

International Blues Conference
Delta State University
Delta Music Institute | Room 201
Cleveland, Mississippi

Friday, October 4, 2019

*The Importance of the Blues from a Sociological
and Historical Perspective with a Focus on the Future.*

By Fernando Jones, Presenter
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Dr. Vernell A. Bennett, Moderator

SESSION OUTLINE

- I. Ice Breaker (2 minutes)
Coke, Folk, Yolk . . .
- II. Call-and-Response Slogan (2 minutes)
I Am Somebody . . .
- III. Song (3 minutes)
The Blues Spares None by Fernando Jones
- IV. Blues is . . . (1 minute)
Handout
- V. Paper Presentation (5 minutes)
- VI. Blues is . . . Handout showing (3 minutes)
- VI. Q&A (3 to 5 minutes)
- VII. Autographs

Sources:

- I Was There When The Blues Was Red Hot by Fernando Jones.
- Theory of Multiple Intelligences Dr. Howard Gardner.
- Theory of Social Emotional Learning.

START

Good afternoon, all. I bring greetings from my Mississippi and Chicago family members and the Blues Ensemble students at Columbia College Chicago where I'm on faculty in the Music Department and the Blues Kids in America, Asia and Europe. Ladies and gentlemen, scholars and fans, my name is Fernando Jones.

I am the son of two Mississippians. I started playing the Blues when I was four years old on guitar. My teachers were my brothers. My classroom was the family living room of our apartment at 55 E. 60th St on the Southside of Chicago. The field trips that they took me on were to nightclubs such as Theresa's Lounge, Queen Bee's and the Checkerboard Lounge. From those childhood experiences I carry two things: My love of the Blues and my commitment to performing it live.

The Blues Spares None by Fernando Jones
Bluefunkjazzroll Music, BMI

I tumble like a tumbleweed,
And I roll like a rolling stone.
You'll never see me crumble
And you'll never know the Blues I've known.

Well, my mother's from Mississippi
And my father's from there, too.
Even though I'm from the City
I'm From Mississippi, too.

I tumble like a tumbleweed,
And I roll like a rolling stone.
You'll never see me crumble
And you'll never know the Blues I've known.

The young folks and millionaires
Live their lives under the gun.
You see, the Blues takes no prisoners
And the Blues spares none.

I tumble like a tumbleweed,
And I roll like a rolling stone.
You'll never see me crumble
And you'll never know the Blues I've known.

Question:

If the Blues is the root of American music, then what are the *roots of the Blues*?

One, clearly is **the music** . . . created right here in the State of Mississippi by free and enslaved Black folks of African decent.

Two, **the cultural component** of making something from nothing, and liking it.

Three, the root of **spirituality / ancestral remembrance and a connection to the past.**

Lastly, **the root of youth** . . . the Blues Kid.

Well, since the “Blues Kid” is one of the roots *or pillars* of this music and culture’s “roots” where do they go to: Be with like-minded others? And learn the history and how to play the Blues properly?

Michelangelo said, “In each block of stone there is a stature. It is the task of the sculptor to discover it.”

For the little Black boy in Aberdeen, Mississippi, born over ’70 years ago, who sat at Howlin’ Wolf’s feet under the watchful eye of his maternal grandfather – that was **his Blues Camp . . . his Blues Ed. 101 course . . . his International Blues Conference.** That boy, was my eldest brother, Foree. He was: My mentor . . . my I-IV-V drill sergeant . . . my Blues Camp.

Make no mistake, clearly, for the Blues as a music form to exist there must be a reverence for and a connection to its ancestral past. However, the future’s new ideas, new language, new concepts, and technology must be embraced, while answering society’s charge of proper social and cultural documentation in lyric and song.

As a ***Keeping the Blues Alive Award*** recipient, there is no dire need to *keep the Blues alive* because the Blues is alive . . . as affirmed by your presence here today. But like all living things we have to keep it healthy and one way to ensure its well being is through interdisciplinary programming at the grassroots level in elementary schools.

For the Blues to remain healthy, thrive and attract future generations an investment of “American roots music as an intelligence” by academia has to be deposited into the bank of “today’s youth” . . . for those who will want access to this platform as players and documentarians in a structured, organized, and nurturing environment to withdraw from – tomorrow. That’s where Blues pedagogy comes into play.

Question: How can **you** help attract new student audiences and get them interested in this “oral” tradition? You can:

1. **Share** your musicological experiences and secure their trust.
2. **Listen** to their music ideas.
3. **Engaged** and involve them in the hands-on creative learning process.
4. **Identify** age and content-appropriate songs with socio-geo reference and make lesson plans from them.
5. **Identify** modern recording artists who have created “Pop” songs that follow Blues patterns and structure.

As an educator, I see the future of the Blues in action at the collegiate level at Columbia College Chicago where I’m on faculty in the Music Department, regularly, and on the primary and secondary level with my Blues Kids in America, Europe and Asia in my Blues Camps across the land.

IN CONCLUSION

Just as professional athletic teams have pools of amateur student athletes who feed, respectfully, into their professional leagues ensuring their sport’s vibrancy, integrity, popularity and socio-economic growth we, too, as Blues practitioners, players, producers and culture preservers have to be cognizant of this model in order to secure this music and culture’s future vibrancy, integrity, popularity and socio-economic growth through the lens of Blues pedagogy.

I ask that we, the practitioners, players, producers and culture preservers, keep the educational component of this music and culture at the Vanguard and lobby to help make more STEM schools STEAM schools with mandated instruction to teach the proper history of American music because the Blues is the root of American music and the roots of the Blues are . . . *The Music. The Culture. Ancestral Remembrance and The Blues Kid.* Thank you ladies and gentlemen. Your kindness shall not be obliterated. My name is Fernando Jones and I Was There When The Blues Was Red Hot!

END W/Q&A and AUTOGRAPHS

