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only limited interference from the authorities. The urgent drums of the Calinda and the Bamboula would sound out in the night, and the priestess of the mysteries would lead the proceedings, dancing with her great serpent Le Grand Zombi draped about her as she moved to the ancient rhythms of African magic. Voodoo was practised openly, with many Conjure Doctors and Voodoo Queens operating in the city, selling herbs, fixing gris-gris, and telling fortunes. The Bayou was a hotbed of Voodoo, with large scale midnight ceremonies taking place deep in the swamps on St. John's Eve and other important dates in the Voodoo calendar.

All of this, of course, attracted much negative attention from the typically ignorant and racist press, who can never resist an opportunity to fill column inches with lurid depictions of African traditional religions. The primal fear that the Voodoo gatherings provoked – and the theme of many feverish newspaper headlines – was that they wilfully did not observe the colour line. The somewhat covert liaisons of *plaçage* were one thing, but these 'temporary autonomous zones' in the city attended by black, white and mixed race celebrants were something else entirely. Much like the media hysteria that would later surround jazz, the overwhelming fear of the day was that Voodoo provided a social setting where the lines of racial segregation were dissolved; and specifically, that such mixed gatherings might lead to sexual relations between black men and white women.

Despite these attacks by the press, Voodoo remained a cultural force in New Orleans, but this was to change radically following the Civil War and the failure of reconstruction. Although slavery was abolished in the US, it was replaced by the pernicious Jim Crow segregation laws and the purposeful creation of an underclass. Once wealthy and influential Creoles – if they were fortunate enough not to have lost all their holdings in the war – now found themselves subject to the 'one drop' rule, where their mixed race heritage greatly reduced their civil rights and eradicated any social position they may have attained. The Jim Crow laws were in force right up until the 1960s when the Civil Rights Movement successfully campaigned to have them overturned,

Conjure
doctors &
voodoo
queens

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