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RESOURCES FOR KATRINA SURVIVORS

Six years after Katrina, the battle for New Orleans continues

Political power has shifted to whites, but Blacks have not given up their struggle for a voice — and justice

by Jordan Flaherty

As this weekend's storm has reminded us, hurricanes can be a threat to U.S. cities on the East Coast as well the Gulf. But the vast changes that have taken place in New Orleans since Katrina have had little to do with weather and everything to do with political struggles.

Six years after the federal levees failed and 80 percent of the city was flooded, New Orleans has lost 80,000 jobs and 110,000 residents. It is a whiter and wealthier city, with tourist areas well maintained while communities like the Lower 9th Ward remain devastated. Beyond the statistics, it is still a much contested city.

Politics continues to shape how the changes to New Orleans are viewed. For some, the city is a crime scene of corporate profiteering and the mass displacement of African Americans and working poor; but for others it's an example of bold public sector reforms, taken in the aftermath of a natural disaster, that have led the way for other cities.

In the wake of Katrina, New Orleans saw the rise of a new class of citizens. They self-identify as YURPs — Young Urban Rebuilding Professionals — and they in architecture, urban planning, education and related fields. The city was still mostly empty, they spoke of a freedom to experiment, unfettered by the barriers of bureaucratic red tape and public comment. Working with local and national political and business leaders, they made rapid gains in the city's education system, public housing, health care and nonprofit sector.

Along the way, the face of elected government changed in the city and state. Among the offices that switched from Black to white were mayor, police chief, district attorney and representatives on the school board and city council, which both switched to white majorities for the first time in a generation. Louisiana also transformed from a state with several statewide elected Democrats to having only one: Sen. Mary Landrieu.

While Black community leaders have said that the displacement after the storm has robbed African Americans of their civic representation, another narrative has also taken shape. Many in the media and business elite have said that a new political class — which happens to be mostly white — is reshaping the politics of the city into a post-racial era.

"Our efforts are changing old ways of thinking," said Mayor Mitch Landrieu, shortly after he was elected in 2010. After accusing his critics of being stuck in the past, Landrieu — who was the first mayor in modern memory elected with the support of a majority of both Black and white voters — added, "We're going to rediscipline ourselves in this city."

The changes in the public sector have been widespread. Shortly after the storm, the entire staff of the public school system was fired. Their union, which had been the largest union in the city, ceased to be recognized. With many parents, students and teachers driven out of the city by Katrina and unable to have a say in the decision, the state took over the city's schools and began shifting them over to charters.

"The reorganization of the public schools has created a separate but unequal tiered system of schools that steers a minority of students, including virtually all of the city's white students, into a set of selective, higher-performing schools and most of the city's students of color into a set of lower-performing schools," writes lawyer and activist Bill Quigley,



New Orleans police arrest a man on the Danziger Bridge Sept. 4, 2005, five days after Katrina, the same day police shot six other people there. PHOTO: ALEX BRANDON, TIMES-PICTAYUNE

In a report prepared with fellow Loyola law professor Davida Finiger.

In many ways, the changes in New Orleans school system, initiated almost six years ago, foreshadowed a battle that has played out more conspicuously this year in Wisconsin, Indiana, New Jersey and other states where teachers and their unions were assailed by both Republican governors and liberal reformers such as the filmmakers behind "Waiting for Superman." Similarly, the battle of New Orleans public housing — which was torn down and replaced by new units built in public-private partnerships that house a small percentage of the former residents — prefigured national battles over government's role in solving problems related to poverty.

The anger at the changes in New Orleans' Black community is palpable. It comes out at City Council meetings, on local Black talk radio station WBOK and in protests. "Since New Orleans was declared a blank slate, we are the social experimental lab of the world," says Endesha Juakali, a housing rights activist. However, despite the changes, grassroots resistance continues. "For those of us that lived and are still living the disaster, moving on is not an option," adds Juakali.

Resistance to the dominant agenda has also led to reform of the city's criminal justice system. But this reform is very different from the others, with leadership coming from African-American residents at the grassroots, including those most affected by both crime and policing.

In the aftermath of Katrina, media images famously depicted poor New Orleanians as criminal and dangerous. In fact, at one point it was announced that rescue efforts were put on hold because of the violence. In response, the second-in-charge of the New Orleans Police Department reportedly told officers to shoot looters, and the governor announced that she had given the National Guard orders to shoot to kill.

Over the following days, police shot and killed several civilians. A police sniper wounded a young African American named Henry Glover, and other officers took and burned his body behind a levee. A 45-year-old grandfather named Danny Brumfield Sr. was shot in the back in front of his family outside the New Orleans convention center.

Two Black families — the Madisons and Bartholomews — walking across New Orleans' Danziger Bridge fell under a hail of gunfire from a group of officers. "We had more incidents of police misconduct than civilian misconduct," says former District Attorney Eddie Jordan, who pursued charges against officers but had the charges thrown out by a judge. "All these stories of looting, it pales next to what the police did."

