Developing a Reconstruction Plan for the Gulf Coast Region

BACKGROUND PAPER COMMISSIONED FOR:

THE MEASURE OF AMERICA

Jeffrey S. Lowe, Ph.D. Florida State University; Todd C. Shaw, Ph.D.; University of South Carolina, Clyde Woods, Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara
January 2008

The views expressed in this paper are the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the American Human Development Project or its Advisory Panel. The American Human Development Project does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this paper and accepts no responsibility for any consequence of their use.
INTRODUCTION

Hurricane Katrina brought catastrophe to one of the most culturally rich, naturally pristine and humanly underdeveloped regions of the United States of America. Prior to the calamity, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi continued to rank at the bottom in many statistics associated with human development and poverty in a comparison to other 50 states: the percent of low birth-weight babies, 48th, 49th and 50th; infant mortality, 45th, 50th and 49th; teens who drop out of high school 36th, 27th and 36th; percent of teens not in school and not working, 40th, 40th and 45th; juvenile violent crime arrest, 40th, 47th and 3rd; teen violent deaths 46th, 44th and 48th; percent of children in poverty, 41st, 49th and 50th; percent of families with children headed by a single parent 46th, 49th and 50th; and total population living in poverty, 42nd, 49th and 50th. 

In New Orleans, the largest city in this three-State Gulf Coast region as well as the 38th most populous and second poorest major city in the nation, 37 percent of the black families were below the poverty level compared with 9 percent of white families.

Indeed, Hurricane Katrina, a 100 year storm, affected everyone living on the Gulf Coast, the psyche of the nation, and the expressions of concern from other parts of the world. The storm is blamed for over 1,800 deaths and about $81 billion in damage. Around the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, many individuals and families still remained officially homeless; occupying approximately 82,000 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailers: 45,000 in Louisiana, 20,000 in Mississippi, 17,000 in Texas, and 400 in Alabama. While much attention has been placed on rebuilding the physical and economic infrastructures, very little attention has been given to eliminating insecurities and radically improving the social realities of coastal residents, particularly blacks and low-wealth individuals from what existed before the storm. This paper focuses on reconstruction of the social safety net in the Gulf Coast region that will advance and sustain human development and social justice.

The intentional retardation of human development among black and poor people is deeply rooted in a political and economic system underpinned by an ideology of devolution and privatization that depresses the social safety net while increasing poverty and racial division. A CNN-Gallup poll conducted with Red Cross data from Katrina victims indicated that race played the primary role in access to food and shelter; and across the gulf coast, predominately black and low-income communities in the impacted areas experience the most difficulty with regard to recovery. Still, many residents persevere, relying on existing networks and establishing new alliances with national reach. With the political will of the nation and significant grassroots representation, the Gulf Coast region can be redeveloped in an equitable manner that includes a radical reconstruction of the social safety net.

This paper continues and provides the local contexts in which recovery must occur along with illuminating redevelopment efforts in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The cases include a review of the current literature. Undoubtedly, given the importance of New Orleans to the region, nation and world, the literature is uneven, with numerous newspaper and journal articles, books and reports focusing on the “Crescent City” after the storm. Given the vast leaning towards New Orleans and away from coastal communities in Alabama and Mississippi,
each case also contains quotes that offer the voice and perspective of individual residents, nonprofit representatives, public administrators and community activists. The paper concludes accomplishing two feats. First, it identifies some major impediments to existing recovery and rebuilding activities. Second, the paper offers key components for advocacy and inclusion into any plan reconstructing the social safety net in the Gulf Coast region.

ALABAMA

Introduction

Alabama has an infamous history of state-sanctioned racial segregation, which reinforces its strong ethic of limited government. In 1949, V.O. Key concluded that each Alabama counties’ racial conservatism was proximately related to its distance from the “black belt” or the swath of majority black counties that cross the state’s mid-section. Although some distance from the black belt, Mobile County or South Mobile Bay reflects a lesser known history of relative racial cooperation and cultural diversity in the state. Approximately 20 miles southeast of the city of Mobile, bordered by Interstate 10 to the North and 163 on the east, the city of Bayou La Batre and the unincorporated hamlet of Coden are part of the “South Bay”. Although this section will discuss the impact of the storm upon the state of Alabama, it will focus mostly upon the post-Katrina reconstruction of the Bayou La Batre (with a population of about 2,300) and Coden (about 3,000), given the devastation they suffered.

In the seventeenth century, the South Bay region was settled by the French, and traces its fishing culture and maritime heritage back to a mixture of African, French, and, in particular, Native American roots. Today, while Coden is 4.4 percent black, 3.9 percent Asian American, and 88 percent white, Bayou La Batre is 9.5 percent black, 32.5 percent Asian American, and 54.1 percent white. Persons of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian descent comprise a larger percentage of the population of Bayou La Batre than of any other Alabama city.

Residents of Bayou La Batre and Coden were hit hardest by the most eastern wing of Hurricane Katrina. Moreover, of 24 Alabama counties that sustained notable damage, Mobile County sustained the most to the tune of $81.3 million and including $28.9 million in damages to buildings and equipment. Adjacent to the west, Baldwin County sustained the second highest level of damage at $38.3 million. All total, about 8,600 housing units in Mobile County suffered at least minimum damage from the storm; another 850 suffered major damage; and 550 homes were destroyed. Across the state, about 40,222 Alabamans received assistance at 31 State/Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) recovery centers. Some 5,000 families permanently relocated to the city of Mobile from Mississippi and Louisiana, and about 3,000 were displaced in Mobile County. Somewhere between 900 to 1,400 people still reside in about 400 FEMA travel trailers (many with high levels of formaldehyde) in South Mobile.

Among the federal, state, and local aid devoted to the recovery of Alabama counties, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) has provided Alabama a cumulative $946 million. The Small Business Administration made some 359 business loans. Of that total, Baldwin and Mobile counties received $49.5 million. The US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) allocated more than $95 million to support the long-term recovery and restoration of housing, infrastructure, and jobs. Gov. Bob Riley set a series of take forces and charitable efforts to supplement these federal dollars. And the Bush-Clinton fund also raised a total of $96 million in Gulf relief. The United Ways of Alabama received $3.2 million of these monies to address the
issues of “emergency preparedness, housing, small business and workforce development.”

Despite this aid, one life-long citizen of Coden who expressed a deep pride in her community also lamented:

After Hurricane Katrina, there were no news reports (TV, radio or newspapers) reporting any damage to the Coden area. Homes, stores, restaurants, were totally destroyed and you would think by listening to the news, everything had been left in tack after the Hurricane.

To this day, advocacy organizations such as the South Bay Communities Alliance have not received satisfactory answers to their questions from local, state, and federal officials, which suggest that at best some of these officials are “ambivalent” when it comes to meeting the needs of all persons in need of post-Hurricane reconstruction assistance. The on-going human development challenges of this region—poverty, housing, infrastructure & economic development, jobs, education, etc.—have not received significant public attention. This lack of public attention—before and after the storm—has several sources rooted in complex problems of equity, efficiency, and maldistributions of structural power in Alabama.

Human Development Needs: Coden & Bayou La Batre

Fueled by historic place identification, residents of Coden are critical of the leadership of Bayou La Batre, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), and several elected leaders. They feel the former have neglected the needs of ordinary and low-income citizens in Coden towards the ends of supporting Bayou La Batre’s plans for post-Katrina infrastructure and economic redevelopment. One Coden resident asserted, “This is our birthplace and politics should not play any part when there has been such devastation.” Consequently, this section presents a snapshot of the still unmet needs (and the occasional victories) Coden and Bayou La Batre have experienced in the areas of poverty, racial and gender disparities; housing and insurance; education and public health; the environment and infrastructure concerns; as well as community and economic development and jobs.

