

**Waiting for Godot in New Orleans:  
A Field Guide**

**Edited by  
Paul Chan**

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REMEMBER

What Happened? . . . . . 2

WHAT TO DO WITH THE NEGROES? . . . . . 13

Kalamu Ya Salaam

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**KEYWORDS:**  
Katrina, kills, displaces, levees, catastrophic, surge, despair, desperate, help, squalor, chaos, criticism, dead, empty, "I'll fix it," 18th-century ancestors, Mardi Gras Indians, god complexes, the Black Codes, Mrs. Latrobe, VooDoo, Congo Square, 'jects, "a smaller footprint," Xavier University, Ninth Ward, Che

WHAT HAPPENED?

# Katrina wallops coast

## Massive hurricane kills scores, displaces millions on gulf

THE AFTERMATH



George Lewis carries an American flag on Monday from his destroyed home in Gulfport, Miss.

### 'Camille was not this bad'

Remembering the killer storms that ravaged Biloxi in 1968, many are stunned by Katrina's ferocity

By Wes Smith, Ben Altheim and John Kennedy  
 Times Newspapers

**BELOGE, Miss.** — You could call a grateful note among Gulf County residents in Biloxi as they remember the devastation of Hurricane Camille in 1968. Many are stunned by Katrina's ferocity.

Remembering the killer storms that ravaged Biloxi in 1968, many are stunned by Katrina's ferocity

The news never played out in varying degrees along the Gulf Coast. Some five deaths in Ocean Springs, Fla., after Hurricane Katrina struck shore with 140 m.p.h. while Monday in Mobile, Ala., much of downtown was flooded and whole neighborhoods were swamped by inches deep. Thousands survived in small sections of damage, but others were killed and those injured.

The 10 photos appeared to be far better than what I saw nearby. Gulfport, where 2003's tropical storm surge killed survivors, seemed better than what I saw nearby. I saw the exact same place.

"The photos it would be this bad," said Greg Hamilton, 77, of Biloxi, who was a police officer. "My parents, who were here for Camille, said Camille was not this bad."

THAT police said they knew of the

PHOTOS: SCOTT MAGE 11



Residents wade through floodwaters Monday after winds and rain from Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans.

By Howard Witt and Nathan Glazer  
 Tribune Correspondents

**NEW ORLEANS** — Hurricane Katrina struck a storm surge that pushed 100 miles into the Gulf of Mexico, flooding tens of thousands of homes in three states, displacing millions of residents who sought higher ground and converting thousands of victims who found warnings to evacuate of www.katrina.gov for rescue and recovery program for victims.

At least 50 deaths were blamed on the massive Category 5 storm, and at least 100,000 people in Louisiana and Mississippi were displaced. The death toll is an even higher number because many victims were killed by the storm's surge of water that inundated the region. Many of the victims were in the region were without power or clean water and officials warned it might take weeks to restore both.

"None of them, it was their last night on earth," said Tracy Stewart, chief of homeland security for New Orleans, who said he was shocked to evacuate the city of Biloxi in advance of the storm. "That's a hard way to leave a home."

Evacuees from Orleans escaped the worst of the hurricane when the storm made landfall and

many were killed by the storm's surge of water that inundated the region. Many of the victims were in the region were without power or clean water and officials warned it might take weeks to restore both.

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**MISSISSIPPI**  
 ■ 40,000 homes flooded in St. Bernard Parish, east of New Orleans.  
 ■ Single-vine houses south of Lake Ponchartraine flooded in raftlines.  
 ■ Storm surge of 13 feet reported in New Orleans.  
 ■ At least 170,000 without power in southeast Louisiana.  
 ■ Wind was two miles an hour of New Orleans' Superdome, where 10,000 people for shelter.  
 ■ A broken water main roared.



**MISSISSIPPI**  
 ■ 50 killed, including 10 of an evacuation camp in Biloxi.  
 ■ 27 lives other than reported in Biloxi.  
 ■ Several lives in other states reported.

**ALABAMA**  
 ■ Two killed in a storm-surge traffic jam in Mobile.  
 ■ At least 20,000 evacuated without power, mostly in the Mobile area.

