



HARVARD JOURNAL
OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN
PUBLIC POLICY



John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

A NATION EXPOSED:
Rebuilding African American Communities

FEATURES

Southern Women's Voices from the Gulf Coast States on Hurricane Katrina
Dr. Ophera A. Davis and Marie Land

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Congresswoman Donna M. Christensen, Britt Weinstock, and Natasha H. Williams

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Reviewed by Reginald Tucker-Seeley

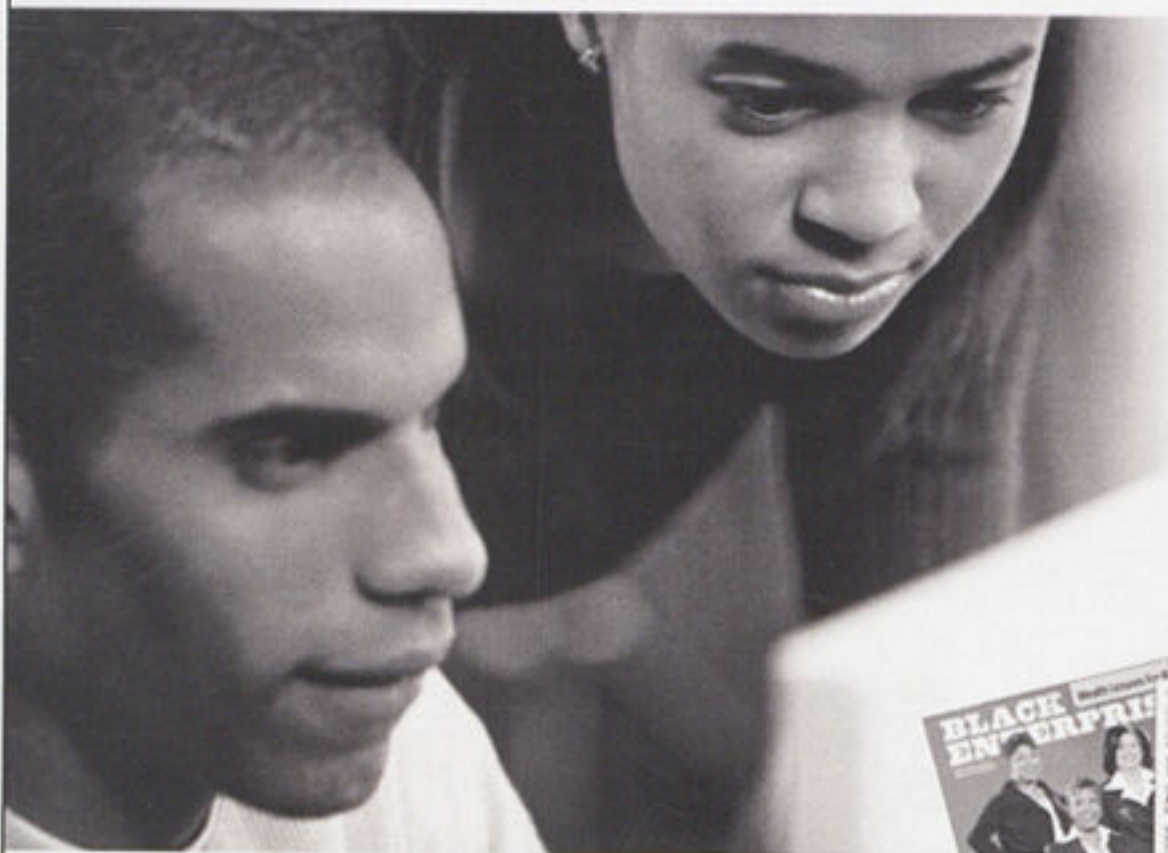
BOOK EXCERPT

Does George W. Bush Care about Black People? Adapted from *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*
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Summer 2006
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Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy

RESERVE YOUR COPY OF VOLUME XII TODAY

The 2006 issue of the *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy*, "A Nation Exposed: Rebuilding African American Communities," is currently available. The journal is a must-read for scholars, students, social scientists, and practitioners with an interest in redeveloping the Gulf Coast in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. "A Nation Exposed" explores the issues of community and economic development, education, environmental quality, civic participation, and health care and provides recommendations for the revitalization of the Gulf region. Contributors to Volume XII include:

- **Melanie L. Campbell**
- **Congresswoman Donna M. Christensen**
- **Dr. Michael Eric Dyson**
- **Marc Morial**

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Editor's Note

Bria Gillum

In the months since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, the reverberations of the storm have established “Katrina” as a metaphor for race- and class-based distinctions that we face as a nation. We are all well aware of the destruction, the images of displaced residents scattered across the country, and the issues of preparation and response by communities and government to a storm of this magnitude. Overall progress remains slow as essential services are too thin to support returning families. Many residents are left with hard choices—to start over and rebuild their homes as New Orleans addresses significant infrastructure challenges or to reestablish themselves in communities outside of the Gulf region.

The storm impacted all communities and families, but for many Americans the once invisible faces of poverty took shape and revealed a reality that most Americans never dreamed possible. Television cameras, newspapers, and radio uncovered thousands of people—disproportionately African American—suffering from a loss of optimism that their lives would ever return to even their definition of normal again. African American residents fared poorly both pre- and post-Katrina, as they lived in low-lying areas that were more flood prone and were the least likely racial group to vacate the area.

A Nation Exposed: Rebuilding African American Communities encompasses the issues of education, economic and community development, health care, environmental quality, and civic participation. The twelfth volume captures human life, human culture, and human possibilities as the nation builds a more racially and economically inclusive region.

We begin with the voices of women directly affected by the storm as women are often silenced by the chaos of government officials and policy analysts. The women answer a series of questions from Dr. Ophera A. Davis of Davis Consulting and master's candidate Marie Land. Dr. Davis and Ms. Land provide an outlet for the women to share and reflect on their experiences and discuss a long-term recovery plan for the region.

The challenge of restoring health services to the region is addressed by both Congresswoman Donna M. Christensen and Dr. Henrie M. Treadwell of Morehouse School of Medicine. Many of the health care services and facilities were either severely damaged or destroyed, and physicians have been displaced. An overwhelming task is described by the congresswoman, which includes rebuilding physician practices and hospital systems, providing health care services to remaining residents, and rebuilding the educational pipeline that trains physicians and health care professionals. Dr. Treadwell advocates for community-based primary and preventative care with a particular focus on men's health, oral health, and mental health.

Melanie L. Campbell from the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, Inc., responds to the crucial question of restoring voting rights to residents displaced by the storm (over one million people). The election in April highlighted the need for voting technologies that allow all citizens the right to vote even if they have not

yet returned to their communities. Ms. Campbell supports legislation proposed by the Congressional Black Caucus as a means to provide Katrina evacuees the same absentee ballot provisions available to military personnel as well as funding for election supplies and equipment damaged by the hurricane.

Professor Jessica Gordon Nembhard from the University of Maryland, College Park, discusses viable strategies for economic renewal to help rebuild the Gulf Coast and that benefit low-income and communities of color. Successful community-based economic development practices and models applicable for the rebuilding process in the Gulf region are highlighted.

In a speech delivered at the Georgetown University Law Center on 12 October 2005, Marc Morial, president of the National Urban League and former mayor of New Orleans, outlines his vision for New Orleans in the Katrina Bill of Rights. The bill supports basic rights for the victims including employment opportunities, restoration of voting rights, and the right to return home.

Interviews with academics and a nonprofit leader provide additional insight on the rebuilding process. Professor James Hoyte, Harvard University Lecturer on Environmental Science and Public Policy, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, discusses the environmental impact of the storm and provides suggestions for managing contaminated areas and maintaining the health and welfare of affected residents. Professor Theresa Perry of Simmons College interviewed Dr. Linda Stelly and Dr. Brenda Mitchell, two women who are working closely with the New Orleans public school system. The interview provides insight on the state's recent decision to have charter schools compete with public schools in the city, as well as their struggle to provide books, materials, and mental health services to children. The final interview with N'Tanya Lee, executive director of Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth in San Francisco, compares the displacement of African Americans in San Francisco to those affected by Hurricane Katrina.

The lesson of Katrina is that the location of housing matters, and it matters for economic, education, health, and other quality of life issues. Reginald Tucker-Seeley's book review of *The Geography of Opportunity: Race Housing Choice in Metropolitan America* by Dr. Xaver de Souza Briggs is included as part of our discussion. The journal closes this issue by featuring an excerpt from the highly acclaimed book by University of Pennsylvania Professor Michael Eric Dyson, *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. Professor Dyson addresses the role that race played in the federal government's response to Katrina victims.

It is our hope that this year's journal details not only the destruction and devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, but also inspires us to join in the rebuilding process. Many of the articles focus on the government's responsibility to rebuild the Gulf Coast. The challenge, however, is not to just rebuild the Gulf Coast as it was, because to do so only continues to promulgate the uneven conditions of its residents. Rather, the focus should be to build a more inclusive and responsive environment that represents a place of opportunity and improves the plight of its diverse residents.

Southern Women's Voices from the Gulf Coast States on Hurricane Katrina

Dr. Ophera A. Davis and Marie Land

ABSTRACT

This essay is a compilation of ten interviews with women ranging in age from twenty to seventy. The women are from New Orleans, Gulfport, and Biloxi. The ethnicity of the women are African American, Caucasian American, Austrian-born Caucasian, and Jewish. The women were identified and asked to participate in a study to offer their opinions and experiences about Hurricane Katrina as residents of Gulf Coast states. Women are sometimes overlooked or not heard. This essay gives women a chance to speak openly and frankly with their own voices.

The media has referred to the people who were involved in the Hurricane Katrina disaster as everything from victims to refugees, however, in this article they will be referred to as survivors.

INTRODUCTION

Southern women are known to some as the prissy belles who follow their husbands around and answer to their every beck and call. But this article will reveal a different side of Southern women. This article will acquaint you with women who have a voice and are willing to say what they feel and think about what happened during Hurricane Katrina and what needs to happen so that the Gulf Coast states can recover. This nature of the Southern women is referred to by many in the South as "the backbone of the culture." These women are often overlooked, but there are a few brave souls who heroically are willing to share their survival stories.

This essay compiles ten interviews with women ranging in age from twenty to seventy. The women are from New Orleans, Gulfport, and Biloxi. The ethnicity of the women are African American, Caucasian American, Austrian-born Caucasian, and Jewish. The women were identified and asked to participate in a study to offer their opinions and experiences about Hurricane Katrina as residents of Gulf Coast states.

Dr. Ophera A. Davis is President of Davis Consulting. She has taught for more than ten years. Dr. Davis's most recent appointment was a visiting professorship at Wellesley College. Her research focus is counseling African Americans. She has published articles and delivered research presentations in China, Ghana, South Africa, Europe, and America.

Marie Land is originally from New Orleans but grew up in New England. She returned to New Orleans for five years to attend her parent's alma mater. She has a B.S. in psychology from the University of New Orleans. She is currently a master's degree candidate in the counseling psychology program at Boston College.

The women were asked a series of questions, and some of their answers are included. For example, the women were asked if surviving the disaster had changed their lives and, if so, how. They were also asked what they think the long-term recovery plan for the Gulf Coast states should entail. After interviewing these Gulf Coast states' hurricane survivors, several themes emerged. This essay will include direct quotations from the women as they relate to the themes that surfaced.

The first theme that emerged from the interviews was that racial and socioeconomic factors played a major role in the response to Hurricane Katrina. We have chosen to let the women speak for themselves. Some of their responses are below.

SEVENTY-YEAR-OLD CAUCASIAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

Well, if citizens from Cape Cod would have been affected or were begging for water that would not have happened. Would they have them living in tents and sleeping on cots outside for two months? Frankly, I don't think so. How about the residents of West Chester, New York? Neglect was what I saw on television from New Orleans. Affluent areas wouldn't be treated that way I don't think or rich residents who live along the California beaches. I don't think so. Would the response have been so slow or just no response at all for days? I don't think so.

FIFTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

Yes, especially in New Orleans. The project area where most Blacks live was hardest hit.

I think the response would have been very different if prime property owners who had money were where the Blacks were. Politics played a key role in the way people were treated. FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] was there before the storm—Wilma or whichever one it was—hit in Florida, and they still have offices open now for long-term recovery for the Florida hurricane survivors. Florida had three or four hurricanes this past season, and the response there was very different from the response in New Orleans.

THIRTY-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

Yes, because the areas that were most impacted by the flood were the low-education and mostly African American areas. They're not trying to get the Black areas of the city back up. They are just thinking about the French Quarter and lake area and not working on the Black parts—the Black parts of all classes, even high-class African American areas. Lakeview is upper and middle white. [They are] not focusing on a majority of New Orleans. Most of New Orleans is Black. So they are not focusing on where the people of New Orleans came from.

TWENTY-EIGHT-YEAR-OLD AUSTRIAN-BORN NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

Honestly, I do think it played a role in the response. I think that the poverty in New Orleans has gone on for so long and hasn't been an issue because the people are

mostly African American, and it just seemed that sort of New Orleans was just this dirty little secret that no one wanted to see, and the hurricane happened, and again these people got ignored.

FIFTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

People were disadvantaged and poor, they didn't have the means or money to leave, and some had no place to go. People were not given good information. I think if Katrina had hit and affected mostly elite people, the response would have been just the opposite of what happened to the poor people—what we all saw on television.

THIRTY-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

Wow. I want to say yes, just for the simple fact that when you think about 9/11 and how fast the government response was. We have the power to come into an area that is filled with water. I do think it was especially a poverty thing. It was the poor that were left and couldn't get out. It was almost as if they were expendable to the government. If it were people that were important to the community or were necessary for the functioning of the city, they would have done more. The poor were not going to be missed. They weren't major contributors to the society. I hate to pull the race card, but, yeah, it was why.

A second theme that emerged was how the women survivors felt Hurricane Katrina had personally changed their lives. When we asked the respondents questions sometimes their voices broke as they were speaking. This emotional response was due to the fact that many of the women had been personally affected or knew someone who had been directly affected. Some striking comments from respondents include that Hurricane Katrina "leveled the playing field," and "There is a greater sense of community even though we are shattered." Over half of the respondents said that their religion, faith in God, church, and prayers helped them survive. We again allow the women to speak for themselves.

TWENTY-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHER AND NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

Being separated from my family is the worst. My family is all relocated. I mean, my husband is in New Orleans, my sister in Alabama. Dad's in Canada, and I'm here in Lake Charles with the baby. This makes no sense.

TWENTY-EIGHT-YEAR-OLD JEWISH NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

It sounds cliché. It's been a stronger sense of family and the importance of people. And I spent a month thinking about how all my possessions are gone, and I reevaluated everything I had—thinking I'd lost all material things. And I think just living back in the city you have to not let the little things make you go crazy because nothing is going right.

And also for me our temple has helped because just coming back and having something to come back to (the people you recognize) has been kind of therapeutic—going back to work too, even though it is stressful. Having a normal, repetitive routine makes a difference—just having something to do.

FIFTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

Yes, Katrina has made me a stronger person. I lost my house. Katrina has taught me to not take anything for granted. Katrina has strengthened my faith in God. I pray more. I never thought I would experience anything like this in my life. I appreciate small things much more now. My privacy is important to me now. I never thought of it before in our own home, but now we are living in a dormitory provided by my job because we are not eligible for help because we had flood insurance. My comfort zone has been totally taken away.

SEVENTY-YEAR-OLD CAUCASIAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

Yes, I have been changed by Katrina. I realized that material things are not important. Family and friends are important. I think it has softened city officials too. I hope it softens senators and national officials. I also realized that it is citizens who make a real difference when a disaster hits—not the government. Major mistakes were made by FEMA. No one was accountable. Children are being neglected by our government. People are living in tents and can't take a bath. I feel sad too that people are living in tents. It's cold here. Every group was affected by Katrina, from the richest of the rich to the poorest of the poor. I never thought I would see anything like this in my life.

THIRTY-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

I don't think it has changed anything about me. I think that if anything it has increased everything I already thought about myself and where I should be going. It makes me think about what was already wrong with New Orleans.

FIFTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

Yes, I have changed personally. I am more grateful, thankful, than before. I feel I have been spared by the hurricane because my son and I were in this house when the storm hit. We did not evacuate because they said the storm was not going to be as bad, but then they changed later that night and said it was going to be very bad, but it was too late, and we had to stay where we were and wait it out. The storm hit a part of my house and blew a part of the roof off. We were definitely spared. I am also more prayerful, and I think of God and church more. I didn't perish. I didn't lose everything like some people I know. The storm was powerful, overwhelming. It took from all, rich and poor. It leveled the playing field in a way, as strange as that seems.

THIRTY-YEAR-OLD CAUCASIAN NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

I have stopped planning ahead. All I thought I had has been taken away. I lost my job, my home. When I was evacuated I didn't know where I would go. You had to live one day at a time. I think the people that returned had a bigger sense of community and belonging. Everyone helps each other out. You can approach each other on the street. I just learned to live with less—content with the little you have left—and I am more appreciative.

The theme of culture was mentioned by almost all respondents. The women had varied viewpoints about the effect on or loss of Southern culture. The women also had differences of opinion about culture depending on whether they lived in Mississippi or New Orleans.

TWENTY-ISH JEWISH NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

The hardest part for me is realizing that New Orleans is never going to be the same. I knew a month ago that it was going to be gone. The racial composition has changed. It saddens me. I loved the diversity. Now it's mostly white and some Mexicans. The city is what it is because of the people, and I worry about what it's going to be in the future.

THIRTY-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

I mean it's never going to be the same. I don't know how long it will take to rebuild. I don't know if it is a priority. All this displacement—is the water even out of the Ninth Ward? People are going to just forget about New Orleans.

SEVENTY-YEAR-OLD CAUCASIAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

I feel a lump in my throat when I leave home each day and see the devastation. It's overwhelming. It looks like an area that has been bombed now. This used to be our home. Now it is gone, wiped out by Katrina.

FIFTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

For the Southerners who had to leave and their families who had to give up everything I think it will be hard. But I believe they will always be Southerners in their hearts regardless of their environment. I don't think they will lose their culture because they are relocated.

FIFTY-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

I do not think the storm will change Southerners. I think it will soften people.

A lot of people were humbled by Katrina. For example, I work with FEMA now, and a lot of older White people who would never be polite or helpful to Blacks say "yes ma'am" to Black people now and "thank you." They also have told me "thank you for listening to my story. I will pray for you tonight; you have a good day ma'am." That has never happen to me before, and I have lived in Mississippi all my

life. Prejudice was reduced some, and people pulled together and helped one another regardless of race, especially during the first few weeks after Katrina.

The final theme that emerged was the issue of what to do after Katrina. These women have thoughts and suggestions for local and national officials about what needs to happen to restore the lives of the people of the Gulf Coast states. Within this theme are comments like "the Small Business Association needs to be here to help...without hassles," "we are living like people in Third World countries," "there are not enough FEMA trailers," and "they are not allowing those people to come back home." Again we allow the women to offer suggestions in their own words.

FIFTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

The news on television said the government is not going to rebuild the projects in New Orleans, then where will the people live? They will probably make it prime property now by rebuilding condos by the water for high-income residents. But a plan for recovery needs to start now. This year's hurricane season has been predicted to be [the] worst. Insurance costs will increase, adding more debt or cost to residents who have nothing now. Tropical depressions, global warming will have an effect on the Gulf Coast states again as it always does. The government needs to stop holding people's hands. Staying in hotels and on cruise ships is not going to last. People need to start now to think of a long-term plan for their families. People need to consciously think about this. Counselors need to start talking to people about careers, new businesses, and the Small Business Administration needs to be here to help them without hassles. About FEMA...people shouldn't have to call around and try to figure out the FEMA system during a disaster. They should use local people and probably the churches as the main centers and distributor sites as points of information. Also, insiders and outsiders should be a part of the solution and what happens next for two reasons: Number one, insiders who have been affected are so subjective based on what happened to them and people they know that it clouds their judgment about the issue sometimes. I think insiders will be excellent for providing strategies that work best if a storm hits and especially in the first stages of the devastation. But, number two, outsiders need to be a part of the long-term plan too because they are objective and can suggest things that people who experience the tragedy may not think of.

TWENTY-EIGHT-YEAR-OLD CAUCASIAN NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

We need people to come back to our city so the economy can come back and the school systems and businesses. We need FEMA trailers on our properties until we can rebuild. The government should do more.

SEVENTY-YEAR-OLD CAUCASIAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

Congress needs to forget politics and help us. They came to the aid of New York so now they need to come to the aid of the Gulf Coast states. People are still suffering

here every day. Funds need to be designated to help Katrina survivors. Politicians need to come to the Gulf Coast states and see this disaster just like they went to New York. They need to be held accountable for coming or not coming to help the Gulf Coast states too. They need to hire the mayor of Biloxi and other leaders like him who know what to do when this type of thing happens because of their experience. Katrina survivors need individual help: jobs, homes repaired, new homes, and improved living standards. I still have hope that the most powerful country in the world will do what's right. Those displaced need to be helped. The Small Business Administration [SBA] needs to help people figure out viable businesses to open and fund them without giving them a hard time. The SBA's leadership and policies need to be reviewed and waived so that some of these people can get back on their feet due to the magnitude of Katrina. The Federal Government and Congress need to stop dragging their feet. Now is the time for action. People need help today.