Poverty, Gender and Race

Compared to Bayou La Batre, Coden residents had a much higher pre-Katrina median income ($33,000 vs. $24,000) and much lower rates of individual poverty (14% versus 29%) and family poverty (10.4 percent versus 23.4 percent). When the storm hit, it was low and moderate-income families and individuals, a significant portion being women-headed households, who in the words of Cutter, confronted a “social geography of vulnerability.” Even Mobile county emergency management officials conceded that, “we could have done a much better job of evacuating the poor.” The economic disparities that confront Bayou La Batre’s larger Asian American and African American populations likely had a bearing upon the city’s much lower median income and greater levels of poverty. One Asian American community advocate explained that many families live in impoverished conditions worsened by the aftereffects of the storm but are often unwilling to appeal for public assistance or appeal to public authorities due to fears of the repercussions. One stark example illustrating this fact is a Vietnamese woman living with her adult son who informed the interviewer that she worked more than 40 hours a week at a shrimp-processing factory and earned the equivalent of $40 dollars a day.

A significantly high degree of multiracial cooperation and goodwill exists in Coden, facilitated by the community organization --- South Bay Communities Alliance. One observer
corroborated this observation, especially among fellow minority groups:

“I don’t see hostility. It might be subtle, but [no hostility] between Asian Americans and African Americans. They seem to be getting along in the Coden. That community seems to be working together, based upon what I see.”

In the case of Bayou La Batre, the same observer noted that the larger Asian American population was essentially unrepresented or under-represented in city government because the one member of the city council appears to no longer reside in the city. From the perspective of several African American community members in Coden, there were ways in which race (subtly and not so subtly) matters in the allocation of resources and redevelopment after the storm. One African American woman, a life-long resident of Coden who resided on Midway Street, the historic center of the black community that suffered great loss from Hurricane Katrina, shared the experience of her and a cousin. They approached the Mennonite Disaster Service for assistance:

We were asked: ‘Where do you live?’ And, we responded Midway Street in Coden. Their response was ‘Oh, we were told there is a hold on that area! Who? Why? We have a map here and it does not even show that area you are talking about needing help.’ We then asked what were they talking about and my cousin…bent down on her knees to view the map and it did show Sweet Bethel Baptist Church, which is in our neighborhood and the church we attended growing up, but our homes were not located on the map. From that day, and still now, there are no funds to rebuild the few homes which just happened to be black owned.

Many other respondents echoed similar sentiments about relief and recovery efforts in Coden. It appeared to them that a lion share of the assistance was targeted toward Bayou La Batre. In fact, there have been accounts of Coden residents who moved to or agreed to be zoned into Bayou La Batre in order to receive assistance. Such action is consistent with a history of subtle antagonisms between the two communities.

Housing and Insurance

There is no more visible indicator of neglected human development needs as the housing conditions in which many Coden and Bayou La Batre citizens must still live --- rendering them effectively homeless a full two years after Hurricane Katrina. One foundation professional confessed: “for the life of me I cannot understand why those poor people are still in trailers in South Mobile.” Prior to the storm, Coden had a much higher rate of homeownership than Bayou La Batre, 83 percent to 68 percent respectively, and Bayou La Batre had more renters (32.5 percent) than Coden (16.7 percent). Afterwards, almost 200 homeowners filed national flood insurance claims in the city of Bayou La Batre, while 1,100 homeowners filed such claims in unincorporated areas like Coden. Several respondents, who were fortunate enough to have insurance, complained about the frustrating red-tape they confronted in filing their claims.

Many more households continue to live in desperate conditions including FEMA travel trailers that frequently malfunctioned and emitted toxic formaldehyde fumes. A Coden community leader said of the FEMA trailer he and his wife shared for more than a year, “We never had lights, or hot water, or air conditioning all at the same time as long as we were in there.” One Bayou La Batre woman testified that her trailer was very likely responsible for the death of her husband (and she suffered harassment from the city because they wanted to
discourage her from placing a trailer upon property so close to an area suspected to be part of a new beachfront redevelopment plan). Another couple explained how they believe their daughter’s trailer likely contributed to her on-going respiratory problems. Outside of these trailers, other families live in equally desperate conditions. In one instance, an abandoned school bus is the home of a Coden family. In another instance from Bayou La Batre, a Vietnamese family of seven live in a one bedroom apartment traced with mold and mildew, deficient air conditioning, and a kitchen stove believed to be in violation of local fire codes.

In general, there is federal, state, and local culpability for these problems and an increasingly inadequate housing market. Mobile County, which is responsible for Coden, received $8.4 million for housing redevelopment. Roughly 1,200 applications were received and about 500 have been processed. But as of September 30, 2007, no application had been approved! This simply adds insult to injury for many citizens, because the federal grant administrator initially gave applicants a mere week to pick up their applications and only two weeks to return them. Only through the advocacy and intervention of Alabama Arise and South Bay Communities Alliance was the deadline extended. Alternatively, FEMA has taken an aggressive posture in its attempts to sale what have largely been established as defective travel trailers to displaced citizens. One Coden resident permitted the author to listen to five telephone messages received in the period of one week from FEMA officials inquiring if she and her husband wanted to purchase the trailer in which they are currently living. This is after experiencing great difficulty in getting FEMA to respond to their requests for unit repairs.

**Education and Health**

A culture of collaboration within the arena of education is the primary factor in the successful resurgence of schools in the South Bay area after Hurricane Katrina. Prior to the catastrophe, the Mobile Area Education Foundation (MAEF) partnered with the Mobile County Public Schools to create an innovative, multi-year collaboration with the goal of generating a “civic infrastructure” necessary for improved local schools. Despite the state’s constitutional limits upon public education spending, these partners devised several steps to reach their goal. Involving about 1,500 community participants, they began with a community meeting which approved “The Yes We Can Community Agreement.” With a smaller but still representative group—the Community Advisory Team—a strategic plan was devised called the “PASSport to Excellence.” Its nineteen performance targets included the areas of student achievement, quality district and school leadership, communications and engagement, governance, and equity. Overall MAEF executive director, Carolyn Akers, described the plan as: “a citizen-driven, long-range plan for school improvement, a data-driven system for decision making, and a accountability mechanism to ensure movement toward a strategic plan.” In a period of seven years, the district has gone from a per pupil expenditure of $3,645 (1993) to $8,066. The system-wide graduation rate increased from 72 percent to 82 percent, and 83 schools made academic performance standards (AYP) in 2005-2006 as compared to only 27 schools in 2002.

The strength of the collaboration enabled Alba Elementary School in Bayou La Batre to become fully operational within about two weeks after the storm. School officials made reopening the school a priority in order to give children and families a strong sense of normalcy. However, because of the outstanding dedication of Mobile County Public Schools administrators, a strong community spirit, and a highly dedicated school staff (many of who also suffered devastating losses) the school not only was a place of refuge but a continued center of learning; where children from very diverse backgrounds, an overwhelming majority of who take free or reduced lunches, still excel on state standardized tests.
Still, while collaboration in support of education achieved success in maintaining priority and achievement in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, access to healthcare remains a problem for the poor. Prior to the storm, two clinics served the South Mobile Area—Mostellar and the Bayou La Batre Rural Health Clinic. In addition, immediately after the storm, the health department coordinated with the Mobile County Emergency Management Agency (and several other agencies) to establish “medical needs centers” which it described as a, “refuge of last resort during emergency conditions for persons with physical and/or mental conditions requiring limited medical/nursing oversight.” Despite the numbers served, health experts noted that the county was particularly unprepared for citizens, many of them elderly and minority, who were in need of dialysis treatments when such needs could not be easily accommodated in the above centers. The need for continued mental health care is also acute, as acknowledged by one health care professional:

> Even more than hypertension and diabetes...the biggest problems were mental health issues, both for evacuees and providers who had lost their homes. They were still struggling to try to do their work and also help people who had been affected by the storm. Now some having to live in FEMA trailers, in the backdrop, mental health has become a very big issue.

