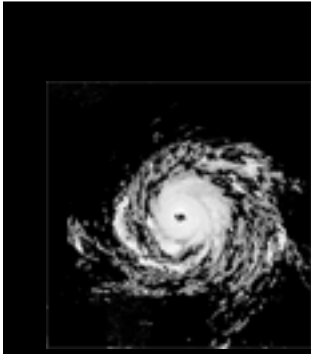


"It is not light that we need, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake." - Frederick Douglas

Hurricane Rita Update

By Common Grounds Collective,
09/21/05

Rita is a strong category 5 hurricane with winds over 165 mph. The forecast track for Rita brings the storm into the Texas coast on Saturday. Storm forecasts for more than two days out are not reliable and should not be used for planning. New Orleans may expect winds of tropical storm strength - over 39 mph. East New Orleans is still under mandatory, but not forced, evacuations with concern for flooding. West New Orleans (including Algiers) is under voluntary evacuations and is currently accessible to relief volunteers.



WHIRLWIND!

French Quarter Struggles With Crisis Residents Defy Evacuation Begin Rebuilding

By David, 09/09/05

"I've got no time for talking.
I've got to keep on walking.
N. O. is my home"
- Walkin' To New Orleans

New Orleans-September 9, 2005- the destruction laid upon New Orleans and the surrounding region has been devastating. Many sections of the city continue to be submerged in toxic waters. Countless streets are impassable due to debris and flooding. The military has begun house-to-house searches hoping to find survivors, but are mostly finding otherwise. It is estimated that thousands are dead. Corpses dwell in the putrid floodwaters, and in the ruined homes in which they once lived. Electricity is still out.

New Orleans resident Mike Powls, 46, sits and has a drink in Molly's, one of the two bars open in the French Quarter. When asked about the time immediately following the hurricane, Mike says, "the first week after Katrina, for all practical purposes, capital property relations disappeared in New Orleans."

The breakdown in the established order was compounded by a four to six day lull between Katrina and the arrival of federal aid. For some communities, especially the low lying ones, this spelled absolute disaster. For neighborhoods that were fortunate enough to escape flooding, there was still the desperate need to find drinking water and food.

In the French Quarter, which had no water damage, people acted fast. Within 48 hours, residents formed ad hoc community centers and created new organizations to try and address their acute needs.

Today it is estimated by neighborhood leaders that 200-300 people remain in the quarter. Like other parts of the region, living conditions are bad, but they are getting by in part because of the unity demonstrated by these residents.

Public Houses

Two community centers have risen out of this storm. Both are old wooden pubs. One is Molly's at The Market on Decatur Street; the other is Johnny White's on Bourbon Street. The former is open every day from 11am-6pm, and serves as a place for people to get together to exchange knowledge and resources. The latter does this too, but has evolved into a kind of shelter/supply depot/first aid station.

"We are the community center. It started out as just a bar and then people started bringing food here. People started bringing clothes and water. Suddenly, it became a soup kitchen and a homeless center," said Johnny White's bartender Joe Bellamy, a former Para-rescuer in the Air Force.

Many of the supplies are donated by residents. It is common, when a person decides to evacuate, for them to drop off their useful belongings to one of these centers. In the last few days, they have also been receiving goods from the National Guard and Army. Even so, much of what comes in has been "looted". However, few take issue with people acquiring basic necessities through whatever means available to them. Ride Hamilton, 29, a network analyst and artist, who himself has acquired a large assortment of basic necessities, had this to say: "you go down to places... that [has] already been broken into, I've never broken into a place, but you go in after the people and usually if they open up... police take supplies they want first, then they guard it as other people go in and that's where I get all of my things".

On a typical day, the tavern provides services for dozens of residents, and until recently was one of the only places where people could receive first aid, administered by Bellamy, Hamilton, and other volunteers. Hamilton's efforts include stitching up an ear with a sewing needle and fishing line.

"It doesn't matter if you're gay, straight, no matter race, religion, no matter what your personal beliefs are, you come in and need some food- you're getting it. You need some water- you're getting it," said Bellamy.

People's Organizations

Beyond these two community centers, new people's organizations have coalesced around a grassroots recovery effort. One, commonly known as The Red Shirts came together as a band of ten people who set out to clean the streets of the French Quarter and administer first aid to any in need. This group continues to hit the streets, wearing their trademark red, and impressing many with their self-imposed twelve-hour shifts. To date, their most impressive achievements were the cleaning of the wrecked Jackson Square, and the removal of a fallen brick wall.

WHIRLWIND! is a publication of the Nemesis Collective (NEFAC). For more see <http://www.nefac.net/katrina>



Thai Watford, a member of the group, stated, "we found a brick wall that was completely collapsed into the street. It was impassable except maybe by a hummer... brick by brick we picked up that wall and stacked them against this building on the sidewalk."

The Red Shirts aren't the only new organization in town. Restore the French Quarter (RFQ) came together shortly after the levees broke. RFQ, which includes forty volunteers, has cleared their share of down trees and rubble. One of their first acts was to make Esplanade, a major street marking the border of the neighborhood, passable by vehicle.

Beyond cleaning, the group has built a public stockpile of necessary items. These include food, water, tools, clothes, etc. the goods and the organization are located in a makeshift headquarters on the corner of Esplanade and Decatur. HQ is a nine thousand square foot three story building owned by actor Harry Anderson of Night Court fame. It is equipped with generators, a fully stocked bar, and a large gas grill. RFQ has gone the extra step of stenciling white "RFQ Volunteer" t-shirts, printing professional looking ID badges, and writing and producing a mission statement.

Standing in the HQ courtyard, RFQ member "Steve", who works in construction, declared that the groups' initial action was shortly after the disaster struck. Their first priority was to help distribute guns and ammunition to area residents to use in self-defense. Since then they have turned their attention to fixing roads and keeping people fed.

RFQ was in the process of gathering resources to repair a number of area roofs that were damaged by Katrina's winds, when a rumor stopped them in their tracks. Yesterday, word got around that either the local or federal government was close to enforcing the mandatory evacuation. This rumor gained validity earlier in the day, when a number of Louisiana State Troopers entered Johnny White's and initially demanded that patrons leave with them to be evacuated. After some heated words, the Troopers were convinced to call their superiors for confirmation. As things went, the Troopers left with no one in tow. Even so, the story and fear of a looming forced removal spread like wildfire across the French Quarter.

"All of us are hunkering down and hiding in our residences. Is that stupid or what? There are hundreds, even thousands, of people right here that would be active volunteers. We know this city like the back of our hands. We are not driving around like Mississippi cops that don't know this place. We know what we're doing, where everything is, and how to get resources. We can get this place back up and running. They [the government] need to leave the French Quarter alone, and let us do this," said Steve of RFQ.

Karen Watt, 61, a small bar owner and RFQ member added, "we are survivors who live here. We can take care of ourselves".

Many have expressed fear of the shelters in Houston, as well as a strong desire to stay put. David Richardson, 56, a carriage driver in the French Quarter who I met up with at Molly's said, "this is my home, I want to stay with it. This is my city. I love this city. I love the French Quarter. I want to be here to put it all back together."

Have RFQ been scared into non-action? The answer is no. Tomorrow, RFQ is planning a show of community solidarity by organizing residents in a massive cleanup starting near Jackson Square (the middle of the quarter). It is hoped that this display will convince officials that residents, far from being a liability, are a clear asset.

While The Red Shirts and RFQ are the most visible organizations, a number of other groups have also coalesced around the basic needs of survival. RFQ says that they have become aware of a new formation in the nearby Marigny neighborhood. This organization, like RFQ, hopes to start reclaiming their streets from Katrina's ghost in the coming days.



As dusk approached, David Richardson leaned up against a post on Decatur street and summed up this Quarters spirit of self-reliance; "This is what I call the 'Committee of 75'. Nobody is giving orders. There are enough people that know what needs to be done and we talk it over."

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what a people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. Men may not get all they pay for in this world; but they must pay for all they get. If we ever get free from all the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice. and, if needs be, by our lives, and the lives of others." - Frederick Douglas

"Anarchy" in New Orleans?

By P.J. Lilley, 09/02/05

Death and devastation. A chemical factory explosion. Fires rage & tempers rise. Capitalist media around the world screamed the headline "ANARCHY" today. Days without food, water, medical supplies.

It's very important to the war-makers, lawmakers, and oil investors to submerge the real definition of anarchy: mutual aid without government, co-operation in solidarity, and ORDER. Their authoritarian control is deeply threatened by their own complete failure to meet basic needs. Their authority has rested on the divides of class, on misogyny and racism. Capital's media pitches images of black men with bags as "looters", while a lighter-skinned man is carrying "something he found". They didn't get pictures of the corrupt police, allowed into WalMart for "relief measures" instead loading their car trunk with DVDs and dogfood. The rulers have no humanity, only profit interests. They continue madly pouring billions into war, while expecting "charities" will bail out New Orleans.

