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Upcoming Events

With JSRI:

Holiday Toy Drive for Loyola at Rayburn. JSRI is collecting toys for children & teens visiting their parents at Rayburn Correctional Center this Christmas! In collaboration with Loyola-Rayburn Student Government Association and Loyola SGA, we are hosting a toy drive so that hundreds of children & teens can unwrap presents and celebrate the holidays with their parents. You can also donate online to the Loyola Rayburn Fund, and we can buy a gift for you! Toys will be collected until Friday, December 12th (formerly the 10th)! Bins are located in the Danna Center, Monroe Library, Law School lobby, and Chapel of Saint Ignatius. See the flyer for guidelines and more information here.

On Campus:

Earth Week Clothing Drive. Join the Environment Program in making a difference by giving your old wardrobe a new life to support the future of Earth Week! Clean out your closet of gently used clothing and drop them off in the bins around campus. Clothing

Ten Social Justice Lessons from Hurricane Katrina and Its Aftermath

By Bill Quigley, J.D.

Lesson One: Katrina Was a Government-Created Human Rights Crisis, Not Just a Natural Disaster.

The catastrophe of Katrina must be understood as a predictable political failure, not just a climate catastrophe. The storm may have been natural, but everything that happened afterward was political. Levee neglect, evacuation planning based on wealth, abandonment of hospitals and prisons, and racially structured recovery programs transformed a hurricane into a mass human rights violation. After Katrina, the tremendous loss and suffering of vulnerable people was seized upon as an opportunity for profit for commercial interests in what is now known as disaster capitalism. The storm tested whether the government's duty to protect life would apply when so many of the victims were poor and Black. The results were devastating.

New Orleans, LA., 10/22/2005 -- Evacuee, Umberto Romero, gathers food and necessities at the distribution center at the Chalmette Recovery Center following devastating hurricane Katrina. FEMA photo/Andrea Booher.

Lesson Two: The Needs of the Least Powerful Must Be Prioritized Before, During, and After Disaster – The Opposite of What Occurred.

Reject the popular narrative that Katrina "created" suffering. Disasters do not create poverty—they expose and worsen it. The hurricane activated pre-existing conditions of abandonment. It revealed what was already there—widespread permanent poverty, racial isolation, high poverty

Collection will run through Thursday, December 11th. Bins are in Buddig, Uptown, Cabra, and Francis Halls, and in the Commuter Lounge in Satchmos. See the flyer here; read more information here.

In the Community:

Abolitionists Tea Party for Human Rights Day. Join the St. Charles Center for Faith + Action and Freedom to Grow for an Abolitionist's Tea Party in honor of Human Rights Day, today, Wednesday December 10th at 5:30 P.M. We will gather around Obie's Solitary Garden at 7100 St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans. See the flyer here.

Unión Migrante Immigration Court Watch. Unión Migrante is a democratic organization of immigrants, for immigrants. They are dedicated to fighting for immigration reform, providing training and offering advocacy to support immigrants in emergencies. As the threat of racist state violence against immigrant communities continues, Unión Migrante's resolve rises to meet it—and they want you to join! See the flyer & post here.

'The Trail They Blazed' is currently on display at the Historic New Orleans Collection. Leaders of the local Civil Rights Movement tell their stories of resistance in their own words. The exhibit features quotes from JSRI's Twomey Scholar, Dr. Ronnie Moore. The multimedia exhibition immerses visitors in the movement with ambient musical recordings of songs sung by activists, audio excerpts from oral history interviews, archival news footage, stirring photography, an interactive voter registration test, and more. The voices of those who experienced it firsthand narrate the tremendous and often

among women, government neglect, and a survival system that collapses the moment stress is applied. Evacuation policy assumed private vehicles, disposable income, and insurance. Tens of thousands of New Orleans citizens without these resources were condemned in advance. Thousands of children were displaced from home. Older adults and people with disabilities were among the hardest hit and the last helped. Katrina revealed how facially-neutral emergency policies can have predictable disparate impact.

Lesson Three: Racism is Always Present and Must Be Faced and Eliminated.

Race determined who was criminalized and who was protected. Racialized media and law enforcement narratives shaped post-storm response. Black survivors were called “looters” for taking food to live. White survivors were described as “finding supplies”. This linguistic distinction justified militarized policing rather than humanitarian rescue. Such framing implicates not only bias, but state action infused with racial motivation, influencing deployment of force and denial of aid. The result was the criminalization of survival in Black neighborhoods.

Lesson Four: Prisoners Are People Too.

