations to see music. And somehow New Orleans had never struck me as a place where I should so that. And then I was just here, and then I would see music all the time.

AW When did you first move out of New York? How old were you?

JD Well, it depends. I went to college at sixteen.

AW Why did you go to college so young?

JD In New York, when I was growing up there was, because I was grew up in the latter end of the baby boom, the cities, the schools were crowded. So they started this program called SP, which would now be called the Gifted and Talented Program, and it was actually just called Special Program—SP. And there was a three year SP, which really was a gifted and talented program the same way they would have now, and there was a two year SP, which means you could skip eighth grade, and take a more concentrated seventh and ninth grade because it got kids out of school faster, and there were crowded schools. Anyway, I took SP, as did a number of my friends. A number of my friends took the three-year, and a number of my friends took the two-year. So basically, so I skipped one grade and I'm born late in the year, in November, so it just happened that when I started I was sixteen. Which was not good for getting dates my freshman year, I have to say. But other than that it was fine. So anyway, so I don't know if that counts, I went away to school when I was sixteen.

AW Where'd you go?

JD Buffalo, New York. It was called, then, SUNY Buffalo State University of New York, at Buffalo. And now I think it's called simply the University of Buffalo. It was a good school. You know, and then I was, I went home for summers. I spent another, I actually lived in Buffalo on and off for nine years. After school I lived there for a year, I drove out to San Diego with my friend, we came back to New York, I lived at home for a while, I went to Europe, I went back to Buffalo for three years, and worked and got my teacher certification, blah blah blah. Did I see music? Yeah, all kinds of stuff I guess. And then I moved back to Brooklyn for the rest, for the next eight years.

AW Were you living at home?

JD No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. No, I was living with my then girlfriend. So, but I only lived about a mile away from where I had grown up, which was kinda interesting. But those were the years I was going to jazz clubs, and I was going to all kinds of clubs, but I was really going to jazz clubs on Sundays. And I went by myself, because, you know, I really, I didn't have a lot of success getting people to go out and see jazz, with me. Less because they didn't like it, but more because they weren't interested enough to pay what it cost. Probably should've taken her out once or twice. I mean, to go, and just say you should go and see this, because she'd like it, but, you know, it wasn't her thing. And it was mine, right. So if I'm gonna go on a Sunday night for a set that starts at nine, and stay for the second set, I'm gonna be there until one a.m., and so, you know, it was, I wanted to be a jazz scholar. You can't expect people to share your obsessions.

AW When you were growing up, you lived in Brooklyn—what was your living situation like? Who did you live with?

JD I lived with my Mom and Dad, who were not happy, who were unhappily married. I'm the youngest of four. My sister's a year older than me, we were very, very close, always were. My older brother and sister are twelve and fifteen years older than me, so they were out of the house by the time I was ten. In fact, my older sister was out by the time I was six. And we had good relationships with them, but they were like a sort of second, medium level parents, yes and no. I mean, you know, they were because they were so much older. So we lived in a six-room apartment in Brooklyn, and I lived in a neighborhood that, while we were growing up, was a fairly middle class Jewish neighborhood, that while I was growing up, went through what was then and is sometimes still called "white flight". Which is to say, African-Americans moved into the neighborhood, a lot of the white people moved to the suburbs, and what that meant in terms of what's relevant, in part for this conversation and my life, is two things. One I didn't understand what was going on, since it didn't seem to make a lot of difference in my day-to-day life, but it seemed to actually throw sort of great fears in everyone else around me, and I couldn't quite understand it and nobody talked about it. What it meant is that my junior high school and high school were 85-90% African-American and Afro-Caribbean.

(26:13)

AW Was your neighborhood as well?

JD Yes and no. I mean, you know the zoning of a given school is, you know, sort of a big neighborhood, and my part of the neighborhood was probably less so.

AW It was more Jewish?

JD Yeah, I mean it was changing as I grew up. But, you know, like my best friend, who lived a good mile from me, probably a little more, my best friends from childhood, you know, his neighborhood was probably about 70-80% African-American, even when he was in grade school, a little more. But, you know, mine wasn't, but by the time we left, when I graduated high school, my family, most all my friends had moved to Queens or Long Island or the suburbs in some kind of fashion. Again, but it's from where my, I mean, it's less where my interest lies and more where my both emotional response and questioning of American society and everything else lies. Like, I didn't understand what the hell race was about, I didn't understand why no one talked about it. And I understood it at the most experiential level in ways I would argue in grad school for years, that there was an interesting, there was a interesting and valid African-American culture, that was a culture, and I saw it, you know. To grow up, I mean, not only did I have a lot of African-American friends, but to grow up in say, junior high school, which is 90% African-American, meant that the guys I admired were African-American, you know, I mean, not always, but, you know, in my school the leaders, the athletes, the cool guys, that's who they were. And I was friends with them, or not, or, you know, but, my understanding, and my relationship with them was based

on experience, not based on sort of being an anthropologist or being sort of a bleeding heart liberal. And so I always, and I, you know, I didn't start asking questions in a conscious way about these issues until I got to college, really. And then I thought most of what I was reading was crap.

AW What kind of stuff were you reading that you thought was crap?

JD I mean, you just read sociology that is, I mean some of it was interesting. But some of it was, you know, basic sort of liberal political narratives about oppression. All of which were often true. None of which seemed to get to anything useful for me. And all of which left out, I mean it was sort of basically treating, sort of African-Americans as if they were victims, and not as if they had sort of any culture, agency, relationships. Now that stuff was being written at the time, and only, a lot, for the first time. But that wasn't what I was reading in those classes. And I would come to eventually, I mean soon after, start reading all of that myself. I like to say that, actually I wrote an essay recently for, about intellectual autobiography, in a sense, why I study what I study. And so this is all fresh because I actually tried to figure it all out. I mean I knew a little bit. And so there's a line I always use, which is that there's a, I don't know if these books exist anymore, there used to be a bunch of sort of comic books, that recalled sort of blank for beginners—Einstein for beginners, Nicaragua for beginners, solar energy for beginners. And I read one called *Einstein for Beginners*. And it said that when Einstein was sixteen he asked himself the question, "What would the world look like if you were riding on a ray of light?" And the writer said, to some extent, Einstein spent the rest of his life answering this question. Right, how would physics change—what would you see if you were traveling at a hundred and eighty six thousand miles an hour. And so, with apologies toward my not being Einstein, my, at sixteen I literally, when we moved out of the neighborhood, we moved, after I graduated high school, my parents waited until I graduated high school. And we moved out of the neighborhood and I remember walking to the train station for the last time because the movers had come and we were moving to Queens, a place I never liked, the other borough, and I remember looking back on my block as I turned the corner, and I thought, "What happened here?" Here are the two questions I thought "What happened here?" and "Why don't I know what happened here?" And to some extent I spent the next twenty years answering those questions around issues of race, black culture, American history, music. And I read all kinds of stuff. The first way I read it was just reading African-American writers, like, what do African-American writers, how do they look at the situation? And I read the civil rights movement stuff, I read autobiography, I read psychology, sociology, and then I always read the music stuff, because I was completely, always into music, so, I'd sort of already started that by reading blues history, that's probably the first, but that wasn't conscious I just loved it and wondered, who made this music? So I mean that's all sort of how I came to be interested in all this stuff, and how it all sort of goes together for me, right, so I don't separate, sort of, the music and the culture from the politics and

the sociology and the history, right. But, there was a time when I went after it, sort of, one after the other.

(31:20)

AW What specific experiences have been most instrumental in helping you answer those two questions?

JD See, you're asking good questions. Except, they all have, as you can see, long answers.

AW That's good.

JD Well, it's good and it's not good in terms of, sort of specifically the Prince of Wales kind of stuff. I'm just warning you. So I'll try to, when you ask good questions, think of concise answers. I don't even know what I would say, there are too many things. I mean really, there are too many things I could think of that answer that question. There are formative questions about understanding music, and sort of understanding what is an African-American musical aesthetic by seeing things live, by listening to things, by reading things. There is stuff about, there is stuff about playing basketball with folks. There's stuff about, well, I'll give two examples, and let them suffice for the rest. And they're ones in which I went, you know, in the same way that I sort of read, I mean for a while I read novels. And in terms of white flight, of which there are a couple of decent novels about it, from sort of the white side, I sort of was always looking for novels about it that might be written from the African-American side of things. And there really aren't. There's very little about it. There's a little, but not much. A question I asked myself for years, like, why aren't they there? But, in general, my point being that I looked for all those novels, and I read what I could, and I found sort of the whole vein of African-American literature, whether it was just Toni Morrison and Alice Walker and Ralph Ellison and Mary Baraka, I read all that stuff. But I also, sort of musically, not just in terms of American music, I always want to understand everything on its own terms in its own milieu, right, so you now, in a world, so, reggae, like, I would love to see, sort of reggae, I don't even know if Jamaicans still listen to reggae at clubs, probably they don't, they listen to reggaeton or whatever its become, blah, blah, blah. But, you know, that's a very different thing. So, so when I was, I don't know, in the 80's, in fact, on that trip that we drove to Denver with Jay's car, we passed through Chicago. And I went to a blues club on the south side of Chicago because, you know, blues was not any longer, except in specific places, what African-Americans listen to as music, and this was the 80's. But there are specific pockets, in the South, in Chicago and various places, where blues still is. And this was one of those clubs and it was sort of well known, and we went there. And I did the same thing five years later when I went to the Mississippi Delta, where it's still the music of the people who live there, and then Chicago, this is actually more of a story about the Delta one, the Chicago trip was fascinating, it was a small club, there was almost nobody there,

even though it was a fairly well known club. The band was great. I mean, and the intensity-

AW It was a blues group?

