



finding our
folk 𐄂

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Finding Our Folk Documentary

Finding Our Folk tells the story of young people, who after the destruction cause by Hurricane Katrina organized themselves, other students, artists and community members from around the country to document and share the stories of Katrina survivors, to connect these stories with the narratives of individuals in marginalized communities across the country, to share the cultural spirit and heritage of the people of New Orleans and offer the work that they and Gulf Coast residents must do to rebuild their communities and lives as an indicator of the work that needs to take place across this country to shift social, political and economic arrangements. The tour which featured the Hot 8 Brass Band, Danny Glover, Suheir Hammad, and the Black Men of Labor visited 8 cities from January - February, 2006. Each gathering drew between 150 to 400 people, a combination of displaced hurricane survivors and local supporters and activists.

Finding Our Folk Tour Activities and Partners

This Spring, Summer and Fall the Finding Our Folk Tour will travel to college campuses and communities throughout the country to create opportunities for conversations with students, community members and faculty, using art, culture and New Orleans as the locust points for a broader reflection on social change. The tour will feature the Hot 8 Brass Band and involve hip hop artists, poets, elders, historians and educators, activists and organizers, and young people.

Through workshops, performances, panel discussions and open forums, students and community members will have opportunities to learn, discuss, and enjoy the intersections of culture, race, history, and politics in America as evidenced in New Orleans. Through these activities we seek to build awareness that New Orleans is serving as a litmus test for the future of America with regard to housing, education, economics, environmental health and justice and racial justice and to help draw connections between what happened and is happening in the Gulf Coast, their communities and the country.

TOUR ACTIVITIES:

Workshops (schools/community based) and Clinics

Dynamic, highly participatory workshops will create learning opportunities facilitated by the Hot 8 Brass Band, other artists and musicians, young people and community elders. Through these efforts we seek to create an atmosphere for young people to learn about the rich traditions, history and culture of New Orleans and how music and culture have been instruments to encourage and promote positive social and community change.

Film Screenings

FOF will feature a full length documentary of the first Finding Our Folk tour. The film characterizes the experiences of the young people who organized and implemented the tour, the people they encountered, and its impact. This organizing and educational tool will be utilized to inform and inspire discussion about the role of young people in building movement and in challenging the obstacles which impede community health and individual growth and development.

Story Circles, Community Conversations and Forums

These activities seek to create a space for people regardless of age, gender, economic class, and level of education to come together, to build relationships and trust, to share and collect ideas and discuss what they are struggling with locally and what they see the country struggling with nationally.

KatrinaRitaVille Express Trailer Exhibit

FOF has partnered with Katrina Rita Ville Express to develop FEMA trailers into a traveling educational exhibit that engages students and community members on the streets of New Orleans, throughout the Gulf Coast and nationally.

Celebration & Performances

After the workshops are complete, tour participants will enjoy a celebration of the culture of the New Orleans and Gulf Coast region. Musicians, Poets, Visual Artists, Singers, Rappers and DJs will come together to celebrate the culture of New Orleans and the region, its roots and its expression throughout the world. Celebrations will connect the voices of revolutionary music, hip-hop, blues and jazz and serve as opportunities for local, regional, national and international artists to share their gifts and talents with the people.

Organizing and Action

The Finding Our Folk Tour will partner with national and local grassroots organizations to engage tour participants in post tour activities, post tour organizing and initiate student research projects that focus on education and culture, which provide an opportunity for students to do outreach into communities, to collect stories and data, develop their own critical analysis and a vision for healthy schools and healthy communities. One of the outcomes of the College Tour and KRV Express will be to create campus and community based *circles* organized around the predominant issues in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, which resonate with students and community members, and are apparent in their local communities.

FOF organizers will support communication among circles and seek to connect circles with the experiences of others in the field and relevant Gulf Coast based policy initiatives.

Katrina Information Network is a strategic effort that supports the Gulf Coast through a solidarity divestment campaign on the local, state and federal level. Students across the country can support this project by supporting the KIN Solidarity Divestment Resolution not allowing profiteers to do business on your campus and taking action through e-advocacy, grassroots pressure, local actions, and selective buying, building greater pressure for what's right. Together, we helped bring down apartheid and forced change in governments abroad. We can use similar tactics to make change happen right here at home.

