INDIANA UNIVERSITY

# Katrina's X, 6 Years Later: Examining the Intersections of Race, Class, and the Marginalization of Low-Income Families in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina

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BY

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The undersigned embers of the Graduate Faculty have examined this thesis entitled:

**Katrina's X, 6 Years Later:**
**Examining the Intersections of Race, Class, and the Marginalization of Low-Income Families in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina**

Presented by

**KIWAN R. LAWSON**

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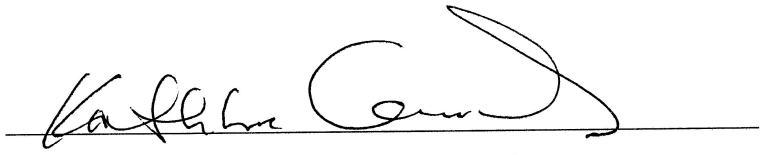
and hereby certify that it is worthy of acceptance.



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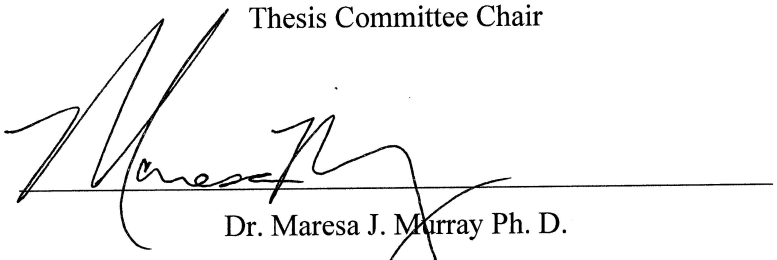

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# Dedication

To each individual affected by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast, August 2005.

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Numerous individuals have contributed to the advancement of my educational and athletic career and in my personal life overall, which provided me with the guidance that placed me where I am today. Throughout my life, I have faced and overcome many obstacles that have made me stronger and more aware of the challenges that are yet to come. My research on Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath has offered me the opportunity to realize the importance of close friends, family, kinships and the blessings therein. For that, I am humbled, honored, and appreciative to have a support group always ready and willing to assist me whenever necessary. Writing this thesis was one of the most challenging and intense tasks I have ever undertaken. I could not have completed it without the many people who support me.

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for me during difficult times in my life. To my grandmother, Patricia Hallaway (Mamps) and grandfather, James Hallaway (Papaw Jimmy), thank you for the unconditional love you gave me over the years as well. Overall, I am proud that the three of you kept the family together over the years. You all are the epitome of unconditional love and care. I believe I speak for the entire family when I say thank you, each of you are greatly appreciated. To my aunt Paula Lawson thank you for believing in me and encouraging me to pursue my dreams and aspirations. To my uncle Phillip Lawson thank you for contributing your time and perspectives as well. To my uncle Timmy, thank you for expanding my interest in music production and business. In many ways, music helped get me through the writing stage of my thesis. To my uncle Quintin Hallaway, you always knew how to make me laugh during our many late evening talks and model car sessions. Thank you for being there for me.

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Mumford, Chris and Katrina Reynolds, Mattie White, Korienth Patterson, and Brother Eric Saunders thank you for the support and encouragement. To my Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. LB's, Brother Eddie Cole and Brother D'uAndre Drain we are Three Tremendous individuals! Although we are apart, I love you all and our bond will never be broken RQQ! To Arielle McAlpin, thank you for introducing me to the *Voices of Hope* course, and inspiring me to do more on what we witnessed in New Orleans. In part, I was able to complete my thesis because of you. Thank you Cate Hart Hyatt for being a wonderful instructor, friend, and host. Thank you Little Farms Church and St. Patrick's Church, in particularly, Liz Reed for the room and board during the summer of July in 2011. I also want to thank the United Church of Christ Disaster Recovery program for providing a space for volunteers like me, worldwide, to help our brothers and sisters rebuild from one of the most devastating tropical storms to breach landfall.

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# Abstract

There is no question that Hurricane Katrina was one of the most powerful and destructive storms ever experienced in New Orleans, Louisiana. The storm and its floodwaters were responsible for over one thousand deaths, hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage and forced hundreds of thousands of residents from their homes. The purpose for this qualitative study was to critically examine the role of social forces such as of race, class, family, and kinship structures and how these forces functioned in New Orleans before, during, and after the events of Hurricane Katrina, utilizing an interdisciplinary research approach. In addition, I interrogate how and why these issues and social forces are obstacles of recovery as narrated by my interlocutors. I demonstrate that underlying issues such as situated poverty, inequitable distribution of wealth, and the gaps among people who have both wealth and an income verses those who rely solely on an income contributed to the scant progress of rebuilding the inner-city spaces of New Orleans after Katrina. Likewise, I reveal how individuals engage in diverse communal practices and diverse economies as a method of coping with the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and/or earning additional income or to mobilize through the Katrina ordeal.

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## Chapter I
## Introduction to Hurricane Katrina

It is Monday March 13th, 2010. As the other volunteers and I make our way to our destination, it is evident that inner city neighborhoods were desolated still. The landscape was a mix of shrubs, sand and gravel. As soon as we made our final turn onto Law Street, I could not help but notice a huge all white storage unit with a red and white sign that read "P.O.D." (Portable On-Demand Storage), in the front yard of the property. On the right side of the home, windows are boarded up. Nonetheless, the house that we are working on was the only house on the block that has people living in it. The property is a two-family "shotgun" style home, the type of home that one could look through the length of the house and see the backdoor from the front door. The siding of the house is painted pastel yellow. The two front doors are protected by steel storm doors. In addition, the homeowner's carport and garage are completely destroyed. A crate and a chain are left in the carport and garage area, which apparently belonged to their pet dog, possibly lost during the storm. Overall, the property is still in bad shape and from the looks of it on the outside, I personally, believe it should be rebuilt.

We began to unpack our personal items from the car at 9:55am. I examine the premises to notice that most of all of the volunteers are white and the homeowners are Black. As we walk into the house on the right side, we notice that the interior of the home is gutted. When we walk through the home, the homeowners inform us that the reason why the windows on the right side of the home are boarded up is due to vandalism and theft. Nonetheless, I can see the scant progress made on the house because it has electricity and new dry wall. The floors inside the home are only plywood—no carpet; no tile or finished wood. There are some areas in the house where the gaps in the floor are so

big I can see the sandy ground below. The restroom on the right side is not functional and building materials are scattered about the premises. The wood cabinets take up most of the space in the living room area. Since there is no daylight to illuminate the house, light fixtures and spotlights fill the room with a dull, depressing yellowish / golden color. Yet, the optimism of Mr. Coleman and the smell of hope through the odors of paints and wood brighten the room more than the lights can. As I further examine the remaining portions of their neighborhood, I notice more vacant homes devastated by the hurricanes and broken levees with the letters "TFW" (Texas Fort Worth) and a date, (for example: 9-16), spray-painted on the front and back of the homes. A fellow classmate and I walked the neighborhood while we snap photographs and film. House after house, block after block, it was obvious this neighborhood in particular is still suffering from the aftermath of Katrina. As we toured other inner city areas of the city, the destruction we witnessed on Law Street was also prevalent in several inner city neighborhoods in New Orleans. From what we could observe, the majority of the inner city residential areas were washed away.

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**Katrina**

Many people in the United States watched helplessly as Hurricane Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans and its surrounding Parishes August 28th through August 30th, 2005. News stations reported around the clock as the city's inhabitants struggled to evacuate flooded neighborhoods. Nearly six years later, I was privileged to have the opportunity to enroll in a service-learning mission course to New Orleans, Louisiana, offered at Indiana University. The purpose of the course was geared towards aiding victims suffering from the destruction of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The mission

trip was organized by a local church in New Orleans and a non-profit organization, which provided shelter and meals to volunteers in exchange for their service. I accompanied the course instructor along with two of my fellow students. Prior to departing from Bloomington, I outlined a list of tasks I wanted to investigate, such as understanding the significance of the letter "X" spray-painted on devastated homes, current living conditions and the progress toward reconstruction in the city.

Before Katrina, the City of New Orleans was home to approximately 478,000 people according to the U.S. Census (2000). As of March 2006, only an estimated 233,388 individuals remained in the city. Moreover, approximately 125,000 homes were destroyed and about 80 percent of Black New Orleans residents are still scattered across the United States today. These data reflect how large numbers of families and communities were affected. However, to truly understand the full magnitude of Katrina and its aftermath and the impact on those left behind, one must physically examine the inner city areas of New Orleans.

Evidence of the destruction at the hands of Katrina is apparent in the 5$^{th}$ and 9$^{th}$ Wards. The two wards are mostly comprised of low-income Black families. Visiting these communities it is devastating to see, after six years, the 5$^{th}$ and 9$^{th}$ Wards are stagnant and still remain in shambles. Upon exiting the 90 West ramp onto 3046 North, it did not take long before we confronted the devastation of Katrina and the broken levees. Functioning streetlights were far and few between and numerous houses remain vacant. The surrounding building structures are vacant as well. The "Xs", which were spray-painted on these vacant properties, are all too common. The "X" indicated four different vital pieces of information for rescue and recovery teams: the date searched; the agency

that searched the premises; whether the premises were entered, and whether corpses were found. Other markings such as "X/O" indicated the premises were searched and cleared. Most houses in the area are in need of demolishing. Accompanying these condemned residences are bagged garbage and uncontained litter. The trash within the area stretches as far as eyes can see. Thus 6 years after the disaster, the environment remains in terrible shape.

Before heading to the 9th Ward, we are told that it is the area most affected by Katrina. Surrounded by several bodies of water within a ten-mile radius, with Lake Pontchartrain being the largest, the outdated levee systems failed thus rendered the residence of the 9th Ward helpless when Katrina struck. We arrive to a very dark and eerie area in the 9th Ward we can barely see anything through the darkness. However, we do see numerous vacant homes throughout the neighborhood. The shrubbery is growing wild engulfing all that is in its path, and homes were either completely washed away from its foundation or physically dilapidated from Katrina. Furthermore, it is painfully obvious to see most of the infrastructure within the inner city area still in dire need of repair. The inner city communities of New Orleans are in the 'eye of the storm' and the residences continue to be ignored, nearly six years after the storm.

Outside the inner city residential areas of New Orleans are reconstructed communities and signs of life in the neighborhoods. Contrary to the conditions found in the 5th and 9th Wards, areas such as Jefferson Parish, the Commercial Business District and The French Quarter are rebuilt and seem to have recovered from the floodwaters, which engulfed the city late August 2005. As I travel throughout New Orleans, it is apparent that lower income communities mostly inhabited by Black families remain in

terrible condition after Katrina. Members of these communities lack basic necessities to which more privilege communities have access such as affordable grocery stores with healthy foods, hospitals, and renovated public educational facilities and infrastructure. In addition, some residents lack basic housing necessities, which conditions unlivable in their home. One of my interlocutors did not have electricity re-established to her property after her FEMA trailer was removed from her property. Why does it seem as though recovery efforts six years after Katrina have lacked in these particular communities? Why are there so many vacant homes? What social forces keep Black families in the 5th and 9th Wards from returning to their properties? In addition, what social forces construct the pathologizing stereotypes and ideologies of Black people during Katrina and how are those forces limit access to resources to help recover from Katrina? I want to know how race, socioeconomic status, influence the Black New Orleans residents' experiences with the rebuilding process in the aftermath of Katrina and how family bonds and alternative forms of kinship practices help these residents endure this crisis. Thus, drawing from my fieldwork experience in New Orleans, I examine the devastation of Katrina and how it exacerbated the already deleterious social conditions in which Black New Orleans residents lived.

**Review of Literature & Journalistic Coverage of Hurricane Katrina**

**Looters or Survivors**

It's important to distinguish the material realities of low-income Black life from the pathologizing discourses that worked to construct these Black people as backward, violent and criminal. Since Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters struck New Orleans, the immediate aftermath left the city in peril. Low-income Black neighborhoods were

destroyed. Some housing structures remained intact after the storm, yet endured severe water and wind damage, while, less fortunate housing structures were completely washed from their foundation. Furthermore, remains of the deceased washed up alongside streets, on top of highways and inside already devastated property. Yet, how were Black Katrina victims represented throughout the Katrina ordeal and what impact did it possibly have on the response to the conditions of the victims and survivors of the storm? Survivors faced several obstacles, such as unsanitary living conditions and evacuation quarters, and no access to food and clean drinking water for five days after the storm (Dawson, 2011; Dyson, 2006; Lee, 2006). In addition, the ill and elderly were exposed to extreme heat without necessary provisions, such as medication, clean clothing and personal items and medical attention. In the midst of all this devastation, the national media chronicled Hurricane Katrina and the social impact of its immediate aftermath; however, the lens through which Katrina was captured was skewed. Initially, many national media outlets such as *The New York Times'* report, "Hurricane Katrina Moves Onshore, Weaker but Still Threatening Havoc" (Treaster & Zernike, 2005); *CNN* reports, "Hurricane Katrina: Hurricane Hospitality," "Hurricane Katrina Makes Landfall," and "Hurricane Katrina Devastates the Gulf Coast" (2005), and the *Bloomberg's* report; "Hurricane Katrina Blows Off Parts of Superdome Roof" (2005). These news articles simply focused on the storm as it approached New Orleans instead of advocating for the all levels of government to adequately evacuate residents, especially those who lived in the city without the means to evacuate without assistance. By focusing on the storm, the media completely ignored the preexisting structural inequalities, which made the poor, the

working poor, and families living on a fixed income, more vulnerable to the perils of Hurricane Katrina.

Those who were most vulnerable to the perils of Katrina found themselves trapped, abandoned, displaced at the Superdome or Convention Center and reliant upon government assistance for days. As people grew tired of waiting, they began to help themselves by seeking food, water, medication and other life necessities (Cutter, 2005). Images with captions of so-called looters and survivors swirled the airwaves as Blacks and whites alike participated in survival activities. However, the media reproduced a discourse that constructed Black people in New Orleans in very problematic ways. These representations starkly contrasted the ways in which white people were viewed nationally. For example, the two images located on the left, Figure 1 and Figure 2, were two of the most reproduced and discussed in the national media. Figure 1 is an image captured by Dave Martin (2005), a photographer from the Associated Press displays who looks to be a young Black man, whose clothes are completely saturated, walking through chest high floodwater pulling a few plastic bags in his left hand and carrying a case of Diet Pepsi under his right arm. A caption emerged from the Associated Press stating that this young man had been "looting a grocery store." However, the second image (Figure 2) below

*Figure 1*. From New York Times Via Yahoo News. Copyright 2005 by Dave Martin Associated Press.

*Figure 2*. From The New York Times Via Yahoo News. Copyright 2005 by Chris Graythen AFP/Getty Images.

captured by Chris Graythen (2005), a photographer of Getty Images that displays two people who appears to be young white people again, walking through the floodwater in saturated clothing. They both have backpacks on their backs. The white woman has a loaf of bread and another item in her right hand. The caption for this image states the two were captured in this image after "finding bread and soda from a local grocery store." The emergence of images like these during the wake of Katrina advanced racist stereotypes of Black people. These representations constructed Black people as violent looters who were later framed as refugees. In other words, the media constructed Black survivors as outsiders. I argue that these representations impacted how Blacks were seen and thus perceived by the national citizenry throughout the Katrina ordeal.

In her book *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics and Performance* (2005), D. Soyini Madison discusses the importance and power of representation, particularly how it relates to multiply marginalized groups. Drawing from Stuart Hall (1997), Madison suggests that groups are treated in the ways in which they are represented. Thus, by representing Black Hurricane Katrina victims and survivors as violent looters and refugees, Black victims and survivors could not garner empathy and sympathy on a national level because they were not seen as human beings or citizens worthy of government assistance. Thus, the lack of empathy and sympathy may have prevented the kind of national outcry that would garner the level of aggressive response from the government necessary to impact the lives of the victims for the better.

Media representations of Black survivors of Katrina played a very significant role in how Blacks were perceived during and after the storm, since these media outlets possessed the power to broadcast their discourse of race and class to the rest of the world

without interpretation. Nonetheless, scholars such as Michael C. Dawson, Michael E. Dyson, filmmaker Spike Lee and activist Reverend Al Sharpton were very critical of both the media representation of Black survivors and the delayed response by all levels of government to provide prompt assistance before, during and immediately after the actual storm. For instance, Al Sharpton publically renounced the term "refugee," which was utilized by media to categorize Black victims and survivors of Katrina seeking higher grounds and the provisions needed for their survival.[1] In addition, several scholars examined and challenged the very social inequalities that media representations obscured (Belle, 2006; Dawson, 2011; Fairchild, Colgrove & Jones, 2006; Fussell, Sastry & VanLandingham, 2009; Lee, 2006; Stabile, 2006; Zottarelli, 2008). These scholars rightfully examine and challenge the negative and inaccurate discourses reproduced by the media, the failed emergency evacuation protocol and the delayed response to the aid survivors before and immediately after Katrina to provide a foundation. Furthermore, these scholars which critically examine the social ramifications of the structural inequalities that existed before the storm. However, according to the literature insufficient attention has been paid to the continuation of these social inequalities, which exists six years after the storm's passing. Furthermore, another very important element of the Katrina recovery that was neither thoroughly examined by scholars nor the media was what people actually did to survive while they waited for the government's response for assistance. Whether developing extended kinship communities or surviving on their own, Katrina victims found the strength to survive five days in extreme heat without power, running water, food, and without help from all levels of government, all the while being

[1] This scene is referenced from Spike Lee's film, *When the Levees Broke (2006)*.

forced by local authorities to remain at the Superdome and Convention Center, places in which were in inhumane and inhabitable conditions (Dawson, 2011; Lee, 2006).

Hidden from the public discourse were institutional and social entities and government officials who took their time providing and executing an effective evacuation strategy for those who were most vulnerable of being trapped in their own home. These people were mostly low-income Black residents who were in no position to evacuate the city without assistance. Spike Lee's documentary film, *When the Levees Broke: An American Tragedy* (2006), was filmed in wake if the immediate aftermath of Katrina, capturing graphic pictures and heartfelt stories of victims and survivors' loss, pain, frustration and agony. Spike Lee's documentary film displayed the very real lived experiences of those who survived after Katrina's floodwaters were gone. In his film, Spike Lee's film reveals that the federal government knew the potential magnitude of this storm and the power it had to devastate the city of New Orleans, yet offered no mass emergency assistance to help those who could not evacuate. In fact, Governor Kathleen Blanco publically announced a warning to all New Orleans residents who were either willing to remain in their homes or had no choice but to remain in their homes in the wake of Katrina that no help would be provided to them if they could not evacuate to the Superdome or Convention Center (Lee, 2006). Governor Blanco clearly overlooked the fact that 80 % of New Orleans residents relied upon public transportation as their primary mode of transportation (Fairchild, Colgrove & Jones, 2006; Lee, 2006).

