

FAVA BEANS AND BÁHN MÌ: ETHNIC REVIVAL AND THE NEW NEW ORLEANS GUMBO

This article explores two kinds of food-centric public spaces in 1970s New Orleans: the Piazza d'Italia, a flamboyant postmodern monument centered around a St. Joseph altar that the Italian-American community built downtown, and the small grocery stores, gardens, and weekend food market founded by Vietnamese refugees in the city's eastern suburbs. Despite profound cultural, linguistic, spatial, and temporal differences between Louisiana's Sicilian immigrants and Vietnamese refugees, a common thread emerged in their stories: *food* facilitated their entrance as discrete ethnic groups into New Orleans society and their mobility within it. Crucially important, however, were the American racial identities claimed by, or accorded to, these groups in the spaces that they created. The histories of the Piazza d'Italia and Vietnamese markets and gardens demonstrate the extent to which the causes and effects of America's ethnic revival were far from equitable. Rather, the production and consumption of ethnicity and race through food in postmodern New Orleans privileged the stories of some and suppressed those of others, especially the city's African Americans.

Keywords: New Orleans, Multiculturalism, Ethnic revival, Sicilians, Vietnamese.

For almost two hundred years, New Orleans's central food market, the French Market, offered a greater experience of linguistic, ethnic, racial, and social diversity than any other site in the city. New Orleans had always been a city that relied on, and profited from, mobility. Before the Crescent City was an American city, people, food, and goods flowed through New Orleans¹. Its position on the Mississippi River near the Gulf of Mexico made New Orleans a crucial node in domestic and international trades of enslaved people, cotton, sugar, tropical fruits, and oil². Migrants, enslaved people, and refugees from Europe, North America, Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia brought cultural beliefs, language, disease, capital, religion, and culinary practices with them to the city. Founded in 1791, the New Orleans French Market distilled these disparate mobilities into edible form; travelers marveled at the remarkable diversity of the food and people they encountered there³. A 1932 editorial in the city's leading newspaper, «The Times-Picayune», asserted that the French Market «ha[d] come to embody the life and

color and charm of the city itself... New Orleans without the old French Market would not be New Orleans at all»⁴.

But as food merchants left the French Market during the 1950s and 1960s – due to white flight out of the city center and shoppers' new preference for chain supermarkets – the institution lost its reputation as a destination distinctively of New Orleans. Despite a major renovation in 1973, the market suffered lagging sales and attracted only tourists. Locals disdained the late twentieth-century market's mass-produced souvenirs. «I won't bring any visitors to see [the market]», a resident confided to a reporter. «Oh, it's pretty, all right – it reminds me of a new shopping mall I saw recently in Florida»⁵. With the French Market fallen from grace, tourists, municipal politicians, local residents, and newspaper reporters looked to other sites throughout the city for proof that New Orleans continued its history as an exceptionally multiethnic place.

This article explores the public narratives surrounding two new kinds of food-centric spaces that rose in 1970s New Orleans, eclipsing the French Market as the city's representative ethnic food experience: the Piazza d'Italia, a flamboyant postmodern monument built by the Italian-American community to commemorate their history, and the small grocery stores, vegetable gardens, and weekend food market founded by Vietnamese refugees in the city's eastern suburbs. Sicilian immigrants and Vietnamese refugees arrived in New Orleans almost a century apart. Beginning in the 1880s, Sicilians fled famine and poverty and settled in the center of the French Quarter. In the 1970s, the Vietnamese escaped war and built new lives in the city's far eastern outskirts. Despite profound cultural, linguistic, spatial, and temporal differences, a common thread emerged in their stories: *food* facilitated their entrance as discrete ethnic groups into New Orleans society and their mobility within it. Crucially important, however, were the American racial identities claimed by, or accorded to, these groups in the food-centric public spaces that they created.

Sicilian and Vietnamese New Orleanians built the Piazza d'Italia, suburban markets, and gardens during the American ethnic revival: a current of interest in the nation's pluralism that swept popular culture and academia alike in the aftermath of movements for civil rights and Black Power⁶. Piazza planners and New Orleans newspaper reporters used recently invented terms – such as «multicultural» and «multiethnic» – to interpret these sites, but proclaimed such perspectives to be nothing new in the Crescent City. Long before most Americans pondered the balance between assimilation and cultural diversity, authors of local histories, travel guides, and cookbooks had defined New

Orleans's creole ethnicity as a unique blend of the many into one that appeared in no other American place⁷. New Orleans writers even used an indigenous culinary metaphor – their city was a «gumbo», rather than the archetypal «melting pot» – to communicate this concept and distinguish their city's history from that of other American places⁸. All groups contributed equally to New Orleans's culture while maintaining their distinctive characteristics, the gumbo metaphor implied. Similarly, the late twentieth-century American ethos of multiculturalism claimed to celebrate the many parts that composed a diverse whole.

Yet the histories of the Piazza d'Italia and Vietnamese markets and gardens demonstrate the extent to which the impetuses and effects of America's ethnic revival were far from equitable. Rather, the production and consumption of ethnicity and race through food in postmodern New Orleans privileged the stories of some and suppressed those of others. Investigating the people, places, and tastes associated with the ethnic revival in the Crescent City shows how New Orleanians used food to generate exclusive definitions of race and ethnicity in public spaces embedded in the city's consumer culture.

Some voices in this history resound more loudly than others. This is because New Orleanians who had progressively been able to become fully «white» during the long twentieth century – such as the city's Sicilian immigrants – controlled the public narrative of ethnic revival. The social and political capital and racial identity accumulated by second- and third-generation Italian Americans allowed them the financial resources, land, and media attention to build a monument in the city center to an invented Italian history. A similar attitude of cultural authority – of claiming to belong comfortably in New Orleans, a perspective that could not be divorced from a white racial identity – characterized newspaper reporters' coverage of the city's so-called exotic new community of Vietnamese refugees, not yet able to fully represent themselves to the larger public due to linguistic differences. Focusing on the public spaces built by Italian Americans and Vietnamese refugees in 1970s New Orleans reveals the key irony at the heart of America's new infatuation with its multiethnic past and present. Despite celebratory language that trumpeted the city's creolized diversity, the most influential voices continued to belong to those who claimed a white racial identity. An artificial line between black and white mattered just as much in New Orleans as in other American places, despite the city's longstanding, self-declared exceptionalism as a racially progressive locale.

For African-American New Orleanians, in contrast, the era of ethnic revival was not one of new public places, but of *placelessness*. Fig-

uratively and literally, white New Orleanians made space for the Piazza d'Italia and the Versailles gardens, groceries, and food market during the same years that African-American residents felt squeezed out of their homes and neighborhoods. Long suppressed within the city's increasingly profitable tourist economy, persistently refused a full sense of belonging in New Orleans's cultural world, and violently denied the social and political privileges enjoyed by whites until federal action ordained it, African Americans had always most fully experienced and comprehended the changing meanings of ethnicity and race in New Orleans. They claimed no new food-centric public spaces during this era. Instead, activists constructed a project humbler in scale and scope than a monument that nevertheless demonstrated the most nuanced understanding of the potential for a multicultural future in the Crescent City.

Inventing an Ethnic Disneyland at the Piazza d'Italia

In early 1973, New Orleans Mayor Moon Landrieu invited Italian-American community leader Joseph Maselli to collaborate on the construction of a memorial to the history of Italian Americans in New Orleans⁹. Landrieu had embarked on several simultaneous building projects – monuments honoring the city's residents of French, Spanish, English, and African-American descent – in an effort to revitalize the city center while also riding the wave of ethnic revival that was sweeping New Orleans and the country. Seeking to build something both unique and grand, Maselli declared that rather than «a statue of Columbus or Garibaldi», Louisiana Italians must have a «living monument»¹⁰. Financed by an ambitious grassroots fundraising campaign, the resultant Piazza d'Italia converted a downtown block surrounded by parking lots and a high-rise office building into an urban Italian piazza. When the Piazza's plaza opened in 1978, it quickly charmed architecture critics as a postmodern masterpiece. «Nothing quite like this has ever been seen in America before», a writer declared in the magazine «Progressive Architecture»¹¹. Yet despite the Piazza's thoughtful design, certain elements of the site betrayed the distance that separated Louisiana Italians from Italian culture, ultimately revealing the Piazza to be a project of ethnic invention rather than revival¹². Italian-American leaders used the Piazza d'Italia to solidify their community's self-described transition over the course of the twentieth century from humble Sicilians to prosperous Italian Americans. Less explicit in the Piazza's design, however, was the fact that the ethnic group's mounting financial suc-

cess and social prominence had occurred in tandem with, and largely thanks to, its progressive inclusion within the fold of white New Orleanians.

Cultural assimilation, prosperity, and a whitening racial identity placed New Orleans's Italians in a position of social authority by the era of the ethnic revival, but this had not always been the case. Mayor Landrieu's invitation to collaborate with Maselli offered an opportunity to make permanent a history that had been frequently discontinuous and disputed for a community then two or three generations removed from Sicily. Mid nineteenth-century steamship routes that ferried Mediterranean citrus fruits to New Orleans had encouraged emigration directly from Sicily to the Crescent City, bypassing New York¹³. After fleeing famine, Sicilian immigrants found work in all tiers of the Louisiana food industry: as laborers on upriver strawberry farms and sugarcane plantations, importers and venders of fruit in the city's public markets, peddlers of ice cream and candy on the streets, and proprietors of corner groceries, bars, and restaurants¹⁴. Poor Sicilians settled near people of color in New Orleans's French Quarter, earning it the nickname «Little Palermo» at the turn of the twentieth century, but with increasing wealth they moved to more spacious and suburban neighborhoods¹⁵. As the fortunes of Louisiana's Sicilians improved they thanked their patron, St. Joseph, with food. To celebrate his feast day on March 19, Sicilian families built St. Joseph altars in their homes. These elaborate constructions of fruits, vegetables, sweets, baked goods, and fish epitomized the community's history by expressing Sicilians' religious devotion in the medium of their labor in the food industry.