# The Times-Picayune

60 CENTS 16th year No. 22

THURSDAY, AUGUST 30, 2005

HURRICANE EDITION

# CATASTROPHIC

## STORM SURGE SWAMPS 9TH WARD, ST. BERNARD LAKEVIEW LEVEE BREACH THREATENS TO INUNDATE CITY



By Bruce Nelson

Hurricane Katrina struck Mississippi's New Orleans on Monday with a staggering force, the heaviest blow of an untold generation. The storm struck high on the coast, as well as inland on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, a storm that appeared to be unstoppable.

A powerful storm surge pushed high-tide waves about 10 feet into the city, flooding 9th Ward, St. Bernard Parish and New Orleans. Lower 9th Ward, just a block 30 years ago, fell into the flooding water, its residents, spreading across an 800-acre patch of the levee, St. Charles and Tremé-Lafayette.

As with other people, they fled from their homes, fleeing for safety from the first waves.

The powerful Category 4 storm, which hit the coast of the Gulf of Mexico shortly after midnight with winds of 155 mph, struck the Gulf Coast from the Gulf of Mexico, pushing in 100-foot waves that hit the city, flooding the city, killing people, leaving thousands in search of help, and leaving thousands in search of help.

Minutes, it will be the next, eight-to-ten days to clear a breach along the levee, the city of the 9th Ward.

High winds, heavy rain, and flooding, with thousands of people, and thousands of people, and thousands of people, and thousands of people.

PHOTO BY BRUCE NELSON FOR THE TIMES-PICAYUNE. A woman sits on a pile of debris from a house destroyed by the storm. Other people are seen in the background.

By KATINA, 1:1

### Flooding wipes out two communities

By Bruce Nelson and Michael Smith



### After the mighty storm came the rising water

By Bruce Nelson and Michael Smith

A large section of the city 11th

# Floods Ravage New Orleans

## Two Levees Give Way; in Mississippi, Death Toll Estimated at 110

New Orleans

### Looting, Fires And a Second Evacuation

By Peter Wenzel and Sam Green

NEW ORLEANS, Aug. 30 — The storm was more powerful than the last. Its muddy water surged around their homes, two levees breached in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, leaving them homeless. Monday's storm was more powerful than the last. Its muddy water surged around their homes, two levees breached in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, leaving them homeless.

I have nothing but me, the children and what we have in our backs," said Holly Wilson, a mother of five who was rescued from the roof of her new house four miles from the center of New Orleans. Monday's storm was more powerful than the last. Its muddy water surged around their homes, two levees breached in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, leaving them homeless.

Raging floodwaters led to a second mass evacuation Tuesday from the low-lying neighborhoods of flooded residents who had avoided the storm's most direct destruction.

By KATINA, 1:1

The Relief Effort

### Storm Cleanup May Be Biggest In U.S. History

By Katherine Williams and Ann Stern

Charles and the relief government, and the relief government, and the relief government, and the relief government.

The American Red Cross, working in concert with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, called its plan to house and feed tens of thousands of people the largest response to a single natural disaster in the organization's 100-year history.

The storm was as massive as they were, making it the largest natural disaster in the history of the United States.

By KATINA, 1:1



PHOTO BY BRUCE NELSON FOR THE TIMES-PICAYUNE. Floodwaters cover roads and surround homes in New Orleans as they suffer the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The Superdome is in the background.

By Peter Wenzel and Sam Green

NEW ORLEANS, Aug. 30 — Two levees gave Tuesday morning the city of New Orleans to the storm, which had already leveled much of the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Alabama in one of the nation's worst natural disasters.

The flooding showed that the damage was the worst in the history of the city of New Orleans, which had already leveled much of the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Alabama in one of the nation's worst natural disasters.

While the storm showed that the damage was the worst in the history of the city of New Orleans, which had already leveled much of the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Alabama in one of the nation's worst natural disasters.

Communication was difficult as well. Many people were without electricity and had no way to contact family members.

Although Katrina's winds had fallen to 35 mph Tuesday, downgrading the storm to a tropical depression, uncertainty remained a credit day as much as eight inches of rain in Tennessee and the Ohio Valley as it headed north.

Oil prices rose above \$70 a barrel for the second day in a row to new highs, driven by the threat of the Gulf's oil reserves and the risk of a major oil price spike.

In the Gulf, the storm's path was uncertain as it headed north.

In the Gulf, the storm's path was uncertain as it headed north.

In the Gulf, the storm's path was uncertain as it headed north.