A community leader further corroborated this view when he shared that he and his wife: “…were more fortunate than many because we were only in the [FEMA] trailer about a year. Many of our people still are in trailers. Stress is just accumulating and growing, growing, growing.”

### Environmental and Infrastructure Concerns

These concerns about public and mental health after-effects are intricately linked to the environmental hazards that persist from the large concentration of petrochemical industries in South Mobile. According to one report, Coden residents reported encountering a highly caustic substance accompanying the storm surge. While the origin of this substance is unknown, it is speculated that it washed ashore from a damage petroleum platform.”

Also, while touring some of the back roads the author witnessed some of these pools of curiously colored liquid. Natural gas repositories were discovered offshore of the Alabama coast in the 1950s, but since the early 1990s there have been nine gas companies who have located to Coden’s shores. This makes this small fishing hamlet, “the largest concentration of natural gas companies in one area in the country.” By 2005, it was concluded that the location of additional gas lines in the beaches of Coden would lead to, “the destruction of marine life, decrease in duck-hunting habitat, pollution of the already heavily polluted waters, and potential pollution from hurricane-damaged offshore pipelines…”

Furthermore, a persistent concern of the South Bay Communities Alliance, as led by its president Jim Fuller, is the “open-loop” Liquefied Natural Gas proposal of the Houston-based TORP Terminal LP. Although a previous Conoco-Phillips proposal was vetoed by Alabama Gov. Bob Riley, this terminal, which is supposed to be 63 miles offshore from Fort Morgan, would use 127 million gallons of seawater in a process to convert liquefied natural gas as it is transported by tankers. It is estimated by federal scientists that this process could kill billions of fish eggs and larvae --- red snapper, blue crabs, king mackerels, etc. --- when alternative technologies are possible.

A major infrastructure concern of Coden and Bayou La Batre is the creation of a new sewage treatment plan. Accompanying the dangers associated with the natural gas companies
is the municipal waste-water-treatment plant within the boundaries of Coden and on the border of Portersville Bay. The problem is that this facility neither complies with the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) standards nor those of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). In addition, the municipality of Bayou La Batre wants to construct an additional facility that may not be in compliance and risks further environmental harm. The current plant, constructed in 1974, has exceeded its 100-million gallon capacity given all of the fish-processing plants in the areas and thus waste water currently overflows into and pollutes the area’s water system. A new 2002 facility was at one time a whopping 1,600 percent out of compliance, but a new proposed cite may be more in line with a real estate developer’s objectives for new condominium construction than water and environmental safety.¹⁹

Advocates in Coden frequently talk of a plan to simply link both Coden and Bayou La Batre up with the Mobile Area Water and Sewer Service System (MAWSS) since it has a reported 200-million gallon excess capacity. But Coden leaders oppose the current environmental risks of the Bayou La Batre pipeline plan that also does not include Coden as a beneficiary.²⁰ In the meanwhile, several Coden homeowners expressed deep frustration with the Mobile County Health Department for what they believe are highly restrictive rules with regards to its unwillingness to approve what they see as perfectly sound septic tanks. One active Coden leader, whose home was formerly upon the historic black street of Midway, shared a memorandum from the health department that stated she could not ‘grandfather’ her new septic tank into the existing system because the department had no previous record of her tank.²¹

Community, Economic Development & Jobs

At the heart of the unmet needs are political disputes over the equitable allocation and expenditure of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars. In June of 2007, the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, along with Alabama Arise, the Mobile Center for Fair Housing, and several other groups and individuals wrote a letter to Bill Johnson, Director of the ADECA with the heading, “Neglected Needs of Low- and Moderate-Income Katrina Victims in the Unincorporated Communities of South Mobile County.”²² Their basic contention was that whereas Bayou La Batre a city of about 2,000 had the authority to apply for and receive over $100 million (of which 8 million was for housing redevelopment) for people, the 3,000 people who live in the unincorporated Coden have to compete for the $8.4 million allocated to the entire Mobile County. To date, Coden (with several families still in FEMA trailers or houses in disrepair) has only directly received $128,000 for the renovation of its current community center. On a per capita basis this means about $6,500 per Bayou La Batre resident and only $250 per Coden resident.²³

Economic gentrification is a broader problem. Elsewhere in Mobile County, the 200-unit apartment building of Harbor Landing on the Mobile Bay was condemned with plans to create a $2 million condominium complex. Closer to home, several respondents mentioned plans underway by Bayou La Batre to redevelop previous moderate and low income areas in the city and its environs in the hopes of new condominium construction and commercial redevelopment on the waterfront. While plans are possibly underfoot in Bayou La Batre, the advocacy organization of Alabama Arise reports many low and moderate income minority families are completely unaware of the CDBG funds that are supposed to be available for housing rehabilitation in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.²⁴

Questions of jobs and workforce development are particularly relevant, given the destruction of many fishing enterprises, which in turn greatly depressed the number of jobs
available in these communities. Prior to the storm, both communities had similar rates of labor force participation.

In general, it is very difficult to find good-paying work in South Mobile. About half of Bayou La Batre and Coden residents have a high school degree or higher; and less than 8 percent of each have at least a bachelor’s degree. With the construction of the $3 billion ThyssenKrupp steel finishing plant in the Northern part of the county, along with other economic development activity, some South Mobile residents are being drawn—centripetally—toward the city of Mobile and away from the bayou. Thus an overall problem that is evolving is the problem of spatial and skills mismatch. One interviewee put it succinctly:

This county is positioned in the next 3 to 5 years to be the economic engine for the Gulf Coast. That's one perspective.... [But] if you look at the drop out rate for high schoolers, 50 percent of the people are not getting high school degrees. Those people will not be able to work in one of those facilities... At a basic level, they won't be able to operate machinery that is going to require some knowledge of computers. We have a dichotomous development that is likely to take place where some people will be doing exceptionally well over the next 5, 10, 15 years; and with some people's circumstances becoming much worse in the future than they are today. And there's no plan [to bridge these gaps] I'm aware of.

Pursuant to the spatial and skill mismatch, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina brought into clearer focus the necessity of choosing the correct approach to meeting the human development needs in Mobile and South Mobile County. Some respondents believe the correct approach to be one of “people-centered development. One interviewee expressed it in the following manner:

I advocate something called people-centered development...That basically says you take people where they are; and people become the principle resource. You invest in people. And they drive the redevelopment. You don't come in with a grand plan that is universal for everybody. But it has to be centered on people in these communities. People in these communities have to be empowered and ultimately the success of people in these communities will involve people taking ownership in these communities. That should be the starting point.

A very active core of non-governmental organizations in Bayou La Batre and Coden are considering such a model of “people-centered development” including the South Bay Communities Alliances, Alabama Arise, Mobile Baykeepers, the Mobile Center for Fair Housing, The International Community Center, and Boat People SOS. Moreover, with the appropriate garnering and allocation of resources, community development organizations could be enhanced or established that will lay out strategic plans for environmentally-friendly job growth and community planning.