During the immediate aftermath of the storm, the news media shifted from covering the storm to reproducing images and scenes, which contributed to overt racism, racial profiling and classism, which most scholars considered factors as to why there was

a slow and tepid response to aid survivors of Hurricane Katrina (Dawson, 2011; Lee, 2006; The Louisiana Justice Institute, 2011). In addition, on Thursday, September 1, 2005, Governor Kathleen Blanco called for martial law to control the looting in the city. The Governor stated at a press conference (as cited in *Outside the Beltway* by Joyner, 2005) "These troops are battle-tested. They have M-16s and are locked and loaded. These troops know how to shoot and kill and I expect they will" (Para. 1). The discourse produced by the national media presented a view of whites as survivors and displaced Black New Orleans residents as looters who are violent criminals and foreign (Elliott & Pais, 2006; Sobel & Leeson, 2006; Stabile, 2007). Clearly this was a problem because martial law gave full authority to law enforcement to legally shoot and kill anyone who fit the profile of a looter who was really Black survivors of Katrina, many of whom lost everything in the wake of the storm and were neglected by their government for assistance. In addition, national broadcast journalists and freelance photographers created a national discourse, of which everyone appeared to be survivors, regardless of race and class. Although most survivors experienced Katrina in similar ways, blatant racism underpinned the framing of and the commentary on those most impacted by the storm. Therefore, Black survivors who were elderly, low-income, were marginalized and blamed for not evacuating in time, regardless if they had the means or ability to evacuate. Survivors were also blamed for the violence and survival strategies and techniques such as and or seeking food, water, medicine and shelter, while they waited for government assistance. National media outlets framed these life or death decisions people made in order to survive, as Black people taking advantage of a terrible situation brought about by Katrina. In contrast, white people who were also participating in similar activities were

viewed and captioned as survivors as I previously discussed. Black survivors who were displaced by Katrina's floodwaters were labeled as refugees by media outlets (The Associated Press, 2005; The Daily Telegraph, 2005, 2006; Lisberg, 2005). Labeling victims and survivors as refugees had a direct impact on the perception of those who were in need of assistance. In this perception, Katrina survivors who were categorized as refugees were symbolically stripped of their citizenship by the media because they were forced out of their place of residence. Again, these images, captions, and public discourses rendered survivors helpless and abandoned them in the immediate aftermath of Katrina. In result, while Black survivors attempted to escape the unlivable conditions in New Orleans, they were met and turned around on the Gretna Bridge at gunpoint by the Crescent City Connection Police and the Jefferson Parish Sherriff and his staff under the direction of then Gretna, Louisiana Mayor Ronnie Harris (Burnett, 2005; Cutter, 2005; Johnson, 2005; Meeks, 2005). Moreover, Black men, women and children were beaten, arrested, shot and killed by local authorities and armed civilians without a legitimate reason throughout the city (Finn, 2011; Lee, 2006; The Louisiana Justice Institute, 2011; McGreal, 2010; Pinckney, 2005). It is apparent that race clearly played a factor during the aftermath of Katrina.

**The Structure of Infrastructure**

Before Katrina, the Army Corp of Engineers of New Orleans struggled to build a functional levee system since Hurricane Betsy. Nearly one year after Katrina struck, the Washington Post reported that the Army Corp of Engineers was at fault for inadequately designing floodwalls, which were not substantial enough to protect a large city (Warrick & Whoriskey, 2006). According to Louisiana Justice Institute and the Select Bipartisan

Committee, scant attention was paid to the inadequate pumping systems. National broadcast media outlets also failed to report on these inadequate pumping systems, which made those who lived in these areas more susceptible to catastrophic damage during a natural disaster (Dawson, 2011; The Louisiana Justice Institute, 2011; The Select Bipartisan Committee, 2006). There is no question that Hurricane Katrina revealed problems with infrastructure in New Orleans that existed long before the storm. Yet, Katrina also exposed to the world historical socioeconomic disparities. In fact, many Black New Orleans residents are still displaced today as the result of the mismanagement of the city in addition to a failed emergency evacuation plan (Brinkley, 2006; Dawson, 2011; Dyson 2006, Lee, 2006). Furthermore, Katrina left countless people searching for assistance to rebuild their life after the actual storm (Dawson, 2011). As described by my interlocutors, overwhelmingly, survivors' experiences and recovery during and after Hurricane Katrina were, in part, shaped by one's socioeconomic position, his/her access to wealth resources within the broader social landscape and the racial politics in New Orleans that have existed long before the Katrina breached landfall (Belle, 2006; Dawson, 2011; Fussell, Sastry & VanLandingham, 2009; Lee, 2006; Zottarelli, 2008). As the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) discovered with Hurricane Pam, a simulated category five hurricane within the Gulf Coast, a catastrophe such as Katrina was bound to happen in New Orleans (Cutter, 2005; Lee, 2006). Moreover, a City Council member expressed concern for the poor infrastructure in New Orleans, particularity in the inner city areas, which is still antediluvian today. Bridges are in dire need of repair and levee systems have been under construction since Hurricane Betsy struck in 1965 (Lee, 2006). Inquires emerged from activist Reverend Al Sharpton,

broadcast journalists Rachel Maddow, Anderson Cooper, and Georgetown professor Michael E. Dyson and national recording artist Kanye West during the immediate aftermath of Katrina, whom all questioned both the delayed emergency evacuation for residents and the inadequate response to the Katrina crisis, which left tens of thousands of people homeless or displaced (Belle, 2006; Cutter, 2005; Dawson, 2011; Dyson, 2006; Elliott & Pais, 2006; Fussell, Sastry & VanLandingham, 2009; Kates, Colten & Leatherman, 2006; Lavelle & Feagin, 2006; Lee, 2006; Moore, 2007; Stabile, 2007; Sobel & Leeson, 2006). The improper handling of this cataclysm amounted to an overall failure of all levels and branches of government. The government simply failed the victims and survivors of Hurricane Katrina who lived in the inner city wards of New Orleans (The Select Bipartisan Committee, 2006). "The revelations of inadequate responses to the hurricane's aftermath are not just about failures in emergency response at the local, state, or failures in the overall emergency management system. They are also about the failures of the social support systems for America's impoverished-the largely invisible urban poor" (Cutter, 2005).

**The Socio-Political Dynamics of Race**

National media outlets not only help to create negative representations of Black survivors, these outlets attempted to separate the devastation caused Katrina's floodwaters and the delayed emergency assistance as two entirely different instances. As reports of racial discrimination, racial inequity and injustice influencing how the delayed response to aid victims and survivors of Katrina were silenced by then Republican Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice and Ohio Democratic Representative, Stephanie Tubbs, what was brought to bear was a false pretense that race had nothing to with

mostly Black residents suffering in the city of New Orleans (*CBS News* & Associated Press, 2009). The Bush Administration and the national media outlets at times overemphasized the role of class as the sole determiner of one's experience during the storm and their ability to rebuild after Katrina. In addition, the Bush Administration and media outlets situated class in a way in which the race did not help determine one's experience of Katrina (Elliott & Pais, 2006; Sobel & Leeson, 2006; Stabile, 2007). Furthermore, class ideology was used as a way to deter national attention away from the blatant racism within the government, thus, denying the United States the opportunity to confront prevalent issues of race and class as the storm's consequences cut across race and socioeconomic status simultaneously (*CBS News* & Associated Press, 2009 Dyson, 2006; Lee, 2006; Stabile, 2007). By focusing on socioeconomic status alone, it allowed for Katrina victims' experience to be categorized as an independent issue, which did not take into account how race influences and impacts ones' ability to survive. However, the storm's consequences cut across race and socioeconomic disparities and I suggest that socioeconomic inequality is about race and class inequities. Therefore it is problematic to disregard the functionality of race as part of survivors' experience simply because not all New Orleans residents who occupy a similar socioeconomic position experienced Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath identically. Critiques of racism and how it functioned to delay the response for Katrina relief from broadcast journalist and Black activists surfaced after days of watching mostly Black New Orleans residents suffer and expire (*CBS News* & Associated Press, 2009). Again, national government leaders dismissed the role of racism, which still exists in New Orleans, and overshadowed it by supporting the notion that the aftermath Hurricane Katrina resulted from social inequalities and poverty

as those there missed conditions are those not structured by race. (Lee, 2006; The Louisiana Justice Institute, 2011; Pinckney, 2005). As a result, this was an opportunity to address how issues of race and class functions simultaneously and the effect it has on society.

In this examination of Katrina, six years after the storm, I examine race and class as inextricable social categories. I use intersectionality to analyze the data collected from my field research. I believe that one's ability to rebuild is influenced by race and class simultaneously. In other words, one's experience of Katrina is structured by granting unearned privileges and access to resources to those of a particular race, socioeconomic status and geographical space (Dawson, 2011). Subsequently, when minoritized groups cut across two social categories, for example a Black low-income New Orleans woman, the social obstacles of recovery they face are far greater than one who represents multiply privileged social categories. Hence, it is imperative to identify how social categories and the representation of people whose lives are structured by those categories shape the material realities of Katrina survivors. These are realities that survivors contend with daily as they attempt to reconstruct their lives after the devastation.

**Communities of Survival**

**Kinship**

Despite the failed government response to victims and survivors of Katrina, and the representation of them in the media that drew from racist and elitist stereotypes, journalist, individuals and communities pulled together to utilize their own skills and resources to provide for one another. By collectively providing their skills, knowledge, time, love, care and labor, these communities became, what I refer to as, communities of

survival. Communities of survival redefine the meaning and function of community by broadening the social roles and functions of community beyond its conventional definitions. These communities redefine family, kinship, religious organizations and networks. These alternative communities function better to serve its people in the midst of an environmental crisis such as Hurricane Katrina. Throughout American history, Black people have been forced to redefine dominant notions of family, and kinship in the United States since the days of (Arnold & Bailey, 2009; Blassingame, 1982; Buxton, 1840; Fogel, 1989; Russell, 1996). Slave families were torn apart during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, as a stark reminder. Whether by being captured on Africa's coastline, watching members of family being thrown overboard during the journey to the Americas or sold on the auction block, African slaves have been forced to create and recreate a functioning family system to rely upon in an effort to survive the daily hardships of slavery (Buxton, 1840; Fogel, 1989; Russell, 1996). Historically in the U.S., Blacks were marginalized and viewed as dysfunctional if the family did not reflect socially normalized family structures (Arnold & Bailey, 2009). Evident in the Moynihan Report (1965), the poor economic growth problem was blamed on the Black family for not following the nuclear family structure, having both the biological mother and biological father active and present in the household. Thus, by not following this nuclear family structure, the Moynihan Report claimed that Black families were the recipients of too many benefits from the government, which hindered socioeconomic growth and equality (Arnold & Bailey, 2009; Kelley, 1997; Moynihan, 1965). The report written by Moynihan and his colleagues do not address the material realities of what it meant to be Black in the United States, particularly during these times replete with racial antagonism,

tension, and strife. What the Moynihan Report suggests is if all Black families adopted this idea of a nuclear family structure in the household that their economic and political problems would simply vanish (Arnold & Bailey, 2009; Davis, 1983; Kelley, 1997). Moynihan failed to recognize the ways in which slavery and Jim Crow laws dismantle Black families. As mentioned above, slavery tore Black families apart. Soon after slavery was abolished, Black Codes[2] and Jim Crow laws kept public schools and housing communities segregated and racism apart of the American fabric. Furthermore, Jim Crow laws kept Black men and women from getting good jobs that paid a sustainable salary. This report damaged Black families and communities because it ostracized all other variations of family structure outside the nuclear system but did not ostracized white non-nuclear family structures (Ryan, 1965). How do Black Katrina survivors in New Orleans survive given that today, many Blacks in New Orleans are situated in less desirable spaces vulnerable to catastrophe and occupy low socioeconomic status with little to no wealth accumulated, very limited access to a quality education, and limited career opportunities (U.S. Census, 2005; U.S. Census 2010)? Carol B Stack's book, *All of Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*, (1974), provides a narrative of how impoverished Black communities contend with the economic, political and social inequities of Black inner city life. Her study provides a perspective of Black families and examines the role and importance of kinship ties as a method of survival within these impoverished communities. Drawing form Stack, this aspect of my study focuses particularly on what she believes is excluded from Black family studies in the United

[2] Black Codes: "restrictive laws which were designed to restrict freed Blacks' activity and ensure their availability as a labor force now that slavery had been abolished." For more, see http://www.history.com/topics/black-codes

States; adaptive strategies, resourcefulness, and the resilience of Black New Orleans families under the conditions of perpetual poverty (p. 22).

In Arnold and Bailey's (2009) study of alternative kinship formations among Black LGBTQ youth argues that even within Black families, members of the LGBTQ community, for example, who are abandoned by their biological parents or legal caregivers often seek and receive knowledge about safer sex practices, love, care and respect within these alternative kinship formations that their families of origin were either unable or unwilling to fulfill. Although this study does not focus on the Black LGBTQ community, particularly, the point is that when the biological parents or caregivers are either unable or unwilling to provide what Cornell West, (1993) refers to as "non-market values" (love, care, and service to others), Black people in particular are known to reconfigure, often times challenging, traditional configurations of family (Bailey, 2010; Flaherty, Facteau & Garver, 1987). Furthermore, the concept of non-market values also describes how people offer spiritual and emotional support for those grieving in the event of an environmental and social catastrophe such as Katrina. I both utilize and extend Cornell West's concept of non-market values in this examination. For this study, it is most appropriate to describe the labor and service people provide by and to one another in these surviving communities as *non-market assets*, as opposed to values. In the world of business, non-market assets pertains to activities performed by market orientated companies to attract more customers or to remain competitive in the market, such as establishing a new location, retooling, or new store appearance (McNaughton, Osborne, Imrie 2002). I conceptualize non-market assets differently. An asset can be owned

property and/or a skill, which can be sold and exchanged for cash, property or service.[3] I utilize non-market assets to capture better how people meet needs of others among surviving communities by providing spiritual, emotional, and labor in the absence of government emergency assistance and income. In Chapter Four, I use the concept of non-market assets to describe the essential function that these practices serve for people in need during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

**Resiliency**

Based on my research, the inner city spaces of New Orleans are still in shambles six years after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Furthermore, it is apparent that all levels of government are moving at a very slow pace to rebuild the neighborhoods that were completely destroyed. While not relinquishing the responsibility of the government and the agencies that are designed to respond to natural catastrophes promptly, the victims and survivors of Katrina adapt to their situation by helping each other get through this terrible time based on their own resiliency. People are volunteering their time to help bring back the neighborhoods in which they currently live. Church organizations house volunteers for a week if they are interested in joining the rotation to help rebuild devastated property. Many studies discount or overlook the importance of these adaptive institutions, which are developed from within these inner city spaces, for coping with poverty and survival strategies (Stack, 1974). However, adaptive institutions and community resilience represent another way of coping with the loss and destruction caused by the storm (Rodiguez, Trainor & Quarantelli, 2006).

[3] Assets: The definition was retrieved from Dictionary.com
http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/assets?s=t

As discussed by Daly, Jennings, Beckett & Leashore (1995) and Stack (1974), the Black community seems to develop effective problem-solving strategies in response to its needs when the dominant culture excludes the Black community from services as the community responds to new challenges. In addition, these scholars argue that these response mechanisms are rooted in African cultural traits, whereas everyone cares and provides assistance for one another regardless of biological relation. Moreover, McCubbin, Joy, Cauble, Comeau, Patterson, and Needle (1980), suggest that personal resources are another key aspect to surviving traumatic experiences. These scholars believe that personal resources offer a broad range of reserves and provide the labor, which reflect the characteristics of individual family members. These personal resources, as McCubbin and his colleagues suggest, are potentially available to any family member during times of need. McCubbin and his colleagues seem to focus on the assumed responsibility of the nuclear biological family. My views differ; I support all healthy and supportive forms of community, kinship and non-biological family structures as they provide non-market assets for solidarity among its members and to help mobilize through tragic times, events and environmental crisis (Stack, 1974).

**Barter/Trade System**

While I was conducting my research, I witnessed Katrina victims and survivors created barter/trade systems in attempt to rebuild their lives and homes. The barter/trade system serves as a form of a non-market asset present within mostly Black impoverished devastated areas of New Orleans. Although the barter/trade system seems antiquated, it is a functional and viable system in New Orleans offering victims and survivors a more affordable way to recover from Katrina's wrath. The domestic form of bartering used in

New Orleans today reflects what Kaikati, (1976) defines as "Straight Barter," suggesting that members of that community or group are willing to negotiate and trade their services with other members for services rendered. Within these dilapidated communities, the barter/trade system functions to provide little to no market cost of physical labor by other community members, which also provided the opportunity to purchase more supplies.

Informal economies emerged as another means to survive the Katrina ordeal. Cynthia M. Blair, author of *I've Got to Make My Living: Black Women's sex work in Turn-of-the Century Chicago* (2010), states the concept of the informal economy term is a way to provide an analytical view of labor and modes of income generation existing outside formal wage relations and employment (p.23). Challenging the term informal economies, Michael Samers suggests that scholars should refrain from using the term informal economy. In his article, "The Myopia of Diverse Economies, or a Critique of the Informal Economy," (2005), Michael Samers challenges the term informal economies, stating that the notion has a pathological and unusual appeal, concealing what is missing from social economic research, "such as non-monetary reciprocity, trust and its ability to act as a coping mechanism where corporate capitalism does not" (p.875). Samers suggests diverse economies provide members of a community an opportunity to earn an income, utilizing their entrepreneurial spirit. As non-market asset systems emerged as a reliable survival technique in New Orleans, diverse economies, such as sex work, drug trafficking and labor trading, serves as another asset to help victims and survivors mobilize through the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In New Orleans, these diverse economies emerge in oppressed low-income communities without viable means of career-based employment. These means cannot afford to be overlooked. They have real

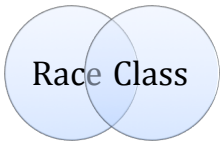
consequences if they are ignored or suppressed (Samers, 2005). After Katrina, many residents expressed feeling abandoned by the government. In addition, they found it necessary to survive their social position and living conditions by creating their own employment on their own terms. The idea of diverse economies is to encompass all of the self-sustaining employment opportunities created to survive the Katrina ordeal. Overall, the literature, which examines communities of survival, is limited especially regarding the context and situation in which my interlocutors find themselves. These survival techniques offer all who participate in diverse economies a chance to enhance the quality of life after Hurricane Katrina.

**Theory: Intersectionality and the Intracategorical Approach**

The lived experiences of my interlocutors' throughout the Hurricane Katrina ordeal are very complex. Those affected by Katrina experienced victimization differently based on race and class dynamics; therefore I utilize intersectionality to examine the ways in which social categories are experienced simultaneously (see Figure 3). Intersectionality enables scholars to recognize that social categories can make individuals more vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination such as racism and socioeconomic exclusions and marginalization. Since we all occupy multiple social categories simultaneously and have very complex identities, it is important to examine and delineate the various forms of discrimination, which impacts all social categories. In addition, intersectionality guides my interrogation of social privilege and the ways in which some are granted rewards at the expense of others (Crenshaw, 1994). This process creates the forms of marginalization from which many of my interlocutors suffer. It is also necessary to emphasize the complexities of each social category and refrain from the suggestion

that each category is mutually exclusive (African American Policy Forum, 2011). Thus, these lived experiences reveal how diverse structures, such as race and class, do not function independent from age, gender, sexuality and socioeconomic status, they are inextricably linked (Crenshaw, 1994).

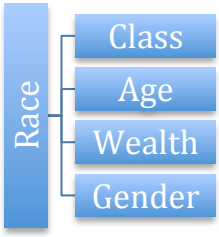
*Figure 3.*
The Intersectionality of Race and Class




As I examine the ways in which social categories are experienced simultaneously at the intersections of each category, another intersectional concept emerged. In Moore (2011), study of Black lesbian families, she agrees that the intersectionality approach reveals how diverse structures do not function independently from other social categories; however, she claims that this approach does not reveal how these diverse structures function within one single group. Citing McCall (2005, 1774) Mignon Moore suggests there is an "intracategorical" approach to intersectionality, which is often overlooked. The goal of the intracategorical approach is to analyze the experiences of individuals who are situated at the intersection of a single dimension of multiple categories as seen in Figure 4. Analyzing data using these techniques would not only reveal recovery differences particularly among race and class categories, but it also allows an analysis of differences of recovery among those who are situated in one overarching category, while occupying several intracategorical categories simultaneously. These reasons emphasize how germane intersectionality and the intracategorical approach framework are as the two serve as the guide to examine the aftermath of Katrina. In addition, these two frameworks are most appropriate ways to

understand the complexities of the Black experience six years after the devastation by providing the analytical tools to illuminate, what is missing from Katrina research the overarching categories, while simultaneously analyzing intracategorical categories from the perspectives of my interlocutors.

*Figure 4.*
The Intracategorical Approach
Example: Race Being the Overarching Category.
Class, Age, Wealth and Gender are the Intracategorical categories.




**Race v. Class Analysis**

Since Hurricane Katrina struck in late August 2005, there has been much debate about the extent to which race and socioeconomic status influence the post Katrina rebuilding process or the lack there of. As we observed in the national media coverage, the vast majority of people left behind struggling in despair were mostly low-income Black residents (Dawson, 2011; Dyson 2006). With so many of Katrina victims and survivors being Black low-income residents, it is imperative to examine race and class and how these categories impacted the lives of Katrina survivors. In order for one to fully understand the significance and influence of race and class as determining factors in the lives of Black New Orleans residents, it is imperative to examine the societal development of race and class and how it has contributed to the advancement of white wealthy elites in the United States. Scholars such as Melvin Oliver & Thomas Shapiro, (1997), Thomas Shapiro, (2004), Manning Marable, (1983, 2000), and Meizhu Lui et al., (2006), suggest that race and class are inextricably linked and are reinforced by

upholding societal norms and cultural practices that privilege whites and the wealthy. These scholars provide an historical analysis of race and class and how those two social categories are embedded in racism and capitalism, as they are also key determinants of one's ability to accumulate wealth and sustain quality living conditions.