THIRTY-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN NEW ORLEANS RESIDENT

They focus too much on rebuilding the business areas. But no people of the city are there. They are not worried about cheap housing for the poor people to come back home. My mom said that the projects downtown had no damage. All those people could go back, but they are not allowing those people to come back home. That's some crap.

FIFTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT

The government needs to get more involved in this disaster to help us get our lives back together...rebuild our homes. It is all about rebuilding lives now! They need to try to change and make things better than they were before. New policies need to be in place to deal with a disaster...FEMA was awful. We need to be better prepared to help people when a disaster strikes. Politicians need to come to Mississippi and New Orleans to see for themselves that we are not doing okay down here. The way we are living is substandard...it's like living in a Third World country.

There is a plethora of other valuable comments made by the respondents. Some touch upon the type of support they received following Katrina. Almost all respondents commented upon FEMA's ineffectiveness. A few offered suggestions on how FEMA might plan ahead next time. In addition, respondents said that their family members and people from across the nation came to the aid of the Gulf Coast residents to help their fellow American citizens. Below are a few comments that particularly stood out.

SEVENTY-YEAR-OLD CAUCASIAN FROM MISSISSIPPI

United States senators, congressmen, and women did not become actively involved with this disaster like they did with 9/11 because they could not profit from it. What do I mean? I mean as far as electoral votes are concerned. New Orleans [i.e., the state of Louisiana] has nine, Mississippi has six, and Alabama has nine; New York has thirty-one, Florida twenty-one, Texas thirty-four, and California fifty-five. Congressmen felt they could benefit by going to New York for 9/11, or other big

electoral vote states, but the total number of electoral votes for the Gulf Coast states is twenty-four. So since they can't capitalize...most didn't come to see the Gulf Coast states disaster or offer to help.

FIFTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN FROM MISSISSIPPI

A group of men called the North Carolina Men came and are still here. They have a system that really works well. It's a drive through to get the basics: ice, water, and hot food. They just ask what you need, and how much, then they put it in your truck, and the line keeps moving. It is very efficient and helpful, especially when people are already so stressed out.

FIFTY-FOUR-YEAR-OLD AFRICAN AMERICAN FROM MISSISSIPPI

Well, I feel we were penalized by our government (FEMA) because we owned our home and had flood insurance. We were not eligible for any assistance, and we have nothing now. The flood insurance is not doing us any good now! I need help too. We are homeless. We all need help. To discriminate at this stage is just...it's just not fair. FEMA has closed our case two times. They don't tell us why they closed the case when we go back to try to get help. We are staying at my job site now. We will have no place to stay in January. Some people are living in their cars because they don't have a place to stay either.

CONCLUSION

Ending this essay was difficult, and we struggled with how to do it. As we thought of all the comments of respondents, we realized that there had been only one mention of Atlanta, Georgia: a city in a Southern state that has transformed itself and is no longer viewed like the Gulf Coast states. After brainstorming and investigating, we decided that a history lesson was the best way to bring this essay to a close. In 1852, Atlanta's population was 3,000, including some 500 slaves. Because of its location and commercial importance, Atlanta was used as the center for military operations and as a supply route by the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Atlanta became a target of the Union army. General William Sherman and his troops captured the city in 1864. In order to weaken the Confederate military organization, Union troops burned Atlanta to the ground before they moved on. Today, Atlanta is the capital of Georgia and is known for its robust economy and a populace of over 416,000. Katrina leveled the Gulf Coast states, and now it is up to the United States of America to make a decision like General Sherman made. What shall we do with the Gulf Coast states? Shall we rebuild them better than they were before so that they can also reemerge as Atlanta did and take their rightful place as a part of these United States of America? Or do we let the Gulf Coast states die and pretend Hurricane Katrina never happened? Only history will tell.

From Despair to Hope: Rebuilding the Health Care Infrastructure of New Orleans after the Storm

Congresswoman Donna M. Christensen, Britt Weinstock, and Natasha H. Williams

ABSTRACT

The wide-scale devastation wrought on the Gulf Coast by Hurricane Katrina exposed what may be one of our nation's least talked about and most poorly addressed shortcomings: that we are a country of "haves" and "have nots." It is no secret that even before the hurricane the health care system in Louisiana—particularly in New Orleans—struggled to meet the needs of its residents and was mired with disparities. As we rebuild the health care infrastructure of the Gulf Coast, this resounding tragedy brings with it the hope and opportunity to redesign and rebuild a health care system that eliminates disparities and creates equality.

INTRODUCTION

On 29 August 2005, Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast leaving in its wake massive destruction. The worst natural disaster in the history of the United States laid bare the social and economic inequities that percolated beneath the surface of our great nation, exposing an underclass of Americans who were abandoned

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by society long before the storm hit and the levees broke. The three states that sustained the brunt of the storm's fury were Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, which are also the poorest in the United States-Louisiana, with a poverty rate of 22 percent; Mississippi, with a poverty rate of 23 percent; and Alabama, with a poverty rate of 20 percent (Schneider and Rousseau 2005). In the days following the hurricane, the images of Americans standing on rooftops, pleading for rescue, and dying among the chaos were burned into our collective consciousness. Many of those-predominately people of color-were unable to evacuate because they were the poor, including the elderly, the young, and the sick.

In addition to destroying the levees, the hurricane further decimated a fragile health care infrastructure that was the lifeline to many of the medically needy and under served. In New Orleans specifically, many of the hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, community health centers, and other health care facilities were either severely damaged or completely destroyed. Many of those impacted health care facilities and providers delivered essential health care services to the poorest and most underserved communities.

The looming challenges in redesigning and rebuilding the health care infrastructure of New Orleans are great, including rebuilding physician practices and hospital systems; providing health care services to the remaining residents of New Orleans, as well as those who will eventually return; and rebuilding the educational pipeline that trained many of the physicians and health care professionals who served the poor and uninsured in the community. As overwhelming as this task may seem, however, we must not shrink from this challenge, because the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina also brings with it the hope and opportunity to redesign and rebuild a health care system that eliminates health disparities and creates health equity.

DISPARITIES IN LOUISIANA

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana was the home to at least 4.5 million people (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals 2005). According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2004 American Community Survey, nearly five in ten (45 percent) residents had family incomes below 20 percent of the federal poverty level, and the state was second only to Mississippi, which ranked number one with the highest poverty rate in the country (21.6 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau 2004). In New Orleans alone, nearly one in four (23 percent) residents lived in poverty, earning only \$16,090 for a family of three (Kaiser Family Foundation 2006).

Before the hurricane hit, the high poverty rates throughout the state correlated with the high uninsured rates. From 2003 to 2004, Louisiana had the fourth-highest uninsured rate in the nation, with about one in every five people living without any health insurance (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals 2005). Of those with coverage, nearly half (48 percent) were covered by private health insurance, and over one-quarter were covered by public health insurance programs: Medicaid covered 15 percent, and Medicare covered 13 percent of insured residents (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals 2005).

Not only was Louisiana one of the poorest states, with a significant uninsured problem, but also its health statistics were among the worst in the United States.

Moreover, there were exorbitantly high racial and ethnic health disparities. For example:

- The infant mortality rate for African Americans was twice that of Caucasians.
- The prevalence of diabetes in African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans was approximately double that in Caucasians.
- Almost one-third of Louisiana adults were overweight, with African Americans more likely than Caucasians to be overweight (Macklin 2003).

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, nearly one-fourth of Louisiana's population resided in the New Orleans area, and it is anticipated that more than half of all hurricane survivors will eventually return home. With the devastation of its health care service and delivery, and public health systems, Louisiana-and particularly the city of New Orleans-will not be able to meet the health care needs of its returning residents and the uninsured workers who have moved to the area to help rebuild the city. The city's health disparity challenges will persist unless the health care infrastructure is restored and rebuilt.

DAMAGE TO HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana State University (LSU) operated ten state-funded inpatient hospitals and over 350 clinics, including the Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans (MCLNO), that primarily served the underinsured and uninsured (Kaiser Family Foundation 2006). Additionally, LSU operated nineteen other acute care hospitals and community health centers in the region (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals 2005).

Even though there were other hospitals in New Orleans, MCLNO, which was the *only* Level 1 Trauma Center and included Charity and University Hospitals, was a fundamental component in the backbone of the LSU health care system. The hospital provided care to the indigent, uninsured, and predominately African American and other ethnic minority population in New Orleans. In fact, more than 50 percent of inpatient care provided by MCLNO was to uninsured patients, nearly three in four of MCLNO patients were African American, and more than eight in ten (85 percent) had annual incomes that were \$20,000 or less. Among all of the hospitals in New Orleans, MCLNO accounted for nearly one in four (23 percent) emergency room visits, 14 percent of all hospital admissions, and nearly one in five (19 percent) total births in the New Orleans area (Kaiser Family Foundation 2006). Furthermore, it provided more than “25,000 discharges and more than 407,000 outpatient visits per year (including 144,000 emergency department visits) both at the hospital campus and through a network of satellite clinics. An astonishing 51 percent of its patients were uninsured and another 32 percent were covered by Medicaid” (Schneider and Rousseau 2005, 3).

After Hurricane Katrina, most of the health care service and delivery facilities in New Orleans were either severely damaged or destroyed. MCLNO was closed, and only seven of the acute care hospitals remain in operation (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals 2005).

According to the National Association of Community Health Centers, Katrina cost the health centers in New Orleans more than \$43 million in damage (Simmons 2005). Moreover, 15 percent of all health centers that were permanently destroyed were located in New Orleans (Duke 2005).

For those residents who remained and those who are assisting in the rebuilding efforts, health services are very limited, and health care resources are extremely scarce. In order to receive medical care, many depend upon tent cities and temporary trauma centers staffed by displaced physicians and other health care professionals. Furthermore, patients often wait days before being seen by a health care provider and getting prescriptions filled.

DISPLACED HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, approximately 4,300 medical doctors and 13,000 registered nurses worked in the New Orleans region. Despite these pre-hurricane numbers, a shortage of health care professionals persisted, with a shortfall of approximately 830 health care personnel (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals 2005). After the storm that shortage worsened. In fact, it is estimated that over 6,000 physicians alone had been displaced in the Gulf Coast region. Of the physicians in the flood-affected areas, which included six Louisiana and four Mississippi counties or parishes, many were specialists (2,952), primary care physicians (1,292), and obstetricians/gynecologists (272) (Ricketts 2005). Many of them have been displaced throughout the country.

In New Orleans, more than two in three displaced providers (4,486) were in the three central New Orleans parishes-Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and Jefferson parishes-all of which were evacuated (Ricketts 2005). It is estimated that more than one in three (35 percent) displaced physicians in these three central New Orleans parishes were primary care physicians (Ricketts 2005). The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals states that in order to provide adequate primary health care services to the general and low-income populations that have started to, and are expected to continue to, return to New Orleans, St. Bernard, Jefferson, and Plaquemines parishes, need approximately ninety-five restored or new primary care practices, each with at least two primary care doctors (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals 2005). Furthermore, if all these practices require new construction, it could cost almost \$90 million, and that does *not* include costs associated with covering medical personnel and staffing (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals 2005).

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The devastation wrought by Katrina has not only damaged the physical structures of the New Orleans health care system, but also has drastically impacted the educational pipeline of future physicians and health care providers that serve predominantly medically needy and underserved communities in the area. Universities and colleges such as LSU, Tulane University, Xavier University, and Delgado Community College provide a vital supply of health care professionals who work in the hospitals, clinics, and community health centers that provide health care

to some of the area's most vulnerable residents. Additionally, Xavier University and Delgado Community College, in particular, play an integral role in diversifying the pool of rising health care providers. When Hurricane Katrina hit, over 1,200 resident physicians were in training in New Orleans (Ricketts 2005). Of the approximately 1,300 enrolled medical students from Tulane University and LSU, most were relocated to other programs in the region, primarily to Baton Rouge and east Texas (Ricketts 2005).

LEGISLATIVE REMEDIES

As the reconstruction of New Orleans gets underway, it is imperative that the health care providers and the medical and academic institutions, which were the foundations of the New Orleans health care infrastructure, be the foundation upon which rebuilding and restoring begins. Until that begins, however, these providers and institutions need resources to cover their funding gaps, to retain their faculty, and to allow them to continue to provide the life-saving health services to the residents who remained and are returning to the area. For example, it is estimated that the LSU Health Sciences Center will need \$98.4 million in 2006 to retain its faculty and continue to offer its health profession education and training programs (Stephens 2005).

While progress has been slow, there are myriad reasons why progress must happen, and there are indicators that progress *will* happen.

CONCLUSION

As a result of Hurricane Katrina, at least 650,000 people were evacuated from the New Orleans region, with about 290,000 evacuating to other parts of Louisiana and about 360,000 leaving the state altogether (Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals 2005). Many of the individuals impacted were from medically needy and underserved communities. Additionally, because a disproportionate number of Hurricane survivors lacked health insurance or were grossly underinsured, they had, and continue to have, serious unmet health care needs and challenges. In fact, before the storm, Louisiana's health statistics "were among the worst in this country, even though the health care expenditures were at the national average" (Stephens 2005, 1).

As we redesign and rebuild the health care infrastructure of the Gulf Coast and New Orleans, we also must build healthy communities that create positive economic, social, political, and environmental structures that ultimately affect health care. If we redesign a state-of-the-art health care system, but the patient lives in a community that does not have a grocery store that provides fresh produce or is unable to exercise because his or her community lacks safe areas in which to exercise, we have not solved the problem. If we fail to be vigilant about the possible negative environmental impacts either created or worsened by the hurricane and subsequent flooding, fail to closely monitor residents, returnees, and workers for the environmental health impacts, and fail to act to mitigate them, we will continue to perpetuate the problems. These social determinants of health—where you live, what you eat, the stress you experience, and where your children go to school—impact our health and well-being every day. Those individuals in our society who are at the low-

est socioeconomic rung suffer the most serious health complications because they lack resources to access quality health services.

Therefore, in order to provide the necessary preventive, diagnostic treatment, dental and mental health, and hospice and primary care services to those who remain in New Orleans, as well as those survivors who are returning, it is imperative to build a health care system based on a public health approach. It must be affordable, community-based, comprehensive, and culturally competent. Equally important, such a health care system should embrace evidence-based medicine, quality standards, and health information technology. Finally, we must also take this opportunity to expand health care coverage to the low-income and uninsured residents and build a foundation that invites and encourages the community to be an active participant in its health care.

Hurricane Katrina exposed the inequities in our health care system. We must let the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast and New Orleans and its health care infrastructure show our innovation, compassion, and revolutionary vision. And we must do so in a manner that champions health care equity.

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Reimagining and Recreating Health Care Systems along the Gulf Coast

Dr. Henrie M. Treadwell

ABSTRACT

I use the metaphor of water to argue for reimagining and recreating health care systems along the Gulf Coast that were destroyed or severely damaged during Hurricane Katrina. Rather than merely treating the symptoms of an ineffective system, I argue for the active participation of the residents of New Orleans to address core problems and better ensure that the needs of those without resources are met. Based upon the experiences of the Community Voices learning laboratories, I maintain that mental health, men's health, and oral health should be explicit priorities in order to provide much needed community-based primary care.

Surely there shall yet dawn some mighty morning to lift the Veil and set the prisoned free. Not for me,—I shall die in my bonds,—but for fresh young souls who have not known the night and waken to the morning; a morning when men ask of the workman, not “Is he white?” but “Can he work?” When men ask artists, not “Are they black?” but “Do they know?” Some morning this may be, long, long years to come. But now there wails, on that dark shore within the Veil, the same deep voice, “Thou shalt forego!” (W.E.B. DuBois, 1903).

STANDING ON THE SHORES OF LAKE KATRINA

On 29 August 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall as a category four hurricane, causing widespread damage along the Gulf Coast of the southern United States and virtually destroying the city of New Orleans when the levees failed to hold back the waters from Lake Pontchartrain. Standing on the shores of Lake Katrina, I watched in horror as most local, state, and federal agencies waited before responding—if at all—to the unfolding disaster.

In the faces of the victims I saw dignity and nobility despite unimaginable loss and tragedy, and I identified with the residents of New Orleans as a member of the larger African American community. My colleagues at the National Center of Primary Care (NCPC) at the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, Georgia, and I witnessed our own people dying and suffering, and we vowed to be a part of the recovery of New Orleans by ensuring that the wisdom we had gained through decades of experience in the health care arena is brought to bear on the current

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crisis. Indeed, the mission of the NCPC is to promote excellence in community-oriented primary health care and optimal health outcomes for all Americans, with a special focus on underserved populations and on the elimination of health disparities.

Among the casualties of Hurricane Katrina is the storied Charity complex, including the main “Big Charity” hospital, its sister University Hospital, research laboratories, and physician offices. Some argue it should be razed. Others demand it be rebuilt. Since it is a public hospital system, its damages are being acutely felt among the poor and working class residents of New Orleans, the overwhelming majority of which are African American. According to Ceci Connolly (2005) of the *Washington Post*, “But the debate over Charity, once the linchpin in this city’s health care system, has come to symbolize much more than a battle over a cherished relic. Providing medical care is one of the most daunting challenges for New Orleans as it rebuilds, and the choices made now will determine whether one of the nation’s poorest cities can adequately care for its legions of uninsured.”

WADING THROUGH THE FLOOD

If we take a longer historical perspective on the current humanitarian crisis, the results are all too predictable. The unequal distribution of safety along social and racial lines is a constant theme, regardless of the human or natural disaster in question (Canadian Medical Association Journal 2005). Hurricane and flood preparedness in New Orleans has been of central concern since the city’s early settlement. New Orleans was built on a delta marsh. Many sections of the city lie beneath the level of neighboring water bodies. In effect, New Orleans is sandwiched between levees from Lake Pontchartrain to the north and the Mississippi River to the south, creating the “bowl” effect so often described.¹

While flooding containment efforts up through the mid-twentieth century focused primarily on floods from the Mississippi River, the deadly impact of Hurricane Betsy in 1965 brought concerns regarding flooding from hurricanes to the forefront of public consciousness. The following account is provided by Kent B. Germany in *LBJ and the Response to Hurricane Betsy* (2005):

On the evening of September 9, 1964, Hurricane Betsy came ashore near Grand Isle, Louisiana, as a Category 4 storm, with the National Weather Service reporting wind gusts near 160 mph. As the storm tracked inland, the city of New Orleans was hit with 110 mph winds, a storm surge around 10 feet, and heavy rain. Betsy devastated low-lying areas on the eastern side of the city and eventually led to the expansion of an already impressive levee system to protect a city that lay mostly below sea-level. After the storm passed, Louisiana Senator Russell Long, the son of the legendary Senator and Governor Huey Long, called President Johnson to get the President to tour the devastated areas. In Long’s unique style, he let the LBJ know that the Betsy had severely damaged his own home and had nearly killed his family.

LBJ arrived in New Orleans five hours after talking to Senator Long. Reporters noted that he was shocked by the suffering and in particular

by thirst of survivors in one shelter. He immediately announced that the “red tape be cut,” and he took personal control of operations, which he continued—according to the *Washington Post*—“day and night.”

The impact of Hurricane Betsy was most profound on the largely poor and African American residents living in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans and Chalmette. The storm killed 76 people in Louisiana and was the first hurricane to cause damages in excess of \$1 billion, thus earning it the title “Billion Dollar Betsy.” Because of these intense, deadly, and costly consequences, the name Betsy was retired from the recurring list of names for hurricanes and replaced by the name Blanche, which was first used in 1969.²

RECEDING WATERS

When the flood waters from Hurricane Katrina receded, they helped reveal the duality in resources available to the wealthy and poorer residents of New Orleans regarding their abilities to hear, understand, and respond to the evacuation orders. A survey jointly designed by the *Washington Post*, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Harvard School of Public Health was conducted from 10-12 September 2005 amongst 680 randomly selected respondents aged 18 or older who were evacuated to Houston from the Gulf Coast due to Hurricane Katrina. All surveys were conducted face to face by trained, Houston-based interviewers in Red Cross shelters in the greater Houston area (Brodie et al. forthcoming).

Results underscored the fact that the Houston evacuees differed markedly from the general populations of New Orleans and Louisiana. More than nine in ten (93 percent) residents of the Houston shelters were African American, compared with 67 percent of New Orleans and 33 percent of Louisiana general populations. Nearly one-third (32 percent) of evacuees in the Houston shelters reported making less than \$10,000 in 2004, compared with just one in ten (10 percent) of the general populations of New Orleans and Louisiana. Only six percent of Houston shelter residents had earned a college degree, compared with more than a quarter (26 percent) of New Orleans and 19 percent of Louisiana residents (Brodie et al. forthcoming).