**Summation of Findings**

Providing grassroots stakeholders and others with the resources to envision new designs for their communities does not solve the full range of problems for which federal, state, and local governments must be held accountable. It is clear that the policy direction and governmental power of the city of Bayou La Batre is at odds with the needs of Coden. Ultimately, this conflict must be resolved for both communities to fully prosper. However, it is
fundamentally important to begin with ordinary citizens and their “grand visions” of what is possible if invisible needs are to be made visible; and given the priority they deserve.

MISSISSIPPI

Introduction

Since the abolition of slavery, the struggle for human development in Mississippi continues to be intricately linked to the influence of federal intervention on sustaining a political economic hegemony without specific consideration given to eradicating the institutionalized social structures that uphold race, class and gender inequality. Advancing human development within this context is made all the more difficult because of the top-down elite dominated political structure that employs the white-black dichotomy to its own advantage, as the state population is essentially 61 percent white and 37 percent black (more blacks, by percentage, than any other state). To be clear, blacks in Mississippi have always faced resistance from white power elites. A valid argument could even be made that the large proportion of civil rights and progressive leadership entering the political sphere, beginning over thirty years ago, severely weakened the legacy of mobilization and agitation from below. The situation was exacerbated on the Mississippi Gulf coast where black citizens made up 17 percent of the population and had very few elected officials, community-based organizations and other non-profits advocating for their interest.

Hurricane Katrina; however, in her aftermath, left the Mississippi Gulf coast with an increase in black residence, a decrease in white population, a lower percentage of home ownership and no significant decline in poverty (Johnson and Anglin 2006). With black and white cohorts closer to equilibrium with regard to population, the influence of the storm on sustaining poverty further magnified the need for advocacy and policy advancing human development. The Governor’s Office of Recovery and Renewal has achieved success in providing a mechanism for efficient communication and some response between federal, state and local governments (Office of the Governor Haley Barbour 2006, 2007). Yet, its ability to address issues of equity that advance human development remains very limited. A just, sustainable and secure future may reside in the fact that Hurricane Katrina initially created a more egalitarian coast, offering another opportunity for a more equitable approach to human development that could be all-encompassing of blacks and low-wealth populations including the Vietnamese and the burgeoning Latino communities residing on the Mississippi Gulf coast.

Human Development Needs: The Magnolia State and its Gulf Coast

The entire state of Mississippi received Hurricane Katrina gale-forced winds. However, it was the six most southern counties that experienced catastrophic impacts from Katrina. The most devastated counties; those adjacent to the Gulf coast, Hancock, Harrison and Jackson, obtained about $2 Billion from the Stafford Act alone just to restore public infrastructure. Pearl River, Stone and George counties more than other parts of the state received the largest influx of displaced individuals from Louisiana and other parts of Mississippi. The Gulf Opportunity Zone (Go Zone), which provides tax incentives for private-sector and nonprofit engagement in rebuilding and revitalization efforts, encompasses the lower 30 counties of the state, beginning
at the western edge of the state (Vicksburg—Warren County) and extending diagonally, northeast, to the Mississippi-Alabama border (Columbus—Lowndes County).

The Office of Hurricane Recovery and Renewal believes that it achieved some success as a liaison and facilitating communication between federal entities, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the coastal jurisdictions. According to one public administrator:

Our folks are some of the best in the world but they have never had to deal with the Stafford Act, HUD, FEMA, the Department of Interior and other federal agencies who set about the business to deploy the aide and fulfill their mission. Folks on the coast ask us to help them understand and we leaned into and accepted that role…

The Office of Hurricane Recovery and Renewal characterizes its role as a partner to sustain a vision and provide hope by enhancing communication and actively working to remove barriers that may exist between federal agencies and local governments impeding recovery efforts (Mississippi Renewal Forum 2005a and 2005b, Governors Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal 2005). Alternatively, success has been much more limited in determining a timeline for engaging the various players and resources. A state administrator concurred with these observations and expressed the following sentiments:

We’ve had starts and stops—efficient use of resources, where to be, when to be, how to be; deploying our human capital at the right level, developing and expediting our relationships with local governments, and clearly defining our role and where we can add value.

Hurricane Katrina recovery and rebuilding efforts provided a steep learning curve. Processes for deployment of resources, first responders, and important organizational structures facilitating roles and responsibilities were not in place. The state was unprepared to handle a catastrophe on the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina and much of the federal intervention provided very little guidance, especially for meeting long-term recovery. The lack of planning for long-term recovery appears quite evident, particular in the rise in poverty and mental health needs, proficient education and the need for affordable housing. Simultaneously, Gulf coast Mississippians, sometimes assisted by others, exhibit a significant level of resilience and self reliance by establishing organizations that build capacity, foster cultural change and advance their community and human development.

Poverty and Mental Health Care

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, almost 38 percent of households receiving FEMA assistance fell below the poverty line, a significant increase of 6 percent; and, one out of five Mississippians did not report having health insurance. The unemployment trend for Mississippi remains higher than the national average as well as other Gulf Coast states affected by the storm. Thus, many Mississippi Gulf Coast residents lack health care, due to a lack of employment, employee health coverage and sufficient wages to cover the cost. A significant concern exists in this regards, from the Office of Recovery and Renewal to the grassroots, for long-term mental health coverage. Mental health care offered by FEMA only allowed for short-term provision and ended about a year after Hurricane Katrina. Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome, also known as Katrina Fatigue, is believed to be rampant. About 10,000 people still live in FEMA trailers, now going on for over two years, which meets the definition of chronic homelessness in the USA. The trailers, intended for short temporary emergency stays, are
small (approximately 400 square feet) and cramped, leading to stress within many households and individuals, including children. Several respondents believe the Katrina Fatigue stems from an undercurrent of anger that has turned into depression rather than a rising up. A nonprofit executive director stated:

*Everybody talks about Katrina Fatigue and this is a major part of it...it has been two years and why haven't we seen more progress?! We really had a chance to make something different, something wonderful and special to be the result of so much devastation. We had this unprecedented opportunity. Now, it seems like the developers are going to make money off of this and the people who were not doing well before will continue to do worse...the small percentage at the top will continue to benefit and the rest are just languishing.*

**Education**

The percentage of Mississippi population with a high school diploma or higher degree (78 percent) is significantly lower than the percentage (84.2 percent) for the nation. Several respondents suggested that education reform needs to go beyond teaching to the test. It must bring everyone up to feel empowered; and must include significant investments in early childhood education with standards and higher wages comparable to other states. Some schools were closed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, allegedly due to destruction, population loss, and behaviors stemming from social segregation as school officials chose to close a newly-built school in a black neighborhood rather than bus students from a predominately white neighborhood where population shrinkage was more pronounced. Moreover, child care was essentially wiped out by Hurricane Katrina.

After two years, early childhood education still has not returned to levels existing before the storm, primarily, because of a lack of government support. For example, in East Biloxi, a very prominent day care provider experienced great difficulty reopening after the storm due to zoning issues. Meanwhile, as one respondent put it, “permits for the casinos were just flying through left and right.” Acknowledging the need to support economic recovery, the absence of support for education coupled with the amount of households remaining in FEMA trailers and the lack of direct government resources flowing to renters, almost all respondents emphasized how government priorities leaning towards private interests furthered inequities that created unevenness in human development along the Mississippi Gulf coast.

