

# Train Whistle Diplomacy: Blues-based Jazz and National Identity

Jacquelynne Modeste

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## Abstract

Since the Cold War, jazz has been inextricably linked with US cultural identity, foreign policy, and international relations. Since its inception, jazz has been linked to African Americans living in the US. The exportation of legendary African American jazzmen such as Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington during the Cold War period is well documented but what of their particular style of jazz? Armstrong and Ellington used the blues to ground their compositions artistically and also as part of a self-conscious effort to keep the traditions of African Americans in contemporary consciousness. What is it about the hybrid, blues-based jazz, which captivated audiences internationally? In what ways does the blues influence swing, their preferred form of jazz? This essay moves towards a definition of blues-based jazz, describes the cultural significance of the hybrid form, and identifies its pervasiveness in areas previously undocumented.

**Keywords:** *Jazz, Blues, National Identity, Train Whistle, Diplomacy*

*"History endures in Mexico. No one has died here, despite the killings and the executions. They are alive – Cuanhtémoc, Cortés, Maximilian, Don Porfirio, and all the conquerors and all the conquered. That is Mexico's special quality. The whole past is a pulsing present. It has not gone by, it has stopped in its tracks".*  
--José Moreno Villa

*"...unless the idiom is not only robust and earthy enough but also refined enough with a range comprehensive enough to reflect the subtleties and complexities of contemporary experience, it is not very likely to be a very effective counteragent of the blues or any other demons, devils, or dragons".*  
-- Albert Murray

## Introduction

Designated a Cultural Ambassador of the United States by Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2002,<sup>1</sup> Wynton Marsalis travels the globe spreading

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<sup>1</sup> Accessed on 12 November 2011, US Department of State website, [http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/eng/releases/ep040319\\_Marsalis.html](http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/eng/releases/ep040319_Marsalis.html)

blues-based jazz in the form of swing.<sup>2</sup> The blues and swing are vital to Marsalis's artistic vision and situate his expression of jazz within a specific historical framework. A champion of the arts in education and an ardent advocate of US integrity, which he defines as being inextricably connected to the nation's cultural heritage, Marsalis personifies the cosmopolitan continuum represented by his legendary predecessors, Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. Like them, Marsalis uses the blues to ground his compositions artistically and as a conscious way of honoring the heritage of African Americans in the US. Additionally, his international tours and artistic residencies take him to regions where the US has strategic interests and, given the well-documented history of using jazz as a covert weapon during the Cold War era, this is no mere coincidence.<sup>3</sup> In 2010, Marsalis's tours included Mexico City, Havana and Abu Dhabi; his 2011 tours included the Ukraine, South Africa, Moscow and Oman. Several questions arise, including: What is the relationship between US strategic interests and Marsalis's tour sites? In what ways does blues-based jazz contribute to the collaborative experience? What is the relationship between cosmopolitanism – as indicated by the careers of Marsalis, Armstrong and Ellington – and changing US strategic interests? Also, in what ways does blues-based jazz through swing assert US identity and help shape an understanding of foreign relations? As part of a larger project that explores these issues using Wynton Marsalis's collaborative recordings and the use of technology and technological advances and their influence/impact on performance,<sup>4</sup> this essay moves towards a definition of blues-based jazz and its relationship with swing, demonstrates its pervasiveness in US culture and, using the example of Marsalis's tours in Vitoria, Spain, and Mexico City, reveals the ways blues-based jazz can be useful in discussions of national identity and foreign relations.

## Cargo

An understanding of the blues is key to understanding Marsalis's music. An amalgamation of influences (sacred and secular), the blues as a musical genre was coalesced by Americans of African descent in the US. Its plaintive sound is found in the music of nations worldwide and conjures the human struggle inherent in engaging hardship and longing through emotion ranging from deepest solitude to the heights of jubilee, turning the "lowdown dirty shame" of life on its head in a cathartic triumph of the

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<sup>2</sup> Marsalis also collaborates with dancers, visual artists, filmmakers, and other creative people but this essay will focus on his musical collaborations.

<sup>3</sup> See, Penny Von Eschen, "Swinging Into Action" in *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Marsalis's international collaborative recordings include: the *Vitoria Suite* (Spain); the *Marcia Suite* (France); and *Congo Square* (with the Ghanaian percussion group, *Odaddaa!*).

human spirit over adversity.<sup>5</sup> The blues has a recognizable structure, typically eight or 12 bar stanzas, of three or four lines each, with a built in rhyming and call-and-response pattern.<sup>6</sup> While the blues is primarily vocal Albert Murray explains, "the definitive element of a blues statement is not verbal. Words as such... are secondary to the music. What counts for most is not verbal precision... but musical precision, or perhaps better still, musical nuance".<sup>7</sup> The guttural sounds, cries of jubilee, saucy growls and intentional mispronunciations are not language specific and translate the soul's yearnings into a sound that connects people emotionally. This helps explain Dave Brubeck's assertion, "[t]he folk origins of music aren't too far apart anywhere in the world".<sup>8</sup> Additionally, and in what may seem a paradox, the blues is not the music of despair but of its transformation because the act of singing, of performing, is an assertion of individual agency that defies or neutralizes the angst of hardship expressed in a song's lyrics, if only temporarily. Murray explains, "the blues... affirm[s] life and humanity itself in the very process of confronting failures and existential absurdities. The spirit of the blues moves in the opposite direction from ashes and sackcloth, self-pity, self-hatred, and suicide".<sup>9</sup> In his insistence on using the blues as the foundation for creating his own compositions or re-imagining others, Marsalis self-consciously integrates the plight of the individual and his/her ability to overcome hardship into his artistic sensibility. By so doing, he also demonstrates the durability of US folk forms vis-à-vis the tradition of African Americans and their inextricable contributions to the "*incontestably mulatto*" nature of US identity and simultaneously creates a barometer by which to gauge the degree of cultural osmosis between the "so-called black and so-called white people of the United States".<sup>10</sup>

The influence of the blues on jazz music is culturally significant. While the blues is the music of relative solitude and can be played alone; jazz requires group interaction, commonly features diverse instrumentation, and may include a vocalist. Additionally, the two forms are mutually exclusive; the blues can be performed independent of jazz and jazz need not be blues based. However, when combined, the hybrid is a cultural signifier of humanity, deep emotion, and the traditions of the historically marginalized. During the performance of blues-based jazz, human emotion infuses the

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<sup>5</sup> Albert Murray, *The Blue Devils of Nada: a Contemporary American Approach to Aesthetic Statement* (New York: Pantheon, 1996), p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> For a more technical description of the blues, see Albert Murray, *Stomping the Blues* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1976), pp. 93-94.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>8</sup> Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> Albert Murray, *The Omni Americans: Black Experience & American Culture* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1970), p. 147.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

sounds on stage as the man-made instruments shape their sounds to express the range of emotion captured in the human voice, its nuances and inflections. This narrows the distance between the human voice and man-made instruments in a communicative experience Nicholas Cook describes as “shared inner time” because two seemingly distinct entities – the human voice and man-made instruments – move to become one.<sup>11</sup> At its very best, this example of cultural osmosis in sound moves towards erasing cultural distance and difference and is an expression of humility.<sup>12</sup> The blues also represents a cultural “call” to engage audiences worldwide and the collective “response” indicates a shared feeling or connection through emotion. Improvisation occurs at the break – a creative space where musicians can assert individuality – and is an opportunity for musicians to *break* away from the group and articulate an individual response by playing rhythm changes on a song’s melody (they play the same song being performed but differently, according to the musician’s individual style preferences).<sup>13</sup> Together the blues and jazz create interdependency that ensures the recognition of human emotion and the traditions of the historically marginalized even within contemporary consciousness.

