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BLUEPRINT

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Katrina – The First Eight Months - Fall 2005 – Spring 2006

By Bill Quigley

Editor's Note

Dear Blueprint Readers:

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina dramatically changed everything in our part of the country, including the Blueprint for Social Justice. For many reasons, we were not able to publish our regular series of issues.

For the 2005-2006 academic year, instead of our usual assortment of social justice articles, the Blueprint for Social Justice is publishing this one issue. This issue shares with you a series of articles I wrote after Katrina as our challenges and hopes unfolded.

We recognize this is a serious departure from the history of this wonderful publication and we ask for your understanding.

We will resume the normal way of publishing of the Blueprint for Social Justice in the summer.

Thank you again for your support and patience and your solidarity.

Peace, love, justice,

Bill Quigley – Editor, Blueprint for Social Justice Quigley@loyno.edu

September 2005 - Boating Down Napoleon Avenue: Reflections on Katrina

I was in a hospital for 5 days and 4 nights during Katrina. My wife is a nurse and I was there with her. We left in a small fishing boat pattering down Napoleon Avenue.

The hospital had about 2000 people in it. Katrina exploded several big windows and the floods surrounded us with 8 feet of water. We lost electricity right away and soon lost the backup generator which was in the flooded basement. The water system stopped. We were advised not to drink the water and could not flush toilets.

You can imagine a hospital with 2000 people without electricity, water and flush toilets. Breathing machines did not work. Computers did not work. Cell phones did not work. Lights did not work. Elevators did not work. The cafeteria was in the basement so we had limited food for the first days and no food at the end. There was some bottled water. Nurses and aides and doctors and staff and families and visitors were all pitching in and doing heroic work despite the absence of modern medicine.

Outside it was much worse. People on rooftops were screaming for help. People fired guns to try to get the attention of the helicopters that kept going overhead. People were swimming in the water. People were boating in the water. A body was floating in the water.

Security turned wandering people away from the hospital and they walked back out into the waters.

The hospital first evacuated some premature infants in incubators out on Tuesday. Staff and families carried incubators down several flights of stairs to the parking garage. There they were handed through a hole in the wall into the back of a truck which took them to the roof for helicopter rescue.

No one was ever told where the helicopters were going. Mothers of the infants were not allowed to evacuate with them. Not enough room in the helicopters, they said. The tiny babies flew away to who knew where, mothers behind. Heartbreak unimaginable to any parent.

The helicopters stopped when it got dark Tuesday night. Nearly 1500 people remained in the hospital. Some doctors broke open vending machines for food so we had cheetos and Hawaiian punch for dinner. It was getting hotter all the time. People lay down by broken windows to try to catch a breeze. People were very tired but sleep was tough.

My wife and I tried to take some quiet time together to plan and went into the darkened chapel. We were stopped by a dead body lying on a gurney covered in a sheet. Patients were dying.

On Wednesday, the helicopters started up again. Elderly patients were carried down dark stairwells and driven to the roof. Small groups of people went out by airboats that roared down Claiborne Avenue and up Napoleon. But suddenly around lunch time the helicopters stopped coming. No one knew why.

People waited for hours for the helicopters to come back, but they never came. Patients were lined up on the roof and down the halls. Volunteers were waving pieces of cardboard over them trying to cool them off. Medicines were unavailable. We were out of food.

Until the sun set, an army sergeant and I held up a homemade sheet sign on the heliport trying to flag down helicopters. The sheet said "HELP!!! People dying!!!" A medical mechanic waiting on the roof to be picked up by his company was cynical. "You are wasting your time" he said, "people are dying all over the city."

A marine helicopter saw our sign and landed but it was too small to take patients. They gave us a case of water and a case of Vienna sausages.

As darkness fell, the patients already outside the hospital were kept on the parking lot ramp because the halls inside were full of waiting patients in wheelchairs and cots. The doctor in charge apologized for

the situation and explained that they had no medicine to give anyone. "We have some food," he said, "but those who have already eaten today should not eat because we do not have enough for everyone." He then handed out a tin of Vienna sausages to those who had not eaten. The patients spent the night on in the parking lot ramp – nurses working around the clock to fan them, do the bedpans, and help whatever way they could.

The night was hot and slow. There were still over a thousand people left in the hospital. Worried about security, the hospital asked everyone to gather up their clothes and possessions on the first and second levels. We "slept" on the floor by a pair of broken windows.

The next morning nothing happened for several hours, then the skies started roaring as helicopter after helicopter landed. A sweet sound.

About mid-day all the patients had left and we boarded a small fishing boat piloted by two young volunteers who were ferrying people out to Napoleon and St. Charles. There we waited with hundreds of other people for a ride out in whatever showed up - a flatbed truck, a garden supply truck or a school bus.

We boarded an open topped truck with nearly a hundred others and drove through the streets of New Orleans in the rain. The woman next to me was in her 20s, pregnant, and holding a clear plastic bag with \$30 in coins and a half-empty bottle of anti-biotics. That was all she had. Another woman tried to shield her 9 day old infant from the rain. Others held black garbage bags full of what they could save.

That truck took us out to Causeway and I-10. When we rounded the ramp, the whole truck gasped.

Thousands and thousands of people were waiting in the rain under the bridges. Mud was everywhere. There were no toilets. National Guard people were everywhere. Helicopters were landing across the highway and then taking off. It seemed like a big crowd scene from a bad movie.

As busses pulled up, the crowd surged forward. Many people had been outside for days and were desperate to get on a bus. No one knew where the busses were going – they would not tell us, but people wanted on no matter what.

We decided to volunteer until the lines went down and ended up catching a ride out with some volunteer nurses.

The city is trying to get back on its feet. It will be hard. Uptown is in pretty good shape. The rest of the city is still in deep trouble. Many have suffered economically, personally, and psychologically.

No one was ever told where the helicopters or busses were going.

There is much depression, much denial, and much anger.

But there is also great generosity, great courage and great solidarity. There is probably more courtesy on the sidewalks and streets of New Orleans than I have ever seen.

New Orleans needs Loyola to help our community re-group, re-build in a more just way, and heal. It will not be a quick process, but it is one that fits with our mission to be aligned with those seeking social justice in our community.

Boating down Napoleon, we saw many trees felled by Katrina. Almost all had sparkling Mardi Gras beads stuck in their branches. I hope that image will remind me to look honestly at both the painful destruction and the bright hope for better times.

October 10, 2005: New Orleans: Leaving the Poor Behind Again!

They are doing it again! My wife and I spent five days and four nights in a hospital in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. We saw people floating dead in the water. We watched people die waiting for evacuation to places with food, water, and electricity. We were rescued by boat and waited for an open pickup truck to take us and dozens of others on a rainy drive to the underpass where thousands of others waited for a bus ride to who knows where. You saw the people left behind. The poor, the sick, the disabled, the prisoners, the low-wage workers of New Orleans, were all left behind in the evacuation. Now that New Orleans is re-opening for some, the same people are being left behind again.

