

Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans Cultural Policy Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Jay H. Banks

1. How do you define the term “culture bearer”? What criteria do you use to determine to whom the term applies?
 - The term culture bearer applies to those who know, understand and practice the cultural values and traditions of a group or society. Culture bearers can be musicians, artists, dancers, writers, etc. and should be actively transmitting or disseminating the cultural practices.
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?
 - Affordable housing must be available. First, we must untie the restrictions on the thousands of the blighted houses throughout the city and use incentives to develop those properties into affordable housing units. Second, we work to freeze residential property assessments to not penalize long term residents because new residents have driven up property values.
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?
 - We must make jobs and housing accessible in more widespread locations by increasing transportation options. We can assess RTA rider data for busses and streetcars to see where additional routes are needed. We can also evaluate options for bikes, scooters, reasonable parking and child-care locations that are near transit.
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?

- Our culture bearers must be compensated fairly. I will work to insure that organizations and business that employ our musicians and other artists pay a living wage.

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?

- I participate in the parades as a member of Zulu and I support a fair and equitable parade fees for our Social Aid and Pleasure clubs.

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?

- I will review the data for the current plan to determine what has been effective and what has not. Security must be effective for the entire city, for our residents as well as tourists.

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

- I will listen to the concerns of these businesses and work to insure that we do not inhibit the ability of those who work and perform to make a living.

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

- 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?

- I will work in conjunction with the various entities to determine what policies may need to be added or revised to support our cultural community. Together we can institute effective policies that will enhance our values.

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?

- All of the stakeholders including tourism, business, government, labor and education must come together to create realistic opportunities for our youth so that crime is an option they never consider. We can enhance programs at NORD such as theater, music lessons and dance to provide programs that will make our youth aware of their culture. Such programs can also employ our culture bearers and allow them to pass on the culture and traditions.

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?

- The City Council has no direct involvement in education but does have the power to demand that all of the stakeholders come together to create paths that our youth can take. We must support and insure that programs for the arts are included in the school curriculums.

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

- Yes