

Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans Cultural Policy Candidate Questionnaire

These questions were developed in conjunction with a number of musicians, artists, grassroots cultural organizations, and culture bearers. The same set of questions is being sent to all mayoral and city council candidates (with one question for mayoral candidates only). We will be publishing the complete answers on our website and expect coverage from a number of news organizations.

If you have any questions, please contact Ethan Ellestad, Executive Director of the Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans at director@maccno.com or at 504-327-7713. We would also be happy to set up a meeting to further discuss these issues if you would like.

Please return your responses to these questions before September 28th. If you would like, you can type your responses directly on this document.

E-mail your responses to director@maccno.com

Thank you for your cooperation and your willingness to serve New Orleans and its residents! We know the culture of the city is very important to many voters, and we want to ensure that people have all the information they need to make their decision.

Candidate Name: **Joel Jackson**

Side Note: Thanks for making your Questionnaire reasonable in length, yet thorough, and using a Google Doc instead of a Google Form (the latter which can be infuriating). Much love for MaCCNO.

1. How do you define the term “culture bearer”? What criteria do you use to determine to whom the term applies?

Joel Jackson: In this context (read: political influence and potential legislation regarding advocacy for culture in our communities), I’d warn against defining Culture Bearer too narrowly.

That said, to me a Culture Bearer in New Orleans embodies our cultural traditions, protects those traditions, and helps transition those traditions in an ever-changing community moving forward in time and space. I think of four generations at an SAPC Second Line on Sunday. Mardi Gras Indians. For example, a culture bearer like Donald Harrison bringing Christian Scott into folds of New Orleans culture, and Christian then becoming a culture bearer in his own right while also progressively advancing the art, music and culture of New Orleans to new generations, and to

those who don't live in New Orleans, or to those whom have recently transitioned to New Orleans. A culture bear keeps close in mind history, the present moment, and the future.

It is about preservation, sustainability, and evolution.

2. New Orleans culture comes from its neighborhoods, working class African-American neighborhoods in particular. However, these neighborhoods, such as Central City, the Treme, and the 7th Ward, are facing skyrocketing housing costs, widespread displacement, and rapid gentrification. How will you ensure that housing will remain affordable for working-class communities in these neighborhoods and that long term residents will not be forced to move due to short-term rentals or escalating mortgages and rent?

Joel Jackson: There is a social/ political movement in America re: Neighborhood Stabilization, which is primarily about blighted buildings and domiciles. I want to advocate for Community Stabilization, which is primarily about people. In short, the city of New Orleans should not profit from its citizens being displaced.

I want to expand the Homestead Exemption, regulate and tax short-term rentals, and more closely regulate developers towards being a partner in our city and community that allows our citizens to live in the houses and neighborhoods that their Great-Great-Grandparents lived in.

In Gentilly specifically, we are a designated 'Resilience District' which comes with designated funding for development, which we need to ensure also includes affordable housing and Community Stabilization. There is a reason that so many developers and contractors are spending significant money to donate to campaigns in this political season: because of the coming development windfall in my District. We must not be beholden to those developer's interests. We need competency, transparency and accountability. Not favors owed.

3. Many musicians, cultural practitioners, and service industry workers travel long distances from areas like New Orleans East to get to jobs and gigs in the historic core of the City. What are your plans to make public transportation more efficient, reliable, and cost effective for these individuals?

Joel Jackson: I take the 91 bus back and forth from my 7th ward neighborhood to my place of work in the Warehouse District. The 'trains' run on time every single day. And it makes my work life so much more practical, easy, and affordable.

I'd take a look at the data of how many of our service/ tourism workers live in the East, and present that data to RTA and the Council while advocating for better

transit that is in lock-step with what's working perfectly in the Mid-City to Treme to French Quarter route.

Regarding cultural practitioners, I asked local culture writer Jay Maaza what had most changed on the Second Line in his 30-odd years attending them. His answer: The Cars- because so many folks don't live in those neighborhoods any longer. Too many of our cultural practitioners have been displaced to the East (for another topic re: affordable housing), and we must make it easier for those displaced to get into the Greater New Orleans area.

4. The City of New Orleans brought in \$7.4 billion in tourism revenue from 10.45 million visitors last year, many of whom were drawn here by advertising campaigns and images that rely heavily on our musicians, artists, and traditional culture bearers. Despite this financial windfall for the city, many of these same musicians, artists, and culture bearers still live close to the poverty line. How would you ensure that a greater percentage of tourism revenue finds its way to the people and communities that create the culture that attracts these visitors?