When those in power close the public schools, close public housing, fire people from their jobs, refuse to provide access to affordable public healthcare, and close off all avenues for justice, it is not necessary to erect a sign outside of New Orleans saying "Poor People Not Allowed To Return." People cannot come back in these circumstances and that is exactly what is happening.

There are 28,000 people still living in shelters in Louisiana. There are thousands of public housing apartments in New Orleans, many in good physical condition. None have been reopened. The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimated that 112,000 low-income homes in New Orleans were damaged by the hurricane. Yet, local, state and federal authorities are not committed to re-opening public housing. Louisiana Congressman Richard Baker (R-LA) said, after the hurricane, "We finally cleaned up public

housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did."

New Orleans public schools enrolled about 60,000 children before the hurricane. The school board president now estimates that no schools on the city's east bank, where the overwhelming majority of people live, will reopen this academic school year. Every one of the 13 public schools on the mostly-dry west bank of New Orleans was changed into charter schools in an afternoon meeting a few days ago. A member of the Louisiana state board of education estimated that at most 10,000 students will attend public schools in New Orleans this academic year.

The City of New Orleans laid off 3,000 workers. The public school system laid off thousands of its workers. The Archdiocese of New Orleans laid off 800 workers from its central staff and countless hundreds of others from its parish schools. The Housing Authority has laid off its workers. The St. Bernard Sheriff's Office laid off half of its workers.

Renters in New Orleans are returning to find their furniture on the street and strangers living in their apartments at higher rents – despite an order by the Governor that no one can be evicted before October 25. Rent in the dry areas have doubled and tripled.

Environmental chemist Wilma Subra cautions that earth and air in the New Orleans area appear to be heavily polluted with heavy metal and organic contaminants from more than 40 oil spills and extensive mold. The people, Subra stated, are subject to "double insult – the chemical insult from the sludge and biological insult from the mold." Homes built on the Agriculture Street landfill – a federal toxic site – stewed for weeks in floodwaters.

Yet, the future of Charity Hospital of New Orleans, the primary place for free comprehensive medical care in the state of Louisiana, is under furious debate and discussion and may never re-open again. Right now, free public healthcare is being provided by volunteers at grassroots free clinics like Common Ground – a wonderful and much needed effort but not a substitute for public healthcare.

The jails and prisons are full and staying full. Despite orders to release prisoners, state and local corrections officials are not releasing them unless someone can transport them out of town. Lawyers have to file lawsuits to force authorities to release people from prison who have already served all of their sentences! Judges are setting \$100,000 bonds for people who steal beer out of a vacant house, while landlords break the law with impunity. People arrested before and after the hurricane have not even been formally

We have to look honestly at both the painful destruction and the bright hope for better times.

charged by the prosecutor. Because the evidence room is under water, part of the police force is discredited, and witnesses are scattered around the country, everyone knows few will ever see a trial, yet timid judges are reluctant to follow the constitution and laws and release them on reasonable bond.

People are making serious money in this hurricane, but not the working and poor people who built and maintained New Orleans. President Bush lifted the requirement that jobs re-building the Gulf Coast pay a living wage. The Small Business Administration has received 1.6 million disaster loan applications and has approved 9 in Louisiana. A US Senator reported that maintenance workers at the Superdome are being replaced by out of town workers who will work for less money and no benefits. He also reported that seventy-five Louisiana electricians at the Naval Air Station are being replaced by workers from Kellogg Brown and Root – a subsidiary of Halliburton.

Take it to the courts, you say? The Louisiana Supreme Court has been closed since the hurricane and is not due to re-open until at least October 25, 2005. While Texas and Mississippi have enacted special rules to allow out of state lawyers to come and help people out, the Louisiana Supreme court has not. Nearly every person victimized by the hurricane has a price-gouging story. Yet, the Louisiana Attorney General has filed exactly one suit for price-gouging – against a campground. Likewise, the US attorney has prosecuted 3 people for wrongfully seeking \$2000 FEMA checks.

No schools. No low-income apartments. No jobs. No healthcare. No justice.

A final example? You can fly on a plane into New Orleans, but you cannot take a bus. Greyhound does not service New Orleans at this time.

You saw the people who were left behind last time. The same people are being left behind all over again. You raised hell about the people left behind last time. Please do it again.

October 31, 2005: Why Are They Making New Orleans A Ghost Town?

On Halloween night, New Orleans will be very, very dark. Well over half the homes on the east bank of New Orleans sit vacant because they still do not have electricity. More do not have natural gas or running water. Most stoplights still do not work. Most street lights remain out.

Fully armed National Guard troops refuse to allow over ten thousand people even visit their property in the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood.

Despite the fact that people cannot come back, tens of thousands of people face eviction from their homes. A local judge told me that their court expects to process a thousand evictions a day for weeks.

Renters still in shelters or temporary homes across the country will never see the court notice taped to the door of their home. Because they will not show up for the eviction hearing that they do not know about, their possessions will be tossed out in the street.

In the street their possessions will sit alongside an estimated 3 million truck loads of downed trees, piles of mud, fiberglass insulation, crushed sheetrock, abandoned cars, spoiled mattresses, wet rugs, and horrifyingly smelly refrigerators full of food from August.

There are also New Orleans renters facing evictions from landlords who want to renovate and charge higher rents to the out of town workers who populate the city. Some renters have offered to pay their rent and are still being evicted. Others question why they should have to pay rent for September when they were not allowed to return to New Orleans.

New Orleans, known for its culture and food and music, is now pushing away the very people who created the culture and food and music. Mardi Gras Indians live and paraded in neighborhoods that sit without electricity or water. The back room cooks for many of the most famous restaurants cannot yet return to New Orleans. Musicians remain in exile. Housing is scarce and rents are soaring. Over 245,000 people lost jobs in September. Public education in New Orleans has not restarted. The levees are not even up to their flawed level in August.

Dr. Arjun Sengupta, the United Nations Human Rights Commission Special Reporter on Extreme Poverty, visited New Orleans and Baton Rouge last week. He toured the devastated areas and listened to the evacuees still in shelters and those living out of town with family.

Dr. Sengupta described current conditions as “shocking” and “gross violations of human rights.” The devastation itself is shocking, he explained, but even more shocking is that two months have passed and there is little to nothing being done to reconstruct vast areas of New Orleans. “The US is the richest nation in the history of the world. Why cannot it restore electricity and water and help people rebuild their homes and neighborhoods? If the US can rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq, why not New Orleans?”