Law is not order. Bush knew that levee would fail in at least 2001. Those who "chose not to evacuate" were the poor, black, elderly... while the rich had long left for their second homes, safe hotels and elsewhere. But it doesn't stop there, as the ruling class seem determined to make things even worse. Now the Governor of Louisiana brings in the National Guard - many young shell-shocked soldiers freshly returned from Iraq - "M-16's locked and loaded," she says about their killing capacity, "and I expect they will". They are sent in like so many other mercenaries, first to protect private property. [Remember that through the poverty draft, the south has already suffered among the heaviest casualties in Iraq, where doubtless many boys sit tonight wondering why they can't just come home to help their families and neighbours, whether they themselves will make it out alive.] A decent journalist from Toronto is nearly shot on sight for taking pictures of flagrant police brutality.

If this was anarchy, there would be neighborhood bases established much earlier to coordinate relief. Direct action toward liberation. Many people actually said it was the looters that first distributed food and water. Perhaps capital will not be able to recuperate. Possibly, finally, the bosses and their media lap-dogs may not escape the peoples' wrath on this one. Will it become widely understood that another world is possible? "Disasters like this can only be met when ordinary people begin to work together on a human level, to the best of their abilities helping each other to get through, instead of relying on highly bureaucratic and irrational social abstractions to save them..." as 'Shevek' put it to Indymedia. "Then there will actually be anarchy in New Orleans". Justice? Just us. Get organized.

Night Patrol With The Vermont National Guard

In The Shadow of Katrina and Iraq
By David, 09/07/05

Jefferson Parish, LA - The Vermont National Guard has been distributing food and patrolling neighborhoods in Jefferson Parish for the last week. On Tuesday, September 6th, I joined them on their first night patrol. At six PM, still light, I boarded a truck with ten soldiers from the 1st of the 86th Field Artillery. All of these men served eleven months in Iraq. They returned home February 29th, 2005.

As we left the gates of their head quarters, an old middle school, the soldiers loaded their M-16s. They had no more idea of what to expect than I did. All we knew were the images of chaos that flashed upon the nightly news several days before.

We rolled through the streets of Jefferson Parish. Katrina's devastating power was evident. Telephone poles were snapped like toothpicks. Roofs were ripped from their beams. Electricity was still out. One gas station was simply flattened. I had never saw anything like it. A soldier turned towards me and said, "Better than we seen in Baghdad."

We reached the sector assigned to the unit. Holms Avenue. The truck drove through the area to get a feel for it. One house had the entire second floor wall torn from its framing. I could see into what was once a person's bedroom. It looked like a giant, postmodern dollhouse, made to appear in a war zone.

Four Guardsmen were dropped off at one end of the street. Four more at the other. I departed with the later. The two groups were maybe three miles apart. The plan was for them to slowly walk towards each other, with the truck patrolling in-between.

As we walked Sergeant Cramdon, the squad leader, said how strange this felt. All the open windows, all the alleyways; this would be a very dangerous situation back in Baghdad. Maybe subconsciously, maybe through intent, the group fell into military formation. It was the first time this unit was activated for such duty since Iraq. We continued on.

The subtropical heat barred down on us. I asked how they were doing in their heavy fatigues. "Every one of us was over [for eleven months]. We went on the last deployment to Iraq. I'm used to the heat. The humidity is another story," said Sergeant Cramdon.

Moving into the side streets of what appeared to be a working class neighborhood of small ranch houses, it was not long before we heard gunshots. They came in groups of four and five. Fifteen shots in all, emanating from a few blocks away. The squad leader called for back up. When the truck arrived they moved towards the shots. A few residents, those who refused to evacuate, directed the Guard towards the perceived source. I was given the advice that "If we get shot at, find cover wherever you can."

The search lasted a good twenty minutes. No shooter was found. Still, walking through the neighborhood, the soldiers were busy. A number of people standing in their driveways would ask, "When is the power coming on? Will you be patrolling all night? How are things going?" For most, this was the first sign of a government response to the destruction since the storm hit, nearly a week before. The Vermonters would stop, answer what they could, remind them of the encroaching curfew, and then be on their way.

As night drew near the two groups converged. The commanding officer decided that they would stay in and about the truck, together, for the remainder of the shift. They would patrol this way, for safety, until the sun came up.

Standing around the truck, we talked to pass the time. I asked what they thought about this assignment. Sergeant Cramdon answered, "[Compared with the Regular Army] We're more public friendly." This was a telling statement as it was rumored that tens of thousands of Regular Army troops were heading for the New Orleans area. The conversation quickly headed to their experiences in Iraq, and how the Vermont Guard approached their duties there.

Oversees they were assigned to protect military convoys passing through the Baghdad area. This is one of the most dangerous assignments in the occupied region.

Sergeant Scott, who in the civilian world works as an auto mechanic in Burlington, stated, "These guys [some Regular Army] don't understand. You don't want to piss off the people who live in your back yard." Another Soldier added, "One guy got shot at the north gate there [in Iraq], and two days later we got mortared."

I asked if there was a 'cause and effect' regarding their conduct in Baghdad. "Exactly," responded Sergeant Cramdon. "You just want to keep the peace in the community. Let them know your there, but let them know your not there... When we were over in Iraq we were never proactive, we were always reactive," said Cramdon.

Sergeant Scott continued, "Like two days after we got mortared, [the sheik] had heads at the front gate." Cramdon continued, "The sheik had somebody's head... Cause he knew that there'd be repercussions to whoever was mortaring the base so he came up with their heads."

I asked them what is the real situation in Iraq, how is the war progressing? Scott responded, "There's the people who like us, the people that don't like us but don't fuck with us, and then there's the people who fuck with us."

Another soldier stated, "a lot of the insurgents pulled out of Falujah [when we attacked it]. Soon as we go into Falujah all hell broke loose in Baghdad." Scott inserted, "In Ramadi too. That's where our guys are being hit hard now... From what I understand we're getting beat up pretty good over there too. We're losing a lot of Vermonters over there now."

All talked of having to fire their weapons regularly. One soldier, helmet pushed forward, nearly sleeping, said he only fired his gun once in eleven months. The others looked at him. Some with near disbelief. Still leaning back, hardly bothering to open his eyes he said, "We threw rocks when other people were shooting bullets."

"Rocks don't do to good when they're shooting bullets at you," argued Sergeant Cramdon. I thought of the Palestinian youth who throw stones as the Israeli Army. Sergeant Cramdon was right; their fate is often death.

The stone thrower answered, "We [his unit] didn't get shot at."

"You didn't get shot at? I can't believe it. That's unbelievable," countered Cramdon. "We all were getting fucking plowed every day... Thirteen days straight we got hit."

I foolishly pointed out the obvious and said that it must have been stressful. Sergeant Cramdon pardoned my flair for the obvious and answered, "That's the biggest question I got when we came back. 'It must have been stressful.' To be quite honest with you, I slept better on nights that we came back that we got hit... because you leave the wire and it's all bottled up in you. Stress and everything, you know. So when you get hit you start firing back and all the stress that you had built up in you comes out. I slept like a baby on the nights when we got hit."

As the night wore on, there was little to do but maintain vigilance, smoke cigarettes, and talk. I looked up and noticed the stars. I thought how ironic it was that many local residents were seeing the beauty of the stars for the first time in their lives thanks only to this sea of destruction. The moment of reflection did not last long. The conversation again became gravely serious. Again recollections of Baghdad filled the space.

"[In Iraq we'd see] kids taking tires off of burning trucks. Tires would be on fire and they'd be rolling them down the road," said Cramdon. "Pissing fucking fuel all over the ground... They'd be bare foot running in there trying to get what they could," added Scott.

Sergeant Cramdon continued, "We got hit one time under 51 Alpha. It swept the whole underside of a trailer out. Flames everywhere. This truck was blazing. And they [kids] had the back of that [trailer] open, unloading it... MSR was two miles down the road, and that truck was half unloaded by the time that MSR patrol got there." A soldier proclaimed, "Any thieves or anything around here, they got nothing on those Iraqis."

Intermittently throughout the night we would board the truck and drive up and down Holms avenue. Flashlights would keep track of the passing landscape. From Holms we could see the raised highway, 90, which lead over the Mississippi Bridge into New Orleans.