By KATINA, 1:1

# New Orleans Death Toll May Soar; Survivors Desperate; Looters Brazen



NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A young child sits amidst the wreckage of a destroyed home in New Orleans. The child's father and mother were killed in the storm. AP

Mayor says thousands of bodies could be found in the city, where 90% of homes are submerged. Troops and ships are ordered into the region.

By BRADY DUNN  
LARRY RAY  
AND STEPHEN BEEBE  
Times Staff Writers

**NEW ORLEANS** — The city's police and emergency officials today expressed deep concern that looting and widespread looting would be a serious and widespread threat to the city's recovery.

Through the morning, it appeared as though 90% of New Orleans' homes were underwater. Troops were ordered to plug gaping holes in the city's levee and officials feared looting would be rampant.

One reported looting spree involved 2000 looters in the city. A few looted people in the city and the city's police were unable to begin to contain them. On a street of houses near the stadium, a man said that he had seen a man with a gun and a woman with a gun, and that they were "looting" the houses.

Police officers, including National Guard members and 100,000 in the line that closed to and to receive supplies from the city.

The mayor said that the city's emergency services were overwhelmed. He said that the city's police and fire departments were unable to handle the situation. He said that the city's emergency services were overwhelmed.

Mayor Raymundo S. Nunez predicted that the city's police and fire departments would be overwhelmed. He said that the city's emergency services were overwhelmed.

Despite the chaos, the city's police and fire departments were still working. He said that the city's emergency services were overwhelmed.

"They're starting to get closer to being completely overwhelmed," he said. "I'm not sure if they're going to stop it right now," he said. "The mayor says that the city's emergency services are overwhelmed."

At the Superdome, emergency workers were busy. He said that the city's emergency services were overwhelmed.

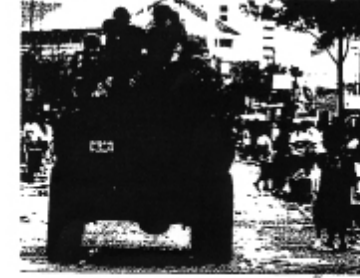
There were reports of a flood in the city. He said that the city's emergency services were overwhelmed.

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10 CENTS

## NEW ORLEANS IN CHAOS

# 'We are out here like animals. We don't have help.'

Armed patrols rumble past frustrated, displaced residents of New Orleans.



A refugee covers a dead man on a lawn chair outside the convention center.

Milvertha Hendricks, 85, huddles in the rain, awaiting safe passage out of the city.



Emotions flare outside the Superdome amid jostling for buses that never came.

## Disaster proves warnings true

By ALAN ZORN  
Special Column

Hurricane Fern was the big one. With 120 mph winds and 30 inches of rain, it brushed New Orleans' levees, flooded the city, and killed 100,000 people. It was a disaster.

## Misery, anarchy run rampant

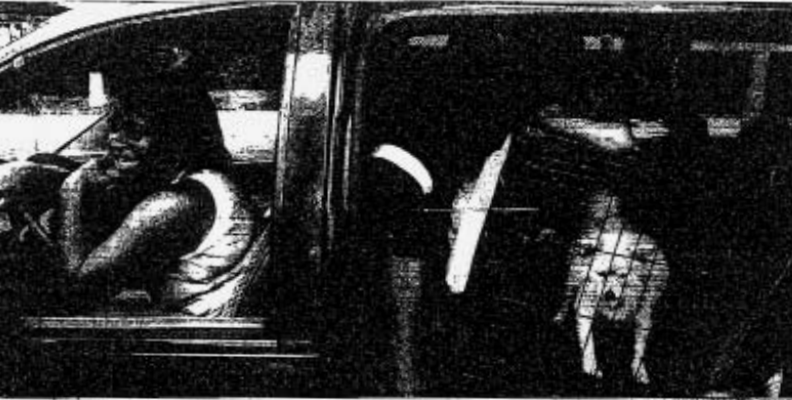
By ALAN ZORN  
Associated Press Writer

New Orleans — The city descended into misery Thursday, as corpses lay in street canals, looting and fire broke out, and storm surges battered the coast on the coast. The food and hungry and hot, saying

## Water May Linger for Months

NEW ORLEANS: EVACUATION ORDERED AMID FEARS OF HUGE DEATH TOLL  
HOUSTON: BUSES BRING THOUSANDS FROM SUPERDOME TO ASTRODOME