The speed and volume of turn-of-the-century Sicilian immigration to Louisiana transformed the state both economically and socially and challenged its solidifying racial order. Between 1880 and 1910, Sicilian immigrants grew from five percent to thirty-nine percent of Louisiana's total population¹⁶. The rapid influx of unskilled and overwhelmingly illiterate Sicilian laborers, whose skin tended to be darker than that of other substantial immigrant populations in New Orleans, like the Germans and Irish, spurred discrimination that placed the Sicilians in a nebulous zone between black and white¹⁷. Such distinctions held enormous importance during an era when public spaces and most social relationships divided along racial lines, as they did in every other southern American city. Sicilian immigrants were lynched in Louisiana, though to a far lesser degree than African Americans¹⁸. Ultimately, though, the community's rapid commercial success helped speed their assimilation into the ranks of white Louisianians descended from European immigrants¹⁹. Only in the 1960s and 1970s did Louisiana Italians seek

to substantially restore – or initiate – their identification with Sicilian and Italian cultural traditions. This timing placed them squarely within larger trends of ethnic revival.

As an unusual brick-and-mortar product of the ethnic revival, the Piazza d'Italia represented the unique history of Sicilian immigrants in Louisiana in concrete form. When Joseph Maselli first set out in 1973 to gather ideas for a memorial, he drew inspiration from an unexpected source that hinted at the community's eagerness to celebrate their long-building economic success. Maselli recalled, «I had just gotten back from visiting the Galleria in Houston, Texas, and at that point we got to thinking, "Why not a living monument to the Italian-American community?"»²⁰. Houston's Galleria, a development that combined a shopping mall with hotels and high-rise office buildings, struck Maselli as one model to emulate. As envisioned by New Orleans's Italian community, the Piazza was not just a commercial setting in which cultural objects could be bought and sold; it was a dynamic cultural and ethnic monument *because it was commercial*. The design of the Piazza d'Italia – crucially, with a St. Joseph altar at its center – showed how commerce was not just a means to an end for New Orleans's Italians; it was, and had been for generations, intrinsic to cultural celebration. In fact, the cultural nature of the Piazza d'Italia derived explicitly from its commercial functions, reflecting the extent to which the history of Sicilian entrepreneurship in Louisiana had pervaded notions of ethnic identity.

In form and function, the Piazza d'Italia exemplified the ways in which ethnicity could be bought and sold during America's ethnic revival²¹. Typically there exists a clear distinction between a souvenir shop and an archive or a street festival and a church. But Italian-American community leaders, officials from the mayor's office, and a team of architects purposefully blurred the physical and ideological boundaries between commercial and cultural spaces at the Piazza d'Italia. The site would teach visitors about Italian history by integrating an outdoor public space, a museum, and a shopping mall. Its plaza would host sacred as well as secular events, such as Catholic masses and opera concerts. A *campanile* and a series of chrome-tipped columns, illuminated by neon tubes at night, demarcated the new ethnic space. Dominating the Piazza's center, a three-dimensional fountain took the form of the Italian peninsula (Fig. 1). Streams of water representing the Tiber, Arno, and Po rivers flowed down mountain ranges cut out of slate, granite, and marble. On St. Joseph's feast day, the podium at the plaza's center converted to a St. Joseph altar. The flamboyant architectural design of the Piazza d'Italia embraced a range of possib-

ilities for the performance of late twentieth-century Italian-American ethnicity in Louisiana.



FIG. 1. New Orleans's Italian Americans built the Piazza d'Italia to commemorate their culture and history in Louisiana. When the Piazza opened in 1978, its classical columns, postmodern neon, and three-dimensional fountain representing the topography of Italy delighted architecture critics and bemused many locals and visitors. Photo by author, March 2015.

Piazza planners envisioned a jubilant mix of high and low Italian culture that sought to please all the senses even if it papered over regional distinctions. «Shopping *is* entertainment», the consulting firm

Foran & Greer confirmed to Piazza designers at the project's outset. They proposed to set the stage with a creatively assembled cast of characters, beginning with a security force dressed to resemble uniformed Italian «*carabinieri*» [*sic*]. As for tenants, the consultants envisioned a blend of the luxurious – Gucci, Ferragamo, and Bulgari – with the humble: wandering organ grinders and vendors selling ice cream, fruit, and peanuts, as had many impoverished Sicilian immigrants soon after their arrival in the Crescent City²². Altogether, consultants suggested approximately forty-five businesses for the space, one-third of which would focus on Italian food and drink. Visitors could purchase imported wines, cheeses, and meats; buy gourmet kitchen equipment to concoct Italian meals at home; or stop to sip an espresso at an outdoor café²³. The Piazza's upper levels and adjoining buildings would house the American Italian Activities Center, a library and museum telling the history of Sicilian immigration and assimilation to Louisiana life; banquet halls for weddings of Italian-American community members; and even an Alitalia travel agent ready to book flights to Italy. Such a dazzling blend of attractions emphasized the extent to which shoppers could enjoy Italian ethnicity as a set of experiences, tastes, and things, most of which were for sale.

The sheer theatricality of the Piazza referenced contemporary festival marketplaces elsewhere in the country, like Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco and Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston, as well as local ethnic and religious celebrations, such as the St. Joseph's Day feast²⁴. Nevertheless, the Piazza d'Italia blended the two kinds of spaces and activities in a new way. The Piazza was more ethnic than a shopping mall and more commercial than a typical monument. Consultants verified the truly unique strategy of commemorating an ethnic group in a predominantly mercantile atmosphere. Larry Smith & Company wrote, «The Piazza d'Italia project is unusual in its concept in that it has as its objective the development of a memorial facility which will be intricately related to... commercial facilities». Developers «anticipate a significant contribution of a cultural character from the commercial elements... The consultant is not aware of any truly comparable project in the country»²⁵.

Italian-American fundraisers found no tension, however, in the co-existence of the Piazza's commemorative and commercial functions. To potential donors, they described the site in terms of an ethnic pride that bloomed out of nostalgia for the past and delight in the tangible products of the present. «Imagine how exciting it would be if you could hear your great grandfather's voice relating a tall tale from the Old Country», read a 1970s fundraising brochure for the American Italian

Activities Center. Immigrants' recorded oral histories would reside in this on-site research institution. Equally exciting, though, would be the «robust Sicilian wines; cameos from Torre del Greco; straw handicrafts from Sardinia and Florence; or Italian fashions from Turin, Milan, or Rome» that shoppers could find ringing the central plaza. As such a list made clear, Piazza planners embraced a pan-Italian identity for its profitable potential and cultural cachet, despite the fact that Louisiana's Italian population was nearly entirely Sicilian²⁶. «Imagine... the People from New Orleans and all over the world shopping in the bright stores for unique Italian products», the brochure's author persisted²⁷. Ethnic pride would come not just from understanding the community's historical links to its ancestors, this fundraising material claimed, but in purchasing contemporary Italian products, too.

While the Piazza's design struck many visitors as surprising if not silly – one reporter described it as a «cross between a board game and a spaghetti Disneyland» – its uninhibited blend of cultural and commercial components felt familiar to many Louisianians of Italian descent because it was rooted in one of their most enduring traditions²⁸. The St. Joseph altar, the oldest public ritual associated with Sicilian immigrants, exemplified this very synthesis. Sicilian immigrants began to «give» altars soon after they arrived in large waves at the turn of the twentieth century, using them to honor their protector while also showcasing their diligence and material success to their non-Italian neighbors²⁹.

Believed to be the husband of the Virgin Mary and the foster father of Jesus on earth, St. Joseph was still essentially a modern saint, as Roman Catholic authorities did not designate an annual feast day in his honor until the early seventeenth century. A variety of devotional traditions to St. Joseph flourished in diverse regions of Italy, Spain, and Portugal. In the mid-twentieth century, Pope Pius XII declared St. Joseph to be the patron saint of workers³⁰. Sicilians who emigrated to Louisiana revered Joseph as the patron of Sicily and a powerful intercessor in desperate moments. Uniquely, they elaborated their devotion in terms of food. Families, clubs, and Catholic parishes in Louisiana differed on the precise origins of the altar tradition, but all claimed that medieval Sicilian peasants had prayed to St. Joseph during times of drought³¹. When he answered their prayers, they recounted, the impoverished devout had only one substance with which to thank him: food. They built altars in their homes in the weeks preceding St. Joseph's feast day and filled them with images of the saint and homemade foods. Originally humble and constructed in private homes, in the 1960s, St. Joseph altars grew into highly elaborate compositions that filled entire rooms, if not churches and businesses³². Proud families posted ads in

local newspapers to invite the public to view their altars. After a ceremony in which children dressed as members of the Holy Family had tasted all of the altar's food, visitors were free to admire the structures, eat, and depart with a lucky dried fava bean, honored for its hardness in Sicilian drought³³.

Fervent religious belief and superstition drew Sicilians-Americans to give and attend altars, but dollars and cents likewise flowed from and between the structures, displaying the mix of commerce and culture that would characterize the Piazza d'Italia. The altars' hosts invited donations or begged for the funds necessary to build them. Oral histories with women who gave altars frequently revealed a very business-like process of bargaining and negotiation with St. Joseph that typically ended in the saint procuring an altar in his honor. Women promised altars in return for healthy babies, the return of a son from the battlefield, and the recovery of a lost job. When Josie Calcagno's husband became ill, he swore to St. Joseph, «Help me get well and I'll make you an altar». When his health improved, Josie considered, «Maybe we'd wait until next year», she remembered. But St. Joseph was a lender who always demanded his due. «I had always heard that if St. Joseph was unhappy, he'd enter your dreams», Calcagno described. «Well, I had a dream of a half-empty altar. Everything was done in half». Calcagno began work on the altar shortly afterward³⁴. Sicilians understood the devotional tradition of the altar to be a contract, even if the other party signed with an invisible hand.

