



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2011 Volume IV: The Big Easy: Literary New Orleans and Intangible Heritage

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## **Intangible Space and the Map of Desire in the Gage Park Neighborhood**

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### **Overview**

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We all take up space one way or another. Some of us can slink by relatively unnoticed during our sliver in time. Some of us can't seem to contain ourselves and are as ever present as Ignatious J. Reilly bulging from the pages of John Kennedy Toole's *Confederacy of Dunces*.<sup>1</sup> Wait a minute. Ignatious is a fictional character. He certainly doesn't take up any geographic space. Of course, I just called him "he" as if "he" were a person. A quick search of Google Scholar shows that "he" is referenced in no less than 118 scholarly articles. I have recently seen him referenced by a journalist, Andre Codrescu,<sup>2</sup> and a geographer, Rob Shields,<sup>3</sup> in two very different contexts. There has even been a statue erected in his honor. Perhaps he does take up a geographic space? Of course, a statue is a hard, defined, immobile space. This is very unlike Ignatious, a bulbous train wreck of a person inciting disaster at every turn. No, this is something very different. Ignatious is fictional yet eternal. He exists not only in space but in time as part of our collective cultural identity. His cultural presence diffuses to anywhere words can appear on a page or a screen. Yet his central node, his point of creation, is New Orleans. There he is woven into the marvelous tapestry of deep time and intangible space along the threads of poets, jazz musicians, gumbo and lagniappe. It is deep time in that it influences our understanding of the present while breathing life into our past. It is intangible space filled with the sights, sounds, smells and feelings of our common culture that allows us to give meaning to the tangible spaces geographers measure with longitudes and latitudes.

Academically, the goal is to have Advanced Placement Human Geography students apply their studies of geography and culture to themselves and their community, adding interest and relevance to their learning. Additionally, students should be able to apply the AP Human Geography course concepts to other neighborhoods. To help students broaden their horizons in this manner, I will be partnering a teacher at a high school in New Orleans. We will have our students communicate with each other as they examine the heritage of their communities. Utilizing a New Orleans neighborhood as a comparative case study will reinforce my students' understanding of their own community.

According to the work of Dr. Robert Marzano, one of the best strategies for student retention is comparative study.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps, if my students can compare their own community to another and be placed in the position of defining and describing the culture of their community to others, they will leave my class with a deeper

understanding of themselves and their community. By integrating classic geographic and ethnographic strategies with modern technology, I hope to give my students an authentic understanding of a sense of place.

As a teacher of not only geography, but Advanced Placement Human Geography, I am supposed to teach my students the "spatial perspective," whatever that means. I have never found an adequate definition. Our widely praised textbook, *The Cultural Landscape: An Introduction to Human Geography* by James M. Rubenstein does not include the term in its glossary. <sup>5</sup> The College Board, in its course description developed by "a group of nationally renowned subject matter experts," comes closer to understanding.

Geography looks at the world from a spatial perspective, seeking to understand the changing spatial organization and material character of Earth's surface. One of the critical advantages of a spatial perspective is the attention it focuses on how phenomena are related to one another in particular places. Students should thus learn not just to recognize and interpret patterns but to assess the nature and significance of the relationships among phenomena that occur in the same place, and to understand how tastes and values, political regulations, and economic constraints work together to create particular types of cultural landscapes. <sup>6</sup>

My ninth grade students are not amused by this goal of the course. When I have them change the word phenomena to things or stuff, the dimmer switch turns brighter. When I tell them that it's what happens when two things occupy the same space to make something new like chocolate and peanut butter making a candy cup, they start to get it. Of course, then I date myself via pop culture references, and I wonder how much longer they will get it as snappy slogans give way to pop music and movie sponsorships in the advertising world. Still, it seems this idea also takes up space in our collective culture. Although such candies exist in the world, I do not have to physically produce one or even describe in much detail in order to conjure up the popular image of peanut butter wrapped in chocolate in a bright orange wrapper with yellow lettering. The branding now has intangible space in the collective consciousness with nodes of activity around most of the convenience stores, grocers and snack counters in our community.

However, my example to the students is still one of material objects and the idea of the cultural landscape is much deeper and more profound than any material object. It is the intangible space I need my students to see in order to truly appreciate the landscape of their community. However, several factors challenge this goal.