**Affordable Housing**

The Mississippi Gulf coast is experiencing an affordable housing crisis. Two years after Hurricane Katrina, individuals and households still live in FEMA trailers that were never designed for long-term living and rendering them officially homeless. The Katrina cottage (400 square feet) was sought to be a reasonable response, but failed to traverse through the federal pipeline in a timely manner. In several instances, permanent affordable housing is not a top priority. For example, several jurisdictions needed to replace destroyed infrastructure, before addressing affordable/workforce housing. Moreover, before providing the shelter, issues about zoning and other regulatory oversight and funding need addressing. Fiscal and financial barriers abound as insurance and land cost tripled in price.

A parcel of land selling for $4,000 before Hurricane Katrina, two years after the storm is demanding $30,000 for purchase. The Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Clayborn County Community Action Agency (AJFC), consisting of a small staff but very experienced in project
development, came to the coast and attempted to ease the crisis by securing contractors from outside of the gulf area to work in the region; thereby, lowering the cost of affordable housing development. Yet, government intervention has not occurred on a grand scale necessary to put an end to the crisis in the supply of affordable housing.

The median mortgage payment increased, by 3 percent, from $876 before Hurricane Katrina to $903 after the storm. Renters experienced an even greater increase of over 6 percent, from $552 to $587. The Office of Hurricane Recovery and Renewal encouraged each county to include one-stop-shop housing resource centers as a part of their long-term recovery planning. However, counties received no government support to open such centers. Governor Haley Barbour established the Hurricane Recovery Fund to help rebuild housing, community centers, playgrounds and day-care facilities along the coast. With $114 million, including 12.4 million from the Bush Clinton Katrina Fund, very little if any resources were known to be allocated towards housing for renters. In addition to the lack of transparency, no members of the local nonprofit or grassroots community participated in the decision-making regarding grants awarded from the fund. The Board of Directors for the Fund is deficient in diversity, consisting of eight white males with backgrounds in finance and investment and lacking contact with the most vulnerable populations on the coast.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, many members of the casino workforce lived in coastal neighborhoods, very close to their places of employment and even walked to work. Now, they are living above I-10, some traveling 20 miles to work and creating a burden of added transportation cost. Even those in the construction industry experience difficult finding affordable housing. Recognizing the need to designate construction of affordable housing as a top priority remains a huge challenge in the recovery efforts. As pointed out by a community developer:

_The first wave [rebuilding] was casinos… You see a lot of condo development, changing the landscape from what it was before. It hints that it may look more like Destin [Florida] and some of the integrated landscape that existed before [Katrina] may not be there in the future. There is very little housing development happening._

Indeed, 10 of the 12 casinos first returned to the Mississippi Gulf coast, followed by the emergence of a new market of condo development. Massive residential development remains to be seen. This may be the case because developers of casinos and condominiums can pay contractors top dollar while those desiring affordable and rental housing cannot afford the high price. Affordable contractors simply do not exist that will meet the demand. In other cases, local jurisdictions appear reluctant to affordable housing within their borders. With approximately 50 percent of its pre-Katrina population returned, Hancock County ranked affordable housing 15th on a list of recovery priorities and Habitat for Humanity was not welcomed by county officials. According to several respondents, one local official failed to deliver promised resources in support of affordable housing and later gained a prominent role as Housing Policy Advisor for Governor Hailey Barber.

While housing counseling has been strengthened, the affordable housing stock for people to move into simply does not exist. Approximately, 56 counselors received training provided by NeighborsWorks, a national housing intermediary that established a regional office in Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina, in homeownership counseling. Participating organizations included Institute for Disability Studies, International Leadership and Development, Dependable Affordable, Sustainable Housing (DASH), Mercy Housing, the Resource Foundation (Baton Rouge, LA), and AJFC. Also, NeighborsWorks, provided resources for about 70 coastal
residents intricately involved in hurricane recovery efforts to attend its National Training Institute and the Community Leaders Institute, fostering linkages to a network of activists involved in community development efforts in other locales across the nation. According to one community developer:

*The capacity of organizations on the coast was a real barrier after the storm. There were just not a lot of development organizations. That may be because the casinos made the coast a destination. As with many places there were pockets of poverty. For example, there were mansions on the coast (Hancock County) and low-income housing more inland. The counties wanted more moderate to upper income. So, there were no groups advocating for low-income households.*

**Emergence of New Groups and Faith-Based Organizations**

Several respondents agree with the statement above and a host of grassroots organizations came into being after Hurricane Katrina. Groups such as Boat People SOS-Biloxi; Coastal Women for Change; East Biloxi Coordination; Relief & Redevelopment Agency, Gulf Coast Latin-American Association, and the Steps Coalition. Others may have been established but became active after the storm. For example, North Gulfport Community Land Trust was established in 2004, and functioned primarily on paper as an organization; while DASH expanded into the Mississippi Gulf coast out of La Grange, Georgia. The few organizations that were actively engaged in human and other development activities prior to the storm including the Biloxi National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and community-based organizations such as Mercy Housing (Gulfport) and Visions of Hope (East Biloxi, whose building was destroyed), were inundated with request, overwhelming their small staff, while having to deal with launching their own recovery effort.

Given the nature of targeted funding and the inability of public-sector policies to move beyond a focus on local government or general mode of operation, the faith community remains the most expeditious and flexible in recovery efforts attempting to benefit those most impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

An executive director of a development-advocacy nonprofit put it this way:

*After the storm the whole eastern part of Biloxi was underwater. There was no place to plug in except for the churches. We were forgotten by the federal government. Had this been another country the UN would have been here directing traffic and coordinating activities. So, it is important to understand that we cannot rely on the government. Governments do infrastructure but not people.*

The frustration with the lack of government intervention remains high. Activists continue to experience great difficulty in communicating with all branches of government in a manner that elicits an effective response on the ground (Johnson 2007). Of the groups existing before the storm with relative capacity to advance human development, local churches and affiliates of nationally-based religious institutions remain one of the most engaged over the short and long term. For example, the United Methodist Conference on Relief maintained a presence on the coast offering casework and financial counseling for families, and the American Friends Service Committee committed to advancing a long-term response for addressing systemic issues affecting poor and immigrant populations. Locally, the Lutheran Episcopal Center, Diocese of Mississippi, made its camp in Pass Christian available for workforce housing. Back Bay
Mission, in Biloxi, is also making provisions for providing workforce housing. Some churches have taken existing real estate or acquired new land and, subsequently, secured a developer to build affordable housing at a lower price. Voice of Calvary Ministries (VOCM), headquartered in Jackson, Mississippi, and a first responder offering mobile medical care in McComb, Mississippi, immediately after Hurricane Katrina, decided upon offering a more long-term response, Victory Gardens, a 16-unit new-construction housing development for evacuees. In fact, Victory Gardens was the first new construction project for VOCM and undertaken with support from NeighborsWorks and Umbrella of Churches—an ecumenical organization located in California. According to the project coordinator:

The ability to [complete Victory Gardens] while others are still trying to get theirs off the ground is very important—a success. It is also important that we diverted our resources to meet the need, given we had no funds dedicated to this effort. One thing that moves my heart sometimes when I get cynical about the political process is the phenomenal generosity of the faith-based community. The risk was profound and we were willing and able to absorb the risk.