The Gulf Coast Civic Works Project is the national effort to support HR 4048: The Gulf Coast Civic Works Act that will hire 100,000 Gulf Coast residents to rebuild New Orleans and the surrounding region. The residents will build and repair houses, schools, hospitals, parks, roads, and bridges. College students all over the country are advocating on behalf of this effort to restore a sense of personal empowerment and hope.

Alternative Spring Break is a college project that encourages students to participate in the rebuilding and recovery efforts in the Gulf Coast. Students from across the country continue to support the recovery efforts by partnering with volunteer organizations, community projects, churches and other service opportunities.



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National Jazz Museum in Harlem Presents New Orleans Brass Bands: From Second-Lines to Frontlines

Posted: 2007-11-21

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New Orleans Brass Bands: From Second-lines to Frontlines

The Hot 8 Brass Band in workshop and discussion with Harlem high-school students, hosted by Larry Blumenfeld and presented by the National Jazz Museum in Harlem in collaboration with the Finding Our Folk Tour.

On Tuesday, November 27th from 1pm-3pm, the Hot 8 spends time with the students of the Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts in Harlem as part of the ongoing cultural and educational programming of The National Jazz Museum of Harlem. They'll perform both traditional and original repertoire for students, explain the fundamentals of New Orleans brass-band styles, and talk about the realities of post-Katrina life and art.

For the past dozen years, the Hot 8 Brass Band of New Orleans has been a standard-bearer of a centuries-old musical tradition as well as an innovator within that tradition, updating this jazz legacy with elements of R&B, funk and hip-hop. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the floods that followed the levee failures, the band's members have emerged as cultural and spiritual leaders in their local community and as important spokesmen on New Orleans for a wider audience. At traditional second-line parades, hosted each Sunday afternoon by Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs, brass bands such as the Hot 8 play and supporters follow along, dancing and clapping out rhythms. These events have always been powerful expressions of community; since Katrina, they express an even deeper message - of community, solidarity, and social purpose.

The afternoon will be hosted by veteran journalist Larry Blumenfeld, who has written extensively about cultural crisis and recovery in New Orleans for publications including The Wall Street Journal, Village Voice, Salon.com, and Jazziz; he'll share his experiences covering these issues - the challenges facing musicians, and the ways in which culture is central to the city's dynamic political and social change, drawn from a book-in-progress on the subject. And he'll lead a discussion with Hot 8 Brass band members about the role of brass-band musicians in post-Katrina recovery, the ways in which they have worked with civic leaders and students, and the importance of the tradition they carry. The Hot 8 Brass Band has epitomized New Orleans street music for over a decade. Founded by tuba player Bennie Pete, trombonist Jerome Jones, and bass drummer Harry Cook in 1995, the band plays the traditional second-line parades, infusing their performances with the funk and energy that makes New Orleans music loved around the world. The members of the Hot 8 were born and raised in New Orleans; many began playing together in high school. The Band performs annually at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, world and jazz festivals across the US and Europe, and were featured in the Spike Lee documentary When the Levees Broke. The Hot 8 has been part of an important relief project following Hurricane Katrina - SAVE OUR BRASS!, a local grass-roots project that has brought music and instruments to shelters, temporary trailer parks, and communities across the Gulf Coast. Working with the "Young People's Project", the Hot 8 toured the program Finding Our Folk working with young people to

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harness their historical and cultural traditions and to promote individual and community strength, development and self-determination.

The National Jazz Museum in Harlem has been ensconced in its Harlem offices for over five years now; its public programs now attract several thousand people a year as they continue their efforts to obtain a permanent home.

The Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts (UASPA) aims to sustain a challenging college preparatory curriculum, infusing the performing arts into all aspects of the academic experience. By using the arts as a teaching tool and providing students with the means to express themselves, UASPA breathes life and creativity into all subjects and build confidence throughout the school community. Unlike many performing arts schools, UASPA does not audition its students; the students need only to exhibit a sincere interest in the arts. UASPA is committed to bringing a quality education, resources and opportunities to underserved areas and students.

During the Finding Our Folk tour, high school and college students, supported by community elders and grassroots organizations, toured America and visited cities where Hurricane Katrina survivors were displaced. The tour partnered with local and national community-based organizations and learning institutions, to identify evacuees and the cities where they were, to develop curriculum and provide training for high school and college students to facilitate workshops and support the overall documentation of the tour. The Finding Our Folk Tour hit the road in 2007 with the Hot 8 Brass Band and continues its work in New Orleans with both the Hot 8 and Black Men of Labor, combining performances, workshops, exhibits, master classes and presentations.