The longer the poor and working class of New Orleans stay away, the more likely it will be that

People are making serious money in this hurricane, but not the working and poor people who built and maintained New Orleans.

they never return. That, some say, is exactly what those in power in New Orleans and Louisiana and the US must want. Otherwise, why are they making New Orleans a ghost town?

November 23, 2005: No Home for the Holidays: Stop Evictions of Katrina Evacuees

Sabrina Robinson lived her whole life in New Orleans. When Katrina and the floodwaters hit her house, she and her three children swam to a dry bridge where they lived for 2 days. "We watched people die," said Ms. Robinson. Now her family and 52 other families from New Orleans face eviction from the Houston apartment complex where they lived for the last month. Tens of thousands of other Katrina evacuees also face holiday evictions.

After a bus took the Robinson family to Houston, they slept on the floor for a month. On October 2, the family received federal housing vouchers from the Disaster Relief Center in Houston. Quail Chase apartments in Houston agreed to accept the vouchers. Ms. Robinson and 52 other families from New Orleans moved in to Quail Chase. After the families lived there for several weeks, Quail Chase changed their mind and refused to accept vouchers. Quail Chase has now given eviction notices to all 53 families. Now they face the streets again. "There is nothing else available," Ms. Robinson said. "All the decent housing is taken."

In the same spirit, FEMA announced November 15 it would quit paying for housing for most of the nearly 60,000 homeless Katrina families who are residing in government paid hotel and motel rooms.

In Texas, where 54,000 people are living in 18,000 rooms, Republican Governor Rick Perry said these evictions will "fuel the cycle of evacuees moving from one temporary housing situation to another - if they can secure housing at all."

The story is being repeated across the nation. In New York, 487 Katrina victims, including 115 kids, have been told their hotel rooms will no longer be paid. In the Carolinas, between 400 and 600 Katrina families in hotels face eviction even as local homeless shelters are already full.

Back home in New Orleans, legal aid lawyers estimate there will be 10,000 evictions filed in November against Katrina evacuees - more in one month than are usually filed in an entire year.

At this holiday time, resolve to stand in solidarity with the hundreds of thousands of people victimized by Katrina and the floods that followed.

Katrina evacuees in your community need your support. Stop the evictions in your community.

Nationally, 54 members of Congress, including all the members of the Congressional Black Caucus, have co-sponsored HR 4197, the Hurricane Katrina Recovery Act. Ask your representative to co-sponsor this bill and to take action to force FEMA to assist those still left behind.

There are also many other great grassroots, regional and national efforts underway to provide solidarity with Katrina evacuees. Many are listed at www.justiceforneworleans.org.

People displaced by Katrina do not want charity. What is needed at this holiday time is solidarity. Resolve to stand with the victims of Katrina as they search for justice.

February 21, 2006: Six Months After Katrina: Who Was Left Behind Then and Who is Being Left Behind Now?

Introduction

Nearly six months ago, my wife Debbie and I boated out of New Orleans. We left five days after Katrina struck. Debbie worked as an oncology nurse in a New Orleans hospital. She volunteered to come in during the hurricane so that other nurses with children could evacuate.

Imagine an entire city with no electricity, water, food or flushing toilets and tens of thousands of people left behind.

Debbie and I left five days later by way of a small fishing boat, the back of a garden truck, and the kindness of strangers. We returned 15 weeks later. Many of those left behind then who evacuated with us have yet to return.

The Katrina evacuation was totally self-help. If you had the resources, a car, money and a place to go, you left. Over one million people evacuated - 80 to 90% of the population.

No provisions were made for those who could not evacuate themselves. To this day no one has a reliable estimate of how many people were left behind in Katrina - that in itself says quite a bit about what happened.

Who was left behind in the self-help evacuation?

In the hospital, we could not see who was left behind because we did not have electricity or TV. We certainly knew the 2000 of us were left behind, and from the hospital we could see others. Some were

Who was left behind in the self help evacuation?

floating in the street – face down. Some were paddling down the street – helping older folks get to high ground. Some were swimming down the streets.

We could hear people left behind screaming for help from rooftops. We routinely heard gunshots as people trapped on rooftops tried to get the attention of helicopters crisscrossing the skies above. We could see the people trapped in the Salvation Army home a block away. We could hear breaking glass as people scrambled to get away from flooded one story homes and into the higher ground of several story office buildings. We saw people swimming to the local drugstore and swimming out with provisions. But we had no idea how many were actually left behind.

The poor, especially those without cars, were left behind. Twenty-seven percent of the people of New Orleans did not have access to a car. Government authorities knew in advance that "...100,000 citizens of New Orleans did not have means of personal transportation." Greyhound and Amtrak stopped service on the Saturday before the hurricane. These are people who did not have cars because they were poor - over 125,000 people, 27% of the people of New Orleans, lived below the very low federal poverty level before Katrina.

The sick were left behind. Some government reports estimated 12,000 patients were evacuated. I estimate at least an additional 24,000 people - staff and families of patients - were left behind in the twenty-two hospitals which were open at the time.

The elderly were left behind. The 280 plus local nursing homes remained mostly full. Only 21% evacuated and as a consequence 215 people died in nursing homes, at least six people died at a single nursing home while they waited four days for busses. The aged who lived at home also certainly found it more difficult than most to evacuate as they were more likely to live alone, less likely to own a car and nearly half were disabled.

Untold numbers of other disabled people and their caretakers were also left behind. There were tens of thousands of people with special needs in New Orleans. A physician reported hundreds of people in wheelchairs were in front of the Convention Center. A comprehensive study of evacuees in Houston shelters found one in seven physically disabled, 22% physically unable to evacuate, 23% stayed behind to care for someone physically disabled, and 25% had a chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes or high blood pressure. There were no provisions made for their evacuations.

Children were left behind. While there are no official estimates breaking out children left behind,

I know from what we saw during our evacuation that many, many children were among those left behind. About one-fourth of the people living in the areas damaged were children, about 183,000 kids, including 47,000 children under the age of 5. Over half of the children displaced were African-American and 30% of children in the damaged areas were poor, nearly double the 2000 national census rate for child poverty of 16.6%. These children were almost twice as likely to live in a female-headed home than children nationally.

Prisoners were left behind. Local prisons held 8300 inmates, most on local minor charges awaiting trial and too poor to post bond. Thousands were left behind with no food, water, or medical attention. Jails depend on electricity as much as hospitals do – doors of cells and halls and pods and entrances and exits are electronically opened and closed. More than 600 hundred prisoners, one entire building, were left behind once the prisons were evacuated – left in chest deep water, locked into cells.

Ultimately as many as 40,000 people took refuge in the Superdome which lost power, lost part of its roof, the water system failed and the toilets backed up. Another 20-30,000 people were dropped off at the Convention Center. Conditions at the Convention Center were far worse than at the Superdome because the Convention Center was never intended to be used for evacuees. It did not have any drinking water, food, or medical care at all. Ten people died in or around the Superdome, four at the convention center.