While petitioning for the saint's intercessional powers, communities celebrated their own labors too. The food and objects that filled St. Joseph altars crystallized countless hours of work. Giving an altar required the conjoined efforts of a family or church community and altars demanded significant investments of time and money. In some cases, the degree of sacrifice proved quite physical. Making *pignolate*, clusters of fried dough that represented pinecones, required women to repeatedly dip their hands in cool water as protection against the hot sugar. Still, «Some of the women... ha[d] burns on their hands for weeks afterward», one observer reported³⁵. When families then gave away all the food that they had created, their generosity communicated not just kindness, but also material success. Altars celebrated in a highly public, theatrical way the diligence with which the Louisiana Italian community worked.

Sacrifice and success bore fruit in the altars' amazing quantities of food, in both lean years and times of plenty. An employee of the New Deal Federal Writer's Project described the offerings of a mid-century altar:

There were alligator pears, prickly pears, nuts, Japanese persimmons, fried cauliflower, fig cakes, snap beans, stuffed crabs, doughnuts, peanuts, crayfish, pineapples, grapefruit, mulberries, onions, celery, nectarines, oranges, almonds, tomatoes, grapes, plums, artichokes, dates and frosted layer cakes by the dozen³⁶.

Such a cornucopia echoed the rainbow of produce sold by many Italians in the city's markets. Altars collapsed the work of present and past generations in this annual feast. Food was the substance of Sicilians' labor in Louisiana as well as the medium of their success and celebration³⁷. Work and worship united on the altars, as they did at the Piazza d'Italia.

An additional clue to the sacred nature of labor in the Sicilian-American community could be perceived in the careful arrangement of items on the three-tiered altars (Fig. 2). Sesame cookies sat next to holy cards. Lamb cakes, frosted with flaked coconut and symbolizing the Lamb of God, appeared next to fig pastries resembling the eyeballs of St. Lucy, believed to have been blinded before her martyrdom. When women positioned the dishes they had made next to statues of Saint Joseph, they leveled the sacred and the quotidian. In their home kitchens, working with their hands and improvised tools, like pocket knives, bakers sculpted breads to resemble the most precious objects associated with the Catholic Mass: the monstrance and chalice, believed to hold the body and blood of Christ. In making, displaying, and consuming the foods on St. Joseph altars, Sicilian families declared that all the work of their hands was worthy of respect.

As practiced in Louisiana, St. Joseph's feast grew to exemplify an Italian-American brand of culture that had logics of labor, commerce, and consumption at its heart. In a January 1975 planning document, the Piazza d'Italia's architects wrote,

The Piazza needs a center – a point to which the whole development can relate... We searched for a single symbol that is central to the Italian-American experience in New Orleans and what we found is the celebration of St. Joseph's Day³⁸.

The persistently intertwined nature of commerce and culture in Louisiana's Sicilian community echoed the role that consumerism played as the ethnic revival unfurled in cities and neighborhoods across America. Nevertheless, the two forces shared the stage in a uniquely equal way at New Orleans's Piazza d'Italia.



FIG. 2. On the St. Joseph altar of New Orleans's St. Louis Cathedral, fish, fruits, vegetables, wine, sculpted breads, fig cakes, dried fava beans, candies, and cakes shared space with candles and a statue of St. Joseph and Jesus. The proximity of such diverse elements communicated that all items – as well as the hands that had made them – were sacred. Photo by author, March 2015.

Still, to certain eyes the Piazza betrayed an intrinsic cultural distance, if not artificiality, at its core. After an Italian journalist visited New Orleans in the early 1970s and interviewed Italian-American Federation president Joseph Maselli, the journalist reported himself completely baffled by the Piazza project. Competition for commemoration

among American ethnic groups that had typically «abandoned without regret the language of their forefathers», as he put it, struck him as perverse. «It is a bizarre phenomenon of today's America», the journalist wrote to his Italian readers. «Even as the races melt ever more finely and fully», the need to assert the accomplishments and histories of individual groups grew stronger. French and Spanish colonial presence was still readily visible in New Orleans, he explained. In addition, «The black population, which even a decade ago could not ride on buses reserved for whites, celebrate the splendors of jazz music in nightclubs» throughout the city. Frantic to not be left behind, the reporter perceived, the Italians of New Orleans proposed the Piazza as a way to prove their legacy³⁹. And yet to this Italian, New Orleans's Piazza d'Italia seemed far from Italian.

Such overt ethnic pride – especially for an *Italian* identity among a population that was virtually entirely of Sicilian descent – was a relatively recent phenomenon in New Orleans, further characterizing the Piazza as essentially a project of ethnic and racial invention under the guise of revival. Although a handful of social clubs and benevolent organizations, such as the Contessa Entellina Society, had existed in New Orleans since the late nineteenth century, most disbanded during the world wars. Similar to German immigrants in other regions of the country, Louisiana Sicilians had sought to drop affiliations with a declared enemy of the United States, even shying away from sponsoring Italian refugee families in New Orleans after World War II⁴⁰. New Italian clubs, such as the Greater New Orleans Italian Cultural Society and the Italian-American Marching Club, did not form until the mid 1960s or even 1970s. St. Joseph altars transitioned from private, family devotionals to expansive public events during these decades as well⁴¹. Thus, as the Piazza d'Italia rose in the mid 1970s, it offered a wholly new experience to residents who called themselves Italian.

Indeed, promotional materials surrounding the Piazza d'Italia's development confirmed the distance separating the city's Italian-American community from Italian culture. This gap revealed itself partly in a lack of familiarity with Italian language. Advertising brochures regularly misspelled common Italian words, such as *cappuccino*⁴². One pamphlet announced that the Piazza d'Italia offered a place to «savor what the French call “joie de vivre”, the Italians “gola della vita”», inadvertently switching *gola*, meaning «gluttony», for *gioia*, «joy». An advertising pamphlet offered a more elaborate, bilingual paean to the Piazza's amenities:

There's a piazza

Where you can drink capuccino [*sic*] or chianti / *dove puoi gustare un caffè o un*

Where you can dine on muffalettas, / *bicchiere di chianti* [*sic*],

Bring a sack lunch / *pranzare con fettuccine e*

Or enjoy chicken cacciatore, / *piccata al limone,*

Where you can buy Italian fashions / *dove ti aspetta l'ultimo grido della moda italiana,*

And leather goods or / *dove compri borse, scarpe e gioielli come*

A variety of Italian products, / *fossi a Via Veneto,*

Where you can dance / *dove danzi, canti e ami*

Or dangle your feet in a fountain, / *al suono dell'acqua zampillante*

Or get married, / *della fontana*

Where you can have a business [meeting] / *dove vai per affari*

Or just stroll in Mediterranean surroundings. / *o solo per passeggiare / su un'isola mediterranea*

And it's in New Orleans⁴³.

English- and Italian-language versions compelled the reader to understand the Piazza as equally legible by an American or Italian visitor, but the two pieces were not direct translations. In fact, distinctions between the two versions pointed to a New Orleanian brand of Italian culture that was fundamentally different from its European source. For example, the English text invited readers to come to the Piazza to «dine on muffalettas», a sandwich invented in the French Quarter, or «bring a sack lunch», a concept likely unfamiliar in Italy's traditional dining culture. In contrast, the Italian version invited the reader to «dine on fettuccine with / lemon piccata». The author drew on distinct foods, places, and consumer products that would be familiar to American and Italian shoppers, but many of these experiences were not shared.

To New Orleans's Italian-American community, the expansion of the St. Joseph altar tradition and construction of the Piazza d'Italia offered highly visible and profitable ways to answer any doubts about cultural authenticity among Louisianians of Sicilian descent. Piazza planners believed that the consumption of Italian food, music, and imported goods would bear fruit in strengthened community ties, pointing to the essentially self-centered gaze of the revival among New Orleans's Italian Americans. Despite such hopes, the Piazza's heyday was short-lived. Its restaurants and shops were never built. The Italian-American community had insisted on an ambitious project that nevertheless relied heavily on city authorities, whose promise to develop the adjacent site and maintain the Piazza went unfulfilled due to major fiscal problems. By 1988, a decade after critics had hailed the Piazza's fountain as a

postmodern masterpiece, a local journalist eulogized the site, writing, «Today the ramshackle piazza has the dubious distinction of having become the world's first post-modern ruin»⁴⁴.

Food-centric public spaces like the St. Joseph altars and Piazza d'Italia presented a persona that was both proudly ethnic and successfully assimilated, rooted in the state's past and a savvy participant in the commercialized cultural environment of the present. Implicit, but hardly invisible, in the Italian-American community's building campaign were the varied social privileges amassed during decades of economic and cultural assimilation. Initially excluded from the ranks of New Orleans's social and racial elite, by the era of ethnic revival Louisiana's Italians claimed pride in a history that their forefathers had sought to shed. Now unambiguously «white», New Orleans's late twentieth-century Italian Americans had arrived in a position where they could play with and profit from their ethnic ties, rather than hide them⁴⁵.