Historical evidence reveals that New Orleans and the Gulf Coast was sought out to be a prosperous region by powerful White slaveholders and political leaders. Since New Orleans was home to these powerful and wealthy slave and plantation owners, it became necessity to maintain dominance over subordinate groups; what we now define as white supremacy and white privilege (Lavelle & Feagin, 2006). The racial landscape of this region has always been one filled with violence and oppression imposed on Black bodies. African slaves endured "Social deaths"(being striped of social ties, family and histories), at the auction block (Lavelle & Feagin, 2006). In addition, slaves were not allowed access to formal education. Thus, most slaves lacked the ability to read and write. The institution of slavery contributed to the economic growth and wealth of White plantation owners all while contributing to the degradation of Black slaves. As the demand for sugar and other profitable crops increased, slave trading became more public and more apart of the social fabric of New Orleans' everyday life (Lavelle & Feagin, 2006).

Once slaves were emancipated, Black residents faced de jure and de facto segregation.[4] They were often subjected to violence such as public lynchings. Such violence was implemented in order for whites to maintain supremacy and privilege over former slaves. Black Codes (1865-1868) and Jim Crow Laws (1876-1965) reinforced

[4] De jure segregation is separation enforced by law, while de facto segregation occurs when widespread individual preferences, sometimes backed up with private pressure, lead to separation. See Dictionary of American History: http://tinyurl.com/ksv5s62

these notions by permitting "separate but equal" public and privatized facilities. Consequentially, whites quickly migrated to suburban areas outside the city of New Orleans after World War II. However, Blacks could not follow because of strict segregation laws and deliberate discrimination by realtors (Lewis, 2003).

Though schools were considered equal by law, integrated public institutions lacked an equitable education with meager learning materials. By the 1980, Blacks represented about half of the New Orleans population, although less than 5% of those Blacks held the highest leadership positions within the city (Lewis, 2003). The racial landscape of New Orleans reflected other neighboring southern states; low-income Black communities marginalized and viewed as pathological. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant state in Racial Formations (1986, 1989), "racial categories and the meaning of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded. Racial meanings have varied tremendously over time and between different societies" (p.15). Within the US, the categorization of race has been used to exploit minority groups all while privileging whites, specifically white elite men.

As we draw from a historical analysis of race in New Orleans, one can also examine the creation of class inequalities in New Orleans as well. Thus, as property of White plantation slave owners, the class division among Whites and Blacks were evident. Black and bi-racial individuals were not White thus white privilege did not exist for them. Furthermore, Blacks were consider three-fifths of a human being Whites owned properties and profited from slave labor and trade. Black codes and Jim Crow laws enabled Whites to pursue life, liberty and happiness, yet prevented Blacks from integrating schools to get an equitable education, equitable housing opportunities and

equal opportunity for employment and city leadership positions. It is evident that class and race are social forces that are inextricably linked and co-create one another. Although the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s made an attempt to bridge the racial and class gap, Blacks people still endured discrimination in housing, access to a quality education, equal opportunity jobs and racial profiling. Today the Hurricane Katrina ordeal reveals societal inequities, inequalities and injustices on the Black community post Jim Crow.

**Overview of Forthcoming Chapters**

Chapter Two presents my methodological framework and fieldwork methods of the data collection process. Within this Chapter, I combine both critical ethnographic narrative and analysis elements to provide a more vivid analysis of my interlocutors' story. Moreover, I utilize critical ethnography and narrative analysis to reveal the social and geographic environment. The methods section discloses what techniques were employed to collect data.

Chapter Three addresses the following question: How does race and class influences ones' chances of recovery, experience or each thereof? Reflecting back to Chapter One, the media did not adequately report the structural and social conditions of New Orleans, particularly among low-income Black families. By ignoring the hardships New Orleans residents face each day, the media was able to create discourses about victims and survivors who sought shelter and assistance during Katrina. These discourses shaped the way in which Blacks were viewed, in comparison to their counterparts, in the public eye. Chapter Three also examines the power and influence of these discourses, which situated White survivors in a different social position from Black survivors. Therefore, within this chapter, I will provide a brief historical analysis of race and class,

which will allow me to unpack the multi-dimensions of these social practices that reproduce and structure discriminatory practices and discourses within the U.S. Furthermore, I will examine how race and class determines who has access to wealth, who occupies what particular geographic space and its vulnerability to social and natural disasters and who are seen as citizens in this country. Lastly, by examining the intersectionality and intracategorical perspective of race and class, I explicate why I believe Hurricane Katrina was more than a 'natural' disaster. Likewise, this analysis illuminates problematic rebuilding issues still prevalent today in the inner city wards of New Orleans.

Chapter Four examines what I call "Obstacles of Recovery." As I discuss in Chapter Three, by examining how race and class determines who has access to wealth, who occupies what particular geographic space and its vulnerability to social and natural disasters and who are seen as citizens in this country, this social forces clearly presents challenges and obstacles that deters one from rebuilding after the storm. Chapter Four explores issues of inequitable distribution of wealth and the difference among those who have access to wealth versus those who earns and relies upon an income. In addition, this chapter investigates the obstacles New Orleans residents faced when they tried to return back to their home. This chapter delineates socioeconomic and geographical structures, which were already in place, before Katrina occurred. Lastly, I will investigate how those structures help predetermine who would qualify for FEMA assistance, enabled the disbursement of New Orleans residents all over the U.S., and the lack of information given to those residents, which would have provided an opportunity for those residents to return home.

In Chapter Five, I transition from focusing on how social forces shaped the experience of those who survived Hurricane Katrina to how individuals came together as a community to help each other through the aftermath of Katrina's destruction. Here, I introduce a new concept, communities of survival. Within this chapter I utilize the concept of non-market assets to analyze how alternative forms of kinship, such as non-nuclear families, support groups, organizations function within devastated communities to endure the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. As revealed by my interlocutors, community members within devastated areas and non-profit organizations participated in and relied upon diverse economies and non-market assets to mobilize through the Katrina ordeal. While not relinquishing the responsibility of all branches of government and its failed response, these groups draw upon the wealth of diverse economies and non-market assets to help rebuild their homes and provide emotional, social and financial support. The strength of these communities demonstrates the resiliency and determination to rebuild despite the conditions in which they are subjected to.

Each chapter unpacks the experience of Black New Orleans residents before during and after Hurricane Katrina. Overall, it is clear to me that race and class are social categories, which are inextricably linked that underpin social inequalities granting privilege granted to whites while subjecting minorities to discrimination, violence, and impoverished living conditions. Thus, I believe it is necessary to examine how each social category contributes to racial injustice and massive socioeconomic disparities. There is no coincidence that low-income areas, mostly occupied by Black families, are still in the deleterious state that they are in today. However, the communities in these areas are pulling together to rebuild and recover. As I examine post Katrina conditions of

New Orleans, I found that structurally, Blacks communities have faced social injustices and inequalities long before Katrina struck the gulf coast and have worked together, mobilized resources in order to survive social and natural crisis.

## Chapter II
## Methodological Framework & Fieldwork Methods

### Critical Ethno-Narrative Analysis

The tragic events of Hurricane Katrina and the severity of its aftermath are very complex and multifaceted. The events Hurricane Katrina demands for me to interrogate the lens through which I witnessed Katrina's aftermath six years later. My overall goal is to provide a narrative of survivors' stories in addition to providing a descriptive assessment of both, the conditions in which Black families, particularity within the 5th Ward, Upper and Lower 9th Ward and East New Orleans, lived and what activities they engaged in to survive while losing nearly everything they owned. I combine both narrative analysis and critical ethnographic elements (critical ethno-narrative analysis) to provide a data, which tells the story of my interlocutors, in addition to providing more detailed information about the social and geographic environment. Critical ethnography and narrative analysis both have elements of which compliment one another by aligning the narratives with observations, interactions and social phenomena.

Narrative Analysis, as described by Daly (2007), centrally focuses on the individual(s) to provide a story based on their own experience. Furthermore, narrative analysis allows for one to examine the content of their story such as events, activities and personal accounts of how the story is delivered. Citing Murray (2003), Daly (2007) suggests narrative analysis can be divided into two pieces: descriptive, focusing on content and structure, and interpretive, focusing on the researcher assumptions and belief. My examination of the aftermath six years after the storm must remain descriptive. Although narrative analysis has important elements to help explain ones experience as told by the interlocutor, a narrative analysis cannot fully capture the complexity of the

Hurricane Katrina's aftermath and the effect of how it has devastated Black New Orleans residents. For the purpose of my study, it is imperative take an interdisciplinary approach to encompass the larger, social, institutional and geographical context of Katrina.

In *Critical Ethnography*, (2005), Madison emphasizes that an ethical critical ethnography is designed to address the processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain. Thus, if the social or geographical conditions are not as what they could be for their particular participants, the researcher may feel obliged to contribute to changing those conditions toward greater freedom and equity of their subjects. Therefore, the researcher will be able to challenge oppressive institutions, regimes of knowledge production, and social practices that ultimately alter meaning, construct social expectations of identity and community (5). In addition, Daly, (2007), express that critical ethnography engages and challenges subjugated knowledge, discourses and exploitive relationships. Often times, ethnography is based on quantity of time spent in the field of research in the data collection process (Daly, 2007). However as a qualitative researcher, I am more concerned with the quality of data accumulated rather than the quantity of time spent in the field, which is why my research contains ethnographic elements to provide more data to situate my interlocutors' narratives in the larger context of surviving and recovering from Hurricane Katrina's aftermath six years later. Critical ethno-narrative analysis does not focus on time spent in the field. Critical ethno-narrative fundamentally provides scholars an opportunity to situate the narratives of the interlocutors, participants, and key informants within the larger social context. Moreover, these narratives provide more insight by bring to light actions, events and other phenomena not observed by the researcher. On the other hand, the researcher could

engage their interlocutors on actions, events and other phenomena observed while collecting data in the field. I argue, critical ethno-narrative analysis provides an opportunity to conduct groundbreaking research over shortened periods of time and with limited resources.

While I was conducting my research, I was faced with managing my emotional response to the conditions of which people live. As I listened to my interlocutors recall their experience of Hurricane Katrina, I could feel their pain and sense the magnitude of their loss. It was painfully obvious that most of my interlocutors lived in areas that had been ignored since Katrina stuck. I witnessed young children playing in the backyard of house, which was adjacent to a furnished abandoned house completely destroyed by Katrina. Desolate neighborhoods destroyed by the storm, mirrored cemeteries. A few of my interlocutors had holes in their flooring, water lines and mold on the walls. The magnitude and impact of Katrina's floodwaters were present and the aftermath was real. In her book, *The Emotional Nature of Qualitative Research* (2001), Kathleen Gilbert addresses how the human emotional response contributes towards the research. Gilbert claims that our understanding as a qualitative researcher requires empathy. In addition, qualitative researchers must draw upon a rational understanding of the activity or environment while they apply their subjective views because their reactions shape the direction and depth of their understanding of the lives and experiences of their interlocutors (11). Furthermore, Gilbert suggests researchers may choose topics or experiences close to them, which could trigger a highly emotional response (12). As I witnessed the devastating events of Hurricane Katrina unfold on television, I felt compelled to provide some sort of assistance to those who endured the storm. However, I

faced several challenges balancing time and negotiating academic and athletic commitments, which delayed my efforts. Nonetheless, I was privileged to have the opportunity to enroll in a service-learning mission course to New Orleans, Louisiana, offered at Indiana University. This was important to me because it granted me an opportunity to not only provide physical labor to survivors, while investigating first-hand the institutional and social forces that impact the lives of Black New Orleans residents and ramifications of these forces revealed by Hurricane Katrina and it's aftermath.

*Figure 5*

The structure pictured in Figure 5 serves as an example of why critical ethnographic elements are intrinsically significant aspect of my research. As an observer in the field, I am able to not only contextualize the narratives provided by my interlocutors; I can show the reader images that capture the social and geographical milieu, which situates their overall narratives. In addition, critical ethnography and narrative analysis together provides a method, which enables me to reference images and observed phenomena while conducting research. For example, the structure in Figure 5

structure above is a house located in the 9th Upper Ward of New Orleans. The home is vacant and sustained damage from Hurricane Katrina. Several of the windows on the left side of the home are broken. The structure has spray-painted "X" on the front wooden siding. The "X" represents four important pieces for search and rescue teams. Starting at the top of the X or northern quadrant, this area represents the date when the property was searched. The right side of the X or the eastern quadrant represents how many hazards, such as sewage, gas leaks, and/or contaminated water inside appliances, are inside the property. The bottom side or the southern quadrant of the X represents how many expired people or animals were found in the property. The left side of the X or the western quadrant represents the search team or military company that searched the property. The markings on this property indicate the structure has been searched three or more times. A local police officer informed me that as the floodwater receded, expired remains often times drifted into vacant homes after the property was searched. Therefore, it was necessary to search vacant structures more than once. The markings spray-painted on the outside of the property indicate, from the information given in the image, the structure was searched and cleared. The two properties on the left and right of the centered structure are both vacant and in need of repair.

The description above vividly illustrates the importance why critical ethnographic research is vital to my research of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina six years after the storm. In addition, it provides a more detailed analysis of the environment as it coincides with the narratives of my interlocutors. Moreover, ethnographic enables me to illustrate the narrative of my interlocutors to the reader, which is imperative for understanding the

social and graphical climate of New Orleans, in addition to the nature of what residents are experiencing as they recover from the Katrina ordeal.

**Examining NOLA: Data Collection Methods**

I traveled to New Orleans to collect to begin my research July 13 through July 20, 2011. With the understanding that my time would be limited, I knew I must collect an enormous amount of quality data within a limited period of time. Therefore, I decided to use several methods to collect data; snowball, semi-structured interviews, observation and surveillance, capturing still images of the social and geographical environment, attended and audio recorded interviews, meetings and voice memos. I also participated in recovery work as a volunteer worker. Sponsored by local church, financially disadvantaged residents were able to apply for and receive free labor assistance from volunteers through this church based recovery program. Using the snowball method, (asking interlocutors for other referrals), I conducted eight semi-structured interviews with members of the 5th Ward, 9th Ward, East New Orleans, Gentilly and surrounding areas. These semi-structured interviews were based on some broad topics to discuss, with the intention of allowing my interlocutors to elaborate the details of their experience with Hurricane Katrina and the rebuilding process.[5] As I observed the city and its' residents, I captured thousands of pictures mostly consisting of structures and areas that were still in need of restoration, nearly six years after Katrina. I also participated in the recovery efforts. I joined a volunteer group in collaboration with a larger church based program to help rebuild the homes of those who were in the process of returning to New Orleans. As I walked the streets of the 5th and 9th Wards, I was able to meet homeowners who had survived Katrina and was able to talk to them about their Katrina experience.

[5] See Appendix 1

Furthermore, I was invited into their homes and was able to witness the damage Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters caused to the property. I attended two City Council meetings at City Hall. I met former Councilman, Jon Johnson and staffers for City Council members. I audio recorded the council meetings and semi-structured interviews and took extensive field notes. My audio recordings of my interviews were transcribed. I was approved by Indiana University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct my research in New Orleans, Louisiana on July 14, 2011.[6]

[6] See Appendix 2

## Chapter III
## "It Made Bad Matters Worse"[7]
## Pre-Katrina Conditions and What Katrina Actually Revealed

### "Bad Matters…"

The city of New Orleans is known for its tourist attractions: soulful music and diverse cuisine. New Orleans is an amazing city, which encompasses the essence of African-American and Creole cultures and traditions. However, prior to Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans was less known for having experienced its share of natural disasters and social and economic hardships. Systemic forms of racism and classism have plagued New Orleanians for decades, and this has disproportionately affected the city's Black residents, with its' limited access to quality housing and modes of transportation. The city is rife with shoddy infrastructure and unsustainable—low-wage—employment. Politically, for a long time, there has been a disconnect between local government and communities in which it serves. These issues were prevalent in New Orleans prior to the events of Hurricane Katrina. Ms. Baker, a lifetime resident of the 5th Ward provided more insight of the social conditions within her community. From her perspective, Ms. Baker believes that matters, i.e. living conditions, were already bad in New Orleans. This chapter discusses the ways in which Hurricane Katrina merely exacerbated and revealed the already intolerable living conditions under which mostly Black people lived in New Orleans. I discuss four central points, which I argue, affected the lives of New Orleans residents *before* Hurricane Katrina. First, I provide a spatial analysis of the social geography of the City of New Orleans and its wards. I introduce the term and challenge the ideology of garbage area as used by an assistant to a city government representative.

[7] Ms. Baker stated: It [Katrina] made bad matters worse, as she describes her lived experiences before and after the storm.

Secondly, I outline the systemic forms of social depravation that existed before Katrina. My third point examines what it means to be stuck in poverty and the lack of opportunities that are available to those who are impoverished. Lastly, I challenge the notion of what Hurricane Katrina actually did to the city and people of New Orleans. As evidenced by my research, I suggest that the destructive effects that were represented as having been caused by the storm were actually already present in these low-income predominately Black areas in New Orleans.

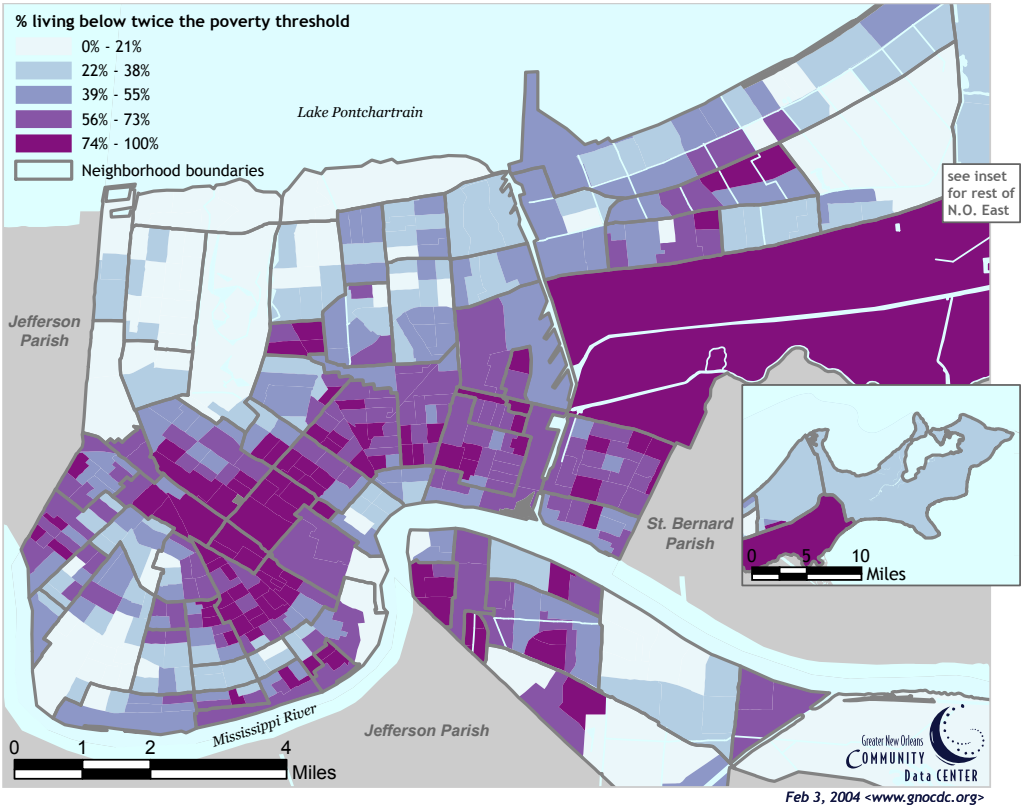
**The Social Geography of New Orleans and its Wards**

It is important to examine the social geography of New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina hit the city. The City of New Orleans is part of the larger Orleans Parish (e.g. county). The city is divided into five districts or segments; Districts A, B, C, D, and E. Each district is comprised of several wards (e.g. neighborhoods) throughout the city.[8] In 2000, the City of New Orleans was predominately occupied by Blacks according to the U.S. Census (2000) with a population of 484,674 people. Blacks represented approximately 67.3 percent of the population estimating 325,947 people. Whites represented approximately 28.1 percent with an estimated 135,956 people. The median household income level for the City of New Orleans was $27,133 in 1999 (Census, 2000). Before Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans was dealing with a dilemma of abject homelessness and poverty. In their ongoing "Point in Time Comprehensive Estimate of Homeless" study, the social service group, UNITY of Greater New Orleans, reported more than five thousand individuals who were classified as homeless in New Orleans in 2005. Moreover, UNITY suggests that during any given night in the Orleans Parish, there

[8] See http://www.nolacitycouncil.com/maps/maps.asp

could be more than six thousand homeless individuals (UNITY, 2011). Among those who were not homeless, tens of thousands of families also lived twice below the national poverty threshold as shown in Figure 6. Although there was poverty throughout New Orleans, mostly Black urban areas such as the Upper and Lower 9th Ward, Mid-City and East New Orleans were subjected to this extreme form of poverty the most as displayed below also shown in the figure below.