The call-and-response patterns that inform the blues shape the multilateral musical conversation. The deep emotion that resonates through blues vocalization shapes the sound of jazz, challenging the man-made instruments to respond to the fragile human voice.<sup>14</sup> When the *least* of things integrates itself into and influences the *greatest* of things, it gives voice to the unheard or marginalized and indicates a cultural recognition, in this case, of African Americans in the US and their historic struggle for recognition within the larger society. The blues “affirm[s] life and

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<sup>11</sup> Nicholas Cook, “Making Music Together, or Improvisation and its Others”, *The Source: Challenging Jazz Criticism* (Vol. 1, 2004), p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> During his August 2011 visit to South Africa, Wynton Marsalis visited the Teboho Trust School in Soweto and listened to the students sing a traditional song, “Shosholoza.” After listening closely, Marsalis “sang” the song back to the astonished children using his trumpet. See, “Wynton teaching Improvisation on ‘Shosholoza’, a Traditional South African Song” at [www.wyntonmarsalis.org](http://www.wyntonmarsalis.org).

<sup>13</sup> Albert Murray describes the musician’s break as “a very special kind of ad-lib bridge passage or cadenza like interlude between two musical phrases that are separated by an interruption or interval in the established cadence.” See Murray op.cit. in note 5, p. 99.

<sup>14</sup> “Seemingly unnecessary” because jazz need not be blues based or feature a vocalist of any sort. For an example of the impact of the human voice on the shaping of instrumental sounds, consider Duke Ellington’s legendary trumpeter Charles Melvin “Cootie” Williams (1911 – 1985). In Duke’s 1940 classic, “Concerto for Cootie” (better known as “Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me”), Cootie’s trumpet so accurately imitates the human voice the lyrics written for the song seem to have been transcribed from the score itself. The song is part of the Blanton-Webster band series of Ellington classics recorded from masters and features some of Ellington’s most famous songs from 1940-42. For a brief but informative biography on Williams, see biography on “Cootie Williams,” last accessed October 27, 2011, <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/musician.php?id=11382>.

humanity"<sup>15</sup> and when integrated into jazz, the blues becomes a metaphor, a "life affirming force of resistance as well as [indicating] the sustaining effect of mutual support"<sup>16</sup> due to the musical conversation or cultural osmosis. By extension, this "suggests that the powerless, despite their dominated state, can still find meaning in collective acts of resistance and through struggle can create symbols and narratives that justify and support the vitality of their efforts".<sup>17</sup> The performance of blues-based jazz is intentional by Marsalis and demonstrates the creative possibilities inherent in recognizing diversity and self-consciously integrating individuality into group dynamics.

By privileging swing, Marsalis and his ensemble pay homage to tradition and simultaneously assert US cultural heritage in terms of a particular historical framework. During its heyday, 1930-45, swing was America's popular music. Broadcast on stations nationwide, swing permeated households by way of nightly or weekly radio programs; integrating itself into homes with sounds that brought together the masses with a common affection for swing's energy, style and drive.<sup>18</sup> With its steady rhythm, swing captured the mechanization of modern America. The "industrial flow... [of the] assembly line" made manifest in the conveyor belt resulted in a "more uniform pace for workers: it would speed up the slow workers and slow down the fast ones" and mirrored the equilibrium achieved in swing's efficient rhythms and balanced sound.<sup>19</sup> Despite its highly reliable rhythm, "metronomic accuracy and rhythmically regular placing of time points (or beats) do not by any means guarantee swing" because all efforts must be "translated into *feeling*".<sup>20</sup> Well suited for dancers, swing got people up and moving and was an active engagement between humans and the mechanized realm. Marsalis explains, "you want people to get off their butts and get on to the dance floor and shake those butts".<sup>21</sup> In a struggle that conjures memories of John Henry's legendary contest with the steam engine, swing represented a "cultural form that was both participatory and

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<sup>15</sup> Murray, op.cit, in note 8, p. 147.

<sup>16</sup> Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres, *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 141.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>18</sup> Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: the Development of Jazz, 1930-1945* (New York; Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 5. Schuller describes the popularity of swing and its significance culturally in bringing together black and white audiences and creating a "new American consumer" by the 1930s.

<sup>19</sup> Joel Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African American Culture between the World Wars* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Schuller, op.cit, in note 16, p. 223. For a detailed but incomplete (Schuller acknowledges a definition of swing is "elusive") definition of swing, see Schuller, op.cit in note 16, pp. 222-225. Emphasis is Schuller's.

<sup>21</sup> Wynton Marsalis and Robert G. O'Meally, "Duke Ellington: 'Music Like a Big Hot Pot of Good Gumbo,'" in Robert G. O'Meally (ed.), *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 144.

dynamic” and the dances inspired by the music (such as swing, tap dance, and the lindy hop) were “public models of humanized machine aesthetics” during an era when “Americans hungered for displays of [such] human mastery”.<sup>22</sup> Swing is the sound of cooperation and Marsalis’s insistence on performing swing can be understood as an effort to harness the energy of decades past and challenge members of contemporary society to actively engage one another; to feel musical and cultural rhythms and respond, act, and cooperate. Marsalis explains, “Swing is about coordination. It’s about attaining an equilibrium of forces that many times don’t go together”.<sup>23</sup> As with contemporary society and its seemingly disparate but inextricably linked sectors, swing features diverse instruments, arranged into sections for big bands, all working together to achieve and sustain a rhythmic flow with a feeling that encourages active engagement. Marsalis wants people to *feel* again, to connect with their emotional lives and as an ardent advocate of the arts, Marsalis *swings* as a way to facilitate active engagement – on the dance floor at least. As Schuller notes, “Rhythm is the most magnetic irresistible force among all elements of music... as long as rhythm is functioning, the human/psychological emotional response is almost guaranteed”.<sup>24</sup> Marsalis’s focus on swing can be understood as an effort to encourage active engagement and coordination in contemporary society.

