

## **An Evening of New Orleans Food and Culture**

Background information and biographies

### **Carol Bebelle**

Carol Bebelle (a.k.a. Akua Wambui) is a native New Orleanian. She received her undergraduate degree (BA) from Loyola University in Sociology and her Master's Degree (M.Ed.) from Tulane University in Education Administration. She spent 20 years in the public sector as an administrator and planner of education, social and health programs. In 1990, Carol embarked on her path of independence which started with establishing Master Plan Development Associates (MPDA), a private consulting firm that offered planning, development, and grant writing services to human service programs and initiatives. In 1998, Carol Bebelle and Douglas Redd founded Ashe Cultural Arts Center.

### **Késhia "Peaches" Caldwell, Spoken Word Artist**

Késhia M. Caldwell (affectionately known as Peaches) has been writing as well as speaking publicly since the age of five. Most recently she has taken the stage and performed in the musical, *Purlie*; and the gospel stage play, *The Unacquainted* and *Women and War*, an all female performance done in conjunction with the 10th Anniversary of the Vagina Monologues.

### **Frederick "Hollywood" Delahoussaye, Spoken Word Artist**

Hollywood is a native New Orleanian. Poet, producer, and actor, Hollywood has starred in several theatrical productions and hosted events starring celebrities such as Maxwell, Erykah Badu, and Jennifer Hudson.

### **Lolis Eric Elie, Director/writer/producer**

Lolis Eric Elie is a national award-winning metro columnist and accomplished author. For the past eight years, he has chronicled the heartbeat of New Orleans' neighborhoods three times a week for New Orleans' major daily newspaper, *The Times-Picayune*. A recognized expert on New Orleans food and culture, Lolis is the author of *Smokestack Lightning: Adventures in the Heart of Barbecue Country*, a book about the culture of barbecue. He recently produced a television documentary based on that book and has several other culinary documentaries in development. He is currently writing *Of Bondage & Memory*, a book on the enduring legacy of the slave trade on two continents. He is editor of *Cornbread Nation 2: The Best of Southern Food Writing* for University of North Carolina Press. As a producer for the Smithsonian Institute's Jazz Oral History Project, Lolis conducted interviews with many of New Orleans' elder jazz musicians. He has master's degrees from the Columbia School of Journalism and a Master's in Creative Writing from the University of Virginia. He is an Open Society Katrina Media Fellow. Lolis was born in New Orleans, the son of a New Orleans Public School principal and Civil Rights lawyer. He lives in Faubourg Tremé where he is still fixing up his Creole cottage.

### **Jordan Hirsch**

Jordan Hirsch, Executive Director of Sweet Home New Orleans, is a New Orleans native, and has orchestrated relief efforts for the city's music community since the flood of 2005. He has built programs that have delivered millions of dollars of assistance to thousands of artists. He is an advocate for practitioners of New Orleans' indigenous culture.

### **Lori Waselchuk**

Lori Waselchuk is a documentary photographer who lives in Philadelphia, PA with her husband and two children. Waselchuk's work has appeared in *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Der Spiegel*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *National Journal*, *USA Today*, *The Independent* (London), and *The Times* (London), *The Star* (Johannesburg) and *Liberation*. Waselchuk's work is featured in numerous books and she exhibits internationally. She is a 2009 recipient of the Aaron Siskind Foundation's Individual Photographer's Fellowship. She has received additional distinctions with the 2007 PhotoNOLA Review Prize (winner); the 2008 Aperture West Book Prize (finalist); and the 2009 Santa Fe Prize for Photography (nominee).

### **Ashe Cultural Arts Center**

Ashe Cultural Arts Center is an effort to combine the intentions of neighborhood and economic development with the awesome creative forces of community, culture and art to revive and reclaim a historically significant corridor in Central City New Orleans: Oretha Castle-Haley Boulevard, formerly known as Dryades Street. Ashé is a gathering place for emerging and established artists to present, create and collaborate in giving life to their art.

### **Sweet Home New Orleans**

Sweet Home New Orleans, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is the leading service provider for New Orleans' music community. Our mission is to support the individuals and organizations that perpetuate New Orleans' unique musical and cultural traditions. We help local musicians, Mardi Gras Indians, and Social Aid and Pleasure Club members to get on their feet, get to work, and revitalize New Orleans.

### **Hot 8 Brass Band**

The members of the Hot 8 were all born and raised in New Orleans; many of them began playing together in high school. In 1995 they came together and began playing traditional New Orleans brass band music professionally. Founded by Bennie Pete, Jerome Jones, and Harry Cook in 1995, the band has played in traditional Second Line parades hosted each Sunday by a Social Aid and Pleasure Club ever since.

It was not until after Hurricane Katrina, however, that Hot 8 became known nationwide. Featured on CNN, Nightline, in the New York Times, and most notably in Spike Lee's Katrina documentary "When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts", Hot 8's work with the Finding Our Folk Tour has brought music to evacuee shelters, temporary trailer parks, and to communities throughout the US that have provided a temporary home to displaced New Orleanians.

### **Grace Before Dying Photography Exhibition**

A life sentence in Louisiana means life. More than 85% of the 5,100 inmates imprisoned at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola are expected to die there. Until the hospice program was created in 1998, most prisoners died alone. Their bodies were buried in shabby boxes in numbered graves at Point Lookout, the prison cemetery. Angola inmates have long feared dying in prison. But a certified and nationally recognized hospice program, initiated by Warden Burl Cain, has changed that.

Now, when a terminally ill inmate is too sick to live among the general prison population, he is transferred to the hospice ward. Here, inmate volunteers work closely with hospital and security staff to care for the patient. The volunteers, most of whom are serving life sentences themselves, try to keep him as comfortable as possible. Then, during the last days of the patient's life, the hospice staff begins a 24-hour vigil. The volunteers go to great lengths to ensure that their fellow inmate does not die alone.

The hospice volunteers' efforts to create a tone of reverence for the dying and the dead have touched the entire prison population. Prison officials say that the program has helped to transform one of the most violent prisons in the South into one of the least violent maximum-security institutions in the United States.

The hospice volunteers must go through a difficult process to bury their own regrets and fears, and unearth their capacity to love. *Grace Before Dying* looks at how, through hospice, inmates assert and affirm their humanity in an environment designed to isolate and punish. It reflects how grace offers hope that our lives need not be defined by our worst acts.

### **VIP Ladies and Kids**

VIP Ladies and Kids was formed September of 2003. The goal of this Social Aid and Pleasure Club is to sponsor activities and empowerment of youth and future generations to come. Founding members include Tamara Jackson, Cheryl Williams, Chantal Barnwell and Marilyn Morgan. The focus of the club is to keep the ancestral heritage alive by hosting the VIP Ladies and Kids annual parade on the first Sunday of March in historic Uptown, New Orleans.