Larry Blumenfeld is a Katrina Media Fellow with the Open Society Institute and editor-at-large of Jazziz magazine. This workshop and performance was also made possible through the institute's generous support.

The Urban Assembly School for the Performing Arts is located at 509 West 129th Street in Manhattan, tel. 212-234-4631. This is a private event for students; for press and other inquiries please contact Wilhelmina Grant at The National Jazz Museum in Harlem: office@jmih.org, or 212-348-8300

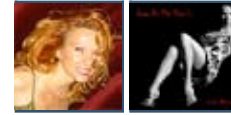
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First-Rate Second-Liners

Reinvigorating New Orleans with the Hot 8 Brass Band
 by Larry Blumenfeld
 November 13th, 2007 12:00 AM

The white sneaker on the left foot of Bennie Pete, tuba player and leader of the Hot 8 Brass Band, carries an inscription: "Brooklyn in Da House." Spike Lee scrawled it, less an autograph than a thank-you note for the band's indelible presence in his HBO documentary *When the Levees Broke*.

A four-hour film about a city in ruins isn't the typical vehicle to national exposure for a deserving band. Nor are prime-time crime shows and CNN disaster reports. But many Americans first experienced the gritty glory of this New Orleans band when, following the late 2006 murder of its snare drummer Dinerral Shavers, the Hot 8's story got major play during an episode of CBS's *48 Hours Mystery*. And yes, these were the same guys who, weeks after Katrina, were caught by CNN anchorwoman Rusty Dornin in uplifting performance at a Baton Rouge evacuee shelter.

The danger and dislocation you've heard about in the streets of New Orleans is real. Yet so is the devastating beauty you don't hear about as much. The former is a crucible in which the Hot 8 has been forged; the latter, a transcendent truth to which it contributes mightily. At second-line parades, brass bands play and supporters follow along, dancing and clapping out rhythms: Held nearly every weekend from September through June, these were always powerful expressions of community, but since Katrina, they express an even deeper message.

Pete, a mountain of a man, has a soft, somewhat high voice that belies both his size and the rippling intensity of his tuba playing. "I wasn't thinking about music or the band or nothing like that when we first met up again in Baton Rouge," he said in front of the Sound Café, a New Orleans coffee shop that has become a center for both music and activism. "I thought about survival, about my mom and dad. But it was beautiful. We just showed up, started blowing. And people began to smile and cry and dance: That's my band! It was a healing thing."

"I remember that the news crews didn't understand why we'd bring a band in here," added Lee Arnold, a band admirer who, since the storm, has grown into the Hot 8's aggressively creative manager. "Some of the Red Cross people were like, 'These people are so sad, they don't need this now.' They thought it was silly or even wrong."

But, Pete explains, "When we kicked it, they all got it—the relief workers, the MPs, everyone. The TV stations showed up. They wanted to know who



"As the city is rebuilding, as we speak, the band is rebuilding. The two are like one."
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we were. And the phone hasn't stopped ringing since." For a dozen years now, ever since two young bands, the Looney Tunes and the High Steppers, merged, the Hot 8 has been called with increasing frequency in its hometown for second-lines, house parties, and club gigs. They've inherited a powerful tradition, and some say it's their turn to rule the streets.

A subtly significant rivalry between New Orleans brass bands plays out mostly through second-lines: Whoever moves the dancers best assumes victory. Phil Frazier, tuba player and leader of the popular Rebirth Brass Band, recalls one parade in particular. "The Hot 8 was playing so hot, coming up from behind us, that we actually marched to the side, let them through," he says. "Bennie was trying to duck down, but I said, 'You can't hide, we know you're coming on. They're dancing for you today.' "

Folks likely won't be shimmying and fancy-dancing around the fountain in Lincoln Center's plaza when the Hot 8 plays Monday during the annual holiday-tree lighting: It's Manhattan. Still, placing the Hot 8 alongside Met Opera singers and New York City Ballet dancers acknowledges second-line brass-band music to be among the essential cultural riches we need to hold dear in this moment of thanks. Were Joe's Pub to clear out the tables for the band's Saturday-night set, it might replicate the gorgeous tumult that ensues on Sundays at the Chocolate Bar in New Orleans. In any case, this weekend will mark two years since the Hot 8 participated in a far different public celebration of gratitude.