Unfounded rumors flew about rapes and murders inside these centers – and the myth that rescue helicopters were fired upon – have all been found to be untrue.. But those rumors so upset military and medical responders that many slowed down demanding protection from the evacuees – only to be greeted by “a whole lot of people clapping and cheering” when they arrived.

Debbie and I left the hospital after five days. Helicopters finally came and airlifted out many patients, their families and staff. Others, like us, left in small fishing boats piloted by volunteers.

The Coast Guard reported it rescued 33,000 people and the National Guard reported rescues of another 25,000 people. Louisiana Department of Homeland Security said 62,000 people were rescued from rooftops or out of water – not including those already in shelters. Many, many others, like us, were rescued by volunteers in boats and trucks.

Some people never made it out of metropolitan New Orleans. February 2006 reports from the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals show 1,103 bodies were recovered from the storm and flood, with over 2,000 people still reported missing. About

The myth that rescue helicopters were fired upon - has been found to be untrue - but it slowed down the evacuations.

215 people died in local hospitals and nursing homes.

Where did the survivors end up? According to FEMA, evacuees ended up all over – applications came in from 18,700 zip codes in all 50 states – half of the nation’s residential postal zones. Most evacuee families stayed within 250 miles of New Orleans, but 240,000 households went to Houston and other cities over 250 miles away and another 60,000 households went over 750 miles away.

Who ended up in shelters? Over 270,000 evacuees started out in shelters. The Washington Post, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health surveyed 680 randomly selected adult evacuees in Houston shelters on September 10-12, 2005. The results of that survey illustrate who ended up in shelters:

- 64% were renters
- 55% did not have a car or a way to evacuate
- 22% had to care for someone who was physically unable to leave
- 72% had no insurance
- 68% had neither money in the bank nor a useable credit card
- 57% had total household incomes of less than \$20,000 in prior year
- 76% had children under 18 with them in the shelter
- 77% had a high school education or less
- 93% were black
- 67% were employed full or part-time before the hurricane
- 52% had no health insurance
- 54% received their healthcare at the big public Charity Hospital

The people who were left behind in Katrina were the poor, the sick, the elderly, the disabled, children, and prisoners – mostly African-American.

Who is Being Left Behind Now?

“Hurricane Katrina likely made one of the poorest areas of the country even poorer....Both those who were poor before the storm and those who have become poor following the storm, are likely to face a particularly difficult time in reestablishing their lives, have few if any financial resources upon which to draw.”

Congressional Research Service 2005

Debbie and I ultimately ended up spending several months in an apartment in Houston while New Orleans started its recovery. Loyola Law Clinic, where I work, moved into the Disaster Relief Center in Houston and our clinic students interviewed and gave assistance to over a thousand evacuees.

We were able to come back to New Orleans for good in mid-December because our house was located close to the University and only sustained roof damage. Very few of the people who were evacuated with us have been able to return.

It seems clear that most of the same people who were left behind in the evacuation for Katrina are being left behind again in the reconstruction of New Orleans. In fact, now there are even more being left behind. Hundreds of thousands of people have not been able to make it back.

Drive through the city away from the French Quarter, Central Business District and the St. Charles streetcar line and you will see tens of thousands of still damaged and unoccupied homes.

Hundreds of thousands of people have not made it back. There were 469,000 fewer people in the metropolitan New Orleans area in January 2006 than in August 2005.

Why? Many reasons.

Most of the City was still without power in early 2006. About two-thirds of the homes in New Orleans did not have electricity in early 2006, even fewer had gas.

Seventy-three percent of the homes in New Orleans were in areas damaged by the storm. But, as the Brown University study concluded “... storm damage data shows that the storm’s impact was disproportionately borne by the region’s African-American community, by people who rented their homes and by the poor and unemployed.” Poor people were hardest hit and are having the hardest time returning. “The population of the damaged areas was nearly half black (45.8% compared to 26.4% black in the rest of the region), living in rental housing (45.7% compared to 30.9%), and disproportionately below the poverty line (20.9% compared to 15.3%.”

Renters are not coming back because there is little affordable housing. With tens of thousands of homes damaged, the cost of renting has skyrocketed. An apartment down the block from my house rented for \$600 last summer – it now rents for \$1400. Trailers have not arrived because of federal, state and local political misjudgments. Over 10,000 trailers were still sitting unused on runways in Hope, Arkansas in February 2006. In my interviews with evacuees who were renters, few were protected by any insurance - most lost everything.

The little reconstruction that has started is aimed at home-owners. Louisiana is slated to receive \$6.2 billion in Community Development Block Grant money and the Governor says \$1 billion “could be

The storm's impact was disproportionately borne by the region's African American community, by people who rented their homes and by the poor and unemployed.

used to encourage the rebuilding of affordable housing.” So with 45% of the homes damaged occupied by renters, affordable housing “could” end up with 16% of the assistance.

Public housing is politically out of the question in early 2006. There is no national or local commitment to re-opening public housing in the city. U.S. Congressman Richard Baker, a longtime critic of public housing in New Orleans, was quoted in the Wall Street Journal after the storm saying “We finally cleaned up in New Orleans. We couldn’t do it, but God did.” As the Brown study politely observed “people who previously lived in public housing seem to have the least chances to return, given current policy. All public housing has been closed (and special barriers bolted to the doors)...plans for reopening the projects or for constructing new affordable housing have not become public.”

Debbie lost her nursing job when her hospital failed to reopen. She is not alone. There are now 200,000 fewer jobs in the area than in August.

When I teach about the working poor, I tell my students to look for the working poor at the bus stops in the morning and in the evening. The working poor have not returned. As the Brookings Institution Katrina Index tells us pre-Katrina public transportation in New Orleans averaged 124,000 riders per week; in January 2006 there were 11,709 a week, only 9% of the pre-storm number.

The sick are not likely to return anytime soon. Healthcare in New Orleans is now difficult even for those with insurance but nearly impossible for the poor without it. While there were 22 hospitals open in New Orleans in June, in early 2006 there were 7, a 78% reduction. Before Katrina there were 53,000 hospital beds in the area, in February 2006 there were 15,000 – waits of more than 8 hours in emergency rooms are not uncommon. With so many hospitals closed, people needing regular medical care like dialysis or chemotherapy cannot expect to return.

Worse still for the poor, there is no public hospital in New Orleans any more – the Charity Hospital that over 50% of the people in shelters went to has not been reopened.

Many of the disabled are still in the areas where they evacuated to, causing financial and medical concerns in those states. Others of the disabled, who lived at home prior to the evacuation, fear being institutionalized.