The blues, jazz and swing combine to form a hybrid cultural force that encourages innovation.<sup>25</sup> Through the integration of diverse instrumentation, jazz performance creates a critical mass of individually articulated sounds that must cooperate. Musicians interacting collaboratively in shared time can listen acutely and formulate relevant nuanced responses. When the blues informs jazz, human emotion extends its reach/influence beyond the relatively limited range of individual articulation. In what Albert Murray calls the “fully orchestrated blues statement” this expression of individuality through diverse voicings is “as affirmative as the ongoing human pulse itself” because through cooperation each voice is validated.<sup>26</sup> As Nicholas Cook asserts, “making music together means the engagement between two or more individuals within a shared inner time...”<sup>27</sup> Swing, the ultimate form of coordination, requires band members to get inside of each other’s *inner time* and challenges them to find and sustain equilibrium – the musical conversation. When this balance in sound is sustained, it almost always forces a response and so also encourages the interaction of audience

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<sup>22</sup> Dinerstein, op.cit. in note 17, pp. 12-13.

<sup>23</sup> Marsalis, op.cit. in note 19, p. 143.

<sup>24</sup> Schuller, op.cit. in note 14, p. 223.

<sup>25</sup> Houston Baker refers to this as a “matrix.” See Houston A. Baker, *Blues, Ideology and African American Literature: a Vernacular Theory* (Illinois: University of Chicago, 1987), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Murray, op.cit. in note 4, pp. 14-15.

<sup>27</sup> Cook, op.cit. in note 10, p. 6.

members and performers.<sup>28</sup> The blues, however, is disruptive and threatens to destabilize the mechanized, orderly, highly efficient metered pulse of swing because human emotion is unpredictable. When the blues shapes jazz, a similar environment of instability is created because while a musician may adhere to certain guiding structures (such as key and/or time signatures), the articulation varies according to embouchure, attack on the note, etc. Human emotion is the ever-changing and uncertain fulcrum upon which the performance is balanced. Culturally, the blues-based swing configuration is more than a simple binary; it is a multilateral, multidimensional conversation, a complex matrix – “a web of intersecting, crisscrossing impulses always in productive transit”.<sup>29</sup> Managing this ever-moving force is the achievement of blues-based swing.<sup>30</sup>

Through its focus on the interaction between the individual and the group, blues-based jazz reveals the power of integration. Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres describe such a focus on individual self-assertion as an integral part of collective force; it is “relational and interactive” and “requires participation”.<sup>31</sup> In what Guinier and Torres describe as “Power-with” they note that through collaboration “power can be exercised apart from the vertical arrangement that modernists use to describe power-over [others]”.<sup>32</sup> Paying homage to the individual, as with the blues, “reassert[s] the importance of human agency” and disrupts hierarchical structures since all voices are given equal weight.<sup>33</sup> The blues essentially redirects the attention of the group and bends it towards the particular, towards human feelings, in a way that changes perspective and so the outcome of the song being performed. Culturally this is substantial. As Anthony Bogues asserts, we need “to think, if possible, from the perspectives of those who have been slaves, whose ideas and practices have been erased from the body politic” in order to write their stories and perchance, right historic wrongs while ushering in a new way of engaging the domestic and international realms.<sup>34</sup> Bogues, Guinier and Torres suggest that in validating the historically marginalized, by integrating their voices into larger conversations, we strengthen society as a whole.

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<sup>28</sup> See Schuller on this point, *op.cit.* in note 16, p. 223.

<sup>29</sup> Baker, *op.cit.* in note 23, pp. 3-4.

<sup>30</sup> Discussions of nonlinear systems and of chaos and ordering are instructive in better understanding the dynamics of on-stage performance and the creative process. See James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (New York: Viking, 1987) and also Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos, Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984).

<sup>31</sup> Guinier and Torres, *The Miner's Canary*, p. 141.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>34</sup> Anthony Bogues, *Empire of Liberty: Power, Desire, & Freedom* (New Hampshire: Dartmouth University Press, 2010), p. 47.

## **Train Whistle: the sound is heard but not seen**

The influence of blues-based jazz on US culture has been steadily increasing. Members of the Harlem Renaissance such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and Jean Toomer, articulated the significance of African American culture within the context of understanding US culture at large through their works that resonated with the sights, sounds and timbres of the blues and jazz. The heyday of swing followed these critical developments. However, due to legalized and socially sanctioned domestic racial segregation, Harlem Renaissance voices remained relatively unheard until the Civil Rights and Feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s; and not until the 1980s, with the widespread establishment of college-level Black Studies departments, would works by black authors from this historic period be widely integrated into school curricula.<sup>35</sup> Robert G. O'Meally's 1998 comprehensive collection of essays published by Columbia University Press, identifies a "jazz cadence" in American culture from a widely respected pulpit that validated earlier claims voiced from less prominent social positions.<sup>36</sup> O'Meally's work essentially reaffirms Murray's 1970 assertion that US culture is "*incontestably mulatto*" and that the "blues tradition, a tradition of confrontation and improvisation... indigenous to the United States" is a key element of US national identity.<sup>37</sup> As Murray asserted and as O'Meally and his predecessors including Marsalis suggest, "Identity is best defined in terms of culture..."<sup>38</sup> In spite of decades of legally sanctioned racial segregation and restrictive social customs, the process of integration, continues.<sup>39</sup>

## **Business strategy and corporate culture**

*Harvard Business Review* addressed the ways in which hierarchy can hurt strategy execution.<sup>40</sup> A survey of readers revealed the "biggest execution challenge [in business] is making strategy meaningful to frontline workers"; that most cannot identify the organization's strategy; "strategy

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<sup>35</sup> Accessed on 21 November 2011, <http://www.sfsu.edu/~af/rs/> San Francisco State was the first four-year college to implement a Black Studies program (1968).

<sup>36</sup> See Robert G. O'Meally (ed.), *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

<sup>37</sup> Murray, op.cit. pp. 22, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> See Von Eschen, op. cit. in note 7, and Casey Nelson Blake (ed.), *The Arts of Democracy: Art, Public Culture, and the State* (Washington, D.C.: the Woodrow Wilson Press, 2007) for a comprehensive statement on the cultural osmosis that took place in Eastern Europe during the Cold War era. Despite various restrictions and the severity of punishment for those who did not abide the laws, jazz infiltrated the culture on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

<sup>40</sup> Spotlight on the Effective Organization, "How Hierarchy Can Hurt Strategy Execution", *Harvard Business Review* (July-August 2010), p. 74.

still comes mainly from the top"; and "people involved in [strategy] development are the most likely to buy in".<sup>41</sup> While the influence of the blues and jazz on corporate culture remains unarticulated, the need for their guiding principles pertaining to multilateral conversation and integration (at least) is clear. The survey's findings recommend, "Leaders should consider making strategy formulation more bottom-up and should communicate more clearly throughout the ranks".<sup>42</sup> Corporations have discovered what jazz musicians know, hierarchical ordering stifles diversity; whereas, the lateral spread of power (Guinier's "Power-with"), and the multilateral distribution of voices, encourages innovation and contributes to achieving and sustaining equilibrium.