Looking at the underpass just outside the unit's area of patrol, Sergeant Cramdon stated, "[In Iraq] when you drove by they used to blow them [improvised explosives] up head level at you. At this bridge, 51 Alpha, is where a lot of shit hit the fan. Right in-between my two Humvees, I was in the middle, and they blew it up right in-between and missed everybody. I don't know how they missed everybody, but they missed everybody. Unbelievable. Right at head level too. A lot of it over there was just luck. A lot of people were unlucky, a lot of people were very lucky"

A different Guardsman discussed his experience. "It was ok when you got passed the bridge, you know. Me being a driver and having a freakin' [explosive] go off and having my driver side door blown open and having stuff flying out, it kinda scarred the shit out of me... They couldn't really prepare us for it [in training]. You kinda learned as you went."

Sergeant Cramdon went on to discuss other aspects of convoys in Iraq. "You'll be driving down the road and these fuckers don't want to wait for you behind the convoy. You're doing sixty mile per hour in the convoy, but they want to do sixty-five, seventy. They'll get into the oncoming lane and just play chicken all the way down the road. And then you'll just see it. WHAM!... Multi-car pile up cause he hit another car head on, there had to be fourteen-fifteen dead people there... [Including] a dead infant."

"I thought it was a doll. Two guys came running up. Picked it up. It was a baby. Just jello - mutilated," said another soldier.

Much of the night was spent speaking of war. When I asked what it was like coming home, one Guardsman, who will remain unnamed recalled, "When I came back, I was having some issues with not being able to calm down. I was wound up all the time. Maybe three or four times I had slight anxiety attacks. I'd have to get up and walk around, and calm myself down. I went into the doctor cause one day my heart was flipping out, shit like that." He went on, "so I went to my doctor and he [said] 'it seems you got a little bit of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder going on. And it's not like I'm depressed, or suicidal or anything, I'm just wound up, you know? I don't know if you've heard of the drug zoloft or what not, but that shits expensive."

"Did the military pay for it?" I asked.

"I went to my regular doctor and they're not VA certified, so I went to the VA to go get it covered through the Veterans Administration, and they don't buy name brand drugs, they use generic shit. The shit that they gave me makes me sick. Makes me want to throw up. So I kind of stopped taking it."

Another soldier interjected, "I haven't hardly slept since we've been back"

The night eventually grew into morning. As the six o'clock hour again approached, we headed back towards the base. I asked when is the soonest the unit can be ordered back to Iraq?

"February," came the reply. Someone questioned, "Does this deployment extend that?" Sergeant Cramdon answered, "No, this is [a] state [mission]." "Shit," said another.

If it were a federally directed mission, their likely re-deployment to Iraq would be pushed back. "One Weekend a Month." My ass.

One soldier announced, "Fuck that. I'm not going back." Another answered, "You'll have to if they call you up." It was left at that.

I inquired, "How long will the war last? How long do you think it will go on for?" Many answered "Forever." Others nodded in agreement.

As we pulled into the HQ, the officer gave the order to unload their weapons.

"All Weapons are cleared."

I asked how long they would be deployed in Louisiana? A soldier replied, "no Idea. Until they tell us to go home."

Nemesis is an autonomous supporter collective of **NEFAC: Northeastern Federation of Anarchist Communists: (bilingual:fr/eng. | theory. | agitation | direct action. | social struggle | revolution.)**

NEFAC.NET
news - opinions - anarchy

New Orleans Resident Rescues Mules

By David, 09/08/05

New Orleans, LA - In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, humans weren't the only ones left homeless. So too were the dozens of mules normally used to pull tourist carriages through the French Quarter. Many of the stables in which the animals lived were all but destroyed in the storm. In the days following, no one really knew, or cared, what became of them; no one that is except David Richardson.

Richardson, 56, worked as a carriage driver before the storm. I met him outside of Molly's pub on Decatur Street. With a gruff salt and pepper beard, a slight twang in his voice, blue jeans, and a bone handled sheath knife on his belt, he isn't exactly the stereotypical New Orleans resident. But then again, who is? Richardson has lived in this city for 25 years. Before that his roots go back to a small farm in Indiana, where his father had two mules. He tells me he has no plans to evacuate. In David's opinion he can do more good in the city than he could in a refugee camp. As of Thursday (9/8) more than fifteen mules have been rescued from the rubble largely because of him.

"[Initially] I wrangled about eight of them back to an area down here in front of my house so we could get them across the lake yesterday with the LSU Veternary Rescue," said Richardson.

Richardson says that he's recovered at least ten more after this first batch. He is keeping them in a warehouse, making sure they have plenty of water and grass until they too can be evacuated. Some of these he rescued with the aid of two Boarder Patrol agents and twelve men from a Texas Sheriff's Department who he has recently enlisted in the effort.

He recalls yesterday morning when some of his neighbors woke him up to say they saw five mules in front of their house. By the time he, the Boarder Patrol, and Sheriffs arrived, "they [the neighbors] had two mules already tied up in their yard. [There was also a] white mule we couldn't catch. So we lead the two down. We thought she'd follow. Un ah. [It took] all twelve of that sheriff's posse, two boarder patrol guys, [my friend] john and about five other civilians about an hour and a half till we got that little girl. We never did catch her. We herded her down by the other mules and got her to run in the gate."

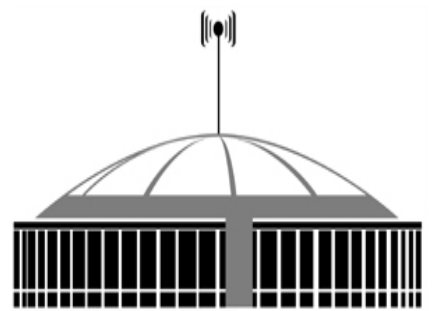
Richardson then looks me in the eyes, and asks in a sincere tone, "You ever try to wrangle horses on a bicycle? I guarantee you it would make you healthy." He laughs.

The "Buggy Man", as he refers to himself, is not just concerned with the mules. Like so many other New Orleans residents, he has done what he can for those in need. He recounts treating a young man for heat exhaustion. He also tells of a humble attempt to raise moral in the French Quarter.

"For Labor Day I did a parade [with] one buggy, we usually have twenty. We came down here into the Quarter on Sunday with a big red and white carriage and my big old red mule Sachmo. I come down Bourbon Street... I come down to this bar... We come down to Johnny White's [back on Bourbon Street]. I swear to God people had tears in their eyes when they saw the big carriage."

David gets choked up. In a cracked voice he continues, "I did it because we needed a victory. And by God we did it." A tear rolls down his cheek.

Despite the mandatory evacuation, Richardson has no plans to leave. "Dam right I'm staying. I got two more [mules] out there I know of... I'll find them by God."



KAMP 95.3FM KH5XIM

Dome City Radio is a low-power FM (LPFM) station that serves the Reliant Complex in Houston, Texas. Our mission is to provide these new Houston residents with the timely information that they have been otherwise unable to obtain, such as school enrollment procedures, vaccination availability, and mail forwarding assistance. The station is completely volunteer-operated and self-supporting.
www.evacuationradioservices.org

"You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows"
Bob Dylan, "Subterranean Homesick Blues"

**Vermont Guard Brings Food To Projects
People Tell of Police Abuse,
Express Anger at Feds**
By David, 09/07/05

Jefferson Parish, LA, - On the afternoon of Wednesday, September 7th, Vermont National Guard troops brought food and water, by truck, into a number of poor and working class communities in Jefferson Parish, just across the river from New Orleans. Throughout the day twelve Guardsmen distributed an estimated 900 meals to hurricane survivors.

The first destination was a housing project in Tarrytown. The apartment buildings were two story structures, built in the 1970s. These projects are populated by poor Blacks. The streets were littered with debris. Many buildings remained intact. Others showed signs of Katrina's devastating winds. Electricity remained out. At the flood's height, waters flowed waist deep through this neighborhood. By the time the Guard rolled through, the flood had already subsided.

Before Katrina the projects were home to hundreds. As the Guard arrived with provisions, it appeared that only thirty or so remained. These were the poorest of the poor; those who had no means to leave on their own accord. Many were children and elderly. This neighborhood received little aid prior to the Guard's arrival, and none whatsoever for the first five days of the disaster. The fire department refused to bring supplies into the community without a National Guard presence because of fear for their safety.

As the Guard drove slowly through the streets passing out food and water, I followed, interviewing residents. A young man named Renee Rose, 16, made his way to the supplies. I asked him what he thought of the government's response to the crisis.

"I don't think they done alright cause the power should have been on by now," said Rose. He continued to talk about the state of his neighborhood, "The community right here is falling apart. Ain't never been that many people who have left... we got a man who lived right here, got killed." The reason for the killing, as well as the perpetrator is unclear.

"That was his van right there, and they left. See what they did -the anger- they messed up the van... see how messed up it is? They just went berserk, see?" The van he points to looks as if its been bludgeoned with sledge hammers. The sides are smashed in, and the windows are broken.

I ask Renee what he thinks the future holds. "I don't know. I have no clue. Bush needs to come down here and see himself... I don't think he would, but he needs to."