In the days before the hurricane hit, half (49 percent) of the evacuees in Houston shelters said they heard the order to evacuate the city and that the order gave clear instructions about how to leave. Nearly four in ten (38 percent) residents said they personally evacuated ahead of the storm. Of those who stayed in New Orleans, about one-third (35 percent) reported that they did not hear an evacuation order. Another three in ten (28 percent) said they heard an order, but the evacuation message did not give clear information about how to evacuate. This leaves just over one-third (35 percent) who said they received clear information about how to evacuate and stayed behind. When asked about possible reasons for not evacuating, more than one-third (34 percent) said the lack of a car or other way to leave was the main reason for not evacuating, while a somewhat smaller proportion (28 percent) said they didn't think the storm and its aftermath would be as bad as it eventually was. More than one in ten (12 percent) said they were physically unable to leave or had to care for someone who was physically unable to leave. Upon reflection, 56 percent said they could have found a way to leave before the storm hit. A larger proportion of those who said

they could *not* have found a way to leave reported making less than \$10,000 in 2004 (39 percent), compared to 29 percent of those who said they *could* have found a way to leave (Brodie et al. forthcoming).

The former commissioners of the bipartisan 9/11 panel formally known as the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States pointed out serious flaws in emergency preparedness and response two weeks after Hurricane Katrina made landfall (Ensor 2005). Tim Roemer, a former Democratic congressman from Indiana who served on the commission, declared it was “inexcusable and unacceptable” that Congress has yet to enact some of the 9/11 recommendations that “could have made a difference” in Louisiana during the early days after the hurricane. Thomas Kean, a former Republican governor from New Jersey who headed the commission, affirmed that “Government has no higher responsibility than the defense of its people, so this ought to be at the top of the priority list.”

BEGINNING AGAIN AFTER THE STORM

In recreating the health care systems along the Gulf Coast, it is important to solve problems rather than merely treat symptoms. Those who weathered the ravages of Hurricane Katrina have a right to community-based primary and preventive care, affordable medications, and remote access to their medical and dental records. Community Voices: HealthCare for the Underserved, with eight sites across the United States and managed by the NCPC, is helping to ensure the survival of safety-net providers and strengthening community support services towards making health care affordable for all. Launched in 1998 by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the sites are part of a national effort to sort out what works from what does not in meeting the needs of those who receive inadequate or no health care.³

Three of the central concerns of our ongoing work are to meaningfully address: (1) mental health for individuals and communities; (2) the health of men, including those who are in prisons and jails; and (3) oral health and health care, especially for adults. During the acute crisis in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, these core issues were manifest. Emergency responder Mike Flesher reported, “Many of the people that we saw had this vacant stare in their eyes. They were mentally and physically exhausted” (Eggertson 2005). The American Civil Liberties Union is currently litigating a federal class-action lawsuit on behalf of an estimated 6,500 New Orleans prisoners who were left behind in the hurricane, claiming that the lack of an adequate evacuation plan violated prisoners’ civil rights (Chen 2005). And while dental records are being used to help identify the dead at the St. Gabriel temporary morgue (AP 2005), many dental records were lost or damaged during the storm and ensuing floods; an unknown number of victims never received any dental care and thus do not have any dental records whatsoever.

Another look at the survey results from the Houston shelter evacuees suggests that the long-term mental health needs of the residents of New Orleans who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina are likely to be substantial. More than half reported not having had enough food (56 percent) or fresh water (54 percent), about one-third (32 percent) did not have the prescription medicines they needed, and one-quarter (25 percent) needed medical care and could not obtain it. More than one in five (22 percent) reported

being threatened by violence, and nearly one-third (32 percent) reported experiencing health problems or injuries as a result of the hurricane, including 13 percent who said these problems were serious. One in seven (14 percent) reported that family, neighbors, or close friends were killed during the storm and aftermath. At the time the survey was conducted (two weeks after landfall of Hurricane Katrina), one in eight (13 percent) said an immediate family member was still missing, and nearly one-third (32 percent) said a close relative or friend was still missing (Brodie et al. forthcoming).

WAVE OF OPPORTUNITY

If we are able to use the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina to reimagine and recreate a health care system that meets the needs of all residents of the Gulf Coast, then we will honor the victims of this disaster. Louisiana, with limited resources and a limited Medicaid program, has historically relied on public institutions such as the Charity complex to serve as the safety net for many of its residents. With the destruction of these hospitals, the medical and dental records were lost along with any hope of continuity of health care for affected individuals. Moving forward, any reconstruction and rebuilding plan needs a safety-net system for ensuring health care for its more vulnerable residents as well as remote access to medical and dental records.

One element of the health care policy discussion about how to extend Medicaid benefits to hurricane victims revolves around whether exclusion of childless adults from eligibility for Medicaid should be waived and whether Medicaid assistance should be provided as a uniform federal response or as separate state-by-state waivers. For Gulf Coast victims, the response to this debate will determine how many of the uninsured residents of New Orleans will receive health care coverage. It will also be crucial in determining whether or not poor men will be eligible to obtain long overdue health care services.

SEA OF CHANGE

Despite devastating losses, more than half (53 percent) of the evacuees in the Houston shelters said they expect to fully recover from Hurricane Katrina. Compared to those who feared they would never recover, evacuees who expected to recover were in better health (less likely to have a chronic condition and less likely to have suffered an injury in the storm), better off financially in terms of income, education, and insurance to cover losses, and experienced fewer problems during the storm (Brodie et al. forthcoming).

These findings point to the dramatic resiliency of the human spirit. While there is a continuing need to hold local, state, and federal officials accountable for meeting the needs of those they were elected to protect and serve, there is also a role for forgiveness and the imperative to move on to higher ground. From the shock of Hurricane Katrina, there might yet arise a grassroots movement—pushed up from the ground—filled with possibilities, optimism, and hope. In this reimagined recovery scenario, there would be medical and dental care for all of us, despite our resources. Any recreated health care system along the Gulf Coast must ensure the

active participation of the residents of New Orleans. Only then will we have achieved our goals of social justice and health care for all Americans.

No, no, we are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream" (King 1963).

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Right of Return Means Access to the Ballot, Access to Neighborhoods, and Access to Economic Opportunity

Melanie L. Campbell

“There is nothing new about poverty. What is new is that we now have the techniques and the resources to get rid of poverty. The real question is whether we have the will.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

ABSTRACT

Over one million people were displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; they are residents of three of the poorest states in the nation—Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. New Orleans represents a microcosm of right-of-return issues for all Gulf Coast residents who were displaced by these storms. This article explores the race, economic, and class divides that appear to be key factors in determining which Gulf Coast residents truly have access to the right of return including: who will have access to a barrier-free ballot to vote in the 2006 New Orleans mayor’s race, who will have access to actively participate and benefit in rebuilding their communities, who will have access to temporary housing to reunite families, and who will have access to the economic opportunities to rebuild their lives.

INTRODUCTION

Today, if you travel to New Orleans and visit what were once neighborhoods where a majority of Black residents lived—New Orleans East, the Lower Ninth Ward, Gentilly, Pontchartrain Park, and Lakeside, to name a few—there are no lights, no running water, and no sewage services. No grocery stores, banks, schools, churches,

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or gas stations are open; there is just the still and chilling reality of no people on the streets and no children playing in the parks.

What I have discovered in organizing tours of New Orleans is that right of return may simply mean having the lights on and the water running in your neighborhood. But right of return also means temporary housing being made available for residents now who want to return to New Orleans and other parts of the Gulf Coast from which people were displaced.

A vast majority of Black New Orleans residents, many whom were active, engaged voters and a core component of the local and state tax base, is still locked out of New Orleans. Today in New Orleans, those who have exercised their right to return in such areas as the French Quarter and Uptown—mostly White residents—appear to have been able to do so because the city has turned on their lights! This begs the question why so many Black and poor New Orleans residents have not been allowed to return and be part of the rebuilding process as these complex issues are addressed by federal, state, and local officials.

VOTING ESSENTIAL TO RIGHT OF RETURN

Pre-Katrina, the U.S. Census reported that New Orleans had a population of nearly 500,000. Over 300,000 of those residents, mostly Black residents, were displaced after Hurricane Katrina devastated the city. *New York Times* reporter Clifford Levy stated in his article on 17 November 2005, “since the hurricane, most of the estimated 60,000 to 100,000 residents who have returned to New Orleans are white and middle class, changing the city’s racial composition, which had been two-thirds black” (Levy 2005).

Benjamin Greenberg reported in his *In These Times* article on 17 November 2005, that there are roughly 219,000 New Orleans evacuees who are voting age [over the age of 18] and estimates that 70 percent of those are Black, which represents 153,300 Black voters who will not have access to the ballot in the 2006 elections. “This is voter disenfranchisement by attrition,” states Greenberg (Greenberg 2005).

Louisiana State Representative Juan LaFonta, who represents the Seventh Ward in New Orleans, stated, “The majority became the minority, and the minority became the majority. That changed the whole outlook of the political scene. If you have an election right now, it is going to be some of the people voting on behalf of all the people” (Levy 2005).

The right to vote is arguably the most important right of citizenship in a democratic country. Since the passage of the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1870, Americans have enjoyed the legal freedom to select those in charge of governing the country without regard to race or color. Yet exercising this civil right has been a struggle for Black Americans. Black citizens need courage to stand up to violence and intimidation and the fortitude to confront poll taxes and literacy tests in order to exercise their democratic right to vote.

Yet, the New Orleans mayor’s race of 2006—rescheduled from its original date of 4 February 2006 to 22 April 2006—is shaping up to be a modern day litmus test, with the poll tax in this case imposed on the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Hurricane victims have to find *access* to the ballot by the government while many are struggling to survive in over 34 states across the country.

The *New York Times* reported that New Orleans residents who wish to vote in the 2006 mayor's race "will either have to make their way back home to town or rely on absentee ballots, a method of voting that has had a checkered record across the nation in recent years" (Levy 2005).

One obvious solution that seems to be escaping federal, state, and local government officials is that our nation has the ability to resolve the issue of access to the ballot. For example, our military personnel who have been deployed overseas voted in federal, state, and local elections through the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act. In addition, our government found a way to provide access to the ballot for Iraqi citizens living in America and established multiple polling locations all across the country for them to vote for a new leader in Iraq without blinking an eye. Why is it so difficult to provide access to the ballot for American citizens who have been displaced in their own country to vote in a local mayor's race in New Orleans? My analysis is that our government does not have *the will* to do so.

Congress has the opportunity to provide *access* to the ballot by passing the Congressional Black Caucus Omnibus Bill HR 4197 [the Hurricane Katrina, Recovery, Reclamation, Restoration, Reconstruction & Reunion Act of 2005]. A key provision of the bill is Title VI—Voting Rights, which provides Katrina evacuees the same absentee ballot provisions available to military personnel and authorizes up to \$50 million in grants for restoration and replacement of election supplies, materials, and equipment damaged by Hurricane Katrina.

As the country grapples with ballot access issues, there continues to be growing concern and discontent in the Black community that many victims displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita who want to return to their communities will not have the *access* or the ability to return to their communities based on economic and political realities.

One thing that is certain is the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; the levee breaks in New Orleans neighborhoods such as the Lower Ninth Ward collectively have not only swept away the livelihood of over one million Gulf Coast residents, but also have the potential to substantially change the political landscape, culture, and psyche of New Orleans, the state of Louisiana, and Black politics across the South overnight.

DO RACE AND CLASS STILL MATTER IN AMERICA?

A CBC News article from 5 September 2005 states that "If those forced out of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina end up re-building their lives in new locations, it could be the largest U.S. black resettlement since the Great Migration of the 20th Century lured southern blacks to the North in search of jobs and better lives" (CBC News, 2005).

According to The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, in a national survey conducted on 6-7 September 2005, "the hurricane has had a profound psychological impact on the public. Fully 58 percent of respondents say they have felt depressed because of what's happened in areas affected by the storm (Pew

Research Center for the People and the Press 2005). In recent years, this percentage is only surpassed by the 71 percent reporting depression in a survey taken just days after the September 11th attacks.”

However, the Pew Research Center survey concluded that:

Overall opinion on this measure obscures a substantial racial divide in reactions to the disaster. As many as 70% of African Americans say they have felt angry, compared with 46% of whites. Blacks are twice as likely as whites to know people directly affected by the hurricane. Further, seven-in-ten blacks (71%) say the disaster shows that racial inequality remains a major problem in the country; a majority of whites (56%) say this was not a particularly important lesson of the disaster.

The painful images of the New Orleans Convention Center, unfair media coverage showing Blacks looting and Whites finding food, floating dead bodies of poor Americans left for days on the side of the road, in neighborhoods, and on sidewalks and bridges, the separation of families, and images of the innocent faces of thousands of missing children have adversely impacted the psyche of Black America and poor Americans as well. These images further reminded Black America and indeed the nation that the legacy of slavery and the old Southern Confederacy is still with us, when African Americans were treated as less than human. Further, these atrocities and the early media reports continually referring to evacuees as “refugees” in their own country may have further exacerbated this racial divide.

LEVEE BREAKS UNMASK ECONOMIC DEVASTATION IN GULF COAST

The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) provided a very sobering analysis of the economic and racial demographics of the affected areas impacted by Hurricane Katrina. According to CBPP, “Many Hurricane Katrina victims faced difficult living conditions even before the storm arrived. Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama, are, respectively, the first, second, and eighth poorest states in the nation. And of the 5.8 million individuals in these states who lived in the areas struck hardest by the hurricane, more than one million lived in poverty prior to the hurricane’s onset. CBPP states that many of the storm victims have little or no resources on which to rely in these difficult times” (Sherman and Shapiro 2005).

CBPP ESSENTIAL FACTS ABOUT THE VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA: POVERTY AND INCOME IN THE AFFECTED STATES AND COUNTIES

Table 1 shows the poverty rate and median household income in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The table compares the data for these states to the data for other states and the nation (Sherman and Shapiro 2005).

The CBPP further reported that:

The Census data also confirm that African Americans made up a disproportionate share of the hurricane’s victims. About one of every three

people who lived in the areas hit hardest by the hurricane were African American. By contrast, one of every eight people in the nation is African American. African Americans living in New Orleans were especially likely to be without a vehicle before the hurricane struck. More than one in three black households in New Orleans (35 percent)—and nearly three in five poor black households (59 percent)—lacked a vehicle. Among white non-Hispanic households in New Orleans, 15 percent lacked a vehicle (Sherman and Shapiro 2005).

Dr. Silas Lee, pollster, communications strategist, and a native of New Orleans, wrote a daunting policy paper, “A Haunted City? The Social and Economic Status of African Americans and Whites in New Orleans” (2003). Dr. Lee’s study further reveals the gross economic inequities that exist between Blacks and Whites in the Crescent City.

As a community, the continued social and economic displacement of a disproportionate share of our population [New Orleans] will result in excessive under employment and unemployment, producing on-going economic stagnation.... For example, only 11 percent of the white population in the workforce has an income below the poverty level, compared to 35 percent of the black population. Furthermore, this inequitable distribution in income also impacts civil leadership. Rather than achieving a broader distribution of income, a small controlling oligarchy emerges to position themselves and benefit from the economic and social opportunities intended for a more diverse constituency (Lee 2003, 8).

Lee’s analysis seems almost clairvoyant to what New Orleans currently faces in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina when he states “As we stand on the crest of this new century, New Orleans cannot afford to have the failure of inaction, and the weight of its constituencies haunt its potential as a city. Twenty years from now, I wonder, will we still be haunted by the same old challenges?” (Lee 2003, 9).

BLACK LEADERS CALL FOR ACTION BY OUR GOVERNMENT

In the first few days after the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe there was a serious void in leadership and action on the federal, state, and local levels of government and from disaster relief and response agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is under the Department of Homeland Security, and the American Red Cross.

Many civil rights, civic, labor, business, faith, nonprofit, philanthropic, and grassroots leaders took swift action to provide relief as our nation watched in horror and disbelief the catastrophic events of Hurricane Katrina and the tragic loss of life and liberties that followed after the levees broke in New Orleans.

In those critical first seventy-two hours after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast region, Black leaders and other people of goodwill began to realize that they needed to maintain a sustained relief effort to ensure help arrived to the victims as soon as possible. Grassroots organizations, churches, and other community-based leaders were in the eye of the storm and activated alternative on-the-ground emergency

response efforts to address the immediate needs of the survivors in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

Vincent Sylvain, state director, Louisiana Unity Coalition, and a displaced New Orleans resident, has been a leading voice of right of return for all New Orleans residents. Sylvain advocates in a field report to the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation that “all displaced persons should maintain the ‘right of return’ to New Orleans and that a person’s socioeconomic status, class, employment, occupation, educational level, neighborhood residence, or how they were evacuated should have no bearing on this fundamental right. This right shall include the provision of adequate transportation to return to the city by the similar means that a person was dispersed.” Further, there was an urgent need for a collective voice from national Black leadership to speak out publicly and demand timely and aggressive action from the federal government and disaster relief agencies whose mission it is to provide aid to those in need in times of national crisis and natural disasters.

On Friday, 2 September 2005, several organizations joined the Congressional Black Caucus, NAACP, National Urban League (NUL), National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), Operation Hope, and Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) at a press conference that was covered by over 50 media outlets at the National Press Club. This was one of the first collective voices of national Black leadership convened to publicly urge the president, Congress, disaster relief agencies, and the American people to speed up the disaster relief and recovery efforts now to help the people of the Gulf Coast. Further, the ReBuild Hope NOW Campaign (RBHN) was announced urging African American organizations and others to join the campaign to provide emergency relief and recovery support now. RBHN has been implemented as a coalition campaign for the long-term rebuilding process.

On 14 September 2005, the NUL and NAACP convened a coalition of African American leadership organizations for a meeting at Howard University in Washington, D.C., to address critical issues and challenges confronting the victims of Hurricane Katrina. An African American Leaders Call to Action (AALCA) document was developed as a public statement demanding action from the federal, state, and local government to speed up the disaster relief, recovery, and rebuilding process. Over forty national African American leaders were in attendance.

The following AALCA action steps and recommendations called for the president, Congress, federal, state, and local government, and disaster relief and recovery agencies to immediately respond to the following eight critical areas of concern:

1. Ensuring affected families’ immediate and long-term right of return to Gulf Coast region

- Provide temporary housing at all assets available to federal government, including currently closed military bases in Gulf Coast region.
- Provide economic incentives for families to return to Gulf Coast region.

2. Rebuilding and reconnecting families and children

- Establish Family Reconstruction Fund (estimated \$100 billion for providing unemployment assistance, job training, school placement, assistance reuniting families, etc.).

3. Ensuring that local residents have first choice at reconstruction jobs and contracts

- Establish Gulf Coast Region Reconstruction Fund (rebuilding homes, businesses, etc.).
- Establish timeline to rebuild colleges and universities, including historically Black colleges and universities (Xavier University, Dillard University, Southern University in New Orleans, Jackson State University).
- Set 50 percent residency target goal for all contracts.
- Set 40 percent minority vendor target for all reconstruction.
- Place moratorium on all contracts until civil rights provisions can be reinstated (Davis-Bacon Requirements).

4. Providing physical and mental health assistance

- Order the admittance of minority community-based counselors in facilities with evacuees nationwide.
- Provide health benefits to all affected citizens for a period no less than 24 months.

5. Monitoring FEMA, American Red Cross, and Salvation Army distribution of resources

- Establish a diverse commission to monitor the equitable distribution of relief resources provided by FEMA, American Red Cross, and Salvation Army as well as the equitable reconstruction of the affected Gulf Coast areas.

6. Providing Legal, Economic, and Voting Protections

- Direct Justice Department to immediately review individual cases of arrested and detained individuals.
- Ensure evacuees immediate ability to vote in state and local elections.
- Ensure home owners the right of first refusal to reclaim property.
- Freeze all foreclosure proceedings against property in affected areas for a minimum of twelve months.
- Build in legal protections against predatory lenders.
- Institute a prohibition of collections and deficiency judgments on real and personal properties.
- Institute a prohibition on negative credit reporting or the omission of negative events from credit scores when the incidents were a result of Katrina.
- Institute a voluntary waiver of late fees or interest on loans made to people in Katrina-affected areas for a period of at least three months.

7. Securing the environment for future generations

- Develop action plan to secure wetlands in coastal areas of United States.
- Stop rollback/waivers of environmental laws.

8. Develop comprehensive strategy to address poverty crisis in America

ACCESS TO HOUSING KEY TO RIGHT OF RETURN

Key provisions of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Katrina bill [HR 4197] address many of the access and right-of-return issues for all victims of Hurricane Katrina including a housing and community rebuilding provision (Title IV). This provides funding for community revitalization, CDBG Section 108 loan guarantee funds, funding for 300,000 additional tenant-based rental assistance (Section 8), fair housing enforcement, and housing counseling for families in temporary shelters.