A steady stream of business research yields insight into the value of integration. As with chaos theory that advances a holistic view of systems, Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble argue against the isolation of innovation teams from a company's core divisions and advocate for the integration of disparate parts.<sup>43</sup> They suggest, "balancing exploration with exploitation" and "integrat[ing] and differentiat[ing] corporate units" in order to create a "surprisingly versatile" or innovative performance engine.<sup>44</sup> Corporate isolation, as with the solitude of the blues, leads to stagnation; whereas integration into complex systems, as with the blues into jazz, encourages innovation because there is a critical mass of engaged parties. In jazz, diverse instrumentation allows individuals to be *differentiated* into sections yet coordinated through sound. *Exploiting* individual talents enriches the sound because the *integration* of various voices gives the music texture. *Innovation* or improvisation is encouraged when sound, or power and talent, is condensed into a critical mass; rather than distilled, through hierarchy, from the top down. Of corporate mergers, Rosabeth Moss Kanter asserts the importance of "global integration" of finding "common human bonds and encourag[ing] relationships beyond tasks" in order to coalesce, harness and develop creative energy.<sup>45</sup> Business leaders seemingly unaware of the jazz cadence.<sup>46</sup> in American culture, indicate its pervasiveness which itself serves as a barometer for the magnitude of domestic integration within US society.

The need for the attitude of affirmation inherent to the blues has been identified in corporate culture. Joshua D. Margolis and Paul G. Stolz

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> See Gleick, op.cit. in note 28, but also various writings on dialectical materialism.

<sup>44</sup> Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble, "Stop the Innovation Wars", *Harvard Business Review* (July-August, 2010), p. 78.

<sup>45</sup> Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Mergers that Stick", *Harvard Business Review* (October 2009), pp. 123, 125.

<sup>46</sup> O'Meally, op.cit. in note 34.

outline a “resilience regimen” –strategies for “turn[ing] a negative experience into a positive one”.<sup>47</sup> In other words, and according to Albert Murray, they intend to document for the readership, “a strategy for acknowledging the fact that life is a lowdown dirty shame and for improvising or riffing on the exigencies of the predicament”<sup>48</sup> in order to make “the best of a bad situation”.<sup>49</sup> Leading with a definition of “Psychological resilience as the capacity to respond quickly and constructively to crises”, Margolis and Stolz delineate a method for turning the blue feelings associated with the nation’s recent financial collapse into productive energy that can be harnessed.<sup>50</sup> Turning to psychology, “at the expense of the more comprehensive wisdom of the humanities and the arts” their “sense of context is deficient” because it does not reflect the centuries-long process of cultural osmosis; the theory is separated from practice.<sup>51</sup> Margolis and Stolz note, “each of us has a distinct, consistent pattern of thinking about life’s twists and turns—a pattern of which most of us are largely unaware”<sup>52</sup> and further validate the existence of a cultural blind spot. Martin E.P. Seligman directs the Penn Resiliency Program that works to train “managers [to] change the culture of their organizations to focus on the positive instead of the negative”.<sup>53</sup> Of executives, Margolis and Stolz note, “highly accomplished managers...are confronting, in rapid succession, challenges the likes of which they’ve never seen before”.<sup>54</sup> Yet this concerted turn towards psychology for guidance indicates not only the continued segregation of academic disciplines and the ideological segregation that stagnates innovation but also indicates the tragic flaw of privilege – the inability, due to lack of apparent necessity, to develop the skill or habit of resilience.

Facing angst unsentimentally and transforming it by way of productive action are lessons learned best from the blues tradition. As “an established mode” of confronting and transcending hardship the blues represents a tradition that emanates from a group that has historically relied upon such devices; there is no better group to model than those who have suffered when seeking a method for transforming despair in to productive action.<sup>55</sup> Albert Murray asserts, “no other people in the land have as yet evolved a characteristic idiom that reflects a more open, robust, and affirmative

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<sup>47</sup> Joshua D. Margolis and Paul G. Stolz, “How to Bounce Back from Adversity”, *Harvard Business Review* (January-February 2010), p. 87.

<sup>48</sup> Murray, op.cit. in note 4, p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> Albert Murray, *The Hero and the Blues* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1973), p. 36.

<sup>50</sup> Margolis and Stolz, op.cit. in note 45, p. 87.

<sup>51</sup> Murray, op.cit. in note 8, p. 44.

<sup>52</sup> Margolis and Stolz, op.cit. in note 45, p. 88.

<sup>53</sup> Martin E.P. Seligman, “Building Resilience”, *Harvard Business Review* (April 2011), pp. 102, 106.

<sup>54</sup> Margolis and Stolz, op.cit. in note 45, p. 89.

<sup>55</sup> Murray, op.cit. in note 47, p. 72.

disposition toward diversity and change. Nor is any other idiom more smoothly geared to open-minded improvisation".<sup>56</sup> Anthony Bogues encourages "us to think, if possible, from the perspectives of those who have been slaves, whose ideas and practices have been erased from the body politic" in order to meaningfully engage the transformative processes such as the blues and jazz.<sup>57</sup> He asserts, "All historically catastrophic events, while wounding, produce cries. In hearing and listening to these cries we begin to glimpse alternative possibilities in relation to the historically catastrophic event".<sup>58</sup> We begin to develop the habit of resilience. When Margolis and Stolz state, "the ability to bounce back from adversity hinges on uncovering and untangling one's implicit beliefs about it and shifting how one responds" – they unknowingly beckon the lessons of the blues.<sup>59</sup>

Business strategies that incorporate the blues and jazz traditions provide a segue into relationships between nations. The globalization of industries since the end of the Cold War demands cooperation across geopolitical and cultural lines. Communicating culturally holds the promise of conducting mutually respectful conversations in part because the participants learn to synchronize their rhythms in such a way as to facilitate interaction. In "Dyadic Drumming Across the Lifespan Reveals a Zone of Proximal Development in Children" the authors assert, "a fundamental dimension of socially coordinated behavior is the ability to intentionally adapt the *timing* of one's own behavior to the timing of other's actions".<sup>60</sup> The investigation of the ability to coordinate one's responses with others is vital to swing and its excavation culturally is necessary in sectors ranging from local to regional, national and international in order to identify best practices when communicating broadly. The following sections identify areas where the culture of blues-based jazz and its manifestation as swing are pervasive. Beginning with the US domestic sphere, the cultural identification of the blues and swing are explored using case studies of Spain and Mexico.

## Government and Governance

Blues-based jazz has also become a meaningful part of high-level US government discussions. Candidate Barack Obama proposed diversifying the nation's military use, advocating an "integrated strategy" that relied on "constant cooperation and revision" with our alliances so the relationships

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>57</sup> Bogues, op.cit. in note 32, p. 47.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>59</sup> Margolis and Stolz, op.cit. in note 45, p. 89.