Kathryn Nevels, 54, sits in a chair in front of her apartment. She also contends that the government response to the storm was less than adequate. "To tell the truth we wish it could be better. We wish it could be much better."

Despite these misgivings, Nevels remains optimistic about the community. "Everybody is fine, they're pitching in together and helping the best way we can. We're just hoping that once everything is over with our debt to society is paid and we can rebuild and start all over again." She does not explain whom she feels the people owe a debt to.

I approached a group of four adults, three women and one man who all appeared to be in their late thirties-early forties. This group was standing around a car loaded with belongings. They immediately express their desire to leave for Texas, but confess they have no gas. All wished to remain unnamed.

A distraught woman, mother of three, tells me "everybody's gone and we've been living here for over five years, maybe six. We're just hanging on strong... I'm just trying to look after my children... We got no gas, we got [some] water in jugs... We're trying to keep [our home] clean the best way we can, but it still has the whole filth and smell in it. The damage is real bad... I'm trying to get out of here. I'm trying to get to Texas. I don't care where I go as long as I get the fuck up out of here."

I ask how she assesses the local and federal government's response to the crisis. Her eyes become sharp. "They [the government] are not handling it [the crisis] right. They're not doing what they're supposed to do. If they were to do what they were supposed to do, we would be out of here right about now."

Links:
katrina.indymedia.org
neworleans.indymedia.org
katrina.mayfirst.org
www.infoshop.org/hurricanekatrina.html



Johnny White's has been open for 14 years, even during the hurricane (photo: Bradley)



714 Desire St. 9th Ward Community Center in the 9th Ward, with kitchen, wellness center, distribution and information center.

Addressing local officials she becomes angry and proclaims, "People came here and drew guns on us... The police... They were about to beat up my [twelve year old] son on his birthday because he told them not to search his bag... They came out from nowhere, just crept up on us. When it's dark we can't see nothing. We didn't know what was going on. They draw guns on us, telling us to raise our hands up, you know -and everything. My little niece was right there, she had her baby and they still was drawing guns... We had no choice but to put our hands up or we'd get shot. They [the police] said 'we saw you breaking into peoples cars' and were gonna shoot somebody."

The woman claims that police shot and killed local residents without just cause. "People that's dear to us done got shot. People we know got killed. They [the police] got the permission to shoot them on sight."

A strong looking man in his forties stepped forward and said, "They draw guns on all of us. Every last one of my kids, my wife, and my nephew, and everything."

The man discusses the plight of those who were forced to loot food when government aid failed to arrive, "We got a lot of people who go get food for their [family]. They [the police] killed them, since the storm, in this neighborhood, on Manhattan [street] across the river and everything. All down here. [The police] have been shooting on the kids. They aren't saying freeze or nothing. They shooting you in the head and that's bad."

Another resident, a woman in her late 30s, attributed the alleged instances of police killings to racism. "We got a lot of racist [White] cops that are taking advantage of this fact that it's supposed to be marshal law, and they're really taking advantage of it."

With relative chaos still prevailing in Jefferson Parish, it is impossible to verify or discredit these serious charges. It is also difficult to tell if these alleged abuses are localized or widespread. However, in the past 72 hours, similar reports have been coming in from New Orleans. I can report that the night before, while on patrol with the Guard no more than a mile away, two local cops from the sheriff's department pulled up to us. In the darkness they did not notice that a member of the press was present. I heard them tell the Guardsmen "no one on this street is innocent." They went on to encourage the Guard to shoot people, and informed them that they would cover up such events. As they pulled away, they aimed their PA system at area apartments, blaring the sounds of a woman screaming. To date the Vermont National Guard has not fired a weapon.



Damaged police car in French Quarter (Photo: Dixie Block)



Mardi Gras Beads and the "X" (Photo: Bradley)

A Southern US Anarchist Statement on the Gulf Coast Disaster
The State leaves 100,000 to drown like rats, while people everywhere open their hearts and homes

As many as 20,000 people have been abandoned in the New Orleans Convention Center with no resources and no anticipated relief. Meanwhile, National Guard units with submachine guns and body armor prevent people from taking necessary food from places where it would otherwise go to waste, and call it "urban warfare." Under capitalism, there is no such thing as "natural" disasters; horrible and unavoidable events are exacerbated by the callous acts of the ruling class. Examples include: the Irish potato famine of the 19th century, and the Somalian of the 20th, where food was taken by imperialist countries, like Britain and the US, instead of being used to save the starving population; the more recent hurricane disasters in Haiti shortly after the U.S. ousted the only government which might have marshaled any aid to the Haitian people and replaced it with a military junta; the tsunami disaster, which was aggravated by years of IMF and World Bank domination in the region that resulted in severe underdevelopment; and the present situation in the Gulf Coast.

How did the ruling class contribute to this disaster? Having full knowledge that this would be a devastating hurricane season, they chose to sink the 79 million dollars designated to repair the antiquated levee system into the Iraq quagmire. Furthermore, although they knew ahead of time that the hurricane would be at least a category 4 hurricane, and that the levee system could withstand no more than a category 3, the ruling class did not invest any serious resources into evacuating the city of New Orleans and the surrounding area as the storm approached (and rich politicians have the gall to accuse working-class people of carelessly staying in the city)! As we mentioned, their first priority is to mobilize heavily-armed National Guard units who will shoot people that are merely trying to find food, rather than to bring the necessary aid to the estimated 20,000 starving people at the Convention Center who will die if nothing is done (not to mention other people in similar situations throughout the city). The politicians continue lying in a desperate attempt to save their careers, making it increasingly clear that they have no concern for the lives of the people they've abandoned.

In contrast, thousands of people have opened their homes to survivors in an amazing gesture of solidarity and compassion. Despite the State's citation of its ability to channel aid in times of need as a justification for its existence, it has again demonstrated how the constraints of capitalism interfere with its ability to provide any sort of assistance. The incredible display of mutual aid on the part of the people gives further support for the anarchist argument that people can indeed develop a stateless society based on the adage "from each according to ability, to each according to necessity." We hope to see that society become a reality someday, but for now we declare our solidarity with those who have been abandoned, and, in hopes that others will join us, we demand the following:

- That the government immediately commandeer the necessary resources, such as transportation and shelter, in order to evacuate people from the city and ensure that they have adequate accommodations until it is possible to return to their homes or move on;
- An immediate end to national guard and police units attacking those looking for food
- Immediate distribution of ALL necessary items (water, food, clothing, etc.) during the process of evacuation;
- The immediate resignation/dismissal and punishment of all decision-makers who neglected the responsibility of repairing the levees or coordinating evacuations from the city while it was possible, or who are responsible for National Guard and police units attacking those who are "stealing" necessary items;
- No conviction for any who were arrested while "stealing" food or any other necessity;
- An end to the price-gouging of oil which is affecting working-class people across the country, by price fixing if necessary;
- Adequate aid to all people wishing to rebuild homes lost due to the negligence of capitalist politicians.

Solidarity with the victims of the Gulf Coast disaster! Solidarity with those who remain in precarious positions months after the tsunami disaster! Solidarity with those all across the globe who have lost family or remain in refugee camps due to the disasters which the ruling class magnifies or the wars which it engineers!

The Capital Terminus Collective
Atlanta, Georgia

Katrina's Heart of Darkness
The Devastated Ninth Ward
By David, 09/08/05

In the morning, I prepared to depart from Johnny White's tavern in the French Quarter, to venture into the devastated Ninth Ward. Before Katrina this was one of the poorest sections of the city. When the levees ruptured, the area was submerged under many feet of water. The Ninth Ward was also the location of much alleged shootings. Thousands of Superdome refugees came from this neighborhood.

I asked a bar patron, James La Lon, 62, for directions to the Ward. He told me to head three miles past Esplanade - away from the Quarter. "You can't miss it." In addition to directions I also was given a warning to be careful. He claimed to have been shot at a dozen times while driving through three days before.

Myself and a local, Ride Hamilton, 29, a volunteer first aid provider of Cheyenne decent, boarded my small red pick-up truck and headed north. I met this man an hour before at the bar. Ride, six feet tall with long black hair, wore a blue "Sioux City" fire department shirt he bought in a thrift store. He found that the uniform helped avoid hassles with the local police. I was equipped with a press pass.

As we drove away from Johnny White's it became eerily apparent that we were the only vehicle on the streets. In this sea of destruction traffic laws no longer applied. We took a one-way street the wrong way for a mile past Esplanade.

As we drew closer to the ward, we began to see large "x"s spray painted on the sides of every house. In each quadrant of the X were written letters and numbers. In the top it read "9-6." To the left, "TX-1." To the right, "NE." At the bottom, "1." We correctly guessed that these symbols were the record of a search conducted by the military or other government agencies. The top obviously represented the date of the search. The left, the unit who conducted it. The right was a code for the type of contamination found within. The bottom number told the grim tale of how many bodies were found. Again, these were on every house.