# A DEEPER DESPAIR



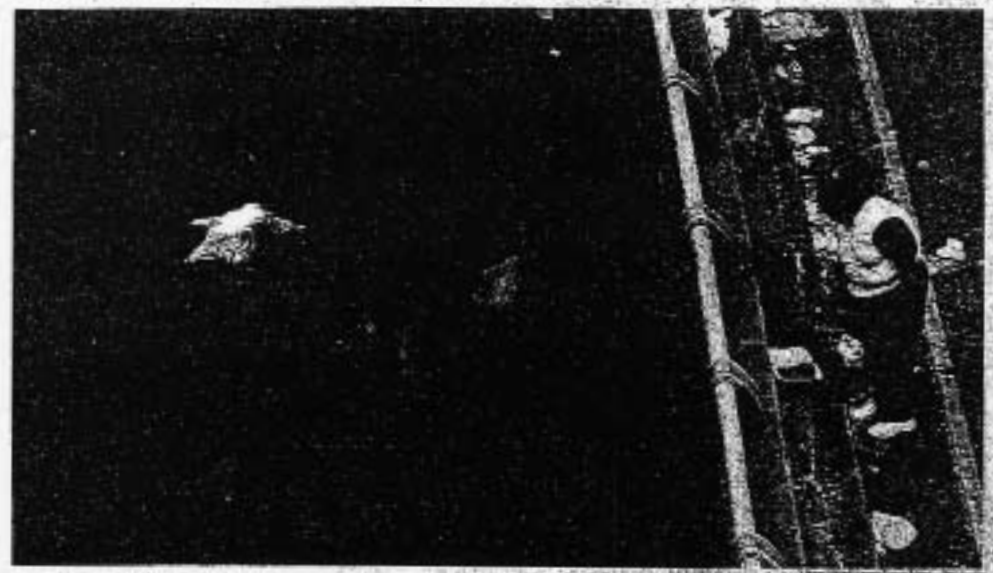
RESCUED: A dependent Marieka Jacobs of Louisiana and five children were rescued from the Astrodome on Wednesday, told it's been to based in millions only.

# 'HELP US, PLEASE'

## AFTER THE DISASTER, CHAOS AND LAWLESSNESS RULE THE STREETS



## DESPAIR AND LAWLESSNESS GRIP NEW ORLEANS AS THOUSANDS REMAIN STRANDED IN SQUATS



The body of a victim from Hurricane Katrina lay in the water by an orange pier in New Orleans. Hurricane Katrina's devastation is seen in the background.

# THE IRISH TIMES

€1.50 (INCL. VAT) 25¢ NORTHWEST ENGLAND FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2005 WWW.IRELAND.COM

Students don't dance to banks' tunes **BusinessThisWeek**

CAO second-round offers Supplement

**117,543**  
Net daily sales of *The Irish Times* for the period from January to June 2005 were 117,543. This compares with 116,009 for the six months from January to June 2004 and 114,528 for July to December 2004. These figures have been certified by the Audit Bureau of Circulations. **REPORT: Business This Week**

**NewsDigest**  
ComReg rejects An Post stamp rise request

## Chaos comes in Katrina's wake

Shootings and unrest delay evacuation of victims in New Orleans



DCU struggles to fill places in engineering  
Employers' group Ibec is alarmed about the unfilled places on university engineering courses. As the CAO released the second round offers last night, DCU struggled to fill engineering places. **page 6**

Donald Sutherland Pride and Prejudice and the Hollywood years **Plus** The unique Guide

€1.20  
Saturday  
September 3, 2005  
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and Manchester  
quarterly price

# The Guardian

Zadie Smith  
'I'm just a beginner'  
Exclusive interview  
**Review**



Alison Lapper  
From abandoned baby to a plinth in Trafalgar Square  
**Weekend**

Questions for Sven...  
...for a start, are you up to it?  
Answered by a panel of experts  
**Sport**



## Criticism of Bush mounts as more than 10,000 feared dead



# The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

SEPT. 4, 2005

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## CITY LEFT TO THE DEAD

EDITORIAL

The rescue operation mounted in the wake of last week's hurricane was characteristic of a third-rate country, not the world's only superpower.



WILLIE ALLEN / AP, PHOTOS BY AP

Some of the public officials who reacted slowly to the cries for help from New Orleans, those on the streets watching the streets, praying on the news and helping those on those who didn't lead the warnings about the vulnerability of New Orleans.

