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## Engineering the post-slave Subject: Louis Armstrong and the Culture of Noise in Early New Orleans

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**Outlandish Noise Now the Supreme  
Effort of the Day.**

**LAW SHOULD ABATE NOISE AS A  
NUISANCE.**

**THE NUISANCE OF NOISE.**

## *Engineering the post-slave Subject: Louis Armstrong and the Culture of Noise in Early New Orleans*

*Dr. Dalton Anthony Jones*

**Tuesday, April 21, 2015, 11:00 - 1:00, 207 BTSU**

Meditating upon the political economy of noise, Jacques Attali claimed that it “is impossible to separate” the history of sound and the musician from one “of repression and surveillance.” In this talk, I draw upon archival sources from turn-of-the-century New Orleans to consider how Progressive Era social reform movements used sound culture as a tool of spatial regulation and control. Collective anxieties about noise offered cover for the entrenchment of white supremacist democratic politics and helped facilitate the nation’s transition, to borrow a formulation used by Joy James, from a slave-democracy to a penal-democracy. Examining city noise ordinances, general court dockets, police correspondences, newspaper accounts and civic records relating to such charges as “boisterous utterances,” “indecent acts with the mouth,” and “disturbing the peace,” I argue that this “carceral continuum,” facilitated by technological, military and corporate enclosures around the medium of sound culture, has limited the enduring potential of emotional and somatic expression as a liberatory space.

Placing Louis Armstrong’s rise from Dickensian poverty on the streets of New Orleans to global stardom within the context of repression and surveillance, I offer a more sobering portrait of twentieth century black aesthetic practices than the one that emerges through traditional narratives of its individual and collective value to us today.

*Dr. Dalton Anthony Jones is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Ethnic Studies at BGSU. He holds a PhD in African-American and American Studies from Yale University (2008). His research interests include (but are not limited to) nineteenth and twentieth century United States popular culture; race, ethnicity, and migration; and, radical social movements and the history of United States colonial imperialism from the Frontier Wars to Iraq.*

*Dr. Jones’s lecture is part of the ICS Faculty Fellows Lecture Series. All events are free and open to the public. For more information, call (419) 372 - 0565.*



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