I teach at Gage Park High School in the Gage Park neighborhood located in the Southwest Side of Chicago. While its traditional boundaries are the CTA Orange Line to the north, 59<sup>th</sup> Street to the south and old rail bridges to the east and west, the cultural identity of Gage Park seems perpetually tied to surrounding neighborhoods. In over ten years of experience teaching at Gage Park High School, I have heard the community lumped into categories such as West Englewood, Marquette Park, Chicago Lawn, and even Pilsen. The only time Gage Park seems to retain its identity is when the media reports on a shooting or other act of violence around the school or involving one of our students, further impeding a positive, unifying identity. Geographically, Gage Park sits at the confluence of numerous other boundaries which impedes its identity. Legislative districts at all levels of government; city wards, state representative and senatorial districts and even federal congressional districts converge here leaving the community on the fringe of political leadership. Even the organizations that serve the community such as the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, the Southwest Organizing Project and the Southwest Youth Collaborative are not exclusive to the Gage Park Community. The last institution to truly serve the traditional neighborhood was Gage Park High School; however, recent school reform and development efforts have shifted the neighborhood school boundaries to

compensate for a rash of school closings and reinventions in surrounding neighborhoods. In some cases, this has led to extreme overcrowding and, more recently, under-enrollment. Additionally, the population of the neighborhood is very transient. The area was recently hard hit by the fallout of extensive predatory mortgage lending forcing numerous foreclosures and evictions. There is also a large immigrant population relatively new to the community, which either has not yet absorbed or has radically changed the intangible space defining the neighborhood. My colleague, Victor Harbison, whose students developed the Community Transformed Project, explains the need for neighborhood identity best.

I had a student who didn't believe that Dr. King had marched in our community. When asked why, he just said "Well, if it was true, there would be a sign or something." That was the inspiration for this civics project. Someone who had lived their whole life in this community didn't know what had happened here. <sup>7</sup>

In the above example, the memory of deep time and intangible heritage was almost lost. Memory plays an essential role in how we define the intangible space, which in turn helps us define our hard semiotic spaces.

During a discussion of the idea of memory at the Yale National Initiative seminar, *The Big Easy: Literary New Orleans and Intangible Heritage*, I recalled an article, "Remembering the Forgetting of New Orleans" by sociologist Daina Cheyenne Harvey, that eloquently describes the impact of spaces on our collective memory. She refers to the spaces of amnesia "that we are socialized to ignore" being extra vulnerable following traumas like Katrina.

President Bush standing in front of Jackson Square "waiting for life and hope to return" surely constrains the memory of the space as a site where slaves were hanged intentionally for civil disobedience. Spaces such as these are spaces of forgetting. Either by intentionally removing objects in the space or the space itself from the collective memory. <sup>8</sup>

A counter-example is the D.H. Holmes Department Store immortalized in *Confederacy of Dunces* but physically replaced by the Chateau Bourbon Hotel only to roar back into our intangible special memory with the placement of Ignatious' statue in front of the building refreshing for us the opening scene in *Confederacy of Dunces*. <sup>9</sup> During a field experience to New Orleans I was able to see firsthand this vibrant space today full of life, art, music and commerce but still playing to the intangible idea of New Orleans. In the following photographs Andrew Jackson is permanently fixed upon his steed, tipping his hat to the crowd in a gesture that may have been contrary to his more often reported crass demeanor. He is surrounded by artisans selling their wares to passersby, musicians renting their instruments for a few minutes of personal composition, and The Roots of Music Project preserving the intangible culture the city. "Where marching bands were always an integral part of the New Orleans middle schools, this has changed dramatically after Katrina and many schools don't offer music programs anymore." This program offers music education to over 100 students from across New Orleans and currently has a waiting list. <sup>10</sup>



**Photos of Jackson Square taken by the author on July 30, 2011**

However, sometimes the amnesia still takes hold. Along our tour of the city, Dave Cash reported to me that sometimes he and his friends will see a new development and be unable to remember what was there before.

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Harvey continues her sociological study of New Orleans geography with a discussion of spaces of anamnesis where intentionally removed objects instead enhance the memory of the space. For example, millions of people a day passed by a view of the World Trade Center without a second thought. Now, nearly a decade after its destruction, that building is firmly planted in the national consciousness soon to be memorialized in hard space by a design titled "Reflecting Absence." Harvey continues by applying this anamnesis to New Orleans.