Groceries, Gardens, and Vietnamese Po-boys: Discovering New Orleans's Exotic Suburbs

During the same years that the Piazza rose on Poydras Street, newspaper reporters introduced readers to a group of newcomers to the city who offered a culinary and cultural exoticism more reminiscent of nineteenth-century New Orleans than the present⁴⁶. On May 27, 1975, history repeated itself. «The Tower of Babel couldn't have been much more confusing than the local Trailways Bus Station about 2:30 p.m. Monday», a «Times-Picayune» reporter described on the paper's front page. The reason: «19 Vietnamese refugees arrived from Eglin Air Force Base in Northwest Florida»⁴⁷. More than one hundred years earlier, local writers and tourists had regularly described the city's French Market as a Tower of Babel, a diverse mix of people and languages that made New Orleans feel excitingly un-American. «It is a more incessant, loud, rapid, & various gabble of tongues of all tones than was ever heard at Babel», wrote the architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe when he first encountered the French Market in 1819⁴⁸. By 1975, locals spurned the French Market as hackneyed. Fresh energy arrived from this infusion of new residents. «Pandemonium reigned», the reporter recalled, «because apparently only one of the 19 spoke any English and no one present spoke Vietnamese». This small group of refugees represented only the first few of thousands who would change New Orleans's culinary, social, and racial dynamics⁴⁹.

Strikingly similar to the city's nineteenth-century Sicilian immigrants, New Orleans's late twentieth-century Vietnamese refugees entered New Orleans's cultural world through food. They added a new ingredient to New Orleans's multiethnic «gumbo» and formed the city's first significant Asian community. Selected cultural qualities of the refugee group – such as their familiarity with French culture, Roman Catholicism, and distinctive cuisine – smoothed their acceptance into New Orleans society.

Yet distinct from the city's contemporary Italian Americans, who controlled the public narrative of their ethnic revival project, early histories of the Vietnamese refugees were mediated completely by newspaper reporters⁵⁰. Writers promoted the community's groceries, restaurants, vegetable gardens, and weekend food market in the far eastern suburbs as exciting and novel cultural destinations for adventurous New Orleanians. In introducing a broad readership to a group initially segregated from the city's mainstream by linguistic differences, the media fueled perceptions of the Vietnamese as exotic and authentically ethnic. Press coverage of the refugees' adaptation to Louisiana life emphasized success stories that seemed to confirm that New Orleans's creolizing society still worked. Importantly, despite the refugees' initially impoverished state, reporters did not interpret the Vietnamese within the same social framework as poor African Americans. Rather, in the eyes of observers, the Vietnamese and their food appeared intriguing, rather than threatening or burdensome. The refugees' arrival seemed to offer a convenient opportunity for many to proclaim American multiculturalism in action in New Orleans's backyard, even during an era of intense hardship for the city's black residents.

Vietnamese refugees settled in Louisiana for geographic, cultural, and religious reasons⁵¹. As refugees fled South Vietnam and Cambodia in the frantic first wave of exits from the region in spring 1975, United States forces funneled them into four hastily established camps. Two of these, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas and Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, stood in relatively close proximity to New Orleans. Refugees later explained that they felt attracted to New Orleans when they learned about its climate and French cultural history. In addition, many refugees had worked in the fishing, shrimping, and oyster industries in Vietnam and anticipated similar opportunities on the Gulf Coast. Dzuyet Hoang remembered an American official asking if he would like to relocate to Washington, D.C. But then, he explained to «The Times-Picayune», «They say New Orleans is a city on the coast, the climate is warm and have many seafood. And we say, “Oh yeah, oh yeah”. We choose New Orleans»⁵². Though half a world apart, environmental parallels between

tropical Vietnam and sub-tropical Louisiana eased the refugees' transition in terms of employment and cuisine.

Sponsorship by Associated Catholic Charities also provided a major incentive to arriving refugees to settle in Louisiana. Many were Roman Catholic and had fled from North to South Vietnam when Communists came to power in 1954. The Louisiana Catholic Church assisted these twice-over refugees with their transition to New Orleans, especially in finding them housing. Working closely with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, Associated Catholic Charities helped settle hundreds of Vietnamese refugees together in a handful of apartment complexes in the city's eastern suburbs, especially the Versailles Arms and Versailles Gardens apartments. This intervention became controversial as many African-American residents accused apartment managers of discrimination⁵³. By May 1978, three years after the fall of Saigon, more than 7,000 Vietnamese refugees had come to Louisiana, approximately 70% of them to the New Orleans metro area⁵⁴. By 1980, Louisiana ranked third among all states in the number of Vietnamese refugees resettled in America⁵⁵. New Orleans's gumbo pot had quickly expanded.

Newspaper coverage of the refugees' adaptation to New Orleans life exoticized the newcomers as profoundly foreign. Nevertheless, food writers found the community's cultural and physical isolation alluring. Accordingly, press reporting tended to depict the dense suburban clusters of Vietnamese as cloistered outposts that adventurous New Orleanians could penetrate if they were willing to leave the familiarity of the French Quarter. Such a narrative adhered to the city's long-standing reputation of culinary exoticism, which had drawn travelers since the nineteenth century. Even in the late twentieth century, and despite a language barrier, food allowed for an initial channel of contact between native-born New Orleanians and the Vietnamese. A 1980 «Times-Picayune» guide to the city's ethnic grocery stores facilitated such exploration.

As presented by New Orleans's leading newspaper, the city's late twentieth-century ethnic grocers offered readers a sense of cultural adventure while also bolstering normative conceptions of the immigrant's proper path. The reporter proclaimed, «[T]here is an ambience at an ethnic grocery store that you just won't find at a slick suburban supermarket. Maybe it's the pungent, not altogether pleasant aroma they all share. Or the visual splash of bright, mysterious... labels». Just as gratifying, it seemed, «Their proprietors... reinforce all the positive stereotypes we have of immigrants – hardworking, energetic, ambitious»⁵⁶. Like many groups before them, especially impoverished Sicilians, the

majority of Vietnamese found their first jobs in the city's food industry. Rather than subsisting as fruit peddlers in the streets or laborers on the docks, they worked as bakers and clerks at Schwegmann's Supermarket, the region's largest employer of Vietnamese refugees, as well as waiters, cooks, restaurant proprietors, and shrimpers⁵⁷. By 1985, a decade after refugees began to arrive, the Fairmont Hotel's pantry staff, who prepared cold food for diners, were fully Vietnamese⁵⁸. Although foreign in some ways in the eyes of many white shoppers, Vietnamese food workers took the first step on a familiar, approved path that had been trod by newcomers before them.

Vietnamese businesses headlined the «Times-Picayune's» guide to ethnic groceries as the city's most novel food shopping experience. Even though the reporter presented Vietnamese and Italian groceries as similarly «ethnic», descriptions of the shops and their owners outlined clear distinctions between these very different waves of immigrants and refugees and their respective roles in the city's social world. In general, the survey presented Vietnamese food stores as mysterious, exotic, and feminized and Italian businesses as familiar, historical, and masculine. Asian stores offered completely new tastes, whereas Italian grocers sold nostalgia. At Oriental Food Store in the suburb of Harvey, the writer described, «strange and enticing foods» filled the shelves. «There are canned vegetables and fruits that you never dreamed existed, all with poetic names such as lily flowers and grass jelly». The reporter's enthusiasm for the food's charms at times transferred to descriptions of the stores' proprietors, depicting both as unfamiliar objects to appraise. A «stunning young Vietnamese woman» operated Vietnam Center in Marrero, according to the writer, whereas the owner of Philippine Imports on Cleary Avenue spoke with a «giggle and a shriek reminiscent of Bloody Mary in "South Pacific"»⁵⁹.

In contrast, the reporter described Central Grocery, the French Quarter's Italian landmark and inventor of the muffuletta sandwich, as «the granddaddy of all New Orleans' ethnic grocery stores» – the patriarch and progenitor, founded in 1906. There, the «unmistakably Mediterranean faces of the Tusa men», alongside dried spices, Perugia chocolates, and espresso beans, helped transport shoppers to Italy. Fellow old-timers included «good old» Puglia's Quality Foods, founded in 1948, and Progress Grocery Company, founded in 1924, whose owner John Perrone «misse[d] the old days when the Quarter was different», the writer reported⁶⁰. Grocers' generations could largely be determined by geography; the old guard stood in the French Quarter, while newer grocers set up on the periphery. Temporally, Italian and Vietnamese grocers bookended the city's social and culinary histories,

with other groups – Jews, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Indians – arranged between⁶¹.

While the «Times-Picayune» guide presented these businesses as places of culinary interest to its readers, the groceries met important cultural and social needs for ethnic communities as well, akin to the role that Italian-American leaders hoped the Piazza d'Italia would play. «Since there are very few ethnic neighborhoods in this city», the newspaper reporter explained, «the groceries tend to act as magnets, attracting people who come from all over»⁶². This was especially true for newer waves of immigrants, who found themselves in suburban housing developments that likely looked and functioned quite differently from their previous communities. Rows of mom-and-pop stores – from restaurants to a tailor to a public notary – filled all-Vietnamese suburban strip malls in Versailles, supporting many of the needs of the nearby growing enclave. Refugees living in Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida drove hundreds of miles to shop at this center⁶³. In another New Orleans suburb, Vietnamese women brought homegrown produce and baked goods on weekends to Oriental Food Store in Tien Nhatrang Center to augment the shop's offerings. «[T]he store turns into a kind of marketplace» on weekends, the «Times-Picayune» reporter described⁶⁴. Commercial and cultural activity happened both inside and outside the business's walls.