<sup>60</sup> Anna Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn, Michaela Riediger, Florian Schmiedek, Timo von Oertzen, Shu-Chen Li, and Ulman Lindenberger, "Dyadic Drumming Across the Lifespan Reveals a Zone of Proximal Development in Children", *Developmental Psychology* (Vol. 47, No. 3, 2011), pp. 632-644.

“remain effective and relevant”, and building “new alliances and partnerships in other vital regions”.<sup>61</sup> The spectrum of activity deemed necessary suggests an “openness to innovation” which is what Eric S. Edelman thinks “could help the United States navigate the [uncertain and uncharted] period ahead”.<sup>62</sup> Like jazz, with its emphasis on improvisation, Obama’s plan requires active engagement with various participants in a horizontal, and multilateral, not hierarchal discussion. Through Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, President Obama’s foreign policy strategy resonates with ideas and practices common to the jazz and blues. Clinton asserts the need for a more “holistic approach to civilian power...coordinating diplomacy across US governments agencies” and notes the State Department’s “engagement [must] reach and influence wider and more diverse groups” in recognition of the world’s “increasing global interconnectedness”. She also advocates “reaching beyond governments to citizens directly....”<sup>63</sup> Clinton’s mandate harkens the blues and its integration into more complex discussions in order to reshape larger narratives and align them more closely with individual needs.

Clinton’s assertions indicate an effort to recognize and balance discussions as in swing, amongst equals in a multilateral conversation, rather than bilateral dialogue. These efforts bolster democracy. As Giovanni Carbone declares, “At the most basic level, democratic rule helps to put the survival concerns of vulnerable people on the agenda of elected governments”. He continues, “democracy protects the lives of the underprivileged by working as an early-warning system (think Guinier’s “miner’s canary” metaphor) that helps to avert major social disasters”.<sup>64</sup> Integrating the bottom into the top-tier of discussions disrupts binary discourse, which can be thought of as existing along a horizontal plane, in favor of a more complex conversation that moves vertically as well as horizontally. As Gunther Schuller notes of swing, “equilibrium occurs when both the verticality and horizontality of a given musical moment are represented in perfect equivalence and oneness”.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, multilateral discussions present multidimensional challenges to traditional diplomatic efforts. Government agencies can be inflexible and can function according to metronomic efficiency in a blind quest to achieve a stated agenda. Like swing without the blues, they can remain largely oblivious to seemingly

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<sup>61</sup> Barack Obama, “Renewing American Leadership”, *Foreign Affairs* (July-August, 2007), pp. 10, 12.

<sup>62</sup> Eric S. Edleman, “The Broken Consensus: America’s Contested Primacy”, *World Affairs* (November/December 2010), p. 59.

<sup>63</sup> Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Leading Through Civilian Power: Redefining American Diplomacy and Development”, *Foreign Affairs* (November/December, 2010), pp. 14-15.

<sup>64</sup> Giovanni Carbone, “The Consequences of Democratization”, *Journal of Democracy* (April 2009), p. 130.

<sup>65</sup> Schuller, op.cit. in note 16, p. 224.

“minor” influences or voices and so can power over them without knowing.<sup>66</sup> The blues forces such agencies to integrate – to take into account individual regions, segments, or parts thereof whose self assertions disrupt metronomic efficiency and require flexibility. Yet, as Frederick Buell insightfully notes in his 1998 essay, while “such a communicative and interactive system may seem fundamentally cosmopolitan, it is important to point out that these same processes may produce increased fundamentalism, ethnic conflict and globalized terrorism”.<sup>67</sup> Conversations cannot be bilateral dialogues between two prominent players; instead, the integration of seemingly disparate parts or voices is necessary to more meaningful communication.

## The President

President Obama’s thinking reveals the influence of the blues and jazz traditions. James T. Kloppenberg’s thoughtful study of Obama’s intellectual development portrays the complexity of Obama’s thinking.<sup>68</sup> Kloppenberg explains, “Balancing... apparently irresistible” and competing “dynamics against the persistent appeal of local cultural traditions, finding a way to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable tugs of the universal against the particular, is the central dynamic of the twenty-first century world”. He continues, “Obama has shown that he understands the sources of that struggle and the reasons why it is so much more difficult to resolve than most commentators on the left and right admit”.<sup>69</sup> Obama recognizes the complexity of governance as bigger than government and being more than the simple binary of the two-party system suggests.<sup>70</sup> The success of Obama’s overall strategy for organizing is based on active engagement and requires cooperation. Kloppenberg notes, “[t]hrough interaction with others, and with the world, we can test our beliefs” and so assert identity.<sup>71</sup> Obama’s understanding of democracy as, “struggling with differences [and] then achieving provisional agreements that immediately spark new disagreements” speaks to the temporal nature of stability in politics and also the paradox of the blues because the catharsis achieved through the blues performance is only temporary; hardship and longing are never conquered permanently, blue feelings are never gone for good.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Obama’s

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<sup>66</sup> The assumption is that government agencies strive towards deeper forms of engagement from the populace.

<sup>67</sup> Frederick Buell, “Nationalist Postnationalism: Globalist Discourse in Contemporary American Culture”, *American Quarterly* (Vol. 50, No. 3, 1998), p. 550.

<sup>68</sup> James T. Kloppenberg, *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hope, and the American Political Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 30.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>70</sup> It might be useful to think of the Tea Party as disruptive within the binary of the two-party political system.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

understanding of democracy is akin to the difficulty in maintaining swing rhythm because sustaining swing is a delicate balancing act; the rhythm section must maintain a certain tension in sound that has the proper “depth” and interval spacing to sustain the feeling.<sup>73</sup> Antagonistically cooperative, dissent and compliance form but a temporary bond. As Albert Murray asserts, no one has “ever been able to get rid of the blues forever... [y]ou can only drive them away and keep them at bay or the time being”.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Obama’s “predilection to conciliate whenever possible is grounded in his understanding of the history of American thought, *culture*, and politics”.<sup>75</sup>

### Leading with culture

While there is still an “absence of a coherent cultural policy” in the US, several key factors distinguish Marsalis’s international tours from those of his predecessors.<sup>76</sup> First, the Cold War is over and Marsalis is the beneficiary of global markets and advances in technology that have reshaped the recording and communications industries in ways that have a direct impact on performance, access and dissemination of music and associated industries. Second, the *National Security Strategy* advances the importance of diplomacy and so consciously conflates notions of hard and soft power.<sup>77</sup> The *NSS* also advises advancing the nation’s interests by “expanding spheres of cooperation around the world” and recognizes “emerging powers in every region of the world are increasingly asserting themselves, raising opportunities for partnership for the United States”.<sup>78</sup> Third, the US has for all practical purposes resolved its legally and socially sanctioned practice of racial segregation. Efforts to advance democracy abroad can largely no longer be associated with national hypocrisy on this point. Fourth, the blues and jazz have earned national and even international credibility as America’s music and the study of these forms is now integrated into colleges and universities internationally. In an effort that might be best understood as nation branding, the US has positioned itself strategically to advance its post-Cold War global identity in terms of cultural heritage.