If the Ninth Ward and other everyday, unmarked black spaces are not rebuilt, whatever replaces them will certainly be located in a space of anamnesis. The void or whatever replaces the original will serve as a "mnemonic prompt" Places such as Madame John's Legacy, which survived the citywide fire of 1794, making it the second-oldest building in the Mississippi Valley, lead us to reflect on their surroundings and prompt us to both remember and wonder what has been removed in the city through previous disasters. <sup>12</sup>

Throughout my own field study of New Orleans, I found that throughout the neighborhoods devastated by Hurricane Katrina and the failure of the levees, there is a recurring pattern in residential development where on the same block one can find the empty space left by home washed away, the empty shell of a property still abandoned and the revitalization of a space with new development.





**Photos of the Ninth Ward taken by the author on July 28, 2011**

The mixture of these developments seems to intensify the memory of those who were there before and alert new observers to what once was. During our journey, Dave Cash showed me the former location of a close friend's house now gone and described in detail how another brick home located directly behind the London Avenue Canal Levee breach had been pushed off of its foundation and spun around into the street. <sup>13</sup>

And finally, Harvey addresses asemiotic spaces. This I believe may be the very essence of intangible space. In contrast to the signs, symbols and hard objects of three dimensional physical space or the roads, signs and symbols that define our two-dimensional maps, asemiotic memory expands the liminal breezeways between the intangible spaces of our consciousness, breathing life into our multi-dimensional maps of desire.

The sticky smell of pralines, the sounds of Mardi Gras, the omnipresent jazz, the sights of crawfish, the warm breeze coming off of the Mississippi, and the bricolage style of its architecture all reference New Orleans and yet do not signify any particular space. <sup>14</sup>

Although the asemiotic space is difficult to express in a photograph, there is no more obvious example of this than Bourbon Street in New Orleans' French Quarter. I quickly discovered that getting lost in the French Quarter would be very difficult. If you close your eyes and listen, you can hear the din of this iconic space and follow your ears, or run the other way depending upon your mood. The mixed blare of various genres of music, the rattle of beads, the raucous shouts of drunken tourists and the stench of stale beer immediately alert anyone with their senses intact that Bourbon Street is nigh.



Photo of Bourbon Street taken by the author on July 30, 2011

Although there are also plenty of things one may also see on Bourbon Street that will be unlikely in any other part of New Orleans.

This is the level of understanding I need my students to obtain about their own neighborhood. Whether it is by the transience of Gage Park's population or the whims of public policy or the shifting of two-dimensional boundaries or other yet to be discovered forces, the intangible heritage and thereby the intangible space of its common neighborhood culture is at risk.

Despite these obstacles, there is a vibrant diversity in this colorful community. Participation with community organizations seems to be on the rise, and there is now a marker honoring the community's connection to Dr. Martin Luther King. For the past three years, students of Gage Park High School have been engaged in the development of a museum-quality touch-screen kiosk full of historical source documents, photographs and oral histories that has spent the last year on tour to various public forums including the DuSable Museum of African American History during Black History Month. The next phase of this project, to which my students will contribute the results of their study of intangible space in the community, will be to make this wealth of material available online allowing the heritage of the community to diffuse outward rather than constrict inward. Furthermore, despite the ethno-centric nature of a memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King, both African-American and Latino students embraced and participated in the project. The Gage Park neighborhood itself is increasingly Hispanic; however, the high school population, though relatively balanced between the two, is seeing an increase in its African-American population. Two of Chicago's richest cultures fuse together here in what should be a powerful block of common interest. It is my hope, that the positive exploration of intangible space by my students will fulfill the broader goal of this unit to further unify and empower their diverse, underserved community through its deep time, intangible heritage. Deep time, rather than historical record is an important distinction. To quote Jill Lane, "Deep time does not obviate social time or social action: the concept of deep time allows us to see sociality against the relief of other temporal scales." <sup>15</sup>

## Objectives

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As stated above, the goal is to have students apply their studies of geography and culture to themselves and their community as well as other communities. To conduct this comparative study, I will be partnering with David Cash, a teacher at George Washington Carver High School in New Orleans. Carver is one of the few remaining traditional neighborhood public schools in New Orleans and faces similar threats to its own community identity. We will have our students communicate with each other electronically to examine their existing biases, research methods and conclusions about their communities. To do this comparative study effectively students will examine the work of geographers who utilize this technique. Two texts that will guide us in the process of comparative geography will be *Urban Outcasts* by Loic Waquant<sup>16</sup> and *What is a City: Rethinking the Urban After Hurricane Katrina* edited by Phil Steinberg and Rob Shields.<sup>17</sup> The former will provide geographic and cultural insights into inner-city Chicago neighborhoods as well the process of comparative geography.