District Attorney Jordan, who angered many in the political establishment when he brought charges against officers and was forced to resign soon after, was not the only one who failed to bring accountability for the post-Katrina violence. In fact, every check and balance in the city's criminal justice system failed. For years, family members of the victims pressured the media,

the U.S. Attorney's office and Eddie Jordan's replacement in the DA's office, Leon Cannizzaro. "The media didn't want to give me the time of day," says William Tanner, who saw officers take away Glover's body. "They called me a raving idiot."

Finally after more than three years of protests, press conferences and lobbying, the Justice Department launched aggressive investigations of the Glover, Brumfield and Danziger cases in early 2009. In recent months, three officers were convicted in the Glover killing — although one conviction was overturned — two were convicted in beating a man to death just before the storm, and 10 officers either pled guilty or were convicted in the Danziger killing and cover-up. In the Danziger case, the jury found that officers had not only killed two civilians and wounded four, but also engaged in a wide-ranging conspiracy that involved planted evidence, invented witnesses and secret meetings.

The Justice Department has at least seven more open investigations on New Orleans police killings and has indicated their plan for more formal oversight of the NOPD, as well as the city jail. In this area, New Orleans is also leading the way: In a remarkable change from Justice Department policy during the Bush administration, the DOJ is also looking at oversight of police departments in Newark, Denver and Seattle.

In the national struggle against law enforcement violence, there is much to be learned from the victims of New Orleans police violence who led a remarkable struggle against a wall of official silence and now have begun to win justice. "This is an opening," explains New Orleans police accountability activist Malcolm Suber. "We have to push for a much more democratic system of policing in the city."

In the closing arguments of the Danziger trial, DOJ prosecutor Bobbi Bernstein fought back against the defense claim that the officers were heroes, saying the family members of those killed deserved the title more. Noting that the official cover-up had "perverted" the system, she said, "The real heroes are the victims who stayed with an imperfect justice system that initially betrayed them." The jury apparently agreed with her, convicting the officers on all 25 counts.

Jordan Flaherty is a New Orleans-based journalist whose award-winning reporting from the Gulf Coast has been featured in a range of outlets including the New York Times, Al Jazeera and Argentina's Clarin newspaper. The author of "FLOODLINES: Community and Resistance from Katrina to the Jena Six," he can be reached at neworleans@leftturn.org, and more information about "Floodlines" can be found at floodlines.org. For speaking engagements, see communityandresistance.wordpress.com. This story originally appeared in The Root.

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New Orleans six years later: The disaster is not over

by M. Endesha Juakali, J.D.

The Katrina Commemoration Committee will sponsor its annual march from the base of the Industrial Canal in the 9th Ward to Hunters Field on Aug. 29, 2011.

Last year, the prevailing thought was that the fifth annual event was going to be the last chance to really make a statement because after that, the media and others around the country and world would definitely move on to other events and disasters. That is probably true from a media-marketing perspective, but for those of us who lived and are still living the disaster, moving on is not an option.

The storm that brushed by New Orleans on Aug. 29, 2005, was never the cause of the disaster. The shoddy work of the U.S. government that led to the levee failures and flooded the city was only the beginning of our troubles.

The real disaster began immediately after the storm when the city's white supremacist economic elite and its "colored" collaborators decided to remake the city in their image, which strongly resembles a 21st century plantation. These collaborators, who included the mayor, city council, head of HUD and almost every Black elected official, thought that the plan would only affect the poor, who they never represented anyway!

They were not only unprincipled, but pretty misguided in not realizing that the majority of people in New Orleans were working poor and anything that affected them would change all the power relationships in the city.

It started almost immediately with the governor labeling Blacks in New Orleans "looters" and giving the police department and National Guard the power to shoot to kill. This was parroted by the then mayor. We can now see how that worked out.

Then the state took control of the public school system, firing all the experienced teachers and breaking union. This was done for the less purpose of privatizing the industry, so now profit is the goal, not serving the children.

Then it was decided that certain areas in the city should not be repopulated. All of these areas, such as New Orleans East, the Lower 9th Ward and all of the traditional public housing developments, were areas that were almost exclusively Black and working class. Then the decision was made not to open the public hospital, which was a critical lifeline for the Black working



The residents of St. Bernard public housing, home to 6,500 people before the flood, fought for their right under international law to return to their well-built, minimally damaged homes in every way imaginable, including with a tent city called Survivors Village set up in 2006. Nevertheless, on Dec. 20, 2007, the epic battle culminated with the New Orleans City Council voting unanimously to let HUD destroy all 4,500 of the city's public housing apartments. Yet still the residents, 95 percent Black, fought and continue to fight for their right to return to the "replacement" housing, poor community.

And after the march and program at Hunters Field, everyone is invited to join the residents and former residents of the St. Bernard community in their annual "Unity in the Community Celebration of Life" at the Fightback Center, 3820 Alfred St., in the 3800 block of St. Bernard Avenue, from 4 p.m. until.