JD Yeah, but they were a no name group. And so, first of all, they weren't known. Second of all, the music they were playing was so intense and kind of, not literally, but electrifying, that, you know, I mean, I was so sort of physically sort of turned on by it. And yet there was an older black couple there, they must have been in their mid fifties, and in the middle of the song they got up and danced, you know, this way. Like with each other, moving a little bit to the right, a little bit to the left. And music that I cannot tell you was as powerful and driving as like any rock and roll you've ever heard. And I went, all right, so first, I gotta figure out what's going on. Which I never quite did, but it's one of those questions, right, if you know an answer, I go, and to some extent I realized that basically they stuck to what was ultimately the underlying rhythm of it, when I was sort of listening to the guitars, and sort of, the sort of power stuff. But it was still kind of a, as a set of images, just unbelievable, for me. And the second thing I remember (35:50) is the band, like after a set, that was just searing, like really exciting, literally, they put their instruments down, the mood was done in thirty seconds, and the lead guitarist went over and played like Space Invaders or Galaga, like, and everyone, the three guys just went over and played video games for like twenty minutes, and then went back to the stage. Like this was like, to go, it was like watching a car go from zero to a hundred, stay at a hundred, and then get off the road, brake down to zero in three seconds and go to the vending machines. Like that's what it was like. And I just said, "All right, I don't really know what that is, but that's fascinating." The more interesting one, I mean, because it has a lot of different parts was I had a similar experience in the Delta at a juke joint, and the club was packed, I mean this place in Chicago didn't have many people. And I knew more—this was five years later, and I was with my friend, my best friend from childhood, and it was, you know, a dive. Well not really, but, and well, I dunno, there must have been a hundred people in the club. Really good band, like the second song was as electrifying as the Chicago music had been, and I thought, "Don't you guys build up to this?" Like it was really just like high intensity, piercing blues, right. Now the thing about the Delta club, because there were a lot of people there, were, was that first of all, people of all ages were in there. Second of all, people danced inter-generationally, which you only see in country and blues. Well, maybe some in Zydeco.. Meaning that seventy year old women danced with thirty year old men, and vice versa. And really danced. It wasn't just, "I'm being nice to Grandma." Like they were both really dancing. And I've read a lot of both, you know, blues history, and a lot of African history, and all that kind of stuff, and the ways in which dance is important culturally, that it is in someway both self-expression and, in some sense, embodied philosophy. Like when you're dancing you are both communicating with your partner and you're not messing around. And you're not even just doing it for fun, it's like a completely, what I learned that I already knew, but it was one of those moments when sort of it

became very clear to me, is this is not the same, dancing is not the same for African-Americans as an activity as it is for most Euro-Americans when they get on the dance floor. Even if they're enjoying it. I mean, they're both enjoying it, but there's a different aesthetic going on as to what enjoyment might mean. And for instance, I've had an old woman, an old African-American woman in New Orleans say to me, in Congo Square, watching a music band, while I was dancing, I'm telling you the woman was not less than seventy five, tap me on the shoulder, literally, and said, "Dance." And so I was moving, and I thought moving all right, and she shook her head, like, "Mm, that's not dancing." And believe me, I've read a version of this story in anthropologies all over the African Diaspora, except usually the white guy's not the one being asked. Although there was, in one of the anthropologies. And so I would dance more seriously. You know, I mean meaning you actually start, stop moving in a fun way, and start moving in a way you think will impress her and you start sort of thinking, ok, how, and it becomes less conscious but what you're really thinking is, you know, how would I dig down deeper into moving to this music? So I did that. You know, and she shook her head. I mean, she kinda both said, "Ok, sort of, but no." And then, and she was, you know, she was wearing like a white gauzy blouse that was, you know, a little bit beat up, and yet she was perfectly self-confident that, you know, if I'm going to, it was, it was like you know one of those things like if you are actually going to write about this stuff then you need to know, and somehow she was the agent. And at some point, after my thirty seconds at that point, she sort of said, she literally, like just looked at me and said, "Show me what you've got!" Which also, not uncommon when African-Americans are dancing together. And then I had to actually give up all of the aspects of thinking about it and sort of submit myself to the music and go where it led, and, I mean, I knew that, but that's not really conscious and can't say that I knew that but I knew that. And then I went for a good one or two minutes, and I wasn't looking at her because that's part of the point, right. But I wasn't conscious, and when I came out, you know, she was sort of nodding and had moved on. Like that's the part she needed to see.

AW Did you get her approval?

(40:14)

JD I think the fact that she moved on was fine. Like she didn't dismiss me, and she, like when I came back out of it, she was like sort of nodding, and, but moving to whatever she was doing next. And so that is sort of what I mean, in effect by the difference between what dance means for, and I mean dance means a lot of things to like, different cultures, so I don't want this to be as literally black and white as it is. I just had already known that it was separate. And to some extent she was saying, well if you're going to get to what it is, then you have to be able to do it. Which is something I take very seriously. Look, I wrote a book on swing, and half of it's about dance. And I learned to swing dance because I wasn't going to write about the dance part if I couldn't swing dance. And yet there are many people who do. So, you know, those are examples of like, truly, you know, major

experiences, moments in which I understand the kinds of things I've been thinking about or they answer things or they deepen my understanding of things that I've studied or thought about or asked. You know. And then there's the stuff we haven't talked about, not that I want to at the moment, which is just I'd also in between read all of American history and, you know, the history of race and African-American history that I, so I always, I have a lot to bring to the table. That's just it's not as relevant to the current conversation.

AW So your interest in African-American culture, your scholarly interest in that, ended up leading you to become part of Prince of Wales, right, because you were working on an article about them?

JD Yeah.

AW Can you tell me about that project?

JD Yeah. Now this is, so now you have all the background for this, and if that was skillful, good for you. And if it wasn't, good for you anyway. But, so here's the background, and it won't take long. So here I am, I'm a scholar of African-American literature and culture and everything, and music. And I have a pretty good sense, having traveled in this country and knowing what music is, I've, the thing about the south, the club in Chicago, for example, was that that was actually a really rough part of town, you know, and my friend didn't even want to go with me. I mean that was true in the Delta too, but I thought, more or less, oddly as tourists I thought we were safer even though we weren't really tourists, I mean we were. But in a sense, we were outsiders in a way that I thought would be, my sense of having traveled in the South was I wasn't really worried, my friend was. And we had a little bit of trouble later that night, but nothing major. But Chicago, is like a big city, it has, you know, serious big city crime, and, you know, going on a weeknight into the depths of south side of Chicago, when what you're doing is going to a blues club, is, you know, it's just, you know, it's what you do, I mean, it's doing when you want to find out something. But it's not without it's rifts of crime and stuff like that. So, anyway, I don't know if there was a reason why I wanted to do that. Oh, it's just a matter of that this is stuff I needed to know, and therefore I would do what I had to do to find out. As best I could. So when I came down here, a month after I lived here I was on my first second line, and I think my friend Garnett invited me. It was a gorgeous, gorgeous September afternoon, and it was cooler than usual, which is to say it was probably low 80's as opposed to low 90's in September. It was late September. But still. And I was, like I was blown away by it. I mean, first of all I thought it was great.

AW Which second line was it?

JD I have no idea, you know.

AW It was your first one?

JD My first one. I could probably figure it out a little bit because, you know, each Social Aid and Pleasure Club has a Sunday reserved. And so, if I wanted to I could probably do the research, because it, but I don't know, it was probably the third or fourth Sunday in September, who knows. And a couple of my friends were on it, people I'm friends with now.

AW Do you remember what color their suits were?

JD No, I have no memory. I have no memory of the actual first line. But the fact that, you know, and I would later write about it, that it was this giant, outdoor, rolling block party, with great music and dancing and, you know, hanging with people, not to mention sort of stops for food and everything, I thought was an amazing thing. As a great event. Also that it was clearly an African-American sort of cultural institution was fascinating, but I didn't care, really. The first time I just, on a pure level, had a great time, thought it was phenomenal, didn't know anything about that they're every Sunday for every nine months out of the year, which would only later, would impress me later. I just really, this is the question I had, I thought, "Why don't I know about this? And why doesn't anyone know about this?" And, as you know, living in New Orleans, most white people in New Orleans, many of whom grew up here, don't know what real second lines are. They think it's either the wave the handkerchief thing, or jazz funeral thing, but they don't know. This whole notion, which to me is kind of astounding, but they don't. So you can only imagine that no one in the country, look, I am a music scholar with something of a reputation. I know the music scholars in this country. They don't know about them, by and large.

AW Just wanted to make sure it was still working.

(45:31)

JD So, so that was, you know, that was my question. Like, because like, my question about Brooklyn was why did this happen here and nobody talked about it, and my question with the second line was how is it I don't know about this, how is it that nobody know about this? So, I immediately sort of liked second lines, in general. I don't really have a sense of how many I went to. I mean, now I probably go to one, well now I'm in the Walers, but even before that I would say I went to like one a month, say. But then I just thought, not only is this great, not only do I want people to know about it, but, as far as what I want, in art, well, music meaning art, but what I want in sort of how music or art can build community, or culture in urban life, like this was everything I'd ever wanted. It's like, a rolling block party with people, and you know, you see people, shake hands with people you haven't seen for years, and there's really, you know, great spirit, and the bands are great. You want to dance the whole time. And actually, at second lines for me, time actually gets suspended. Especially if I'm drinking, I mean I don't drink much at second lines. But if I have two beers, on a Sunday afternoon, and there is music,

by the time it's three o'clock, I have pretty much lost track of time and my own life, in the best sense. Not as in, not as escape, but as you know, sort of an alternative kind of reality. And so, you know, and I thought, you know, not only I wanted to know about this, but I always sort of immediately wanted to know, how do these things, who puts them on, how do they get done, all of that. So that was one initial set of questions. And then I would go on them and stuff. And so, that was in '03, so, what happens is that I, the first major second line after the storm was the Prince of Wales parade and it's the one I wrote the article about. And I live in the 12th ward, which is where the Prince of Wales originally was from, you know, not everyone's from there anymore, but that was originally sort of where they were from. And they started that year from Tipitina's. And I remember hearing about it, it was like December 18th I think, and I literally thought, on my way over—were you here for the storm?

AW No.

JD Well I can only tell you that it was a very weird time. Like I had no real damage to my house and all, but you know, really, it was incredibly stressful. I mean for about six months, like I would go literally day to day, one day I would think, there is no way this city is going to survive, I crunch the numbers, I look around, I look at the problems. And the next day I would think, oh, we're gonna survive. But it was really stressful, I mean it wasn't like I'm saying I would think one thing then the other, I would have a whole day in which I was in one sort of psychological reality and another in which I was in another. Anyway I'd only been back for two weeks. I moved back like December 5th, and I didn't have heat in my house yet either. And literally, as I was walking over to the parade I thought, this, I will know today whether the city will survive. Because I have that kind of, you know, sort of outsized faith in culture and music. And in people. It's like, you will know the spirit of people by certain things. And for me, I know the spirit of New Orleans, you know, I hadn't made this conscious, but I will know the spirit of New Orleans by whether the second line has it, or not.

AW When you went to this Prince of Wales second line, was that with the intention of writing an article? Did you already know you were going to be writing about it?

JD No, no, no, no, no. This is a good story. Sort of. Not at all. Not in the least. Not only that, I used to, until very recently, I don't really keep journals much. And the only journal I kept about New Orleans was I kept a live music journal. Not every time, but live music here was so interesting to me, both in terms of its venues, things that happened, and the music, and those are alls sometimes separate, that it was worth doing. So, you know, I would try to write down something about every music event I saw. Music events could be all kinds of things. And so, that second line, first of all, was great. I mean it was also, it was a gorgeous day. I don't mean, not just the temperature, but the lighting was, I mean, I have some pictures and there's some video, but it was beautiful light. It was a gorgeous day, and it was just a great, great second line. Like immediately great. I know that's really not

that descriptive. But that itself is telling. Anyway, it was beautiful, the guys all wore white, because like they could only get white tuxes late in the day, and they wore like white tuxes with blue hats—they looked great. And the umbrellas were really beautiful. And I took some pictures. But it was huge, I mean, you know, there weren't a lot of people back in town yet. And I live only five, it started at Tipitina's, I live only five blocks from Tipitina's, and when I came, and not only that, you know, Uptown is an area that is not as African-American as Central City, or Treme, where a lot of them also start. And, you know, I didn't know Prince of Wales. I came onto Napoleon, and like there were trucks, big trucks, parked on the neutral ground as they are sometimes at Tipitina's, like three or four blocks up and I thought, okay, it's gonna be a big parade.

AW Like pick-up trucks?