In *Urban Outcasts* (2008), Loic Waquant has made important theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to our understanding of the "new poverty" through his comparison of the late 1980s/early 1990s Chicago Black "ghetto" to the Paris banlieues. In so doing, he makes four central arguments drawing on a wealth of ethnographic and quantitative data. (Gilbert)<sup>18</sup>

These arguments address a definition of American hyperghettos, identifying differences between his subjects, the role of the state policy in these conditions, and a framework for future research. (Gilbert)<sup>19</sup> The latter text will provide the insights needed to make legitimate comparisons with post-Katrina New Orleans and also provides further exemplars of comparative geography.

Comparative theory (with the Netherlands, London, Mumbai) acts as a device to remind American scholars that New Orleans' perceived uniqueness in the United States does not mean that similar issues, and solutions, cannot be found elsewhere among world cities. (Hernandez)<sup>20</sup>

The original intent of this unit was to reinvent the culture unit for my AP Human Geography course. I was looking at having students research and study cultures exclusively outside their experience. Upon further reflection, I realized that my students need to develop a stronger sense of identity and belonging to their community. Studs Terkel kicks off *The Great Divide* with a quote by Carlos Fuentes that sums up the importance of this identity. "We must go forward. . . but we cannot kill the past in doing so, for the past is part of our identity and without our identity we are nothing."<sup>21</sup> I have instead developed an introductory unit to the concept and importance of culture, so my students can focus their further study of culture through the lens of intangible space. The course also ties together the larger, ongoing project of the Community Transformed website.

The unit will be tied into a double period cohort consisting of my AP Human Geography class and my Freshman AVID class. This will allow us the freedom to do some longer lessons and more complicated projects in a shorter period of time. We will begin by having students explore what they already know about the Gage Park Community and identifying both tangible and intangible aspects of the community culture and traditions. Students will read a brief history of their community to give them a sense of its evolution from open prairie to Irish, Polish and Lithuanian enclave to the predominantly Hispanic and African-American demographic that exists today.<sup>22</sup> To expand their understanding of the area's historic diversity, students will also examine

excerpts from Studs Terkel's *Division Street America* and *The Great Divide*.

Additionally, they will take a community walk field trip, during which students will speak with local cultural leaders and gather information to develop a culture map and calendar. Stops along this tour will include the Park District Field House at Gage Park, a mural by Thomas Lea, and a museum-quality kiosk developed by previous Gage Park High School students to commemorate the equal housing marches led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1966. My students will contribute their work for publication on the kiosk's related website, . The purpose here is two-fold. First, we will build collegiality in our school community as my freshman will be able to cite the work of upperclassmen and alumni from Gage Park High School in their own research. Second they will contribute to existing efforts to define a sense of shared history and culture within the Gage Park community.

As my classes tend to be evenly split between Hispanic and African-American students, they will precede this unit by also engaging in a series of literature circles exploring their own cultural identity and that of their diverse neighbors. For the literature circles, I have selected *TheAmericano Dream* by Lionel Sosa and *Enough* by Juan Williams. Sosa's text extols the benefits and advantages of being bi-cultural without shying away from the obstacles faced by Hispanic-Americans. <sup>23</sup> Williams' text, although more politically charged, also celebrates the historical strengths and successes of African-Americans while identifying more contemporary obstacles to the African-American community's success. <sup>24</sup>*Enough* was recommended in Alfred W. Tatum's *Reading for their Life* as one of ten enabling texts for African American Adolescents. <sup>25</sup> Ideally, these texts will help students to define their own cultural identity and how the diversity of the Gage Park neighborhood can be a unifying asset. Another piece of the AVID component of the course will be guest speakers. Students will hear from at least two teachers who also attended Gage Park High School, to discuss the past cultural traditions of the school and the community.