Not all adaptive uses of space charmed refugees' neighbors, however. Vietnamese residents in Versailles commonly dried fish and shrimp on their apartment balconies in the hot Louisiana sun, irritating native-born New Orleanians. «Their American neighbors would come home and get a whiff... There were a lot of problems culturally», recalled apartment manager Melanie Ottaway⁶⁵. Refugees also made spontaneous use of the green space that surrounded their apartment complexes in a way that would have been impossible if they had settled closer to the city center. In the swampy soil, similar to that which they had left in Vietnam, they planted taro, bitter cucumber, lemongrass, water spinach, and ginger⁶⁶. Versailles apartment management and developers protested that the plants interfered with drainage in the area. Also citing aesthetic concerns, they forced the gardens to be dug up and relocated twice⁶⁷. With a permanent home by 1981, however, the gardens flourished. Having settled in a new city without a familiar town center, public square, or designated farmland, many refugees created their own commercial and cultural spaces in the New Orleans suburbs⁶⁸.

Press coverage like the «Times-Picayune»'s guide to the city's ethnic grocery stores helped generate interest in the next logical steps in processes of culinary and cultural acquaintance – cooking and eating –

which cast Vietnamese refugees as increasingly accessible. In September 1982, Sandra Day, the newspaper's food editor, wrote an ambitious guide to Vietnamese cuisine in the Crescent City. Some of the devices she used to entice readers echoed those that writers had long employed to mark the city's Creole cooking as exclusive and exceptional. In doing so, she welcomed Vietnamese food into the fold of New Orleans cuisine. «Vietnamese cookery is considered to be the *nouvelle cuisine* of Oriental cooking», Day declared. Chinese was out and Vietnamese was in.

Procuring the recipe for purportedly authentic egg rolls could be as challenging as securing a prized family formula for a creole gumbo, however. «In Vietnam, recipes by tradition are carefully guarded secrets, and mothers are unwilling to give out secrets even to their daughters», Day disclosed. «Although younger generations are more willing to give out their recipes... secret ingredients are still frequently “forgotten” so that a recipe can't be exactly duplicated»⁶⁹. Day's emphasis on the covert nature of culinary treasures, carefully passed down – or not – within a family line would have been familiar to many readers of longstanding local volumes like *The Picayune's Creole Cook Book*, which helped generate a culinary canon affirmed by many New Orleanians. Her portrayal of Vietnamese dishes as a novel form of cultural knowledge to acquire and protect taught New Orleanians that this foreign cuisine could be understood in similar terms to their own. Authentic ingredients were crucial to constructing Vietnamese recipes, however, and Day recommended a new food source that whet the appetites of adventure-seeking New Orleanians like no other: the Versailles farmers' market.

Soon after Vietnamese refugees settled in the city, the Versailles weekend food market became New Orleans's new exotic food destination, definitively replacing the French Market as the city's most unique ethnic institution. From humble beginnings on front lawns and sidewalks, the marketplace grew to an assembly of dozens of Vietnamese women, most selling surplus vegetables from their gardens and freshly prepared foods in the apartment complex parking lot. Shoppers found an abundance of herbs, vegetables, fish, live birds, and holiday foods like rice cakes wrapped in banana leaves. Vendors' wares offered special benefit to elderly refugees, who could not drive to a faraway supermarket or read the English-language product labels on shelves⁷⁰. In contrast, for local reporters and food writers, trekking to the early morning Saturday market, with its unfamiliar smells, sights, and sounds, offered a trip of adventure rather than subsistence and replicated similar pilgrimages to the French Market a century earlier.

The relatively spontaneous, far-flung, and humble nature of the Vietnamese market contrasted sharply with the elaborately planned centrality and grandeur of the Piazza d'Italia. Nevertheless, these qualities lent the Vietnamese spaces a raw authenticity, at least in the eyes of non-Vietnamese, that some city residents seemed to desire. «It is a scene unlike anything American», a «Times-Picayune» reporter affirmed of the Versailles food market. «It was 6 a.m. Saturday. The early-morning light was broken by the chatter of old women selling their vegetables... As the sun rose higher, the small market area bustled with activity»⁷¹. Another reporter recounted her early morning foray primarily in terms of senses of smell and sound.

Women are setting out small bundles on tables and mats spread on the ground. There is a slight odor of fish in the air. In the semi-darkness, caged geese scabble across the wooden floor of their pen⁷².

Both descriptions echoed the accounts of travelers of almost a century earlier, who had sought to experience the French Market's people, languages, and foods in the pre-dawn cool. The 1896 edition of the *Picayune's Guide to New Orleans* had advised, «The markets in New Orleans are well worth a visit... To see them in their perfection, [the tourist] will have to arise early enough to get to the market by sunrise»⁷³. The same sun rose over both markets, women played a comparably prominent role as food preparers and vendors, and the linguistic mix of both groups led to comparisons to the Tower of Babel. Visitors reveled in the perceived exoticism inherent in both environments. Despite the obvious geographic, historical, and cultural differences between the French Market and Versailles market, the latter offered a sense of New Orleans's culinary and ethnic history come full circle.

The market's intriguing activity, the speed with which many refugees found work in the city, and the generalized success of Vietnamese students in New Orleans schools prompted press coverage that touted the group as an assimilation success story. Newspaper reporting on the tenth anniversary of refugees' first arrival cast the group as hardworking and humble, able to quickly adapt to American life. Such narratives, which conformed to America's developing stereotype of the «model minority», seemed to confirm to readers that New Orleans's multiethnic gumbo continued to offer commercial and cultural success to eager workers⁷⁴. Still, while the majority of Vietnamese in New Orleans found jobs within a few months of their arrival, as did refugees in other states, such statistics hid the fact that they worked mostly in positions that were low paying

and unstable. A short timeframe of government support and the desire to become financially and socially independent led most refugees to take any position that was immediately available, however menial⁷⁵. Nevertheless, in the same years that Italian Americans built the Piazza d'Italia in downtown New Orleans, newspapers' chronicles of the upward mobility of many Vietnamese refugees sought to demonstrate that they too had embarked on a path of progressive commercial and cultural success, just like the Sicilians had a century before them.

Seemingly quick progress for Vietnamese refugees was possible partly because many white New Orleanians had affirmed their rightful place in the city soon after their arrival, creating a story of assimilation that had begun with food. When the New Orleans Museum of Art celebrated Young People's Day in 1979, a «Times-Picayune» reporter described the scene as a seamless mix of many cultures. «Youngsters were dazzled by the brightly colored costumes and graceful rhythm of the Versailles Vietnamese Community Dancers», she wrote. As attendees watched the different groups perform, «A warm feeling of community engulfed the audience... For four glorious hours more than 3,000 people filled every corner» of the museum, including «Vietnamese school girls, black youths, young couples clad in jeans... nuns, Girl Scouts, old men, Eurasian and Middle Eastern groups»⁷⁶. Though the newest additions, the Vietnamese belonged unambiguously in this diverse mix, such a list proclaimed.

Not all was smooth going, of course, especially between Vietnamese and African Americans who found themselves to be neighbors in challenging economic circumstances. Fights at Versailles bus stops in the early 1980s prompted increased police presence in the neighborhood⁷⁷. The refugees benefitted from easier access to affordable housing and government assistance, at least initially, which caused resentment among some African-American New Orleanians struggling to make ends meet in a still deeply segregated city⁷⁸. Yet the arrival of Vietnamese refugees coincided fortuitously with a new awareness among the broader public regarding the meanings of ethnicity, race, and assimilation in America. Non-Vietnamese visitors at grocery stores and the Saturday market, which the community had built out of necessity, put these spaces to work for their own interests by using them to claim that the city continued its heritage as a multiethnic gumbo. University of New Orleans anthropologist Martha Ward confirmed this food-centric process of cultural acceptance for Vietnamese refugees. Ward predicted that twenty years in the future, «New Orleans will

be proud of its Asian population and we'll all go to the Tết Festival... All will be forgiven if they throw beads and cook good food»⁷⁹. Play the game by throwing Mardi Gras beads and bringing delicious food to the table, Ward instructed. These steps could make a New Orleanian out of anyone. Nevertheless, for some city residents this formula did not always work. For African-American New Orleanians, the era of ethnic revival was not one of new public places but of placelessness.

Conclusion. New Orleans Gumbo: A Metaphor for Some But Not All

Absent from most newspaper reporting on the Vietnamese refugees' arrival was an analysis of their impact on African-American New Orleanians, who strove to find jobs, affordable housing, and quality education during these years. Literally and figuratively, New Orleanians made space for the newcomers even as longstanding city residents struggled. Vietnamese refugees displaced African-American renters in Versailles. Apartment managers dramatically increased the rents charged to poor white and African-American tenants, ignored maintenance requests for problems such as broken air conditioners, and levied new fees for basic services like parking. They used such tools to make space for resettled refugees able to pay higher rates due to federal housing assistance⁸⁰. At the same time, residents of predominantly African-American neighborhoods like Tremé/Seventh Ward, a sector close to the French Quarter that had long been a bastion for free New Orleanians of color, angrily declared that urban renewal and poverty had robbed them of one of the only quarters of the city that had belonged to them⁸¹. Municipal authorities had bisected their neighborhood with a new highway in the 1960s, razing blocks of historic buildings and felling large stands of oak trees in the process. Consequently, during the same years that Italian Americans and Vietnamese refugees built celebrated new food-centric public spaces, African-American New Orleanians rushed to preserve the history of a place that no longer existed, at least in the form it had for almost a century.