(50:52)

JD Yeah, yeah. But, they were, first of all I thought it was going to be a big parade because I was there at noon and there were all these trucks. And second of all, for me, having African-American friends in town that a lot of working class African-Americans drive those, they looked like sort of really sort of shiny, big pickup trucks and four by fours. And just looking at them I thought, I think those are trucks owned by African-Americans, so I thought immediately, all right. I mean, I just, in terms sort of judging who's going to be here, because at that time there weren't a lot of blacks back in the city because, of course, you know black neighborhoods were much, disproportionately hit by the storm. So I'm just saying, as I'm walking over I thought, literally, consciously thought, all right, is, you know, this will be a sign of whether the city, the spirit is still here, even though the city's a wreck. And two, I was wondering what sort of the makeup of the parade would be, and, you know, anyways, so it was great immediately, it was intense immediately. I actually wrote this in my article, it was like some parades, I don't know how many second lines you've been on, but some parades, you know, it doesn't, it's always it's all good, but the real intense part is the third leg, two hours in, like that's when it kicks up. Sometimes it's the second, sometimes it's the end. This parade was like instantly, you know, powerful and dynamic in like the first ten minutes, like the first five minutes you turn the corner and like spirit was high, the music was great, it was quite something.

AW What band was playing?

JD Rebirth. So, anyway, all that happened, blah blah blah. I wrote a really long, and not only did I write like a long journal entry from that day, but it was that day was the first time I really tried to analyze second lines. I'd been on enough of them that the stuff I'm telling you a little bit about second lines, I hadn't actually written down yet. And so that day, because it was such a great second line, and I was sort of excited, and literally the first three words of my journal entry was, "Okay, I'm staying." Like, that was sort of my note to myself that I would stay in

New Orleans. I didn't think I was going to leave, but I also didn't know whether the city was gonna survive. So, so I wrote this okay I'm staying, and I wrote this sort of thing that was partially about the parade, partially an analysis of how second lines work. I mean it actually was, that journal entry is basically how the paper got written and then how the article got written, because I had taken a lot of notes. And so that year at the music conference, the Experience Music Project Conference, I wanted to present something, and somebody asked me, I forget who. It wasn't that year. Maybe it was the next year. I had been to the Experience Music Project Conference, I like a lot in Seattle, and I wanted to go again, and somebody said we should do something on New Orleans, and I said, okay. And I thought I was just going to give a paper based on my journal entry and just give sort of a testimonial about Post-Katrina and the importance of the second-line to me. And then I said, well, I should do the work and do research, and so I talked to a couple people, and there's a woman at Tulane named Nicola Wolf, who's head of the Bayou Steppers, she works in the Dean's office. She works in Cudd Hall, she's as administrator. And she's very much into second line culture. As I said, she's one of the founders of the Bayou Steppers, which is the only integrated Social Aid and Pleasure Club. The only one founded as an integrated group. And she had in fact asked me to be in it a couple times, and I always thought I'd wind up in it, but I really wanted to be in one that had been around longer. I didn't know if I ever would be, but it was a thought. And so she said, you have to talk to Joes Stern, and so Joe Stern is, was then, when I asked, president of the Prince of Wales, which he was made president because of the second line that happened that year. So here's what happened. So I thought it was all great and didn't know there was any kind of interesting back story to the parade, right. Then I find out there's an incredibly interesting back story to the parade. Not only that Joe Stern himself, who was known throughout second line culture as white Joe.

AW And he knows he's called that?

(54:59)

JD Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, everyone knows Joe. And I don't think they call him white Joe, but I think he knows he's called white Joe. And, you know, so Nicola told me I had to talk to Joe Stern. So I interviewed Joe Stern, who I didn't know, who I found fascinating, in a lot of ways. And Joe had been in the club 25 years because he moved down here in the 80's, and became good friends with a guy named Alonso who was in the Prince of Wales, and his first second line he loved so he became a part of the club. And now I think he's been in the club the longest, I think. Anyway, what happened was, Joe's a, Joe actually has a masters in English from Ohio State. But he's also an old sort of leftist kinda guy. And he just thought that what was happening, and he'll tell you this, that after the storm, clearly the political and business powers didn't want African-Americans to come back. That the more, and this is something a lot of people think, and I am one of them, that not only at the national level the people who thought, you know, who cares if New Orleans rebuilds, and you know, the people who said, well, you

know, God smote them down, whatever, all that, there was also just real, the same reason that the housing projects got shut down that were not in bad shape, that people wanted, that there were a lot of white people that wanted the city back being white. And I don't know if you know, but there's been a demographic shift, based on nothing that more black people lost their houses than whites, but, before the storm, New Orleans was about two thirds black and one third white, and now it's about fifty-fifty. Which is about 15%, pretty big shift. But, you know, clearly they were happy about it, and what Joe said was, and what he thought was, you know, if you kill the culture people won't come back. They live here for certain reasons. So he thought it was very important to have a second line as soon as possible, to get the culture back. To get it back on the streets. But no one had any money, like, it takes a lot of money to throw a second line parade. It's two grand for the police permit, and it's two grand for the band, and then there's the clothes, which a lot of the dues go for, right, which you might understand, are very expensive. So, but no one in the club had much money, and a couple people lost their house and all their stuff, you know, so Joe hustled up some money. I mean you can read this—did I send you the article?

AW No.

JD Oh. Well, send me an email and I'll send it to you. And then I'll, you'll just have to find this out again. But Joe hustled up some money, because Joe's very connected. For example, the Prince of Wales every year does a mini second line at Jazz Fest, which they get paid a certain amount. I did it with them this year.

AW I saw them at Voodoo Fest also.

JD Right, they did it at Voodoo Fest, right.

AW I didn't see the second line, I just ran into Bruce backstage.

JD Yeah, so, so they get money for that. And so there's stuff. And we fundraise during the year, you know you throw a dance, or we threw a dance that was a fundraiser or you throw a casino night, you try to make money, stuff like that. So there was no money, so Joe hustled up some money from the kinds of groups in New Orleans you hustle up money from. So the Jazz and Heritage Foundation, that runs WWOZ, gave some money. Putamayo records, he got some money from them. He got, some people privately gave some money. Some people gave him money after the parade. He got Rebirth to take a little less than what they usually make, and so, you know, there's a section of my article called, you know, 'Joe Stern hustles up a second line.' But he hustled up for, he thought it was really important, to show that this was here still. Because he thought that a lot of people, a lot of African-Americans in particular, would not have reason to move back if it wasn't any different than anywhere else. Like, and I quote Joe in that article saying, look, without the culture, without the second lines and the Mardi Gras Indians, New Orleans is just a funky depressed Southern town. And so, soon after

that, in a way that you probably don't have to know, there began, there was a coalition of second lines founded, and they had a huge parade a month and a half later. Literally because, whoever was in town, so there were members of like twenty different social aid and pleasure clubs, all coming together because nobody had enough people.

AW Were they still doing the suits?

JD No, they all wore the black renew—you ever see the Renew Orleans shirt? It's a black t-shirt that says Renew Orleans, New Orleans is in white, re is in red.

AW Yeah.

JD Yeah. Those were the shirts from that parade. That's where they, I mean people made them after that, but that's, you know. That was the longest second line I've ever seen, like that second line was about half a mile long, like from the start to the finish. Because there were a couple, there was like four different bands, there were a lot of different clubs, it you know, it broke up into parts, it was really long. It was really big.

AW When was this?

JD I think January. Mid-January 2006. Or late January. It was a month after the second line. So anyway, but then I so after talking to Joe, I talked to everyone else in the club. I said well look, I mean now that I know there's this interesting back story, I gotta do what you do, as a scholar. So I interviewed Bruce and Walter and Phyllis and everyone else.

(1:00:11)

AW You interviewed everyone in Prince of Wales?

JD No, I didn't interview everyone. I interviewed Walter, Stan, I don't think I interviewed Noland, Alvin, and maybe one other person.

AW What was the interview process like?

JD It was really informal. I mean Joe, I interviewed twice and took notes.

AW Did you record the interviews?

JD No. The others were, oh, Little Bruh, I interviewed. Mostly, a couple of them were on the phone. And then I went to one of the meetings, and introduced myself, told them what I was doing, talked a little bit to Little Bruh at the party, and somebody else. Maybe five or six people. So I thought I sort of had what I needed.

AW What was the meeting like?

JD Meetings. Well, I don't know how to answer that, because now that I've been to a lot of meetings, that was the first.

AW Did you feel out of place the first time you went?

JD Well not really, I felt conspicuous as a white guy, in to how I was being seen. Especially with someone I was interviewing, like, am I being looked at as someone who's like a journalist or an anthropologist, or just sort of a white guy looking for a story. I didn't know how they saw me. I wasn't really uncomfortable. I was sort of interested in how informal it was. It was at Joe Stern's house, and Joe Stern lives in this house not far from school on Zimpel and not far from the Starbucks on Maple and Adams, like four blocks up from there. Maple and Adams, I think. And, you know where the Starbucks is on Maple Street?

AW Yeah.

JD It's a very sort of informal, wood paneled house. A couple couches, shag carpeting, and, you know, everybody was sitting on all the stuff. And I didn't really know what the meeting was for that day, I don't remember now. But I sat, you know, and talked to people, and told them what I was doing, and I think some people thought I was suspicious and some people didn't. And Bruce, was I already friendly with Bruce? I don't remember. I became friendly with Bruce earlier than that. I think, I don't remember this. I think I might have given the paper at the conference just from my journal notes and my experience. I don't remember if, no, I did some interviewing before then, maybe not all of it. Anyway, I'd come to, once I interviewed Joe he started inviting me to things. So he invited me to, there was a coalition picnic that I came to, and I became friends with Bruce, who was cooking. But I felt a little out of place, there. I talked to Bruce and I talked to Joe. And then about whatever, I mean I don't know what the years are, so now it's, what are we, '09, right? So in, '08, right, so I gave the talk in '08, in April of '08 in Seattle. And then I turned it into an article and handed that in September 1st of '08, and it got published about a month ago. And after I wrote, so I, the article was written by September 1st, I'd asked Joe to look at it and fact check it and blah blah blah. And then, and then Joe called me up one day, and this was probably a year ago today, this time of year. And he said, well, it's the time of year when we get new members, and I put your name forward and no one seemed to have any problem with you joining. Not exactly a roaring welcome. But I thought, and here's what brings all this together. I thought, I had always, from the very first second line I was on, I wanted to know from the inside who threw them, why did they throw them, how'd they come together. And I thought, you know, and Prince of Wales was the second oldest club and it was actually in my neighborhood and I'd met everybody. And so I said, okay. And then like a

couple weeks later I went to my first meeting, and a couple people were really friendly right off the bat, a couple people were a little more standoffish. Some because they were shy, and like it wasn't really anything. And I don't mean simply in a black white sense, it's like, you know, there's a sense of, I mean, second line culture is mostly black working class culture. I mean there are a lot of middle class folks in it, but it's a lot of working class culture. And I'm a professor. By sort of definition, I'm sort of, you know, not that I make a ton of money, but, you know, I'm sort of an educated guy, and it could look to a lot of people like I was whatever you want to call it. That I was slumming, that I was just sort of doing this to write something. For lack of better terms, that my heart wasn't in it. And I think I won everybody over. In about a month. I think it was the Christmas party when I realized that, you know, it was all fine. And I'm not singling anybody out. I didn't feel any hostility, I just, you know, like anybody,
1:05:39 even in a new situation, like who's the new member, why did they want to join it, it's not a natural thing—by natural I mean sort of organic, for me as a professor to want to join this group. Right, so what's my interest here. Whether that's conscious or not, I felt some of that. And I thought it was gone by really, by about a month later, which, you know, in any club, for any reason, you know, there would've been a sort of breaking in period. I will say, sometimes in terms of, when there are arguments about things, from rules at meetings, to what we're going to order, I have not spoken much to this. In part because it's my first year and I feel like a rookie. And in part because I'm a white guy and, you know, I don't, there are certain things I think that my, there are a lot of different reasons why I don't speak up. So sometimes, for example, like this year, our colors were olive, I mean, peach and olive. And when they were arguing about the colors, you know, really I thought peach and olive sort of worked, by the time we came around to it. When I first saw it, I thought, I don't mind the peach, I thought, but the olive just did not work for me at all. You know, in fact, when I was out on Halloween I wore peach and black, which I thought went really well.