During the unit, students will read excerpts from *Remembering Gage Park* by William P. Shunas. The story is about two working class white boys coming of age in the Gage Park Neighborhood during the 1960's. The text offers a unique perspective for my students regarding race relations in the neighborhood at that time and should give them an opportunity to compare, contrast and connect the past and the present. The story depicts a neighborhood that will be familiar to my students but tainted by the ignorance of racism and how the young people of the community felt and coped by either embracing the horror of racist violence or, in the case of the main characters, grappling with the shame of it. <sup>26</sup> I expect this text to be attainable for my students academically, but challenging for them when dealing with the complexity of their neighborhood's past. The goal of using these texts is to encourage students to reflect upon their own identities and aspirations while gaining a deeper knowledge of their personal identities allowing them greater access to defining the intangible space of their community culture.

The most exciting aspect of this unit will be the ability of my students to collaborate with students in New Orleans' Desire Development Neighborhood's George Washington Carver High School. According to teacher David Cash, "I teach in a high poverty school. My school is a non-charter public school, though it will likely be converted to a charter within the next couple of years. All of my students are African-American. I know they are interested in how other people live in other places. Many of them lived in other states after Hurricane Katrina. I'm sure they would love to compare notes about education in Chicago." <sup>27</sup> Students from both schools will share their findings with each other and complete a comparison study of the two neighborhoods. Ideally the students will interact at the beginning of this unit, in order to share their initial thoughts and biases about their communities. The second communication will be mid-unit to check in on study methods. The third



communication will be toward the end of the unit to share final findings with each other for the comparison study. While the students could connect via Skype, e-mail, blog, other media or a combination, we have settled on e-mail as the most efficient means of ongoing communication. Our students will connect via e-mail at the very start of the unit, and continue communicating that way throughout with a culminating video conference where students share their findings and make inquiries of each other face-to-face.

The study and preservation of intangible space is particularly poignant for the students of Carver High School, where their main building, one of architectural and cultural significance, was recently demolished despite efforts by the International Working Party for the Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement to save it.

The School Facilities Master Plan of Orleans Parish has ignored and consistently threatened to eradicate important mid-century modern public schools from New Orleans's historic neighborhoods. From the outset, DOCOMOMO US/Louisiana identified the George Washington Carver Junior-Senior High School as one of the most architecturally significant buildings of its generation. In the early 1950s, the nationally recognized New Orleans-based architectural firm of Curtis and Davis won a design competition, and responded by creating an elegant school complex. The most compelling structure is a dramatic cast in place concrete auditorium building. The monumental structure utilized parabolic concrete hinged arches that extend beyond the building and rest on hinged concrete buttresses, creating a modern stoa that shelters one from rain and sun. The Federal Emergency Management Agency assessed the building's innovative auditorium as eligible for the National Register, thereby triggering the National Historic Preservation Act's Section 106 Process. <sup>28</sup>

As the tangible spaces of this storied community are brushed aside, perhaps the intangible spaces can help to preserve what remains and inspire my own students to respect and define both the tangible and intangible cultural icons in their neighborhood. Jacob Wagner puts it best in his essay, *Understanding New Orleans*.

Rather than attracting us to New Orleans as some exceptional case, however, the idea of Creole urbanism should send all of us back to our own neighborhoods in search of the forgotten place identities in whatever location we call home. <sup>29</sup>

To accomplish this task students will become a combination of ethnographers and street-level geographers. C. Tabor Fisher explains the importance of this combination in her essay, *The Theorist in the Lower Ninth Ward*.

The streetwalking theorist is able to have a complex understanding of space and the relations that constitute it, not by looking at it from above (and thus gaining a breadth of understanding), but by experiencing the production from within the space produced and in company with others moving through and producing it (and thus gaining a depth of understanding.) <sup>30</sup>

Students will be expected to tour their neighborhood on foot and interview the tapestry of characters that make up their community. They will engage community and cultural leaders as well as neighbors and friends to develop a combined perspective from the members of the community regarding its intangible spaces and deep time heritage. These interviews are designed to illicit data as well as stories which are more protective of memory than any snapshot. It is only after gathering a deep time perspective that my students will be able to truly identify and define the more tangible cultural icons of their neighborhood and their meaning. According to Fisher, "A streetwalking theorist is aware of both the active subjectivity and the relations that produce

space, making it possible for her to conceptualize and move with resistance." <sup>31</sup> In other words, the students are expected to not only gather the perspective of others, but be an active participant with the tangible and intangible spaces of the neighborhood.

Ultimately, students will be expected to produce a research paper that thoughtfully defines the culture of their community using personal ethnographies, neighborhood locations, and cultural events of significance to the overarching culture of the neighborhood.