A mile past Esplanade we saw the first other vehicles. Two military trucks rolled past. In the back we could see the sullen faces of haggard evacuees. Nobody bothered to wave. We continued.

The deeper into the neighborhood we got, the more debris littered the deserted streets. "Fuck Bush. Them Bitches Flood Us," was written in black spray paint across a battered brick wall.

Heading up Rampart Street we passed a tire garage. A wiry Black man sat out in front. The sign said "open." He, along with the two taverns operating in the French Quarter, represented the last outposts of commerce in this former city.

Soon we approached a small bridge crossing a canal deep into the Ninth Ward. A gate sat across our path. Four National Guard troops stood watch with loaded M-16s. We approached. I got out of the truck and present my press pass. They opened the gate and let us in. Immediately the flooding began.

The road we drove on, North Rampart was sometimes dry, sometimes six inches underwater. The side streets to our left were under too much water to traverse. The water was black and smelled like rotting meat.

On the corner of St. Clair and Deslonde the water deepened. The wreckage from the flood and winds was like nothing I have ever seen. Sides of houses and roofs were ripped clean off. The tops of abandoned trucks were caked with mud.

We drove a half-mile further and still we saw no signs of the living. The tightly packed houses were left alone. Here, a number of homes were yet to have an 'X' to keep them company. The scene made me think of some kind of evil Venice that had been bombed and left for dead.

The flooding worsened. To my left I saw a boat that had been heaved atop of a four-foot fence. Trees were up-rooted and strewn across the road.

Breaking the strange silence two empty military trucks passed heading deeper into the Ward. Did they expect to find survivors?

Down a side street, still underwater, I saw empty school busses. I assumed they never brought people out.



We turned right down Gordon Street. We drove carefully to avoid being ensnared by fallen power lines. The letters "DEA-OK" were painted on a cement wall. Arrows pointed in both directions. A few blocks away we made out five military personnel on a front porch. They were battering down a door. We assumed they were looking for the dead and injured. We drove through the black putrid waters in their direction.

When we reached them I got out and ask, "have you been finding anyone?" A soldier replied, "No. Just dead bodies." "Are you going to start clearing out the dead bodies?" The soldier answered, "No." He gave me a cold look. The conversation was over.

In silence we headed back up to Rampart, then south out of the Ninth Ward. It will be many years before this community can count the ghosts which walk these wrecked streets. It will be generations before they can be exorcised from the collective memories of the living.

Unfounded? Stories Violence and Rape Countered By New Orleans Residents
by David, 09/11/05

New Orleans, LA, - Initial media reports of widespread violence and rape amongst hurricane survivors may have been overstated. The Associated Press is reporting that at both the City Center, and the Superdome eyewitnesses failed to substantiate such claims. On the contrary, many contend that it was the "thugs and criminals" who took the lead in rescuing people, keeping them fed, and providing water [Looters Denounced But Also Called Heroes' AP 9/2/05]. National Public Radio has reported likewise [This American Life' 9/11/05]. Many New Orleans residents I spoke with agreed. On September 8th I asked city residents about such allegations at the two open bars in the French Quarter, both of which are also serving as community centers.

Joe Belome, a bartender at Johnny White's on Bourbon Street takes issue with the recent stereotypes of violent looters. Joe paints a different picture. Referencing the large stockpiles of food and water accumulated behind the bar, he explains that a portion of it was brought and donated by the very people who are being portrayed as criminals.

"Street thugs are just donating things to us to help people out. That's the kind of community we have here," said Joe.

Several blocks away at Molly's, I spoke with the pubs owner Jim Monyham. Upon being asked about the initial reports from the Superdome, he becomes agitated. In a loud voice Monyham proclaims, "[the allegations of violence and rape] and not true! They are lies!"

Mike Powls, 46, sits calmly at the bar drinking a cold beer. Prior to the storm he was a taro card reader in Jackson Square. Powls depiction of events contradicts the reports of general mayhem.

"I live right off of Rampart Street so I saw thousands of people leaving the Ninth Ward and heading, unfortunately, to the Superdome. I saw people share the only pair of shoes that they had. I didn't see any acts of violence. I saw people just trying to help one another... The people have been good. I haven't seen any problem with violence."

Powls continues, "This whole image of the poor people coming from the Ninth Ward being this uncontrolled mob is absolute BS. Like I said, I was right where the people were coming from, and I didn't have any problems with anyone."

"The main thing [is] how humane the people were... Everybody said, 'hello', 'how are you', 'good luck.' They'd tell you where to go to get things. It was heart warming, because even people that were in worse shape than I was in, much worse shape, would do things that were helpful, and I'm very thankful for that... I saw the best of people, and that includes people from the Ninth Ward," recalls Powls.

Medical Relief In Algiers Continues

Liz Highleyman, BARHC Report #4, 09/17/05

The medical relief effort at the Common Ground clinic in the Algiers neighborhood of New Orleans is shifting from "emergency response" to "primary care" mode. Many patients now are repeat visitors. The clinic is well stocked with first aid supplies and has a phone line and several donated computers. But, says BARHC's Dr. Michael Kozart, "public health conditions are so unpredictable." He says they are still seeing dog bites, wounds, and other types of emergencies. Business owners began re-entering dry areas of the city today, and residents are scheduled to start coming back on Monday. The history of past disasters has shown that injury rates typically increase as people get into recovery and rebuilding efforts.

"We anticipate a sharp increase in work volume once the evacuees return to the neighborhood," says Kozart. "So many of them will need medication renewals and all sorts of other services."

Also, as conditions permit, volunteers are trying to branch out to provide medical assistance in other parts of the city and surrounding areas. They have made contact with some remaining residents in the French Quarter and assessed conditions in the 9th Ward. Several of the smaller towns around NOLA still have received little or no outside help. Expansion of the Algiers effort has been hampered, however, by remaining floodwaters, a heavy military and police presence, and a shortage of volunteers.

Two of the BARHC medics left NOLA today, and Kozart - the only physician on site who can write prescriptions - will be departing Monday. Other action medics from the Bay Area and elsewhere (including DC, Connecticut, Canada, and Montana) are still at the clinic and more will be arriving over the next couple weeks.

The volunteers in Algiers are working diligently to move the relief effort into local hands. They have been teaching residents basic medical procedures like how to take blood pressures and read glucose levels. Hopefully, healthcare workers at all levels will be among the returning residents.

But there continues to be a pressing need for primary care providers - especially those who can write prescriptions. Out of more than a dozen hospitals in the greater NOLA area, only a handful are up and running.

Unfortunately, the governor's order allowing out-of-state physicians to prescribe medications in Louisiana is expected to be rescinded before the end of the month (it remains unclear whether this order applies as well to nurse practitioners and physician assistants). Medics on the ground stress that this would pose a serious hardship, and encourage activists - including organizations such as Physicians for Social Responsibility, Doctors Without Borders, and healthcare worker unions - to apply pressure on Louisiana officials to allow out-of-state providers to continue practicing there as long as needed.

Health professionals considering going to New Orleans to lend a hand should contact the LA state board in Baton Rouge at 225-763-5766, 225-763-5770, or 225-763-5751 for the latest status. People can also call the Algiers clinic for updates (504-361-9659), but keep in mind that staffing there is limited.

For more information on the Common Ground clinic, see www.commongroundrelief.org.

Three days earlier I spoke with a New Orleans evacuee at a shelter in Baton Rouge. The evacuee was a young Black man in his twenties. I asked him if "gang members" had been playing a positive or negative role in the crisis. In response he simply smiled, and said, "I'm still here, ain't I?"

Anarchists say:
END THE WAR! END THE STATE!

09/24/05

Many liberals feel that it was wrong to invade Iraq; that, though the United States has used the crime of 9/11 to justify a war for geopolitical power, wealth and oil and created disaster upon disaster in that country, it has a responsibility to stay there to restore order and to repair a ruined infrastructure. Other liberals feel Iraq should be handed over to NATO or the U.N. But these are coalitions of imperialist governments with motives similar to the U.S. The Iraqis will gain nothing by being occupied by more foreign armies than by, mostly, just one. Anarchists recognize that we cannot trust the U.S. imperialist state to act any better than it has already. On no account will the U.S. help the Iraqis gain real democracy and freedom. **The U.S. must immediately withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan, and withdraw all support from Israel. Supporting the continued occupation of Iraq is a justification for the continued imposition of U.S. dominance.**

Iraqi workers and peasants have the right to determine the fate of their own country. They have every right to armed resistance against foreign occupiers. We give no political support to the semi-fascists who would impose a religious dictatorship over the women and other workers of Iraq or the rest of the Middle East but **we want the U.S. to lose its wars of aggression.** We urge U.S. soldiers and their families to oppose this war and to demand the soldiers be brought home now. We support all efforts to resist military recruitment of young people, on and off school grounds. There must be no draft. Registration for the draft must be ended immediately.

