

***PEOPLE ON THE MOVE AND THE COMMON GOOD:
MIGRATION, POVERTY, AND RACISM: CONCERNS FOR OUR FUTURE***
A CONFERENCE ON CAMPUS, OCTOBER 28-NOVEMBER 17, 2009

**Jesuit Social Research Institute, College of Social Sciences
Loyola University New Orleans
Final Report, April 5, 2010**

I. Activities and Accomplishments; Timeframe and Workplan

From October 28th through November 17th, Jesuit Social Research Institute staff hosted a compelling series of events for students, faculty, staff, and the wider community as part of our conference entitled *People on the Move and the Common Good—Migration, Poverty, and Racism, Converging Concerns for Our Future*. Seven separate events moved participants from the experience of the “internally displaced people” of Katrina’s New Orleans in the first week to the migrating peoples of the South in the second to the plight of immigrant peoples of the United States in the third to the internationally displaced in the last week.

Over five hundred people participated in one or another of the conference events or smaller gatherings (meetings with classes, students, or faculty) made possible by this grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The key events moved in four stages:

The Katrina Experience:

- (1) evening showing on October 28, 2009 of the award-winning documentary *Trouble the Waters* and discussion with the film protagonists Kimberly Rivers Roberts and Scott Roberts;
- (2) a panel at midday, November 3, 2009 on Katrina and its aftermath featuring Dr. Allison Plyer of the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, Liz McCartney of the St. Bernard Project, and Loyola students Kimble Wright and Macede Jackson, who were evacuees as high school students with their families from the devastation of Katrina;

Migration in the Southeast:

- (3) an evening lecture on November 3, 2009 by Dr. Manuel Vásquez of the University of Florida on research into migration trends in the Southeast, with a focus on Atlanta and New Orleans;
- (4) a panel at midday, November 10, 2009 on local opportunities to accompany migrants with Martin Gutierrez of Catholic Charities, Anna Chavez of the JSRI staff, an audio “Dream Act Story” from *This American Life*, and Loyola student Molly Thomas;

U.S. Migrating Workers:

(5) a talk by Kim Bobo of the Chicago-based Interfaith Worker Justice on justice for immigrant workers in the US, along with a testimonial from representatives from the New Orleans Worker Center for Racial Justice on local worker problems;

International Migration:

(6) a panel on international opportunities for immersion and service with Fr. Tom Greene, SJ, Loyola professor and JSRI Associate, Justine Diamond, alum ('07) working with the Hispanic Apostolate of the Archdiocese, Josh Daly of University Ministry and the Ignacio (international) Volunteers, and students Margaret Sands, Marie Briard, and Luis Baker from the Loyola Center for International Education; and

(7) a final talk on the plight of refugees and asylum seekers by Dr. Katrine Camilleri, internationally honored advocate with Jesuit Refugee Service Malta.

The conference basically followed the modified workplan and timeframe submitted to the Carnegie Corporation on May 27, 2009 and approved on August 20, 2009. This was an expansion to a multi-week conference which we judged to be a better “fit” into the academic world than a more traditional single-day or two-day conference.

II. Immediate and Possible Long-Term Impacts of the Activities; Relation to Goals; Definition of Success

In terms of the overall goal of demonstrating the overlapping relationships between racism, poverty, and migration as they affect the common good, the different events had particular emphases on these relationships:

- a) In the screening of *Trouble the Water* and discussions with the protagonists, participants got to see the reality of Katrina and its aftermath through the eyes of the African-American poor and the ineptness of governmental responses to needy populations.
- b) In the presentation by Dr. Vásquez, participants heard analyses of three-group interactions (whites, blacks, and Hispanics) in two different locales and well as throughout the Southern region. This included fascinating research about the reciprocal attitudes of African-Americans and Hispanics.
- c) In the presentation on the plight of immigrant workers in the US by Kim Bobo, participants saw the direct connection between immigration and poverty and the ways in which immigrant workers are exploited due to their poverty and immigration status.
- d) In the presentation on international asylum-seekers, Dr. Camilleri tied together the poverty-status of African refugees and asylum seekers within their own countries to their status as people on the move internationally.