Title IV also prohibits placement of persons displaced by Katrina in substandard housing, provides for more vigorous enforcement of Fair Housing laws, gives people displaced by Katrina preference for Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) inventory and foreclosed properties, and establishes a mortgage payment fund for payment of mortgages similar to the fund authorized under Title III for the payment of private health insurance premiums.

In addition to advocating for key national public policy initiatives such as HR 4197 to be adopted by Congress, Black leaders must closely scrutinize and speak out against any rebuilding plans for New Orleans or any other Gulf Coast community that leaves out Black and poor neighborhoods in their recommendations for rebuilding.

ECONOMIC CATASTROPHE CONTINUES FOR EVACUEES

John Bryant, founder and CEO of Operation Hope, sounded the alarm to the long-term economic disaster that many of the over two million survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are facing. The economic disaster, Bryant warns, could have more damaging effects on their lives than the storms themselves. Bryant has established an "economic triage" (Project Restore HOPE) to assist the survivors. Bryant states in an Operation Hope press statement dated 13 January 2006, "Economic triage is necessary when short term financial aid is simply not enough to stem the flow of economic bad news following a disaster; and ranges from simply helping to arrange the deferment of a payment or set of payments on credit consumer debt and other loans with your lender, to at times, helping to actually restructure a credit or financial relations benefit of all involved." Bryant reminds the public that many victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita will "require help beyond what FEMA provides through immediate cash payments, including the emergency economic counseling and emergency budget counseling."

Additionally, in an Operation Hope press statement from 13 January 2006, former Ambassador Andrew Young describes the economic impact of Katrina as having national implications. Young states "the affects of the impact of Katrina is not just felt on a few folks who showed up on television following this disaster. The effects of this are national, and include all of the shipping that comes down the Mississippi River, spanning from Minneapolis to Tennessee, both agricultural and industrial. All of it requires a functioning port out of the mouth of the Mississippi. We are already seeing the effects of damages on oil and gas prices, and if we don't get this under control, it will damage our larger economy."

CONCLUSION

The catastrophe of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita has challenged America at its core, exposing the face of poverty and the unresolved issues of race and class, as the world watched in disbelief on CNN, BBC, MSNBC, BET, the Weather Channel, Fox, and hundreds of other media outlets. Yet, in this moment of great crisis, Americans also expressed their outrage by opening their hearts, their homes, their wallets, and their communities to the millions of victims impacted by these storms.

The African American community has been reminded of what it took to survive and thrive in spite of the vestiges of slavery, the Jim Crow South, institutional racism, and negative stereotypes such as the ones misrepresenting them as looters, rather than as mothers and fathers, seeking water, diapers, food, clothing, and shelter for their children who had been abandoned by the government in the first seventy-two hours after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans.

These catastrophes require a regional “Marshall Plan” for the Gulf Coast and a comprehensive response that engages the public, private, philanthropic, civic, faith, education, and grassroots sectors in helping to restore a sense of hope and restoration, not only for the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, but also the nation, to regain a sense of responsibility for our most vulnerable and precious resources—our children, who are our future, and our elders, who have sacrificed and paid their dues to live in dignity in their senior years.

As I close this article, our nation is celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who had he lived would have been 77 years old on 15 January 2006. Dr. King's teachings left a blueprint that reminds us that our nation's soul is in peril if we forget about the “least of these” God's children.

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TABLE 1**POVERTY ESPECIALLY HIGH AND INCOMES ESPECIALLY LOW IN STATES HIT HARDEST BY KATRINA**

	Poverty Rate	Rank	Median Household Income	Rank
Alabama	16.1%	8th worst	\$36,709	9th lowest
Louisiana	19.4%	2nd worst	\$35,110	5th lowest
Mississippi	21.6%	Worst	\$31,642	2nd lowest
United States	13%*		\$44,684	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) for 2004.

According to the ACS (which the government uses for ranking states by poverty), the national poverty rate was 13.1 percent in 2004. According to another government survey, the Current Population Survey, it was 12.7 percent.
(Sherman and Shapiro 2005)

Principles and Strategies for Reconstruction: Models of African American Community- Based Cooperative Economic Development

Jessica Gordon Nembhard

ABSTRACT

Community-based, cooperatively owned enterprises are characterized by greater community input and participation in the planning, development, and governance of commercially viable, socially responsible businesses that generate jobs, income, and wealth-producing assets. African Americans have a strong but hidden history of cooperative ownership in the face of market failure and racial discrimination. Cooperatives are democratically owned and governed businesses, whose members pool resources and share risk and profits. This research contributes information about viable strategies for economic renewal, particularly to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast in ways that retain and benefit long-term and low-income residents of color.

[Pamela] Everage also worried about her relatives and friends who lived on the other side of North Claiborne Avenue between Florida and Caffin Avenues [New Orleans], a place where, at the time, soldiers were barring people from entering and where, it was rumored, bodies were still being found. (Prince 2006, A5)

Five months later some neighborhoods still have no street lights and are not inhabitable. (Rahim 2006, Weeks 2006)

The state of Louisiana and the city of New Orleans have announced their plans for rebuilding after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Louisiana plan in particular uses inclusive language about the return to better conditions for all citizens. Phrases are used such as, “rebuild our communities and the lives of all our citizens to levels that exceed those prior to Katrina,” “using the talents, labor, ideas, and assets of our own citizens ... first and foremost, Louisianans will lead the rebuilding effort,” “rebuild in a manner that is culturally sensitive and recognizes the strength that comes from the diversity of all our heritages,” and “rebuild so that those less privileged in our

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midst have a markedly improved quality of life as a result of this effort” (Department of Culture, Recreation and Terrorism 2006) as well as “New Orleans will be a sustainable, environmentally safe, socially equitable community with a vibrant economy,” and “neighborhoods will be planned with its citizens and connect to jobs and the region” (Urban Planning Committee 2006). This is loaded terminology, which probably means different things to different people, but is to reassure everyone that the right principles are in place.

How will these plans be achieved? Who is at the table, and are all the stakeholders making the decisions present and recognized? Are “citizens” all the previous residents or a certain subset? Do the various stakeholders have the resources and voice to participate equally and effectively? Can the models of development and the business plans proposed actually achieve the goals as stated? What strategies and models would achieve such goals? How do we evaluate the planning process and the suggested strategies?

How all the above questions are answered will in great part determine who is allowed to return, what they will return to, how all the original residents will be treated, and what kinds of development will occur. The New Orleans plan only projects a city of 181,000 by September 2006 (about 144,000 had returned by January 2006) and 247,000 by 2008. New Orleans, however, had a population close to 500,000 on 28 August 2005 before Hurricane Katrina hit. So who are the citizens these plans mention? Where will the rest of the residents be, and what will or has happened to their homes and livelihood?

Words are easy to craft, but crafting actual economic experiences and economic structures that deliver equitable development and increase prosperity at all levels are more difficult and rarely seriously addressed. In many cases the economic development models used are not inclusive and do not deliver prosperity to all. The language, particularly in the state plan, is similar to language a group of Black social scientists used when we publicized our principles and priorities for rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast (Black Social Scientists 2005)—although our proposals were more specific about how to direct help to the most needy and more comprehensive about how to address all the needs. At the time, what little press we received considered our proposals quite unrealistic and costly (Kemper 2005), but missed the main point about effective relief, community controlled development, comprehensive services, and shared ownership. While our principles are somewhat acceptable, when it comes to allocating funds to actually make a difference in the lives of the poor and displaced, the cost becomes the focus, and no one wants to spend the money. On the other hand, no one questions the ever expanding military expenses of an illegal war—the country continues to find and spend the funds to support those skyrocketing costs.

Not unexpectedly, much of the discussion about rebuilding has been about cost and feasibility, rather than about how to reach and help those in most need. The window of opportunity to talk about race and class (racial economic inequality, institutional racism, and polarized urban politics) that opened when the entire world watched as people of color, the poor, and the elderly were stranded on rooftops and in the prison-like Louisiana Superdome and Convention Center closed rapidly once the media focused on looting and armed gangs roaming the streets. Then attention

was turned toward protection of private property, and New Orleans became a “police state.” The government began to address the problem by sending in the military and paid mercenaries—with orders to “shoot to kill.”

The federal government then suspended the Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements for contractors, waived contractors’ obligations to submit affirmative action plans, relaxed environmental standards and restrictions against using fuel with high sulfur content, and gave no-bid contracts to The Shaw Group, Bechtel, Halliburton subsidiaries, and other administration-favored transnational corporations (several of which are already under investigation for overbilling and fraud). With no guaranteed right to return, the poor and non-White have been scattered around the country, left to the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) inadequate provisions. In contrast, rich folk and corporations sent their insurance adjusters ahead to stake out their path for a rapid return and signed on to Bush’s proposed “Gulf Opportunity Zones” for tax breaks and other incentives to rebuild. Many of them have already returned. Hotels, restaurants, and stores in the tourist districts are open, and Mardi Gras proceeded as usual. In contrast, many residents in areas such as the Ninth Ward are being discouraged from returning or are actually barred from their neighborhoods.

Are these the best strategies for rebuilding? My research on alternative community-based economic development suggests that there are other effective practices being overlooked. Process (principles and strategies for revitalization), structure (types of ownership, governance, and management), and outcomes (meaningful work, “good” jobs, economic equality and stability, environmental sustainability, asset development) all matter. An understanding of the kinds of processes that produce the results touted in the language of the plans, and proper evaluation of the processes and structures used, will help to bring about the kinds of outcomes and benefits desired. What appears to be lacking is an evaluation of the kinds of development proposed, what kinds of structures they entail, what those strategies have achieved in the past, and what alternatives are available. Below I discuss how and why equitable development and democratic community-based economic development are feasible, and I address many of the current issues and challenges in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. I provide examples of African American community-based cooperative business development.

This article explores the options and delves into the history of alternative economic development in African American communities to identify models applicable to rebuilding the Gulf Coast and other areas in need of revitalization. I briefly comment on strategies to ensure democratic participation and the equality of voice necessary for community-based and equitable economic development, i.e., process. The bulk of this article addresses the kinds and caliber of economic development that are compatible with the goals professed (about using the talents, labor, ideas, and assets of citizens and increasing the standards of living for all citizens). I provide cases of African American initiated and owned cooperative and community-based businesses throughout U.S. history (and currently being used in New Orleans) as examples of strategies that can deliver equitable development using the talents of and increasing the standards of living for all citizens. I also discuss the ways we know that the above structures are working and producing the benefits professed in the goals. I

address strategies for measuring the benefits and achievements of community-based, especially cooperatively owned, development and delineate some of the benefits. I conclude by suggesting that while more research is needed, we know a lot about how to achieve and sustain economic development that is equitable, nondiscriminatory, profitable, and sustainable. These practices can be utilized in the rebuilding of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES FOR DEMOCRATIC ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

What viable models do we have that will address the issues and uphold the principles that have worked in African American communities and communities of color? Because the Gulf Coast and New Orleans are areas in which the gaps between rich and poor and Black and White are glaring and disturbing, there has actually been significant discussion nationally and locally (though not as much media coverage) of alternative development strategies and principles and priorities for rebuilding. The National Urban League's Marc Morial (a former mayor of New Orleans) and various groups like the NAACP, PolicyLink (a nonprofit research organization promoting equitable development strategies), the People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Coalition (PHRF/OC), and a group of Black Social Scientists (Black Social Scientists 2005), for example, all call for the right to return of all residents in the area, meaningful participation in development planning, economic rights, and equitable development. The Congressional Black Caucus proposal and bill HR 4197 provides an important initial set of policies and proposes a beginning budget to pay for the provisions. Ralph Nader (Nader 2005), the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (2006), and the "Big Idea" (2006) project out of Canada all have actually proposed using the cooperative economic model for business and housing development in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives and the Common Ground Collective are already using cooperative, community-based activities in their efforts to help survivors and rebuild neighborhoods.

Many of these groups agree to a common set of principles for how to proceed equitably, including right to return of all citizens, community control, democratic governance, community-based ownership, jobs for residents, livable wages, asset building, and comprehensive services. These are similar to the general principles of meaningful community economic development my colleagues and I formulated in "Inner-City Economic Development and Revitalization: A Community-Building Approach" (Whitehead, Landes, and Gordon Nembhard 2005). In addition, many of us concerned about the economic development of communities of color and the negative effects of gentrification are beginning to articulate similar principles for future neighborhood redevelopment. These include democratic participation, economic and cultural empowerment, mobilization and education, equity, social justice (social needs over profits), environmental health and justice, and meeting basic needs while increasing opportunities to build assets and accumulate wealth.

When planning proceeds equitably, developers, corporations, government, and residents plan together and engage in mutually beneficial projects. Community ben-

efit agreements (the least intensive of such strategies) spell out, for example, how residents will gain from development by ensuring affordable housing, living-wage, long-term jobs, small business development and support for locally owned and community-based businesses, and development funds for educational, cultural, and recreational development. Some also include environmental protections. Examples of such agreements exist throughout the country (Manna Community Development Corporation 2006, Janis-Aparicio and Tynan 2005). Achieving such goals requires organizing and mobilizing at the grassroots level and diplomacy on all sides. City governments and farsighted developers are negotiating and signing such agreements, even when initially resistant. The case is made most successfully using both economic and social analysis as evidence.

Residents are demanding that such principles operate in the rebuilding of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. They want more relief, the right to return, that all of New Orleans be rebuilt—not some of it—much strengthened levees and environmental sustainability and protections, and relief from unjust hotel evictions (Dvorak 2006, People's Hurricane Relief Fund 2006). The original demands from the People's Hurricane Relief Fund include: funds for all families to be reunited; that the more than \$50 billion in relief should be controlled by the victims; that a Victims Compensation Fund be established like the one after 9/11; representation of the People's Committee on all boards and decision-making bodies about how to spend the public money and that those most affected be part of the planning process; public work jobs for displaced workers and residents at union wages; and transparency in the reconstruction process (People's Hurricane Relief Fund 2005). As recently as 9 February 2006, the PHRF/OC issued a statement about the current housing crisis, demanding that FEMA comply with the Stafford Act, which specifies that those impacted by a national disaster receive housing and assistance for eighteen months (not six months), and national legislation that makes affordable housing a national priority (People's Hurricane Relief Fund 2006). An emergency summit, including representatives of the Congressional Black Caucus, Progressive Caucus, and Tri-Caucus, PHRF/OC, Common Ground Collective, Rebuilding LA Coalition, and many others, released the following demands:

- Right of return
- Rebuilding that invests in those displaced
- Temporary and long-term housing assistance
- Protection for voting rights for the displaced
- Community control over Community Development Block Grants
- Mortgage forgiveness
- Funding for quality public education
- A Victim Restoration Fund
- Environmental cleanup
- Rebuilding of medical facilities
- Small businesses assistance
- Tax credits and bankruptcy exemptions for victims (Shamis 2006)

PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES THAT DELIVER EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

What economic structures will reproduce and reflect principles such as those discussed above? In terms of community involvement in development planning, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative¹ in Boston provides a good example of how to put inclusion and democratic participation into practice in development planning (Medoff and Sklar 1994). A community of diverse ethnicities and nationalities came together and formed a community development corporation and community land trust in order to make joint decisions about how their neighborhood would be developed. They struggled through processes, which included realization that the board of directors needed to be composed of a majority of grassroots residents rather than only philanthropists and corporate and business representatives. They also realized they needed to own or control the abandoned properties in the neighborhood in order to ensure land use corresponded with their plans. They utilized a Community Land Trust to own the land in common, for the purpose of keeping land affordable and keeping the governance of the land under community control (Institute for Community Economics 2001).

In terms of community-based and community-owned production of goods and services, the cooperative business model is an important alternative. Cooperatives are businesses (for profit and not for profit) owned by their members for the purpose of providing high-quality and affordable goods and services that the market has failed to provide. For example, in an area where fresh produce and natural and vegetarian foods are not supplied or are very costly, consumers come together and form a buying club or a cooperative grocery store in order to obtain the goods they need. Consumers also come together to buy electricity, environmentally friendly fuels, child care, and financial services (a credit union). Producers also form cooperatives to jointly purchase supplies and equipment and/or to jointly process and market their goods. In addition, workers form cooperatives to jointly own and manage a business themselves. There are many different kinds of cooperatives, large and small, in almost every sector, operating in the United States and all over the world. Cooperatives have operated as a form of successful business ownership for centuries, some more democratically run than others, following a set of principles that include one person one vote, open membership, shared profits, continuous education, and concern for community.

There are several different models of cooperative development² (self-initiated, charismatic leader, agency initiated) and several different kinds of examples under each broad category. There are also a variety of capitalization strategies. Cooperative developers help groups figure out which model might be most effective given the jurisdiction, prevailing economic circumstances, characteristics of the group or population, and financial needs. A cooperative structure is not always the best model of development to use, and a cooperative developer will help a group to figure it out. On the other hand, cooperative ownership is often quite viable and solves many issues such as control over income, affordability, local economic anchoring, and asset ownership (Gordon Nembhard 2006; also see the outcomes

discussion below). Here I describe the basic models and provide some examples of how they have been implemented.

In the self-initiated business development model, a group of interested parties—usually people already working together, such as members of the same religious institution or social organization—in the same firm decide that they want to organize a democratic workplace, jointly own their existing workplace, or create a new business, or start a buying club, purchasing or marketing cooperative, or retail store or service. They form study groups to teach themselves about cooperative economics and work on the feasibility and business plan (often with technical assistance). If everything proceeds favorably, they incorporate the business, launch it, and run it themselves or hire a manager. The Chesapeake Marine Railway and Dry Dock Company, Consumers' Co-operative Trading Company, and Freedom Quilting Bee are examples of self-initiated cooperatives.

Similar to the self-initiating model is the model where a charismatic leader or leaders mobilize a group to form a cooperative. While the charismatic leader can take the group far, sometimes this model is weak because if something happens to the leader and there is no succession or the enterprise has not been stabilized, the business fails. However, one of the most successful worker-owned cooperatives in the world started with a charismatic leader. The multinational, billion-dollar, fifty-year-old Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC) in Spain credits its beginnings to a charismatic young priest who started a school, trained the owners of the MCC's first factory, and helped organize the corporation's credit union, which has been the engine of growth for the over 150 cooperatives in the complex.³ Other examples are The Young Negroes Cooperative League, Light of Tyrrell, and Green Worker Cooperatives⁴ (more below).

A very popular and growing model, especially among low-income groups, is the agency-initiated model. A private or government agency pulls together a group of people, trains them, provides management in the initial launch, and slowly turns the business over to the owner/members. The agency raises money for the project through grants from foundations, government sources, and a variety of loans and raises equity from among the members. In addition to handling much of the capitalization, the agency also handles business planning and training. These transitional enterprises have a decent track record, and there are a variety of agencies involved—government (U.S. Department of Agriculture), co-op developers, cooperative development and community organizations. Recently (a model more prevalent in Canada and Europe), successful cooperative businesses start a development fund and hire developers to initiate new cooperatives. The Bricks (church school), SSC Temporary Services (community organization), APR Masonry Arts Construction Company (union and development company), and Emma's Eco-Clean⁵ (nonprofit women's organization) are examples of cooperatives started by various agencies (see descriptions below). Examples of cooperatives that created development agencies or divisions once they were successful are The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund,⁶ Cooperative Home Care Associates⁷ (Kreiner 2003), Childspace (Kreiner 2003), and Cheeseboard Bakery and Cheese Shop (Off Center Video 2001), as well as Mondragon Cooperative Corporation.

Financing and capitalization are issues, even though cooperatives address some level of financing by helping members pool their resources and leverage others. Members contribute to the equity from their own savings or earnings through a membership fee and/or initial investment. The cooperative holds their equity share in an internal account and usually disburses dividends based on members' use. Cooperatives, like other businesses, often need more capital than their members can contribute on their own. There are a variety of fund-raising strategies and loan agreements used to augment members' equity. For low-income cooperatives in particular, cooperatives often mix member equity with loans and grants. Traditional lending institutions such as banks, religious organizations, community development financial institutions, and cooperative loan funds as well as foundations provide financing for initial start-up and expansion of cooperatives. Credit unions—financial cooperatives—have been used historically not just to provide financial services to underserved communities, but also for business development and to fund cooperative development. This model was used, for example, historically in the Black community (Pitts 1950) and is also the model practiced very successfully by the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation. Mondragon's Credit Union, Caja Laboral, is heavily involved in cooperative development, research and development, and other financial supports for its network of cooperatives (MacLeod 1997, Thomas 2000). Mondragon also supports a university and other educational institutions that promote cooperative development in addition to meeting traditional educational needs. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund also includes a network of credit unions serving rural Black communities and raises foundation grants to provide technical services to its co-op members and the community.