*Figure 6:*




**Data sources:** Poverty rates (Census 2000), water & parish boundaries (Census Tiger files), neighborhood boundaries (adapted from City Planning Commission of New Orleans)

Furthermore, the U.S. Census statistics (2000) indicates that the families and communities most affected by Katrina were impoverished communities. In addition, these areas were located near outdated levee systems and deteriorating wetlands, which subjected its residents to catastrophic damage. Overall, the Census data revealed that these residents had very limited resources to evacuate immediately in the event of a

natural disaster. Mr. Turner, a staffer for one of the city council members, described how impoverished Black communities were abandoned not warned about possible flooding and destruction of Hurricane Katrina. According to Mr. Turner "the 9th Ward, the 7th Ward, they were not warned. They were all just flooded out. Many people uptown they were not warned. The garbage areas were not warned" (Mr. Turner, personal communication, July 12, 2011).

Mr. Turner's use of the term "garbage area" is important here. The term describes neighborhood and areas in which poor and low-income Black families live. The term not only characterizes how New Orleans city officials view this geographic space, but it also a derogatory term used to characterize the people who predominately live in these areas—poor and working poor Black people. In other words, the term "garbage areas" is a sociopolitical term, which implies that these areas and those who live in them are trash and disposable. The term is used devalues and demoralizes the residents who are subjected to racism and have very little opportunity to build wealth. In addition, the term undergirds and influences policy decisions. This sociopolitical term enabled Mr. Turner to categorize this space by the explicit demarcations of the space… i.e. who occupies the space and its locale. Drawing from McKittrick and Woods, (2007), Mr. Turner's phrase is based on a common-sense ideology, which produces knowledge of the real and imagined human geography. In this case, these geographies reflect the material realities and consequences of race, racism and poverty as it correlates with impoverished communities and the lack of neighborhood return (McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Bailey & Shabazz, 2013). Hence, both social and geographical spaces are key determinants of who benefits from social privilege and who suffers from social neglect.

Touring the neighborhoods, the housing and building communities I see are very modest and simple. In individual interviews, Mr. Turner and Dr. Delany, a professor of Tulane University, informed me that majority of the homes built in these predominately Black low-income wards of New Orleans were wooden single-family shotgun style homes built after World War II. Areas such as the 9th Ward and East New Orleans were designated for modest Black homeowners. The majority of the homes was either built ground level or were elevated no more than one foot from the ground. Homes in this area averaged the size of nine hundred to about one thousand square feet. The construction of these homes took place before the City of New Orleans enacted laws for homes to be built ten or more feet above ground level. In addition, several of these homes did not have a mortgage attached to the property, which then homeowners were not required to purchase homeowners or flood insurance. As I reveal in the forthcoming sections, these structural forces provided a foundation for how residents, particularity Black residents, are devalued, neglected and cast out of the society.

**Structural Racism and the Public Agenda**

Sadly, racism, discrimination and class differences have been a part of the U.S. fabric for hundreds of years. Although the mask of racism, discrimination and class issues have changed over time, its material realities and structural consequences still exist today. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is a testament of how Black New Orleans residents contend with these structural forces, which are underpinned by government policy and social practices. As I examine the impact of these structural forces, it is clear to me that these forces are in place to minimize opportunities to accumulate wealth, all the while producing and reproducing systemic poverty, particularly among Black

residents throughout New Orleans. In, *Introduction to Black Studies* (1993), Maulana Karenga defines the Black community as a group of people sharing common spaces, experiences, views, value systems, social institutions and self-consciousness (p. 270). In addition, Shapiro (2004) suggests that there is a racialized ceiling within these neighborhoods because middle class whites will not move into these communities, which also keeps out their economic value (p. 58). Thus, poor Black residents are confined to these less than desirable spaces of low value due to convergent forms of structural racial and socio-economic marginalization, which simultaneously shut Blacks out of the larger society.

Ms. Hamer is a current resident of New Orleans East working class community. She spent most of her adolescent life in the 9th Ward and much of her adult life in New Orleans East. She is no stranger to the societal neglect and abandonment of Black working class and impoverished communities. Ms. Hamer witnessed these social trends all throughout her life in New Orleans. She reflects on her experience:

> The areas that had the most water were your Black areas. I mean you had whites in the area, okay. However, the majority, like the east is now a majority Black, the Lower 9th. This used to be white area. You know, white flight, Blacks moving in whites move out. That is what this is. The Lower 9th is mostly Black. Now Chalmette as you go farther back and you're going to Chalmette, St. Bernard, all of that, that was mainly white. I mean because if you look around, you can see it. But again, they're very good.

As I looked around her neighborhood and the surrounding ones, I witnessed closed factories, schools and grocery stores. I witnessed poor infrastructure, abandoned homes and neglected communities left in shambles after Katrina. When Ms. Hamer asked us to "look around," she wanted us to see beyond the mask of recovery to analyze structural racism and how it influences the economy and recovery process. The concept of structural racism accounts for the ways in which social patterns of urban divestment and residential segregation produces, disproportionately, vulnerable communities and populations. In addition, structural racism also accounts for the ways in which public policy produces intended and unintended consequences without necessarily relying on racist actors (Powell, 2007). Utilizing this concept helps to reveal social patterns such as ghettoization and urban divestment such as deindustrialization that has contributed towards unsustainable living conditions in New Orleans preceding Hurricane Katrina.

**Deindustrialization and Ghettoization**

The concept of deindustrialization is important to discuss when one examines the social climate of New Orleans. Drawing upon Bluestone and Harrison's (1982) idea, the concept of deindustrialization explains the widespread divestment of New Orleans productive capacity. In other words, as industries began to vacate neighborhoods and surrounding areas, those who have access to wealth and opportunity to relocate vacate as well. What remains are physical areas populated with vacant structures and a community filled with socioeconomically disadvantaged residents who lack the means to escape declining living conditions. The concept of deindustrialization captures the trend my interlocutors revealed to me. In their perception, social divestment renders communities helpless, as there are very few opportunities to secure and maintain employment, which

yields a livable wage. In addition, these disadvantaged areas lack a functioning infrastructure and an economy that would attract more entrepreneurs and major retail chains. Mr. Turner suggested that changes in the New Orleans communities and economy has brought on negative consequences that have systematically forced, particularly, Black New Orleans residents into poverty and are regulated in working for service industry jobs. He claimed, due to deindustrialization in New Orleans, the city's economy is based on low-wage tourist jobs. In effect, the neighborhoods and the people who occupy them are systemically devalued and the land depreciates more over time (Mr. Turner, personal communication, July 12, 2011). Mr. Turner described this process as a cycle. He believes the cause of this cycle is not rooted solely within the scope of one societal force. Instead, his idea is that this cycle revolves around social inequality, marginalized housing communities and inequitable wealth and income distribution through the process of inclusionary and exclusionary practices.

Through inclusionary and exclusionary practices,[9] race and socioeconomic status, in part, become indicators of what is valued in society. One interesting fact about New Orleans is that most working class Black people do not live in or have access to working class white neighborhoods such as Lakeview. According to Mr. Turner, Black families that currently live in mostly white areas in New Orleans are being forced from their homes through the process of what Mr. Turner revealed as "pricing loud," the procedure of increasing taxes and higher living costs. I will explore this idea more in Chapter Four. Nonetheless, the only viable option they have is to move into working class Black neighborhoods, which in Mr. Turner's opinion, is a step down from what mostly white

[9] Inclusionary & Exclusionary Practices: See Marc Seitles "The Perpetuation of Residential Racial Segregation in America: Historical Discrimination, Modern Forms of Exclusion and Inclusionary Remedies" (1996).

neighborhoods have to offer, such as better schools, grocery stores, and infrastructure. Therefore, mostly Black populated areas exist as "garbage areas" because of the people, the socioeconomic conditions in and the political regulation of the neighborhoods. Furthermore, because of the social divestment in these Black neighborhoods, middle class white families will not choose to move into a mostly Black neighborhood, which lacks adequate infrastructure, retail and social value by local and state governments, when they have the privilege to choose otherwise (Shapiro, 2004 p. 59). Although white and Black working class residents and their respective neighborhoods may reflect a middle class environment, white neighborhoods are granted more privileges, as Black neighborhoods depreciates over time. In other words, middle class white residents and neighborhoods have access to even more resources than middle class Black families and their neighborhoods, which has consequential results in education, health, income and wealth building (Lareau, 2002 p. 749). Furthermore, as white families relocate to other areas within or outside the city, i.e. white flight,[10] retail industries and other businesses follow, ultimately stripping the area left abandoned of its economy. In addition, the more Black families move in, the systems of ghettoization begin to shape the material life expectancy and realities of those residents who are trapped within these "garbage neighborhoods". Drawing from Mr. Turner's cycle analysis, these social forces act in unison with one another, as it influences the quality of life an individual can have given the limited resources available.

It is necessary to discuss how the idea garbage areas is a result from ghettoization Above, I discussed what garbage areas are and how they produce and reproduce systemic

[10] White Flight: See Frey "Central City White Flight: Racial and Nonracial Causes" (1979) p. 425-448

forms of inequality. This inequity influences policy decisions. In addition, these areas regulate social resources communities have access to and the living conditions under which people in these communities live. Mr. Turner's use of the term "garbage areas" reflects the process of ghettoization and maintained conditions therein. Maulana Karenga defines ghettoization as bounded communities and common spaces in which Blacks people occupy. Black people in these spaces share common social institutions and self-consciousness (1993 p. 270). Referencing the work of DuBois, Drake and others, Karenga suggests that the ghetto is a social reality, which is guided by six basic dimensions; geographical territory and access to other territories, racial and ethnic make-up, socioeconomic status, institutionalization, political and psycho-cultural i.e. the views and values and productivity of the community (1993, p. 271-272). Oliver and Shapiro claim that Blacks continue to be adversely affected by these systemic practices such as ghettoization. In addition, the two scholars contend that Blacks are denied access to wealthier white communities through a discriminatory process known as redlining.[11] Thus, established Black and racially mixed communities are deemed undesirable socially and there is no investment into these communities and the economic value depreciates. On the other hand, white residents have more opportunities to relocate in more desirable areas than Blacks. Oliver and Shapiro suggest this system further segregates Black residents and abandons Black and racially mixed neighborhoods (Oliver & Shapiro, 1997; Shapiro, 2004). Reflecting back to Dr. Delany and Mr. Turner's account of pre Katrina conditions in New Orleans, the social forces that existed before the storm shaped the lives of Black New Orleans residents significantly. It is clear that these social forces

[11] Redlining: See Oliver & Shapiro *Black Wealth / White Wealth* (2007) p. 19

help create the economic and social hardships and conditions under which Black residents lived (Karenga, 1993; Oliver & Shapiro, 1997; Shapiro, 2004).

Both deindustrialization and ghettoization play a significant role in situating and confining impoverished and working class people to particular spaces and available resources, then regulating the conditions in which people live. Evident of the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina and a failed levee system, deindustrialization and ghettoization in New Orleans functions to further marginalize particularly, low-income Black communities, leaving many working class residents in New Orleans fringe of collapse without any material wealth to ascend out of it.

**No Money**

This section examines the socioeconomic climate of impoverished New Orleans residents within "garbage areas." I explain the climate or the conditions of "garbage areas," by outlining four inextricable factors: no wealth, no transportation, no insurance and stuck in poverty. I bring to light how systemic issues not only plague the opportunities to ascend out of impoverished living conditions, but they also function to keep disadvantaged residents trapped in impoverished conditions.

In Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro's book *Black Wealth / White Wealth* (2006), they conceptually explain the term wealth as it relates to the United States racial wealth gap. Given that wealth is more than bearing an income or a paycheck, it is important to examine the roles of income and wealth because the two serve as an evaluation of a family's wellbeing and value in the social justice system, which addresses equality, equity and socioeconomic issues within the United States (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). Regarding New Orleans, the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center

(2012), study reveals that among New Orleans families, 23 percent live in poverty. Furthermore, the study reveals that 30 percent of all African American families in New Orleans live in poverty while only 8 percent of all white families live in poverty (GNOCDC, 2012). These statistics are vital to understanding the socioeconomic landscape of New Orleans before Katrina and the value of those residents who occupied those marginalized areas of the city. It was no accident that those who were devastated the most were asset impoverished.[12] As my interlocutors all revealed to me, the only asset that most low-income Black families had was their home, no car and no wealth.

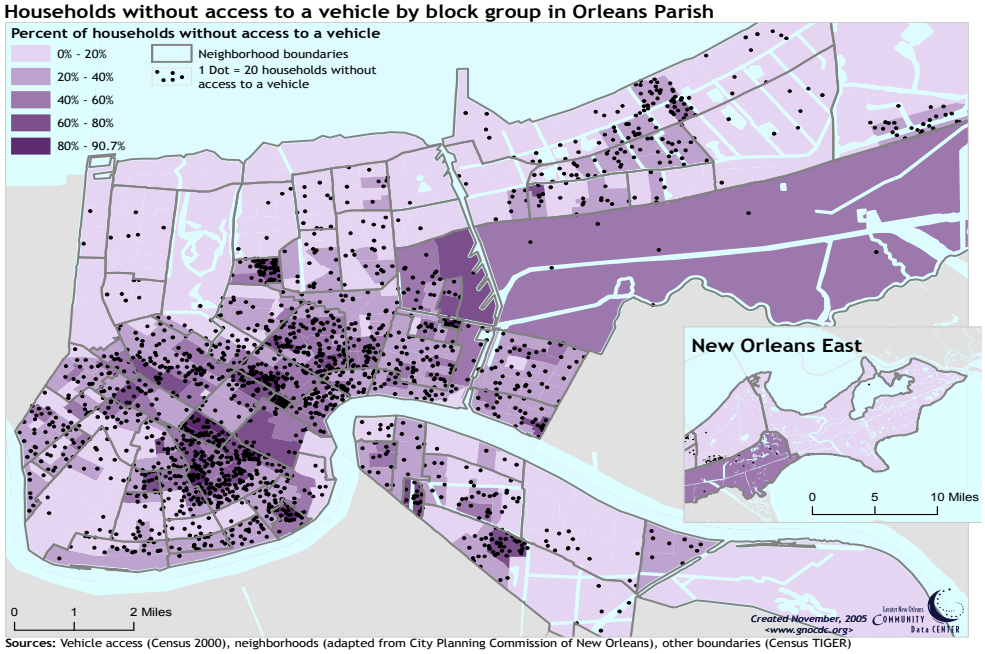
**No Transportation**

The lack of access to personal and public transportation among New Orleans residents was a problematic issue before Katrina. Impoverished living conditions made it very difficult to accumulate financial or material wealth and purchase assets, such as an automobile. Three of my interlocutors, Ms. Baker, Ms. Nash and Ms. Clark did not own or have access to an automobile before Hurricane Katrina. In fact, the U.S. Census (2000) revealed that nearly one-third of the entire population of New Orleans did not have access to an automobile and depended on public transportation to commute to work, grocery stores and other areas of the city for social and leisure activities. Moreover, according to Berube & Raphael (2005) 27 percent of the Black residents in the New Orleans area lacked access to a car, which is nearly 10 percent higher than the national average. As displayed in Figure 7, this issue was most prevalent in the areas located in the most impoverished neighborhoods of the city, which I highlighted above. In the event of a natural disaster such as Katrina, the lack of transportation rendered these communities

[12] Asset Poverty: Defined as not having the financial means to support a household for three months at the federal poverty level should they lose their main source of income (GNOCDC, 2012)

helpless and reliant upon emergency evacuation assistance by the government. However, I argue that the lack of personal transportation keeps low-income Black residents immobilized, and, therefore, trapped within the confinements of their respective communities. This was a systemic issue, which inhibited residents' ability to relocate or seek employment that required personal transportation prior to the events of Katrina. In his study, "Work and Automobile Ownership among Welfare Recipients" (1996), Paul Ong found that welfare recipients experienced geographic isolation from employment opportunities because they did not have access to an automobile. In addition, he suggests that by owning an automobile, a welfare recipient would be able to conduct a geographically broader job search and entertain employment offers farther away from home (Ong, 1996). While notwithstanding the cost of maintenance, having direct access to an automobile offers better opportunities for employment and life.

*Figure 7:*



**No Insurance**

Many of my interlocutors claimed the vast majority of low-income Black New Orleans residents were underinsured, if not uninsured. This issue has been a progressive problem since Hurricane Betsy in 1965 (Michel-Kerjan, 2010). Hurricane Betsy was the first billion-dollar hurricane, causing more than $1.2 billion in damages (The Times-Picayune, 2011). In response to Betsy, Congress ordered the Army Corps of Engineers to build a massive flood-protection system for the City of New Orleans. However, after witnessing the destruction of Betsy and the lack of interest by private insurers to provide flood insurance, the U.S. Government established the National Flood Insurance Program in an attempt to provide flood insurance coverage to all residents regardless of location (Michel-Kerjan, 2010).

As I will discuss in the following section, most impoverished residents could not afford homeowner's and flood insurance policies. However, despite efforts by Congress to provide flood insurance to those who live in flood hazard areas, marginalized communities faced financial and other systemic challenges in obtaining a homeowner and flood insurance policies. As Green, Bates and Smyth reveals in their study, "Impediments to Recovery in New Orleans' Upper and Lower 9th Ward One Year after Hurricane Katrina" (2007), homeowner insurance policies are regulated by private market sector in correlation with how much the Federal Government decides to invest in the levee protection systems within the city. Moreover, the Green, Bates, and Smyth claim that the failure of the Federal Government to strengthen the levee protection systems had severe consequential effects, which extended beyond the purview of simply purchasing an insurance policy for low-income New Orleans residents. Their study exposes how federal

and state divestments in the levee systems caused home and flood insurance premiums to increase exorbitantly in financially strapped neighborhoods. Furthermore, several agencies refused to issue policies in flood hazard areas of New Orleans because of the high risk of total loss (Green, Bates & Smyth, 2007). As marginalized Black families were forced in less desirable "garbage areas." which are vulnerable to catastrophic damage, due to ghettoization and divestment in the community, these residents do not have the same opportunities to protect their personal assets from absolute loss in the event of a natural disaster as wealthier communities do. Systemically, limited access to purchase insurance policies becomes the means through which impoverished families in these "garbage areas" encounter discrimination and are victimized before the threat of a natural disaster is eminent. Nonetheless, most of these residents are stuck in these neighborhoods with no viable way out. As a lifelong resident of New Orleans, Dr. Delany elaborated on historical accounts of past flooding and hurricanes and how the victimized community responded to the events.