In terms of more specific outcomes indicated in the conference proposal:

- 1) Public education was accomplished by treating migrating peoples in the local situation (Katrina and New Orleans) with first-hand experiences of both the movie protagonists and Loyola students and people working to deal with the aftermath of the storm, in the southeast region, in this country, and internationally. Even this division helped participants to see the many faces of people on the move. The variety of presenters and media—movie, powerpoint presentation, NPR audio, formal speakers, and the sharing of fellow students’ experiences—also enriched the educational experience.
- 2) The conference did present an opportunity for scholars, advocates, service providers, faculty, and students to analyze and reflect on the intersecting issues of race, poverty, and migration.
- 3) Advocacy for solutions included: presentation of opportunities for students to become involved in local or international service; education about anti-wage-theft legislation pending at the local (New Orleans) and national levels; Dream Act legislation pending before Congress as a way to at least help undocumented young people brought to the U.S. by their parents; and ways in which local Churches and community groups could reach out to assist people on the move.
- 4) Advancing the knowledge base for social policy improvements occurred especially in understanding the inability of large numbers of poor and needy persons to evacuate a disaster zone without concerted and competent governmental measures, seeing more clearly the vulnerability of undocumented workers to economic exploitation, and discerning the connection between economic conditions in “sending” countries (“push” factors) and the willingness of migrating peoples to risk their lives in international flight.
- 5) Strengthened partnerships occurred in a variety of forms:
 - a. On campus, various conference activities were co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of New Orleans, the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Loyola’s Office of Mission and Ministry, and the Center for International Education.
 - b. Loyola’s Women’s Center also sponsored a companion film series on *Women on the Move* to complement the conference.
 - c. A faculty, staff, and civic activist meeting with Kim Bobo brought together faculty across departments with university centers (Boggs Center on Community Literacy; Twomey Center for Peace and Justice; Loyola University Community Action Program) and community advocates (Hispanic Apostolate; Peace and Justice Office of Archdiocese)—all interested in the plight of migrating workers.
 - d. JSRI staff were able to spend more extensive time and development personal relationships with presenters to discuss common concerns and future collaboration—very important to a young Institute in its early development.
- 6) Research from the conference in the form of formal papers has been made available on the website for the Institute; and the eight-page conference educational booklet prepared by JSRI staff on the plight of people on the move was distributed to all the participants at conference events and has been used with other interested groups as well. Six hundred copies of the booklet were produced, with only a handful remaining.

In terms of “success,” we turn to the summary of the completed evaluations by 130 participants in various events of the conference. Of 130 completed evaluations of various events, 128 participants rated events “excellent” or “good” and overwhelmingly affirmed the events’ impact on their *knowledge* of migration realities, *appreciation* of the plight of refugees, and *resolve* to learn more and become more involved. As the nation enters into what will assuredly be an intense and heated debate over immigration reform legislation, our attendees hopefully will participate with enhanced solidarity with people on the move and knowledge of the issues involved.

In terms of other long-term impacts, our Institute has been strengthened by improved relationships within the university and with the wider community of researchers and activists, better understanding by staff of the problems we focus on here, and knowledge gained about how to engage various publics on civic issues. For the students, long-term impacts can be hoped for in the heightened consciousness of the plight of people on the move and the dedication by some to working on the interrelated issues of race, poverty, and migration.

III. Measurement of Achievement of Goals and Impacts

The primary instruments of measurement were the 128 evaluation surveys returned at the seven events of the conference. In addition, we had some word-of-mouth responses from professors quoting students who attended events and from civic community members. Staff met weekly during the conference to assess participation and to try to improve participation by posters, handouts, video displays, and personal recruiting in the campus center. We also have incorporated our own lessons from the conference into our planning for a conference in the fall of 2010.

IV. Lack of Achievement

We sent out advance notice to professors in May of 2009 of the events being planned for the conference, hoping they might be incorporated in advance into course curricula; this may well have been too late. We followed this with targeted letters to about sixty professors on September 30, 2009, hoping that students would be encouraged to attend for extra credit, in lieu of classes, etc.; yet we found the level of unawareness by professors a continuing barrier to greater participation. In part this may be explained by the fact that, for the first time only, two courses were offered in migration studies in the undergraduate curriculum in the fall of 2009 at Loyola—by Fr. Tom Greene, SJ, an associate of the Institute. In the law school, however, there was already an interest in these issues among students working in the immigration law clinic. We also offered to have evening speakers available for meetings with individual classes, but only four professors took up the offer.