Challenged by limited physical space, negligible funding, and press reporting that focused on African-American poverty, crime, and educational failures, Tremé/Seventh Ward residents participated in the ethnic revival by constructing an intangible product, though one still intended to be a «living monument» just like the Piazza d'Italia. A group of activists and high school and college students based at the St. Mark's Community Center in Tremé proposed to use the *classroom*

as a space where they would teach cultural pride and preserve their community's unique story. To that end, they wrote a curriculum to teach New Orleans eighth-grade schoolchildren about their ethnic and racial identities and history in the city. Using the tools of ethnic revival, they instructed students how to conduct oral histories with neighborhood residents and wrote new definitions for terms such as «assimilation», «majority», and «creole» that privileged the perspectives of black New Orleanians⁸². Beginning their curriculum with detailed essays on ten ethnic groups that had come to New Orleans during different eras, they cast all as equal contributors to the city's construction. Ultimately, the project demonstrated the most nuanced understanding of the potential for a multicultural future in the Crescent City in that it sought to celebrate the many parts of a diverse whole. In the face of relentless structural challenges, African-American New Orleanians continued to claim space within cultural narratives of the city's past, present, and future, even if they were often denied access to actual space within the city.

In 1979, UNO historian Joseph Logsdon, a longtime scholar of race and assimilation in New Orleans, wrote a reflective essay on the nature of ethnicity in the city. «The disappointments of the American melting pot have, I guess, made me become a New Orleanian», he wrote. Logsdon, a Chicago native, concluded that New Orleans's history was exceptional. «Here the process of assimilation created something of inestimable value – a new public culture related to place and tradition. Nowhere else in America has a new culture of this sort developed». Logsdon perceived the creolizing process as a loosening of the bonds of history, which, perhaps unexpectedly for a historian, he declared to be liberating. He explained:

In New Orleans, we have developed a new ethnicity... We have no need to regret the loss of our ancestors' habits and customs... We can reflect upon our own past and its joys, decide upon our needs, and determine our own wants. Most Americans do not have that choice⁸³.

Though deeply sensitive to New Orleans's complicated history, Logsdon's emphasis on the pleasurable *choice* to submit to the creolizing process and become New Orleanian underscored a privileged perspective⁸⁴. «We Can All Become New Orleanians», Logsdon subtitled his essay. Yet many New Orleanians of color had long claimed to be Creole and were violently spurned⁸⁵. New immigrants most fully accessed social, economic, and cultural security only after being absorbed into the ranks of white New Orleanians. When the descendants of Sicilians identified as Italian in the late twentieth century, their choice

provided a simplified geographic referent that tied them to other Italian communities throughout America. At the same time, though, it served to whiten a group that had originally suffered discrimination for their so-called «swarthy» skin⁸⁶. Vietnamese refugees benefitted, too, from the admiring gaze of those intrigued by a perceived blend of Asian exoticism and proximity to French culture. As the histories of these groups demonstrated, the value that city residents attached to celebrated ethnic identifiers like «Creole» was no less crucial, or disputed, in the late twentieth century than it had been one hundred years earlier. Such battles stood in for much larger, nebulous struggles for full political, social, economic, and cultural inclusion, which New Orleanians of color had had to wage since the city's founding. Even America's ethnic revival and the sensory pleasures of an Italian muffuletta or Vietnamese bánh mì could not correct the prejudice inherent in New Orleans's lengthy, conflicted history as a city that originated in slavery and segregation but simultaneously proclaimed itself to be exceptionally multiethnic and racially progressive.

In the same year that Logsdon wrote his essay, the St. Mark's project published an oral history conducted with Hazel Bean, a resident of Tremé/Seventh Ward and community advocate. Rather than a gumbo pot, she suggested a different culinary metaphor to explain her experience as a lifelong New Orleanian:

I was feeding the baby the other day and... a fly flew in and it fell right in the child's bowl of milk with the cornflakes. And I sat there and I watched that fly. It was black. That fly was black. And he's in that bowl of white milk and cornflakes, and he's just swimming round and round and round and I took a straw out the broom and I pushed him down... When I pushed him down, he jumped back up and when he jumped back up, something snapped in my mind, and said, That's you. You see, everywhere he tried to get up, he was surrounded in that white milk and sooner or later it drowned him. And that's just the way... these white people got set up for us... just swimming and swimming and swimming and looking for, you know, me to give up! But I'm going to still strive, strive – struggle to stay here and going to try to out-beat him and outwit him or something, try to do something to him, but he just ain't gon' kill me off⁸⁷.

Joseph Logsdon and Hazel Bean offered vastly different perspectives on their lives as New Orleanians. To those without the privileges of choice, space, and a widely respected cultural history, creole New Orleans could be suffocating, not liberating. As the twenty-first century approached, the postmodern Crescent City was still a gumbo pot, many

claimed, enriched by mobile people and their food. Yet this utopian metaphor – especially in an age of inequitable and superficial ethnic revival – left a bitter taste on many New Orleanians' tongues.

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Notes

¹ On the perspective offered by the «mobilities paradigm» on places, people, and food in motion, see M. SHELLER, J. URRY, *The New Mobilities Paradigm*, in «Environment and Planning A», 38 (2006), pp. 207-26; and D.R. GABACCIA, *Food, Mobility, and World History*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, ed. J.M. PILCHER, Oxford 2012, pp. 305-23.

² On New Orleans as an inherently mobile city, see L.N. POWELL, *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans*, Cambridge 2013, and W. JOHNSON, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*, Cambridge 2013.

³ In 1819, architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe visited New Orleans and found himself overwhelmed by the people and food at the market. He described «black negroes & negresses... mulattoes, curly & straight-haired, quartersoons of all shades... Their wares consisted of as many kinds as their faces». B.H. LATROBE, *Impressions Respecting New Orleans: Diary & Sketches 1818-1820*, ed. S. WILSON, JR., New York 1951. p. 22.

⁴ *New French Market*, «The Times-Picayune» (hereafter TP), September 13, 1932.

⁵ S. PITTS, *French Market Controversy is Nothing New*, ivi, April 13, 1975.

⁶ Essential histories of the ethnic revival and the subsequent interest in multiculturalism include N. GLAZER, D.P. MOYNIHAN, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*, Cambridge 1963; M. NOVAK, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics and Culture in the Seventies*, New York 1972; R.D. ALBA, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America*, New Haven 1990 and M. FRYE JACOBSON, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*, Cambridge 2006.

⁷ Richard Campanella argued: «New Orleans is the only American city that can reasonably claim to have rendered its own ethnicity. Creole is a place-based ethnicity»: R. CAMPANELLA, *Bienville's Dilemma: A Historical Geography of New Orleans*, Lafayette 2008, p. 161.

⁸ English writer Israel Zangwill introduced the metaphor of a melting pot to describe the ethnic and racial blending that America enacted on immigrants. I. ZANGWILL, *The Melting Pot, Drama in Four Acts*, New York 1909.

⁹ Maselli was president of the Italian-American Federation, an umbrella organization uniting Louisiana's sixteen Italian clubs, many of which had formed during the previous decade.

¹⁰ E.J. CASSO, J. MASELLI (eds), *An Idea Comes of Age*, ca. 1980, *Piazza d'Italia* (hereafter cited as PDI), Box 2, American Italian Research Library, Metairie, La. (hereafter cited as AIRL).

¹¹ Thus far, scholars have focused on the Piazza d'Italia as a postmodern architectural masterpiece. None have investigated the role of the local Italian-American community in constructing the Piazza as a product of the ethnic revival. *The Magic Fountain*, in «Progressive Architecture», 59 (1978), p. 87. For additional studies of postmodernism and hyperreality in connection to New Orleans and the Piazza d'Italia, see U. ÈCO, *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays*, San Diego 1986 and S.M. HOM, *The Beautiful Country: Tourism and the Impossible State of Destination Italy*, Toronto 2015.

¹² I will use «Italian» and «Sicilian» relatively interchangeably, emphasizing «Sicilian» during the decades immediately following immigration and «Italian» thereafter. As I will discuss, the overwhelming majority of Italian immigrants to Louisiana came from Sicily, but by the 1960s and 1970s they identified as Italian, as did many other communities around the country that had originally aligned themselves with specific towns or regions in Italy. On the generation of an Italian identity within the diaspora, see D.R. GABACCIA, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, Seattle 2000.

¹³ For a geographically diverse mix of histories of Italian immigrants in the United States, see S. LUCONI, *From Paesani to White Ethnics: The Italian Experience in Philadelphia*, Albany 2001; G.R. MORMINO, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1995*, Urbana 1987; D.R. GABACCIA, *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change Among Italian Immigrants, 1880-1930*, Albany 1984 and V. YANS-MCLAUGHLIN, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930*, Ithaca 1977.

¹⁴ Food-centric histories of Sicilians in Louisiana include J. NYSTROM, *Creole Italian: How Sicilian Immigrants Transformed the Culture of America's Most Interesting Food Town* (forthcoming); T.L. KARNES, *Tropical Enterprise: The Standard Fruit and Steamship Company in Latin America*, Baton Rouge 1978 and J.A. SCARPACI, *Italian Immigrants in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes: Recruitment, Labor Conditions, and Community Relations, 1880-1910*, New York 1980.

¹⁵ Famed journalist Lafcadio Hearn reported that by 1884 white New Orleanians had «mostly abandoned the [Vieux] Carré to the European Latins – French emigrants from the Mediterranean coasts, Italians, Sicilians, Spaniards, Greeks... and especially to the French-speaking element of color». L. HEARN, *Quaint New Orleans and its Inhabitants*, in «Harper's Weekly», v. XXVIII, n. 1459, December 6, 1884, p. 812.

¹⁶ K.H. LIPPS, *Italians, New Orleans Style*, in «Dixie», March 19, 1978.

¹⁷ On the tenuous racial identities of turn-of-the-century Italian immigrants, see P.G. VELLON, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race: Italian Immigrant Newspapers and the Construction of Whiteness in the Early Twentieth Century*, New York 2014; J. GUGLIELMO, *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America*, Florence 2012 and T.A. GUGLIELMO, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945*, Oxford 2003.