Dr. Delany:

> There are going to be areas that are environmentally less safe for either reason of past industrial activity or just in terms of the susceptibility of the land to be in the path of danger. This is part of a kind of pattern of institutionalized racism in the sense that even when no one comes up with a deliberate policy, it's structural in the sense that what is available to people as a live in space is going to be determined by the undesirability of it to preferred customers. Therefore, marginalized people in social terms are always going to have the fewest options and they are going to wind up

> in places that are more prone to destabilization and crisis. It is generally a situation where a whole lot of trend lines converged and a particular type of disaster exacerbated long-standing circumstances. Whether or not it is likely, feasible or any evidence to suggest intent by the government, uninsured Black residents, particularly of the 9th Ward, suffers the most catastrophic damage in the event of a natural disaster. Again, low-income and working class Black residents were building on land that was less desirable to white residents, generally speaking, due to the fact it was below sea level, more prone to flooding and all of those other things I spoke of earlier. Therefore, low-income and working class Blacks had access to undesirable land and lacked access to wealthier communities, which were better protected from natural disasters (Dr. Delany, personal communication, July 15, 2011).

**Stuck in Poverty**

A phrase that is commonly repeated in the United States is "pull yourself up by your bootstraps," to claim ones piece of the American dream. This phrase suggests that everyone is seen as equal and is given a fair shot in life to achieve whatever one sets out to accomplish. Yet, we tend to ignore the fact that not everyone begins their life journey with a pair of boots, or bootstraps, for that matter. Social forces such as racism and classism produce and reproduce situated poverty by systematically forcing the poor and working class Black residents to work in low paying service industry jobs. Furthermore, as my interlocutors explains below, these service industry jobs provide very few opportunities, especially for minorities, to advance to higher-ranking positions within the

company, earn more money and participate in company provided healthcare benefit packages. Interviewed in a group setting, Ms. Baker and Ms. Nash provided insight to what their living conditions, employment challenges were before Hurricane Katrina.

Ms. Baker begins:

> The last job I had was located in St. Morris, the area I used to live in. I worked at a Pizza Hut and I was paid less than $8 an hour. Even worse, Pizza Hut did not give me enough hours to survive off their wage. You know what I am saying? You are working like four hours at a time for under $7, $7.50. How you supposed to live off of that?

By structuring a specific level of pay for a particular form of labor, individuals who are employed in these jobs find themselves trapped working for minimum wages, which helps to create and sustain a permanent underclass of workers. These low paying service jobs not only influences where one lives, but it also determines what type of life one can afford.

Ms. Baker continues:

> The cost of living, I don't know if you would say the cost of living here is high but it's sure is not affordable. I feel like we are so poor we have to stand on steps to look at the poverty line. Now, I do not have any health benefits but I do receive food stamps. I can also collect my unemployment. Everything has worked out better for me by not having a job and that is sad.

Ms. Nash expresses her thoughts:

> Yeah, you must quit your job to survive here. You must quit your job just to play the system or the system is going to play the piss out of you. Currently, I receive Medicaid benefits. All of my healthcare costs are covered. When I was had a job, I could not get any of that.

Ms. Baker and Ms. Nash provide a very important narrative for why anyone would work for so very little, to then be ineligible for social assistance. Then once one exits the workplace, either by force or voluntarily, in order to qualify for assistance, why are they viewed as pathological, lazy and unmotivated to work? This discourse does not take into account how people living in impoverished conditions find ways to better their life opportunities in order to survive. Ms. Baker and Ms. Nash's stories, among others who have experienced similar realities, illustrate how the system works to trap the less fortunate in these less than desirable areas. As Ms. Baker and Ms. Nash state above, being unemployed grants them access to social services they would not have access to if they were employed. However, socially we tend not to discuss the great deal of money and resources allocated to huge corporations and the very wealthy. Somehow, taxation loopholes and corporate welfare are not portrayed as forms of entitlement. Yet, we focus on the miniscule amount of money the poor and the working class receives to further marginalize and categorize them as "takers" and "victims" of society.[13] That claim suggests everyone has equitable resources and an equal opportunity to provide for themselves and their families without government assistance, yet people are too lazy to do so. This is clearly not the case in New Orleans. We cannot ignore the systems in place

[13] See Mitt Romney's 47 percent comment http://youtu.be/M2gvY2wqI7MSS and See Paul Ryan's 30 percent http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Guf46aaC8Cc

to keep the poor, poor and the wealthy, wealthy.

Earlier in this chapter, I referenced Mr. Turner's use of the term "garbage areas," which was used to categorize less than desirable neighborhoods that were neglected by the government, yet maintained by structural and public policy. Yet, his use the term "garbage areas" does not accurately reflect the environments in which low-income Black families reside. Again, the term "garbage area" is a negative and imprecise depiction of the environment and those who reside within those areas. The concept of "situated poverty" best describes the conditions in which people live within these less than desirable areas of New Orleans daily. As Karen Seccombe (2000) suggests, numerous factors influence the likelihood of people being impoverished, including cognitive attainment, family background, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic violence. She draws from her research conducted in the 1990s as she argues for a conceptual movement away from individual explanations for poverty (e.g., motivation, personality, cognitive attainment, levels of human capital). Instead, Seccombe explains that poverty is situated within a broader social milieu, (social setting), such as capitalism, racism and classism.

All too often people often stereotype the poor as lazy, unmotivated or unwilling to defer their immediate gratification by pursuing long-term goals to improve their employment opportunities (Seccombe, 2000). However, I argue that one is not poor because of laziness and incompetence. Instead, it is the fact that low-income Black residents and their respective neighborhoods are deemed garbage areas by government officials and then neglected the social services, employment opportunities, access to reliable transportation and infrastructure most needed. The less fortunate should not be stereotyped and blamed for their impoverished state. Alternatively, as I have

demonstrated, poverty is the result of several systemic factors functioning simultaneously. Therefore, situated poverty explains the ways in which individual behavior is shaped or positioned by larger structural forces within society, which in turn structures poverty and consequences therein (Seccombe, 2000). As Dr. Delany explained, marginalized communities will continue to be scrutinized and regulated by deliberate policy making, which as I will discuss in the Chapter Four, more obstacles of recovery. Dr. Delany suggests:

> In a sense, they are by definition marginal and therefore are a disposable population, and that definition tends to overlap economic and racial markers, so yeah, that is how it tends to play out. Again, I am not making a case for or against a certain level of conscious behavior on the part of people in a position to influence things. Generally, speaking impoverished Black residents belief and social practices extends from a sense of profound alienation from resources and sources of power in society. Yet, they survive off the means they do have access to the best way they know how (Dr. Delany, personal communication, July 15 2011).

By examining the U.S. Census demographic and socioeconomic data from 1990 and 2000, and by surveying historical events, current housing trends and geographic space, poverty and wealth, it is clear that these blighted communities were socioeconomically disadvantaged before Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005. Moreover, the data demonstrate how race and class are, in part, determining factors in the lives of New Orleans residents, which influences where individuals live and the resources that are available to them. The material realities that my interlocutors faced prior to

Katrina is, in large part, a result of systemic issues that have plagued, particularly Black New Orleans residents, for a long time. Furthermore, many of my interlocutors' experiences reflect the daily challenges of those who live on a minimum wage and constantly struggle to make ends meet. The racial and socio-economic conditions in New Orleans were bad before Katrina; however, the Katrina ordeal made bad matters worse.

**What Did Katrina Do?**

Hurricane Katrina and the flooding that came after the storm were indeed catastrophic, causing more than $81 billion in total property loss and damages (National Climate Data Center, 2005; Zhang, 2011). About 80 percent of New Orleans experienced flooding, and some parts of the city were submerged in 20 feet of water (Lodsdon, 2008; Penry-Davey, 2005). Floodwaters did not recede for weeks Over 1.7 million people lost power as a result of the storm in the Gulf States, with power companies estimating that it would take more than several weeks to restore power to some locations. Clean drinking water was also unavailable in New Orleans due to a broken water main that serves the city.

However, there was another storm that somehow evaded national media attention and all the criticism. With so much focus on the Katrina ordeal, the world audience did not take time to realize that *Katrina* was already present in New Orleans. To suggest the storm was solely responsible for the mass destruction in New Orleans would be entirely inaccurate. The damage already existed within these "garbage areas," which made these predominately low-income Black areas even more vulnerable to destruction and exposed to the world how the United States veils, yet participates in, various discriminatory practices. The national media reproduced images of who the survivor was and what they

looked like. Anything or anyone who differed from that image was socially stripped of their citizenship, humanity and was not worthy of immediate need of assistance. What was not discussed in the media was how marginalized residents' lives were already for those mostly affected by the Katrina.

Thus, what Hurricane Katrina actually did was expose to the world how racist and classist all levels of government are by only assisting residents with privilege and political power, while forcing the poor Black folks who live in "garbage areas" out of the city. Katrina revealed to the masses via national news networks that people are treated how they are represented in society. As Watkins-Hayes (2009) stated, Americans saw their government in its most visible ineffective state. All levels of government were not prepared and left behind those who were most in need, which changed the dynamics of Katrina from being a natural disaster to a political agenda with a racist tone. People died on television as a result of being abandoned by their government. Moreover, Mr. Turner stated, during the immediate aftermath of Katrina the sick had very little to no medical help and no medication at the Superdome and Convention Center. There was no running water or sanitation services available throughout the city (Mr. Turner, personal communication, July 12, 2011).

We all watched the Katrina ordeal unfold around the world. Katrina forced us to watch how racism, class pre-determined an individual's worth as a United States citizen. Yes, for once in a long time, Katrina subjected the United States to these very systemic issues, which have plagued minorities all throughout U.S. History. For once we were exposed to inequalities and injustices already present in New Orleans. Evident in the narratives provided by my interlocutors, many of them are still in the process of

rebuilding their lives nearly a decade after the Katrina ordeal as they continue to struggle with the consequences of living in an impoverished community such as poor education, infrastructure and better jobs with salaries, which one could afford the necessities of living. As I will discuss later in Chapter Four, racism and class differences in wealth drew attention to what was already structurally present in New Orleans before the Katrina ordeal. Yet, Katrina further marginalized minorities and those without wealth by producing and maintaining obstacles that prohibited recovery by keeping impoverished and working class Black families from returning home to New Orleans.

## Chapter IV
## Obstacles of Recovery

I begin my day by looking at a map of New Orleans located inside the entryway of the church, where I am staying. On this map, I notice several pins with a small paper flag attached to the end tacked on communities most affected by Katrina's floodwaters. At this point I decide to go to these neighborhoods to witness the devastation of Katrina firsthand. As I make my way to the 9th Ward, it is apparent by the construction within the city that the greater New Orleans community is still in the process of rebuilding and recovering from Katrina. The roads have huge potholes, the vegetation on several lots has over grown the property, and there are very few functioning streetlights. As I turn onto Feliciana Street, I see a Black elderly woman with a middle aged Black man in the backyard trying to start a gas powered generator. I pull my car over to the side of the road to investigate what was going on. As I look on, the elderly woman takes a few steps in my direction to yell, "Hey there, is ya lost?" I reply, "No, I am just looking at a map and taking pictures of areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina." "Well just look around ya, it aint hard to miss. Can I help ya with something?" says the elderly woman. I walk over to the fence line of her property and begin telling her about my research project and what it means for me to be able to conduct such a study on an American tragedy. She tells me her name is Ms. Clark then graciously, invites me into her home to show me the ongoing devastation she contends with daily.

Ms. Clark's home is not a traditional shotgun New Orleans style of home. It's a small white ranch house, which sits on a corner lot. Looking at the front of the house there are three windows approximately the same dimensions protected by iron bars and sunbaked aluminum brown and white striped awnings. One of the windows is on the far

right of the home with the letters TFW in a circle, spray-painted in black, under it. Panning left, I see three white uneven steps that lead to front door of the home. The door is protected by a black rusted steel storm door. The makeshift porch light is located near the upper right corner of the front door right below the address and has a cord that extends into the window on the right side of the house. The two remaining windows are located on the left side of the home. The house is elevated no more than a foot off the ground. The vegetation in the front yard is mix of grass and a sandy dirt mixture. Ms. Clark has a flowerbed and a small white plastic decorative fence that goes around the foundation of her home to mask the elevation gap between her home and the ground. The walkway that leads to her home appears to be new, however outside of her gated front year, there is no sidewalk or curb to separate the street from the pedestrian area, only two slabs of concrete one on left and right sides of her walkway outside her gate.

As I enter through the front door, I immediately notice there is no electricity in the home. In fact, the gas-powered generator Ms. Clark has in the backyard provides some electricity to her home. Without it, however, she has no means to power the refrigerator, lights, television, radio or a few small appliances she has in her kitchen. It is mid-July in New Orleans, the heat and the humidity is extremely intense. Since there is no electricity, there is no means to power an air conditioning unit or a box or ceiling fan to cool the house. It is awfully hot in her home, nearly suffocating. Ms. Clark states: “That’s why I said I’m just living. I just wanted to just get the lights on,” I nod my head agreeing with her comment as I walk through the precarious structure. The wooden floors throughout the house are uneven, rotten, and deteriorating. There are no baseboards around the bottom of the walls in any of the rooms. As I approach the wall that divides the kitchen

from the family room, I notice that Ms. Clark uses this particular wall as her phone book, as each contact address and telephone number appears on the wall. There are no bedroom doors. Mattress sheets serve as doors. In the family room, Ms. Clark moves a picture that was hanging on the far right wall to show me a massive hole that has been there since Katrina. Overall the home was in shambles. I would think this is an inhabitable home; however, this is Ms. Clark's experience as an impoverished Black elderly woman in the Lower 9th Ward. After we walk through her home, she allows me to ask her a few questions about Hurricane Katrina. She pulls up a chair and a white paint bucket and begins to tell me her story.

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In the previous chapter, I examined the material realities my interlocutors faced prior to Katrina, which, in large part, result from systemic forces that plague, particularly Black New Orleans residents in multi-faceted ways. In addition, I argued that Katrina revealed to the world how all levels of U.S. government failed to assist residents that lacked social privilege and political power. In addition, a disproportionate number of poor Black residents were forced out of New Orleans during the Katrina ordeal. Furthermore, Hurricane Katrina brings into focus how racism and white supremacy, poverty, and government dysfunction by and large determine an individual's value as a United States citizen.

In this chapter, I focus on the actual recovery, or the lack thereof. According to my research, it is clear there has been little to no rebuilding or social recovery for mostly impoverished Black communities. I identify these delays and lack of progress as obstacles of recovery. Although my interlocutors revealed several obstacles of recovery,

for the purpose of my study, I identify three primary obstacles that have prevented much needed progress for these marginalized communities: structural racism, poverty, and government dysfunction. The obstacles I have identified do not function independently. Rather, they are inextricably linked; creating a vicious cycle that curbs opportunities for marginalized communities to rebuild. I interrogate how structural racism, which is underpinned by government policy and social practices, which minimizes the opportunity for one to accumulate wealth all the while influencing and reproducing systemic poverty. Therefore, these obstacles are not experienced by the few who coincidentally fell on difficult times. Instead, these obstacles are experienced by the masses simultaneously as a result of systemic forces that constrain what low-income Black New Orleans residents can do, under unacceptable living conditions. In addition, this chapter reveals the consequential results of how these obstacles of recovery impact the lives of those who were completely devastated six years after the storm. As demonstrated above, Ms. Clark's home serves as a vivid example of the conditions in which impoverished Black New Orleans residents live as they contend with these obstacles of recovery.

**Structural Racism**

How is structural racism an obstacle of recovery and why? In Chapter Three, I provided four central points, which reveal the structural issues under which low-income Black New Orleans faced prior to Katrina. Nearly a decade removed from Hurricane Katrina, these structural issues still influence one's prospects for recovery from the mass destruction caused by the storm. In Chapter Three, Ms. Hamer suggested that I could see how structural forces such as poverty, racism, deindustrialization, and ghettoization affect Black communities in New Orleans. As I toured the East New Orleans, 5$^{th}$ and 9$^{th}$ Wards,

I witnessed that most of these areas have been neglected since Katrina struck in August 2005. During the time I conducted this research, there was no hospital or medical infrastructure in the East New Orleans / 9th Ward area. In addition, there are limited places to buy food. Wal-Mart has not returned to the space it once occupied and there is no Target department store within close proximity. Within these devastated neighborhoods I walked blocks that had only two to three rebuilt homes in it. Furthermore, in the neighborhoods or area where people have returned, roads are still in repair and there are very few functioning streetlights. Buildings are still vacant, homes are still devastated and neighborhoods are desolate. There are very few "Mom and Pop" shops in the neighborhoods. There are no major chain restaurants within these areas. It is clear that one's has nothing to get done in the way of necessities other than to get home.

On the other hand, in the neighboring predominately white, St. Bernard Parish, I witnessed more progress within these communities after being completely devastated by Katrina as well. However, the St. Bernard Parish demographics are entirely opposite of the City of New Orleans. Before Katrina, the U.S. Census (2000) revealed that the St. Bernard Parish population was approximately 67,229 in 2000. Examining St. Bernard's population by race, whites represented 88.29 percent of all persons with a population of 59,356. Blacks represented 7.62 percent with a total population of 5,123. The median household income level was approximately $36,000. After Hurricane Katrina, the St. Bernard Parish demographics statistics are different. According to U.S. Census (2010), the parish had a population estimate of 36,897 residents. White residents represented 75.3% of population, approximately 27,784 people and Blacks represented 19.4%, approximately, 7,158 people. The median household income in the St. Bernard parish

was $40,450 (US Census, 2010). Although the parish is relatively smaller, today the St. Bernard Parish has a Wal-Mart Supercenter [14]and steadily growing number of residents returning to area (US Census, 2012). The Parish also has a new medical infrastructure[15] in place to serve its community members. It is clear that the St. Bernard Parish is investing in their community and is attracting major retail corporations. Why has New Orleans failed to accomplish the same feat in its predominately Black neighborhoods?

Ms. Hamer, the retired school teacher who lives in East New Orleans suggests there is a racial and class opposition to provide the necessary resources to disadvantaged Black residents of New Orleans who had once resided in a disadvantaged area.

> Jindal is very prejudiced and doesn't give a rat's ass about Black people. First of all, Blacks didn't put his ass in office. New Orleans didn't put his ass in office. So guess what? He has never done anything down here. I don't think the government as a whole has done enough as far as the Blacks and the poor. I don't think they've done enough. I think a whole lot more could have been done. The money that was allocated to the City that was intended for impoverished and working class Blacks have not reached the Blacks. Where is the money? No one seems to know. They could do a hell of a lot more for the Blacks. They really could. And I'm talking about all levels. Because like I say, your white community has returned much, much faster, okay. They didn't have as much of a hassle receiving aid as we did. Like I say, the majority of your Blacks were forced out the City.

[14] Wal-Mart in St. Bernard Parish see http://www.walmart.com/storeLocator/ca_storefinder_details_short.do?edit_object_id=909
[15] Medical Infrastructure see http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/directory/detail/224 and http://www.sbph.net

> They had no choice, because like I say the projects, back here in the E, the Lower 9 were flooded out. The white areas didn't have much water so they remained in the city.

Ms. Hamer articulates how the Black community is valued less in comparison to the more privileged white communities. She brings into focus how politics, government dysfunction, and racism simultaneously affect the people who have been deemed pathological and the areas that have endured neglect prior to Katrina. This is clearly an obstacle of recovery because the necessary assistance, which should have been provided to those who were in most need, did not materialize. Therefore, how can one rebuild their life, if they lack the support and resources? Surely, these social forces pose a disincentive for business owners and major retail industries to return to the area. In addition, divestment and deindustrialization also pose a disincentive for residents to return to their community on account of a very slow rate of return. Thus, considering what was discussed earlier in Pre-Katina Conditions, the social forces in place structured these obstacles of recovery before Katina hit. In other words, as residents contended with working low wage jobs, racism, powerlessness within the political realm, situated in poverty and corralled into less-than-desirable neighborhoods, the aftermath of Katrina only exacerbated the conditions under which New Orleans residents lived.

**Poverty: Garbage Areas**

It is imperative to understand the role of historic events, housing trends, social geography, socioeconomic marginalization, and inequitable wealth distribution in New Orleans. These factors illustrate the inauspicious nature of most impoverished Black residents' road to recovery. Furthermore, it is no accident that low-income Black

communities, which were socioeconomically disadvantaged prior to the Hurricane, are still struggling six years later. Referencing McKittrick and Woods (2007), Bailey and Shabazz, (2013), suggests Black spaces are always seen as spaces of 'crisis' that require state regulation and dispossession simultaneously. This idea ties into the idea of situated poverty, whereas disadvantage Black people and predominately Black areas are regulated by the state, yet are devalued, neglected, and abandoned by the state. As I indicate above, the concept of situated poverty best describes the conditions under which my interlocutors live, and who's lived experiences are similar to many other low-income Black residents in New Orleans before, during, and after Katrina. After six years, I examine why survivors and victims of Katrina still struggle with situated poverty that made the impact of the storm worse.