Work in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has also resulted in systemic change within some individual congregations. One pastor provided the following example:

*Redeemer Episcopal Church (the parish of Jefferson Davis) voted to take its existing building and dedicate it to social justice. They are building a new church north in Pops Ferry that will have shelter and showers to house people. The existing building (overlooking the Gulf of Mexico) will house the Steps Coalition, a day care that will try to expand, and financial counseling that will be provided to the area. To me, this takes ministry beyond the church and says that where you worship is not nearly as important as to how you serve.*

The belief is that people do not have to worship together in order to stand together for social justice. Moreover, some respondents believe it is time for the church to move beyond service provision and become engage in advocacy as a community of faith. The charitable habits of faith organizations carried out on an individual bases do not sufficiently challenge or address issues of system injustice and systemic incapacities to the scale of success that would result from collective action.

**Community, Economic Development and Advocacy**

The casino industry received an immediate response from the State Legislature, allowing land-based gaming on the Mississippi Gulf coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Meanwhile, home insurance is about as much as mortgages, rents have increased, and schools and services are not returning. One executive director summed it up best by commenting:

*People are depressed and feel like they have no options. People are not feeling secure. The hang-up is at the state level...letting the insurance industry off the hook. They have not been held accountable.***

Accompanying this laissez-faire approach, no independent watch-dog or oversight organizations exist to monitor state recovery efforts on the gulf coast. Moreover, respondents could not identify any government policies to support structural changes for equitable and human development as part of recovery and renewal.
According to another executive director:

“I see a gulf that is widening rapidly, certainly based on color and increasing based on economic status as an excuse.” There is a pervasive opinion among whites making over $65,000 that the recovery is complete. I have words like workforce housing, basically saying we want people to run our gaming table and clean our rooms. I honestly think that it is sinister. It is an evil piece that is running through this that has its roots in slavery and certainly segregation. I think it is more pervasive in this state than people want to admit—brown, black or white. I think it is being magnified by the influx of Hispanic people. I think what is going to happen is that Hispanic people who aren’t speaking English are going to be used as a tool to enlarge the gulf between the haves and have not.

The Gulf Coast Latin-American Association (GCLAA), originally a social organization that transitioned to advocacy in post-Katrina, suggests a four-fold increase in the Latino population on the Mississippi Gulf coast to a conservative estimate of about 30,000 people. Along with this increase in population has come an increase in intimidation around housing, employment and law enforcement. Many Latinos and Latinas, both documented and undocumented, fear repercussions, such as job loss and deportation, from speaking out on these abuses as the prevailing social structure seeks to view them as an invisible community. As one executive director suggests:

They know that Latinos are here. Yet, they want to turn their face from Latino needs. They say ‘let them fix up the casinos, let them rebuild the Gulf coast and when they are done, let them go home.’

GCLAA is working to give the Latino community greater voice by building relationships, and eliminating communication and education barriers that foster anti-immigrant sentiments and posture. Costal Women for Change, similarly, provides a voice for women in a social and power structure heavily dominated by men before and after the storm. In short, practically all of the respondents recognized themselves as having greater voice since Katrina, however, they have yet to see their advocacy result into institutional change. Collective action is viewed as the only means of ameliorating current conditions. The work of Oxfam America in helping to establish the Steps Coalition, which currently consists of approximately 50 locally-based organizations committed to advocacy for a just and sustainable rebuilding of the Mississippi Gulf coast, is a critically important step in the right direction. In addition, respondents suggested the need for collective action beyond those residing in Mississippi and its Gulf coast to include those from other parts of the nation and even the world.

The leader of a local non-profit organization articulated this concern in the following manner:

I think if we don’t act as a block soon…and not just us here in Mississippi. We need more than Mississippians. It has to be a wake up call across the board. We need a solid block and agenda. Taking a stand and going to the Governor and outside the state or it is going to get worse.

There is recognition at the community-based level that much work towards equitable development remains. For example, Boat People SOS-Biloxi, which provides case management to primarily Asian and Vietnamese households, in addition to others, finds that most people remain far from recovery. Persons lost jobs, vehicles, phones and housing—owner and renter occupancy. With much of the affordable housing stock lost and returning at a much
slower pace than shelter for others, many households continue to need job, renter-relocation assistance, language translation and other services. The number of persons still in need of relief can be substantiated by the steep percent increase in the number of households receiving food stamp benefits. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, approximately 22 percent of individuals that obtained FEMA assistance received food stamps. Of this amount, about 11 percent of individuals currently receiving food stamps did so before the catastrophe—a 100 percent increase. Therefore, before moving to the recovery phase, Boat People SOS is implementing an intermediate relief phase offering programs such as youth tutorials and mentoring, health programs for women, and financial literacy education.

Along these lines, Hope Community Credit Union, an entity of Enterprise Corporation of the Delta, began operations on the Mississippi Gulf coast in December 2005, offering Hurricane Recovery Loans (gap financing) to individuals and families of up to $5,000 for 3 to 6 months, and 4 percent up to two years after that time. Bridge loans were available to businesses and nonprofits, as well as savings accounts specifically for nonprofits to accumulate donations. Also, Hope Community Development Credit Union provided forgivable loans to low and moderate families of up to $80,000; and, through a gift from an anonymous donor, provided funds for 20 families to receive $50,000 towards the purchase modular homes—both in Pass Christian—making possible some neighborhoods to come back in cluster. However, many households remained unable to leverage these subsidies because government resources did not materialize in a timely manner. The slowness of government response, the steep increases in homeowners insurance that in many cases is as much as mortgages, and the realization that renters received no direct government intervention as allotted to homeowners, substantiates the fact that many Mississippi Gulf coast residents remain a long way from recovery and enhanced human development.

**Summation of Findings**

Two years later, much of the optimism held by so many Gulf Coast residents around the prospects for renewal is now exasperation and hopelessness due to the day after day slow, if any, progress. Simultaneously, lacking just and equitable government intervention and accountability, many also fight to resist being overcome by Katrina Fatigue. Indeed, community-based organizations and local activist believe in the need for collective action and advocacy for justice and systemic change as Hurricane Katrina only magnified problems that existed before the storm. In struggle, they remain resilient and self-reliant.

**LOUISIANA**

**Introduction**

Hurricane Katrina provided Louisiana as the model of how decades of public policies fostering constructions of race, class and poverty produced not only social and geographic segregation but also fashioned catastrophic consequences for equitable and human development in the most powerful nation in the world. The entire southeastern coastline of the state was impacted by the storm, in the east from the outermost tip of Plaquemines Parish to the west encompassing the parish of Terrebonne. However, no other place in the court of global media and attention represents the epicenter of the catastrophe following Hurricane Katrina than New Orleans.
Ironically, the millions of tourists who flocked to New Orleans every year prior to 2005 were oblivious to the fact that they were visiting one of the greatest urban social disasters in the United States. The fact that the national political culture had adopted social philosophies which naturalized this and other urban disasters during the last three decades was perhaps the most dangerous threat to the city and the nation. Hurricane Katrina revealed both the problems in the city and fundamental weaknesses in the national approach to human development.

Historic patterns of racial segregation resulted in low-income African Americans being concentrated in flood-prone areas of the city and their being prevented from having access to the rapidly developing suburbs in adjacent parishes. A long tradition of environmental injustice concentrated low-income and predominantly African Americans neighborhoods in low lying areas susceptible to flooding. The collapse of the inadequate, underfunded, and poorly designed levee system was accelerated by an underused canal which served as a storm surge highway into the heart of the city. Additionally, evacuation planning was not targeted to these areas. The Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MR GO), poorly constructed levees by the Army Corp of Engineers, and subsidence made the low-lying areas uniquely susceptible to a surge of waters generated by hurricanes. Economic and racial inequality was increasingly exacerbated by the decline of manufacturing, an emphasis on low-wage service sectors, mass impoverishment, declining federal social and infrastructural support, the intensification of partisan politics, deteriorating human rights conditions, and by local and national social philosophies which abandoned comprehensive approaches to addressing poverty, health, educational, and other inequalities.