¹⁸ New Orleans residents blamed the 1890 murder of police chief David Hennessy on the local Sicilian mafia. Despite no judicial rulings of guilt, on March 14, 1891, a mob broke into the city prison and lynched eleven men. M. RIMANELLI, S.L. POSTMAN (eds), *The 1891 New Orleans Lynchings and U.S.-Italian Relations: A Look Back*, New York 1992.

¹⁹ The history of New Orleans's Sicilians offers a good example of the trajectory described by Matthew Frye Jacobson, as a «probationary white group» at the end of the nineteenth century to one «granted the scientific stamp of authenticity as [a member of] the unitary Caucasian race» by the early twentieth. M.F. JACOBSON, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 7-8.

²⁰ CASSO, MASELLI (eds), *An Idea Comes of Age*, Box 2, PDI, AIRL.

²¹ Scholars have explored ethnic formation, assimilation, and consumer culture as linked processes in several historical eras. Some argue for the value of ethnicity long before revival, when shopping at an immigrant-owned corner store instead of a chain grocer had the power to unite immigrants into a cohesive social group and promote their financial stability. Others argue for the importance of mass consumption and consumer objects, like radios and televisions, as mechanisms of Americanization. Still others note the use of ethnicity as a tool to segment consumers during the twentieth-century white ethnic revival. See S. CINOTTO (ed.), *Making Italian America: Consumer Culture and the Production of Ethnic Identities*, New York 2014; L. COHEN, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, Cambridge 1990; A. DÁVILA, *Latinos, Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People*, Berkeley 2001; D.R. GABACCIA, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*, Cambridge 1998; and M. HALTER, *Shopping for Identity: The Marketing of Ethnicity*, New York 2000.

²² Foran & Greer, Inc., *Piazza d'Italia: Report and Recommendations*, no page, Box 2, Folder 54: Foran & Greer Final Report (Leasing Portion) 6/22/78, Piazza d'Italia Project Records, 1976-1982 (hereafter cited as PDI Records), New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, La. (hereafter cited as NOPL).

²³ Larry Smith & Company, Inc., *Piazza d'Italia Economic Analysis*, November 13, 1975, Appendix A-9: Piazza d'Italia – First Level, Preliminary Tenanting and Rent Schedules, Box 1, PDI, AIRL.

²⁴ On the history of these «festival marketplaces» and their combination of entertainment and consumer culture, see N. DAGEN BLOOM, *Merchant of Illusion: James Rouse, America's Salesman of the Businessman's Utopia*, Columbus 2004.

²⁵ Larry Smith & Company, Inc., *Piazza d'Italia Economic Analysis* cit.

²⁶ As of 1978, the year the Piazza opened, «99 percent of the New Orleans Italian community [was] Sicilian». LIPPS, *Italians* cit.

²⁷ *The American Italian Activities Center: In the Heart of New Orleans' Piazza d'Italia*, ca. mid-1970s, Box 1, PDI, AIRL.

²⁸ M. CROSSLEY, *Bit of Italian Fantasy Down in New Orleans*, in «Houston Post», ca. 1978.

²⁹ French-speaking New Orleanians celebrated St. Joseph's Day as *Mi-Carême*, or a mid-Lent holiday, since the early nineteenth century. Newspapers reported on the prevalence of Sicilian altars beginning in the first decades of the twentieth century. For example, see *Altars Honor St. Joseph*, in «The Morning Tribune», March 19, 1931.

³⁰ For the varied histories of Roman Catholics' devotions to St. Joseph, see A. TORRE, *Il consumo di devozioni: Religione e comunità nelle campagne dell'Antico Régime*, Venezia 1995; R. CIPRIANI, L.M. LOMBARDI SATRANI (eds), *Il cibo e il sacro*, Roma 2013 and J.G. MELTON (ed.), *Religious Celebrations: An Encyclopedia of Holidays, Festivals, Solemn Observances, and Spiritual Commemorations*, Santa Barbara 2011.

³¹ Participants in Louisiana St. Joseph altars conveyed these origin stories to religion and folklore scholars, who offer the most comprehensive studies of this tradition. See K. TURNER, S. SERIFF, «*Giving an Altar*»: *The Ideology of Reproduction in a St. Joseph's Day Feast*, in «The Journal of American Folklore», 100/398 (October-December, 1987), pp. 446-60; R. PLEMER, *The Feast of St. Joseph*, in «Louisiana Folklore Miscellany», 2/4 (1968), pp. 85-90; E. ORSO, P. KAVESKI, *Undisclosed Aspects of Saint Joseph Altars*, in «Louisiana Folklore Miscellany», 3/5 (1975), pp. 14-8; and K. WARREN, *Feast of St. Joseph: Labor of Love by the Faithful*, Folklife in the Florida Parishes Series, 1, Hammond, LA 1982. Local historians and Louisiana church parishes complemented these scholarly writings with informal guides to constructing altars, which included recipes for typical dishes. See M. PALAO, *St. Joseph's Day in New Orleans*, 1979, and *Spirit of Independence: The St. Joseph Day Celebration*, Independence, ca. 1980s.

³² A.J. KASLOW, *The Afro-American Celebration of St. Joseph's Day*, in J. COOKE (ed.), *Perspectives on Ethnicity in New Orleans*, New Orleans 1979, p. 48.

³³ Although altar hosts gave visitors holy medals, pictures of saints, and pieces of bread, Palao wrote that the most popular item was the «blessed fava or "lucky bean"»: PALAO, *St. Joseph's Day* cit.

³⁴ *Spirit of Independence* cit., p. 32.

³⁵ WARREN, *Feast of St. Joseph* cit., p. 5.

³⁶ L. SAXON, *Gumbo Ya-Ya: A Collection of Louisiana Folk Tales*, Boston 1945, p. 98.

³⁷ On the construction of an Italian-American identity around cultural practices and objects, especially food, see S. CINOTTO, *The Italian American Table: Food, Family, and Community in New York City*, Urbana 2013; J. SCIORRA, *Italian Folks: Vernacular Culture in Italian-American Lives*, New York 2011; ID., *Yard Shrines and Sidewalk Altars of New York's Italian-Americans*, in «Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture», 3 (1989), pp. 185-98; and R.A. ORSI, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950*, New Haven 1985.

³⁸ Perez & Associates Architects, *Piazza d'Italia Design Statement*, January 1975, Box 2, Folder 59: Preliminary Development Info, PDI Records, NOPL.

³⁹ M. COSTA, *Una piazza d'Italia dentro New Orleans*, no source, ca. early 1970s, Box 2, PDI, AIRL.

⁴⁰ The American Committee on Italian Migration attempted to settle 1,000 refugee families in New Orleans, knowing the size and longstanding nature of Sicilian immigration there. But due to the community's hesitant response, only fifty-five families were settled. A. LUNDBERG, *The Italian Community in New Orleans*, in J. COOKE (ed.), *New Orleans Ethnic Cultures: A Publication of the Committee on Ethnicity in New Orleans*, New Orleans 1978, pp. 45-6.

⁴¹ Some scholars suggest that St. Joseph's Day traditions grew increasingly lavish during the 1960s due to competition with the city's Irish-American community, which sponsored extravagant St. Patrick's Day celebrations two days earlier. Ethelyn Orso, as cited in *New Orleans Ethnic Cultures*, Introduction, p. 2.

⁴² *Here's that piazza...*, promotional folder, ca. 1975-1976, Box 2, Folder 76: Stanson & Grier [sic], PDI Records, NOPL; *Festival della Piazza d'Italia*, advertising booklet, October 12-18, 1975, Box 1, PDI, AIRL.

⁴³ Ivi.

⁴⁴ The city closed the Piazza d'Italia in 2001, yet Italian cultural groups continued to use the space for special events. In May 2015 the city revitalized original plans for the site as they requested proposals to develop the parking lots next to the Piazza. As of December 2015, the city appeared to have confirmed plans to build a 355-room Hard Rock Hotel adjacent to the Piazza d'Italia. F. SCHNEIDER, *With Help of Some Friends, Piazza Fountain is Flowing*, in TP, August 19, 1987; R. GREEN, *Once Proud Piazza Falls into Decay*, ivi, June 18, 1988; E. STRICKLAND, *The Fall and Rise of Piazza d'Italia*, in «Italian America», 2003, pp. 12-3; *Piazza d'Italia Down to one Developer: A Hard Rock Hotel*, in «Canal Street Beat», December 21, 2015.

⁴⁵ Herbert Gans theorized this approach as «symbolic ethnicity». H. GANS, *Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America*, in «Ethnic and Racial Studies», 2/1 (January 1979), pp. 1-20.

⁴⁶ «Vietnamese po-boys», in the title of this section, refers to bánh mì, a Vietnamese sandwich made of meat, pâté, pickled vegetables, and herbs on French bread. Just as the muffuletta came to be identified with New Orleans Italians, as a dish original to the city and eagerly adopted by locals and tourists, so was the Vietnamese bánh mì quickly translated into the terms of New Orleans cuisine. In 1987, a New Orleans reporter described bánh mì as «a Vietnamese version of a po-boy». G. ASHTON, *Vietnamese retain ways of their former home*, in TP, January 25, 1987.

⁴⁷ J. TREADWAY, *Resettlement Begins Here for Nineteen Vietnamese*, in TP, May 27, 1975, 1.

⁴⁸ LATROBE, *Impressions* cit., p. 18.

⁴⁹ TREADWAY, *Resettlement Begins Here* cit., in TP.