AFRICAN AMERICAN COOPERATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

African Americans have utilized cooperative ownership in good and bad times throughout U.S. history (Gordon Nembhard 2004b). After the Civil War, in Baltimore, Maryland, for example, where African American caulkers were considered the best at that craft, White caulkers felt threatened and tried to chase Black shipyard workers out of the state. White carpenters boycotted shipyards with African American caulkers, and White mobs attacked Black caulkers and stevedores on their way home. A group of Black stevedores and caulkers started their own cooperative shipyard to protect their jobs and safety and maintain their standard of living. The Chesapeake Marine Railway and Dry Dock Company survived as an integrated workplace for 18 years and succeeded in integrating the all-White unions at that time (DuBois 1907). About 110 years later, in Los Angeles when Black bricklayers suffered persistent discrimination and underrepresentation in jobs and management, their union worked with the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund and a private employee-ownership development agency to help them establish their own worker-owned construction company—APR Masonry Arts Construction (Hill and Mackin 2002).

Schools and education programs have also been important cooperative developers in the African American community, sometimes through churches. In 1932 during the depression in Gary, Indiana, an African American principal in a local high school called a meeting among African Americans to discuss how to better

their economic condition. They began weekly education meetings to learn about cooperative economics. After about eighteen months they established a buying club and then a network of cooperatives. The Consumer's Co-operative Trading Company came to operate a main grocery store, a branch store, a gas station, and a credit union (Hope 1940, Reddix 1974). In 1936, the company was considered to be "the largest grocery business operated by Negroes in the United States" with total sales of \$160,000 (Reddix 1974, 119). The young people's branch operated its own ice cream and candy store. The cooperative education element was very important. In 1933 it began offering a cooperative economics course in the high school's evening school. At one point that was the largest subscribed course offered by the high school.

Similarly, in 1934 in Bricks, North Carolina, the Brick Rural Life School, run by the American Missionary Association, developed a program of adult education for African American cooperative development. Families would take up residence on the school's farm to learn new farming techniques and cooperative economics. Cooperative economics courses and training workshops were provided for the community. In 1936 Bricks organized a credit union. Early members then pooled their resources and borrowed from the credit union to jointly buy a tractor. In 1938 the group opened a cooperative store and in 1939 developed a health program. It raised half of the costs of a full-time nurse and convinced the state health department to match the rest. Small purchasing and service groups were established in the surrounding communities. By the late 1940s more than 75% of the families had at least one member connected with one of the co-ops (Pitts 1950, 24-26).

Also in North Carolina, another charismatic principal began organizing cooperatives in the late 1930s. The principal of the Tyrrell County Training School, and members of his staff, conducted study groups on cooperative economics. This principal was familiar with the cooperatives at Bricks and had learned about cooperatives in a class on rural education at Columbia University (Pitts 1950). By 1939 twenty-five neighbors established a credit union. In the first year membership increased to 187. The credit union started a student savings account program. Members of the Tyrrell group started a store in 1940 and in 1941 established a cooperative health insurance program that guaranteed a member up to \$100 for hospitalization for a membership fee of \$1.00, monthly assessments of ten cents, and a twenty-five cent "co-payment" for each hospital visit. They had plans to raise money to hire a doctor, but never proceeded with those plans. The credit union helped several families save their farms from foreclosure and/or to purchase a farm and financed group purchases of farm equipment. Buying clubs and machinery cooperatives (purchasing coops) were established through 1945 (Pitts 1950, 27-30). More cooperative activity took place in North Carolina around that time with Bricks and Tyrrell County co-ops joining together to organize the Eastern Carolina Council federation of North Carolinian cooperatives (Pitts, 1950).

The 1930s was an active time for cooperative development among Blacks and Whites. The Young Negro Cooperative League, founded in December 1930 by twenty-five to thirty African American youth in response to a call by George Schuyler (Schuyler 1930, Schuyler 1932, Calvin 1931) in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, was strong in five cities by the early 1930s. Ella J. Baker was elected its first executive director. The Chicago Women's Auxiliary of the Brotherhood of Pullman Car

Porters was also organizing cooperatives during this time (Cohen 2003, Chateauvert 1998). In every case study groups were formed to discuss the economic problems and learn cooperative economics before starting a business.

The cooperative movement in African American communities also received momentum in the 1960s with the Black Panther Party establishing cooperative bakeries and free breakfast programs for children. In 1969 the "Black Manifesto" of the National Black Economic Development Conference in Detroit demanded reparations of \$500,000 in part to establish a Southern land bank and cooperative businesses in the United States and Africa (The Black National Economic Conference 1969). In addition, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives was established in 1967 uniting one-hundred farmer's cooperatives, marketing co-ops, and credit unions from across the South. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF) is a network of rural cooperatives, credit unions, and state associations of cooperatives and cooperative development centers in the southern United States established to support land-based economic development for low-income communities through cooperative development and saving of Black-owned land. The FSC/LAF provides technical assistance, legal assistance, financial support, education, and advocacy to its members (Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund 2002, Journal of Cooperative Development 2000).⁸

Freedom Quilting Bee of Alberta, Alabama, one of the founding members of the FSC/LAF, began in 1966. Women in sharecropping families began making quilts and selling them to augment the family incomes. The cooperative bought 23 acres in 1968 to build the sewing plant and also to sell land to sharecropping families who had been evicted from their homes for registering to vote and/or participating in civil rights activities (Freedom Quilting Bee 2002). By 1992 the cooperative, the largest employer in the town, had 150 members, owned a day care center, and operated an after school tutoring program and a summer reading program (Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund 1992).

SSC Employment Agency in Baltimore is a worker-owned cooperative temporary services agency in the hospitality industry.⁹ Baltimore BUILD, a community organizing and advocacy organization, wanted to support business development that would help employ "hard to employ" local residents, develop their skills and mobility, and provide good jobs with ownership possibilities. BUILD established SSC in 1997 and hired a management company to run the business until the workers could take over. After 160 hours as employees, workers are eligible to apply to become members, at an investment of \$100. As more and more workers became eligible to be owners, the agency became self-managing and truly worker owned. As the company has grown, it has provided annual dividends to each owner, in addition to job permanence, decent wages, and job ladder mobility.

The APR Masonry Arts Corporation is an African-American worker-owned unionized masonry construction company (Hill and Mackin 2002). African American unionized bricklayers in Los Angeles, California, were underemployed and felt discriminated against. The union was not successful in addressing their needs. After seven years of organizing and fund-raising, with help from the non-profit organization A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund and cooperative developers Ownership Associates in Boston, the cooperative was launched in

August of 1998. Members invested \$5,000 each. They worked mostly on jobs in the Black community. Unfortunately they had cash-flow difficulties, and the business shut down in 2005.

Emma's Eco-Clean house cleaning cooperative is a project of Women's Action to Gain Economic Security (WAGES) in Redwood City, California. Five founding members (predominantly Latinas) went through a one-year business training program offered by WAGES and 75 hours of industrial training in ecological cleaning. The business began operating in April 1999. The now eleven members make decisions collectively, jointly participate in administration, and formed their own internal training program. Emma's won a 1999 Silicon Valley Environmental Business Award with WAGES and was nominated for a 2001 San Mateo County Sustainability Award.¹⁰ WAGES has developed and supported several other ecological cleaning cooperatives and generally helps immigrant women jointly own their own businesses, receive the needed training, and gain control over their income. Cooperative Economics for Women, in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, works similarly with immigrant women to develop entrepreneurship and form cooperatives.

Green Worker Cooperatives (GWC) in the South Bronx, New York, was started by Director Omar Freilla in 2003. It started as an outgrowth of New York City's environmental justice movement. Green Worker Cooperatives is an incubator for worker cooperatives that practice ecological sustainability. They combine cooperative development (building a cooperative from inception to launch and supporting the cooperative members until the business is well on its way) with advocacy for sustainable development in their neighborhood. Their objective is to "build a movement for a different kind of economy, one built on environmental justice; empowered communities; and democratic workplaces."¹¹ The purpose is to address the dual needs of eco-friendly industry (to clean up hazardous sites and develop sustainability) and people-friendly jobs. GWC combines meaningful work, workplace democracy, advocacy, and environmental safety and sustainability in a low-income, underserved community in New York City. It is developing its first cooperative, Building Materials Reuse Center, a retail warehouse for surplus and salvaged building materials recovered from construction and demolition jobs. Deconstruction and recycling are emerging industries with a potential to grow. GWC has also developed a "Cooperative Academy" to train residents in cooperative economics. GWC receives technical assistance from The ICA Group, a cooperative development company in Boston, Massachusetts.

COOPERATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND NEW ORLEANS

Given all the possible positive effects of cooperative ownership, and the variety of models for how to initiate and sustain such development, cooperative economic development is a viable revitalization strategy (Haynes and Gordon Nembhard 1999). The development plans for New Orleans and the Gulf Coast might better meet all their goals if they add cooperative development to the strategies they will be advocating and supporting.

Ralph Nader is the most prominent of those of us suggesting using cooperative business ownership to help rebuild New Orleans and its environs. A couple of months after Hurricane Katrina Nader wrote:

Here is a flattened major city in America where a cooperative economy can take hold that puts people first, that allows the return of low-income families back home with dignity, self-determination and opportunity. (Nader 2005)

What he did not say was that such a strategy already exists in New Orleans, however it is small and needs more attention and more resources. There were cooperative and worker-owned businesses in New Orleans before the flooding. *GEO Newsletter* editors, for example, reported on a gathering with several co-op members in New Orleans in April 2003. This group included representatives from Invest Construction (a construction cooperative whose members are public housing residents), Cyberspace Central Computer Consultants, Plan B Bicycle Co-op, and the Green Project (recycling cooperative) (Bowman and Stone 2003). Many of the businesses and their members are working to reestablish themselves in New Orleans and to help develop more cooperatives. The Crescent City Farmers Market in New Orleans had been an outlet for many of the FSC/LAF's Mississippi farm cooperatives. It was reopened in November after being totaled by Hurricane Katrina. Its reopening helped local farmers reestablish themselves.

In addition, the cooperative movement has been very much involved in relief efforts and rebuilding. Cooperatives from around the country (including the FSC/LAF's Indian Springs Farmer's Association in Mississippi, whose own facilities were damaged and whose members' farms suffered "excessive losses") donated produce, biodiesel fuel, and other supplies to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast (Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund 2006, 2-3). The FSC/LAF's Assessment and Outreach Team is providing emergency financial relief to hurricane survivors and coordinating disaster relief training. The FSC/LAF has also begun to provide training workshops on advocacy and cooperative development. It plans to help develop housing cooperatives, worker-owned cooperatives for cleanup, rehab, and construction, as well as to continue ongoing work with farmer cooperatives and credit unions (2006, 3).

The Common Ground Collective has a director for cooperative development and is planning to launch a number of cooperatives in construction, seafood production, housing, and other areas in the near future.¹² Among its many projects, the Common Ground Collective has opened two community health clinics and two food and supply distribution centers (Common Ground Collective 2005). The free community-controlled, locally employed, primary care health clinic in Algiers, New Orleans, has a mobile unit that travels to other communities, and the staff also provides home visits. Common Ground Collective also helps support three community gardens.

COOPERATIVE OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

All of these cooperative enterprises have many things in common. Members are from marginalized communities and were not being served well or at all by prevailing mar-

ket forces or government agencies. They needed to generate income and build assets and generally have control over their own economic lives and their communities. They came together (often with the help of a leader or community organization), studied their circumstances, studied the alternatives, and pooled their resources—talents and capital. They launched businesses that would address their needs and keep them in control. Many followed a charismatic leader. Many started through a church or school. Others were initiated by an agency or organization that recognized the need and pulled together a group of people who could then work together.

These are all stable businesses anchored in their communities, with no desire or incentive to leave. They usually provide permanent jobs with livable wages and benefits for their workers and/or owners, often setting the standard (a higher standard) for their industry in their region. Many provide comprehensive services, or services beyond those specific to their industry. Because they are member owned, they provide asset building opportunities and, in addition to the added individual wealth, increase the wealth of their community (Gordon Nembhard 2002). The benefits from these businesses spill over into the broader community, often increasing training and education of members and consumers in the community, buying from other local businesses, fostering business spin-offs, increasing civic participation, and advocating for industry or community changes—i.e., creating positive externalities (Gordon Nembhard 2004a, Gordon Nembhard and Blasingame 2002).

The research I and a few others are engaged in to document and evaluate the impact of cooperative ownership on communities, especially subaltern communities,¹³ is helpful and will continue to be helpful to our understanding of alternative economic development strategies that anchor capital in communities, give residents control of economic development in their communities, and generate income and wealth. Much more research needs to be conducted, with the involvement of communities themselves. In addition, this information needs to be disseminated more widely, and policy strategies must be devised to support the development strategies. We need to know more about policies to better support and develop such enterprises, and we need more analysis of their strengths and weaknesses—particularly the myriad benefits cooperative businesses provide communities.

However, we know enough now—about their benefits and how to develop such businesses—to promote and support more such types of business development. It is time that urban and rural renewal programs and municipal and state governments took these democratic-ownership models seriously and included them in their development plans.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ See the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative Web site (www.dsni.org).
- ² This list is based on my notes from a workshop on worker-owned cooperatives taught by Tim Huet (Huet 2001).
- ³ See the Mondragon Web site at <http://www.mcc.es/ing/index.asp>.
- ⁴ See the Green Worker Cooperatives Web site at www.greenworker.coop.
- ⁵ See "Emma's Eco-Clean" on the WAGES Web site at www.wagescooperatives.org/emmas.html.
- ⁶ See Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund Web site at <http://www.federation.coop/>.
- ⁷ See the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute Web site at www.paraprofessional.org/Sections/chca.htm.
- ⁸ See 8.
- ⁹ This information is from McCulloch 2001, page 69, and the author's personal discussions with Avis Ransom of R&B Unlimited, Inc., providers of management assistance to SSC.
- ¹⁰ See 7.
- ¹¹ See 6.
- ¹² In e-mail correspondence (March 2006) with Common Ground's cooperative development director, Shakoor Aljuwani notes that the organization will be conducting trainings and hopes to develop several cooperatives and community land trusts in the next few months.
- ¹³ I am currently writing a book on African American cooperative thought and practice.



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Remarks on Katrina

Marc Morial

Speech delivered at the Georgetown University Law Center, Washington D.C., on 12 October 2005.

Today I want to elaborate upon the Katrina Bill of Rights, which the National Urban League began to elucidate in the days immediately after the hurricane. I believe that all of us—businesswomen and day laborers, shrimp boat captains and city dwellers, Black and White, Hispanic and Asian—can and must agree that all the people of the Gulf Coast should be guaranteed the following rights: the right to recover, the right to vote, the right to return, the right to rebuild, and the right to work.

These are not excessive demands, nor are they unfair. They are the basic rights of which the victims of this super-catastrophe should be assured.

First, the people of the Gulf Coast must be guaranteed the right to recover. To do so, they need immediate help to get back on their feet and rebuild their lives. That is why Congress should provide extended unemployment assistance to the half a million hard-working Americans thrown out of a job simply because of a storm.

Beyond unemployment assistance, our elected representatives in Washington should establish a Katrina Victims Compensation Fund. Let us recall that within days after the awful terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Congress passed and the president signed legislation authorizing a 9/11 victims compensation fund, which eventually provided more than \$7 billion in compensation to people affected by 9/11.

As it did then, Congress must take immediate and decisive action to begin helping American citizens whose lives have been disrupted and whose livelihoods have been wiped out by this major national tragedy.

Another part of securing the right to recover is to help heal the wounds which have torn apart the people of the Gulf Coast. Right now, people are angry and suspicious. They have seen the worst and are prepared to believe the worst. So while memories are fresh, we must begin the search for answers. Congress must establish an independent, nonpartisan commission to understand what went wrong in the response to this disaster.

Marc Morial is the president and chief financial officer of the National Urban League, a civil rights and community-based organization devoted to empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream. He has focused his attention on closing the equality gaps between African Americans and other ethnic communities in health, education, economic empowerment, civil rights, racial justice, civic engagement, and quality of life. Prior to his appointment as president, Morial served two terms as the mayor of New Orleans and also two years in the Louisiana State Senate.

The National Urban League supports this not to point fingers but to understand what happened so we can prepare every city across this nation for a natural disaster or terrorist attack. As a former mayor, I can say that this is critical work.

Second, we need to secure the right to vote for the people of the Gulf Coast. Katrina may have knocked over buildings, but we must not let it weaken the foundation of our democracy. That is why we must ensure that the hundreds of thousands of citizens displaced from their towns, villages, and precincts have full voting rights in their home states. The ballot is the best way to ensure that our displaced citizens have the voice that they want and deserve in the rebuilding of their communities.

Third, we must guarantee to every evacuee and every resident the right to return home. Whether those returning lived in affluent, working-class, or poor sections, no high-minded government officials or private officials should make the decision whether or not to return. All families should have the chance to come back to their hometowns or neighborhoods if they so choose. We need to ensure that home owners have the right to choose whether or not to reclaim property. Washed out or not, these are their homes.

I have no illusions. For many, coming home will be tough. That is why Congress should institute a three-year federal tax holiday for those residents earning less than \$50,000 a year who lived in the region and choose to return. Concerning business, we should say that if they want to enjoy a 50 percent tax holiday, they must pay their workers a living wage, for nothing will do more to lift people out of poverty and help them rebuild than a good job at a good wage.

Fourth, we must ensure that every resident of the Gulf Coast has the right to rebuild and to have a say in what the future of his or her home will be. Everyone needs a voice, and those voices must be heard. Listening to everybody's voice is the only way we can rebuild the Gulf in a way that does not benefit only the big contractors and real estate developers, in a way that does not divide us but rather unites us, in a way that does not turn New Orleans or Gulfport into a gated community but rather breaks down the barriers to success for all those who live there.

Indeed, rebuilding the Gulf Coast around the principle of equal opportunity for all means that as we rebuild, we must not tear down what has made us strong. We must not pay for Katrina by cutting Medicaid, education, job training programs, increasing Medicare premiums, or gutting rural economic development efforts. Paying for the rebuilding on the backs of those whose lives are already ruined only adds insult to injury.

Instead of burdening those already down and those already out, we should help them get back up and move forward.

That is why we must remove obstacles that can allow a family or a small business owner to put the tragedy of Katrina behind them and allow them an opportunity to rebuild. We must be vigilant in making sure that in the confusion of rebuilding, forces are not allowed to stifle their ability to succeed and that red tape does not restrain our people from thriving.

As soon as possible, I believe there should be a moratorium on collections and deficiency judgments on real and personal properties. We should prohibit negative credit reporting or the omission of negative events from credit scores when the incidents were a result of Katrina.

We should encourage our financial institutions to forebear on loans and mortgages until people can really move back and actually live in their homes. We must protect the people of the Gulf Coast from predatory lenders and those that would use their tragedy for sheer personal benefit. And we should freeze all foreclosure proceedings against property in affected areas for a minimum of twelve months.

The final and perhaps the most important right that every resident of the Gulf Coast must be assured of is the right to work, for there is no better antipoverty program than a good job that pays good wages.

With reconstruction and rebuilding, there will be many, many, many new jobs created in the region, and it is our duty to ensure that these jobs go to people from the Gulf region.

We should give local residents first choice on recovery and reconstruction jobs and first choice on contracts. We should aim for 50 percent of all contracts to be secured by local contractors and 25 percent of all contracts to be secured by minority contractors.

To honor their work, we must ensure that fair wages are paid and fairness in the workplace is upheld.

Ladies and gentlemen, civil rights and equal opportunity are not “red tape” to be cut when times are tough. They are who we are as a nation. They are what generations of Americans fought for. Indeed, our parents and grandparents gave so much to ensure that equal opportunity and civil rights were the fabric of American life.

For that reason, to the President of the United States I say, “Mr. President, I support the idea of your commitment to a broad rebuilding initiative. Mr. President, the workers rebuilding the Gulf are heroes. They deserve a fair wage. They deserve a fair shake. I ask you today to do the right thing and restore affirmative action and the Davis Bacon prevailing wage laws.”

Plain and simple: there should be no more federal contracts granted until these guarantees are put back in place.

These guarantees were not waived for 9/11. They were not waived for Wall Street. So I do not think a great nation should waive them when the streets affected are the Main Streets in New Orleans, Gulfport, Biloxi, or St. Bernard Parish. High standards for Wall Street, high standards for Main Street.

Once the rebuilding is finished, we need to have an economy in the Gulf Coast that can sustain good-paying jobs for the people of the region and that will lift this area out of the swamps of poverty.

The Katrina Bill of Rights is not a not a detailed plan, but a set of principles that should guide us as we put back the pieces of this devastated part of our nation. It is a lodestone directing us toward the Gulf Coast we want to build and the nation we want to become.

Keeping us on this path will not be easy. With so many different jurisdictions—from cities and towns to counties, parishes, and states—it will not be hard to lose the forest for the trees. That is why the president and Congress should establish one single authority that will transcend and unify the region’s political borders and direct the rebuilding effort. I envision a Tennessee Valley Authority-style agency. I propose today the establishment of a Gulf Coast Authority with the charge and the power to lead and implement the Herculean task of rebuilding.