Finally, I will have students reflect upon their experience using the "Metaphors for the Future" lesson from *Engaging Students Through Global Issues*. <sup>32</sup>

These objectives and their ensuing lessons have been designed to accommodate a confluence of goals, standards and benchmarks surrounding this course provided by the College Board, The Common Core Standards, the College Readiness Standards and the Ninth Grade Benchmarks required by Advancement Via Individual Determination. According to the College Board Course Description, Advanced Placement Human Geography is the study of the way that humans live in, interact with, and impact the world. This course will be of particular value for those who plan to pursue careers in the social sciences and geography. The course is organized by units with the goal that a clear understanding of the associations and implications of theories and models be obtained.

The College Board has defined five essential goals for the Advanced Placement Human Geography Course.

1. Use and think about maps and spatial data.
2. Understand and interpret the implications of associations among phenomena. (Use the spatial perspective in geography.)
3. Recognize and interpret at different scales the relationships among patterns and processes.
4. Define regions and evaluate the regionalization process. (How and why do these regions exist and change?)
5. Characterize and analyze changing interconnections among places. <sup>33</sup>

These goals will be met through extensive practical applications, in the form of detailed and comprehensive studies of theories, models and specific information. This course requires a great deal of self-discipline. Students must read, study, and work on projects on their own as well as in groups. Students will need to be organized and communicate with your team members.

Much of the organization required for success will be monitored by the Advancement Via Individual Determination program benchmarks which include twice-weekly tutorial sessions and weekly binder checks for note-taking and organization. The Major Writing benchmark will be met by a Description of a Place essay at the start of the unit and the culminating research paper. The Reading to Learn Benchmark will be fulfilled by vocabulary building activities and text annotation. The Writing to Learn benchmark will be met by Cornell Note-taking, Learning Logs, Summarizing and Annotating, To meet the Inquiry benchmark students will develop questions at levels 2 and 3 for Costa's Levels of Inquiry. Producing work for the Community Transformed website will count as service learning and fulfill the Problem Solving benchmark. The Collaborative Projects benchmark will be met by giving a presentation and participating in Literature Circle activities. Lastly the Fifth Day benchmark will be fulfilled by guest speakers. These benchmarks along with

original unit objectives will help students fulfill the Common Core Standards for Literacy in Reading and Writing in Social Studies/History. The targeted range of College Readiness Standards aligned to the American College Test is 20-23.

## Teaching Strategies

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Although there will be at least three weeks worth of activities for students to complete in this unit, there are three essential activities for students to become the street-level geographers and definers of the community culture I'm seeking. These are the walking tour of the community, the hunt for cultural objects and the Google Map pop-up marker submission assignments.

The first of these, ideally following the introduction of the ethnographic form and readings on street-level geography but still in the first week is the Neighborhood Walking Tour lesson. This will, by necessity be a rather long and involved activity. Students will need to be signed out of classes on a field trip. We will gather together first thing in the morning, review the night's homework, and then walk the neighborhood. Ideally, there will be cultural leaders from the community assisting in the chaperoning of the walk, a stop at a well-known historical landmark which I can help students see as new again along with a new understanding of the location's deep time importance to the neighborhood, a popular eatery for lunch, and several other major nodes of activity to deepen their street-level understanding. For my purposes, I will be joining forces with one of my school's partner organizations, the Southwest Organizing Project help plan the trip and attract local community and cultural leaders such as my friend, local school council member and former aldermanic candidate, Eric Hermosillo. I expect to complete a walk along Western Avenue's commercial zone to the Gage Park Park District Field house at Western and 55<sup>th</sup> Street. Here we will pause to examine the history and architecture of the building as well as the mural by Thomas Lea.<sup>34</sup> While here students will form groups and conduct ethnography interviews with as many community cultural leaders as I can find to meet us there. The ethnography form will be introduced earlier in the week and students will initially have to complete one for themselves and for one other person in the class, giving them enough familiarity with the process for when they meet local community cultural leaders. From there we will explore the 55<sup>th</sup> Street commercial area, much of which was "prairie" during the setting of *Remembering Gage Park*. Along the way we will stop at St. Gall's Catholic Church, Senka Park, and Nicky's Fast Food for lunch. I will likely have students provide their own lunch money; but prepare myself for the possibility of purchasing a couple of meals. If possible, I will try to orchestrate some fundraising prior to this trip and provide lunch. At Nicky's the classic order is a Big Baby (double cheeseburger with everything), fries and an RC Cola. It will also be smart to arrange a group discount in advance. There will be a follow-up tour during the intersession, considering that this tour will barely cover the east and north ends of the neighborhood. The second tour will actually begin south of the neighborhood in the Marquette Park Park District Field House. This is the traditional locale for the Community Transformed kiosk honoring Dr. Martin Luther King. Here we will meet with more cultural leaders and students will take turns completing more ethnographies and an exercise examining the content of the kiosk. Also, during the intersession, students will be required to complete three more personal ethnographies; but only one of those stories can come from within their own home. I need my students to stretch beyond their comfort zone a bit if we are to define the flavor our neighborhood culture. I want to focus here, although slightly outside the neighborhood boundaries, to connect students to the Community Transformed Project and so that they can see what our students have been able to accomplish. From Marquette Park, we will head north to examine the

