QUESTIONS & DECISIONS-Directions: In your small group, read your assigned quote from a musician in *Talk That Music Talk*. Discuss what happens in their story, and how people’s lives were impacted by living in a society organized by race. What choices did they make around them? How did the history of racial categories developed by scientists like Linneaus and the experiences of living under racial segregation impact their decisions? What have you experienced or witnessed? As a group, be prepared to share your answers with the class.



***Anthony Bennett:*** My grandmother Na Na spoke patois. Half of the time you couldn’t understand what she was saying. She would say, “Look, but in Creole, “Gardé ca.” She sang little Creole songs to you, too. Uncle Lionel Batiste used to call her “Talk of the Town.” She was a tall woman and very outspoken. She told me about when the police chief of New Orleans, David Hennessey, was killed in 1890. People were running around the city yelling, “They killa da chief!” They started rounding up Sicilians. My uncle could have easily been confused for one. They had to put him in the vegetable cart to snake him out of the neighborhood. It was hard to tell the difference between a lot of Sicilians and blacks back then. (Page 117)

***Joseph Torregano:*** The inquiries I get about who I am are unbelievable. If people try to guess, Spanish is probably number one, and then it ranges. Anything from Filipino to Pakastani could be possible. It usually begins with, “Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?” If I say no, they will ask “What is your ethnic background?” I tell them, “African-American.” It confuses them. If I add, “I’m from New Orleans,” they might get it...There was a very ugly split in the family because some of my father’s family crossed the color line and passed for white. My father was a tad darker than me. He could pass for Spanish, but he was always proud of who we were. (Page 141)

***Will Hightower:*** My great-grandmother was really, really old. She lived over on Orleans Avenue by Bayou St. John. My mom tells funny stories about her. How she used to walk with an umbrella every day to get to work because she was Spanish and she didn’t want her skin to get an darker. This was a time when, if you were a certain color, they wouldn’t let you work certain places. (Page 105)

***Woody Penouilh:*** I grew up Catholic during segregation. Even when I was a kid, I questioned why there had to be separation. I went to school with white people. The street I lived on, Esplanade Avenue, was almost all white. A lot of the side streets were black. My mother learned French from her grandmother and went to an all-white girls school. My daddy spoke Cajun French. It used to hurt my heart so much to see the way white people were treating black people. There was so much trouble in the schools—to feel like a person should be shunned for the color of their skin. (Page 193)

***Kenneth Terry:*** My mom was actually the first black lady to move in that block between Marais and Urquhart. It was pre-integration, and, during that time, it was mainly Caucasian. The block voted to see if you could meet their standards to be around Caucasian people. Here’s an interesting thing about “race.” My dad grew up a country boy in Napoleonville, Louisina, and part of his family there is actually Caucasian. A lot of people don’t know that. On the other side, my mom’s dad was the darkest child in the family. They used to call him Midnight. Yes. And my mom inherited her skin tone from him. My parents connected and were together for 46 years. The 1200 block of Frenchmen voted about them, and, as a family, we passed. (Page 167)

***Will Smith***: Ray and I got to be a lot better personal friends when we went to China. The other guys in the band were tall, but I was tall and black. And so everywhere I went, they took me in the backroom. Every­where. They’re going through everything. Digging through all my stuff. I wanted to say, “Yes, I’m still black. The passport is valid.” At the end Ray said, “I never paid attention to profiling as much as I do now.” (Page 239)