The integration of scholarly discourse and the arts can be viewed through at least two novel academic enterprises. Columbia University and Harvard University have taken definitive steps towards integrating jazz

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<sup>73</sup> LaFrae Sci, a drummer who performs internationally as part of the Rhythm Road tours sponsored by the US Department of State explains the “doo-doo-la” of the swing rhythm, its spacing and depth in a workshop in Santiago, Chile. See, <http://www.lafrasesci.com>

<sup>74</sup> Murray, *op.cit.* in note 5, p. 258.

<sup>75</sup> Kloppenberg, *op.cit.* in note 64, p. 83. Emphasis mine.

<sup>76</sup> Von Eschen, *op.cit.* in note 7, p. 24.

<sup>77</sup> President Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

performance into the academic fiber of their institutions. Founded in 1999, Columbia University's Center for Jazz Studies is committed to "research, teaching and public event sponsorship, in the affirmation that understanding jazz can provide a link to the development of new knowledge".<sup>79</sup> In 2003 jazz was fully integrated into Columbia's acclaimed Core Curriculum, requiring every Columbia student to take a course on the subject.<sup>80</sup> Likewise, Harvard University has committed to integrating the performing arts into its intellectual life and is moving towards requiring students to take courses in performance as a complement to chosen fields of study.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, Harvard retained Marsalis for a series of key lectures and performances during 2011-13; a definitive move towards increasing the integration of the arts and academic disciplines.<sup>82</sup> These efforts by Columbia and Harvard will undoubtedly facilitate the integration of the arts into the nation's cultural fabric.

### Case Study: Spain

Marsalis's *Vitoria Suite* is a collaboration between Chano Dominguez (piano) and Paco de Luca (guitar) and others whose deep roots in Spanish traditions merge with the blues and swing of the US.<sup>83</sup> The *Vitoria Suite* is a 12-part composition "inspired by the 12 measures of the blues [and] Marsalis uses the impulse of the blues as a foundation to jointly explore the music of two worlds and two cultures: the jazz and blues of North America and the indigenous Basque music and flamenco of Spain".<sup>84</sup> The cultural territory between the US and Spain, is narrowed as Marsalis integrates the commonalities of both countries' traditions into a singular work. Strategically, the deeper integration of members of the Basque region into the whole of Spain could facilitate peace in the region. "Marsalis shows how much the two locations [US and Spain] have common, musically" and notes "as outsiders, it's not possible for us to play this music in the same way that a Spanish musician would, so instead I've tried to take elements of the music of the region and translate that into the sound of jazz".<sup>85</sup> Even song

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<sup>79</sup> Accessed on 21 November 2011, <http://www.jazz.columbia.edu/mission/history.html>

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> The *Harvard Arts Report* calls for far-reaching changes in the undergraduate curriculum, for the creation of new graduate programs, and for the construction of major new facilities to give the arts a greater presence at Harvard. See, *Report of the Task Force on the Arts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>82</sup> Accessed on 27 October 2011, <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/04/wynton-marsalis-to-kick-off-lecture-series-at-harvard-university/>.

<sup>83</sup> Marsalis's concerts typically include a range of programming such as: workshops, small and large public and private concerts, Masters classes, lectures, etc.

<sup>84</sup> Accessed on 21 November 2011, [http://www.wyntonmarsalis.org/Vitoria\\_Suite](http://www.wyntonmarsalis.org/Vitoria_Suite)

<sup>85</sup> Accessed on 21 November 2011, [http://www.wyntonmarsalis.org/Vitoria\\_Suite](http://www.wyntonmarsalis.org/Vitoria_Suite)

titles pay homage to the host country.<sup>86</sup> The Mayor of Vitoria, Patxo Lazcoz, presented Marsalis with a gold medal in honor of his “contribution to the proliferation of the capital’s image” due to his signature recording paying homage to the city.<sup>87</sup> Lazcoz explains, Marsalis, “spoke about the Medieval part, the Santa María Cathedral, the Paseo de la Senda, the Parque de la Florida and even some of the restaurants including El Portalón and Ikea” and in so doing, Marsalis converses culturally with the city, its residents and those who come hear him perform in the region and demonstrates the power of cultural osmosis to open doors of understanding. The example of musical collaboration inter-culturally could serve as a template for facilitating greater ties within the region through, for example, the development of music and educational programs that integrate the region’s seemingly disparate forms into a synthesis. Having traveled more than 3,000,000 miles touring domestically and abroad,<sup>88</sup> Marsalis’s tour in Vitoria essentially put the city on the map of *swing stations* along his prolific tour route and strengthened diplomatic ties with an established partner.<sup>89</sup>

### **Case Study: Mexico**

The case of US – Mexico relations is instructive. Mexico’s geographic location makes it a key strategic interest for the US. Border control/immigration, drug cartels, and trade all demand that close attention be given to this neighbor with whom the US is poised to have increasingly meaningful engagement. The legacy of colonization has lingered in Mexico and has left an indelible cultural mark from Spain and France that is still evident in the nation’s fabric from architecture to class stratification to national identity. Likewise, racial chattel slavery and the removal of indigenous peoples from tribal lands and the curious treatment of various immigrant groups have left an indelible mark on US cultural identity. Breaking free from the ideological imprint of colonization, Mexico’s numerous wars, land secession to the U.S., history of dictatorship and one-party rule, and recent tumultuous elections have created a complex mixture of religious and national pride, miscegenation and governing styles best captured in the

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<sup>86</sup> “Smooth Night/Suave en la Noche”, “Buleria el Portalón” and “Deep Blue/Profundo” are song titles that pay homage to Spanish culture and language.

<sup>87</sup> Accessed on 21 November 2011, [http://www.eitb.com/news/entertainment/detail/164511/vitoria-honours-wynton-marsalis/"title=Vitoria](http://www.eitb.com/news/entertainment/detail/164511/vitoria-honours-wynton-marsalis/ "Vitoria\"").