Bungalow Belt, and possibly tour one of the Green Bungalow rehab projects completed during Mayor Richard M. Daley's term as mayor. We will then explore the 59<sup>th</sup> Street commercial zone and California Avenue. I would like my students to be able to juxtapose more established nodes of activity like the Carniceria and Taqueria La Hacienda with newer ones like a new coffee shop, The Twist, on the corner of 59<sup>th</sup> Street and St. Louis Avenue. Along the way, we will be taking photography of as many of the neighborhoods cultural icons as we can identify for use in the next major activity.

The second activity will take two class periods. The first period will be a standard Power Point presentation explaining deeper background on the community icons identified along our two neighborhood walks. This activity will be somewhat labor intensive for me, to ensure that my background information is accurate and that I include enough cultural icons for students to utilize later in the course. During the Power Point presentation, students will practice taking Cornell Notes on the various icons presented, which should include events as well as physical places and artifacts. The following day, we will move this community-walking concept from street-level to hallway-level and students will be sent out in teams with a camera to identify cultural icons throughout the school and explain their importance to us. My intent is to leave this phase of the activity relatively unscripted in order to allow my students to judge for themselves what is important to the culture of our school and why it is so.

The third activity I want to share here is having students submit pop-up marker suggestions to Google Maps. This activity will also require two class periods. The first class period will be spent conducting additional background research on the various cultural places, artifacts, activities and events described in the previous lesson. The goal is to provide as much detailed information as possible and distill it down to pop-up box for Google Maps. The second day, of this activity will focus on the technical aspect of encoding the pop up and submitting to Google Maps for approval. If approved, we will have successfully used technology to integrate our map of desire with the flat map of the familiar.

To close, I look forward to helping my students develop a deeper understanding of intangible culture and its impact on New Orleans' neighborhood communities as well as their own, while expanding their spatial thinking to include those ever-present intangible spaces that bring our tangible spaces to life. To reaffirm our motivations as we move forward, I turn again to quote master Studs Terkel, this time pulling from the opening of *Division Street: America*.

We may either smother the divine fire of youth or we may feed it. We may either stand stupidly staring as it sinks into a murky fire of crime and flares into the intermittent blaze of folly or we may tend it into a lambent flame with power to make clean and bright our dingy city streets.

-Jane Addams, 1909 <sup>35</sup>



## Endnotes

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2. Codrescu, Andrei. *New Orleans Mon Amour* Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2006
3. Steinberg, P.E. and Shields, R., editors. *What Is a City?: Rethinking the Urban after Hurricane Katrina* University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 2008.
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Williams, J., *Enough*, Crown Publishers, New York, 2006

## Student Reading List

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\*The following are excellent reference books to have in the classroom or from which to pull short excerpts.

Cutler, I., *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent 4<sup>th</sup> ed.*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 2006.

Grossman, James R. and Keating, Ann D. and Reiff, Janice L., editors. *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 2004

Steinberg, P.E. and Shields, R., editors. *What Is a City?: Rethinking the Urban after Hurricane Katrina* University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 2008.

Terkel, S., *Division Street: America*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1967

Terkel, S., *The Great Divide*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1988

Wacquant, L., *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008

\*The following website will be a useful model for students researching their neighborhood.

Gage Park Students, *A Community Transformed: The Legacy of Dr. King and the Marches of 1966*, 2010, Web. Accessed 30 June 2011.

\*The following textbook or a similar text approved by the College Board should be integrated into the unit if done in conjunction with Advanced Placement Human Geography.

