

An Evening of New Orleans Food and Culture

Co-hosts: Carol Bebelle, Executive Director, Ashe Cultural Arts Center

Lolis Elie, Journalist, Filmmaker, Food Critic, and Former OSI
Katrina Media Fellow

Co-planner: Jordan Hirsch, Director, Sweet Home New Orleans

New Orleans is known around the world as a cultural wellspring. The rich tapestry of African-American, Cajun and Creole traditions gave birth to a number of indigenous cultural forms, including jazz, the Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs, and the Mardi Gras Indians. In New Orleans, culture serves as both an organizing tool for positive change and a safety net in the face of adversity. Cultural activists have organized “second line” parades to support Charity Hospital, the only remaining public hospital in the city; to demand alternatives to the over-incarceration of young people; and to protest the closing of public housing. Perhaps more than anywhere else in the United States, in New Orleans social justice continues to be expressed and advanced through cultural forms.

During the evening of December 2 at the Ashe Cultural Arts Center, the Board will have the opportunity to experience firsthand the role that culture plays in advancing social change in New Orleans. Lolis Elie has curated a dinner menu of traditional New Orleans cuisine prepared by a renowned local chef, and will offer remarks about the role of food in New Orleans and in the city’s redevelopment after Katrina. Carol Bebelle will provide an overview of the role that art and culture play in advancing social justice in New Orleans, and will introduce musicians and artists throughout the evening. A number of local musicians and spoken word artists will join us for dinner, share their talent during the evening, and discuss their role in advancing social change in New Orleans.

The evening’s cultural offerings will include:

- A photography exhibit of Lori Waselchuk, a grantee of OSI’s Documentary Photography Fund. Lori’s photographs document Angola Prison’s hospice program, and are touring correctional facilities in Mississippi and Louisiana.
- Music by the Hot 8 Brass Band, which blends traditional New Orleans brass, hip-hop, jazz and funk. The Hot 8 Brass Band frequently leads “second line” parades, and is active on a number of social justice issues in the city.
- Performances by two local spoken word poets, Frederick “Hollywood” Delahoussaye and Keisha Caldwell. Spoken word is a style of poetry that is written with the intention of being performed and which frequently includes social commentary.
- Music and performance by the V.I.P. Ladies and Kids Social Aid & Pleasure Club, which has been organizing “second line” parades to promote peace and demand an end to rising violence in the city.