Children have not returned to New Orleans. Most public schools remain closed or have been converted into charter schools. Before the storm there were 117 public schools with 60,000 students. In

January 2006, there were 19 open, including 8 new charter schools, serving about 13,000 students. Houston alone has nearly 20,000 evacuated students. The failure to reopen public schools in New Orleans has prompted litigation to force the charter and public schools to accept children.

Prisoners have again been left behind. Some of those evacuated were kept in jail long after their sentences had run. Only 7 of 42 public defenders have returned to represent the thousands still held in jail.

Even among homeowners, it is much more likely that white homeowners will have the chance to rebuild than black homeowners because of deep patterns of racial disparities in income – white median income is \$61,000 compared to black income of \$25,000. Black businesses were severely impacted by Katrina. Rebuilding by homeowners in mostly black low-lying neighborhoods is much less likely at the time of the writing of this article because of bulldozing plans by the city and because rebuilding in those areas depends heavily on planning and homeowners insurance and flood insurance issues, many of which have yet to be resolved.

As a result, because renters, poor people and those without work are overwhelmingly African-American, “New Orleans is at risk of losing 80% of its black population.”

“New Orleans is not going to be as black as it was for a long time, if ever again,” Alphonso Jackson, the secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, told a Houston audience.

Recall some of the characteristics of people who ended up in shelters, then compare to the situation currently in New Orleans:

64% were renters – now rents have skyrocketed and public housing is mostly closed;

22% had to care for someone who was physically unable to leave – now there are many fewer hospital beds;

52% had no health insurance – now the main center of public healthcare is closed;

76% had children under 18 with them in the shelter – most public schools are closed;

93% were black – the areas hit hardest were black and poor;

67% were employed full or part-time before the hurricane – there are now 200,000 fewer jobs than before the hurricane.

The people left behind in the rebuilding of New Orleans are the poor, the sick, the elderly, the disabled, children, and prisoners, mostly African-American. Again left behind.

The working poor have returned.

The television showed who was left behind in the evacuation of New Orleans after Katrina. There is no similar easy visual for those who are left behind now, but they are the same people.

Conclusion

There is not a sign outside of New Orleans saying "If you are poor, sick, elderly, disabled, children or African-American, you cannot return." But there might as well be.

The people left behind in the evacuation of New Orleans after Katrina are the same people left behind in rebuilding of New Orleans - the poor, the sick, the elderly, the disabled, and children, mostly African-American.

Now that we are back from Houston, Debbie has just started a new job at another hospital. I am fortunate enough to work at one of the universities which was not severely physically damaged by the storm and floods.

We are back. But where are our neighbors, the people we rode out of the city with? Where are the hundreds of thousands of our neighbors and will they ever be allowed to return?

Where is New Orleans now, and more important, where is it going to be?

Finally, if all levels of government and corporate power allow this to happen in New Orleans, do you think it will be any different in your city?

***March 29, 2006: Seven Months After Katrina:
Sleeping in Your Car in Front of Your Trailer in
Front of Your Devastated Home, Tales of Lunacy and
Hope from New Orleans***

In New Orleans, seven months after Katrina, senior citizens are living in their cars. WWL-TV introduced us to Korean War veteran Paul Morris, 74, and his wife Yvonne, 66. They have been sleeping in their 2 door sedan since January. They have been waiting that long for FEMA contractors to unlock the 240 square foot trailer in their yard and connect the power so they can sleep inside it in front of their devastated home.

This tale of lunacy does not begin to stop there.

Their 240 square foot trailer may well cost more than their house. While FEMA flat out refuses to say how much the government is paying for trailers, reliable estimates by the New York Times and others place the cost at over \$60,000 each.

How could these tiny FEMA trailers cost so much?

Follow the money.

Circle B Enterprises of Georgia was awarded \$287 million in contracts by FEMA for temporary housing. At the time, that was the seventh highest award of Katrina money in the country. According to the Washington Post, Circle B was not even being licensed to build homes in its own state of Georgia and filed for bankruptcy in 2003. The company does not even have a website.

Here is how it works. The original contractor takes their cut and subcontracts out the work of constructing the trailer to other companies. Once it is built, they subcontract out the transporting the trailers to yet other companies which pay drivers, gas, insurance and mileage. They then subcontract out the hookups of the trailers to other companies and keep taking cuts for their services. Usually none of the people who make the money are local workers.

With \$60,000 many people could adequately repair their homes.

Why not just give the \$60,000 directly to the elderly couple and let them fix up their home? Ask Congress. FEMA is not allowed to give grants of that much. Money for fixing up homes comes from somewhere else and people are still waiting for that to arrive.

While many corporations are making big money off of Katrina, Mr. and Mrs. Morris wait in their car.

Craziness continues in the area of the right to vote.

You would think that the nation that put on elections with satellite voting boxes for Iraqis and Afghans and Haitians and many others would do the same for Katrina evacuees. Wrong. There is no satellite voting for the 230,000 citizens of New Orleans who are out of state. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Advancement Project, ACORN and the Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund have all fought for satellite voting but Louisiana and the courts and the U.S. Justice Department have said no.

The rule of thumb around here is that the poorer you are, the further you have been displaced. African Americans are also much more likely to be poor and renters – the people who cannot yet come back to a city where rents have doubled. They are the ones bearing the burdens of no satellite voting.

The people already back are much more affluent than the pre-Katrina New Orleans. The city is

Sleeping in
your car in
front of your
trailer in
front of your
devastated
home.

also much whiter. Many of those already back in New Orleans are not so sure that all of New Orleans should be rebuilt. The consequence of that is not everyone will be allowed to return. Planners and politicians openly suggest turning poor neighborhoods into green spaces. No one yet has said they want to turn their own neighborhood into green space – only other people’s neighborhoods – usually poor people’s neighborhoods. Those who disagree are by and large not here.

New Orleans has not been majority white for decades, but it is quite possible that a majority of those who are able to vote in the upcoming election will be white. Thus the decisions about the future of New Orleans are poised to be made by those who have been able to get back and will exclude many of those still evacuated. Guess what type of plans they will have for New Orleans?

There are many, many more tales of lunacy all over town as all systems have melted down: criminal justice, healthcare, public education, churches, electricity, water, garbage, our environment – you name it, it melted down and is not yet fully back up.

But, there are also clear signs of hope.

Across New Orleans neighborhood groups are meeting every weekend planning their own come-backs. People catch rides back into town and visit ruined neighborhoods and greet neighbors and together make plans to recover. Because governmental action and contractors are so slow, groups are looking to their own resources and partnering with churches and community groups and universities and businesses to fill in the gaps where the politicians have not yet been able to respond. The citizens themselves are our greatest hope.

We also have allies that give us hope.