Rubenstein, J.M., *The Cultural Landscape: An Introduction to Human Geography 10<sup>th</sup> ed.*, Prentice Hall, Boston, 2011

These are excellent texts for examining ethnocentric perspectives on specific cultures.

Sosa, L., *The Americano Dream*, The Penguin Group, New York, 1999

Williams, J., *Enough*, Crown Publishers, New York, 2006

## Materials for Classroom Use

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E-mail cheat sheet: (Insert Form) To simplify the development of Google Maps, all students should have a Gmail account. This will make it easier for students to sign onto Google Maps at the appointed time and share files via Google Docs.

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### Gmail Set-up Cheat Sheet

Step 1: Open the web browser and go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

**Step 2:** Click on "Gmail" located in the menu bar at the top of the page.

**Step 3:** Click on "Create an account" located on the right side of the page.

**Step 4:** Enter your first and last name on the form as directed.

**Step 5:** Enter your first name and student ID number as the "Desired Login Name." This account should ONLY be used for class.

**NOTE:** If you fail to follow this direction and forget your login, your teacher may not be able to help you.

**Step 6:** Enter and then re-enter your password. This account should ONLY be used for class. Your password should be the name of your school. **NOTE:** If you fail to follow this direction and forget your password, your teacher may not be able to help you.

**Step 7:** Choose a security question. You must choose a question that YOU can answer.

**Step 8:** Answer the security question.

**Step 9:** If you have another e-mail account, enter that as a recovery e-mail.

**Step 10:** Enter your birth date. Be certain to use all four digits of the year in which you were born.

**Step 11:** Scroll through the "Terms of Service."

**Step 12:** Click "I accept. Create my account."

**Step 13:** At this point you may need to log into your recovery e-mail account to activate your G-mail account.

**Step 14:** Go back to the Google home page and log into your Gmail account.

**Step 15:** Send your teacher and email at \_\_\_\_\_.

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Google Maps: This online tool will allow students to create their own maps of desire by identifying locations of cultural significance within their communities and adding pop-up information boxes explaining their significance. The class will be able to create its own map for public viewing as well as make pop-up submissions to Google Maps for inclusion on their global map.

Interview guide: Students will be expected to interview people about their community. A brief guide is provided here to assist students with this process and focus their interviews. It should be reinforced that this is only a guide and not a script for their conversations.

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Interview guide:

As you walk through the community and meet with members of the community, you will need to engage them in conversations about the neighborhood. Remember, that our goal is to define the culture of the neighborhood in both tangible and intangible ways. You should focus on what the neighborhood and the things in it mean to the people you interview. Remember, you will gain more interesting information if you establish rapport with your subject and have conversation than if you conduct an interrogation. The questions below are NOT as important as your conversation and should lead to more detailed stories about our community.

Subject's name: \_\_\_\_\_



Subject's place of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information for verification: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and location of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived in the neighborhood?

What encouraged you to live in this neighborhood?

What is your favorite place for entertainment in the neighborhood?

What is your fondest memory in this neighborhood?

What first comes to mind when you think of the neighborhood?

What are your favorite shops or restaurants in the neighborhood?

How would you describe your culture?

How do you identify yourself racially, ethnically, religiously?

Which places of worship do you attend in the neighborhood?

Where have you attended school in the neighborhood?

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## Appendix A: Implementing Standards

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*Common Core English Language Arts Standards: History/Social Studies/ Grades 9-10*

RH. 9-10.1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

Students will meet this standard with the completion of their final written assessment where they use the evidence from their research to define the cultural identity of their neighborhood.

RH.9-10.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Students will practice this skill through reading strategy activities such as passage mapping and SQ3R and the summarizing of notes.

RH.9-10.3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

Students will practice this skill through a series of literature circle activities involving the analysis of characters in a story as they

change over time and plot mapping.

RH. 9-10.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

Students will consistently practice words in context and maintain a personal geographic dictionary of vital course terms.

RH. 9-10.6. Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Students will conduct and compare the ethnographic interviews of several people from their community.

RH. 9-10.8. Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

Students will evaluate the claims addressed by Lionel Sosa and Juan Williams regarding race and ethnicity. This could lead to either a philosophical chairs or deliberation activity.

RH. 9-10.9. Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Students will meet this standard with the completion of their final written assessment where they use the evidence from their research to define the cultural identity of their neighborhood.

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