AW Did you wear your suit?

JD Yeah.

AW With black instead of olive?

JD Yeah. With a black shirt and a black hat and a black tie and black boots.

AW What were you?

JD I was kind of a gangster. I mean, and actually it came from one comment. When I was, before we came out of the bar at the Rock Bottom, one of the guys at the bar, not one of the Walers, said to me, he turned to me and he goes, "You look like one of the Sopranos." Which I took as a very high compliment, particularly coming from Brooklyn, and I just thought, oh, okay. Actually I had the thought at that moment, oh good I can go on Halloween as, yeah. Because people saw me

and you know, some people would say pimp, and, you know, I see why they say that, but really I just thought of myself as a generic kind of gangster figure.

AW Did you go to Frenchmen on Halloween?

JD I did. We went to this party in the French Quarter, me and my friend T.R., but then we walked back to where, I think I was parked at his house, back through Frenchmen, which was insane. I mean insane like really bad like you couldn't move. So, but that was all right. But in any case, so there are certain things that I don't think I should pass judgment on because on a literal level it's like look, never would've chosen peach and olive, so therefore my argument about it, it's like in a visual aesthetic sense, it's not, it's a culture, it's an ethnic culture, it's not a racial thing, but like there's a different sort of visual aesthetic. In the same way that African-Americans wear purple very well, in ways that very few other cultures do. In the same way that Mexican-Americans like sort of bright sort of pinks. In ways that, you know, it's like, I understand aesthetics, I study culture. And so I don't think it's, you know, I don't think it' my place, literally, this is my personal opinion and I don't think it will be shared by others. But there are ways in which in a given argument about an issue, you know, whether we're going to have a casino, or fundraising dance or anything like that, I didn't participate in part because it was my first year, and I thought, let me just see how things work. And partly because, you know, I think I felt a little gun shy as a white guy, less about how I would be heard, and more about, I mean I, you know, I've been learning and working and, with some situations that are heavily African-American for a long time, community stuff, all kinds of stuff, and when you're new, there's a real read of a white guy that's trying to be pushy and think that he knows better. And I thought that would be an easy read of me. And so, you know, I didn't want to be seen that way. We'll see what happens this year. Also, you know, I didn't really think, it's like, you know, when I say I wanted to see how it worked, I wanted to see how it worked. What people argue about, and also just on a basic level, this is neither about race or culture, it's like, I'm both a professor and somebody who writes and somebody who observes, and when I'm in a situation, I'm trying to figure out who's who. Like, even among friends—like what's your position, what ticks you, what tweaks you, you know, let me figure out who's in the room and how I can best sort of contribute. And that's how I am in general, at this point in my life. Probably not when I was 23, but now. So in that sense, this is just about me in a new group, and I'm not a joiner. Like, this is a really interesting thing, like I'm not the kind of person who's in clubs. And so, that was also one of the reasons why I don't speak up much. It's like, you know, clubs that have meetings that are twice a month, there's always gonna be like, the people who like to argue. And there's always going to be the people who like to make trouble. And there's always going to be people who need attention. And like, and I'm none of those people. As I said, I'm not a natural joiner. I just wanted to understand how second lines work, really much more so than being in the second line. Like I loved being in the second line, but really, I was much, I could've been just as happy outside. I just wanted to know how these work. And like, what are

1:10:55 people's motivations. Because it's not cheap—dues are expensive. So, you know, this culture has been here for at least a hundred years, right. And so I understand a little bit about what's great about it, that's what I felt the first time I was out. It's this free rolling block party every week. I have, and not only that, I have never, let me put it another way, let me be positive. I go to a second line, I always come back feeling better. Always. How many things can you say that about? Besides maybe shopping if you like to shop, and then it's costing you money. But I mean, like literally, even when I'm not in a good mood when I go over, you know, because I'd said I was going to meet somebody and then I'm not in the mood, it's like, between the music, and being outdoors, walking, and the first beer and the pork chop sandwich, but you know, any number of those things, I have never not walked off of the line, because sometimes I go for one leg, for an hour, sometimes I go for two, sometimes I go for the whole thing, in a better mood, happier, in all the ways in which spirit gets lifted, spirit gets lifted. And that's what I felt the first time. And so for me, I have studied all the ways in which African-American culture is sophisticated at the artistic and spiritual level, anything from literally spirituals, right, church stuff, gospel stuff, music stuff, dance stuff, right. And this is totally within that sort of nexus of culture and aesthetics. It's like, in my book, there are a couple of quotes from my book, that I cherish, even though people never mention them. And, Frederick Douglas once talked about spirituals, and he said, look, he says, this is 1855, he said, he goes, white people think that black people sing because they're happy, or because they're simple. He said, they should only come into the woods and hear them sing spirituals, and they would understand more about what they actually feel about their plight, than reading a hundred things, right. So that, that's a good quote. But the better quote, which is related, Sidney Bechet, who's a first generation great jazz musician, right, and we, you read him.

AW I don't think we read him.

JD We did. You were in the jazz seminar, yes?

AW No, I wasn't. I was in the—

JD Oh right, you were in the cool class, sorry. We didn't read, oh, that's right, I used to read him in, we used to read him in that class, that's why.

AW But I mean, I know who he is.

JD Sidney Bechet once said, he said, look, he said, black people don't sing because they are happy, they sing to make themselves happy. Now this is a simple but very profound statement, right. It says that the act of singing, or the act of dancing, makes you feel better, right. I mean, there's the, there are health aspects of it, physiologically, you get your metabolic, you know, your metabolism going, that you tend to sing things you want to sing, so it lifts sort of both your heart and your spirit, and keeps your eye on things you wanna do. But you know, I mean, I

don't think we're not really stuck in the stereotype anymore, to say the least, that black people sing because they're happy, they're naturally happy, which really did last for a very long time, right. But that's what I'm saying, it's like, this is a very sophisticated, artistic community event, in which it makes people happy, right. And I now know that first hand, it makes me literally happy every time I go and leave. And not consciously—I don't go, ooh, I'm going to feel better after the second line. The only thing I can compare it to, and then I'll let you ask your next question, the gospel tent at Jazz Fest. I always go, the gospel tent's great. I mean consistently the gospel tent has the best music. And, but when I go—I usually go all day every day, right—so Jazz Fest starts at 11 a.m. I usually go in and the first thing I do is go to the gospel tent. And I usually watch 20 minutes, 25 minutes of whoever's first. And I, no matter, you know, I'm still, you know, maybe because of Jazz Fest maybe I'm tired, maybe I'm drinking, maybe I'm just sluggish. By 20 minutes in I'm probably clapping and waving for Jesus, and I'm Jewish. So I understand this to be a very, very, deep sophisticated religious technique, right. And, but it's shared. That's the sacred end of it, this is the secular end of it. Now a part of it is I know all of this. Like I have studied, I, when I say I asked those questions for twenty years, that I first asked at 16, one of the ways I answered them was this music cultural side, when I finally thought I understood what it was about. And I do. There's another side, but I won't get to it. But now I, you know, what completely astounds me every time, like any artistic thing, is I don't go in consciously thinking this is what will happen now. And I'm not sitting there watching it to see it happen. But it happens, because I surrender to the event and
1:15:45 these people are experts at what they do. So for me, I don't know anything better to do on a Sunday than do second line for four hours, in which you get exhausted, uplifted, you see people, you socialize, you eat, you dance, you express yourself, it's all, it's everything in one package. So that's how I come to second lines, and, you know, it was, I wouldn't have joined, or pursued it if it wasn't natural or organic. I'm like a rare kind of academic, right. In which, people think that as a scholar you're supposed to keep your critical distance, you know, or else you can't be objective. I don't really believe in objectivity, and I think people are deluding themselves. I mean you do need to have critical distance, but I think you actually learn a lot when you immerse yourself in it. You shouldn't write until you come out, but it's important to understand what the experience is like, and I don't think you can if you're not willing to accept it on its own terms. So for me, I mean, I'm not young anymore, and you know, that the second line is that good every time is truly amazing to me. Still. So, you know. So that's, that's so, so I decided to join the Prince of Wales because I was asked, and then I would know from the inside, and I'll keep learning more about it. But you know the second line part, and this is a different thing so I'll just say this shortly, is all the stuff I didn't know, right. Paying dues, arguing about, you know, colors, and what you're gonna wear and how much you're gonna spend, and how you raise money, like we sold raffle tickets this year, you know, and I shouldn't say this on the record, but, you know, the last thing in the world I want to do is sell raffle tickets. And also raffle tickets are much more accepted within an African-American community in which people, I mean, that's a common thing to do to raise money,

or it's things that kids do, right, like in schools. But like, you know. I'm also just personally not, like, I don't want to sell raffle tickets, I don't want to go to my friends and hit them up for raffle tickets. So, but you know, it's, you know, these are things I learn about how it's done, and to some extent how working class African-American culture sort of lives, not only in terms of the music stuff, but actually is in the day to day sense, you know. And so that is interesting for me on every level. On me as a person, on me as a New Orleanian, on me as a scholar of African-American culture in general, on New Orleans culture in particular, you know, and I sort of, you know, just hang out with a bunch of people who I like and who I otherwise would not know. And you know, I mean, so, I'll stop there.

AW Would you consider your membership to Prince of Wales a scholarly endeavor, to a certain extent?

JD Well, let's put it another way. That's a good question, all right. I don't. Because I would do it if this wasn't, I mean it's hard for me to separate at this point. I mean I, my, what I wanted to be was a novelist, and I spent my twenties writing fiction and I still write fiction. And if I could've been a novelist, I wouldn't have been a professor. So, I say this for this reason. All that time I was still completely, I would've still, my fiction was about race and African-Americans and music and all that. And so therefore, when I pursued all that stuff I pursued back then, I had no idea I was going to go to grad school and be a professor. I didn't want, it wasn't even in my mind. I mean I went back to grad school when I was 32. So, so on that level, let's say I moved to New Orleans, and I was a novelist, and I went on my first second line, just as the same thing as I did in September, I would've had all of the same feelings anyway, I still would've wanted to understand more about second lines. So then you could say, well would you, as a, if you were a novelist, would you be looking at it as a kind of research thing, or as not, that would be a similar question. But no, it's like this is what I'm interested in, this is what I love. I love African-American music of all types. I love all kinds of music. I mean, but I want to know, and this is the purer thing, I want to know where this kind of truly community cultural event comes from, why is it important, who puts it on, how is it meaningful, and to some extent on a basic level, how does it keep going. And that would be true of almost, if any, if I encountered any cultural event that I felt what I felt about second lines, I would've tried to be part of it. So 1:20:33 is that scholarly? It's partly intellectual I would say, I want to understand. But it's also partly totally personal. It's like, I love this and want to know more about it, right, so how can I contribute. So, but at this point, as a professor, as a writer, as someone who's a scholar in this field, it's hard to separate them, it's what I do. But I didn't join it as a scholarly endeavor, like I didn't, I don't take notes at meetings, and I'm not planning to publish anything about it. I mean I published something on the second line because of what it meant to me, and in fact, that whole article, as you'll read, comes back to the end saying, why was this so meaningful to me? Because I needed it. Because when I came back to town, I didn't really know what the next part of my life was going to be, and this told me a little bit about it. It's like, that's what art to me does. So, you know, for me, it's

more a question about art and culture and community than it is a question about research and scholarly stuff and race stuff and all that.