All real popular gains have been won outside of the electoral system. Slavery of African-Americans in this country was ended with illegal runaways, revolts, and, ultimately, with a civil war. Legal segregation was defeated with civil disobedience. Urban rebellions brought anti-discrimination and affirmative action laws. Unions were won through mass sit-down strikes in major industries. Women's rights were won with consciousness-raising and mass demonstrations. Gay rights began to be recognized with the Stonewall Rebellion. The struggle against the war in Vietnam was won with the armed resistance of the Vietnamese people and, in the U.S., with large legal and illegal demonstrations, campus strikes, widespread draft resistance, and a virtual mutiny in the army. **The mainstream antiwar movement focuses on electing Democrats or third party politicians but it is only through mass struggle, outside of and against the State, that we can successfully stop this war.** In particular, we should aim for political strikes, using the unique strategic power of workers to stop society in its tracks, recreating it on a new and better basis.

The war and other social evils are caused by a bad social system. They are not caused by the bad policies of politicians. At the heart of this system is capitalism, by which a few rich people drain off the wealth produced by everyone else. This class system supports, and is supported by, all other forms of oppression: of women, of people of color, of poorer nations, of gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-gendered people, and so on. Holding it all together is the nation state, the special layer of police, military, bureaucrats, politicians, lobbyists, and others that stand over the rest of us. **The nation state is a war-waging machine in the service of the rich. Without war — preparing for war and paying for war — there would hardly be nation states. To end all wars, we must end all states.**

What is revolutionary socialist anarchism? Anarchism means the abolition of all forms of oppression. Instead of the State, we advocate a federation of democratic associations. Instead of capitalism, we advocate a federation of self-managed workplaces, industries, associations, and communes. To achieve such a society, we must bring an end to patriarchy, white supremacy and class domination; smash State power; expropriate the wealth of the rich; abolish the wage system and market economy; and seize the means of production and distribution for the benefit of society as a whole. This means nothing short of social revolution, which can only emerge from autonomous mass movements and the revolutionary self-activity of the working class.

Open City Anarchist Collective, New York City, opencity@nefac.net
PO Box 250-159, Columbia University Station, NY, NY 10025
<http://www.nefac.net/> secretary@nefac.net

Nemesis Collective, Baltimore, Maryland, nemesis@nefac.net
Capital Terminus Collective, Atlanta, Georgia, capitalterminus@gmail.com ;
Seattle NAF (Northwest Anarchist Federation) acus@nafederation.org

Hurricane Katrina, and the Good Churchgoers of the U.S. South

By prole cat, Capital Terminus Collective

Like many frustrated Southerners in the aftermath of the hurricane named Katrina, I drove a small truck-and-trailer full of food and water to South Mississippi. I met some refugees at a camp site, during the trip down. They appeared to be poor whites. One, a native of Bay St. Louis, was snarling against the "looters", using racial epithets. When informed that I planned to take food straight to the hungry people in the streets, this man (who had already taken offense when I challenged his bigotry) snorted, "Good. You gone find out then. Great. You go right ahead." His words left me more determined than ever.

Later that night, one of the man's campmates approached me. He had been told of my plans. He was on the verge of tears. "Hey man, I'm not wanting to be all hateful, or racist, or anything. Really, I'm not. But please, please don't just drive down there, and open up your truck, and start giving stuff away. Please don't. You don't know these people. You don't know what it's like, down there."

He seemed sincere. His words accomplished what neither his friend's words, nor the media news reports, had been able to. I hadn't been frightened before. But now I was scared.

The role of the good church people

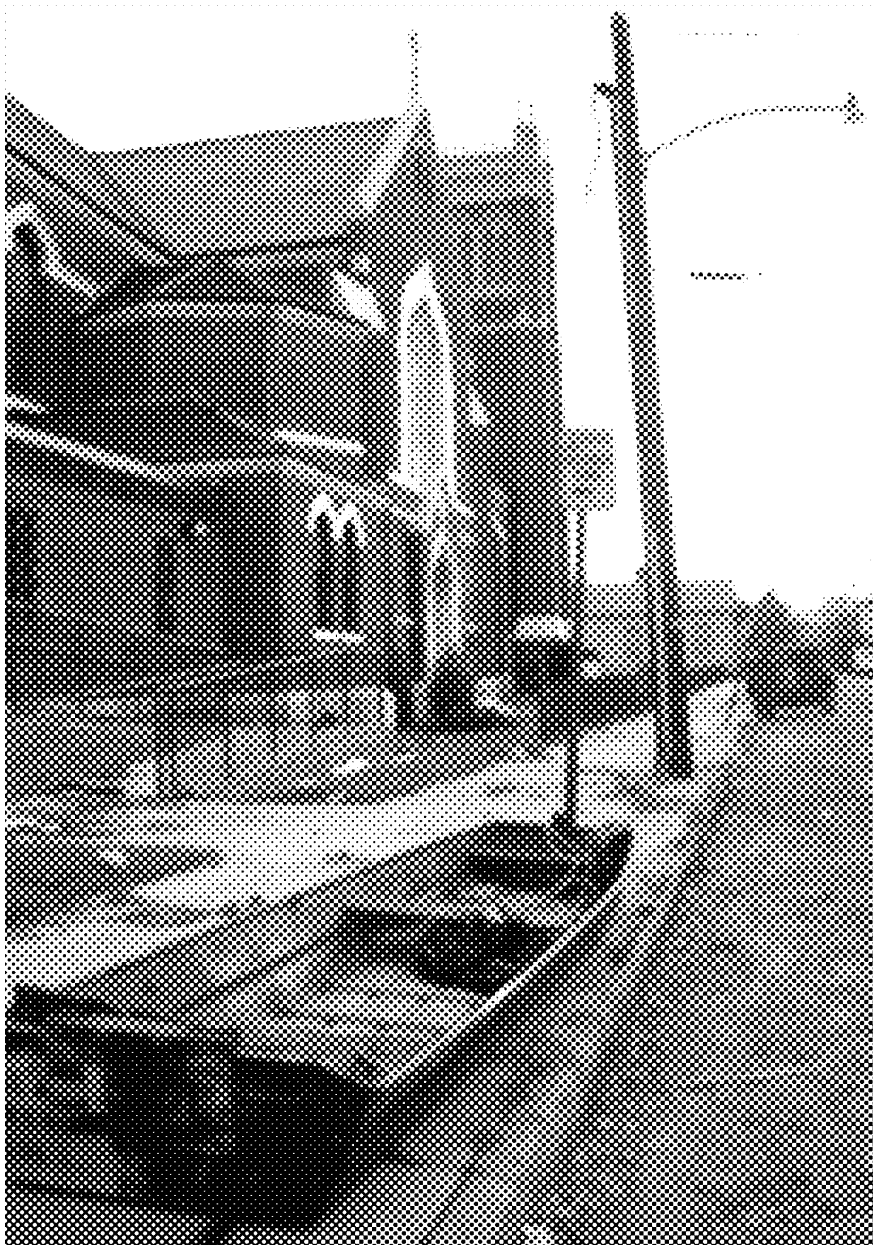
We went first to the rural town of Wiggins, but relief had arrived there earlier in the day. We went to Poplarsville, which was militarized to an alarming degree. Soldiers carrying submachine guns guarded the gas pumps. (As it turned out, President Bush was doing a photo op in Poplarsville that day.) A National Guardsman with rank told us that aid was still desperately needed (ironically enough) in Bay St. Louis, sixty miles outside of New Orleans. So we took off. (We believed New Orleans itself to be unapproachable due to martial law.)

The sunlight was beginning to dim on the second day of our trip as we approached Bay St. Louis. Adding to my apprehension, was the otherworldly sight of automobiles upended in drainage ditches. Motorboats were perched in the tops of trees, either thrown there by the wind, or perhaps nested there as the flood waters receded. Cars traveling on the road became rare, consisting mostly of military vehicles. Power was out, and so of course no gasoline was available. Occasionally a man in a bucket truck with a chainsaw was in evidence. I decided against camping in the area. We would drop the food as close as we could get to the people who needed it, and then get the hell out before nightfall. I, for one, had a family to return to.

A man in front of a wrecked convenience store directed us towards a National Guard armory, as the nearest exchange point for relief aid. Was this what I had traveled so far to do, hand the supplies over to the U.S. government, who had already demonstrated their callous indifference to all but the richest people in the area? A knot in my stomach tightened as we advanced.

