

The Partners for Advancing Health Equity Collaborative hosted the 2022 Summit, *On the Front Lines of Equity & Justice*, December 4-6, 2022. The Summit brought together leaders in health equity and justice to foster collaboration across sectors, and to promote action in advancing health equity in research, practice, and policy. This report provides a synthesis of key takeaways from the plenary session, *New Orleans Jazz as a Metaphor for American Life* with Michael White, hosted by Thomas LaVeist.

Session Voices



Thomas LaVeist, [Dean, Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#)



Michael White, [Keller Endowed Chair, Xavier University and New Orleans Jazz clarinetist, Composer, and Jazz Historian](#)

Key Takeaways

Discover the ways in which New Orleans jazz symbolizes American life. The performance of [authentic New Orleans jazz demonstrates the democratic ideals](#) that the United States was founded upon. New Orleans jazz reinterprets the strict rules of music to allow for personalization and creativity. This points to democracy, where rules and laws exist but can also be relaxed to incorporate diversity and freedom. The creativity of expression, personalization, and joy of New Orleans jazz emphasizes the same aspects that exist in true democracy. At its birth, New Orleans jazz gave Black musicians a [voice powerful enough to overcome societally imposed invisibility and barriers](#), offering them respect, recognition, and social mobility.

Uncover the true origins of jazz music. Though [ragtime, marching bands, and blues](#) form the three main musical roots of jazz, this music was also a product of many [cultural, historical, and social influences](#). New Orleans' mix of African and European-derived music and its constant musical activities made it the ideal birthplace for jazz. The social and political climate of the 19th-centuryth post-reconstruction period, filled with [great racial turbulence and violence](#), also spurred its creation. By the 1920s, jazz had spread nationally, becoming entrenched in American popular culture and bringing joy after WWI.

Learn about the structure of New Orleans jazz. New Orleans jazz is often characterized by [collective improvisation](#) and a specific harmonic structure. New Orleans jazz bands can be configured in many ways, though a 6-7 combination is standard. All bands must have a horn or front-line section and a rhythm section. New Orleans jazz bands are unified, yet each instrument still has a [unique sound to demonstrate individuality and emotion](#). Though there are jazz classics, the principles and style of New Orleans jazz can be applied to the process of song composition or the reinterpretation of other songs.

Share your thoughts!

What did you think of this topic? Would you like to hear more from these speakers? Do you have any resources you would like to share with us? [Email us!](#)