AW So you don't plan to write about this?

JD Not in a large way. Not unless I learn something that I think I really want to tell people. _____. But it's true. I've written two novels, one of which I think is pretty good, but has been rejected. I've written part of a third novel about Austin, that I am not going back to at the moment, and in all those novels, African-American music is important in all those novels. In Austin, by the way, it was the Blues Specialists, who are this great band who I went to see every week and tried to get to know, and believe me, if they had invited me into their lives I would've gone. And again, not because I was trying to learn more about blues, although I was, but because what they did every Friday for me in my life was sort of very, if I could get that from religion, I would get that from religion, I just, you know, and I don't get it from my own religion, I mean I'm, I'm a proud Jewish guy, but I don't practice, you know, Jewish in a religious sense more or less. So anyway, let's say this. I think, I have a plan to write a novel about New Orleans at some point. Whether I'll ever write it I have no idea. If I write that novel, will second line culture be in it? Probably. In part because I know a lot about it. But I'm not in it because I hope to write a novel later about New Orleans that I will use this for. So you know, in that sense, you know, I have no plans to write about it. I think that what it does, besides enriching my life, because I don't wanna be, I don't wanna seem like this is a really, well, I will say that in the ways it has deepened my understanding of, truly, race relations, black culture in New Orleans, black music, the difficulties and literally in a sense about race both oppressions, feelings, responses, to living as an African-American person that I know from knowing these people, in the club, I wouldn't say that that's not of interest to me, it is of interest to me. But there's no conscious sense that I'm doing it so I can write about it later. Or doing it for research for anything I'm going to write, either scholarly or fictional. So that's, you know, that's not my motivation. That that may happen one day, I mean, look, when I write fiction, I have used people from my past as characters that I never would have dreamed I would use as characters. You know, I'll just start writing someone and go, oh, you know, that's based on Linda when I worked with her in San Diego. And there's a character like this who's based on a woman I know for example, a long, long time ago, who wouldn't even recognize it if she recognize my name and read it. So, you know, yeah I'd probably write about it. I think it's one of the great things about New Orleans and these are the people I know. But it's not research in that sense. It's not a scholarly endeavor. I mean, for example, what Nick is doing, what you're doing, is something I might do in my jazz seminar, in the way I make people go to second lines. But that's just, you know, pedagogy. That's just stuff for students.

(1:25:18)

AW What about personal relationships—have you formed any close personal relationships with any of the members of Prince of Wales? Do you feel like it offers you a sense of community that you feel a part of?

JD That's a good question. And that's a tough question. Like I have a personal relationship with Joe Stern. I have sort of, let's call it good fellowship, because I don't know what else to call it, with Bruce, probably more than anybody else. Other than that, I mean I like everybody, I walk in, kiss everybody hello, we're all cool about it, but they're not friendships yet. But it's also early, I mean these are people I see twice a month for a year, and I'm not otherwise in their lives. There is a sense that if you're a Waler you're part of sort of a larger community and you support people. And, and I think it's early. I don't really know how that will take shape.

AW Do you sense that other people in the club are closer with each other than you are with them?

JD Well, yes and no. I mean, there are people who don't seem close with anybody, you know, who are kind of loners, like Trice, and, well, I shouldn't name names. And you know, so, in fact, when I'm on a second line I'll usually run into two or three of four Walers, and we'll all hang out for a little bit. So yes and no. I mean I sense that Joe's pretty close with a lot of people. But I'm not sure anybody else is. That's in part because I think it's a very important part of Joe's life, it is for a lot of people. He's been in it for 25 years. I think it, you know, I just think he's somebody who takes it very seriously. And a lot of people do, but, you know, I just think that you know, there are people, in any club, there are people who really hold it together. And he's one of them, and Phyllis is one of them, and Phyllis and Alvin are married and Alvin's been president this past year, but, and Betty is one of them, and because of that they have stronger relationships. To what extent people actually see each other outside of club meetings I don't know. I haven't been there long enough to know. So I don't know. I'm curious about, sort of the way this will go with me with personal relationships. I can't tell you. It's been a year and I can't tell.

AW So you have meetings twice a month and then you have scattered events throughout the year?

JD Right.

AW Fundraiser and stuff?

JD Yeah, we have meetings twice a month, and then, this is the slack period, because after the parade itself, which is the second Sunday in October, there's usually like only one meeting a month. And then there's a Christmas party.

AW Where's the Christmas party?

JD I don't know where it's gonna be this year. Last year it was at Stan's. He's got a really nice house out in Gentilly. And then we start in January. You know, so, I mean we threw a dance we threw over in the Treme about a month before the parade, you know we all had to again, sort of sell tickets for. And I just decided I wasn't going to sell them. I just bought a book of tickets and gave them to my friends. But it was great, I mean, you know, I had like three Tulane faculty folks come, and they brought their dates, and a couple of my friends and ex-grad students, and they had a table and it was great and I liked that. And I bartended all night. Because we work, you know, when we throw the dance we work the dance. In fact next year I will take more time off to dance. But you know, it was really, you know, it was good. But you know, there was an interesting aspect in which it's really clear, particularly in an event like that, just how much second line culture is working class African-American culture. A culture that most people in this country, particularly middle and upper class white people think is either not a culture, or is pathological, or is ghetto, or whatever it is, and they really just have no sense of how people survive, or what they do. You know, faced with what is the obvious notion that this is the group that produces a great deal of what becomes sort of popular music in this country, or new dances or new vernacular slang terms. And not wanting to ask themselves, well how is it they do that? They think that they are this kind of inferior ghetto culture. They never ask, they don't bother with that question. And even most scholars don't bother with that question, which makes me crazy but it gives me a lot of work to do. So I'm bartending, you know, at that thing, at the dance, and like, you know, a lot of people come up to the- is this? I'm just worried about people being able to hear me, when I lean back.

(1:10:37)

AW I think-

JD It was quiet.

AW You're projecting.

JD Yeah, yeah, and it's actually fairly quiet.

AW Cause when I interviewed people at the second line, and I had the microphone like right in their face, it turned out.

JD Ok. I know, I just realized I was leaning back. No, so you know, I bring this up because, and this'll also shed some light on my first couple meetings, but, you know. So there I am right, and, you know, I'm being very honest with you, that so here is a not only middle class but, so here's like, on a stereotype read, sort of like a middle-aged, sort of middle class, maybe even more than middle class, but the sort of white guy, at a bar, serving people coming up for drinks who are very

much working class, and working class black. And they are not comfortable, it's not, they don't know how to read the situation.

AW Did they know that you were in Prince of Wales?

JD Yeah, I mean we're throwing the thing and I'm wearing, we all have Prince of Wales t-shirts and hats on. But it doesn't matter. Like Joe's known, right. I'm not known. I mean it's my first year, whatever. There are about, you know, I would say in second line culture there's probably about a handful of whites, outside of the Bayou Steppers. So outside of the Bayou Steppers I would say it's not less than 90% African-American. But there are some. Anyway, but you could tell that they would not come over to me. Like we had four bartenders and there were people who would not come over to me. And I just think they couldn't read it, they didn't, you know, they felt self-conscious of whatever the gap was between us, you know, and I tried to be truly, as sort of, not so much just friendly just as, what's the word, as both, sort of congenial as possible, like what can I get you, you know, it's like, as if it was my house and it was a party and you wanted a drink. You know, but you could just tell, people would look away or they wouldn't come up to me or whatever. I'm just saying I understand that and to some extent when I first joined the club that was true on probably an even larger extent, like why is he here, what does he want, you know, I'm not comfortable. I once read an exchange in a Richard Wright novel, and it was a black woman who was young telling the black male protagonist that she feels sort of very nervous around whites, and he asked her why and she goes, because I'm always self-conscious around them, you know. And so I felt that. You know, it's like they're not asking me because they feel self-conscious, you know, as opposed to just going up and sort of being somebody that asks for a drink. So that's neither here nor there, it's just sort of an interesting thing to sort of learn about how people individually, subjectively respond to situations that are explicitly racial

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_____ Why is this white guy behind the counter, what's he doing there, and it makes me feel self-conscious, right. So you know, for me, again, not in a scholarly way, I am just someone who's genuinely interesting in figuring out, as a novelist, not even writing, like how do people respond to different things and why, and this, you know, whenever you're in a new experience you're even that much more aware of like, well that's an odd thing, why that, right? I will say, and this gets us off the subject, but brass band music in New Orleans, right, it doesn't really exist anywhere else in the country. I mean, not only do I mean it's New Orleans music, I mean that when we had this dance, we had a really good DJ. Played, you know, great music, mostly sort of contemporary R&B, some hip-hop, occasional classics—"Sexual Healing", or "I'll Take You There", stuff like that. And then at some point he played like 20 minutes straight of brass band music, like Rebirth, Hot 8, etcetera. You know and it just kicked the party up to another register and everybody danced, and I said to my friend Felipe, Felipe who's, Felipe Smith, I said this is the only place in the country where for a contemporary African-American audience you put on brass band and not only do they like it, it

kicks the party up and they listen to it for a half-hour. It's completely local. And that, on a, just fascinating. I love local cultural stuff that you know, it's outside any sort of, making national stereotype idea about what people's musical tastes are. You have to live here to know that, right. I mean, you know that. You have to live here to know these things.The way, you know, when I live some place, this
1:35:43 again, you know, I actually think that we need to figure out how to build communities in the United States, and I don't think we ever will, personally. That having broken the back of having any regional culture at all, you know, New Orleans is like, I describe New Orleans as the last non-generic city in America. It doesn't look like any place else, it doesn't feel like any place else. And it doesn't live like any place else. Now you could say that about places like San Francisco and Chicago and New York, but actually, that gets less and less true about all three of those places. It doesn't get less and less true about New Orleans—for good and bad reasons. I mean, you know, people ask me about New Orleans, and they mean about the storm. I say, look, we are a corrupt, you know, city that is informal and weird and doesn't work particularly well, and if any of that doesn't agree with how you want to live your day-to-day life, you won't like it there. On the other hand, it attracts the kind of people that if you are the kind of person who likes it there, you'll like to meet. And so, you know, as I say, it's like, before the storm we had for 20 years, terrible schools, and one of the worst murder and crime rates in the country, and a completely corrupt government. I said it's still the same. I said, what it was, like after 9/11, it was a giant missed opportunity, right. It's like, well 9/11, we could've actually changed how we are in the world and we didn't. And this could've been a way to change how New Orleans works and it didn't. I said, but on the other hand, for those of us who've lived here for a while, it's the same. Now I could go through a little more detail about recovery economically and stuff like that, but I mean, you know. After the storm I talked to people about where I would be willing to live if Tulane closed or the city didn't work. Me and T.R. told people, we didn't want to live anywhere else, but if we had to, we just sort of broke it down. T.R. and I both thought we would, our first choice would be Chicago if we had a choice, because I love Chicago and it's, I think it's the most high-functioning and interesting big city in America. Although it would be hard to, I wouldn't be able to have a house there or anything. But anyway, I mean, so my point is that I think we need local culture and we need regional culture everywhere, and, you know, wouldn't it be great if New Orleans wasn't as racially fucked up and everybody actually shared in second line culture, not only that it would go all over the city, but that every neighborhood had its own social aid and pleasure club. Like, that'd be a great thing I think. I think the whole country should have social aid and pleasure clubs. But even if they didn't, if every city had its own thing, right, besides its own couple of foods, that actually a lot of cities do have, you know. This would be an actual cultural dream I would have for this country. Because it's very hard, countries this large you can't have national, we do have national culture, right, we have movies and TV, whatever we have, right. But you have to have culture on the ground, in your neighborhood, with people you know, or else you don't have it. I mean Mardi Gras's like that in a real sense, for people who have a neighborhood relationship to doing Mardi