I hope that this Gulf Coast Authority would have a dedicated multiyear budget, for in this current fiscal climate with taxes for the wealthy still being cut and commitments overseas unending, it is critical that we secure funds separate from the federal budget to rebuild these towns here at home.

Talking about the right to a good job and good schools, affordable housing, and priceless legal rights may sound bold to some. After all, some may say, we have many other priorities.

During the ninety-five-year history of the National Urban League and its affiliate movement, we have heard that argument before. But we have never waited. Why? Because expanding opportunity for all must never be an afterthought in this great nation. Because alleviating the poverty of our fellow citizens is a responsibility we must never forget. Because liberty and justice for all is not an empty slogan but rather a pledge we make to our neighbors and our children.

Forty-one years ago, Coretta Scott King called her husband, who was recuperating from a viral fever and exhaustion from hard work in an Atlanta hospital, to tell him that he had won the Nobel Peace Prize.

When Dr. King accepted that prize the following winter, he did so with an unyielding belief in this nation. Even though he was jailed and abused and even though African Americans were being set upon by hoses and dogs, King believed in America. He told the dignitaries in Oslo that he was accepting the prize "with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. I refuse to accept despair," he said, "as the final response to the ambiguities of history."

Today at Georgetown University Law Center, I too refuse to accept despair as the final response to this cruel twist of history.

I refuse to accept that a whole region of a great nation can be written off.

I refuse to accept the poverty and absence of opportunity that were laid bare for the whole nation to see.

I believe that the Katrina Bill of Rights will ensure that we rebuild a treasured part of this nation in a way that lives up to our nation's highest ideals.

While the days just after Katrina were a painful example of how we do not want our country, our states, and our cities to be run, the years of rebuilding can and must be an example of what we want our nation to become. I thank you, I appreciate you, and I encourage your continued work. The Katrina Bill of Rights, ladies and gentlemen. Let us put the Katrina victims first.

Agency, Equity, and Environmental Justice: An Interview with James Hoyte

Interview conducted by Timothy J. Cunningham

James Hoyte is Assistant to the President and Lecturer on Environmental Science and Public Policy at Harvard University. From 1983 to 1988, Hoyte served as Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs with responsibility for the planning and management of all environmental and natural resource conservation policies and programs for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He has published articles in the fields of environmental policy and management and serves on the boards of directors of numerous environmental and civic organizations.

Timothy J. Cunningham of the Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy interviewed James Hoyte on 12 December 2005.

HJAAP

What led you to public service as a career?

HOYTE

I suppose it is fair to say since high school I have been interested in working on issues that affect people's lives, particularly people with social welfare issues at their heart. I grew up in very modest circumstances. My father had a big affect on me; he was very engaged in issues of race and social action. Even though he was a janitor, he was extraordinarily well read. He spoke about ideas, particularly ideas that related to socioeconomic status. From those times I have always known that I wanted to work in areas that engage those issues. I have gone between working in public service and teaching. I've been fortunate enough to combine those interests in many ways as I look over the sweep of my career. I have had opportunities to teach. I've had opportunities to serve as a public manager. And I've had opportunities to affect issues of race and social justice as an activist in my professional life at Harvard. It really started with my upbringing. It was the focus of my family.

HJAAP

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, dialogue about the "two Americas" has reemerged, suggesting the poor and mostly African American residents of New Orleans suffered disproportionately. What are your thoughts?

Timothy J. Cunningham is a master in society, human development, and health candidate at the Harvard School of Public Health. Cunningham completed a bachelor of science degree in biology at Morehouse College in 2004.

HOYTE

I think that is quite real. We would have had to have our heads in the sand not to observe the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the African American community in the Gulf Coast, and New Orleans in particular. We like to say there has been a wake-up call in our country to recognize that a portion of the population, our citizenry that clearly is underserved and underprivileged, clearly bore the blunt of the hurricane, namely urban dwellers in New Orleans. It remains to be seen what we do with that awakening. The devastation and impact on people, families, and property was so overwhelming. It is hard to conceive that there will not be a strategy to address the devastation. There are a variety of responses that have occurred, albeit delayed; the issue is going to be whether those responses prove to be evenhanded—whether in the final analysis those who were really affected most are made, and if not whole are at least a good way towards being made, whole. Depending on where you sit, there is a feeling of hope or weariness. There are significant issues of justice in error.

HJAAP

Let me ask you directly, do you believe the response was slow and/or inadequate because the overwhelming majority of those people inside New Orleans following the disaster were poor and African American?

HOYTE

I do. Certainly, I do not believe that anyone at any level was sitting around saying, “those are Black folks; we [are] not going to respond.” I don’t think that people this day and age very often think that way; there may be some of that on the fringes. It is the institutional relationships that exist. These institutional relationships disempower Black people across the board throughout our country at each level of our government, including New Orleans. There is a certain amount of success at the local level that Black politicians have had in New Orleans and other urban areas. But what really makes a difference is the economic infrastructure that exists and who controls the levers that relate to it. In large part that is not Black people. Governmental systems respond to those folks that they think they have to respond [to]. That is not to say that those in government do not have an interest in serving the people. Institutions that are in place go along with the routine. When something like this happens, you have to break out of the routine. You break out [of] the routine when there is enough energy and activism to make you break out of that routine. The fact that Black people happen to be the people that are most disenfranchised and less well off was a major factor. It resulted in Black people not being responded to as quickly.

HJAAP

What kind of response should there have been to the hurricane?

HOYTE

First of all, there should have been an immediate emergency response that did not occur. There needed to be a response that started from a feeling of respect for those people that were impacted. However, we saw that media images dictated the response. Many of those media images were mixed at best as they related to Black people. So many of us were offended by the way in which the citizens were referred to in the media—as refugees. It is not necessary to be animist with regard to affecting people, but it did show some lack of respect. And that translates in some degree to how those who have the power to deliver services respond.

HJAAP

Following Katrina, New Orleans was described as a “toxic gumbo.” It was filled with sewage. It was filled with chemicals. What can be done to contain these threats?

HOYTE

In the most immediate form, one wants to be sure that only appropriate and well-maintained facilities are in place in communities like New Orleans. While the devastating hurricane that occurred is not anything that one can control, there was an impact on facilities. It is not clear to me that those facilities were cited, built, and maintained with the consideration of the potential impact of Hurricane Katrina. In the cleanup process, what is most important is the health and welfare of the affected population. One should start with an aggressive cleanup strategy that addresses the “toxic gumbo” as the major emergency need, even while we have to be concerned about the economic impact.

HJAAP

What are the long-term implications for the Gulf region?

HOYTE

Again, I would go back to the need to take into account environmental justice principles with respect to facility citing, facility maintenance, and facility operations. That means that the populations that might be affected by the operation of a facility have to be consulted with respect to operations and any new citing needs. I don't have the impression that facilities were wiped out and that there is a need to build a lot of new ones. We have to repair what has been damaged. We are stuck with the citing decisions that were made in the past. However, we can be more sensible about citing decisions and take into account the potential impact on communities, especially low-income and communities of color. With the devastation that occurred in various parts of the Gulf region there is an opportunity to almost start from scratch. Certain principles should be taken into account in the decision-making process. One, concerns about environmental impacts and environmental justice related impacts, there is a need for real involvement of affected communities in the deci-

sion-making process. Second, there is a tension in wanting to get things done as quickly as possible and the desire to have people return to New Orleans. It is certainly important, both psychologically and presumably for the economic vitality of the community. But we must be tough-minded about that. We don't want to make building decisions that put us right back in a vulnerable position.

HJAAP

What lessons can be learned from Hurricane Katrina in terms of environmental policy and environmental justice?

HOYTE

In terms of environmental policy, the lesson concerning the application of environmental justice principles is key. There is the need to involve affected communities in the decision-making process. The fundamental requirements of flood control in rebuilding these levies must be followed to protect against this type of disaster more significantly than they have in the past. I can't drill down to the level of knowing about specific facilities—where they are cited and where they are built. But it is necessary that they involve affected communities and apply the most sophisticated technology to make it most likely that people will be protected against environmental contamination. I understand there is a tremendous economic recovery that has to occur. In terms of the economic concerns, we need to get the city up and running. New Orleans was an important part of the industrial equation with respect to oil and the movement of cargo. A working port is a messy enterprise under the best of circumstances. I don't think we can be too cavalier about the need to reenergize the Port of New Orleans. It is important to the country as a whole and especially important to the region.

HJAAP

It seems that we've covered a lot of ground. Is there anything you would like to add?

HOYTE

In the rebuilding of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, it is extremely important that the economic activity generated in the rebuilding process is shared by populations of colors. This is a region with a significant proportion of citizens of color. After suffering this devastation, it is only fair that they should have some priority in sharing in the economic benefits of the rebuilding process. In the effort to rebuild, there are a lot of entrepreneurial folk who want to make some money in the process. We need to be careful that the desire to make money does not result in poor quality work, but also does not result in squeezing out those people who should have as a matter of justice first crack at the benefits of the economic activity.

The Plight of the Education Systems—Post Hurricane Katrina: An Interview with Dr. Brenda Mitchell and Dr. Linda Stelly

Interview conducted by Dr. Theresa Perry

Dr. Brenda Mitchell is president of the United Teachers of New Orleans. She was raised in the city of New Orleans and has called New Orleans her home for over fifty years. She is a graduate of the New Orleans public schools. Dr. Mitchell received her undergraduate degree from Southern University of New Orleans, her Masters +30 from the University of New Orleans, and doctorate degree in developmental education with a specialization in instructional systems from Grambling State University. Dr. Mitchell began her teaching career in 1968. She has served in many capacities in the New Orleans Public schools—elementary school teacher, Title I staff developer, and a Title I math and reading teacher. She was the founding director of both the New Orleans Teacher Center and the United Teachers of New Orleans Center for Professional Growth and Development. In 1999, she was elected president of the United Teachers of New Orleans. She brings to this position a commitment to teachers' professional development and highlights the necessary role that teachers must play in the reform of city schools.

Dr. Linda Stelly works as the Associate Director for Educational Issues for the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in Washington, D.C. Her role includes coordination of the AFT's Redesigning Schools to Raise Achievement Project. Stelly has facilitated leadership and results-based reform solutions, designing communications strategies for administrators and decision makers in local and national institutions. She has coordinated research initiatives in the areas of local and national policy development and strategic planning. She has developed proven practice leadership strategies for accountability and effective teaching behaviors from a multicultural perspective. A graduate of Dillard and Loyola Universities, she is a resident of the New Orleans community and serves on the mayor's advisory committee for education.

Dr. Theresa Perry interviewed Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Stelly by phone on 28 February 2006.

Dr. Theresa Perry is a Professor of Africana Studies and Education at Simmons College and the Director of the Simmons College/Beacon Press Race Democracy and Education Lecture and Book Series. Her research and work in schools has recently focused on the development of a theory of practice for African American achievement and educational environments that normalize high achievement for Black students. Dr. Perry's areas of expertise include African American achievement, teacher preparation, school/college/community partnerships, and

culturally responsive teaching practices. Among other publications, she is the coauthor, with Asa Hilliard and Claude Steele, of Young, Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African American Students and is completing a book entitled Educating African American Students: What Teachers, Teacher Educators and Community Activists Should Know.

PERRY

Could you tell me what has happened to public education in New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina?

MITCHELL

I think that [public education] has been systematically dismantled. They have disenfranchised poor and underclass people.

PERRY

Tell me exactly how you think this has happened.

MITCHELL

Our initial conversation was about how we were going to reopen New Orleans public schools. There were written documents that were generated, and then I began to hear rumblings about charter school money. The first meeting we had with the state superintendent, he said to us that the schools would not open this year. My question to him was, "Why won't schools open this year?" He said, "The buildings are in disrepair."

PERRY

And he's saying 117 schools wouldn't open?

STELLY

None of them would open.

MITCHELL

I wasn't quite sure about what was going on. But what I found out was that there was some federal money that was set aside for charter schools, which was under the state and from the work of Senator Mary Landrieu.

PERRY

Was this money set aside before Katrina or after Katrina?

STELLY

Post-Katrina. There was \$21 million allocated for the expansion and improvement of charter schools in Louisiana. Pre-Katrina, there were approximately seven charter schools.

MITCHELL

I began to hear about the money at the state superintendent's office. And I began to have the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) look into it. The only way schools could open, we were told, was because there was going to be some money for our charter schools. And he would have to use that money to operate schools since the state wasn't going to have any money.

STELLY

The district was in default as far as paying its bills, as far as paying teachers, employees. The district had already been taken over financially by the state, because the board was determined to be fiscally inept, due to the lack of financial stability. Hence, [the state] appointed a private contractor to manage the finances of the district. This was all pre-Katrina.

PERRY

So the finances of the district, but not the operation and management of the schools, had been taken over prior to Katrina?

STELLY

Correct...And pre-Katrina, schools had student achievement levels that had improved significantly.

MITCHELL

If you look at our accountability scores, our initial baseline data was 2000. And at that point, (based on) our scores, we had to make 15 points. It's now at 60. And while many of our schools are still below what they should be, they have progressed tremendously. As a matter of fact, this year, 93 have made positive growth. And 88 have met their AYP. But that isn't publicized.

STELLY

So that's 93 schools showing improvement according to the state accountability system...So that was 93 out of 117 schools and eighty-eight made the Annual Yearly Progress...(as) required by No Child Left Behind...

PERRY

So after Katrina, what happened at the state level?

STELLY

Post-Katrina the state had determined that no schools would be opened. However, with the statement that no schools would be opened, Dr. Mitchell challenged that.

MITCHELL

Yes. As a matter of fact, our union filed a suit to compel the school district to open schools. We did that on November 8 and have since amended our suit to include the state board of education and the Louisiana Recovery School District because they're also responsible for educating students in the city of New Orleans right now.

PERRY

On what grounds did the state take over all the schools?

MITCHELL

We have something that's called Act 35, which authorized (post Katrina) the state takeover of any school whose score was at or below the state average.

PERRY

Did Act 35 apply to the other schools in Louisiana?

STELLY

The legislation was advanced for a city larger than 400,000.

T. PERRY

So in essence it was just for New Orleans?

STELLY

Right after the funding (\$21 million) was appropriated, the highest-performing schools in the city of New Orleans applied for charter status. And what gave them the authorization to do it was the governor, [who also] issued an executive order [eliminating] all of the protocols necessary for schools to convert into charter status. As a result of that, Benjamin Franklin, which is largely White and [is] the highest-performing school in the state, recognized nationally, [became a charter school]. From there was established the Algiers Charter Association, which then brought in all of the schools—thirteen schools—in the driest part of the city. Algiers is part of New Orleans, but it's on the west bank side of New Orleans, which is more adjacent to the business district and the St. Charles Avenue corridor.

PERRY

So all the schools in this section of town became charter schools?

STELLY

Right.

MITCHELL

However, the representative from that district last year put it in a bill to the legislature to have that area secede from New Orleans. And so, there's no coincidence. I think this was in the making for some time now. They wanted to have the city for themselves. So they wanted all thirteen of the schools. This provided them the opportunity.

PERRY

Who is in charge of these 102 schools that have been taken over?

STELLY

The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the State Department of Education are the governing authorities for these end of line Recovery Districts.

PERRY

I have read in the press that there are twenty public schools open. How many of these schools are charter schools and how many are regular public schools?

MITCHELL

Regular public schools, there are four open, that's it.

PERRY

You had about five thousand teachers, approximately 85 percent Black teachers. What has happened to all the teachers?

MITCHELL

They're all over. We have people in thirty-eight states. The largest group we've seen is actually in New Orleans.

PERRY

Is it true that all the teachers were fired?

MITCHELL

Yes. They were all terminated. It was supposed to be on January 31, but we got a stay. They'll all be terminated as of March 27, which means they don't have any benefits.

PERRY

So, initially, the teachers were fired and AFT went to court on their behalf?

STELLY

Correct.

MITCHELL

Initially, they put the teachers on disaster leave, but there really is no such thing as disaster leave. Nothing like this has ever happen to schools. They called it the disaster leave so they could get unemployment.

PERRY

So these charters schools, are they hiring union teachers?

MITCHELL

They are hiring [some] union teachers. But once they become a charter school staff member, they won't have collective bargaining. What the charter schools did, which they had the option to do as a part of the application process, is that they can state in the application whether they want to allow collective bargaining for their employees or not.

PERRY

When we were down in New Orleans, a couple of teachers currently teaching in charter schools told us that they had had to sign a statement saying that if they disclosed their salary they would be fired. Have you heard of this from teachers?

MITCHELL

Yes. They are really working under the worst conditions. And you know that's so unfortunate because they're trying to earn a salary to take care of their families. They're very vulnerable. And they're being misused.

PERRY

What is happening to the retirees in terms of their health benefits?

STELLY

Retirees are eligible for health insurance after their retirement. As a result of this termination action, their health care premiums have tripled, if not exceeded that level.

PERRY

So what are they paying a month?

STELLY

Originally, retirees paid approximately \$200-\$500 per month depending on individual or family enrollment. Now they are paying from \$400-\$1200 a month.

PERRY

I understand that the AFT is filing suits on behalf of the families to get the state to open more schools?

STELLY

Right, to provide greater access to children in the city. The charter schools, some of them, have selective enrollment. Although, they all are supposed to be open access districts, open access schools, which leave a lot to be desired. However some charter schools have a cap on the percentage of special education students who can attend at 25 percent.

PERRY

One of the reasons you all are filing suit is because there are kids who can't get into the schools?

STELLY

[There are also] not enough schools for the number of children who are in the city.

PERRY

Would you say that the schools that opened as charter schools had an incentive to do so because they were getting extra money from the federal government?

STELLY

Yes, correct.

MITCHELL

However, if you have five potential charter schools, then \$20 million is one thing. But now we have nineteen, and that's not a lot of money. I've heard the rumblings because they haven't gotten the kind of funding that they thought they were going to get.

STELLY

All of the allocated \$21 million was only seed money. This is proposed as a one-time grant to get charter schools started or expanded, but not money for charter schools over time.

PERRY

Where is the superintendent, the deputy superintendent?

STELLY

The board's decision-making power is negated because they have no control over the finances of the district. So every time a school is opened, it has to be approved by all of these chains above the school board.

PERRY

The decisions have to be approved by whom?

STELLY

By the state, the operations manager, and then approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

PERRY

Who is controlling what is happening to New Orleans schools?

STELLY

External forces to the community.

PERRY

Can the charters pay people whatever they want to pay them?

MITCHELL

Yes.

PERRY

And, essentially, they can hire whomever they want to hire. But none of the schools are really under local governance?

STELLY

Four schools are still operating under the control of the local school board. And those four schools adhere to the United Teachers of New Orleans's (UTNO) contractual agreement until June of 2006.

PERRY

Has anyone talked to the people who are in New Orleans about what they want?

STELLY

Well, there were attempts, according to the Bring New Orleans Back Committee, where they were using the Internet to get feedback. There were some focus groups that were conducted among parents, students, and teachers. But I would say it would have been a highly select group of representatives in select circumstances, but not the community at large. And that was raised as part of the Bring New Orleans Back Committee—that the larger community who were consumers of public education was not involved in a meaningful way in a lot of this discussion.

MITCHELL

[This shows] the impact that politics has on education. To me, this was how Katrina gives them authority to do things they probably wanted to do—talked about in some quiet rooms, away from public view, for over a year. And so, what they've done is to redesign public education. The state department says they will make the decision which schools will open and where they will open. And that they're also not going to allow our parents back into the community. You can't go back into the housing development unless you have a job or you sign on to get a job, to go to training or something of that nature. It seems that every opportunity they get, they do something to discourage our folk from coming back. They lost their jobs. They lost their homes. And there's just been no compassion shown to them. I believe that, when they designed all of this away from the people that are most affected by it, they intentionally disenfranchised us.

STELLY

It's more like "make sure you stay where you are because you are not really a contributing member of this community." There's no housing. The housing that exists is exorbitant. The rents have increased significantly wherever there is access to housing. And as Dr. Mitchell mentioned, in terms of the housing development, it has been stated that, unless you're employed or employable, then you are not going to get housing in the housing developments.

PERRY

So they're even keeping people out of public housing?

STELLY

It's just unbelievable. So the education issues, the number of children who will come back to repopulate these schools, will depend heavily on housing. It will depend on jobs. It will depend on transportation. Because as you saw in all of the Katrina pictures, the issue of transportation was what caused so many people to be left in New Orleans in the beginning.

STELLY

And even with all of the issues that we're raising, we see ourselves, the union that represents all of us as residents, as key players in ensuring that children and families have access to more than what they had before. We want better schools. We want quality teachers.

MITCHELL

We are the largest union in the state. Getting rid of UTNO serves more than one purpose. They have control over the teachers. But it's also a political move because we have a vote of 70 to 80 percent.