We have been amazed and refreshed by the thousands of college students who took their spring break in New Orleans helping our elderly and uninsured families gut houses, clean up streets and advocate for justice with Common Ground Relief, the Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund, Catholic Charities, ACORN and many other church and civic groups. Even law students! Over 1000 law students helped provide legal aid and are providing the first comprehensive documentation of abuses of local and out of town workers by businesses.

Over 100 clergy from across the US visited New Orleans with the PICO Network, as did hundreds of other people of faith with the Jeremiah community. The Protestant Women are here now and the Interfaith Worker Justice group meets here soon. Together, these groups raise the voices of their faith communities and call for justice in the rebuilding of our communities.

On the national level, we see rising support from numerous social justice groups. Several created the Katrina Information Network, an internet advocacy group that enables people across the country to take action with us to influence all levels of government in the rebuilding effort. We are inspired by the veterans and allies who marched from Florida to New Orleans to highlight the diversion of money from our cities to war efforts.

Yes, we have lunacy in New Orleans. But there are also signs of hope.

Whether lunacy or hope will triumph in New Orleans is yet to be determined. But we appreciate those of you who are working in solidarity with us to try to keep our hope alive.

April 27, 2006: Eight Months After Katrina: “Don’t Come Back to New Orleans Unless You Intend to Join the Fight for Justice!”

On Monday, April 17, 2006, two bodies were found buried beneath what used to be a home in the Lower 9th Ward. Their discovery raised to 17 the number of Hurricane Katrina fatalities that have been discovered in New Orleans in the past month and a half. Katrina is now directly blamed for the deaths of 1,282 Louisiana residents. Eight months after Katrina, the state reports 987 people are still missing.

Chief Steve Glynn, who oversees the New Orleans Fire Department search effort that found the latest two bodies told CNN: “You want to put it to rest at some point. You want to feel like it’s over and it’s just not yet.”

Eight months after Katrina, there are still nearly 300,000 people who have not returned to New Orleans. While we can hope that our community is nearing the end of finding bodies, the struggle for justice for the hundreds of thousands of displaced people continues.

Election Blues

The right to vote remains displaced from New Orleans.

In what was billed as “the most important election in the history of New Orleans,” only 36 percent of those registered voted in the recent city elections. Turnout was heavy and high in the mostly prosperous and white areas of Uptown where little damage occurred and exceptionally low in the heavily damaged and mostly black areas of the New Orleans East, Gentilly and the Ninth Ward – where some

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precincts reported as few as 15% voter participation.

The state refusal to set up satellite voting for those displaced outside the state resulted in exactly the disenfranchisement predicted.

While Iraqis who had not lived in Iraq in years were helped to vote in the US by our government, people forced out of state by Katrina for seven months were not allowed to vote where they are temporarily living.

This has national implications. The New Orleans Times-Picayune reported that in the 2002 U.S. Senate seat runoff between incumbent Democrat Mary Landrieu and Republican Suzanne Haik Terrell, the Orleans factor made the difference for Landrieu. The senator won Orleans by 78,900 votes, compared with her statewide lead of 42,012. In the 2003 gubernatorial runoff between Democrat Kathleen Blanco and Republican Bobby Jindal, Blanco won statewide by 54,874 votes. She won by a margin of 49,741 votes in New Orleans.

Worse, the systematic exclusion of the displaced gives fuel to those who do not want the poor to return and helps create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Low turnout in poor neighborhoods where the displaced could not drive back in to vote can now be taken as an indication of lack of interest and an excuse to further silence their voices. As the Washington Post noted: "How many people turned out to vote in each precinct was being viewed as an indicator of which neighborhoods are likely to be rebuilt; in many abandoned neighborhoods, people fear that residents who have left for good would not vote, revealing their lack of interest in the neighborhood and the city. Turnout could offer clues to the future racial makeup of the city."

Healthcare Crisis

New Orleans has lost 77% of its primary care doctors, 70% of its dentists and 89% of its psychiatrists since Katrina.

National Public Radio reported that the few hospitals in New Orleans are dangerously overburdened, especially emergency rooms. Nationally, it takes an average of 20 minutes to take a patient from an ambulance waiting in front of hospital to emergency room. In the New Orleans area, according to one surgeon at the East Jefferson Hospital, load times are usually 2 hours, but sometimes more. The longest time he's seen is 6 hours, 40 minutes, of a patient waiting in ER driveway to receive care.

Non-emergency care in New Orleans is also in crisis. With the closure of Charity Hospital and most public health clinics, it is very difficult to get a

child tested for lead poisoning or other toxins – even though recent reports indicate there are 46 environmental "hot spots" in the city. One corner, Magnolia and First in Central City, showed lead levels of 3,960 parts per million – nearly 10 times the acceptable level. Dr. Howard Mielke of Xavier University says 40 percent of the city soil has elevated lead levels.

Among the displaced, the healthcare situation is much worse. The Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health surveyed hundreds of the thousands of families living in FEMA trailers and found: Nearly half of the parents surveyed reported that at least one of their children had emotional or behavioral difficulties that the child didn't have before the hurricane; More than half the women caregivers showed evidence of clinically-diagnosed psychiatric problems, such as depression or anxiety disorders; On average, households have moved 3.5 times since the hurricane, some as many as nine times, often across state lines; More than one-fifth of the school-age children who were displaced were either not in school, or had missed 10 or more days of school in the past month.

Public Education Phase Out

New Orleans has become the national experiment for charter schools. Pre-Katrina 60,000 students attended over 115 New Orleans public schools. Now about 12,000 students attend public school in New Orleans. However, only four public schools are operated by the elected school board – the rest are now privately operated public charter schools or operated directly by the state. State authorities recently approved opening 22 more charter schools in the fall. Still many children in New Orleans are not in school at all because no schools have opened in their neighborhoods.

Where Has All the Money Gone - Robin Hood in Reverse

People who visit New Orleans are amazed at how devastated it still is. Where has all the money gone, they ask? Follow the money.

"How many contractors does it take to haul a pile of tree branches?" asked the Washington Post. If it's government work, at least four: a contractor, his subcontractor, the subcontractor's subcontractor, and finally, the local man with a truck and chainsaw. The big contractors typically receive between \$28 to \$30 a cubic yard for the debris. By the time they subcontract the work out to smaller and smaller companies, the guy in the truck receives about \$6 to \$8 per cubic yard.

The Miami Herald reported that the single biggest receiver of federal contracts was Ashbriitt, Inc.


Robin Hood in reverse.

of Pompano Beach, FL, which received over \$579 million in contracts for debris removal in Mississippi from Army Corps of Engineers. The paper reported that the company does not own a single dumptruck! All they do is subcontract. Ashbritt, however, had recently dumped \$40,000 into the lobbying firm of Barbour, Griffith & Rogers, which had been run by Mississippi Governor and former National GOP Chair Haley Barbour. The owners of Ashbritt also trucked \$50,000 over to the Republican National Committee in 2004.