To learn more, contact Survivors Village and the St. Bernard Fightback Center at communitiesrising@gmail.com and the Katrina Commemoration Committee at katrinacommemoration@gmail.com or (504) 328-3159.

Note from Sakura Kono

The Aug. 29 march will begin with a healing ceremony 10 a.m. at the Lower 9th Ward levee breach on Jourdan and Galvez. Immediately following the healing ceremony begins the Katrina Commemoration March and Secondline, a combination of traditional New Orleans secondlining, African drummers, New Orleans brass bands, social aid and pleasure clubs, various community organizations and the community-at-large. It travels through the streets of New Orleans down North Claiborne Avenue for about three miles to St. Bernard Avenue. The march secondline ends at Hunters Field, located on the corner of North Claiborne Avenue and St. Bernard Avenue.

The Fightback Center maintain the culture of the St. Bernard community. The property at 3820 Alfred St. has always been the focal point of the St. Bernard community. As the headquarters of the New Day Black Community Development Organization, it provides economic assistance, a job bank, GED programs, a youth club and many other social, political and recreational services. There is not much left of what used to be our community physically, but the spirit, culture and love for St. Bernard still lives. The Fightback center is the perfect place for the yearly Mother's Day reunions that the Big 7 parade has become. See pictures from this year's parade at communitiesrising.wordpress.com/.

This is just meant to be a sample of what has happened to the city since the storm. As a native New Orleansian and a Black person, I could go on and on with examples of how sad it feels to be politically and economically powerless in my own city. Suffice it to say, calling this a 21st century plantation is not meant to be a joke.

All people who believe in social justice should make it a point to march on Aug. 29. We cannot afford to move on because the disaster is not over. It's an ongoing living event that seems to have gotten worse each year since 2005.

Therefore, we must march each year in order to remind ourselves that we are in a fight and cannot rest! We have lost many battles, but the war is ongoing and we must not quit!

I hope to see you at the levee breach on the 29th!

NOTICE OF PROPOSED PLAN AND PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD HUNTERS POINT NAVAL SHIPYARD PARCEL E-2 (INCLUDING THE LANDFILL)

The U.S. Department of the Navy, in coordination with state and federal environmental regulatory agencies, encourages the public to comment on its Proposed Plan for cleanup of Parcel E-2, which includes a landfill along the shoreline at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco, California. The Proposed Plan summarizes the remedial (cleanup) alternatives evaluated by the Navy and explains the basis for identifying the preferred alternative to address contamination at Parcel E-2 at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD
The Navy invites interested members of the public to review and comment on the Parcel E-2 Proposed Plan during a Public Comment Period, from September 7, 2011, to October 24, 2011. Public comments must be submitted in writing and must be postmarked or e-mailed no later than October 24, 2011. Alternatively, members of the public are invited to attend a Public Meeting on September 20, 2011, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Public comments to the Proposed Plan will also be accepted at this meeting. If you have any questions or wish to comment on this project, please contact Mr. Keith Forman, Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Environmental Coordinator, BRAC Program Management Office West, 1455 Frazee Road, Suite 900, San Diego, CA 92108-4310; keith.s.forman@navy.mil; (619) 532-0913 phone; (415) 308-1458 cell phone; (619) 532-0995 fax.

PUBLIC MEETING
The Navy will host a Public Meeting to discuss the Proposed Plan, answer questions, and accept public comments:
Date: September 20, 2011
Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Southeast Community Facility Commission Building
Alex L. Pitcher Jr. Room
1800 Oakdale Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94124

FOR MORE INFORMATION
As of September 7, 2011, copies of the Proposed Plan and other site documents will be available for review at the two Information Repositories:

City of San Francisco Main Library
Government Information Center, 5th Floor
100 Larkin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 557-4500

Hunters Point Shipyard Site Trailer
(Located across the street from the security entrance to the Shipyard)
690 Hudson Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94124

And on the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard website: <http://www.bracpmo.navy.mil>
Click "BRAC 2005," click on "Prior BRAC Installations" dropdown menu, and then select "Former NSY Hunters Point."



Engineering/Remediation Resources Group, Inc.
 4585 Pacheco Blvd., Suite 200, Martinez, CA 94553
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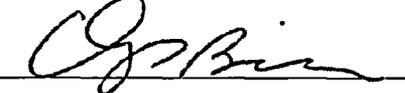
Contract: N68711-05-C-6011 **Document Control Number:** ERRG-6011-0000-0016

TO: Contracting Officer
 Cynthia Mafara (BPMOW.CM)
 NAVFAC Southwest
 1455 Frazee Road, Suite 900
 San Diego, CA 92108-4310

DATE: September 4, 2011

CTO: n/a (sole source contract)

LOCATION: Hunters Point Naval Shipyard,
 San Francisco, CA

FROM: 
 Doug Bielskis, Project Manager

DOCUMENT TITLE AND DATE: Notice of Proposed Plan and Public Comment Period, Hunters Point Naval Shipyard Parcel E-2 (Including The Landfill), (San Francisco Bayview, Newspaper Advertisement, September 2011)

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