Then we came to the intersection of two main roads. In the parking lot of a darkened K-Mart, a large tent had been erected. People were busily unloading food and water from trucks, and carrying them into the tent. Smoke rose from a large grill out back of the tent. All around the tent, people sorted through piles of clothes, carrying away what they needed, without paying. Inside the tent, blacks and whites mingled without apparent distinction. Immediately upon approaching, we were offered a meal. In the short time we were there, we saw a pair of men in cheap jeans and mill-worker tee shirts approach, carrying canned goods wrapped in the stomach portion of their shirts. Presumably, instead of hoarding, they were bringing what little they had, and throwing it into the common pile with everyone else's. It was the polar opposite of all the looting, murder, and rape that we had been told to expect.

We began to unload the truck. I was so relieved not to have to give up the goods to the government soldiers, I never thought to ask under whose authority (if anyone's) the operation was being carried out. But as we stacked box after box, I was hardly surprised to note crosses hanging from chains around the necks of many of the relief workers, and Christian messages on tee shirts. This was Deep Dixie, after all. I struck up a conversation. I learned that a circle of volunteers from a small Baptist church in southeast Alabama, near Mobile, had been instrumental in organizing the particular relief site we had stumbled up on. We had been saved from the clutches of the soldiers, by common folks who had organized among themselves. And they had done so, in large part, by employing the mostly unofficial networks of their



Receding waters leaves empty boat by a church (photo: Dixie Block)

I was touched. I have long been antagonistic to the self-righteous evangelicals of my region. But here they were, in the vanguard of some fine, compassionate work. A new evaluation of their role in our society was surely in order.

In addition to my newfound appreciation for these kindhearted individuals, I was also moved to wonder, "Why does the government allow this?" It has long been apparent that the government and the corporations demand a monopoly on power. They either absorb, or infiltrate and destroy, unions, active community groups, food coops, coordinated anti-war activists, grassroots political organizations of all types, in short, any and everything that tries to operate outside the framework of the market place, and its corollary, the election booth. But churches are granted a remarkable, an incredible, amount of latitude. For example, everyone had been warned not to try to take food into, or even near to, New Orleans, because putting a stop to "looting" and "lawlessness" was being given a higher priority than relief. "If you go near the soldiers guarding the stores, you might get shot", was the clear-if-implicit message. But here were these good, simple people from the far corner of Alabama, a scant sixty miles outside of New Orleans, actually being allowed to give food away- out in front of a store! For what reason, I wondered, were they granted this exemption? Did the government have a secret soft spot, reserved solely for born-again Christians? Or was there a darker underlying motive?

The role of the Deity

A man approached my traveling companion (who had recently had a finger surgically removed, due to disease.) The stranger took my friend's crippled hand in his, and petitioned "God, through our Savior Jesus Christ", to heal the illness that caused the deformity. This, I found more spooky than touching. To change the subject away from invisible Physicians in the Sky, I commented that it was some mighty fine, generous work that was being done in that parking lot.

The man replied, "It's the Lord's work, son. The Lord is doing it all. We're born into sin, and left to our own devices, we would rip each other up, just like you see on TV. Only the grace of God can heal your friend's hand, or make a sinner help his brother."

"We have always lived in slums and holes in the wall. We will know how to accommodate ourselves for a while. For, you must not forget, we also know how to build. It is we the workers who built these palaces and cities here in Spain and in America and everywhere. We, the workers, can build others to take their place. And better ones! We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth; there is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here, in our hearts. That world is growing this minute.", **Buenaventura Durruti**

So I had my answer.

Here is how it works: the little country churches are granted an exemption from the restrictions that the government (working for the corporations) places on everyone else. For example, churches are allowed to give food away, at the same time that kids doling out chow under the banner of Food Not Bombs are prosecuted for vending without a business license. Heck, churches don't even have to pay taxes! In exchange for all this special treatment, the churches agree to promote the fiction that "charity", giving, helping, is something otherworldly, "spiritual", exceptional. Helping out a sister in need, they insist, runs counter to "human nature". Only the mystical "Lord" can make a person give.

It is all lies, of course. To begin with, science has long known that there is no such thing as "human nature". The behavior of the human animal varies so widely according to the surrounding conditions, that talk of the innate goodness of humanity, or its evil nature, is nonsensical.

We do, however, have instincts, that were honed by eons of evolution. The deepest instincts of women and men, after tending to their own survival and that of their children, runs to helping their fellows. Now, the bosses know this. The CEOs and politicians know that we have to be conditioned to be selfish and fear our neighbors, if the reign of the corporate marketplace is to continue. And they also know that when a disaster strikes, they can't stop us from helping each other, in the process doing an end run around the structures of domination, the Wal-marts and Exxon stations and government offices. The U.S. government can barely subdue the Iraqi people right now; they don't have enough soldiers left, to put the entire South under martial law, and so prevent the free exchange of goods (as was done in New Orleans). Because they can't physically stop us, they have to find a way to limit the damage, to make sure that when the crisis is passed, we don't continue to give things to one another (and so undermine the buying and selling that they spend millions of dollars to promote, on television and elsewhere.) They have to, they must, have a means, in the months following a disaster in which communities have come together in sharing, to coax the good, common folks back into the old routines of acting selfishly.

Enter the churches.

The churches assure us all that it is not possible to be giving and caring, all the time. We are born into sin. It is normal to live under the watchful eye of security cameras, to sleep with a loaded gun under one's pillow, to hoard one's goods, and to gouge one's neighbor. "Let the buyer beware". It is just human nature, they claim, to lie and cheat and strive to dominate, to separate ourselves into bosses, and servants of the bosses. Twas ever thus. "There will be poor among us always." It can't be helped. And it is a rarity- no, it is a by-god miracle- when a storm wrecks havoc on a region, and the people come together to help each other.

And miracles, though awesome, are of course brief. When the crisis and its attendant miracle are past, it will be time to go back to "reality", to hoarding and gouging and cheating and most of all, to turning a blind eye to the suffering of our sisters and brothers. We will return to blaming the victims, and insist that "if they were not so lazy, they would get jobs, and not be poor anymore." By treating compassion as something alien to humanity, the churches dutifully play their role in this sorry state of affairs.

The mystery is solved. Now we know why the politicians and their commanders, the corporate bigwigs, grant the various churches access and permissions that are denied to so many. Because they can't trust anyone else with the job.

Katrina's Real Name

by Ross Gelbspan

The hurricane that struck Louisiana yesterday was nicknamed Katrina by the National Weather Service. Its real name is global warming.

As the atmosphere warms, it generates longer droughts, more-intense downpours, more-frequent heat waves, and more-severe storms.

Although Katrina began as a relatively small hurricane that glanced off south Florida, it was supercharged with extraordinary intensity by the relatively blistering sea surface temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico.

The consequences are as heartbreaking as they are terrifying.

Unfortunately, very few people in America know the real name of Hurricane Katrina because the coal and oil industries have spent millions of dollars to keep the public in doubt about the issue.

The reason is simple: To allow the climate to stabilize requires humanity to cut its use of coal and oil by 70 percent. That, of course, threatens the survival of one of the largest commercial enterprises in history.

In 1995, public utility hearings in Minnesota found that the coal industry had paid more than \$1 million to four scientists who were public dissenters on global warming. And ExxonMobil has spent more than \$13 million since 1998 on an anti-global warming public relations and lobbying campaign.

In 2000, big oil and big coal scored their biggest electoral victory yet when President George W. Bush was elected president -- and subsequently took suggestions from the industry for his climate and energy policies.

As the pace of climate change accelerates, many researchers fear we have already entered a period of irreversible runaway climate change.

Against this background, the ignorance of the American public about global warming stands out as an indictment of the US media.

When the US press has bothered to cover the subject of global warming, it has focused almost exclusively on its political and diplomatic aspects and not on what the warming is doing to our agriculture, water supplies, plant and animal life, public health, and weather.

For years, the fossil fuel industry has lobbied the media to accord the same weight to a handful of global warming skeptics that it accords the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change -- more than 2,000 scientists from 100 countries reporting to the United Nations.

Today, with the science having become even more robust -- and the impacts as visible as the megastorm that covered much of the Gulf of Mexico -- the press bears a share of the guilt for our self-induced destruction with the oil and coal industries.

Ross Gelbspan is author of "The Heat Is On" and "Boiling Point."

APOC Conference Postponed

The Anarchist People of Color Conference scheduled for October 7-9, 2005 in Houston, Texas has been postponed due to a myriad of urgent circumstances and the need for local organizers to turn their attention to community efforts in this demanding time in our region. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the addition of over 100,000 new and temporary residents from the Gulf coast, Houston is short on help from the radical community.

We need to focus priorities on helping grassroots efforts for hurricane survivors who have been intentionally left behind and set-up by an arrogant capitalist state. It is easy to say that we should continue with the conference as scheduled, but our reality is the reality of most radical communities in this country. We are in the process of building strength as the world around us falls apart.