**Human Development Needs: The Crescent City Before and After Katrina**

The portrait of New Orleans prior to Hurricane Katrina demands careful evaluation to understand part of the motivation for residents demanding that the city be rebuilt better than it was before. The City had become the epicenter of urban poverty in the United States. The unstable economic and social policy infrastructure of New Orleans in particular, and the state of Louisiana more generally, prior to 2005, could not simply be propped up by temporary federal and charitable assistance.

The New Orleans metropolitan economy experienced a significant downturn between 1969 and 1999, accounting for 14.4 percent of all jobs, most in relatively high-paying activities. Local government and private sector response was to increase the city’s dependence on low-wage services with approximately, 78 percent of all job growth occurred in services and retail trade. Meanwhile, other works suggest that a highly insular racial, cultural, and economic elite consciously denied the region of dynamism by limiting new entrepreneurial activity, fresh professional leadership, labor mobility, and African American advancement. A present-day local leader concurred with this conclusion:

> *Uptown whites run everything and they stood in the way of New Orleans developing in the 1960s and 1970s. It is a very narrow and insular leadership that wants to maintain the colonial set-up we have here: black people serving white people, white people having their balls and attending to their affairs, and they have a local black political class...*

The policies and practices of the economic and political elite persisted during the last three decades. By 2004, the processes of deindustrialization and the hollowing out of the local class structure were exacerbated by policies emphasizing an even greater dependence upon low-wage sectors such as tourism, entertainment, sports, gaming, and other services. High
levels of unemployment and poverty were intensified by declining real wages. The poverty reduction strategies of individuals, families, and local government were uniquely constrained. Leaders of the low wage sectors and their allies strongly resisted any changes in the opportunity structure. Families in the flooded black neighborhoods of New Orleans had a 2004 median income of only $25,759 a year, barely more than half the national average. Although, New Orleans voters approved a citywide living wage measure in 2002, it was later overturned by the courts. Additionally, public and private affirmative action initiatives were defeated.

With some of the nation’s highest rates of unemployment, drug abuse, crime, incarceration, and racial segregation, Hozler suggests that on the eve of Hurricane Katrina, many young African American men were trapped in an institutionally organized downward spiral:

Among young black men in New Orleans aged 16-24 who were not enrolled in school, fully 40 percent were not even in the labor force in the year 2000 – one of the worst rates of nonparticipation in the nation. Among the contributing factors to high joblessness among young black men are weak schooling in an economy that increasingly values math and language skills, disappearing blue collar jobs, and “job sprawl” that creates employment opportunities in suburbs that are hard for many young blacks to access. Illegal activity, especially the drug trade, led to increased incarceration rates among young black males in the 1980s and early 1990s. On top of their poor skills, low work experience and substance abuse histories, most employers are reluctant to hire former offenders—especially black offenders. State laws prohibit them from holding many kinds of jobs or even drivers’ licenses.

Although often ignored by many studies, accompanying these institutional barriers to human development is also the detrimental limitations placed on human rights. The dismal history of race relations in Louisiana documented by Fairclough and others, improved after the gains won by the Civil Rights Movement. During the 1990s, the human rights climate in New Orleans took a turn for the worst. For many, the region’s criminal justice system came to symbolize a significant reversal in human development. New Orleans had the highest ranking of citizen complaints of police brutality in the country according to a 1991 U.S. Justice Department report. Aggressive policing and zero tolerance policies led to a 27 percent increase in citizen complaints between 1996 and 1997. According to a police abuse expert:

...some city police departments have reputations for being brutal, like Los Angeles, or corrupt, like New York, and still others are considered incompetent. New Orleans has accomplished the rare feat of leading nationally in all categories.

In 2000, blacks represented 32.5 percent of Louisiana’s population and yet, they were 72.1 percent of those incarcerated. At the end of 2003, Louisiana ranked second among the states in the number of youth sentenced to life without the possibility of parole and first in the percentage of youth 14 to 17 years old serving such a sentence. Not only is the rate of white youth serving this sentence the highest in the country, the black rate is nearly five times higher. With 800 inmates per 100,000 residents in 2003, the state has an incarceration rate that, according to Burke Foster, is “the highest rate in the universe.” In the mid-1980s, the state led the nation in executions in proportion to its population; thus, becoming known as “Americas' leading executioner.”

It appears that sections of the city economy became dependent upon revenues gained from arrests. According to one interviewee, not only were there economic incentives for the
police to increase their arrest rates: lawyers, judges, clerks, and bail bondsmen also "eat off the backs of the poor." Another social service provider appears to agree:

The greatest economic drain on our community was not crime but the criminal justice system. There are more people losing their homes to predatory lenders... You can’t go to a bank to say I need $40,000 for a lawyer for my son. You have to go to a secondary lender to pay bonds and fines. If you on parole you have to pay a parole supervision fee. That has always been the greatest economic drain on our community.... Eight out of every 10 are impacted by the criminal justice system...The most expensive phone call you can make in America is a prison call.

More concisely put, there were deep structural flaws in New Orleans’ institutions before the hurricane. Also, the conditions faced by the poor were rapidly deteriorating. The intense class, race, and gender divisions prefaced the highly toxic relief and development process that was to follow particularly around poverty, education and heath care, affordable housing and community economic development.

Poverty and Hunger

The 2000 census recorded 485,000 residents in New Orleans; 328,000 or 67.6 percent were African American. There were 131,000 persons in poverty, 27.9 percent of the city’s population. The 111,000 African Americans in poverty represented 84.7 percent of the total poor and 33.8 percent of all African American residents. Approximately 70,000 New Orleanians lived in extreme poverty, below 50 percent of the federal poverty line, of whom 59,000 or 84 percent were African Americans.

By 2004, the child poverty rate in New Orleans stood at 40 percent, the highest in the nation.\(^3\) Launched in 1996, Louisiana’s version of federal welfare reform Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program or FITAP reduced state rolls by two-thirds. According to a recent study by Zedlewski:

[two] years after leaving welfare, 41 percent of former welfare recipients were not working and had not returned to welfare... Other research shows that these ‘disconnected families’ rely on noncash government assistance and family members to survive.” \(^3\)

Finally, women needing additional benefits could receive them if they joined a program offering voluntary sterilization.

Approximately one in five of the elderly living in New Orleans were poor in 2004, nearly twice the national average.\(^3\) The cost of being poor in New Orleans and Louisiana was uniquely dangerous. The report issued by the governor’s summit on poverty cited the following summary from "The Costs of Being Poor" found in the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kids Count Databook, 2003:

The simple fact is that many low-income families, especially those living in high-poverty communities, end up paying too much for many of life’s necessities: food, shelter, transportation, credit, and financial services. Not only are the prices they pay routinely more costly, but they are often downright predatory as well...
The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities noted that in New Orleans more than 54 percent of impoverished households and 65 percent of impoverished-elderly households did not possess a car, truck or van in 2000. Poverty, low wages, insurance redlining, and predatory auto lending left many residents without the means to evacuate the city.  