"Those first few parades after the storm, the Hot 8 carried us," says filmmaker and New Orleans native Royce Osborn. "They literally lifted the city on their big, brawny shoulders and carried us through the street, insisting that the shit was going to get better."

The Hot 8 earned a reputation around New Orleans for the latest wrinkles within contemporary brass-band style: a liberal blend of jazz, r&b, and hip-hop elements. But in Katrina's wake, the group, like the city, has focused anew on its deepest cultural roots. In the months following the floods, through an organization called Finding Our Folk, the band began outreach tours alongside the Black Men of Labor, staunch traditionalists within the Social Aid & Pleasure Club ranks. Fred Johnson, a founding club member, encouraged the band to learn the older repertoire, drawing a line of continuity from raucous contemporary second-lines to slave-era African dances in the city's Congo Square and Reconstruction-era black benevolent societies.

"A wake-up call," Hot 8 trumpeter Raymond Williams called it. Soon the band sought out musical elders like Dr. Michael White, a clarinetist steeped in the tradition of brass-band players clad in white shirts, ties, and black-banded caps, playing hymns, marches, and early jazz tunes, always with three-trumpet harmonies. Through a mixture of rehearsals, performances, and discussions, White shared musical elements as well as history and values. Pete spoke of gaining "answers to questions I'd never asked before."

One question the band, like the city, repeatedly asks these days is simply, "Why?" The Hot 8 has known more than its share of unnecessary tragedy during its dozen years of existence. In 1996, trumpeter Jacob Johnson was found shot execution-style in his home. In 2004, trombonist Joe Williams was shot dead by police under controversial circumstances. In the spring of 2006, trumpeter Terrell Batiste lost his legs in a horrific roadside accident after relocating to Atlanta. And last December, snare-drummer Dinerral Shavers was shot dead in his car, apparently by someone trying to kill his stepson.

When Silence Is Violence, a citizen-action group, organized a march on City Hall to protest a lack of police protection, there was Bennie Pete, helping hold up a massive banner. Meanwhile, the very cultural traditions that have buoyed New Orleans life are now under considerable siege. After the city tripled the fees for second-line parades, a consortium of Social Aid & Pleasure Clubs took the matter to federal court. Last month, police arrested two brass-band musicians for parading without a permit during a funeral procession, setting off new controversy over a time-honored tradition.

"We rose out of water and debris to lead the way back to the life that we love," said Pete at a recent public forum on such matters. "It's not just a party, it's our life. We can sugarcoat it all kinds of ways, but the city looks at us as uncivilized. And that's why they try to confine us."

The band will soon create a follow-up to its self-produced debut studio album, *Rock with the Hot 8*; they're also featured on the forthcoming Blind Boys of Alabama album. (Two other releases were drawn from Hot 8 shows at the annual Jazz & Heritage Festival.) But the band's real power and presence can't be measured or captured on disc. "To me, they represent the true rebirth of New Orleans," says trumpeter Shamarr Allen, a former member who still often plays with the band. "As the city is rebuilding, as we speak, the band is rebuilding. The two are like one."

In October, a shooting along the route of a second-line parade caused the procession to divert from its intended course. The Hot 8 had been mining an up-tempo groove. But Pete signaled his players to change things up, out of respect for the seriousness of the situation and as a way to employ knowledge he'd gained of late. His choice? "We Shall Overcome."

The Hot 8 Brass Band plays Joe's Pub November 24 (joespub.com), and participates in the Lincoln Center Tree Lighting Ceremony November 26.

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News

Young People's Project Gulf tour:

A message of healing and hope

by By: Fritz Alexandre, Yersalem Amanuel - Photos By: Betty Bastidas

source: Bridge News

Sunday April 30, 2006

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The Finding Our Folk Tour (www.findingourfolk.org) was organized by the Young People's Project (www.typp.org) as well as other national and local organizations, to visit the cities where Hurricane Katrina survivors were currently living.

Our main objective in going on this tour was to conduct workshops, develop extra curriculum as well as document what we saw, heard and viewed. The tour was attended by high school and college students nationwide, and supported by community elders.

The cities that we visited while on tour were Atlanta, Georgia; Houston, Texas; Baton Rouge and Lafayette, Louisiana. The nature of our visit consisted of healing and emphasizing unity, culture, and bringing back New Orleans life to these people.