We used posters, flyers, video announcements, web-alerts, inclusion in the university calendars of various sorts, pizza (at the midday events), and other means to promote participation at various events. Yet, some events were sparsely attended.

V. Effective and Ineffective Strategies

What seemed to work were:

- engagement of other “centers” or organizations in co-sponsoring conference events;
- use of a variety of publicity modes to try to get through to faculty and students;
- focusing on the four venues or aspects (local, regional, national, and international) of migration as a way to describe the scope of the realities;
- blending researchers with practitioners;
- trying to give students in the midday events opportunities to hear from other students and ways to become engaged in the issues; and
- the blended meeting of diverse faculty and civic activists in a small-group discussion with a presenter.

What did not work or work well were:

- having seven events was too many;
- spreading the conference over four weeks kept staff highly “engaged” in the conference logistics for too long a time;
- holding the conference over four weeks weakened the ability to have a more intense, in-depth analysis of the intersection of race, poverty, and migration by the same people;
- certain rooms in the university were unsuitable for the events held there; and
- having the conference relatively late in the semester when the press of papers and pending exams was high.

VI. Changes in Major Factors or Conditions

As described in the request for an extension, the change of directors of the Institute in March, 2009 meant that planning shifted in some ways, although the overall focus of the conference continued in place. Additional meetings of staff were required to reach consensus on details and format of the various events of the conference. Funding did not change.

VII. Programmatic and Administrative Problems

The major problems are indicated in number V, above, in terms of publicity, the high engagement of staff over four weeks, spaces used, and the number of events. We adjusted and intensified publicity strategies as the events were occurring, changed rooms where we could, shifted to the faculty and activist meeting with a speaker when no classes were scheduled (that worked well!), and resolved not to do so “long” a conference in the future.

VIII. Communications Planning and Effects

Our communications and publicity planning were really focused on promotional activities such as the following:

- 1) advance publicity on university platforms, e.g. calendar, webpage, by email, inclusion in our *JustSouth Quarterly* and *JustSouth E-Newsletter*, dissemination by university public relations offices to public media (electronic and four newspapers—general circulation, Catholic news, community papers, African-American newsweekly), video displays in the campus center, and posters and flyers on various bulletin boards);
- 2) a formal conference flyer, included with this report;

- 3) a conference educational booklet distributed at all events with the overall schedule;
- 4) email alerts to faculty;
- 5) individual letters to sixty faculty members;
- 6) individual letters of invitation with flyers were sent to twenty community groups;
- 7) other campus centers and organizations were recruited to co-sponsor particular events;

Subsequent to the various events, we have attempted to continue the overall educational thrust of the conference by:

- 1) reports and photographs of the conference on our webpage and in our *JustSouth Quarterly* and *E-News*;
- 2) excerpt on migration in the New Orleans area in the spring, 2010 *JustSouth Quarterly* from the paper of Dr. Vásquez; and
- 3) posting of the full papers from Dr. Vásquez and Ms. Bobo on our website.

IX. Sustainability of the Work:

The primary focus of the Jesuit Social Research Institute is on the issues that dominated the conference—racism, poverty, and migration. Our research, social analysis, publications, speaking, and advocacy activities all revolve around these three issues and their intersections, primarily in the Gulf South and the Caribbean area. Staff will continue to work on these matters and to try to provide opportunities to engage the university community (faculty, staff, and students) and the religious and civic communities of this region in deeper understanding of these issues and in focused efforts to work towards the common good.

More specifically, in the academic year ahead (fall, 2010) we want to take the opportunity of the fifth anniversary of hurricanes Katrina and Rita to look again at the impact of the storms and their aftermath on poor, minority, and migrant peoples.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) Conference promotional flyer
- 2) Conference educational booklet
- 3) Assorted promotional flyers, posters, etc.
- 4) Three samples of newspaper coverage
- 5) Conference financial report
- 6) One-page and two-page versions of participant evaluation summary grid
- 7) Conference report from spring, 2010, *JustSouth Quarterly* (see also <http://www.loyno.edu/jsri/forums/index.html>) with Vásquez excerpt.
- 8) Collage of conference photographs (see also <http://www.loyno.edu/jsri/>)
- 9) Conference address of Dr. Manuel Vásquez
- 10) Conference address of Kim Bobo