Tens of thousands of families lived twice below the national poverty threshold in New Orleans (Census, 2000). Although there was poverty throughout the City of New Orleans, mostly Black urban areas such as the Upper and Lower 9th Ward, Mid-City and East New Orleans were subjected to this extreme form of poverty. The issue with poverty is very complicated and multifaceted in terms of New Orleans, Black people, and Katrina. Thus, to be entirely immersed in poverty, what options do these low-income Black residents have to ascend out of it? It is common to blame the victims for their impoverished state; however, I argue that we should avoid blaming victims for their poverty and challenge how and why poverty is an obstacle for low-income Black residents to recover from Hurricane Katrina nearly a decade after the storm. Although there are numerous obstacles of recovery, which help create and sustain impoverished conditions, my research reveals three primary factors, which depicts the true complexity

of how and why these obstacles function, particularly in low-income Black residential areas. First, I explain how is Mr. Turner's concept of "garbage areas" an obstacle of recovery and why. Second, I explain why bearing no wealth and no assets is an obstacle of recovery and how, in part, it functions to further marginalize low-income Black residents. Reflecting back to Chapter Three, impoverished Black residents did not have any accumulated wealth and the only assets they had were completely destroyed or washed away by Hurricane Katrina and massive flooding in the city. Third, I illuminate why those who do not have any money are still struggling daily to rebuild after Katrina and how lacking money is an obstacle, which alters the course of their recovery. These three primary factors were revealed in all of my interlocutor's personal accounts of living in New Orleans six years after Katrina ordeal. In Chapter Three I revealed what Katrina did and the themes, which emerged from my research. Within this chapter, I concentrate my argument on how and why these three primary factors are obstacles of recovery.

As I drove around the 5th Ward, Upper and Lower 9th Ward, and parts of East New Orleans, the devastation I witnessed was all too common. Cement steps and landings leading to an empty lot once occupied by a shotgun home. From those I could see, wood framed houses were buckled and splintered. The wood framed houses I was not able to see, they were completely engulfed by the over grown vegetation on the property. The roads were filled with potholes and lined with garbage on what used to be curbs. Blocks of vacant properties separated sporadic signs of life. Mr. Turner, characterized these areas, it is painfully obvious the term "garbage areas" illuminates the problems and dismay with rebuilding areas that are considered as rubbish.

Since Ms. Nash and Ms. Baker's household income levels are under the poverty threshold, the two qualify for government assistance. In addition, they are forced into housing developments and buildings or low-income communities. These two ladies, Mr. Augusta, and a few of my other interlocutors, all live in less-than-desirable areas, and in many cases, they are most vulnerable to great catastrophic damage in the event of a catastrophic storm like Katrina. I strongly believe these structural forces create and sustain systems of oppression and marginalization, which keeps the impoverished in poverty and segregated from wealthier communities. As Dr. Delany informed me, "these structural conditions made it possible for one community to come back and not others" (personal communication, July 15, 2011). In other words, where one lives depends on where one is employed and their income. And where one is employed depends on their education and socioeconomic status. If one occupies a lower socioeconomic status and does not have adequate education to qualify for a higher paying job, their chances of affording the cost of living in a more desirable neighborhood in New Orleans is slim to none. These garbage areas do not provide the equitable resources to advance one's life. In fact, these garbage areas are designed to keep the poor, poor.

Many of my interlocutors believe that they are able to escape their conditions by earning a trade or a post-secondary degree. However, as I listened to my interlocutors describe their life experiences post Katrina, it was clear to me that there were social factors that posed greater obstacles to going to school to earn a trade or specialized degree. For instance, Mr. Augusta discusses his post Katrina education experiences being the only one from his family to finish college:

It just was instilled in me that I had to go to college. As far as me going to school down here when it happened I felt like it delayed me from graduating on time. I had a couple of times I broke down in school because of just the situation was just too much stress for me and it was hard I think. It was pretty hard because I was supposed to graduate in ’07 but the storm came in ’05 and with all of that happening my mind frame wasn’t that into school at the time and I went back to school right when it happened. Like when I evacuated, I enrolled into school right away so I hadn’t had time to think in the process what was really going on. So when I went to school in Texas right during ’05 when it happened, I think I enrolled in at least four classes and I really tried my best to pass those classes but just with everything going on at home and mind frame from just being in school and thinking about home and family, friends missing and everything I just couldn’t get it together. It really affected my grades. And then the next semester I decided to move back here and come back and finish my degree at UNO [University of New Orleans] and I think I - - when I moved back, I had just - - on top of that I was transferred to a new school because I was actually originally going to Xavier University and then I transferred in August to UNO. So when I moved back after the storm to go back to UNO, I felt like I was a freshman all over again. I didn’t know nobody, none of my friends were there so I just felt alone and then it took me a while to adjust to their teaching, the way they taught. It

took me about a year before I decided - - before I really picked up on how to get back into the study mode and to start passing classes and stuff.

Aside from struggling with the expected demands and rigor of college, Mr. Augusta story reveals that the Katrina ordeal made it more difficult for students to perform well in school. I use Mr. Augusta quote above to make three points. First, if earning a college education is one way to ascend out of poverty, the Katrina ordeal radically changed the trajectory of one's educational progress and graduation track as students were forced to struggle with the dangers of the storm and many had to relocate and transfer institutions. Second, the Katrina ordeal also caused a great deal of psychological trauma. Under these living conditions and threat of losing family members, their home and displacement, many students struggled to succeed in the classroom. Lastly, Mr. Augusta highlights the traumatic experience of returning home to begin recovering from the massive flooding all the while still transferring and attending college. The reality is, he and his family were forced from their home and required to make life-altering decisions to survive the Katrina ordeal. Mr. Augusta's personal account of his academic struggles is not an isolated one. As revealed by Ms. Baker's and Ms. Nash's experiences, the two claimed that New Orleans' children were already at the mercy of a failing public educational system. Still, educational attainment became more difficult because of devastation with Katrina all the while adjusting to a new social and learning environment. Clearly, the Katrina ordeal presented additional obstacles to the ones that existed before the mass flooding of New Orleans. Ms. Baker and Ms. Nash informed me of the dysfunction within the public school system. Some schools closed and never reopened. Children in the city were forced to attend a different school in the city or were

completely displaced in another school in another state after Katrina. When some of the public schools reopened most the schools lacked the necessary resources or the means to educate its children. After the storm, Ms. Baker claims the public school system and the children were worse off. Ms. Baker further explained:

> If your kid is not focused on school or want to be there it don't make sense to them because they done restructured the education. A lot of these schools they just had kids in there to keep a pool, to keep their stuff open because it's all divided between public, private and charters. My daughter in the 9th grade said some girl in her class or go to school with her… 18 years old. She is in the 9th grade? They should already be out of school. It makes no sense. I only see this happen in the public schools. Why not have somewhere for these kids to go get an education or a trade? No, they make it mandatory to enroll these kids in school then once they come back to these New Orleans public schools they abandon them. Its sad because they have nowhere else to go and their mind is not at the academic level where they are enrolled. Now what?

Ms. Baker enlightened me of several problems that made it harder for children to learn while they attended school. She explained how one has to question what career opportunities these kids will have access to once they are out of school. How much income could these kids potentially earn without a decent education? Would they be able to build wealth and remain out of poverty? Again, as one is situated in poverty, it completely delimits the quality of life one can experience and the opportunities they have. In other words, systemic forces such as this keep less fortunate residents confined

to marginalized communities with limited education and resources, which lessens the opportunity to ascend out their impoverished state. This is an obstacle of recovery because after the Katrina ordeal, there were no service jobs available according to Ms. Baker and Ms. Nash. Thus, all service industry and tourism jobs that people had were washed away alongside their personal possessions and what they knew as life. These residents faced obstacles unimaginable to anyone who had not experienced the mass devastation caused by Katrina firsthand. However, not everyone within the city experienced Katrina in the same light.

Mr. Augusta and Ms. Hamer suggested that families and communities not affected by the storm or flooding were still able to function as they did prior to Katrina. Mr. Augusta expressed his frustration with this fact: "uptown and closer towards the French Quarter area, no water at all, no water in the French Quarter, and they received aid. All they had to do was clean up." Ms. Hamer made a similar point, "I mean I laugh now because they tell me when Katrina passed, you had whites out riding bicycles." Mr. Turner declared the geographical space influenced how the population was handled, which posed another obstacle for those living in less-than-desirable areas due to the lack of government resources and neglect. In addition, Mr. Turner believes that as time pass, those who are suffering from the effects of poverty before Katrina will continue to suffer in addition to their respective geographical spaces as the city recovers from Katrina. "If you live close to massah, you've got it good. All you all that's hurtin', ya'll hurt," said Mr. Turner (personal communication, July 12, 2011). He pinpoints that the poor and low-income Black population that once occupied government housing and low-income areas are simply disposable. As the city is divided among race and class boundaries, the less

fortunate areas and those who reside in them are left neglected with no accumulated wealth, no money to rebuild, and abandoned by all levels of government. Each factor creates more obstacles of recovery, obscuring the lens of what predated Katrina, while at the same time making it more complicated and complex to restore life necessities, goals and aspirations.

**Poverty: No Wealth No Assets**

There is no question that the residents of New Orleans are still recovering from devastation of Katrina. I do not focus my critique solely on the physical space; instead, I bring to light how social forces and government policy structure these neglected communities and the opportunities available to its residents. As I observed while conducting my research, the very limited opportunities available to the people do not contribute towards their wealth accumulation. Again, I draw the distinction between having wealth and assets *and* income. In Chapter One, I argued that wealth is inclusive of income, assets, education level, (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Lui et al, 2006). An asset is defined as "items of ownership convertible into cash." In the case of Hurricane Katrina, most low-income residents did not have any accumulated wealth, just their home as the only major asset. Thus, I argue that the lack of wealth inhibits the city's residences ability to rebuild after a natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina. In addition, since according to the U.S. Census (2000) 27.9 percent of New Orleans residents were living below the poverty line prior to Katrina, New Orleans residents' living conditions made it extremely difficult to establish the kind of wealth that one could rely on in the event of a disaster. Therefore, not having access to wealth presents another obstacle of recovery as victims' lives were already in peril. Consequently, when Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans

the summer of 2005, those who did not have the wealth or access to other means to recover from the massive flooding were crippled and found themselves forced from their homes and at the mercy of a dysfunctional government, which I discuss in more detail below.

Six years later, most low-income Black families still remain gridlocked at the mercy of a dysfunctional government, without well-paying jobs in the city, and very limited opportunities to advance and raise their quality of life. This systemic trap presents yet another obstacle as residents struggle to make ends meet while try to recover from Katrina. As Ms. Baker stated in Chapter Three, living conditions are worse now than they were before the Katrina ordeal as she fights each day to get her children and herself out of their current living conditions. Ms. Baker described her experience:

> You're not going to some old job. I tried to apply at a job out here work where 9 to 7, not even before -- you know what I'm saying not even right before Katrina, same people been there, you tell me no I'm too qualified. Now since Katrina they don't have no cap on the rent, they charge what they want and I don't think anybody walk on the face of the earth going to work 100 hours to pay rent at $800 a month, you know what I'm saying? So it don't add up, you're not making $8 an hour, how you going to pay $800 rent and they still have to pay to their bills, you know, personal stuff just even if you're not getting food stamps, it's hard. It's just hard here now.

The material conditions of life as Ms. Baker described it to be, are difficult. Both Ms. Baker and Ms. Hamer claim the poor people in the city were made poorer. Jobs are

still limited, making it harder recover from Katrina. Moreover the two also agree that those who had accumulated some wealth had to use it to rebuild, placing them further in debt, which completely removed many Black individuals and families out of a working class social status into poverty. Reflecting on her own experience with this issue, Ms. Hamer explained how Katrina affected her socioeconomic status. “Well, at one time I was considered middle class. I guess now I'm like right at poverty, the way things are now.”

Victims of Katrina relied on their assets because they did not have anything else to rely upon. It is painful to observe the lasting effects from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. The results of the aftermath of Katrina is a combination of discriminatory public policy and poor government decision-making, which in part produces and reproduces systemic poverty, structural racism and geographic spaces less desirable than other spaces and more vulnerable to mass destruction caused by natural disasters. Since the home serves as the victims’ only asset, once it was washed off its foundation or damaged beyond repair, they had nothing else to rely on to help themselves rebuild after the storm. Many impoverished Katrina victims that lived in predominately Black low-income and impoverished areas, which the government did not care about, had no wealth, no assets and no money to rebuild and restructure their lives. Both residents who live in poverty and poor working class residents do not have the same opportunities to rebuild and recover from natural disasters as upper middle class residents. Impoverished and poor working class residents are compounded with obstacles, which keeps them situated in poverty, no wealth, no income and uninsured.

**The Insurance Dilemma**

Since many New Orleans victims of Katrina did not have the savings to rebuild after Katrina, the rate of return of most New Orleans neighborhoods depended on who had proper insurance coverage. The lack of insurance coverage presented new obstacles to survivors of the Katrina ordeal. Survivors were instantly made homeless and displaced in another city or state, while their respective neighborhoods suffered from neglect. Ms. Baker was a renter during the time Katrina stuck. At that time, she did have any knowledge of renters insurance, which is another obstacle. Ms. Baker and her children lost nearly all of her possessions, many of them irreplaceable, and they were forced to relocate out of the city. When she was able to return to New Orleans, her neighborhood remained in ruins. She was forced to relocate to another unfamiliar area of New Orleans with where she faced a higher cost of living and dysfunctional public system school, in which her children attended. Ms. Nash lived with her mother, who did not have proper insurance coverage to protect her home. She did have a homeowner insurance policy; however, she did not have a flood insurance policy. After decades of paying into their policy, Ms. Nash's family insurance claim was denied because the insurance agency declared that the damage sustained to her mother's home was caused by water damage, which is not covered in the policy. This is an insurance obstacle of recovery, which prevented many residents from accessing insurance money. Ms. Nash's family alongside several other families claimed wind damage was the root cause of structural damage, not water. Insurance companies denied their claim on account of the contrary. Ms. Nash's mother's home was one of the thousands of homes washed off of its foundation and later found blocks away from the lot it once occupied. Ms. Baker and Ms. Nash's story is an

example of what many experienced in their quest to rebuild after Katrina. The discrepancies between what home and flood and renters insurance policies covered quickly became another obstacle of recovery when several residents attempted to file a claim with their insurance agency and were denied or subject to unwarranted scrutiny.

Dr. Delany, the professor from Tulane University, provided some insight as to why the rate of return among communities differed. Below he points out the importance of having wealth more so than an income and how insurance determined one's chances of rebuilding after Katrina:

> You had whole groups of people who had no resource or income just to rebuild, and then other people who had built houses within the last ten or fifteen years, they had bank mortgages. Their mortgages required them to have flood insurance. The flood insurance policies paid out immediately rather than after a big long fight which meant that the owners were able to get back sooner and able to rebuild more fully and, in many cases, it's just a kind of more of a bureaucratic difference than anything else that determined the rate of return in some places. Even the ones that had homeowners insurance may not have been sufficiently protected because a lot of the companies were very specific about what they would and wouldn't cover and even if people eventually did get money out of their insurance companies it was only out of attractive battle that they did so. Meanwhile, if you had flood insurance and the government backed up the policy, it paid out almost instantly. The other dimension is that some neighborhoods had the good fortune that the homes were built relatively

> within the same timeframe. So if you happen to be in a neighborhood where all of the construction was really recent, like this is especially part of the city at least where migration into the area is like 20, 30 years old in some parts and even sooner in other parts or even more recent in other parts. The area that I was in everybody was still paying off a mortgage more or less and they had flood insurance through part of their mortgage requirements and the money was there (Dr. Delany, personal communication, July 15, 2011).

Below Ms. Hamer describes her experience with how she managed the insurance money she received to repair the damage sustained to their home. In addition she tells how quickly the neighborhood she lives in returned:

> I had insurance. But when I got my insurance money I paid off the balance of mortgage. I did not know what was going on. I didn't know what was going to happen. I had just made a second mortgage on my home to get some things done. So when I got my insurance money, most of it went right back, because like I said, I had just closed on a second mortgage. However, I was working and I was able to pay it off. The extra money left over from the insurance enabled me to purchase a car because I lost my previous car in Katrina. I did what I thought I had to do.

Since both Ms. Hamer and Dr. Delany had a flood and homeowner insurance policy. They provided a personal account of how they were able to rebuild and recover from the Katrina ordeal on account of filing a claim on their insurance policy.

Dr. Delany compares his story to the larger experience of those who were totally decimated, demonstrating the importance of wealth and how insurance companies created obstacles of recovery to the less fortunate:

> In the case of our house Kiwan, we already had money in the bank by, I would say, by the beginning of October, that time of year. It was a pretty quick process. So in a lot of instances rate of return was pegged to what kind of money you were able to get in terms of insurance settlements and how quickly you were able to get it. My personal story doesn't really sync with the larger experience where people just massively lost everything, were totally bereft, completely dependent on government agencies or philanthropy. No one lost his or her job. We did not lose family members. We didn't have that kind of catastrophic experience. It was and is a continuing kind of rebuilding process in order to get back to where we had been but not at the dramatic levels that other people had to commit to in order to get back. My whole neighborhood came back almost immediately almost 100 percent. Even the houses that didn't, where people didn't come back, they had money to fix the house and then put it on the market if they decided to go rather than just leave it abandoned and unrepaired. With that kind of a neighborhood return, you have a pocket of stability that reassured other people on the fringes in trying to cut back (Dr. Delany, personal communication, July 15, 2011).

Each of my interlocutors' experience reflects different trajectories as they continue to recover from the aftermath of the Katrina ordeal. These differences are

exacerbated by systemic forces that plague, particularly Black impoverished and working middle class residents of New Orleans. The material realities of poverty are tangible as they produce debilitating consequences, which then create obstacles of recovery onto those who are trapped in the web of poverty or, in Ms. Hamer's case, those who are one catastrophe away from living in an impoverished state. Thus, residents who are able to return must decide whether the risk of experiencing another catastrophic event such as Katrina is something they can manage on their own. For most low-income residents, residing within the less-than-desirable areas is costly. In fact, in 2007 the state's Insurance Rating Commission approved premium rate increases between 16 and 35 percent. Furthermore, some flood insurance carriers raised their rates by 40 percent in 2006 (Mowbray, 2007). A year after Katrina, the average homeowner's insurance premium rate increased by 22 percent statewide, with the greatest increases in coastal and flood hazard parishes (Mowbray, 2007). Moreover, for residents who rely on Louisiana Citizens' Property Insurance, a state owned carrier, their premium rates are set 10 percent above the private market rates (Mowbray, 2007; Louisiana Public Square, 2011; Anderson, 2012). Specifically in the Orleans Parish, where the City of New Orleans is located, Louisiana Citizens' Property Insurance rates increased by 38.8 percent as of June 2007 (LA Citizens, 2005-2007). How can one afford these cost increases on a low or fixed income? Again, as Ms. Baker and Nash reveal, this system keeps the poor, poor and situated in less-than-desirable neighborhoods, which bears a high cost of living. This is clearly an obstacle of recovery as residents still struggle to make end meet in their pursuit to recover after the Katrina ordeal. It is woeful to see, that six years later, so many residents manage to survive without necessary resources the government has failed to

adequately allocate to survivors due to dysfunctional management.