Artists such as Danny Glover and the Hot 8 Band were there to celebrate and enjoy the festivities as well as attend the workshops. We had a second line, which was a parade where native New Orleans music was being played, which also in the process reminded these people of their hometowns and made them come out and dance with us.

What surprised a lot of us was how these people continued to smile even through all of their struggles and their ability to continue going about their lives; basically starting from scratch even in their predicament. They reminded of us of how glad they were to still be living, and grateful for still having some of their family members still with them. Many of them also expressed how they felt about George Bush, FEMA representatives, and how the United States fails to acknowledge their tragic circumstances.

YPP recently sat down at the Boston Public Library-West End for a discussion with fellow Boston-based youth organization, Project Hip Hop (www.projecthiphop.org), who also had youth recently visited the South. Below are some excerpts from our discussion:

What surprised you the most about your visit to the Gulf Region?

"The thing that shocked me the most about the visit to the Gulf Coast was the actual stories from Hurricane Katrina Survivors dealing with adversity but still rising their head up to overcome the struggle." - (CRLS senior Fritz Alexander, YPP)

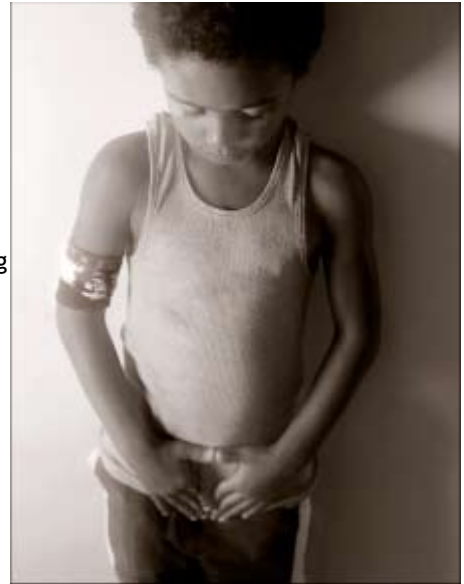
What have you done to share your experiences? And what have people's reactions to that been?

"Since we've come back from our trip, we have done a lot public speaking concerning what we saw. CBS interviewed us and we told them exactly what we felt needed to be done in order to raise awareness of the issues the survivors told us they had with George Bush and the media. We also had a night where we showcased our videos, pictures and stories and let people know then too about how our experiences on the tour." - (CRLS senior Yersalem Amanuel, YPP)

"People had a hard time facing reality. It was like a mental block until you saw it with your own two eyes..." - (YPP Director, Chad Milner)

"We gotta start making moves. What happened can't be ignored. Do something to rebuild where they live, locate people, and provide job opportunities" - (CRLS sophomore Helen Amanuel, YPP)

What do we do next? "Want to see different communities come together as a whole. Different people should go to the Gulf Coast to experience. We should meet once a month with other groups and organizations." - (Project Hip-hop's Shane Bass)



News

Finding Our Folk Stuns PTO Conference in NC

by Linda Frye Burnham

source: http://www.communityarts.net/blog/archives/2006/05/finding_our_fol.php

Tuesday May 22, 2007

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The 2006 Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed conference at UNC-Chapel Hill was stunned by a May 19 presentation by Finding Our Folk, a national partnership of artists and organizations seeking to raise the voices of Hurricane Katrina's survivors who are people of color. Two young African-American college students showed documentary video footage from their January-February tour of the locations of Katrina survivors and of Katrina-damaged landscapes. Survivors in the video expressed their anger and despair at the limbo in which they are living while the country decides what to do about repairing their home towns, most of which remain uninhabitable. Citizens of different economic classes talked about what they have lost and what they have been promised but never received. Many said they have come to believe the mass evacuation of people from the Gulf Coast region, and subsequent inaction by government on all levels, was literally planned to rid the region of native people of color. The two college students (whose names, I am sorry to say, we weren't given in writing so I can't pass them on) spoke eloquently and knowledgeably about the politics of the situation and their strategies to bring it to public attention. For some of us in the audience who may have put the Katrina disaster aside to go on with our own agendas, the effect was just devastating. Personally, I still haven't recovered. In the context of the PTO conference, the presentation was a searing, living manifestation of the philosophies of Friere and Boal. It validated the volunteer efforts of PTO members to continue presenting the PTO conference annually across the U.S. and my thanks go to Janet Mittman and her colleagues at UNC. The Finding Our Folk tour footage is currently being edited into a documentary film. You can see more about Finding Our Folk on their Web site at <http://www.findingourfolk.org>. PTO can be found at <http://www.ptoweb.org>.