PERRY

What's the vision for the union? You all are filing suits. What is top on the agenda of the national office in terms of responding to what's happening to schools?

STELLY

One thing that we are trying to do is increase the communication among our members, not only our members but citizens throughout the country around the realities of what's going on. [We] need them to exercise their right to vote in these upcoming elections because while we don't have collective bargaining, we still have a union. And we have been sending out our updates to make sure they're informed about what's going on. And that also includes the tours that we're doing to different communities to meet with them. And when we meet them, we find that it's been the same everywhere—that they feel isolated. They feel like the school district has abandoned them. There's been no communication. There are many people out there who don't have access to the Internet, personally, who have told us stories about having to go to the library and wait in line to use the computer.

STELLY

At a point where there's a void in leadership on educational issues, in the city of New Orleans, AFT is supporting UTNO and ensuring that UTNO is seen as the leader in providing education for all children. That's within the charter schools as well as within public schools.

PERRY

When I was in New Orleans, I heard from teachers that they hadn't been able to get into buildings to get their personal belongings because they were under the control of this private management company.

MITCHELL

They began to operate as if [they] told teachers, "These are our buildings. And so, you cannot come into them." Now there were many schools that were not damaged. And initially, folk couldn't get into New Orleans, including myself. They weren't allowing us in. And they brought it to our attention. And, of course, we went into court again and forced them to make sure that they allow the teachers and other school employees in the building to get their property. So what they did was they put a schedule up on the Internet. And when individuals got into the building, they would have to sign a waiver saying that they were in there of their own volition. And something to the effect that they know that there's mold in the building which may be hazardous to their health. But they're doing this of their own accord. So, I supposed this was to protect the school district from any...

STELLY

Liability.

PERRY

So teachers have been able to go in and get their personal belongings?

MITCHELL

Yes. Some have on a limited basis. And we have asked that they keep the buildings accessible [for longer periods of time] because a lot of people are not here. And they can't all get back from 10 am to 12 pm on whichever date.

PERRY

Do you think that the racial composition of the teachers in New Orleans will shift?

MITCHELL

The majority are African American teachers. But I'll tell you what we heard. They're suggesting that they hire Teach For America teachers and the New Teacher Intern Project teachers, which are primarily White teachers, Caucasian teachers.

STELLY

Young teachers.

That would certainly have an impact on the percentage of African American teachers, also considering the percentage of them who are retiring because of financial need. The only income that they have available to them is their retirement. Teachers who have more than twenty years of service are eligible for retirement. Presently, we have more than two thousand of those who have already gone into retirement.

MITCHELL

Now we're going to have an impact on the number of African American teachers in the district, but we are also going to have an impact on those with the experience. The most senior veteran people are also going to be negatively impacted by this because they were forced to make those decisions in order to survive the situation.

STELLY

If 85 percent of the teaching staff are African American, and you have more than half of that eligible for retirement, when you think of the average years of experience exceeding twenty, you can clearly see with the recommendation that the New Teacher project and Teach For America students or whatever...then you're going to see this shift [of more white teachers]. And you're going to see this lack of cultural relevance in the educational process from there.

PERRY

Do you think the kids who are back in school are getting the psychological help they need?

STELLY

No. The youngsters are saying, explicitly, that there aren't enough counselors. They're seniors. They're youngsters who are going to graduate from school this year, but yet have not gotten their coursework. The counselors and teachers are doing the best job that they can possibly do. Unfortunately, the resources are not there. The ratios are too large. And those are places where additional support and resources need to be applied.

STELLY

The posttraumatic stress is absolutely there. And the mental health support does not exist here in the city to the degree that it needs to in order to support young people.

PERRY

What is happening with the testing schedule for the children in school in New Orleans or in other parts of the state?

STELLY

The testing is on schedule. They're high-stakes tests where graduation and promotion are tied to the performance on the tests at grades three, five, and graduation. I think the state gave the schools some latitude around their school performance scores and the sanctions around No Child Left Behind.

MITCHELL

In addition, when we were in Houston, we found out that students that are attending school in Texas not only have to take the Texas state accountability test [but also] the Louisiana accountability test. These kids need to have some additional support. They're already behind because of what has happened to them. They're not getting any counseling or social services. And so, to me, it's very unfair. Then I heard recently, within the last month, that the federal government is going to waive the schools' performance accountability sanctions.

PERRY

What else is happening to the kids that are there?

STELLY

One of my concerns is there was a push to get families and children back into the city. One would think that the schools that they would be going back to would be of the highest quality. That are, facilities would be of high quality. The technology would be there. The materials would be there.

MITCHELL

The research-based programs.

STELLY

The programs would be there to welcome these young people back from places where they had been across the country. I would venture to say that is not the case. It's bothersome to me that even currently the school circumstances that youngsters are being placed in is less than quality. The class sizes are not ideal class sizes. They are in extraordinary circumstances.

MITCHELL

And I'd like to add that I think that there are some lessons to be learned from the aftermath of Katrina, for things that people said they should not do. They should not rush—God forbid this ever happens to anybody else. But you don't rush to redesign a system, excluding the very people from the table who are impacted by it the most. And that includes parents. And it includes teachers and school support staff. I think that we had an opportunity, and we've missed it. And we could have sat down and

crafted a plan that would work for all of us. We could have used a set of resources to our benefit. And then, to talk about educators, they could lend us the kind of support that we need to get those research-based programs, to talk to people about the best ways of educating African American youngsters, the best ways of working with urban poor, the best ways of how we can provide the social services that are direly needed for these kids—where they are now and when they come back home—and how we, as a community, can put all of our resources together in order to do that.

AFTERWORD

The changes in the New Orleans public school system are proceeding at break neck speed. There is currently a bill in the Louisiana State Senate which would allow the state to sell, lease, or give New Orleans school buildings to any institution that has operated schools for 25 years. This would be done with a no-bid process. The money would not go to Orleans Parish. There is nothing in place to insure that the buildings, sold or granted at rock-bottom prices, would even continue to be used as schools, nor is there anything preventing private entities from reselling the buildings for monumental profit.

The Displacement of Black Families and Communities: San Francisco as a Case Study in Political Response: An Interview with N'Tanya Lee

Interview conducted by Tanene Allison

N'Tanya Lee is the Executive Director of Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth in San Francisco, California. Lee began working for social justice as a Black, thirteen-year-old, free-lunch kid fighting against Ronald Reagan's "ketchup is a vegetable" policy. Professionally, she has been the education policy advocate for the Community Service Society of New York City, street outreach director for Ozone House Youth Services, youth empowerment coordinator for the San Francisco Youth Commission, and a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies/African American History at Yale University.

Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth is a local community organization that works to transform San Francisco's services and policies in order to create a more family-friendly community. Through combining political advocacy, community organizing, and leadership development strategies, Coleman has created a powerful and cost-effective model for promoting social change and facilitating the participation of community residents (particularly youth and parents) in the city's policy-making process.

Tanene Allison of the Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy interviewed N'Tanya Lee on 15 January 2006 at her home in San Francisco.

HJAAP

What has led you to the work you do, and what are your present priorities as the executive director of Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth?

Tanene Allison is a master in public policy candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Prior to attending graduate school, Allison worked in community organizing, with a focus on increasing the political access of marginalized communities. She also chaired San Francisco's Youth Commission and served for three years as an advisor to San Francisco's mayor and board of supervisors on children and youth issues.

LEE

I have pretty much lived my life around social justice issues since I was about thirteen. I grew up between parents, one who was in poverty and one who was upper-middle class. I was politicized by witnessing the differences between their economic statuses and opportunities and just the injustices that my mother faced, being poor, Black, and female.

I became executive director of Coleman Advocates after working there for five years on their youth organizing project, Youth Making a Change. And my primary focus is the organization's ability to do real justice policy work.

HJAAP

There has been a dramatic decline in the number of families in San Francisco, and this phenomenon is seen most strongly in San Francisco's Black community. What do you believe are the key forces that have brought about this exodus out of the city?

LEE

There are a number of causes. The number one reason is the lack of affordable housing, not just in the city but in the entire Bay Area.

The second thing is the concern middle-income families have about the quality of the public schools. We have a really high rate of middle-income families sending their kids to private schools in San Francisco, which is I think directly related to the issue.

And then the third, which—we don't have as much good data on, but lots of anecdotal information, particularly for poor and working-class folks—has to do with safety issues and people basically feeling really unsafe.

HJAAP

How do you see Black families fitting into those factors?

LEE

I think those factors affect almost everyone, from very low-income people to higher-income people. In regards to the African American community, there are a couple different things going on. Before World War II there was a very small Black community in San Francisco. During the war there was a surge in Black migration into the city and a surge in Black living-wage employment here. After the war, Blacks were basically kicked out of the employment that they were able to hold during the war.

That was the heyday of Black life in San Francisco, and it more or less hasn't returned. African Americans in San Francisco have never had a strong foothold in the city's economy. In terms of this city's economic development over the last 50 years, Black people have become marginalized. Oftentimes such marginalization comes along with displacement.

The city has evolved into this new Pacific Coast center for globalization; there's basically just no place for Black people here.

For the city at large, there's the issue of middle-income people choosing to leave. But for the African American community, the primary issue is around displacement.

HJAAP

Do you think San Francisco differs in that displacement reality from other major urban areas?

LEE

Something that's kind of obvious is that San Francisco is a very small city, and the fact that the real estate and the land here is so highly valued means that every plot of land is being sought for the maximum value. This is different from other cities where there may be a center of the city that's expensive, but there are still places, pockets, which are marginalized within the city; there are still ghettos.

San Francisco is a place where there actually does not have to be pockets or concentrations of urban poverty. Those pockets of urban poverty can just be pushed beyond the city limits. So people have to travel to the city to work in low-wage jobs and then live elsewhere.

HJAAP

In a recent article you were quoted as saying that "San Francisco is at a crossroads. It may have an infrastructure of children's services, but no children." What is it that you think has brought about that mixture of having a number of services that aim to aid children and families in the city and yet such a decline in children?

LEE

The micro answer is that the very effective child-advocacy strategies in this city for the last 30 years have really focused on pressuring the government to provide services that families need, and yet the basic bread-and-butter issues for families have not so equally been advanced.

We have great after-school programs; we have this incredible network of services that are essential but are no substitutes for people's basic economic needs around housing and living-wage jobs. Those are the two basic things people need, and those have not been the primary things that child advocates have focused on in the last 30 years.

There's this mismatch of sorts; you have housing advocates who have been organizing around affordable housing in San Francisco for decades, but it's not been the child advocates involved in the housing work. Now we're in a crisis mode; we have to make that a priority. And so now we don't talk about general "affordable housing" but "affordable family housing."

You could build one-bedroom, affordable apartments, and that wouldn't do anything to stop families from leaving the city, because families shouldn't live in one-bedroom apartments. Unfortunately, many of them actually do, but that's not how we want them to live.

Also, San Francisco is a very liberal-to-progressive city. But, similar to national Democratic politics, there's a divide between people advocating around what you might call "social justice" issues versus "economic justice" issues. And you can get farther around social justice issues when they don't push up against economic powers or the people in political power who have economic stakes in some things.

It's been politically more risky and costly for people to fight for economic justice issues. I think that's part of why we're in the situation we're in now.

HJAAP

What would need to happen to create change, or what policies would need to be implemented in order to at least maintain, if not increase, the population percentage of black families in San Francisco?

LEE

There would have to be a movement led by people of color to elect a mayor whose political base was independent of the downtown business community. That politically would be the answer. There's a bunch of housing policies that would need to happen, but none of them could happen without a political base. We would need a mayor who knew that he or she could get reelected in this city without the downtown business community, so that they could push policies that took on the developers, such as a stronger living-wage ordinance, and all the other things that would make it possible for working families to live here. It would take some major political risks, and it would take that kind of base.

In terms of the Black community, there would have to be a revitalization of Black political power in San Francisco, despite our declining numbers. There would have to be some serious investment in organizing so that city policy makers feel accountable to African American people's needs, because right now they clearly do not. And the fact that African American people are leaving the city disproportionately, frankly, is not seen to be a crisis for anyone but for Black people.

HJAAP

Do you see any correlations between what's happening regarding New Orleans, as far as Black communities and their ability to mobilize and get political power, and what is happening at a slower pace in San Francisco? Are there commonalities or shared lessons between the work here in San Francisco and the situation in New Orleans?

LEE

I'm not sure how well-connected all these things are, but the question makes me think of the fact that we had a War on Poverty in this country that obviously had extraordinary limits, given the level of poverty that still exists in the Deep South.

And the level of poverty, even here in San Francisco, exposes to me one of the biggest weaknesses of that era and of the War on Poverty, which is just a lack of a real analysis of racism in this country and the way that economic inequality is structured

according to race. And so without that analysis, there haven't been the kind of policies and the kind of urban-revitalization strategies that really are going to address poor Black people's needs, anywhere, but especially in the South.

And I think the problems that low-income African American people face here in San Francisco have some unique components to them, but it is basically the same status of a large percentage of Black people in this country who, kind of like I was saying before, never really got "incorporated"—but that's not quite the right word—into the modern economy in this country.

There was slavery, there was sharecropping, there's the very bottom of the industrial economy, and that's it! And when that bottom of the industrial economy left, there's nothing for that part of the American economy, and Black people are there. So the aftermath of Katrina shows the national state of what's happening with a big part of Black America.

Another literal connection is that New Orleans and San Francisco are both, to a large degree, tourist economies. And in order for a tourist economy to flourish, there has to be a really strong PR thing about the beauty of that city and the wonderful attributes of that city. Both of the cities share that, and people fly in from all over the world to enjoy all the beauty. And there's a huge amount of money expended in hiding the inequalities of those cities and denying the reality of what's happening. And as long as there's that denial, then there's no outcry for the need for massive public investment.

In San Francisco's Black community, you have levels of unemployment that *exceed* the *highest* level of unemployment in the Great Depression, but we have no Depression-level response. We have no massive public investment in job creation. In the Great Depression it was very clear, because it mostly affected white people: "Okay, we got a massive problem. The government needs to step in." And although some of the people in power were upset with that response, it ultimately did happen!

And that's what's needed, massive public investment. If New Orleans is going to be rebuilt, and if the Ninth Ward and all the Black folks who were there are going to have some decent opportunity, it's going to require massive public investment and not privatization. That is similar to what's happening here in San Francisco.

It's partially about the role of government. It's about how much can we really believe that government—despite the failure of government in Katrina, and, in San Francisco, despite the failure of government to really assert itself and check the housing market—can do better? Can we believe that government can play a more positive and vital role in reducing economic inequality and actually building economic opportunity for people?

HJAAP

What do you think both San Francisco's situation and New Orleans's situation, post-Katrina, mean for the future of Black communities in America as far as community organizing, political power, and the ability to get community needs prioritized?

LEE

That's a good question. I think African American communities all over the country need to do a version of what we're doing at Coleman Advocates, but in a multi-ethnic way—which is that we need a new era of leadership in terms of people of color. We need a new era of leadership that isn't just an inside, old-school, Civil Rights leadership strategy of lobbying.

We need a strategy where you have truly community-based organizations that are independent of whatever political machine dominates their city: organizations where there's leadership that has the skills to work inside strategy, work with those politicians, to get what you need in your community and to set an agenda, but leadership that also knows how to work the outside strategies and actually has a base—a voting base and not just a public opinion base—to put pressure on elected leaders to get demands met.

There's a serious lack of those kinds of independent Black institutions around the country, for a lot of historical reasons, and they are desperately needed. In San Francisco we're committed to building a multi-ethnic independent community organization that really is driven by what the community needs, that knows how to leverage relationships inside city government.

Ultimately the power to produce change is going to be based on power in the community. Elected officials will need to feel accountable to a mass of people, but, because of historical circumstances and where we are in history right now, it is a very, very difficult time for such organizing.

And just my reading of African American history painfully tells me that one of the things that might need to happen for there to be a new, stronger movement for independent organizing in the Black community is more Black people dying in Iraq—more young, Black men being killed in a war that a lot of Black people don't support. And, historically, Black people's service in the military has had a huge impact on Black politics and Black people's consciousness about what this country deserves. The loss of life in war has previously led to people reevaluating their sense of entitlement and quality of life in this country, and oftentimes that means fighting for better living standards.

I also think people in younger generations are more open to and more experienced than our predecessors in the African American community as far as working in alliance with other communities and racial groups, and that's going to be essential. We have to figure out stronger ways of working together and forming stronger political alliances, and even just stronger community relationships, so there's not so much divide and conquer, which is what happens now. But I feel hopeful about that part, because I think there's more folks coming up who believed in such coalitions and have the personal experience that can support them.

HJAAP

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

LEE

I don't know all the answers, but I know it's a big task ahead for Black community leaders who devote their lives to working with young people, and who work in the churches, and who work to improve the education of our children, and work on all these different battlefronts.

One of the prime tasks is to directly figure out how to take on the issue of gentrification and make that a Black community issue. Gentrification is not part of our historic politics; we don't have a Civil Rights framework to talk about displacement and gentrification. But it's core to what's happening in the cities; in San Francisco, 25,000 Black people have left the city since 1980. That's tens of thousands of votes, just in terms of political power; it's dispersed now.

When significant numbers of Black home owners lose their housing, which alters the terms of who invests in the community, who invests in the public schools, who invests in all the local institutions, our churches, our Black community organizations, there is a great challenge when a significant number of those people have left. And the consequences for the fabric of the community as well as the politics are really serious when people are displaced from their community.

This has to do with us really having a serious conversation, which many people are having, about the strengths and weaknesses of the Civil Rights movement and the tensions around "how much do we talk about race" versus "how much do we talk about class?" How much do we bring up the basic economic structures of American society and the things that Dr. King was starting to talk about in his final time here?

And we need to develop strong language on these issues in terms of community, politics, and policy. There are a lot of people in the Black community who are wrestling with these key questions. And I don't know if more African American students need to go off to policy school and learn about urban planning and these regional policies, but that certainly would help!

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The Geography of Opportunity: Race and Housing Choice in Metropolitan America

(Brookings Institution Press, 15 July 2005)

Dr. Xavier de Souza Briggs, Editor

Reviewed by Reginald Tucker-Seeley

Research across many fields (e.g., economics, political science, public health, education, and sociology) has consistently shown that there is something about where we live that influences a host of individual- and population-level outcomes. Such outcomes include health status, employment opportunities, and education quality. The conclusion drawn from this research is that place matters.

The Geography of Opportunity: Race and Housing Choice in Metropolitan America is a book edited by Dr. Xavier de Souza Briggs. Dr. Briggs states that this book was inspired by a project cosponsored by Harvard University's Civil Rights Project, Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies, and the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program. This project assembled researchers, practitioners, and policy officials for a symposium that was held in November 2001. This text includes the invited papers from that symposium as well as additional papers to fill the "gaps in coverage." The result is a collection of essays describing and prescribing topics on an important social policy issue facing metropolitan American: the confluence of race and housing choice.

The book is organized into four parts with a foreword written by Dr. William Julius Wilson of Harvard University and two introductory chapters written by Dr. Briggs. In the foreword, Dr. Wilson sets the tone for the book by introducing many of the problems in the current urban environment: sprawl, regionalism, and demographic shifts within central cities, suburbs, and satellite cities. Dr. Wilson argues that the geography of housing choice is not a singular issue, but that housing with-

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Reginald Tucker-Seeley is a doctoral student in health and social policy at the Harvard School of Public Health. His dissertation focuses on modeling urban social systems using geographic information systems and agent-based modeling methodologies to better understand health status and health decision making within urban environments.

in the metropolitan region is linked to many other broader problems/issues within the urban environment that contribute to the fiscal and physical health of the region.

The two introductory chapters by Dr. Briggs provide the reader with a sense of the focus of the text as well as an introduction to the national policy context. He contends that U.S. metropolitan areas are sprawling and segregated by class and race, and as a result a disparate “geography of opportunity” is created. He suggests that failure to address this disparity in opportunity will continue to affect outcomes related to education, employment, health, and other integral areas over the next generation. In these two chapters, Dr. Briggs also situates the topics in the book (e.g., housing, education, race, poverty) within the national social policy dialogue—a dialogue that is basically silent on issues related to race and housing choice. Yet, the confluence of the changing demographic, resident preferences, fiscal pressures, and competing public objectives in metropolitan regions presents policy makers and the local citizenry with tough challenges and difficult decisions to make. Nevertheless, consistent with the aforementioned research in other social science disciplines, Dr. Briggs asserts that location matters, and it matters for economic, education, health, and many other quality-of-life issues.

Part I includes chapters on topics such as housing choice and racial attitudes and the discrimination in mortgage lending. This section asks some very interesting questions related to housing choice in cities. For example, what drives neighborhood composition preferences? Is the mortgage-lending market guided by risk or race? How does geographic steering of racial/ethnic minorities to specific neighborhoods contribute to segregation patterns? The authors provide information and data in response to these questions, yet clear-cut answers currently elude researchers, practitioners, and policy makers.