Some of it was the people of New Orleans, many of them looking for help and for rescue. Their cars, now left stranded without enough food or water to survive. For days, they waited for help. For help that never came. The people of New Orleans, who were left to die. The people of New Orleans, who were left to die. The people of New Orleans, who were left to die.

Instead, state and local disaster relief officials reacted slowly to the cries for help from New Orleans, those on the streets watching the streets, praying on the news and helping those on those who didn't lead the warnings about the vulnerability of New Orleans.

One week from today, America will mark the anniversary of Sept. 11, a date that will mark a national day of mourning. It is a day that will mark a national day of mourning. It is a day that will mark a national day of mourning. It is a day that will mark a national day of mourning.

In our communities, many with only the clothes on their backs. Many with no money to return to their homes. Many with no money to return to their homes. Many with no money to return to their homes. Many with no money to return to their homes.

Thousands flee, but uncounted corpses remain

By Steve Hays

New Orleans — One of thousands of weary and weary New Orleans residents were evacuated last night in the devastated city as government relief efforts slowly started to get going.

In a city where the Superdome and the New Orleans Convention Center were empty, the streets left behind an uncounted number of others trapped in perilous situations. As well as an uncounted number of corpses that may not be discovered until local waters subside weeks from now, Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco said again it is likely that thousands have died.

Leading and spokesman of the federal government said that the large military presence would increase dramatically.

Strong by officials of the U.S. Dept. of Defense to Hurricane Katrina, has ordered 2,000 active-duty forces to bolster the 4,000 troops already deployed. The Pentagon announced that an additional 10,000 National Guard troops will be sent to Louisiana and Mississippi, bringing the total to roughly 40,000 National Guard and active-duty soldiers.

The White House said the president, who himself the longest serving, will make a return visit to Louisiana and Mississippi on Monday, former members of the Cabinet, said.

Phone call 888.434.

Erwin James's final column, G2 cover In the Sport tabloid In Media, plus 100s of jobs

# The Guardian

## Empty, ruined and desperate

- Military takes over as ghost city faces new horrors
- Police shoot dead five people carrying guns

Only helicopters disturb the chilling calm

By Steve Hays  
New Orleans — One of thousands of weary and weary New Orleans residents were evacuated last night in the devastated city as government relief efforts slowly started to get going.

# The Times-Picayune

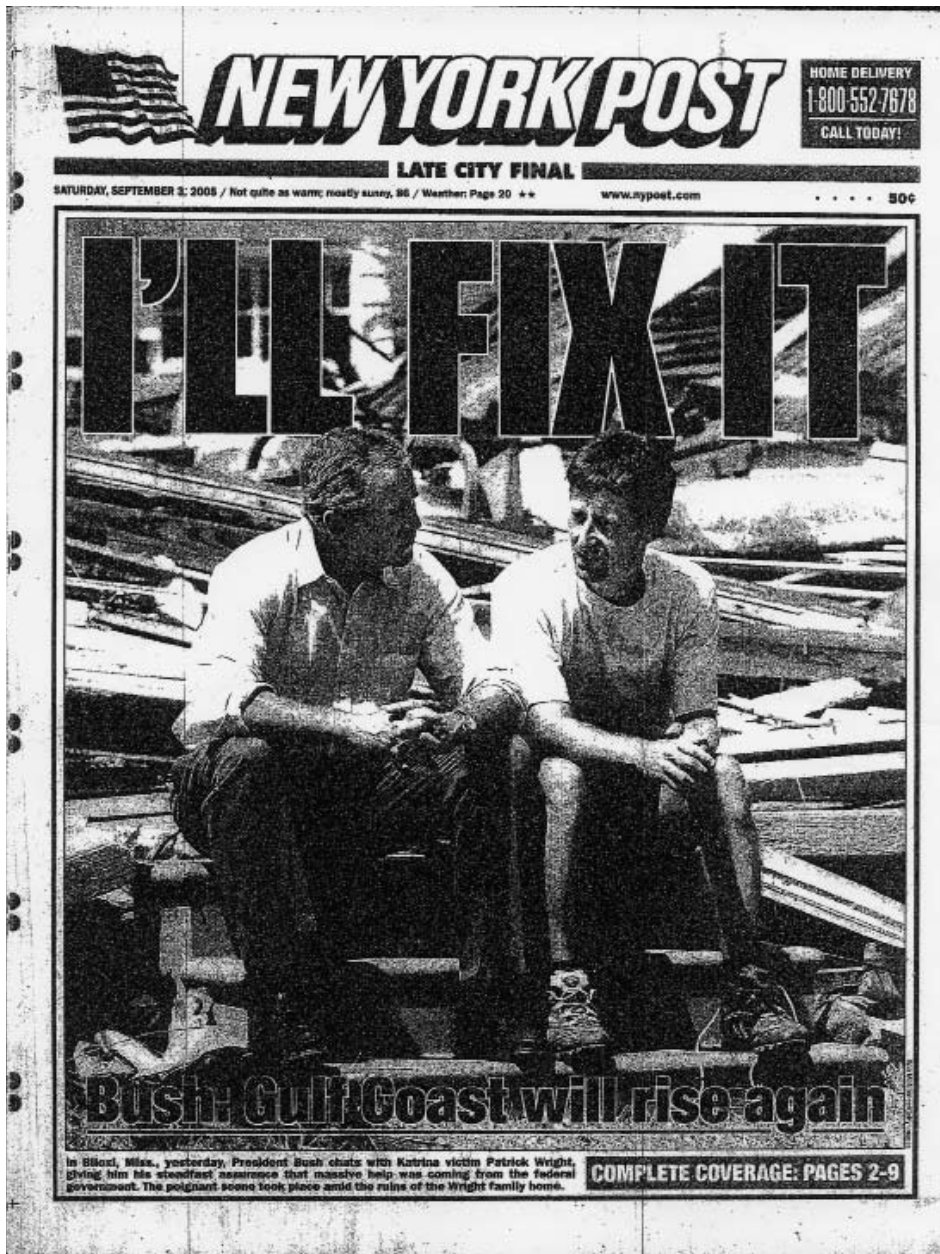
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2005