⁵⁰ The history of Vietnamese refugees is offered here as a comparative perspective to that of Sicilian immigrants, rather than a fully equal portrait. Due to the recent nature of refugees' arrival and linguistic differences, historians are only beginning to explore the stories of the Vietnamese in New Orleans. Newspaper reporting, municipal sources, and geographers' and anthropologists' studies comprise the current body of scholarship on this group. For example, see S.L. CHIANG, *A Village Called Versailles*, film, Harriman, New Day Films, 2009; C.H. ROWELL, V. NGUYEN, *Father Vien Nguyen*, in «Callaloo», 29/4 (2006), pp. 1070-81, and J.W. NASH, E.T. NGUYEN (eds), *Romance, Gender, and Religion in a Vietnamese-American Community: Tales of God and Beautiful Women*, Lewiston 1995.

⁵¹ For general histories of Vietnamese refugees in the United States, see S. CHAN (ed.), *The Vietnamese American 1.5 Generation: Stories of War, Revolution, Flight, and New Beginnings*, Philadelphia 2006; N. KIBRIA, *Family Tighrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans*, Princeton 1993, and P. RUTLEDGE, *The Vietnamese Experience in America*, Bloomington 1992.

52 C. BANKSTON, M. ZHOU, *Go Fish: The Louisiana Vietnamese and Ethnic Entrepreneurship in an Extractive Industry*, in «National Journal of Sociology», 10/1 (July 1996), pp. 37-55; G. ASHTON, *Carving a Slice of the American Dream*, in TP, April 21, 1985, 12.

53 Between 1975 and 1978, the number of African-American renters in three suburban apartment complexes dropped by half, from 245 to 124, whereas the number of «Indochinese» renters there increased from 1 to 344. Data from public records of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Annual Occupancy Reports*, as cited in W.R. RAGAS, V. MARUGGI, *Vietnamese refugee living conditions in the New Orleans Metro area*, Working Paper No. 111, New Orleans: Division of Business and Economic Research, University of New Orleans, November 1978, p. 16.

54 Ivi, *passim*.

55 Between 1980 and 1990 Louisiana's Vietnamese population grew by approximately 62%, ranking it fifth among all states, with approximately 17,600 Vietnamese Americans. Still, this growth rate was only twenty-sixth highest in the country, far behind the explosive growth of California and Massachusetts, which experienced increases of Vietnamese-American residents at rates of 213% and 387%, respectively. Table 2.2: *Distribution of Vietnamese Americans in the United States, by State, 1978, 1980, and 1990*, in M. ZHOU, C.L. BANKSTON, III, *Growing Up American: The Adaptation of Vietnamese Children to American Society*, New York 1999, https://www.russellsage.org/sites/all/files/zhou_tables%20figures.pdf.

56 E. MULLENER, *A Survey of Ethnic Grocery Stores in the Area*, Part I, in TP, September 21, 1980.

57 RAGAS, MARUGGI, *Vietnamese refugee living conditions* cit., pp. 21, 29.

58 Vietnamese refugees also dominated the workforce at Café du Monde, the longstanding coffee and beignet restaurant at the heart of the French Market. Their experience working there generated an affection among the Vietnamese community for Café du Monde's signature blend of coffee and chicory. By the turn of the twenty-first century, tins of Café du Monde coffee could be purchased in grocery stores in Vietnam, a fascinating example of the incessant mobility of people, food, and tastes, even following a rupture as violent as that of the Vietnamese War. L. McKinney, *New Orleans: A Cultural History*, Oxford 2006, pp. 44-5; G. ASHTON, *Refugees Showed They Are Survivors*, in TP, April 22, 1985.

59 MULLENER, *A Survey of Ethnic Grocery Stores in the Area*, Part I, cit.

60 ID., *A Survey of Ethnic Grocery Stores in the Area*, Part II, ivi, September 28, 1980.

61 ID., *A Survey of Ethnic Grocery Stores in the Area*, Part III, ivi, October 5, 1980.

62 MULLENER, *A Survey of Ethnic Grocery Stores in the Area*, Part I, cit.

63 Ch.A. AIRRIESS, D.L. CLAWSON, *Versailles: A Vietnamese Enclave in New Orleans, Louisiana*, in «Journal of Cultural Geography», 12/1 (1991), pp. 10-1.

64 MULLENER, *A Survey of Ethnic Grocery Stores in the Area*, Part I, cit.

65 G. ASHTON, *Prejudice: Refugees Struggle for Acceptance*, in TP, April 21, 1985.

66 AIRRIESS, CLAWSON, *Versailles: A Vietnamese Enclave* cit., pp. 8-9; EID., *Vietnamese Market Gardens in New Orleans*, in «Geographical Review», 84/1 (January 1994), p. 21.

67 V. FACIANE, *Chef Lagoon Gardens Moved to Aid Drainage*, in «The Times-Picayune The States-Item», February 20, 1982, p. 14; AIRRIESS, CLAWSON, *Vietnamese Market Gardens* cit., p. 18.

68 These gardens were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, but residents have rebuilt many of them. The Vietnamese-American community in New Orleans East attracted national attention for its quick return following the hurricane, led largely by the local Vietnamese Catholic church, as well as its collaboration with African-American neighbors to prevent the city from opening a landfill for storm debris in their neighborhood. K.J. LEONG *et al.*, *Resilient History and the Rebuilding of a Community: The Vietnamese American Community in New Orleans East*, in «Journal of American History», 94 (December 2007), pp. 770-9.

69 S. DAY, *Những món ăn thuần túy*, in TP, September 23, 1982.

70 Airriess and Clawson noted that because many elderly residents of the Versailles apartments maintained garden plots, they participated in the market as vendors as well as shoppers, deriving further benefits of «emotional well-being and economic empowerment». ASHTON, *Vietnamese retain ways* cit.; AIRRIESS, CLAWSON, *Vietnamese Market Gardens in New Orleans* cit., p. 20.

71 K. MUTCHLER, *Market Place*, in TP, April 22, 1985.

72 ASHTON, *Vietnamese retain ways* cit.

73 *The Picayune's Guide to New Orleans*, New Orleans, Nicholson & Co., 1896, p. 33.

74 E.D. WU, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*, Princeton 2014.

75 RUTLEDGE, *The Vietnamese Experience* cit.

76 P. SPRATLIN ANTENUCCI, *It Was Her Day: Accent on Young People, Family Fun at NOMA*, in TP, December 9, 1979, 105.

77 On race relations in Versailles, especially after Hurricane Katrina, see E. TANG, *A Gulf Unites Us: The Vietnamese Americans of Black New Orleans East*, in «American Quarterly», 63/1 (2011), pp. 117-49; LEONG *et al.*, *Resilient History* cit.; Ashton, *Prejudice* cit.

78 On the Civil Rights Movement and its aftermath in New Orleans, see D.E. DEVORE, *Defying Jim Crow: African American Community Development and the Struggle for Racial Equality in New Orleans, 1900-1960*, Baton Rouge 2015; L.N. MOORE, *Black Rage in New Orleans: Police Brutality and African American Activism from World War II to Hurricane Katrina*, Baton Rouge 2010 and K.B. GERMANY, *New Orleans After the Promises: Poverty, Citizenship, and the Search for the Great Society*, Athens 2007.

79 ASHTON, *Prejudice* cit.

80 Between 1975 and 1979, Versailles apartment managers received upward of \$1.6 million in federal subsidies for their assistance in resettling Vietnamese refugees. Interview with Present Tenant, Versailles Arms Apartment Complex, by Athrin L. Worthy, Carlton Bennett, and Joseph Shorter, February 1979, Indo-Chinese Refugee Resettlement Task Force, *Impact Analysis of Indo-Chinese Resettlement in the New Orleans Metropolitan Area: A Task Force Study, prepared for Mayor Ernest Morial*, New Orleans: Office of Policy Planning, 1979; T.L. MITCHELL, *Subsidized Housing Criticized*, in TP, February 13, 1979, 6.

81 On the history of Tremé as a social and cultural center for free New Orleanians of color, see M.E. CRUTCHER, JR., *Treme: Race and Place in a New Orleans Neighborhood*, Athens 2010 and S.E. THOMPSON, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans*, Cambridge 2009.

82 In the curriculum's Glossary of Terms, the authors defined «majority» to mean, «More than half, e.g., more than 50% of New Orleans school children are black – they are a majority». Though a simple gesture, authors made a powerful statement to African-American students whose families had long been treated like political and social minorities. St. Mark's Community Center, *Tremé/7th Ward Griots: A New Orleans Ethnic Heritage Program, Field Edition*, funded by the Office of Education, Ethnic Heritage Studies Program (1979), p. 18.

83 J. LOGSDON, *The Surprise of the Melting Pot: We Can All Become New Orleanians*, in *Perspectives on Ethnicity* cit., pp. 7-8.

84 Logsdon's essay supported the findings of sociologist Richard D. Alba who concluded, «[F]or Americans of European background in general, ethnic identity is a choice... [W]hites are largely free to identify themselves as they will and to make these identities as important as they like». ALBA, *Ethnic Identity* cit., pp. 294-5.

85 On the much-disputed adjective «Creole» and its shifting relationship to race, see V.R. DOMÍNGUEZ, *White by Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana*, New Brunswick 1986; S. KEIN (ed.), *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, Baton

Rouge 2000 and A.R. HIRSCH, J. LOGSDON (eds), *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, Baton Rouge 1992.

⁸⁶ In 1890, a writer dismissed the French Market's Sicilian vendors, «with their swarthy skins, unstudied attitude, and careless raiment». H.W. BURDETT, *Historic America: VI. New Orleans*, in «The Illustrated American», April 5, 1890, p. 153.

⁸⁷ «Just Ain' Gon' Kill Me Off!», oral history with Hazel Bean, interviewed by Donna Davis, in D. DAVIS. (ed.), *Quartee Red Beans, Quartee Rice: Stories of the Tremé/7th Ward*, The Ethnic Heritage Project, St. Mark's Community Center, New Orleans 1979.