Gras. And it's like for me, it's one of the great things about living here. And it's not just, and by no means is it just a black thing, it's like, you know, where I live, the people who watch Mardi Gras parades along St. Charles, on the same block every year, know all the people around them, you know. It's like, that's a good thing, you know. And there's a lot of community that people have, not only just Cajuns or white working class people, you know, it's like some of them, yes, are actually racist people. That aside, they have some interesting community stuff. So you know, for me, this has always been, second lines have all been much about, how do we, I mean how, I called my article in the, about the second line, that I'll send you, I called it "Learning Community from the Prince of Wales Club," because that's what it's more important for. It's like, you know, I mean, I know this because we've talked, you and I, about stuff like this, it's like, what I see in the United States in American culture is, is more and more sort of, you know, un-self-aware, alienation, like people being deluded by Facebook and Twitter and social media into thinking that's community, and it's like the opposite of community. You know, it's the delusion of community. Community has to be with people you know. And, you know. And how do you do that? And the answer is, I don't know how you do that, but we also have very few models about what that would even look like. And to me the second line parade is one thing that might look like. And I don't see a lot of examples and I've lived in a lot of places in this country. Which would make a really nice end to our interview, not that I'm saying we have to end it, I'm just saying that actually brings everything, all, that brings everything I've said full circle. But I'm not saying we have to end, I'm just
1:40:41 saying that is really true, and it's the good thing about the interview for me, is that's why, when I've been saying, you know, it's not a scholarly endeavor, I've been saying it's not about race or ethnicity or me, all that's true, but while I'm saying that I knew I wasn't telling you what it is, and that's what it is, you know. I mean, for a long time I've been thinking quite consciously, and now I think it's just utopian, how could we get community back in a technological society that thinks in more global terms all the time, and yet sells people out at the local level all the time. And the answer is for me about second lines, it's the one of the few actual pragmatic visions of how one would begin to create community. And yet of course there's a bad disconnect, right. The communities themselves are poor, right. The communities themselves are not really building community in a way that would actually be best for them. But they do have this ritual that is one important aspect of it. And if I could contribute at all, which this is not something I think will happen, to figuring out how you build out from something like a social aid and pleasure club, to like, you know, well let me say this. One of the things, social aid and pleasure clubs, they derive from, in part, this old fraternal organizations, from like the late 19th century, which you may or may not know something about, but a lot of immigrant groups, when they came over, because they, you know, were locked out of certain things, blah blah blah, they had groups they paid dues to. Sometimes they were for cemeteries and burial. Sometimes they were for life insurance amongst themselves. Sometimes they gave loans to their own group to start businesses. So, they were fraternal organizations, they were, there was a German name for these that I forget. It's a scholarly term.

Gameinschaft or Ganelsh—whatever it is. That I usually know better. But the point is, African-Americans had the same kinds of things after Emancipation and the Civil War, and second lines come out of some of those organizations. And of course it's a real crime, but at the time we're a very prosperous country and we should have, for example, health insurance, that we actually need, sort of, some version of local organizations, again. And I don't see a vision of that happening, I am saying that I, you know, think about the need for them because I think about community, and I love living in New Orleans because I have a sense of belonging here, that is both about the city, and about smaller things that I belong to. You know, I belong to New Orleans and I belong to Prince of Wales and, you know, I know some people in the neighborhood, and all that, and it's very hard to have a sense of belonging in America, at the moment, in any kind of city. You know, unless you live in sort of a suburb, and I hate suburbs.

AW You mentioned before about how most whites in New Orleans are pretty removed from the second line culture, you know, and even those who are aware feel pretty alienated or feel like they don't belong in the second lines-

JD I didn't actually say that last part.

AW No, you didn't say that, you didn't say that, but that's-

JD I would mostly agree. I'm just saying, I want you to know, I didn't say that.

AW Right, but, just that you mentioned it, that whites aren't, that it's 90% African Americans mostly at these second lines. If whites-

JD Well, there's a lot of- it's fair to say that there are a lot of middle class African Americans who aren't interested in second line culture. They usually know about it, but they aren't interested either. So.

AW Well, what do you think if whites were to become more immersed in second line culture, what effect do you think that would have on—

JD Well I don't know. This is happening, as you may or may not know. In fact, Helen Regis, who's an anthropologist of second lines, she works at LSU.

AW She writes about Jazz Fest also?

JD She might.

AW I think I read an article that she wrote.

JD You probably did. But she has written, she wrote a bunch of her articles about six or seven years ago, and she wrote an update, and since the storm, second line, I was going to say audiences, but they're not audiences, second line crowds are

much more white. So they've gone from being, I mean my first second line in 2003, I would say the second lines back then were not more than say 10% white. And now they're closer to 20 and sometimes more. Part of it is because people who move here become aware. Like young people who move to New Orleans after the storm are aware of, sort of become aware of second line culture and want to find out what it is. Part of it is because you have the bohemian section of New Orleans, and they've always sort of, they've become more interested in it than they were. And partly it's more publicized. The city's become a little less embarrassed by it. You know, I've got a quote in my article about a black cop who says that, you know, for as long as I've been here the city has wanted to shut down second line culture.

(1:45:40)

AW Why do you think that is?

JD Because black culture embarrasses them, because they don't. I mean it embarrasses them on a hundred levels, right. First of all, they think it's, they still have their old stereotypes that it's inferior, it's weird, it's for lack of what, people say it's primitive in some sort of way, like people dancing in the street. They're not dressed well, it's not something to be proud of, it's not, whatever, it's not the ballet. And, they are in part I think, in ways they're not aware of, jealous. It's like, we don't have this kind of joyous event that people put together on their own every week. But I think it's a threat. I think there is the notion in the ways that New Orleans remains a Southern city, I mean even if it wasn't, but, that African-Americans should stay in their place, and we don't want them dancing in the street. And there is the fear, and I think in the racist sense, that any time there are a lot of African-Americans gathered there will be violence. Which they used to good effect after the storm, because there were some shootings in a series of second lines. Made Joe Stern really mad, as I quote in the article. He said look, in 20 years of second lines there have been six shootings. But then there were a number of them because people were gone, they come back, and then you go look for who it was. I mean I was on a second line where there was a shooting not far behind me. But they already thought that. You know, it's like, I've been, years ago I was at like, reggae events, or events in, you know, black neighborhoods that the cops would just shut down as well. Because to them, any congregation of African-Americans is a threat. It's not under their control, they fear that, it's almost as if there's a deep-seated fear both that there will be disorder, in a pure crime sense, and that somehow an uprising's getting claimed. It's like, why the FBI followed around everyone African-American there was. And I still think all of those carry forward. So, anyway, but in the same, you know, that it's been more publicized. So, for example, you might have seen there were pictures of our parade in the paper. Did you see them?

AW I didn't see them.

JD Go on the Times-Pic. There's a picture of me, which is just funny.

AW I've seen pictures of you from just, people in our class took pictures.

JD Oh yeah, but I mean there's two, on the next day's Times-Pic in the front page of the Living section there were two photos. One of Katrina. Amazingly, that's her name. And one of me, Joe Stern, and Stan in a row. I think they wanted a picture with the two white guys in it. Because, whatever. But you know, there, it's very rare to have pictures of a second line in the paper. I mean, Prince of Wales is well known and Joe is well known, but I mean I now see, sometimes, in the Times-Pic, an announcement of a second line. And that just did not happen, that's fairly recent. So part of that is that there are some younger, hipper people at the Times-Pic. Part of that is a certain realization that this is part of the culture people want to see it. So the Mardi Gras Indians, same thing. Like Mardi Gras Indians were not something that local white culture was interested in, and suddenly they are. For all kinds of reasons. They've been in the news, people go to Super Sunday, people like to take pictures of them, it's very, you know, but that's all pretty new.

AW Do you think that whites are welcome?

JD Yeah. By and large I think they're really welcome. So I think basically, that is just paranoia. I mean, you know, so for example, the time I was at that juke joint in Mississippi, right, and I, you know, there were white people in there but it was a little sort of tense, interesting. I have never been on a second line in which I felt anything but welcome. I mean, I don't mean like they're going to open your arms and say we're happy you're here. But it was an event that I was free to attend and have a good time. The few times I felt hostility, you'll read this in the article, were because I was not sort of, I or somebody else I was watching, was treating it as not, it was like the dance thing we talked about earlier, it's like if you're gonna march, if you're gonna walk near the band, you sort of have to be dancing. And if you're not, you're being looked at as someone who's a sort of spectator, who's just sort of slumming. So I understood that, but, no, I don't think, I think white people are afraid because often second lines are in rough parts of town. Which I think is a legitimate fear. I don't think its paranoia necessarily. But I've never experienced, and I don't know anybody who has experienced any sort of like, you know, overt hostility going to second lines. So you know it's one of those things,
1:50:33 like, you know, look, on a more basic level, there are those people, and you're probably one of them, who would go out, and I mean this more for young people, because they're the people who do this, who go looking for excitement, culture, stimulus, music, you know, who look for new music, who aren't waiting for people to tell them where to go. That those people, should they say, well I've heard about second lines, want to go to a second line? You would naturally, if you lived here, find your way to going to one. And then it would be up to you whether you enjoyed it or not. So I know people who have gone to their first one, I mean, people, some of my students, but also just people and they like have version of the experience I have, or they really like it, or it becomes part of their life, they go

once in a while. But in terms of, and whenever I have visitors here I take them to Super Sunday or second lines, but, you know, not to sort of be too stereotyped, if you take sort of people who grow up in what is really upper class New Orleans, so like Uptown or Metairie, or anything like that, I never see those people in second lines, ever. The few times I've seen them, a couple times there've been second lines that were Uptown, and therefore really safe, like only going on safe streets. And then you see white audiences, and not just, so you know. So that, so part of it's fear, but it's unfounded in terms of any sense that they are in danger, unless they're paranoid. I've just not seen that. I do think that, just as an American culture expert, that this is a consumer society, and they want to feel when they show up, like consumers. Like, hey we're so glad you're here, it's all about you, we love you, like that's not what you're gonna get at a second line. Like it's an event, you wanna enjoy it? Enjoy it, right. But nobody cares about you, right, whether you're there. And I think a lot of middle class white people, they don't like that, right. They want, you know, to be catered to. Like this is about you. And it's really not about them. And I think most people have lost their ability to actually, genuinely generate their own sort of fun and experience. This is a spectator culture. You know, it's a second order culture. That's why people like being on Twitter and Facebook. It's really safe and you're in control of everything. People aren't next to you, you know, it's like, it's like second lines are exactly the opposite. Anything could happen, things are alive, and I think, at this point, most people are completely afraid of that. And that, I mean that basically breaks down along racial and class lines here, but, you know.