<sup>88</sup> Accessed on 21 November 2011, <http://www.wyntonmarsalis.org>

<sup>89</sup> Marsalis’s other collaborative recordings include the *Marciac Suite* (he was honored with the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor by French Ambassador Pierre Vilmont in November 2009) and *Congo Square* with the Ghanaian percussion ensemble, *Odaddaa!* Vitoria and Marciac have both erected bronze statues of Marsalis in their town plazas. Marsalis has played in the Marciac Jazz Festival each year and has done so for more than 30 years.

term, *mestizaje* or as Albert Murray asserts, “*incontestably mulatto*” in the US.<sup>90</sup>

As with the US, two distinct strands of history emerged in Mexico.<sup>91</sup> The liberal version obscured Mexico’s colonial past while the conservative articulation championed it as a defining feature of Mexican identity.<sup>92</sup> The War of the Reform was essentially an effort to reconcile these competing narratives and the liberal version emerged as the dominant account of the nation’s past. Asserting a national history that occluded colonization promoted Mexico as a nation poised for the future because it was disconnected from its troubled past and put into context the nation’s political trends since 1861. Similarly, occluding the reality of mulatto culture in the US, the nation was poised to move forward by obliterating significant struggles of the past. The example of Marsalis’s tours and the diverse collection of performances and educational opportunities contained therein offers the example of the US and its troublesome history in providing a model of how traditional forms (the blues, folk forms and indigenous forms in general) can be integrated into a modern national consciousness but simultaneously raises issues regarding the consequences of so doing. Indeed such debates, over national identity, cultural heritage or nation branding, are a consequence of having an engaged populace. The clear and obvious leader in intra-cultural integration, due to historic and ongoing challenges, the US is uniquely positioned to offer a template for merging seemingly disparate elements of into a unified whole.

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<sup>90</sup> According to James D. Huck Jr., this term refers to “ethnic and cultural blending” that “manifested the best of both the indigenous and the European peoples and cultures,” to form the “enigmatic identity of the Mexican.” Also, “The existence of large, settled, and complex pre-Columbian indigenous civilizations and peoples prior to the Spanish conquest has not only made the process of racial and ethnic mixture more difficult and troublesome but [has] also complicated the process of constructing a unique national identity.” See, James D. Huck Jr., *Mexico: a Global Studies Handbook* (California: ABC-CLIO Press, 2008), p. 159.

<sup>91</sup> In the US, one strand of history ignored the contributions of “others” in the making of the US while a separate strand, hailing from a multicultural or ethnically centered discourse, championed the contributions of ethnic others and immigrants to the building of US national identity. See such collections as Wesley Brown’s, *Imagining America: Stories from the Promised Land, a Multicultural Anthology of American Fiction* (New York: Persea Books, 2003) and Ronald Takaki’s, *Strangers from a Different Shore* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 1998)

<sup>92</sup> The War of Reform (1858-61) was a struggle between conservatives and liberals (representing three different ideological threads) to articulate a history of Mexico. The liberal version of history articulated a view that eliminated the colonial past and so began Mexico’s timeline with the 1821 War of Independence per Justo Sierra. Conservatives, however, viewed Mexico’s history as beginning with colonization (per Lucas Alemán) and viewed the War of Independence as a mistake. See Enrique Krauze *Mexico: Biography of Power, a history of modern Mexico, 1810-1996* (New York: Harper Perennial Publishers, 1997), pp. 91-244 for a detailed contextual discussion of each view of history.

Reconciling the past and present remains a central issue in Mexico. The country's recent political history echoes that of other Latin American nations in honoring its agrarian populace because it has historic ties to the land and its cultivation for subsistence, security, and trade. "Over the past twenty years, the peasantry [in Latin America] has re-emerged, playing a central role in changing regimes, determining national agendas, leading struggles against international trade agreements... as well as establishing regional and local bases of power".<sup>93</sup> The riotous 2000 defeat of Francisco Labastida Ochoa of the long-reigning Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) by Vicente Fox Quesada of the National Action Party (PAN) is an example of Mexico's ongoing struggle between tradition and modernity.<sup>94</sup> After 71 years of rule by the PRI, Fox's electoral win sent Ochoa "into seclusion" while "the party's top leader...resigned her post" and "at least three rival factions lunged for control".<sup>95</sup> In allegiance to tradition, PRI members vowed to oppose the Fox victory and promised to "do everything possible to hobble Mr. Fox" and limit his powers.<sup>96</sup> Fox's presidency represented modernity not only because it altered decades of one-party rule<sup>97</sup> but also because it ushered in a new era of cooperative trade negotiations with the US and Canada.<sup>98</sup> Fox and his PAN successor Felipe Calderón struggled not only to achieve political legitimacy in the midst of hard line political adversaries who remained wedded to tradition, but also to simultaneously achieve equilibrium in forming a meaningful tri-lateral partnership with the US and Canada as trading partners rather than continue the historical asymmetrical relationship with its northern neighbors. Articulating a vision of the country's strategic interests will likely be based on reconciling internal differences or at least

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<sup>93</sup> José Mantero, "What Lies Beneath Music and Land in the US South and Latin America", *Latinos and the US South* (Connecticut: Praeger Press, 2008), p. 205.

<sup>94</sup> The PRI and PRD parties support platforms that are more self-consciously aligned with workers' rights and less likely to support close ties with the US, although the PRI is more likely to engage in cooperative relations with the US. See, Duncan Wood's report on US-Mexico Relations; The Center for Strategic Studies, "Mexico 2012: Tracking Democracy in a Time of Uncertainty", May 2011, for a discussion on security, the economy and energy concerns for the upcoming elections. Also see Krauze op.cit. in note 87, for a discussion of the PRI, PRD, and PAN parties.

<sup>95</sup> Sam Dillon, "Mexico's Ousted Party Tries to Regroup After Stunning Defeat", *The New York Times*, 13 July, 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com>.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Fox represents a trend of ivy-league educated Mexican heads of state. In 2005, Fox signed the Security and Prosperity Partnership agreement which aligned the trade interests of Mexico the US and Canada. In 2008, Fox's successor and PAN party member Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, signed the Mérida Initiative with the United States Agency for International Development. Calderón defeated Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) for the presidency in 2006.

<sup>98</sup> Mexico became a member of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on November 17, 1993, under the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari. See Enrique Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power*, 778. The NAFTA agreement became effective on January 1, 1994. Accessed on 21 November 2011, <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/north-american-free-trade-agreement-nafta>.

narrowing the ideological divide between tradition and modernity in such a way as to assert a cohesive sense of national identity that takes both into account as valid aspects of national identity and it is here that the US example can be instructive.

Marsalis's 2004 residency in Mexico City was his first and laid the foundation for cultural integration.<sup>99</sup> This tour included a diverse array of concerts such as a free Jazz for Young People's Concert, a master class for students, educators and cultural leaders, and a collaboration with the Orquesta Filarmonica de a Ciudad de Mexico. Sponsored in part by the Culture Connect program, these concerts focused on the "importance of jazz in the cultural landscape and in the educational system".<sup>100</sup> Guest vocalist Lila Downs,<sup>101</sup> a beloved *ranchera* and jazz singer who sings in indigenous languages and incorporates traditional songs into her modern repertoire, performed with Marsalis's band and broadened the band's appeal with local audiences, especially those from smaller towns. Performing "El Feo" and "A Glory Train" (a take on Strayhorn/Ellington's "Take the A Train"), Downs and Marsalis integrated Mexican and American cultures into a single entity, declaring jazz a "universal language".<sup>102</sup> US Ambassador to Mexico Antonio O. Garza Jr.,<sup>103</sup> attended a public elementary and secondary school in Mexico City where Marsalis and his band performed.<sup>104</sup> Connecting with youth is a powerful multiplier, planting memories that will endure and encouraging interest in culture and the arts. Similarly, Marsalis's 2010 tour included guest artists: Edmar Casteneda, Paquito D'Rivera, Chano Dominguez, Antonio Sanchez and Diego Urcola in homage to the Spanish diaspora. As with his previous tours to the area, Marsalis's band performed in Mexico City as well as the less well-known cities of Guanajuato and Guadajajara.<sup>105</sup> Repetition, in music or in diplomatic gestures, strengthens relationships and encourages ongoing engagement.