KATRINA: THE STORM WE VE LIVED

## Glimmers of hope emerge as water slowly recedes



South Coast's rescue policy response team members Gene Yohn, left, and Matt Siskel lead the search, using a variety of tools to recover the dead Saturday in the Bayou Rouge, which flooded under the storm's onslaught. Search and rescue missions have shifted from saving the living to recovering the dead. See story, A-2



KALAMU YA SALAAM

## WHAT TO DO WITH THE NEGROES?

There is a secret hidden in the heart of New Orleans, a secret hidden in plain sight but ignored by all but the secret citizens themselves. Before Bienville arrived in this area in 1718, Native American scouts informed the adventurous Frenchman that there were groups of Africans—they probably said “blacks”—living in their own communities and that these self-ruled women and men would not talk to whites.

Although how the Native Americans knew that the blacks would not talk to whites remains unexplained, the report seems accurate on the face of it. After all, close to three centuries later in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans there remain a number of us who are reluctant to talk truthfully to outsiders—not out of fear of repercussions or because of an inability to speak English but rather because of the general principle that there’s no future in such conversations.

Indeed, I am probably breaking ranks simply by writing this, although what I have to say should be obvious. Whether considering our eighteenth-century ancestors who inhabited the swamps of the North American southeast (from Florida to Louisiana) or unsuccessfully trying to question a handful of staunch holdouts among the Mardi Gras Indians, there have always been blacks who were both proud of being black and determined to be self-determining—not just constitutionally free as any other twenty-first-century U.S. citizen but also independent of any higher authority whether that authority be legal, religious, or cultural; whether that authority be other blacks, wealthy whites, politicians of any race or economic status, or whatever, none of that mattered. We recognized no higher earthly authority than ourselves.

Sometimes when it looks like we are doing nothing but waiting on the corners, sitting quietly on a well-worn kitchen chair sipping a beer in the early afternoon shade, holding court on one of the many neutral grounds, i.e. medians, that separate the lanes of major streets and avenues in Central City, sometimes those blank stares you see at a bus stop are not what you think it is.

We are not waiting for the arrival of a messiah or for a government handout. We expect nothing from our immediate future but more of the past.

Our talk will seem either fatalistic or farcical, and certainly will not make sense to you. The weary blues etched into our cheeks and coal coloring the sagging flesh beneath our eyes; the mottled black, browns, grays, and streaks of blond or red on our woolly heads and the aroma of anger clinging to our clothes has nothing to do with our failures or with failed expectations. We never anticipated that we would be understood or loved in this land ruled by men with guns, money, and god complexes.