AW What was your experience like the first time that you were in the first line? How would you compare being, actually being a part of the parade with your other experiences of being at second lines?

JD Well, you know, there are two things that go on, and I'll give you one from a scholarly perspective and one not. One of the things is that I'm on display, like you know, you have a role in being on the first line, that you have to perform, right. People are watching you dance. And you know, therefore, as much as I love to dance, and love sort of dancing to the music on a second line, it's private and as much as I'm having a good time and anyone around me is moving with me might move together, but you know, it's in that sense totally not about me in a way I would really like. I enjoy it and I can participate on any level. In first line, like, you're on. And that's all right, but, you know, I'm actually not, you know, someone who likes the spotlight in that sense. But I don't mind. So, you know, so for a couple of things, as much as I like to dance, I drank a little bit before I started. Because I was self-conscious, not because I need to drink to dance.

AW What did you drink?

JD Well I had a couple beers at the bar, and I actually had a flask with me.

AW What was in the flask?

JD I think Jack Daniel's. Some kind of Bourbon. And I think the cheap stuff, because I knew it wouldn't matter if it was the good stuff. But, you know, Paul, who's a really nice guy, he's in the Prince of Wales, and as we were about to go out to the bar, when you come out-

AW Out of Rock Bottom?

JD Yeah, you know, one of the things you do when you come out is you're basically saying, "Hey I'm here, this is me," right. And like, that whole thing, and I'm not, this is not a judgment thing, that's not me. Like I don't have a sense of, I mean, how to enter a room and go, "Hey, it's me." And so, you know, I just, I mean I've seen guys do great kinda, they're not quite entrances, you know, they come out.
1:55:26 On second lines I'll be near the ropes, and they'll like jump out and they'll do something and they'll really do a great set of moves and the whole audience will be pumped up. And I'll get to that in a second. And the way in which they're pumped up and how that excites the crowd is really important. That's an important dynamic. So I both, I'm not good at it and I also know I couldn't do it because as a white guy that's not what would work anyway. Although I have seen on a second line there's a white woman, I don't know who she is, who's in one of the women's groups, who's a great dancer and does and knows all the really core African-American moves. And when she dances in the first line during the parade, man, it is, it is, and she's very cool and very, her expression is very subdued but she does all the moves and that will actually excite the crowd. But I can do my own moves, which are fine. And I can do some stuff. In fact I was told, second hand after the parade, that everyone was very impressed with my footwork and didn't know that I had that.

AW Did you consciously learn anything?

JD No, I dance. I like dancing. And I dance, I mean, it's not only that I learned how to swing dance, but even before that it's like, you know, it's not that I go to clubs and dance, but I know how and I know how to dance with the music, and, you know. After that it's just going with it. And being light on your feet. Anyway, so, right before I was going to come out, Paul, thinking I'm a white guy, which I am, but thinking that I dance like a white guy, which, he shouldn't be, I can see why he thought that. One of the more, I don't know that it would be a stereotype, but it would be a fairly accurate perception to think that most white guys, who are not dancers, dance too fast, like are a little frantic and frenetic and not cool in a sense and not in the groove. My perception is to say that that's mostly true. Except maybe for gay men. And even then, they're in the groove but they actually dance fairly fast. So I heard Paul behind me, as I was about to go dance, saying "Take your time Joel, take your time." Which I thought was really touching in its own way because he's thinking all right, we know this is how it is, so you know, I'm just saying. I think he actually said, "Listen to the music, take your time," and we were all a little drunk at that point, and I thought that was funny because it was

true but I kind of knew that because I'm just listening to the tuba and sort of trying to find my way. So I was just self-conscious and that was fine, you know, but I did fine. I came out, I enjoyed it and all that. And then I made a point of, the first leg like the first three blocks, I wound up dancing with, or against, a number of different men. In particular, Alvin, Paul, maybe Bruce, and it was great, you know. It was really fun, I mean. So now I forget the original question, what was the original question? Oh, what was it like being in the first line?

AW Yeah

JD So that was really my concept of the first part of the parade. But we had, you know, it was a whole day thing. We go to church together first in the morning.

AW Where'd you got to church?

JD This small Baptist church on Annunciation and Valmont.

AW How did you feel about that as a Jewish man?

JD It doesn't bother me. I'm ecumenical. I've been to church. You know, I told you, it's like I wish they had a gospel choir there because I, you know, but for me, first of all I'm fine with most religions, unless it's a religion whose tenets would offend me, and I can't think of any off hand about which that would be true. You know, the Jews don't really believe in Jesus as the Messiah, but Jesus was a Jew, and, you know. I like Jesus a lot more than I like the church. That's just never been a problem for me. But we started there and then we had pictures taken and then we went over to the Rock Bottom and ate a little bit and drank a little bit. So being in the first line, so that was the first part, that was the part, that, you know, I most really remember was that first part. And then, you know, then it just becomes, you just get into the swing of things. You drink a little, you march a little, you go from side to side, you see people you know, you pose for pictures a little bit. There are times I'm just listening to music and struttin'. There are times you think you should hold the banners high. As I said, at some point you just lose track of time. And it's a great thing, even in the first line. And sometimes I'm trying to, you know, a lot of the time I'm, I was conscious of trying to, you know, be with, spend some time with different people, and yet also sort of watch to see who's dancing how, and go back to dance with the band for a while because I like that. Then I get too far away and I go back. You know, dance with different folks, talk to different folks on the parade, I mean both of the Walers in and outside.

(2:00:38)

AW Do people in the crowd approach you?

JD Yeah, I mean people who know me, sure. And then people who don't, well, I have to say, it's the only time I've ever been told by another man, more than once, that I looked pretty. Did I tell you that?

AW No.

JD Well, "pretty" is like a big term. This is also an African-American aesthetic. Like, Muhammad Ali, when he used to box, he used to say, you know, "I look pretty, don't I?" Or they would say, you know, that was a tough fight, and he would say, yeah, but they didn't mess up my pretty face. There's a certain kind of importance to the term pretty for black men that is totally has no analog for not only not sort of white men, but Mexican men etcetera, and so Tootie Montana, who was the Mardi Gras Indian chief who died a couple years ago, he always said that he, and this is true, he changed, Mardi Gras tribes used to actually fight. And he changed the idea of fighting, to fighting through who makes the best suit. So therefore the competition was about who made the best suit. And he called that, he goes, the question is always do I look prettier than you? So pretty has specific meaning, which I knew about, right. This is the scholarly part a little bit. But you know, two different guys at two different times in the parade just came up to me and said, "You look pretty." Which I knew was a serious compliment. And I said, "Well, thanks." The second time I was actually drunk enough to think, well to think the line, you know, "Well I feel pretty." But I couldn't say it, and I didn't.

AW But you felt that way?

JD Well, no, no, I wouldn't say it was true. It's just that it's a line from *West Side Story*, I just thought it sort of as a joking kind of way. And it wasn't really true. It's just not a term I would use, right. It's not a term that's familiar to me. And you know, I felt good, but even so I'm not that much of a clothes horse. So, you know, on Halloween when I was wearing the same suit but with black, you know, I felt tough because I like to walk the street like a tough Brooklyn guy. I like that. I don't know that I would say I feel tough. I would say it's one of the few times I probably say I feel macho, if macho was the term. But that's what's interesting, right. There's something macho about feeling pretty. It's almost as if there's an interesting inverse meaning of the word in which I'm so tough and so strong in masculinity that I'm pretty, right, and that's sort of what I think the word means.

AW Would you say that being in Prince of Wales has affected your sense of aesthetics?

JD Well, no. Not really. Maybe that'll happen later. I'll give you an example of what I mean. So for example, sometimes I look at what folks are wearing in second lines and first lines, and I think the colors are great. And sometimes I don't like them. So for example, the year before I was in it, excuse me, last year, the colors were two tone, light blue and dark blue. Which I don't like. I've never liked two tone. I mean, when I was a kid, there was a rage in the 70's of two tone and I

always thought it was unattractive. I don't like two tone. Although brown two tone is not as bad as blue two tone. In any sense, I don't like it. On the other hand, I once saw, in the only second line I've ever been to in the 9th ward, the guys wore what looked like silk, it couldn't have been silk. But they wore ivory suits, like off-white ivory, with blood red fedoras and blood red shoes and a blood red shirt. And they looked not only pretty—they looked fierce. They looked great. And I actually thought to myself, if I could pull that off, I would wear that. Like that looks great. You know, and I will say again, it's not something I would've ever thought, like blood red and ivory, but it looked great. So in that sense, one of the things I think about African-American aesthetics, in terms of what whites sometimes think is flamboyance, but what I just think is sort of an interesting visual palette, is I don't really understand it yet. I mean on one level it has to do with the color of their skin. To some extent, I mean a little bit, I think that purple for example looks better against black skin than against white skin. And the fairer you are the more you can't hold up to the purple. And I think that's sort of the same with a deep gold. Both of which are very prominent, I mean there are a lot of, for example, black high schools their colors are purple and gold, and I think those are colors that work. And I mean aesthetically for skin. And then there's some of it that's just a little more flamboyant and showy in ways, for example, once you know a few things about West African culture, or any African culture, is how important colors are. So you know, Africans wear that traditional garb that is, you know, really colorful. You know what I'm talking about, right?

(2:05:37)

AW You just mean the clothes they wear?

JD Yeah. So in West Africa they wear these really colorful, very busy colorful outfits, right. You know what I'm talking about, right?

AW Yeah.

JD So you're coming from a culture that even in a parent culture sense has a much different relationship to color and to pattern than what you think of any classic sort of traditional European culture. So you start with that and then you say okay, how did that adapt, you know to the United States. And so that's a live question for me, but it's I get a little more of an understanding of it, but it hasn't changed my aesthetics. And my personal aesthetics, you know, on the one hand, I have fairly sophisticated understanding of aesthetics, but music is the place for me. I'm much more aural than visual anyway, so it doesn't really matter to me. But I'm still working on it. Like I still don't know on the on hand why I didn't like peach and olive at all, and on the other hand I thought it kind of worked, when all was said and done. But then there are things, like I said, with the two tone blue or things I sometimes see at other second lines, and I just go, man, that just doesn't look good. So there's the flamboyant thing, there's the color thing, and I think there is just a sense of experimentation that goes with, like you're willing to try

colors, that, just to see what works. And the value on newness, right. That I've never seen this color scheme before, so we're gonna wear that and surprise them, like a move no one's seen, because no one's ever seen that before. And that has value in and of itself. And I think that's true. If there's anything I've learned it's that. I think that's true.

