

Let's Boogie Woogie in Museums! Episode 1: Crossings and Deportation

About the Podcast: *A multi-voiced conversation about museum exhibits featuring middle school students, museum professionals, an ethnologist from the University of Strasbourg, and artists. Enter the museums and delve into the history of slavery to help understand our current world and combat racism. Enjoy listening!*

[Music & Title...] BOOGIE-WOOGIE IN MUSEUMS. MUSEUM BOOGIE-WOOGIE.

Hosts – ALL: Have you ever been racist?
The way they behave, it's not right.
Boogie-Woogie in museums.
A sound and transatlantic journey.
Against racism. Against racism. Against racism.

Hosts -- Intro: I'm Jade. I'm Havrunnisa. I'm Marine. I'm Youssoupha. And I'm Sofia.

Do you encounter racism? Maybe every day? Several times a day, a year, a month?

What kind of music do you listen to?

Me? Gazo;

Me? Rap;

Me? it's the same as her.

[Sound of hand slapping a body...]

Host: In this first episode, we're going to talk about *Pattin' Juba*. That's what you're hearing. When you don't have an instrument, or don't know how to play one, you can use your body – a method that's both physically raw and vulnerable.

[Sounds the ocean and of a ship creaking...]

Host: A third of the cargo, made up of human beings, died during the crossing. What remains is dance, the temporal, music--an outlet, a hope, a struggle.

"57 heads of Negroes, Negresses, etc., either Creole or native-born, made up of 47 for the garden, most of whom are workers and under 30 years of age, and 10 domestics of various and rare skills, who are currently in the parish of Lanceveau, island and coast of Saint-Domingue, for sale. Please contact M.Brun."

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This is the reading of a deed of sale, from a person. It dates from August 7, 1777.

Once the deportation and crossing had been completed, and regardless of family ties, women, men, and children--large and small-- were sold to white masters, branded, and renamed after their masters.

"A lady who had stopped her passage to the Cape, near the end of the current, asked if anyone had a black woman to send to Saint-Domingue. She would cover the cost of the passage fees for the service she will receive during the crossing. Please contact M.M. Bonafé, frères."

[Piano Music...]

Philippe Chauveau-Vindrinet (PCV): Look at this. What are they?

Students: They're chains. It's chains. I don't see any chains.

It's handcuffs. It looks like handcuffs.

It's like handcuffs, you put them on your hands and then you put them behind your neck.

It's more for the feet, sir.

PCV: It's more for the feet, exactly.

In fact, this system was used on board slave ships. In a moment, you'll see the conditions on a slave ship. These restraints consist of a metal bar on which two U-shaped elements slide. In fact, this type of shackle was used to immobilize captives in pairs, with one person's right ankle and their neighbor's left ankle shackled together. Thus, on board the ship, individuals connected this way could not move. So, both the ankle and, most of the time, one wrist of each individual were immobilized.

Student: Can I try the chain?

PCV: You can touch it, but don't put it on your feet, or you'll fall.

Student: Ah, it's a bit heavy.

PCV: Be careful!

Student: It's a metal bar. And on it, there are some sort of handcuffs in the shape of a half-circle, a U. It's pretty heavy, though. On the feet, it must hurt.

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It must shear the ankle a bit, it must hurt.

PCV: In fact, look at the angle of the metal on the foot, on the ankles. This shackle here was used to immobilize and this one was used like chains.

You can see them, the chains, the links. It looks more like a pair of handcuffs, but still intended for the ankles and this one was used for a single individual when it was necessary to bring the slaves up on deck from where they were confined in the ship, so they could breathe a bit more fresh air than was inside the ship, be fed once a day, and allow the ship's doctor could also check their health. But to prevent them from escaping – though they wouldn't have been able to get very far, being on a ship in the middle of the ocean - nevertheless, the captain needed to prevent revolts and suicides. That's why most individuals, especially men, were shackled when they moved around the ship.

PCV: Yes, when you hold this type of object in your hands, you first feel that it's heavy, cold and angular.

[Piano music plays...]

Laurent Védrine: That is to say, there were ships that were outfitted from Bordeaux by shipowners who financed an expedition, and these shackles are one of the physical witnesses to the imprisonment and deportation of enslaved people. Shackles that would also accompany them throughout the journey to their destination countries. This could be to France, particularly the Caribbean, or to Saint-Domingue, or even French Guiana, in any case within the context of the French colonial empire

PCV: One really important element, which I believe and others also agree with, is that slavery is an invention. Alright? One is not naturally born a slave. One becomes a slave by the will of someone else. One becomes a slave because someone else has decided that it should be so. And in France, as in most European countries, laws were created to establish slavery and make it official.

PCV: Have you ever heard of the Code Noir?

Student: It's a law that says we can buy black people and we can make them work, that they can be our slaves.

PCV: Yes, that is...property.

Students: Yes, that's it. It says that non-whites are chattel and belong entirely to their master.

The Code Noir is a series of French laws created in 1675. It specifies that the enslaved person is movable property.

Possession of movable property means success, wealth, power and strength.

The Code Noir also states that slaves must be baptized. Can you baptize a piece of furniture?

PCV: It makes you think of furniture and mobility, right? So, this movable property, we're going to be able to take it, move it, do whatever we want with it, basically. So, in the end, the Code

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Noir was decided upon and imposed by the Kingdom of France, by the King of France and his minister Colbert. Over time, this Black Code evolved because the statutes changed, but never in a favorable direction for the enslaved. On the contrary, for the enslaved, the status became increasingly harsh and severe.

[Outro, music, credits...]

Hosts - ALL: Why does racism exist? Just because I'm black, I've been hated all these years.

Host: In the next episode, we'll tell you about WorkSong.

This was episode 1 of Museum Boogie Woogie.

With...

With students from Collège Solignac in Strasbourg.

With students from Collège Édouard Vaillant in Bordeaux.

And Laurent Védrine, Philippe Chauveau-Vindrinet.

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