No, what you see when you look at us looking back at you is a resolve to keep on living until we die or until someone kills us.

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The history of New Orleans is replete with the inexplicable. In the late 1700s, before the Americans arrived as a governing force in 1804, a nominally enslaved black man could be seen walking to his home, which he owned, carrying a rifle, which he owned, with money of his own in his pockets. I know it seems impossible, but the impossible is one of the roots of New Orleans culture.

The Spanish imposed different laws and customs. We had been offered freedom in exchange for joining the Spanish in fighting the English. Join the army and get emancipated—all you had to do was shoot white men... and avoid getting shot.

The Black Codes guaranteed Sundays were ours. We could keep all the proceeds from the food, handicrafts, services, or whatever we could sell. If you study the colonial administrative records you will notice that our economy was so rich that the city merchants petitioned the governor to be able to sell on Sundays (like the slaves did).

Prior to the Civil War, the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled that one man had to pay back money he borrowed from a slave. There was also the instance of a shocked Mrs. Latrobe, the wife of the architect who designed and built the New Orleans waterworks, who beseeched others to imagine "...how shocked I was to see three Mulatto children and their mother call upon me and say they were the children of Henry." Henry was her dearly departed son. He died of yellow fever and was buried in New Orleans in 1817, three years before his father, who also died of yellow fever and was buried next to his son in St. Louis Cemetery. Like many, many people today, Mrs. Latrobe had no idea what was really going on in New Orleans.

You can read the papers all day and sit in front of the TV all night and never get the news about a significant and shocking subculture in New

Orleans—a subculture that not only is unknown to you but a subculture that really does not care to be known by most of you. Our independently produced subculture is responsible for the roux that flavors New Orleans music, New Orleans cuisine, New Orleans speech idioms, New Orleans architecture, the way we walk down here, and especially how we celebrate life even in the face of death. From the African iterations of VooDoo spiritual observances to the music emanating from Congo Square, this subculture has made New Orleans world renowned.

I don't remember the black sufferers ever receiving a thank you or a blessing. Instead of recognizing our contributions, the black poor and those who identify with them have been demonized. When the waters came, those who were largely affected and eventually washed away were overwhelmingly black. Our saviors gave us one-way tickets out of town. Four years later there have been no provisions to bring blacks back here—I say "back here" instead of "back home" because here is no longer home. Post-Katrina New Orleans is not even a ghost of what our beloved city was.

What is gone is not just houses or pictures on the wall, not just the little neighborhood store we used to frequent or the tavern where we hung out on warm nights; not just the small church in the middle of the block or even the flower bed alongside the house; not just the old landmarks or some of the schools we used to attend, not just the jumble of overcrowded habitations or the storied stacks of bricks we called the 'jects (a.k.a. projects)—housing schemes we knew by name and reputation. No, it is not just bricks and wood that is missing from the landscape. What is gone, what we miss most of all, is us.

We the people are not here. What is left is an amputated city ignoring its stumps. Moreover, even if it were possible, our city does not desire to re-grow or replace what was "disappeared." "Good riddance," says the new majority.

"Good riddance" is sometimes proclaimed using the coded language of "a smaller footprint" (reductively, smaller footprint means fewer black butts). At other times, "good riddance" is spewed forth as the uncut racist cant of "lock all those savages up."

--

Although poor blacks controlled none of the city's major resources, we were blamed for everything that was wrong—from a failing school system to rising crime; from ineffective and corrupt political leadership to an "immoral" street culture of drugs, sagging pants, and loud music;



from a rise in sexually transmitted diseases to deteriorating neighborhoods. When responsible citizens wrote to the *Times-Picayune* newspaper suggesting what ought be done do address these concerns, high on the list of panaceas was our incarceration, as if so many—indeed, far, far too many of us—were not already in prison.

How convenient to ignore this glaring statistic: the largest concentration of black women in New Orleans is located at Xavier University and the largest concentration of their age-compatible male counterparts exists across the expressway in the city jail—dorms for the women, cells for the men. The truth is disorienting to most: what has been tried thus far, whether education or jail, has not worked. The people who complain the most about crime in the city, or should I say the voices that we most often hear in the media complaining about crime, are from the people who are the least affected.

However, worse than the name-calling is the fact that New Orleans is now a city that forgot to care. In the aftermath of the greatest flood trauma ever suffered by a major American city, New Orleans is devoid of public health care in general and mental health care in particular.