The chapters in Part II begin with setting the historical context to give the reader a framework from which to evaluate the specific topic under review. For example, there is a chapter on the history of public housing transformation in Chicago with information and data on the players and the context. The authors summarize this particular chapter by noting that historically federal housing programs have produced differential benefits to families. Collectively, these chapters illustrate the difficulties faced when attempting to carry out housing research.

The chapters in Part III show the complexity involved in attempts to address housing policy issues. The authors in Part III emphasize the importance of history, race, and area-based politics in any attempts to address housing policy changes. They contrast housing policies across places, show barriers to much needed coalition building in local areas, and illustrate the importance of land use policies/regulations to equitable housing choices.

Part IV consists of two concluding chapters. The first section offers suggestions for state and local policy makers based on the authors’ experience in addressing housing issues, and the second section consists of Dr. Briggs’s summary and concluding remarks. The authors of the first section describe “equitable development,” which is their notion of the fair distribution of affordable and racially inclusionary housing. They also provide strategies necessary to implement equitable development. Finally, Dr. Briggs concludes with a summary of the text as well as suggestions for America’s metropolitan troubles. He outlines four core dilemmas

that the policy agenda for change in the uneven geography within our nation's cities will have to address. These dilemmas include the unsatisfactory fair housing laws, managing competing public priorities, coalition building among the various competing interest groups, and ensuring a fair local political process. Yet, at the heart of the issue of the geography of opportunity, argues Dr. Briggs, is the nation's ambivalence about civil rights and race-based policy.

Dr. Briggs's efforts here are critical to the debate of housing choice in metropolitan America. He interjects a discussion of the politics of race and place into the current housing debate and suggests that an evaluation of underlying social mechanisms and processes to understand the effects of our changing American cities is necessary. At the intersection of fields such as regional science/planning, geography, economics, sociology, and behavioral science, Dr. Briggs has edited a superb text that is not constrained by disciplinary boundaries. A review of his text shows that he and the other authors are really interested in highlighting a set of problems that simmer and sometimes overflow in our nation's cities. Housing choice in metropolitan America presents many policy challenges, and anyone interested in learning more about these challenges would do well to pick up Dr. Briggs's text.

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Does George W. Bush Care about Black People?

Adapted from *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster* by Michael Eric Dyson. Copyright © 2006 by Michael Eric Dyson. Reprinted by permission of Basic Civitas Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group.

When President Bush and the federal government tragically failed to respond in a timely and life-saving manner to the disaster on the Gulf Coast, they made themselves vulnerable to the charge that race was the obvious reason for their delay. And that charge was vigorously pursued—in media and entertainment camps, in Black and poor communities across the nation, by many of the nation’s distinguished intellectuals and political critics, and indeed, by observers around the world. Would Bush and the federal government have moved faster to secure the lives of the Hurricane victims if they had been White? The question must be partnered with a second one that permits us to tally a few of the myriad injuries of the racial contract that has bound American citizens together: did the largely Black and poor citizens in the Gulf Coast get left behind because they were Black and poor?

It is clear that President Bush and officials of the federal government, like the rest of us, have been shaped by racial forces that have continually changed our society since its founding. The tragic reign of slavery for 250 years, the colossal efforts of the government and the legal system to extend White supremacy through Jim Crow law, and the monumental effort of Black folk to resist these forces while redefining Black identity have formed the rhythms, relations, and rules of race. The rhythms of race have largely to do with customs and cultural practices that feed on differences between racial groups. The relations of race have mostly to do with the conditions that foster or frustrate interactions between racial groups. The rules of race have to do with norms and behavior that reflect or resist formal barriers to social equality.

The rhythms, relations, and rules of race have both defined the forces against which progress must be made and provided a measure of the progress achieved. They help us understand that even when fundamental changes in law and practice occur—say, the 14th Amendment, the *Brown v. Board* Supreme Court decision, or the Civil Rights Act of 1964—there is the matter of racial vision and imagination to consider. They help us see that racial terror has bled through the boundaries of law

Dr. Michael Eric Dyson is the author of Is Bill Cosby Right?; The Michael Eric Dyson Reader; Open Mike; Holler If You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur; Why I Love Black Women; I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.; Race Rules: Navigating the Color Line; Between God and Gangsta Rap; Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X; and Reflecting Black. He is the Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities at the University of Pennsylvania and lives in Philadelphia.

as surely as harmful racial customs and beliefs persist in deep pockets of a formally changed society.

This framework must be kept in mind as we answer the question of whether race played a role in how the federal government responded to Katrina's victims. But as I've made clear, the question shouldn't be if race played a role, but what role it played. How can race possibly be quarantined from a consideration of Katrina when it so thoroughly pervades our culture—the choices we make, the laws we adopt and discard, and the social practices that are polluted by its pestering ubiquity? Of course race colored the response to Katrina, although it may not mean that explicit racial prejudice fueled the decision to leave poor Black folk defenseless before the fury of nature.

After all, one need not have conscious or intentional racist beliefs to act out a script written long before specific actors come on the political stage to play. We take our cues from different parts of the culture that have vastly opposed ways of viewing the same racial event. Our conscious decisions are drawn from the reservoir of beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions that form our group's collective racial unconscious. When we gear up for response to a particular event, when we dissect or process a specific item of information, we pull from these resources, which have shaped our understanding of what can and should be done. The collective racial unconscious, and the rhythms, relations and rules of race, together constitute the framework for making decisions, even those that apparently have nothing to do with race. Thus, one can reasonably say that race was the farthest thing from one's mind even as its subtle propositions lure one forward into territory invisibly bounded by racial criteria. And one can scrupulously proclaim, and mean it, that race does not affect one's calculus of desert, of how resources should be shared, while appealing to ancient racial understandings that shape just who is seen as meriting a particular sort of treatment.

It should also be clear that although one may not have racial intent, one's actions may nonetheless have racial consequence. In discussing the charge that racism was at the heart of the response to Hurricane Katrina, Senator Barack Obama said, "I've said publicly that I do not subscribe to the notion that the painfully slow response of FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] and the Department of Homeland Security was racially-based. The ineptitude was colorblind" (Obama 2005). Obama went on to say that "I see no evidence of active malice, but I see a continuation of passive indifference on the part of our government towards the least of these" (2005). However, one may agree with Obama that there was no racial intent, no "active malice," in the response to Katrina and yet hold the view that there were nonetheless racial consequences that flowed from the "passive indifference" of the government to poor Blacks. Active malice and passive indifference are but flip sides of the same racial coin, different modalities of racial menace that flare according to the contexts and purposes at hand. In a sense, if one conceives of racism as a cell phone, then active malice is the ring tone at its highest volume, while passive indifference is the ring tone on vibrate. In either case, whether loudly or silently, the consequence is the same: a call is transmitted, a racial meaning is communicated.

When it comes to the federal government's response to the victims of Hurricane Katrina, the specific elements at play must be examined. There were poor Blacks,

mostly from Louisiana, drowning in 20-foot floods, stranded in their homes, or crammed into makeshift shelters, awaiting help from a Texas-bred president and an Oklahoma-born head of FEMA. At its core, this was a Southern racial narrative being performed before a national and global audience. If Southern Whites have been relatively demonized within the realms of Whiteness—when compared to their Northern peers, they are viewed as slower, less liberal, more bigoted, and thoroughly “country”—then Southern Blacks are even more the victims of social stigma from every quarter of the culture, including Northern and Southern Whites and even among other Blacks outside the region.

Southern Blacks, especially poor ones, are viewed as the worst possible combination of troubled elements—region, race, and class—that on their own make life difficult enough. They are stereotyped as being backward, belligerently opposed to enlightenment, and tethered to self-defeating cultural habits that undermine their upward thrust from a life of penury and ignorance. Their woes are considered so entrenched that they cannot be overcome by social programs or political intervention. Not even a change of geography is seen as completely successful; when transposed to Northern terrain, poor Southern Blacks are believed to be victims of a time warp of anachronistic values that work against absorption into the middle class and instead drive them to carve enclaves of urban horror from their rural roots. Such beliefs die hard. Even when the customs that ushered them into prominence fade, those Southern Whites who inherit from their ancestors and predecessors the rhythms, rules, and relations of race—and the collective racial unconscious—find it difficult to defeat or betray their racial orientation to the world.

To be sure, caricatures of Black identity have been swept away in many White Southern quarters and replaced with far more sophisticated and nuanced ideas about Black folk. But such progress runs hard into another wall constructed out of racial history: the structural inequities that support the inferior social position of poor Blacks. While one may point to enlightened ideas about Black folk as proof of racial progressivism, the persistence of, and investment in, complicated legacies of social inequality by the very Whites who wear their racial bona fides on their sleeves are equally confusing and troubling.

It is safe to say that race played a major role in the failure of the federal government—especially for Bush and [Former FEMA Director Michael] Brown—to respond in a timely manner to the poor Black folk of Louisiana because Black grief and pain have been ignored throughout the nation’s history. Bush and Brown simply updated the practice. Southern Black suffering in particular has been overlooked by Southern Whites—those in power and ordinary citizens as well. In discussing the profound differences between White and Black Southern historical memory, historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage captures how Whites ignored Black success and suffering, while Blacks sought to overcome the segregated conscience of White society to emphasize a unified national memory and purpose.

Southern White historical memory exalted White civilization, legitimated White power, and virtually excluded any admission of meaningful Black agency in the region’s past. White accounts seemed to insulate Blacks from history. There was, in White history, no acknowledgment

of true suffering or real accomplishments among Blacks. They were without personal ancestry, their lives were small, and there was a great void in their past. And if southern Whites grudgingly acknowledged the restoration of the union, they still embraced a willfully sectional historical identity. This jealous defense of sectional honor that was at the heart of the White southern memory had no parallel in Black memory. Rather, most southern Blacks, in rhapsodically nationalist terms, imagined a biracial America in which they would assume their place as equal and full citizens. To the same extent that White southerners insisted on their sectional identity, southern African Americans exalted their national ties. Likewise, Blacks recounted a past in which Black participation figured decisively in all of the nation's defining moments. (Brundage 2005, 99-100)

The Black poor of the Delta lacked social standing, racial status, and the apparent and unconscious identifiers that might evoke a dramatic empathy in Bush and Brown. Had these factors been present, it might have spurred Bush and Brown to identify *with* the Black poor, indeed, see themselves as the Black poor. Since their agency and angst had been minimized in the Southern historical memory, the Black poor simply didn't register as large, or count as much, as they might have had they been White. If they had been White, a history of identification—supported by structures of care, sentiments of empathy, and an elevated racial standing—would have immediately kicked in. That might have boosted considerably their chances of survival because the federal government, including Bush and Brown, would have seen their kind, perhaps their kin, and hence themselves, floating in a flood of death in the Delta.

The undeniable incompetence of the federal disaster relief infrastructure still might have hampered the chances of even White folk surviving Katrina. But their relatively higher social and racial standing might have prompted a quicker attempt to respond, and thus to work out the problems. It also might have made Bush and Brown more adventurous, more daring, more willing to suspend rules, more determined to accept help from whatever quarters it came (they turned down offers of help from several countries), open to deferring procedural correctness in the interest of saving lives. The irony is that poor Blacks were so pained by their erasure from the historical record—both in the past and with Katrina—because, as Michael Ignatieff argues they uphold, and expect in return, the social contract (Ignatieff 2005). And as Brundage writes, they are fully invested in a democratic and multiracial accounting of the nation's history.

Ignatieff's and Brundage's arguments about race and memory and political obligation can help to decipher Kanye West's controversial television appearance in which he charged President Bush with indifference to the plight of the Black poor. On 2 September 2005, the rapper appeared on an NBC telethon in support of the American Red Cross disaster relief efforts in the Gulf Coast. After Harry Connick, Jr., played piano as he longingly, achingly sang "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?" accompanied by Wynton Marsalis's crisp but mournful trumpet wails, the cameras turned to comedian Mike Myers and West. Both of them were

to read from a script. Myers was faithful to the task. "With the breach of three levees protecting New Orleans," Myers said in clipped speech that was nearly perfunctory, "the landscape of the city was changed dramatically, tragically and perhaps irreversibly. There is now over 25 feet of water where there was once city streets and thriving neighborhoods."¹ Myers half turned to the obviously nervous West, who cleared his throat before he spoke.

"I hate the way they portray us in the media," West intoned. "If you see a Black family, it says, 'They're looting.' You see a White family, it says, 'They're looking for food.' And, you know, it's been five days [waiting for the government to arrive] because most of the people are Black. And even for me to complain about it, I would be a hypocrite because I've tried to turn away from the TV because it's too hard to watch. I've even been shopping before even giving a donation. So now I'm calling my business manager right now to see what is the biggest amount I can give. And just to imagine if I was down there, and those are my people down there. So anybody out there that wants to do anything that we can help—with the way America is set up to help the poor, the Black people, the less well off, as slow as possible. I mean, the Red Cross is doing everything they can. We already realize a lot of people that could help are at war right now, fighting another way. And they've given them permission to go down and shoot us!"²

West's nervy chiding of the federal government froze Myers's face in disbelief and small panic. But he soldiered on and stuck to the script, rushing his words as if he wanted to quickly as possible banish the anxious feelings that fluttered in his eyes. "And subtle, but in many ways even more profoundly devastating, is the lasting damage to the survivors' will to rebuild and remain in the area. The destruction of the spirit of the people of Southern Louisiana and Mississippi may end up being the most tragic loss of all." Once again, Myers turned to West, this time with a bit of trepidation creasing his brow. West let out his final off-script pronouncement with as sure a statement as he had made during his brief and amiable diatribe. "George Bush doesn't care about Black people."³ With that, just as Myers mouthed the beginning of his plea for viewers to phone in—"Please call..."—someone in the NBC control room, working with a seven-second delay aimed at blocking profanity, finally understood West's tack and ordered the camera to turn unceremoniously away from the duo and cut to comedian Chris Tucker, who picked up his cue and tried to roll past West's punches.

Kanye West simply made Ignatieff's and Brundage's arguments into a polemic. West was suggesting that the government had callously broken its compact with its poor Black citizens, and that it had forgotten them because it had not taken their pain to heart. West's claim that "George Bush doesn't care about Black people" was not a claim about Bush's personal, but professional, life. Bush's wife and father understandably jumped to his defense. "I think all of those remarks were disgusting," Laura Bush said in an interview with American Urban Radio Networks. "I mean I am the person who lives with him. I know what he is like, and I know what he thinks, and I know he cares about people" (CNN 2005). On CNN's *Larry King Live* talk show, former President George H.W. Bush defended his son against the "particularly vicious comment that the president didn't care, was insensitive on

ethnicity...Insensitive about race. Now that one hurt because I know this president and I know he does care...that's what's in his heart." (Larry King Live 2005).

Unlike Bush's wife and father, West was not referring to the president's personal sentiments about Black people, which he probably had no way of knowing. Neither was West addressing Bush's personal concern for Black people. West was speaking of George Bush as the face of the government. In fact, our understanding of West's comments depends on our making distinctions in three categories. First, one must address the question of *personae*—is one referring to a *private* persona that is, relatively speaking, autonomous and independent, or is one referring to a *public* persona that is representational and functional? Second, one must address the question of *identities*—is one referring to an *individual* identity that primarily concerns one's self; an *institutional* identity, that is concerned with one's role in relation to a particular institution; or a *social* identity, that is concerned with one's role in society? Thirdly, one must address the question of *care*—is one speaking of *personal* care, an area of interest limited to, or rooted in, one's own life; *moral* care, an area of interest shaped by consideration of ethical effects on self and others; or *political* care, an area of interest shaped by the consideration of political concern and consequences in society?

With these distinctions in mind, it is clear that when West declared that Bush doesn't care for Black people, he was referring to Bush's public persona, not his private one, since what was at stake was his function as a representative public figure; that he was referring to Bush's institutional and social identities, as the face of the federal government and in his role as president of the United States; and that he was speaking of Bush's political care in his role as chief symbol of the nation's political organization. West was thus calling into question—and in my opinion, rightly so—the apparent lack of political concern by a public figure whose duty it is to direct the resources of the nation to those areas that cry out for address. When West claimed that Bush doesn't care for Black people, it was a critical judgment about the failure of the government that George Bush represents to take care of, in a timely fashion, those citizens under his watch. When Bush conceded that the response of the government was “unacceptable”—and when he later took full responsibility for the failure of the government to adequately do its job—he was partially acknowledging the legitimacy of West's criticism. In the political realm, care is measured, in part, by the satisfaction of legitimate claims with effective action that fulfills the duties and obligations of one's office.

Perhaps one of the reasons President Bush cares so little about the Black poor is that he has not found political favor among them, or, for that matter, among most Blacks. Poor Blacks are neither economically stable nor vote rich; they matter very little in the president's political philosophy. In 2000, Bush got 8 percent of the Black vote; in 2004, he got 11 percent, extending a trend begun in the 1930s of Blacks voting heavily Democratic. Of course, Black freedom struggles, especially the civil rights movement, destroyed, then reshaped, the Democratic Party in the South, driving Whites into the party of Richard Nixon, and later, Ronald Reagan. Over time, the racist Southern Democrats of the Jim Crow era give way to the liberal Democrats of the civil rights era. As a result, Republicans have largely spurned the Black vote for the last forty years and courted conservative White constituencies that were hostile to

Black interests and people (Weisberg 2005). This may help explain why Bush didn't rush to Democratic dominated territory in Louisiana nearly as quickly as he did to Republican friendly ground in Mississippi after Katrina struck. As critic Jacob Weisberg says, "it's a demonstrable matter of fact that Bush doesn't care much about Black votes," and that, "in the end, [it] may amount to the same thing" as not caring about Black people (Weisberg 2005).

Weisberg argues that because "they don't see Blacks as a current or potential constituency, Bush and his fellow Republicans do not respond out of the instinct of self-interest when dealing with their concerns." Rendering assistance to low-income Blacks is a "matter of charity to them, not necessity" (Weisberg 2005). Their condescending attitude is magnified in New Orleans, "which is 67 percent Black and largely irrelevant to GOP political ambitions." Only at election time are cities in swing states with large Black populations important to Republicans—and in the immediate past, to Bush and his aides. Since Louisiana's paltry nine electoral votes are not presently up for grabs in an election cycle, the state doesn't show up much on the conservative political radar. "If Bush and Rove didn't experience the spontaneous political reflex to help New Orleans," Weisberg writes, "it may be because they don't think of New Orleans as a place that helps them" (Weisberg 2005). Weisberg detects the president's lack of political care for Black folk in his delayed and lackluster response to Katrina, while Hurricanes Charley and Frances, which affected the Republican stronghold of Florida, prompted the president and the federal government to greater urgency and generosity.

Had the residents of New Orleans been White Republicans in a state that mattered politically, instead of poor Blacks in a city that didn't, Bush's response surely would have been different. Compare what happened when hurricanes Charley and Frances hit Florida in 2004. Though the damage from those storms was negligible in relation to Katrina's, the reaction from the White House was instinctive, rapid, and generous to the point of profligacy. Bush visited hurricane victims four times in six weeks and delivered relief checks personally. Michael Brown of FEMA, now widely regarded as an incompetent political hack, was so responsive that local officials praised the agency's performance. The kind of constituency politics that results in a big life-preserver for Whites in Florida and a tiny one for Blacks in Louisiana may not be racist by design or intent. But the inevitable result is clear racial discrimination. (Weisberg 2005)

Bush's claim that race played no role in the recovery efforts betrayed a simplistic understanding of how a complex force like race operates in the culture. "My attitude is this: The storm didn't discriminate and neither will the recovery effort," Bush said. "When those Coast Guard choppers...were pulling people off roofs, they didn't check the color of a person's skin. They wanted to save lives" (Page and Puente 2005). Katrina's fury may have been race neutral, but not its affect: 80 percent of New Orleans's minority households lived in the flooded area, while the same was true for only 54 percent of the city's White population. The average household income of those in the flooded area trailed those who lived in New Orleans's high-

er ground by \$17,000 (Berube and Katz 2005). Concentrated poverty rendered poor Blacks much more vulnerable to the affects of natural disaster. Before Katrina, these Blacks had been hit by hurricanes of social and economic devastation. Such a fact never seems to register with the president. Nor does it prod him into deep reflection about the unintended, but certainly foreseen, racial consequences of catastrophe and mayhem.

Nearly forty years ago, Muhammad Ali's single line captured the reason for his conscientious objection to the Vietnam War while summing up millions of Black people's feelings—"Ain't no Viet Cong ever called me 'nigger.'" Now, Kanye West's simple sentence brilliantly condensed an analysis that millions of other Blacks have made about an uncaring Bush regime. Until many White and well-off folk feel the full force of Black pain, and open their eyes to see racial and class suffering, that divide will continue. And the Black poor will continue to be left behind long after Katrina recovery efforts are over.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ From "A Concert for Hurricane Relief," NBC, September 2, 2005.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.

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