**Government Dysfunctions**

Social observers who are sensitive to and are critical of structural forces such as racism, classism and discrimination tend to pay little attention institutional, political and economic forces that directly or indirectly contribute to racial inequality (Wilson, 2009 p. 5). Examining the politics behind the Katrina ordeal, several of my interlocutors criticized the local government for their lack of effort in getting low-income Black New Orleans residents back into their homes. Dr. Delany, for example, believed that the Katrina ordeal was utilized in a way to flush poor to lower middle class Black residents out of the city. He stated: "there were those kinds of factors that led, themselves, to problems of people getting back and the less you depended upon the government, which again at the federal level had an agenda, not only were they not particularly motivated to help people but they were mobilized to dis-incentivize returns for political reasons and they pursued that policy no matter what they try to pretend" (Dr. Delany, personal communication, July 15, 2011) To support his claim, the US Census revealed that as the Black population decreased the white population has grown even larger since Katrina. The US Census (2006, 2009) reported that in July 2005, New Orleans population was estimated to be 455,000. One year after Katrina, the population was still in decline with a population of 210,000 individuals residing in New Orleans. In 2010, the US Census estimated that there were 343,829 people living in New Orleans. Black residents comprised of 60 percent of city residents in 2010. However, when compared to the Black population in 2000, the Census data reveal that Blacks comprised 67 percent of the New Orleans population. Meanwhile, the proportion of white residents has grown since

Katrina. In 2000, whites comprised approximately 28 percent of New Orleans population. In 2010, the white population increased to 33 percent of the population. What is significant here is that Black families are not returning home, as white families are. Communities within these urban areas that were largely affected by Katrina are not being rebuilt. The structural violence, inequalities and inequities to which Black families are subjected daily keeps the poor, working poor, and low income Black residents out of New Orleans. The social safety net of the U.S. Government, which is supposedly designed to perform the tasks that individual citizens cannot, was just an illusion. These programs are said to help those in poverty ascend out of it; however, government helped to produce homelessness, abandonment and neglect. Again, as my interlocutors suggest, these conditions are created in part by government actions. These are the obstacles that keep residents from retuning back home. As my interlocutors explained, for those who were able to rebuild, the challenge of returning back to their homes was great and living in New Orleans was more difficult than it had been before. Although my interlocutors occupied different socioeconomic statuses, their stories mirrored one another.

Within this section I argue there are three particular aspects of government dysfunction. The first aspect reveals that federal aid was not properly allocated to those who were most in need of assistance. Secondly, all levels of government de-incentivized the rates of return in "garbage areas". My lastly, government officials failed to acknowledge inequality within race and class categories. Moreover, local government representatives suggest that survivors of the Katrina ordeal were all affected by the hurricane similarly. In other words, their opinion claims that race and class were not apart of the rate of return in particular communities.

Many of interlocutors claimed that federal aid was not allocated to those who need it most. Agitated with the lack of assistance they received from all levels of government, my interlocutors reflect on their experience with applying for and receiving assistance after returning to New Orleans. For instance Mr. Turner stated: “So much stuff was not done because [The Federal Government] just didn't give them enough money. But what they gave you, people had to live off of because there still wasn't any jobs. There still wasn't this, that, and the other and the people tried to make the most out of what they had” (Mr. Turner, personal communication, July 12, 2011).

I asked each of my interlocutors if they received assistance from FEMA or Road Home during the Katrina ordeal. Ms. Clark and Ms. Hamer provided with their story, which unveils profound dissatisfaction with the mismanagement of the city after Katrina and the misappropriation of resources. Ms. Clark stated: “No, I ain’t got nothing. When I got something I got it in Austin, and what just - - they gave me nothing. I still ain’t got nothing. I don’t want nothing. Yeah, FEMA, they’re full of shit. They refused my trailer when I was there.” Ms. Hamer responded: “I don’t talk about this too much because neither FEMA nor Road Home did shit for me.”

As detailed in their personal accounts above, Ms. Clark and Ms. Hamer story reveals that in this case, government bureaucracies such as FEMA and Road Home did not allocate the appropriate amount of funds and resources to the people who needed it the most to help them recover from a failed levee system paid for by residents’ tax dollars. Where is the accountability? Again, the stories of my interlocutors proves that poverty is not about the necessarily about the choices the people make; instead, it is a part of larger systems of government that create and sustain it. Thus, situated poverty is a

result of government dysfunction and unwillingness to serve the underprivileged and disadvantaged. Government failures contributed to both the devastation itself as well as the aftermath, which maintains and creates the conditions of poverty, racism and white supremacy all the while limiting viable opportunities within these communities. What are low-income Black New Orleans residents suppose to do under these meager living conditions? As Celeste Watkins-Hayes, (2009) suggests, there are institutional practices, which contributes to the creation of discursive tools to promote and pursue goals that will further marginalize people of color (p. 151). These agency's role is to allocate and disseminate funds and resources to help people recover from natural disasters like Katrina, not to redistribute wealth or decrease wealth disparities in New Orleans. However, Evident in the aftermath of the Katrina ordeal, when impoverished Black people relied upon government assistance in their time of need, the government neglects to protect and serve the communities most devastated by Katrina and ultimately abandons them. All levels of government simply failed to perform the roles of their responsibility,

Each of my interlocutors elaborated on the mismanagement of government as residents still fight and protest local and federal government to do more for the impoverished and working class Black community and not tear down low-income housing (CNN, 2007; The New York Times, 2007; Mowbray, 2012). Mr. Turner, the assistant to the city representative, shared what he believed to be a disinterest to the state and local government. According to Mr. Turner, "there is no incentive for New Orleans to rebuild a mostly Black impoverished community," suggesting poor Black residents make New Orleans unattractive for young professionals who are willing to uphold the status quo. In addition, the city is not interested in poor and working class Black residents

(Mr. Turner, personal communication, July 12, 2011). However, what is unattractive from my observations is the lack of infrastructure and focus on providing assistance to those residents who were completely devastated within these less-than-desirable urban areas after Katrina.

Another form of institutional racism emerging in the City of New Orleans to force Black working class families out of their homes. Mr. Turner informed me that there is an attack on the working class Black residents through the process of "pricing loud." According to Mr. Turner pricing loud is when one can no longer afford their house due to a systematic tax increase on existing properties. Therefore, older residents on a fixed income or those who working poor class are forced to relocate because they can no longer afford the cost of living in that particular area (Mr. Turner, personal communication, July 12, 2011). Again, if one cannot afford to live in an area with infrastructure, resources and medical facilities, they are corralled into less-than-desirable areas as I discussed in Chapter Three.

Mr. Turner went on to say:

> If one cannot see how this process affects middle class areas, we are in trouble. Personally I first bought my house when I lived in Gentilly, a predominately middle class Black residential area. Under the Homestead tax exemption code, the first $75,000 of your property is tax exempt, which made it affordable for working class Blacks to live as oppose to the more white and costly Lakeview area. Before Katrina, my house was valued at $72,000. Therefore, I paid about $34 for city services such as police and refuge collection. Now these middle class Black areas are going

> through what is called pricing loud. Blacks Uptown had those houses because they had those houses when they was young and been having that stuff for generations. So what's happening is, now that they're dying off and their children are getting those prime real estate plots. The City is trying to increase the taxes on these properties. After the housing assessments in 2008, my taxes that was once $34, is now $1,400. So you know, I was working and could afford the hike, however, imagine a lady on a fixed income or a family on a fixed income paying $34 a year, she cannot afford the hike. A man who cuts grass for the City, he can't do it. The regular policeman or policewoman they cannot afford to live in that area. They would have to move somewhere else because it is now out of their budget (Mr. Turner, personal communication, July 12, 2011).

Evident in the forced evacuation of impoverished and working class communities, Katrina exposed the consequential realities of what Watkins-Hayes calls "faceless-bureaucracies," which are networks of individuals who bring their own experiences, knowledge, beliefs, agendas, skills and shortcomings to distribute public resources to residents who were in need most (p. 2). In other words, those who are in positions of power and or influence are only interested serving their agendas. If their agenda is to serve the wealthy and the more privileged, the underprivileged and disadvantaged people and communities will suffer most and face neglect. Thus, as Mr. Turner reveals how city officials make decisions based on race, class, and in part age to further marginalize communities through the process of redlining, situated poverty, and pricing loud. As witnessed with the Katrina ordeal, the administration has failed, as did the levees. Six

years later, residents still find themselves suffering as the result of a government breakdown and institutionalized racism and classism. Frustrated with all levels of government and the lack of progress of the New Orleans and treatment of poor Blacks, Dr. Delany added his professional perspective:

> At the level of policymakers and governmental support it's been mismanaged, short sighted, people with agendas, people trying to find ways to capitalize off of events, circumstance, so that's been hugely disappointing in terms of restoring confidence in the city as a space that has enlightened government and leadership (Dr. Delany, personal communication, July 15, 2011).

The Black community has endured institutional violence through the work of these structural forces. Along with Dr. Delany, many residents find themselves frustrated and enraged by the mismanagement and multi-faceted systems of oppression. Although most of my interlocutors, such as Dr. Delany, are critical of the government dysfunctions, Mr. Young was satisfied with the progress that has been made since the new administration has taken office.

**Perspective vs. Perception of a Privileged Resident**

Not all of my interlocutors are convinced that racism and class are functioning to move poor Blacks out of the New Orleans and resituate middle class Blacks in different lower income and less-than-desirable residential areas. Mr. Young is one of those people, I met Mr. Young at a City Hall Council Meeting. He is a very privileged man, who comes from a privileged family. Mr. Young is a college graduated and attended a law school at a prestigious institution. He has a light skin complexion and serves a very important

position to one of the top officials in the New Orleans City Government. He was also born in the 9th Ward. As we conversed, Mr. Young told me returned from college to help the City of New Orleans rebuild after Katrina and as we parted ways, Mr. Young gave me his card and told me he would like to share his thoughts regarding the Katrina ordeal and the city's progress to recover from the devastation. We arranged to meet the following day. Two days later, I was able to interview him at a local tavern during a shrimp boil.

I engaged Mr. Young on several topics such as the state of New Orleans currently and his thoughts of how the city is progressing on issues surrounding race, class and how the two functions is New Orleans, particularly in the 9th Ward. I asked him specifically if the results of Hurricane Katrina and flooding intentional. Mr. Young confidently replied:

> There is a very high African American population in Districts D and E. And a lot of those people were displaced after the storm. So when you talk about opportunities within these areas, you have to understand that it is a high concentration of African-American in that area and the funds just haven't been allocated to those districts they just haven't (Mr. Young, personal communication, July 16, 2011).

After he made that statement, I posed another question, regarding why a high concentration of African-Americans would be a determining factor of why funds and other resources were not allocated to people who needed assistance most. In other words, I asked were Blacks less deserving of assistance simply because they were Black? But according to Mr. Young:

> The mayor that we have here now, Mayor Landrieu, he's made it his priority to make sure that those districts are funded. If you see we have

> Methodist Hospital right now that's like one of the mayor's top priorities rebuilding Methodist Hospital. They just opened urgent care at Methodist Hospital this month so from 2005 to 2011 there has not been a healthcare facility in New Orleans East. But this mayor within one year has opened healthcare in New Orleans East and we'll have a full hospital in New Orleans East in 2013. Regarding the massive flooding and loss, the Army Corp of Engineers and the federal government maintain the levees. I cannot make that correlation that it was all based on race or class. Lakeview got a lot of water, too. Yeah, we have million dollar homes in Lakeview so I understand that point but I just can't, I can't get to point of saying that it was completely a race or class thing because you had people in Lakeview that really lost million dollar homes in the storm. So, I mean you had people in Lakeview and in other parts of the city that lost million dollars home in this storm so it's not a race, class or a culture thing. I guess it's just the way it happened 'cause everybody was affected by it. I mean I think it's very, very unfortunate that my section of the city I was raised in was flooded but I can't come to that conclusion (Mr. Young, personal communication, July 16, 2011).

As Mr. Young spoke, it was obvious that he was either oblivious or did not want to acknowledge how race, class and in part, age functions in New Orleans, which to a great extent, determines one's chances of rebuilding after Karina. Politically, this is an obstacle of recovery. I agree that Hurricane Katrina affected several New Orleans residents; however, those who have the wealth and means to recover from the devastation

were able to and possibly were better off because of the access to government assistance and insurance policy claims. Yet, for the residents who lacked proper insurance coverage, wealth, and earned very little income, the trajectory of their recovery took a different route. It appeared that Mr. Young gave his statement little thought, as he basically revealed the institutionalized forces that pushed impoverished and working class Black residents from their homes. Mr. Young claimed that what remain currently is a fight between the city representatives and the Historic District Landmarks Commission to save traditional shotgun style homes in these impoverished areas. I argue, this further marginalizes these areas by restricting the demolishing of condemned houses and construction of new viable residential areas, built to withstand future natural disasters. In other words, this is another obstacle of recovery because it keeps poor people in poor areas that are not of value to more privileged communities. As Mr. Young argues, there are not enough resources to fund a citywide reconstruction campaign. And he ultimately claimed that it is about money,

> It's a money issue. How do you finance that? We have finite funds so you got to be able to fund it. Well, like I said, like I said when I came back from D.C. and I had the same mind frame. Let's tear down and let's build something new. Let's build something better. Let's build a whole new city but you can't really do that with finite resources. You got to work with what you have. That's why my primary principle investors are backing out. So with the finite resources we're doing the best we can right now and we're going to try to continue getting people as we can back to the city and back into their properties. We're hoping we can revitalize an area

> back to the way it was. Yes, we definitely need to revitalize District C and E and the rest of the city in general. I think that is a very high priority of the Mayor, but also we need to take a handle on what we have right now. What we have now are people who received their Road Home money and they left the city and their property and we cannot technically take them because their private property and these people do not have the desire to come back (Mr. Young, personal communication, July 16, 2011).

As I examine Mr. Young's personal account of rebuilding in the wake of the Katrina ordeal, I come to understand that perception is more than a perspective. His perception reflects what he experience each day. Yet, the obstacles of recovery that my interlocutors and several other New Orleans residents face are complex and disguised as the consequential results of a natural disaster. Furthermore, if the government funding had been allocated appropriately to those who were most in need, more families would have been able to return to their property and rebuild. In contrast to Mr. Young's opinion, I argue that these systems are in place to regulate impoverished and working class Blacks into marginalized communities through structural racism, poverty, and government dysfunction and government actions. As I suggested in the case of Mr. Young, it is imperative to acknowledge these forces in order to be critical of why these forces are obstacles and how they function in New Orleans. By not acknowledging these structural forces, systemic forms of oppression will continue to plague marginalized Blacks residents in New Orleans with racism, classism, and discrimination, which in turn will create more obstacles of recovery. Nevertheless, as marginalized Black residents face adversity in their pursuit of rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina they find a way to survive

using utilizing their strength as a community that refuse to be washed from their homes. I identify this phenomenon in the subsequent chapter as communities of survival.

## Chapter V
## Communities of Survival

### Lending a Helping Hand

I awake at 6:43 am Thursday morning on March 16. The bedroom I am in is slightly illuminated from the morning sunrays, which pierce through the floral designed curtains. The hallway outside my room seems to have some traffic from the sounds of doors opening and closing. In addition, I can hear other volunteers wishing one another a good morning as they go through their morning routine. As I lie in my bed on the top bunk, I reflect on the difference this trip has made in my life thus far and the privileges with which I have been blessed. My volunteer team has made progress in the home restoration project since the first day we walked into the Coleman's home. The structure that was in dire need of repair is now becoming a livable space. Every inch of dry wall was primed and ready for paint. The farthest room in the back of the shotgun home wore its first coat of taupe paint with style and elegance. The wood cabinets have been sand and stained and the master bathroom tiling is almost complete. This is how I envisioned Katrina relief in New Orleans to be.

After we showered and packed our lunches, we head to our destination. We are greeted with warm smiles and embracing hugs from the Coleman Family when we arrive. The sun was bright and the sky was clear. Although it was a beautiful day, the crisp morning breeze made everyone in my group wear a light jacket. I walk up three stair-steps onto the porch to assist a fellow volunteer bring supplies from inside the house out into the working areas where we paint and stain furnishings. As I walk back into the home, the smell of sawdust and fresh paint is in the air. The unfinished cabinets that were once on the floor are now finished and only hours away from being mounted on the

kitchen wall. Indeed, there is progress. I experience the feeling great satisfaction as Mr. Coleman smiles as he and I walk through the premises. Just knowing I am making a difference in someone's life is one of the most humbling and gratifying feelings I could ever experience. Yet, although we have made progress, there is still much work to do before we depart New Orleans Friday evening. I unwrap the paint rollers, brushes and paint buckets to prepare them for use. I turn on the radio to hear Usher's song "There Goes My Baby" yet again. I take one final look around the room to make sure there is not anything that could slow me down once I start. After my final inspection, I began rolling paint onto the primed walls.

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In this chapter, I transition from focusing on how social forces shaped the experience of those who survived Hurricane Katrina to how individuals came together as a community to help each other through the aftermath of Katrina's destruction. In addition, I analyze how alternative forms of community, such as extended family formations, support groups, and organizations, and how these entities were utilized as non-market assets to endure the aftermath of Katrina. As revealed by my interlocutors, community members and non-profit organizations participated in diverse economies and non-market assets to help rebuild their homes and provide emotional and social support. While not relinquishing the responsibility of all branches of government and its failed response, these support groups provide the necessary means through which devastated residents were able to survive the Katrina ordeal.

I examine the function of, what I refer to as, and communities of survival in four segments. First, I draw from my personal experience as I bring into focus the importance

of institutional aid from church organizations, non-profits and educational institutions with service learning courses. Second, examine the role and usefulness of non-market values such as love as care, and non-market assets, which individuals relied upon during and after the Katrina ordeal. My last point explores the concept of diverse economies and the central role they played in sustaining a higher standard of living despite the lack of job opportunities available to those who were uneducated and impoverished. Furthermore, I discuss how diverse economies underpin coping mechanisms as suffering residents engage in substance abuse and misuse to help them cope with the pain of social loss and mental anguish. Overall, I will reveal how communities mobilized through the Katrina ordeal with the help of institutional aid, participating in non-market assets, and diverse economies

**Faith and Non-Faith Based Organizations**

Despite of the unwillingness and inability of the government to provide the necessary resources to aid New Orleans victims and survivors, various institutions collaborated with community members to begin organizing their own recovery efforts. Churches, non-profit organizations, educational and skilled carpenter and construction agencies volunteered time and labor in pursuit of rebuilding decimated neighborhoods. Programs such as Common Ground Relief, Habitat for Humanity, His Hands 2 Go, and Brad Pitt's Make It Right Foundation are nonprofit organizations that provide relief and comfort to those who were devastated in the event of a natural disaster. In addition, these non-profit disaster relief organizations also provide some shelter, food and many other resources for the homeless and underprivileged. I worked with and observed the work and dedication of these community leaders who work tirelessly assisting those who are in

need through church organizations and other non-faith based disaster relief organizations. The volunteers of these organizations gutted homes removing water-damaged appliances, flooring, drywall, furniture and fixtures to restore the homes back to its original condition. This serves as an example of the work my team members and I performed at the Coleman's residence. Non-profit disaster relief organizations grant the opportunity for volunteers from all over the world to assist flooded communities and residents of New Orleans.

In my case, I was privileged to have access to Voices of Katrina, a service-learning course offered by the School of Education at Indiana University, Bloomington during our spring recess. The program was developed to give provide students with an affordable opportunity to volunteer their time for community service. In addition, students are able to assist survivors who are in most need without a great cost. Through the collaboration of the School of Education and its service leaning initiative and Little Farms Church, six years later, I was able to conduct research, while I participated in rebuilding structures devastated by Katrina alongside seven other individuals from Bloomington, Indiana. Without this collaboration, I do not believe the opportunity to work for and with New Orleans' survivors of Hurricane Katrina would have been a possibility.

Although non-profit disaster relief organizations provide great support to those who suffered loss during the Katrina Ordeal, these organizations face several obstacles. Despite the city's professional football team, the New Orleans Saints, winning the Super Bowl in 2010 then later being the host-city for the Super Bowl in 2013, with all its tourist attractions and sites, New Orleans is far from a structurally safe and functional city. I

spoke with Mr. Evans, the director of the volunteer program, in which I participated. He suggested that people believe the Katrina ordeal is over. However, according to Mr. Evans, "We are not back In fact, I would guess it is going to be another twenty years before we see a real difference in these impoverished neighborhoods." In his opinion, if we believe New Orleans have recovered from Hurricane Katrina, non-profit disaster relief organizations will not survive. In addition, Mr. Evans discusses the difficulties with raising money and motivating people to volunteer their time, six years removed from Katrina. Mr. Evans continues:

> Just think Kiwan, if more people believe that City of New Orleans has completely recovered from Katrina, the massive flooding and the devastating loss, how many of those people are going to volunteer their time and skills to aid those who still need help? How much money do you think people will donate to a cause if they believe this mess is over? How can we go about providing aid to survivors if we do not have the resources to do so? It is getting to a point where our hands are simply tied, yet we do what we can until we cannot provide our services any longer (Mr. Evans, personal communication, July 13, 2011).