Draw your own conclusions about where the money has gone.

Federal Housing Funds for Rehab of Private Housing

Unfortunately, not a dime of the billions of federal housing reconstruction money from the Community Development Block Grant has yet made it to New Orleans. Seventy percent of CDBG money is usually targeted to low and moderate income families. HUD has already lowered that to 50% and for poorest among us, there will be little help at all.

Despite the fact that New Orleans was over half renters and that 84,000 rental units were destroyed or damaged, only 6,000 low-income rental units are part of state plan.

People are already living in damaged houses all over the city, many without electricity. A night trip through New Orleans neighborhoods shows people on porches surrounded by candles.

Louisiana calls its CDBG plan the "The Road Home." Obviously, few of the working poor are going to be able to go on this road trip.

Public Housing Closed

In 1996, New Orleans had 13,694 units of public housing. In August 2005, they reported 7,381. Now? Maybe 700. Residents returning to New Orleans who want to move back in their apartments are being told they forfeited their public housing apartments because they abandoned them! Abandoned apartments which have been forcibly closed for months? Many apartments are closed by locked metal shutters and surrounded by chain link fence. The housing authority also has a secret list of 1407 units of housing scheduled to be demolished. The housing authority let go 290 employees, mostly maintenance. Does it sound like they are planning to reopen?

In New Orleans, public housing was occupied by women, mostly working, children and the elderly. How are they supposed to return when private rents have skyrocketed?

HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson, whose agency is now running the local housing authority, stated clearly that public housing residents should not be allowed to return. In an interview with the Times-Picayune, Jackson said: "Some of the people shouldn't return. The developments were gang-ridden by some of the most notorious gangs in this country. People hid and took care of those persons because they took care of them. Only the best residents should return. Those who paid rent on time, those who held a job and those who worked." The blunt-spoken Jackson, who is black, acknowledged his comments might be seen as racially offensive. He told a white reporter, "If you said this, they would say you were racist."

Signs of Hope

Despite our very serious problems, there are also serious signs of hope. For every campaign of injustice and ugliness, there are people struggling despite the odds to create opportunities for justice and beauty. The people of New Orleans, joined with allies from across the nation and indeed the world, continue to resist the forces of injustice and to create opportunities for decency, community and equity. Here are a few examples.

St. Augustine's Church, one of the oldest black catholic churches in the nation, was abruptly closed by the Archdiocese of New Orleans in the months after Katrina. St. Augustine was dedicated in 1842 by the free black citizens of New Orleans and welcomed both free and slave as worshippers. It served both as a multiracial church and a center of community activities. After continual petitions, vigils and protests by community, neighborhood and church members, including direct action where some young people locked themselves inside the rectory, the Catholic hierarchy reversed itself. The joyous reopening of St. Augustine is a great cultural, spiritual, community and neighborhood victory.

Lower Ninth Ward residents have had no public schools open since Katrina. They wanted their neighborhood school, Martin Luther King, Jr., repaired and fixed up after it took in ten feet of water. Authorities refused to fix it up. So the residents, joined by members of Common Ground and the Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund, decided to do it themselves. They started gutting the moldy parts and repairing and re-painting the school. They continued until the State Superintendent of Education called the police and stopped the work saying the neighbors were doing more harm than good. After days of public outcry of support of the volunteers, the State backed off. Volunteers went back to work, creating a place for education in the neighborhood as well as a symbol of resistance.

Despite our very serious problem, there are also serious signs of hope.

Mildred Battle is 70 and gets around in a wheelchair. She is one of more than 1000 families who been displaced from their apartment in the St. Bernard Housing Development in New Orleans since Katrina. Despite coming back three times, she was never allowed to go back to retrieve her belongings. Her apartment has heavy metal sheets locked into place over the windows and a new heavy metal door for which she is not allowed a key. The ramp to her building that allowed her to roll up to her apartment is blocked by a block-long chain link fence to keep all residents out. This month, Ms. Battle's wheelchair was the first one through the gate in the chain link fence as dozens of residents rushed past the lone security guard and broke back into their own homes. Friends of Ms. Battle helped her retrieve a picture of her dead son and a broken glass Martin Luther King award she received in the 1990s. She clutched them to her breast and cried saying, "This has been my home for decades. I want to come home." She and the other residents, along with veteran public housing organizers and activists from C3, a local anti-war organization, vow there will be more direct actions to enforce the rights of public housing residents to return home.

Before this action, veteran organizer Endesha Jukali yelled through a bullhorn to the crowd outside the St. Bernard Housing Development. "Those who attack public housing refuse to understand that we are talking about poor women and children, the poorest of the poor. Why attack them? Some people say do not come back to New Orleans if you don't intend to work. We say something else. Don't come back to New Orleans if you don't intend to fight! The only way that we are going to be able to come back, is to fight for justice every step of the way!" He then dropped the bullhorn and started pushing Ms. Battle in her wheelchair across the street and through the gate so she could break into her own home.

Suggestions for further reading on this topic include:

"A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina," U.S. House of Representatives. February 15, 2006. <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/congress/index.html>

"Hurricane Katrina: Social-Demographic Characteristics of Impacted Areas," CRS Report for Congress, November 4, 2005, Summary. Report available at:

<http://www.gnocdc.org/reports/crsrept.pdf>;

"Katrina Index," Brookings Institution, updated monthly. Available at:

http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/200512_katri-

[naindex.htm](#)

John R. Logan, "The Impact of Katrina: Race and Class in Storm-Damaged Neighborhoods," <http://www.s4.brown.edu/Katrina/report.pdf> "Survey of Katrina Evacuees," This survey of 680 randomly selected adult evacuees in Houston shelters was conducted September 10-12, 2005 by The Washington Post, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health, questions 11a and 62. The entire survey can be found at:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/katrina_poll091605.pdf

Gulf Coast Reconstruction Watch.

<http://www.reconstructionwatch.org>

Want to advocate for and with the people of the Gulf?

Advocacy ideas are readily available at:

<http://www.katrinaaction.org>

Want to volunteer to come down and help?

ACORN: <http://www.acorn.org>

Catholic Charities Operation Helping Hands:

<http://www.catholiccharities-no.org>

Common Ground Relief: <http://www.commongroundrelief.org>

Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund:

<http://www.communitylaborunited.net>

PICO – All Congregations Together -

<http://www.piconetwork.org/>

Other updates, ideas and suggestions for Action can be found at

<http://www.justicefornorleans.org>

In memorium:

We take time to celebrate the lives of three long time supporters of Loyola University and our Twomey Center. Mr. James Comiskey, Professor Jack Nelson, and Capt. Winter Trapolin were men of faith who lived their Catholic values. They understood that, "The central message is simple: our faith is profoundly social. We cannot be called truly "Catholic" unless we hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace." Communities of Salt and Light, U.S. Bishops, 1993

Mr. James A. Comiskey Sr

We mourn the passing of Mr. James A. Comiskey Sr., and extend condolence to his wife Blanche and his family. He lived in the spirit of Loyola's Jesuit traditions.