AW What is your understanding of where Prince of Wales got its name?

JD Have I told you this yet?

AW No.

JD K. I'll probably write something about this I think. And I only know this because I'm a jazz scholar. But I asked Joe, and Joe pretty much agrees, although from a different—so I asked Joe, thinking there must be lore, some folklore as to why, and there is none. So Joe is the member with the longest time, and it was never told to him what it meant. So, this was the 81st year that Prince of Wales marched, meaning that our first parade was 1928. Now, jazz functionally begins in terms of the world's knowledge of it in 1917, first recordings. Probably whatever we can call jazz doesn't really begin before 1912. Anyway, in the 1920's, jazz was hugely famous international music. And the Prince of Wales, the actual Prince of Wales in England was a huge jazz fan. Which is true. I forget his name. But I mean huge. He was good friends with Paul Whiteman, who was the richest jazz musician in the United States. He was a white guy who ran a sort of very boring jazz band, but there were, he was a franchise. There were a hundred fifty bands known as the Paul Whiteman bands, like he franchised his name. Very famous, had a good band, you know, but just boring. Anyway, I bring this up because the Prince of Wales was friends of his. Prince of Wales was a bon vivante, you know, a sport, a playboy, and he was in the United States a lot. And when he'd come, he'd come to see jazz. So that's the first part. My bet is the Prince of Wales was in New Orleans in either 1927 or 1928. And while he was here, either came to see jazz or while he was here went to see jazz and loved it in town, because New Orleans was, as it always has been, a place for tourism. And at the time probably still had the remnants of its whorehouse culture, because Storyville would only have been closed down ten years earlier. And it was still a vacation spot. You know, Faulkner lived here for a year. Sherwood Anderson lived here for ten years. You know, it was still both what it was and more. And, so my feeling is he was here. That's the first part. The second part is that this was a period in which African-American musicians, and not only musicians but all kinds of theatrical people, would take on the title of royalty to express their importance. So classically, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Earl Hines, Bessie Smith was known as the Empress of the Blues. And I think it's important that they were royalty as, oddly, kind of a protest against the United States, because we don't have royalty, but yet African-Americans aren't let in to be full citizens, right. So you sort of, you know, you jump past what would be the claim to you know, what would be either wealth or you know, political power, and you give yourself these title of

royalty, right. So my guess would be the Prince of Wales was here in ’27 or ’28, and saw a lot of jazz, expressed his love for jazz, and the Prince of Wales founded themselves that year separately and decided that they would give themselves the title of royalty that would both express their power and prestige and still have sort
02:10:46of a connection to both jazz and sort of royalty, England, Europe, etcetera. And so that’s my theory, and so basically I asked Joe and he basically said something similar. He did, you know, he had part of that but not all of that. And I do plan at some point to go, and to go look at the newspapers. Or the Prince of Wales biography, and see, and I’ll write it up if it’s true and I’ll just say, look, this is speculative, I’m just saying, there’s no lore. I’ll tell them exactly what I told you, and we do know the Prince of Wales was here and here are the things we can put together. Because I think that would be sort in interesting enough to be in a, like the Hogan Jazz Archive has a newsletter. It’s the kind of thing I would publish in that newsletter. I just think it’s more impressive to me that they’ve been going for 81 years. So we’re the second oldest. So the first oldest, which is the Young Men Olympia, they just had their 125th parade, which means they’re 39, 41 years older than we are. And from 1884. And they were like two months ago. And they, to celebrate the 125th, they had six different divisions and six different brass bands. It was the biggest, it was the biggest second line I’d ever seen except for that coalition one. So it was great. So the colors were black and white, but each of the divisions had different suits. So some of them had like all white suits with black tie and shirt. Some of them had like black and white like sort of stripes, you know, and white pants. Some of them had like really wide lapels and suits with a crazy black and white pattern. But everybody did black and white and everybody did it slightly differently.

AW Is it a bigger club than Prince of Wales?

JD I don’t know. I have to assume it is, because they had six divisions. Or I don’t know if they sort of brought in other people. But you could ask. Someone else could ask Joe. I have no idea. But it was really, really impressive. But you know, so anyway, what you’ll see in my article is not only is it something people in town don’t know about, right, but like how many things do we have in the United States that have been around for 125 years that are weekly community rituals? I can’t think of any, outside of things like Thanksgiving day parades and Memorial day parades and things that are actually national holidays. I can’t think of any. And maybe there are, you know, but I don’t know any. And so, I quote both Sidney Bechet and Louis Armstrong talking about second line parades when they were growing up. So it’s not just that we know for a fact that, for example, that Young Men of Olympia has been around since 1884, we know that people who grew up in the city were totally conscious of second lines as a culture, as they grew up. For at least a hundred years. So it’s not really that we don’t know about it, we willfully don’t know about it, right. This isn’t news And so that gets into all the questions about why Americans are embarrassed about black culture, why they don’t, why they aren’t proud of it like they are about the way, oh, whatever their genealogy is, the French, the English, the Swedish, the Irish. You know,

there's a real difficulty involved. Some of it is just plain racism. They don't want this as literally, as part of them, right. And that's not something I talk about in the article as much, but it's something my whole life's work is based on. It's like, look, you are already this. You need to accept it, because, first of all, you've already chosen it, and second of all, any other way of thinking about it is simply about that you feel superior, or that you feel that they're inferior. Not just blacks, sometimes Mexicans, etcetera. You know, my next book, this book I'm working on on race is basically about that. It's like, you guys have to get off it. And I know that's, I'm saying things that are very flippant at the moment about very deep things, but really, and I haven't told, there's a side project I'm working on that just says, look, I thought most of my life, that it was ultimately about, that things had to die out, that what used to be sort of white supremacy and class difference and ethnic difference and race would eventually die out. But, and we know there's no biological reality to race, right. So therefore, it's clear to me that it's not gonna die out, that my students, it seems to me, not you, are still invested in their white identity and still think of blacks as other, in ways I thought was going to be 2:15:08 progressively less and less true as I got older and is not.

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AW Do you plan on staying in Prince of Wales as long as you're in New Orleans?

JD Another good question. I think the short answer is yes, but I don't know. So, it's not cheap. And that's a factor. So I'm definitely in it this year. And I'm gonna play it by ear, year by year. Helen Regis, for example, she was in a social aid and pleasure club for about five years, and she wrote about, a little bit about why she left it. So I could imagine leaving it for any number of reasons. Like, I'd learned what I wanted to know and I liked it but it was really time consuming and I didn't have the time, or the money. For example, on the most pure level, like, if I had kids, I mean the dues aren't cheap, and, you know, I'm not a rich person, and that could make a difference.

AW Do you anticipate having kids?

JD I do. What?

AW Soon?

JD Well, and on the other hand, I love the fact that the kids, you know, there are always kids in our parade. So I could imagine leaving and coming back, because that happens a lot. So I leave because of money issues or whatever else, and then later on, if the money issues aren't the same, or I really want my kids to be in it or something like that.

AW Is it generally an open invitation if a person leaves for short-term because of financial reasons or—

JD Yeah, unless there's bad blood. There are people, I just learned, that of the new members somebody has rejoined, that used to be in it. Before the parade I shook hands with a lot of people who said, I was in the Walers for ten years, or five years, or 18 years. Or I was in but I'm coming back, or I moved to Baton Rouge, you know, so that I think is really common. So I can imagine that happening. If I, you know, if I got a grant for a year and I left. But I really don't know because, you know. Is anyone going to listen to this, to this except you? And maybe Nick? Is everyone going to listen to it?

AW Not, the whole class isn't going to listen to it, but Nick is going to have a copy.

JD Yeah. I mean, as I said I'm not a club-going person. And like, going to meetings twice a month, in which people for two hours argue about things I think are trivial. I mean that happens in any club--that's why I don't like clubs. That gets on, you know, that gets on my nerves. I could imagine not wanting to do that for a year. So, I mean, honestly I don't know. But I'm doing it this year. I'll do it on a year by year basis. I think as long as I live in New Orleans, on any given year, if I wasn't, I could drop back in. Or I would want to drop back in. Again, it struck me as a very, and sometimes you can have your kids in even if you don't join for the year, like you pay and they come in at the end. And I could truly imagine from the youngest age, from like the age they could walk, I would love my kids to be in this as soon as they could be in it. I think it would be great for them. And I may never have kids, but I may. So that's attractive to me. But, you know.

AW Do you see yourself staying in New Orleans long-term?

JD I do. I do. I, you know, I love New Orleans. I love living here and there's nowhere else I want to live. I mean, as much as I love Brooklyn, Brooklyn's not my Brooklyn and New York's not my New York. Both New York is, Manhattan is a complete millionaire city and no longer has any attraction to me, except in as

much as it's nostalgic and its my hometown. Brooklyn has a lot of what Brooklyn always had, but it doesn't tempt me anymore. I still love going back, but I don't have any interest in living there. When I was talking to you earlier about community, it' like, as much as I love Chicago, the chance of going to a place at this point and feeling the belonging that I feel here sometimes, is not so likely. There is, you know, I'm enough of a scholar, meaning I have books coming out, I would say there's a chance that, you know, a chance, that someone may make me an offer I can't refuse. But I don't think so. I mean where I live is always very important to me, and there is no place else I want to live in the United States. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____. And if I'm feeling underappreciated I could imagine leaving. And pretty much as solely for, if somebody offered me, like, a lot. I will say it's only because I'm fairly bullish on both my projects that I'm working on, would even dream such a thing. But. There's that, so. So therefore, you know, as long as I'm here I might be in the Prince of Wales, we'll see. Although next year, I have to figure out how to put things in my shoes that won't make my feet hurt for days after that.

AW Were your feet sore after that?

JD Oh my god. My everything. I didn't, I also, I didn't do my warm up exercises for my legs, because I run, and it's like, dancing through the street, in hard shoes, for four miles, I've never done anything like that.

AW Were your arms tired from those things, too?

JD My arms were kind of achy. Less so that I would have guessed, because I put them down some of the time. My legs, literally, I lay down on the couch and could not get up. My legs like, I could get up and lie down again.

AW Yeah, I can imagine.

JD And I wasn't even expecting that, because it didn't feel that way.

AW When you're out there.

JD A little bit in the last leg, but not at all. And then I got back to the Rock Bottom, I was exhausted, I ate a little, I was, I just didn't, it was too loud at that point, in the bar, I just couldn't handle it so I went home, not that long, like abut seven, and then I just couldn't get up.

AW I was surprised by how heavy- I mean, I play water polo, and I was at Voodoo, they let me kind of dance with them for a little while, and, I mean, my arms were tired from dancing around with those.

JD Yeah I mean it's funny cause when I carried them around at Jazzfest they were heavy, and we only did a 40-minute dance. And yet, I had two of them, and they weren't tiring. I think that was just, you know, adrenaline. And then I found a couple comfortable positions to have them down by my side. But mostly I think it was adrenaline, because they were heavy. So that was kinda nice. I have actually, the two big banners, in my like living room. Cause they look good and I didn't know what to do with them, I don't have enough stuff on the walls. So, currently my house is still adorned in our 2009 colors. So, that's kinda funny.

AW Is there anything else you want to add about Prince of Wales experience, or anything else?

JD No, I don't think so. I mean, we covered way more ground than I thought we would. _____.

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