In the entire Gulf Coast area that was directly affected by Katrina, only in New Orleans were 7,000 educators fired. The Federal Government guaranteed the salaries of teachers in all other areas, and guaranteed the same for New Orleans teachers, but the state of Louisiana made a decision to decimate the largest block of college-educated blacks, the largest block of black voters, the largest block of black home owners. The denouement? The entire middle-class black strata was disenfranchised. Black professionals, the majority of whom lived in flooded areas in New Orleans East, whether government employees or independent professionals (doctors, lawyers, dentists, accountants, and the like), no longer had a client base. Most professionals could not reestablish themselves in New Orleans. What was left of the black New Orleans social infrastructure was nothing nice.

--

How does anyone explain why in post-racial America economic inequality gaps are widening, not closing? In a city that prior to Katrina had one of the highest percentage of native residents, why are so many young adults leaving rather than staying?

Why is spending nearly twice as much per pupil to service half the pre-storm population called a success in education innovation, especially



Lower Ninth Ward, 2007



This used to be a house, 2007



Hyman Green in front of his FEMA trailer, 2007



Who let the dogs out?, 2009



Graffiti in the Lower Ninth Ward, 2006

Luke, John, Matthew, whomever, where art thou?, 2006



when the current status quo is economically unsustainable, not to mention that comparable pre-storm health care and retirement benefits are no longer offered to teachers?

I don't even know how to identify what is happening to us without speaking class-warfare clichés, without sounding bitter about racial reconciliation or ungrateful for all the charitable assistance New Orleans has received.

I know that my voice is a minority voice. I know I don't represent all blacks, nor most blacks, nor educated blacks, nor your black friend, nor Malia and Sasha, nor... I know it's just plain "stupid" to talk like I'm talking...

I know. I know we blacks are not blameless. Indeed, we are often co-conspirators in our own debasement. Too often we act out in ways for which there is no sensible justification. Yes, I know about corrupt politicians and a seeming endless line of street-level drug dealers, about rampant gun violence and an always-for-pleasure, 24/7 party attitude.

But amid all our acknowledged shortcomings, I ask one simple question: who else in this city has contributed so much for so long to this unique gumbo we call New Orleans culture?

Like the state of Texas finally admitting that "abstinence only" sex education has led to higher, not lower, rates of teen pregnancy, unless we materially address the realities of our social situation, we may find that the short-sighted solutions we have put in place will, in the long run, worsen rather than solve our problems.

--

Most days I am resolved to soldier on, to suck it up and keep on keeping on, but sometimes, sometimes I feel like Che Guevara facing a summary execution squad of counter-insurgency soldiers.

Sometimes, after working all day in the public schools or after hearing Recovery School District administrators refusing to allow us to teach an Advanced Placement English class because "no students are capable of that kind of work"; or after finding out that a teacher we worked with last year is no longer employed, despite her talents, because (as they said without shame or chagrin) "we can get two, young, straight-out-of-college, Teach-For-America instructors for the same price we paid your old, experienced ass"; or when the city "accidentally" bulldozes a house whose owners, struggling to rehabilitate the property, possess a building

permit issued by the same city—all while, four years after the flood, there is no coherent plan to address the 40,000 or so blighted properties that dominate the Ninth Ward landscape—sometimes I just want to calmly recite Che's command: "Go ahead, shoot!"

Just kill us and get it over with.

But until then: *a luta continua* (the struggle continues)!

## CONTRIBUTORS

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Christopher McElroen is the Co-founder of the Classical Theatre of Harlem (CTH), for which he produced forty productions between 2000 and 2009 that yielded thirteen AUDELCO Awards, six OBIE Awards, two Lucille Lortel Awards, and a Drama Desk Award. Selected directing credits include *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Blacks: A Clown Show*, and *Marat/Sade*. He has also directed at numerous venues, including the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Duke University, and the Walker Art Center.

### Nato Thompson

Nato Thompson is Chief Curator for CreativeTime, where he has organized major projects, such as *It Is What It Is: Conversations about Iraq* (2009), a project that encouraged public discussion of the history, present circumstances, and future of Iraq. Prior to CreativeTime, he worked as a curator for MASS MoCA, where he completed numerous large-scale exhibitions, such as *The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere*, a survey of political art of the 1990s. His most recent book, *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the Age of Cultural Production*, is available through Autonomedia.org.

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