Houston is the epicenter of many struggles right now and it needs its own community members to figure out what is needed here before we move forward with a national conference within a month. There are many community efforts going on in Houston and not enough being done by the larger radical community in terms of support. We need educators, food, supplies and especially money for community organizations that are supporting Katrina evacuees. A clearinghouse is in the works of community centers, churches and shelters that are housing people.

Additionally, Houston is preparing itself for the coming of the racist border vigilante group, the Minutemen. Various community organizers have been readying themselves for direct actions, community patrols, and poster campaigns. Not to mention the impending state lynching of Frances Newton this Wednesday September 14th. While our hearts are heavy and the mind overburdened we must ready the fight. Houston's gonna pop. With all of this going on in our community, we realize that having additional people is not conducive to the needs that we have of building our foundations and preparing ourselves adequately for what's to come. We need some extra time, we need to prioritize and focus. With the date postponed, this conference can only be bigger and stronger than our last.

Concessions for the APOC 2005 conference have been put into place. Space is confirmed, we have the fundraising in motion, we have the schedules, we have the vision and ultimately we have the will and the strength to put it together. We are simply asking for solidarity and support in our decision to move it back to March. As we move forward, we ask for more input and debate, for more voices to be involved in the planning of the event. We have a great need for discussions to happen at our event. What is our direction? We have a need to figure out how to build solid networks, foundations and goals; engage in a critical analysis, create strategies and define common visions, goals. In the coming weeks, we will be setting up a conference specific website with discussion forums, room for debate, and more information about what is going on in the Belly of the Beast.

New and established community organizations are creating mechanisms for support where people can plug in. Right now, give your support in various ways. If you had in your plans to come to Houston already, come. There will be ways to plug in and be a resource. Let us talk about the format of the conference and how we can use the coming months to have a solid foundation.

There is also work at home, now. Build parallel institutions that foster self-determination, self-definition, unity, courage and hope. People in our communities know what is going on, now more than ever. How do we serve their needs and unite them across cultural and economic lines to take this system down by creating the alternative? Get together with other people of color in your cities, communities and regions. Build for March. If you can come help before, let us know and we will set you up. We look forward to seeing you in March!

In Struggle, from the Heart of the Beast,
Karla Aguilar and Heather Ajani-Villalobos.

You can make cash donations or send supplies from the list below to the following address and they will be distributed directly to people of color grassroots community centers in Houston: APOC-Houston, PO Box 667110, Houston, TX 77266-7110

Items you can donate: Cash, Non-perishable food items, Personal Hygiene, Diapers, Blankets; Women and Men's clothing (all sizes), Large/X-Large Women's Underclothes (bras and underwear), Gas cards, phone cards, grocery cards (Randall's, HEB, Kroger, etc.)



White Supremacy Free Zone (Photo: Bradley)

Kanye West is My Hero

By Justin Felux, Counterpunch, 09/05/05

"I hate the way they portray us in the media. You see a black family and they say we are looting, you see a white family and they say they are looking for food. And, you know, its been five days because most of the people ARE black ... We already realize a lot of the people that could help are at war right now, fighting another way. And now they've given them permission to go down and shoot us. George Bush doesn't care about black people."

- Kanye West, speaking to a nationally televised audience on NBC

"We've never seen anything like this before." I have heard this phrase repeated several times by newscasters describing the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. However, as I watched the footage of all those black bodies desperately trudging through dirty flood waters, I realized that I actually had seen something exactly like this before. It was one year ago, when Hurricane Jeanne slammed against the coasts of Haiti, a country which like New Orleans is both poor and black. The floods and mud slides ended up killing thousands of Haitians. The media gave scant attention to the matter for a few days; just long enough to get some sexy footage of houses being destroyed and valleys filled with floodwater. Enough to boost ratings for a while. Shortly after that, they packed up their equipment and got out of there faster than you can say "racist indifference."

The United States rendered so little aid as to be insignificant, and before long the entire incident had faded from the minds of most Americans. There were few cries of outrage over the fact that this country couldn't care less about the deaths of thousands of black people, but devotes countless hours of TV time to the latest Missing Pretty White Girl (I believe at the time it was Dru Sjin, not Natalie Holloway). But people dying in Haiti is one thing. Americans have always found it easy to dismiss the deaths of those from other countries, especially when those countries are full of dark-skinned people. But who would think our government would allow something equally devastating to happen to people on our own soil -- to people who are full-fledged American citizens (in theory, anyway)?

Enter Kanye West. The future of hip hop. An artist who more than compensates for his less-than-stellar skills as an emcee with his razor-sharp wit and passion for justice and equality, not to mention his bravado. It's hard to imagine any rapper since Tupac Shakur having the guts to get brolic with the Commander-in-Chief on national TV. He will undoubtedly be savaged by detractors on the right and the left for "politicizing" a fundraiser to aid the victims of the flooding. However, I have little doubt that Kanye was saying exactly what most of the black residents of New Orleans are thinking right at this moment. As Kanye said on his last album, "Racism's still alive, they've just been concealin' it," but it's in times of crisis such as this one that America begins to show its true colors, and "black" isn't one of them.

The truth is, Kanye West didn't "politicize" a damn thing. George W. Bush did. The hurricane became a political issue the second Bush decided there were more important priorities than shoring up the preventive measures in New Orleans; such as giving tax cuts to billionaires and launching an evil, imperialist war against the people of Iraq. Hurricane Ivan made it abundantly clear that New Orleans was unprepared to deal with such a catastrophe if one were to occur. If only Bush could be half the statesman Fidel Castro is. The Cuban government managed to evacuate over a million people, and didn't lose a single life to Hurricane Ivan.

In fact, I'd say Kanye was far too generous. Bush, as well as some of the other players in this affair, don't simply "not care about" black people. They have been proactive oppressors of African Americans for years. As Texas governor, Bush never met a death certificate he didn't like. As a result, he is personally responsible for the executions of numerous black men. Mississippi's governor Haley Barbour warned that all "looters" would be dealt with "ruthlessly." This is a man who has been linked to the Council of Conservative Citizens, a group started from the White Citizen's Councils of the civil rights era. These were groups committed to the preservation of Jim Crow and had intimate connections and overlapping membership with the Ku Klux Klan. And the New Orleans Police Department doesn't need a "shoot to kill" order from the governor to go about attacking black folks. New Orleans consistently ranks among the top cities in the number of citizen complaints of police brutality. Just last month, a black man named Raymond Robair died after the police brought him to the hospital. Witnesses observed the cops brutally beating him, leaving him with four broken ribs and a ruptured spleen.

Cartridges for Katrina? The white supremacists are supposedly collecting ammunition to be donated to racist vigilantes for confirmed kills of black "looters". The despicable ideological descendents of the KKK are still capable of spreading misery. Fight them! Protest white supremacists at the Georgia Peach Museum on Oct. 1, 2005 in Tempe, Georgia. See onepeoplesproject.com for details.

But don't expect the mainstream media to tell you anything negative about the New Orleans Police Department. Their time will likely be devoted to unsubstantiated stories that play into popular white fears about blacks -- stories about wild, black savages engaging in theft, murder, rape, and even cannibalism. White folks will eat it up like candy, and the ratings will soar accordingly. In a time when we are being bombarded by so many images and statements which seem designed to bring out the worst in us, it's very refreshing to see someone like Kanye West step up and call a spade a spade. Let's make sure he still has a career to go back to after the dust settles. First and foremost, we should donate money to the relief efforts, but it would also be a good idea cop Kanye's new album, Late Registration. It's a classic.

Justin Felux is a writer and activist based in San Antonio, Texas.

The United Houma Nation in Need

Indymedia, 09/20/2005

The 15,000 members of the United Houma Nation branch out across the most southeastern part of Louisiana. Of them, at least 3,400 have been direly affected by Hurricane Katrina, the homes of approximately 1,000 remain underwater, and the plight of all have been largely ignored by the federal government and mainstream media alike.



Still federally unrecognized by the U.S. government, the Houma's calls for help have too remained unheeded by the same authority. Fortunately, the Houma can count on allies such as the National Congress of American Indians and the Common Ground Collective. NCAI and the National Indian Gaming Association have teamed up in a million-dollar fundraising effort to benefit all of the tribes in the affected areas of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Meanwhile, the Common Ground Collective of the Algiers neighborhood of New Orleans sent one truck loaded with food and ice today. Another truck stocked with gasoline, water, and medicine, should be hitting the road tomorrow.

Throughout their history, the Houma have rebuilt and relocated after each displacement, be it because of natural disasters or man-made oppression. How many times must a people recreate themselves before the simple recognition of their existence is finally granted?