### **The Roundhouse: where trains of thought meet**

Culture coalesces Marsalis's artistic vision and an understanding of US cultural identity. In alignment with President Obama's *National Security*

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<sup>99</sup> Marsalis performed in Mexico City and Aguascalientes at the invitation of the Festival of Mexico.

<sup>100</sup> Accessed on 14 November 2011, <http://www.jazzatlincolncenter.org/about/news/040123-news.html>

<sup>101</sup> Accessed on 14 November 2011, <http://www.liladowns.com>

<sup>102</sup> Accessed on 21 November 2011, <http://www.setlist.fm/setlist/wynton-marsalis/2004/zocalo-de-la-ciudad-de-mexico-city-mexico-5bd49380.html>

<sup>103</sup> Accessed on 21 November 2011, <http://www.tonygarza.com>. Garza served as US Ambassador to Mexico from 2002 – 2009.

<sup>104</sup> Accessed on 21 November 2011, <http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/eng/releases/ep040319Marsalis.html>

<sup>105</sup> Accessed on 28 November 2011, <http://www.wyntonmarsalis.org>

*Strategy* of having the US relationship with "European allies remain the cornerstone for U.S. engagement with the world and a catalyst for international action" Marsalis's tours in Europe and other historically allied regions can be seen as an effort to reinforce those relationships. Additionally, in light of the Bush administration's distancing of European allies over the Iraq war and other controversies, Marsalis's tours can be seen as conscious effort by the US to reconcile ideological differences by more carefully tending to established partnerships.<sup>106</sup> Marsalis does not relay his experiences abroad in political terms but like his legendary predecessors Armstrong and Ellington, he realizes the artistic and professional advantages of having international access through the State. Obama explains, "These relationships must be constantly cultivated, not just because they are indispensable for U.S. interests and national security objectives, but because they are fundamental to our collective security. Alliances are force multipliers: through multinational cooperation and coordination, the sum of our actions is always greater than if we act alone".<sup>107</sup> Marsalis's tours to newly emerging centers of power such those in Latin America and Africa can be seen as part of the US effort to "expand spheres of cooperation around the world" in recognition of the fact that "different nations are exerting greater influence" and "emerging powers in every region of the world are increasingly asserting themselves, raising opportunities for partnership for the United States".<sup>108</sup> His efforts to promote swing as the hallmark of US cultural heritage can be viewed as a concerted effort to motivate people to actively engage their environments, through dance at least. Yet, as Anne-Marie Slaughter insightfully notes, the *NSS* is a document "written by specialists for specialists" and does not answer central questions that "more and more Americans are asking" such as "Where is the United States going in the world? How can we get there? What are the guiding stars that will illuminate the path along the way?"<sup>109</sup> An examination of Marsalis's tours can yield insight into where the US is going strategically and how it might fare long the journey because blues-based jazz connects people on an emotional level, engages them in its provocative call-and-response patterns, and fills them with the feeling of swing rhythms that encourage organized action. Where swing goes, collaboration follows and if Anna Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn, Michaela Riediger and their team of researchers are correct; cooperation is facilitated though music and swing may be its sound.<sup>110</sup>

With history as a guide, the future seems clear. The Cold War era diplomacy so insightfully rendered by Penny M. Von Eschen, Uta Poiger,

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<sup>106</sup> Obama, op.cit. in note 72, p. 41.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>109</sup> Accessed on 21 November 2011, Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Preface" to *A National Strategic Narrative* (Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars: [www.wilsoncenter.org](http://www.wilsoncenter.org), 2011)

<sup>110</sup> Anna Kleinspehn-Ammerlahn, et.al, "Dyadic Drumming Across the Lifespan Reveals a Zone of Proximal Development in Children", *Developmental Psychology* (Vol. 47, No. 3, 2011), pp. 632-644.

Casey Nelson Blake and others makes clear, cultural transfer continues organically (like cellular osmosis) despite legal sanctions, social customs, and geopolitical borders. While the transfer that occurred through the Iron Curtain serves as an excellent example of the possibilities of cultural diplomacy, the United States is now strategically poised to advance beyond its former efforts. The long history of racial chattel slavery, ongoing immigration issues, and the critical body of work that emerged in order to illuminate the process of acculturation and integrate it into the national consciousness make the US is decidedly different than nations new to such struggles. Integrating diverse populations into its national political, socio-economic and legal fabric and articulating a comprehensive national identity based on a critical examination of its diversity are matters with which the US has experience. As natural disasters and political upheavals reshape geographic spaces, the United States is strategically poised to lead in facilitating the effort to coordinate the multilateral conversations necessary to achieving and sustaining equilibrium amongst seemingly disparate nations. The "*incontestably mulatto*" nature of US culture and the critical body of work that delineates its manifestations through the blues and jazz provide a template for facing adversity, managing change, being resilient, and coordinating various and varied entities in a move towards greater societal and perhaps global equilibrium. Indeed, business leaders, the corporate sector, government and academia are sending a resounding cultural "call" and blues-based swing is poised for a "response."

Marsalis's tours demonstrate the power and success of leadership based on culture, not commerce, in engaging both the domestic and international realm. "What is a historic fact is that in the last two decades, foreign policy issues have had an increasing impact on domestic policy".<sup>111</sup> While Cold War era diplomacy was thwarted by domestic racial segregation and rendered US foreign policy untenable, the current moment of more complete intra-cultural osmosis represents a definitive *break* from the past. The end of the Cold War represented a definitive end but also a new beginning and like the musician's break – "or temporary interruption of the established cadence" – the US is now poised to improvise. By coalescing the disparate elements of domestic, foreign and international interests into a cohesive template, the US can demonstrate its resilience -- its ability to face, manage and lead according to its cultural heritage, which is rooted in the traditions of the blues and jazz.<sup>112</sup>

***Jacquelynn Modeste holds a PhD in Cultural Diplomacy.***

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<sup>111</sup> José Luis Valdes-Ugalde, "Mexican Foreign Policy Objectives and Times of Transition", Silvia Nunez-Garcia and Manuel Chavez (eds.), *Critical Issues in the New US-Mexican Relations: Stumbling Blocks and Constructive Paths* (Michigan: Michigan State Press, 2008), p. 37.

<sup>112</sup> Murray, op.cit. in note 4, pp. 94-95.