Nowhere was the collapse of human dignity clearer than in Orleans Parish Prison. More than 6,000 incarcerated people were left behind in locked cells as floodwaters rose. Some stood for days in chest-deep water mixed with sewage, without food or drinking water, without evacuation, without information, and without help. Guards fled without evacuating prisoners. No evacuation plan existed. Many in the jail were pretrial and legally innocent. Thousands were shipped to other jails, some even out of state, with no notice to families, no access to lawyers, and no record of where they were taken. Prisoners are human beings; this was torture. We must admit the law does not protect everyone.

Lesson Five: Renters Must Be Protected.

Renters were de-emphasized in government assistance. The most glaring example was the mistreatment of the 5,000 families in public housing. Thousands of structurally sound public-housing units were demolished. Perfectly livable public housing was destroyed while former residents slept in FEMA trailers and distant shelters. This destruction of public housing was not accidental – it was strategic. This was not recovery. This was permanent removal and displacement of poor Black residents from valuable urban land.

Lesson Six: The Right of Return Must Be Respected, Especially While Billions of Recovery Funds Are Being Distributed in Their Names.

About 40% of the 1.5 million people evacuated from the Gulf Coast never returned, more than 100,000 from New Orleans alone. No one said, ‘You are forbidden to return.’ The system simply made return impossible. Under UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, post-Katrina displacement was supposed to be treated as internal forced migration. The US displaced hundreds of thousands of families and then refused to help them exercise their right to return. Families were scattered across the nation with no housing plan, no job plan, and no roadmap home. Recovery policy favored homeowners. If you owned property, you were counted. If you rented, you were invisible. The blocking of return was bureaucratic rather than overt. While the directly impacted were displaced, more than $120 billion was spent by the government in recovery. Billions

dangerous effort to transform Louisiana from a Jim Crow holdout into an equitable place for all residents. Admission is free. On view until June 7, 2026. Located on the 3rd floor of the Historic New Orleans Collection, 520 Royal Street.

drained away in fraud and waste. Yet today, New Orleans is smaller, poorer and more unequal than before Katrina.

Lesson Seven: Immigrant Workers are Essential Workers.

When hundreds of thousands were displaced by Katrina, more than 10,000 immigrant workers came to the Gulf Coast to help our communities rebuild. Many were undocumented. Despite receiving lower pay, less medical care, and less safety equipment than other workers, they gutted houses, rebuilt homes, and repaired roofs. Without their labor, the rebuilding that has happened would have taken much, much longer. Twenty years later, these workers and their families are being hunted by masked heavily armed officers who snatch them from worksites and their families.

Lesson Eight: Grassroots Community Solidarity Replaced State Protection.

While the government failed, communities organized. The first responders were not federal agencies. The sheroes and heroes were neighbors with boats, churches with keys, volunteers with medical bags, and relatives who made extra room in their homes. As the weeks and months passed, it was neighborhood associations, volunteer groups, families, and faith communities that led the sheltering and helping, and forced the government to improve the rebuilding. These communities and mutual-aid networks did their best to fulfill functions ordinarily assigned to government, underscoring the extent of institutional collapse.

Lesson Nine: Collective Memory is Itself a Justice Obligation.

Now Katrina is treated as history, but for tens of thousands it is still unfinished business. A society that forgets who it abandons will abandon them again. Public amnesia facilitates repetition. **We must never forget these lessons.**

Lesson Ten: Summary of What Should be Done.

For the future, full implementation of human rights to housing, land, occupation and livelihood, freedom from discrimination, and the right to return need to be guaranteed. The needs of the poor and vulnerable need to take priority over the wants of the well-off. All communities deserve to participate in the decision-making process planning for disasters and prioritizing actions before, during, and after disasters. There must be accountability and transparency in the raising, taking, and spending money in the name of the people. That means that government, non-government organizations, and non-profits must disclose, in real time, how much money has been raised, how much has been spent and the identities of each organization, person, or governmental unit which received any funds.

Conclusion: Katrina as Government Failure.

Katrina did not merely fail in evacuation (Lesson One), incarceration (Lesson Four), and housing (Lesson Five). It revealed that each of these systems is structurally designed to sacrifice the same populations. It was a systemic government failure—not simply a disaster. The guarantees of fairness and equality collapsed along racial lines. Children, women heads of households, the disabled and the elderly were left behind. Displacement became a tool of urban restructuring. Human rights were ignored.

Katrina thus stands as a warning precedent for climate-driven disaster response in the United States. The current President has vowed to abolish

the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and has cut its staff. Without substantive structural reform based on the human dignity and worth of all people, future storms will replicate and aggravate the same inequalities under new weather conditions.

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