Mr. Comiskey graduated from Jesuit High School. After entering Loyola University, his studies were interrupted by service in the Army during World War II. He graduated from Loyola in 1948 and the Loyola School of Law in 1951, and began practicing law.

Mr. Comiskey was president of the Bank of Louisiana, a former president of the Louisiana Bankers Association, a civic leader, a board member of the New Orleans Legal Aid Corp, and in 1967, Mr. Comiskey was appointed a U.S. district judge by President Johnson.

He was a founding member of the St. Thomas More Catholic Lawyers Association, and a board member of the Christian Brothers Foundation and the Friends of St. Alphonsus Art and Cultural Center.

He was a former member of the Loyola board of trustees, and in 1997 received the Loyola School of Law's St. Ives Award for his service to the school. In 1999, Mr. Comiskey and his wife, Blanche Mouldoux Comiskey, received the Loyola Alumni Association's Adjutor Hominum award, which honors Loyola alumni whose lives exemplify moral character and integrity.

In 1989, Mr. Comiskey, a parishioner of St. Patrick Catholic Church and a founding member of the Catholic Charities Association, was named a Knight of St. Gregory by Pope John Paul II.

Mr. Comiskey died February 1, 2005 at the age of 78.

Besides his wife, survivors include a son, James A. Comiskey Jr.; 10 daughters, Margaret Comiskey Pomerleau Portillo, Marian Comiskey Roper, Laura Comiskey Broders, Michelle Comiskey McCarthy, Jeanne Comiskey Hartnett, Eileen Patricia Comiskey, Paula Comiskey Mentz, Louise Comiskey Bryan, Elizabeth Comiskey Novick and Catherine Comiskey Marsh; a sister, Laura Comiskey Murphy; and 23 grandchildren.

John P. Nelson

1924 - 2006

We mourn the passing of John P. "Jack" Nelson Jr., a longtime civil rights champion and a Loyola University Law School faculty member. Jack was a partner and friend of Fr. Louis Twomey in the struggle for civil rights in Louisiana.

In 1963, Nelson argued the Lombard v. Louisiana case before the U.S. Supreme Court, defending Sidney "Lanny" Goldfinch Jr., Oretha Castle, Cecil W. Carter Jr. and Rudy Lombard, who were arrested for their lunch counter sit-in at McCrory's on Canal Street. He also served as counsel for efforts to desegregate high school athletics, private clubs, Tulane University, the Orleans public school system, and many other institutions.

Mr. Nelson, who was white, was revered by many who fought to desegregate city and state institutions, his colleagues said. "There was not a white man in this state who compared to Jack Nelson as a civil rights lawyer. He transcended

race and encouraged everyone around him to do the same," said Lolis Elie, a semi-retired African-American New Orleans lawyer who often fought segregation alongside Nelson. "My former partner, Nils Douglas, used to call him a saint," Elie said.

Professor Nelson throughout his life distinguished himself. During his five-year career in the Army, from 1940 to 1945, he rose to the rank of captain and earned a Silver Star, a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. The Loyola Law School graduate served as an assistant district attorney from 1954 until 1958. After two decades of private practice, he joined the Loyola Law Faculty as Professor and Director of the Loyola Law Clinic.

Mr. Nelson is survived by his wife, Marie; four daughters, Missy Hotard, Heidi Schwab, Cesyle Nelson and Stephanie Nelson; a brother, Gerald Nelson; a sister, Isabelle Nelson DiLeo; four grandchildren; and a great-granddaughter.

Jack died March 18, 2006, he was 84.

FRANK WINTER TRAPOLIN 1913 - 2005

The Twomey Center mourns the passing of Capt. Frank Winter Trapolin, a stalwart supporter of the Twomey Center and an old friend and confidant of Fr. Louis J. Twomey. He and his brother Ivor helped Fr. Twomey found the Institute for Human Relations and many years later he served on the committee that planned the ceremony to rename the Institute of Human Relations the Twomey Center for Peace through Justice to honor Fr. Twomey. He shared many stories about Fr. Twomey and the fight for civil and human rights in the 1950's and 60's.

Capt. Trapolin was a native New Orleanian, who graduated from Jesuit High School and Loyola University, joined the Godchaux and Mayer insurance firm after college but left in 1942 to enlist in the Navy.

In addition to serving four years in World War II, Capt. Trapolin was recalled to duty during the Korean War. During those years, Capt. Trapolin invented gunnery and mechanical devices, six of which the Navy patented. He remained in the Naval Reserve, retiring as a captain in 1972.

After his active duty, Capt. Trapolin established his own insurance firm and started a life of community service. He was president of Associated Catholic Charities, the Sertoma Club of New Orleans, and the Greater New Orleans Executives Association, The Serra Club of New Orleans, the Community Relations of Committee of Greater New Orleans, and the Loyola University Alumni Association. He received the Order of St. Louis Medallion from the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Frank Winter Trapolin died August 28, 2005 at Memorial Medical Center. He was 92.

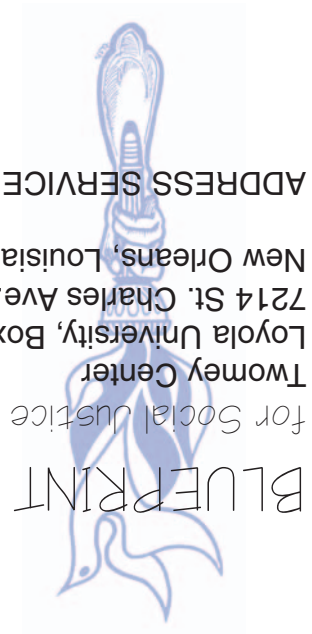
Capt. Trapolin is survived by his wife Thelma M. Trapolin, one son Timothy J. Trapolin, three daughters, Jane T. Oaksmith of Seattle, Patricia T. Couret and Anne T. Britt; ten grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

In this Issue

Katrina - The First Fight Months - Fall 2005 - Spring 2006

By Bill Quigley

Hurricane Katrina changed everything in the Gulf Coast community. The disruptions have impacted Loyola University and the Blueprint for Social Justice. This issue contains seven articles written during the past eight months by our editor, Bill Quigley. These reflect the unfolding devastation, especially among the poorest and most vulnerable of our sisters and brothers. This will be the only issue published for the academic year 2005-2006. We thank you for your patience and solidarity.



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for Social Justice

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