Joel Jackson: I work in tourism and hospitality industry. It is disconcerting to me that the very good paying live performance booking for events in town for tradeshows and conferences typically do not hire the relevant musicians and artists who perform in our clubs and on our streets. Instead, there is a roster of 'event' artists,, second line groups, etc, who don't get a whiff at our venerable music venues like the Maple Leaf, DBA and Tipitina's. I'd advocate to create a coalition of artists, performers, and culture bearers to help them tap into the windfall that comes with this type of tourism. I can tell you that the clients who do business here want it. We just need to connect said coalition with the tourism industry leaders. I know how to do it.

5. There is a fundamental inequity in parade fee structures, where fees for large Mardi Gras parades are significantly less than what Social Aid and Pleasure clubs pay for their annual second lines. How will you address this inequity?

Joel Jackson: Start with pointing out, with supporting data, the elephant in the room that is racial and socioeconomic inequity in New Orleans. An increase in fees for Mardi Gras parades should subsidize the SAPC Second Lines. Let's approach it from a positive perspective and give our Mardi Gras Krewes the 'opportunity' to support New Orleans street culture throughout the year.

6. Do you support the current administration's \$40 million dollar Security Plan? What is one component that you would keep, and one component that you would change?

Joel Jackson: No. And I would start from scratch with a new master plan for Public Safety that begins with Criminal Justice Reform. Frankly, so many parts of the

current plan are egregiously erroneous at first glance that I haven't read thru the entire plan. I just want to refuse a plan that violates constitutional rights, and not try to cherry pick anything redeemable within such a plan.

7. How will you support neighborhood bars, music venues, and small cultural businesses?

Joel Jackson: I support the official recognition of culture as a key aspect of preservation, and not just buildings, but our cultural bearers and artists. To that end, I support and applaud the successful efforts of MaCCNO's impact on the city's Master Plan regarding policy on zoning in New Orleans.

Any historical venue that has supported music and New Orleans culture should be able to file for a permit against existing zoning overlays.

This is kind of an easy answer to your question: I will support MaCCNO and lobby to ensure that MaCCNO will have a seat at the table regarding planning, cultural preservation and sustainability.

8. Do you support the permanent removal of the 8PM street musician curfew?

Joel Jackson: Yes

9. New Orleans culture includes Black Masking/Mardi Gras Indians and brass bands, but also funk and bounce music, spoken word, theater and dance, and much more. How will you partner with these diverse cultural communities in crafting impactful policies and decisions that reflect both the values of that community and our local government?

Joel Jackson: As my good friend Geoff Douville often says, we need to support the advent and sustainability of cultural 'incubators' in our historic neighborhoods, so that the music and culture of the future has a place to divide cells and grow towards that next new thing that comes from our Crescent City. See Tank & the Bangas. Jazz was born in New Orleans- we shouldn't stop there.

10. Cultural activity is a great crime prevention tool, particularly for youth. Provide one specific example of what you will do/advocate for to better leverage our cultural assets to build a safer community?

Joel Jackson: From my first hand experience, I feel like cultural activity is in a heyday for our youth. At the Second Lines on Sunday, I am particularly emboldened by the sight of teenagers wearing hip metal tee-shirts and skinny jeans reveling in a tradition that their Grandparents still take part in.

One specific thing I would do to further advance cultural activities for our young people is to approach our music clubs, and incentivize them, to book events during

the afternoon/ early evenings on Saturdays and Sundays geared towards young people, as well as allowing young 'promoters' to curate those type of shows.

11. Many of New Orleans' musical/cultural traditions are passed down from teacher to student and/or elder to young torchbearer. How would you assist in perpetuating our traditions for the next generation within our current school system?

Joel Jackson: I co-host a podcast about New Orleans culture, and many of our guests have waxed on and on about their music teachers from Grade School to High School, and the experience of being in the Marching Band. The discipline and self-respect that is taught and learned are invaluable, in all aspects of life.

I will support every school and cultural entity that passes on our community's rich and relevant traditions.

12. Do you support creating priority loading/unloading zones for musicians on Frenchmen St. & Bourbon St.?

Joel Jackson: Yes

13. **(For Mayoral candidates only)** Will you maintain the Office of Cultural Economy? If so, what is your vision for that agency under your leadership?