finding our

FOIK TOUR 2006



Jackson, MS
Jan. 14



Mobile, AL
Jan. 15



Atlanta, GA
Jan. 21

Mobile, AL
Jan. 22



DISC 1 = The TOUR

DISC 2 = EXTRA CLIPS

New Orleans, LA
Jan. 29

Baton Rouge, LA
Jan. 28



Houston, TX
Feb. 4

Lafayette &
Baton Rouge, La
Feb. 5



**Finding
Ourselves**





Rest In Peace

Christopher Orasowie Adagbonyin

OCTOBER 7, 1982 - SEPTEMBER 14, 2007

We seek to raise the voices of Katrina's survivors and connect them with the voices of America's survivors, the brothers and sisters in all corners of the country who remain on the margins of citizenship. We seek to use the tools of education, documentation, healing, and organizing to explore and discuss the conditions that lead to the devastating impact of Katrina; to join the voices of resistance, the veterans of past and continuing movements, with the voices of hip-hop, blues and jazz; to celebrate African and indigenous cultures as they have been expressed in new Orleans and throughout the world; to find our folk, to reconnect the individuals, families and communities that are scattered across the country, living in exile. In finding our folk, we hope to find ourselves.

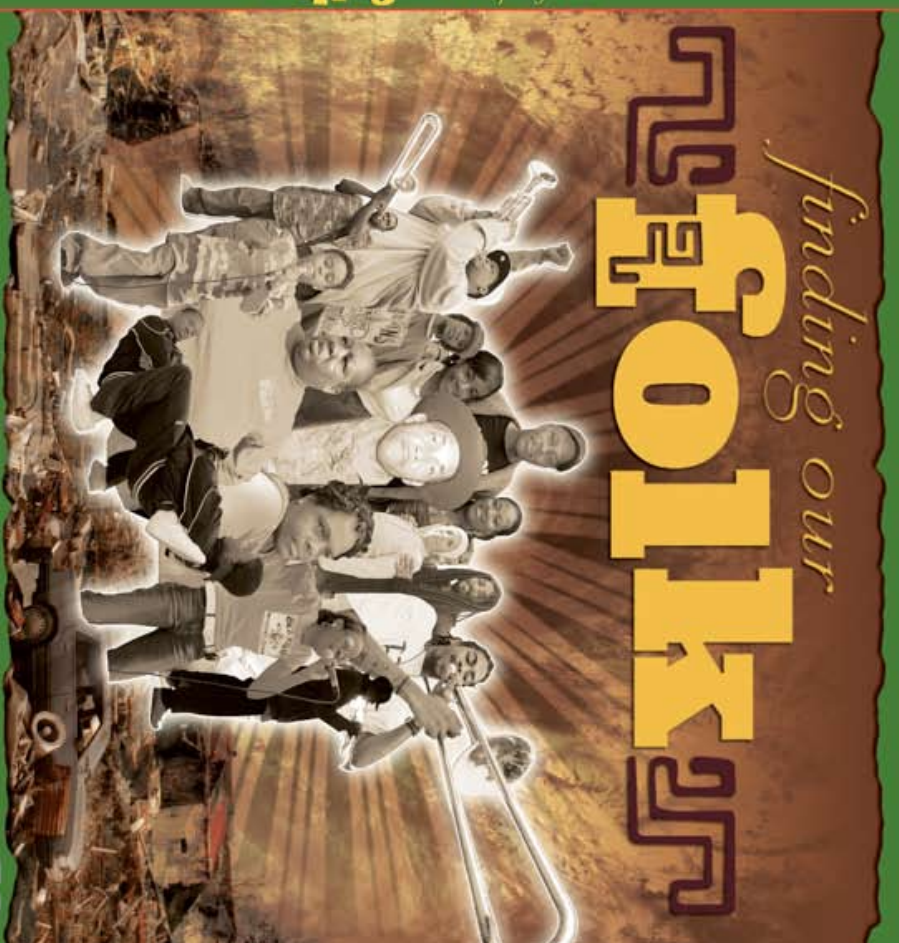


www.findingourfolk.org

This dvd is the result of the hard work of many dedicated, creative young people, and old people alike. It was made with hope, a passion for justice and most of all love.



finding our folk



finding our folk

documented through the eyes of young people