Non-profit disaster relief organizations make a difference in the communities in which they serve. These organizations are an essential lifeline to survivors who are still struggling to recover from the Katrina ordeal. Mr. Evans provided insight as to how non-profits organizations receive funding and at times struggle to meet the demands of providing disaster relief to suffering residents of New Orleans.

Mr. Evans states:

> "It is important to realize that although non-profit disaster relief organizations, such as this one, receive grants from the government, most of our funding is collected by way of our congregation offering, fundraising and other forms of individuals donating towards the cause" (Mr. Evans, personal communication, July 13, 2011).

His statement demonstrates the importance of contributing towards relief efforts in New Orleans to serve the homeless, the impoverished, and the uninsured with the resources and support to mobilize through a horrific event such as Katrina.

**Bartering and Trading**

Non-profit disaster relief organizations are an institutional source aid. These institutions are governed by church members and organized bodies, which adhere to formal laws, bylaws and the formalities of their respective mission and objectives. Yet, I witnessed an alternative form of disaster relief not regulated by a church or secular organizations while walking around Law Street collecting data. I came across a middle-aged man name Marcus about block from the house we were repairing. He is a carpenter who is skilled at laying subflooring, carpet, and he also cuts and mounts baseboards, and crown molding. Marcus informed me that he was there to lay carpet in his friend's home. In return, his friend worked on the plumbing issues Marcus was experiencing in his home. Marcus stated; "We find a way to make it when there is no way." His story was not unique. I also noticed a trend of extended families and community members organizing themselves to establish a variation of a barter/trade system. In this system,

participants provided an exchange of labor and forms of care, support, and other non-monetary services.

The barter/trade system was evident in most of my interlocutor's stories. For, example, Ms. Nash and Ms. Baker relied on one another form of support, love and care. As I observed their interaction and body language, I could sense that they were surviving the Katrina ordeal together. Ms. Baker styled Ms. Nash's hair at no cost and encouraged her to finish nursing school so she can begin her career. In turn, Ms. Nash listened to Ms. Baker family problems, financial struggles, and helped her kids with their homework. Mr. Augusta revealed to me that he and his friends hosts pizza party building sessions, where in which the person whose house is in need of restoration provides pizzas for the friends who are providing their labor. As Mr. Augusta explained, "One weekend out of the month, we would all meet up over someone's house to help them clean and rebuild their house. In return, the person whose house we were rebuilding would get a few boxes of pizza and some soda for the rest of us. This way, we did not have to worry about shady contractors running off with our money. You know that was big here." Clearly, Mr. Augusta not only depended on his friends for labor and support, through the exchange of non-market labor, he also was able to protect himself from the fraudulent activity of illegitimate contractors. Furthermore, when I met Ms. Clark, I witnessed her nephew providing non-market labor as he attempted to start the gas-powered generator in the backyard to power a few appliances inside Ms. Clark's home because she had no electricity.

The functionality of the barter/trade system is a key aspect of the recovery process. The utility of the barter/trade system provided assistance to those who did not have the financial resources or proper insurance coverage to recover from the damages caused by the hurricane and mass flooding. Evident in my interlocutors' stories, barter/trade system also provided the space for non-nuclear and alternative kinship formations to emerge and provide the necessary labor, love, and emotional support, as we would expect from a nuclear family. Moreover, the exchange of care, goods and/or labor does not require a one to one exchange, necessarily. Thus, the return of service and/or labor provided could be reciprocated in a non-monetary fashion, demonstrating the strength, resiliency, and determination of these communities to restore their lives, as best as they can, to a semblance of normalcy. This proves that despite the conditions in which individuals are living, rebuilding and supporting each other through the Katrina ordeal extends beyond capital gain. However, the barter/trade system serves as only one of many examples of what Katrina survivors did to help rebuild their lives and their homes.

**Diverse Economies**

Diverse economies, otherwise known as informal economies, capture both the entrepreneurial spirit of New Orleans residents, which provides additional income to those who engage in sex work and drug trafficking. In addition, through various forms of illicit drug use and abuse, diverse economies provide suffering residents a coping strategy to help them manage the pain of mental anguish associated with material and social loss. In several ways, diverse economies helped restore and sustain a standard of living within these less than desirable areas despite the lack of job opportunities available to those who are less fortunate and reside in neglected segments of New Orleans. Although many of

the practices mirror bartering, trading and exchanging goods for services, it is necessary to recognize how diverse economies are influenced by and dependent upon revenue gains, unlike non-market assets. As painful as it was for me to witness while driving through New Orleans, the Katrina ordeal left many impoverished residents in complete disarray, searching for alternative ways to manage life and cope with the devastation. The activity of diverse economies provided that alternative opportunity to manage and cope with the material realities of what impoverished Black residents faced daily (Cepeda, Valdez, Kaplan, & Hill, 2010; Curtis, Mills, & Leitner, 2007).

Within the capacity of diverse economies, the threat of contractor fraud emerged as an obstacle to rebuild as Mr. Augusta mentioned earlier. In addition to contractor fraud, the underground drug ring, and sex work world provides the opportunity to navigate through the chaos of the Katrina ordeal declared by Mr. Turner and Ms. Baker and Ms. Clark. Several of my interlocutors spoke about a strategy to survive in New Orleans if you do not have a good education. For example, Mr. Turner suggested, "The only thing that is going to save Black people now is how strong your hustle is or how good your education is. If your hustle ain't shit, and your education ain't shit, you might as well go to Mississippi somewhere. You might as well move up North" Mr. Turner, personal communication, July 12, 2011). Confirming Mr. Turner's claim, Ms. Baker declared: "It's hard to live here and that's why I said if you don't have a hustle it does not make sense for you to come here because unless you have a good education to get a good job, you will not be able to work or live here anymore."

"The hustle" captures the idea of diverse economies of which several of my interlocutors spoke about. If no jobs with livable wages are available, diverse economies

provide an alternative option to help, particularly low-income Black residents, survive the daily struggles of living in New Orleans especially after Katrina. Below Ms. Clark reflected on her experience with drugs and sex work during the immediate aftermath of Katrina.

> When I was on drugs, I was on drugs. I had everything I wanted. I did not need any money during any time. If I needed anything, nobody got none until I got what I needed. All the contractors who stayed in this house were all stoned, and you know what? I will tell you, all those contractors did what they wanted to do out there, and when they got what they got, they were gone. However, when they first come down they had nowhere to stay, so they stayed with me. I took care of their ass until they got on their feet.

Ms. Clark's narrative provides vivid examples of multiple diverse economies functioning simultaneously. She makes clear that while contractors stayed with her they cared for and attended to her needs. If there were ever a time where she was in need, the contractors would not get "none," implying she would not have sex with anyone or provide labor until her needs were met. Through diverse economies, Ms. Clark was temporarily able to receive the assistance, support, and substances she needed to face the obstacles of the Katrina ordeal.

Ms. Baker and Ms. Nash both agree that New Orleans, particularly the impoverished Black residential areas, have been infested with drug distribution, misuse and abuse. However, the two believe this problem has grown worse because of the mental anguish, depression and feelings of hopelessness among the common Black New Orleans

residents. In addition, they believe that for most people, drugs use serves as a coping mechanism to deal with what individuals experienced during Katrina. Consequently, residents of New Orleans resort to drugs mainly for two reasons; one, as an additional source of income to improve the conditions of their life and/or two, as a method to cope with the pain of their life experience, extending beyond the realm of Hurricane Katrina. Ms. Baker explained this as she lit her marijuana cigarette:

> You sit right here and right where I'm sitting at with the door open you see misery, you see depression, you see all that, you don't see people thriving, saying they're going to get a job or they looking for none or they getting up going to work. Most of these people they done got to the point where they actually have that fuck it mentality. You know, it ain't get no better since Katrina, ain't gonna get no better, it is what it is. Some resort to the streets to sell dope and that is all they know. On the other hand, when you go to just about any corner you see people standing out outside begging. They are just looking for their next little fix or whatever the case may be and it is a day-to-day type thing.

Ms. Baker brings into focus how and why New Orleans residents resort to drug use and distribution. Moreover, she identifies how diverse economies create a market where there is a demand for drugs to cope with the hardships of life, especially after Katrina. Coinciding with Ms. Baker's claims Ms. Nash gave her perception about the drug problem and how it is affecting, particularly unemployed and low-income Black New Orleans residents:

> This drug problem is a huge problem. That is why she was telling you, you look out the door you see nothing but misery. Drug attics walk around as if they are zombies. Seriously, these people around here eat, sleep and breathe dope no matter what it is; heroin, crack, pills, everything. It is worse; I tell you. Now it was bad before the storm, but not as bad as it is now. You do not know what is on their drugged out minds. You do not know if they are stoned or fucked up, or what their life was like before Katrina. Their life may have been fucked up already. Hell, no telling what Katrina did to them. They could have loss everything. They could have walked over dead bodies floating down the streets, or found dead bodies in their homes. You never know. These people are addicted to drugs; they look for ways to get them all day everyday. I think these people would try anything just to take off the edge.

Ms. Baker and Ms. Nash's narrative brings to light how drugs are used to cope with loss and mental trauma of being a poor Black resident of New Orleans with very limited opportunities to overcome the obstacles placed before them. Ms. Baker suggests that many of these people do not know what else to do with their lives because FEMA benefits are expiring in addition to disaster relief housing vouchers. Systemically, survivors are being cut-off from their government benefits, which is their only means of support when they have no place to go and lack the resources to improve their quality of life.

My experience in New Orleans made me more conscious of the disadvantages of being poor and Black in America, let alone in New Orleans. My research focuses on three

major issues, which were revealed to me while I critically examined the aftermath of hurricane Katrina six years after the storm. I am certain that there is more information to be examined about the poor material and social conditions under which Black New Orleans residents live. My future research will continue to monitor how natural disasters are portrayed on be the national media and all levels of government to analyze how race, class, culture, gender factors into the representation of victims, thus influencing the storm and relief assistance and efforts. Moreover, I will investigate how we as a country can help alleviate the mass devastation caused by natural disasters and how we can improve our infrastructure and our emergency response teams so that relief is readily available when danger is eminent. It is important to continue challenging the ways in which systemic forms of oppression influence and reproduce, for example, race and class, hierarchies in society at large. The work in New Orleans is not yet finished and the low-income Black residents who reside within the confines of garbage areas, for example, are still in need of our assistance. The responsibility of disaster relief should not be on the hands of a selected few. As United States citizens, we all have the responsibility to come together as one family to assist our fellow sisters and brothers during times of crisis.

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We began packing up our belongings around two o'clock Friday afternoon. The sun is high and bright, as the temperature steadily increases past 80 degrees. As I walk throughout the house, I see substantial difference with the progress that has been made. Every wall in the home, with the exception of the front room, was primed and painted with two coats of taupe colored paint. Carpeting covered the backroom floor as we worked our way toward the front of the house. The wooden boards that covered the

windows were removed. The cabinets, which we found on the floor upon our arrival on Monday, were now mounted on the kitchen walls this afternoon. The house was in the midst of becoming a home, again, as the sunlight shined illuminated each room as though they were facets of a flawless diamond. The Colman's children and grandchildren also had come to witness the progress we made. The whole family were overcome with joy some began crying. The Colman family asked us to take pictures so they can always have something to remember this experience. This is what recovery looks like. Each of us knew we made a difference in their life and although we did not have the time to complete each task the homes needed to be completely restored, we as a team accomplished more than we ever could imagined. Most importantly, we respected and repaired as if it was our own, and the difference showed through.

We came as strangers and faced with the success and shortcomings of the previous teams, which worked at this site before us. Although we are here to assist their recovery efforts, I always kept in mind the invasiveness of the job and how difficult it must be to have different groups of people they do not know in their home each week. I believe, as a team, we did an excellent job of building their trust, confidence and earning their respect and friendship. We communicated with the family to gain more knowledge about them personally in ways our site supervisor lacked. Overall, my team and I managed to build a relationship with the Coleman family that will be forever lasting. Each team member understood how delicate this situation is and did all we could to make this unique experience a positive and memorable one.

Prior to departing this site for the last time, one team member thought of an idea to capture the daily progress and humorous moments as we repaired the Coleman's home.

As we began to wash our paintbrushes and retrieve loose nails and other materials from the rooms, she left the house to pick-up the fourteen-page photo book from Walgreens she ordered. At 2:30 in the afternoon, my team member presented the family with the purple photo book symbolically on their front porch as the rest of us watched on from the front yard. In it were pictures of us in the house and the progress we made from the first day we arrived here until noon today. The gesture brought tears of joy to each of our eyes as the family collectively flipped through the album. The Coleman family knew at this particular moment that this experience meant a great deal for each of us. We were thankful of the Coleman family for allowing us to help them recover the best of our ability. For once, I believe we were able to do something that no other group has ever achieved; we left the Coleman's home as family.

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# Appendix 1

**Katrina 's X Sample Topics and Questions for Interview:**

1. What is your race/ethnicity? Or you can ask them how do they identify?
2. How old are you?
3. How many people lived at this residence during the time Katrina stuck?
    a. Talk about your family.
    b. What is your family's history in New Orleans?
4. Did you own an automobile before Hurricane Katrina stuck?
5. Talk about your socioeconomic status?
6. Do you receive any federal aid or living assistance?
7. How long have you lived in this particular area?
8. Discuss your experiences with past hurricanes.

What is your sense of the impact these hurricanes have had on the City of New Orleans, neighborhoods, etc.

How did the city deal with these hurricanes?

    a. Was there ample time to prepare for the storm?

9. Discuss Hurricane Katrina.
10. How did the city deal with it?
11. What was the impact on your family?
    a. Did you evacuate immediately or did you remain in your home?
    b. Why?
12. Did you anticipate the possible devastation of Hurricane Katrina?
13. Do you own or rent your home?
14. What was the level of damage to your home as a result Hurricane Katrina?

a. Did you have home owners/renters insurance?

b. Were you able to regain most of your possession lost after the storm?

15. Who do you believe were most affected by the storm?

a. Why?

16. Elaborate on your experience been since Hurricane?

17. What are some of the factors that you think shape your experiences?

Were you temporarily displaced as a result of the Hurricane?

a. Were you in a FEMA trailer?

b. Are there any plans of returning to NOLA?

c. Why or why not?

d. How long was it before you were able to return home?

18. In your view, how is the government (all branches) dealing with the recovery from Katrina?

What would you do differently to help the recovery process?

# Appendix 2

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

**To:** KATHLEEN R. GILBERT
APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCE

**From:** IU Human Subjects Office
Office of Research Administration – Indiana University

**Date:** July 08, 2011

**RE:** **EXEMPTION GRANTED**

Protocol Title: Katrina's X Examining the Race, Class and the Black Communities of Survival in New Orleans

Protocol #: 1106006086

Funding Agency/Sponsor: None

IRB: IRB-04, IRB00000219

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Your study named above was accepted on July 07, 2011 as meeting the criteria of exempt research as described in the Federal regulations at 45 CFR 46.101(b), paragraph(s) (2) . This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals that may be required.

As the principal investigator (or faculty sponsor in the case of a student protocol) of this study, you assume the following responsibilities:

**Amendments:** Any proposed changes to the research study must be reported to the IRB prior to implementation. To request approval, please complete an Amendment form and submit it, along with any revised study documents, to irb@iu.edu. Only after approval has been granted by the IRB can these changes be implemented.

**Completion:** Although a continuing review is not required for an exempt study, you are required to notify the IRB when this project is completed. In some cases, you will receive a request for current project status from our office. If we are unsuccessful at in our attempts to confirm the status of the project, we will consider the project closed. It is your responsibility to inform us of any address changes to ensure our records are kept current.

Per federal regulations, there is no requirement for the use of an informed consent document or study information sheet for exempt research, although one may be used if it is felt to be appropriate for the research being conducted. As such, these documents are returned without an IRB-approval stamp. Please note that if your submission included an informed consent statement or a study information sheet, the IRB requires the investigational team to use these documents.

You should retain a copy of this letter and any associated approved study documents for your records. Please refer to the project title and number in future correspondence with our office. Additional information is available on our website at http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/index.html.

If you have any questions, please contact our office at the below address.

Thank you.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

# DOCUMENTATION OF REVIEW AND APPROVAL (DRA)

**Reviewing IRB (please choose one):** IRB STUDY NUMBER: 1106006086

Biomedical: ☐ IRB-02 ☐ IRB-03 ☐ IRB-04 ☐ IRB-05
Behavioral: ☐ IRB-01 ☒ IUB IRB

*Please type only in the gray boxes. To mark a box as checked, double-click the box, select "checked", and click "OK".*

## SECTION I: INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION

**Principal Investigator:**
Name *(Last, First, Middle Initial)*: **Kathleen J. Gilbert**
Department: HPER Applied Health Science Phone: 812-855-5209 E-Mail: gilbertk@indiana.edu
Fax: _____ Address: HPER Room 115

**Additional Study Contact**:
Name: Kiwan R Lawson Phone: 614.783.0559 E-Mail: kiwan.lawson@gmail.com

Student Contact, if this is a student protocol: Kiwan Lawson Phone: 614-783-0559 Email: kiwan.lawson@gmail.com

Project Title: **Katrina's X Examining the Race, Class and the Black Communities of Survival in New Orleans**

Sponsor/Funding Agency: N/A PI on Grant: N/A
Sponsor Protocol #/Grant #: N/A Period: from: N/A to N/A
Sponsor Type: ☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ Industry ☐ Not-for-Profit ☒ Unfunded ☐ Internally Funded
Funding Status: ☐ Pending ☐ Funded ☒ N/A
Grant Title (if different from project title): N/A

## SECTION II: TYPE OF REVIEW

☒ Exempt Review
☐ Expedited Review
☐ Full Board Review (*Choose One*) → ☐ Behavioral: ☐ IRB-01 ☐ IU Bloomington IRB
☐ Biomedical: ☐ IRB-02 ☐ IRB-04 ☐ IRB-05

## SECTION III: DOCUMENTS INCLUDED WITH RESEARCH SUBMISSION

☐ Assent, dated: _____
Number of assent documents: _____
☐ Authorization, dated: _____
Number of authorizations: _____
☐ Clinical Investigator's Brochure, dated: _____
☐ Expedited Research Checklist, dated: _____
☒ Exempt Research Checklist, dated: _____
☐ HIPAA & Recruitment Checklist, dated: _____
☐ Informed Consent, dated: _____
Number of consent documents: _____
☐ Protocol, dated: _____
☐ Recruitment materials (please list and date): _____
☐ Request form(s) for vulnerable population(s) (please list and date); _____
☒ Surveys, questionnaires (please list and date): Sample questions
☐ Summary Safeguard Statement or HUD Form, dated: _____
☒ Study Information Sheet
☒ Other (please list and date): Investigator List

## SECTION IV: INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

By submitting this form, the Principal Investigator assures that all information provided is accurate. He/she assures that procedures performed under this project will be conducted in strict accordance with federal regulations and Indiana University policies and procedures that govern research involving human subjects. He/she acknowledges that he/she has the resources required to conduct research in a way that will protect the rights and welfare of participants, and that he/she will employ sound study design which minimizes risks to subjects. He/she agrees to submit *any* change to the project (e.g. change in principal investigator, research methodology, subject recruitment procedures, etc.) to the Board in the form of an amendment for IRB approval prior to implementation.

## SECTION V: IRB APPROVAL

This research project, including all documents included with the submission (e.g., informed consent statement, authorization, and/or waiver of authorization) has been reviewed and approved by the Indiana University IRB for a maximum of a one year period unless otherwise indicated as follows:_____

☒ Exempt Category(ies), if applicable: 2
☐ Expedited Category(ies), if applicable: _____

Authorized IRB Signature: Kara Brocious IRB Approval Date: 7/7/11

Printed Name of IRB Member: KARA BROCIOUS

*For IU Human Subjects Office use only.*

Recorded in the Minutes of: _____