Associated with poverty is hunger. Hunger affected a growing proportion of families and children before the storm. More than 10 percent of the families in New Orleans and Louisiana received food stamps in 2003. In the city, approximately 40 percent of low income children under age six received Women Infant and Children (WIC) benefits. A 2002 survey of New Orleans residents found that they were more impoverished and received less assistance than the rest of Louisiana and the rest of the South: 83 percent of school-age children received free or reduced priced lunches; over one-fifth of low income families with children went hungry; and over a quarter were food insecure. 

In 2005, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. organized a survey of hunger in the 23 parish region serviced by the Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana. The survey found that the network of agencies and organizations served 248,000 different individuals annually and 62,000 individuals in a given week. Many of those receiving assistance were youth: 31 percent of household members were children under 18 years old; 7 percent were children age 0 to 5 years; and 8 percent were elderly. Although 35 percent of the households had an employed adult member, 75 percent of households had total incomes below the federal poverty level and 34 percent of the households were homeless. Additionally, blacks made up 68 percent of the recipients; whites, 22 percent; and Latinos 7 percent. The survey also found that 82 percent of the client households were food insecure and that 52 percent were experiencing hunger.

Households receiving assistance reported having to make life threatening choices between purchasing food and paying for other necessities: 44 percent between food and utilities or heating fuel; 35 percent between food and rent or mortgage; and 47 percent between food and medicine or medical care. Faith-based organization stepped in to meet gaping holes in the regional safety net; 74 percent of pantries, 87 percent of kitchens, and 66 percent of shelters are run by faith-based agencies affiliated with churches, mosques, synagogues, and other religious organizations. According the president and CEO of a local food bank:

[the] food system of south Louisiana is severely compromised, recovering school systems are having trouble providing school lunches, Meals on Wheels programs are coming back slowly, community centers serving seniors have been destroyed, retail grocery stores have not returned to all neighborhoods, only a fraction of the hundreds of faith-based agencies serving the poor have reopened, and food stamp offices are closed.

Furthermore, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, severe food shortages are being experienced in Northeast, Central, and Northwest Louisiana due to the displacements caused by the levees. In June of 2007, the state legislature provided $5 million to support the efforts of the Louisiana Food Bank Association in the face of a tripling of demand.

Education

In 2005, New Orleans had 128 public schools, 4,000 teachers, and 60,000 students about 90 percent of whom were African Americans. The public school system had been in a deep state of crisis during the previous decade: ten superintendents in the previous ten years;
73.5 percent of the schools received academic warnings or were deemed academically unacceptable by the state in 2004; 35 percent of the schools didn’t meet the progress requirements of No Child Left Behind; and the Orleans parish school district had a deficit of at least $30 million. Three quarters of eighth-graders failed to score at the basic level on state English assessments. The system in many ways continued to reflect the integration and funding crises of the 1960s; overwhelmingly white suburban districts and half of the students in the city attending private or parochial schools. Despite the heroic efforts of many teachers and administrators, educational advocates have characterized the New Orleans Public School system of functioning as little more than a warehousing program for black youth.\footnote{42}

The decision to fragment the educational system is also fueling numerous controversies. When schools re-opened, there were an estimated 30,000 students in September of 2007. Of the 128 schools under the jurisdiction of the Orleans Public School Board (OPSB) prior to Katrina, the state took over 112 and placed some with the Recovery School District (RSD). With 16 schools left, the OPSB also chartered out several of the schools that remained under its jurisdiction, leaving them with five under their direct administration.\footnote{43}

New Orleans’ Public schools were transformed into a massive experiment based on the free market ideologies underlying the charter school movement. This was accomplished by the U.S. Department of Education pledging significant funds, $20 million, to support charter schools while offering little in the way of new funds for traditional public schools. In this fragmented system students are segregated by special needs, class, test scores, school resources, family, and race. Veteran former teaches claim that the RSD is plagued by the exclusion of teachers in decision-making, high teacher turnover, poor working conditions, longer hours, collective bargaining rights, job security, and the lack of respect.\footnote{44}

The transformation of public education has fueled a deep schism in the city. Declining test scores have contributed to this frustration. Several of the leaders interviewed saw the fragmentation of the schools as part of the larger effort to disempower African Americans, as expressed by this youth service provider:

\begin{quote}
I think it is garbage…it is about white folks raiding the cash register. Special educational needs are not being served. Then you insist what is there is better than what was before … This is not happening to white children How can you fire 7000 teachers.. There is a massive takeover of anything of value. The failure of the schools is based on institutional racism. There is no community where white children are forced to endure what black children have too.
\end{quote}

\textbf{Health Care}

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s residents of the city and the state organized environmental justice movements to respond to the health consequences resulting from a highly toxic environment. Additionally, a computer analysis by the \textit{Dallas Morning News} in 2000 found that three-quarters of the public housing in New Orleans is within a mile of one or more toxic dumps. Built on such a dump, the lead, arsenic and cancer-causing chemicals in the former Desire public housing development devastated the children of the community with girls as young as twelve developing breast cancer. In 1996, Chris Hornig, of HUD, classified Desire as a “public housing sin.”\footnote{45}

Another public health concern is HIV/AIDS. With more than 7200 HIV/AIDs cases in 2004, the New Orleans metropolitan areas ranked thirteenth in the nation while the state ranked
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report the “rate for African-Americans is over seven times higher than those among Whites. Also, seventy-six percent of newly-diagnosed HIV infections statewide were in African-Americans. Overall, HIV/AIDS rates have been declining in both White and African-American men since 1993; however, the rate among African-American women has remained relatively stable.”

According to the New Orleans Health Department, the population of persons living with HIV/AIDS in post-Katrina New Orleans is increasing. New Orleans EMA alone accounts for 41 percent of the state’s HIV/AIDS population. The disproportionate number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the New Orleans EMA consists of 66 percent African Americans, and 71 percent who live in Orleans Parish. Moreover, many of the city’s pressing health care conditions and needs were described in Mayor Nagin’s August 1, 2007 testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations as part of the hearing on “Post Katrina Health Care: Continuing and Immediate Needs in the New Orleans Region, Part II.”

Every hospital and medical facility in Orleans Parish was shut down and since the storm only four of the eight hospitals have reopened, most at decreased capacity. The City of New Orleans Health Department, which employed more than 200 health professionals, lost more than 60 percent of its staff and closed eight of its 13 clinics.

The health security of residents in post-Katrina New Orleans is threatened even more so than before the storm by the absence of medical facilities and the absence of medical professionals. A prolonged debate erupted between community leaders and doctors who believed that Charity Hospital, the historic public hospital, could be quickly reopened and the state which refused. Then a conflict erupted between the federal government and the state over the rebuilding of Charity as a public hospital as opposed to providing privatized care. Dr. Kevin Stephens, the City’s Health Director, summed up the crisis in an article published by the American Medical Association Journal:

With Charity and several other hospitals still closed, the emergency department and inpatient bed capacity of the region comprised of Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes is now just more than half of pre-Katrina capacity. For mental health beds, the capacity is about one-third....At the same time, the reality of the post-Katrina environment has led to a dramatic increase in the need for mental health services. The stress of survival and life in a damaged region has increased the rate of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and aggravated existing mental and physical health problems. Because few outpatient drug treatment centers and detox beds are available, people with addictive disorders who are in crisis also seek treatment in our already overtaxed emergency rooms, contributing to further delays and longer wait times for service.

Housing and Homelessness

According to an Urban Institute study, prior to Hurricane Katrina, although families in New Orleans faced a severe affordability crisis, they were less likely to receive housing assistance than other citizens in Louisiana and the Southeast more generally:

Nearly half of low-income families with children paid rent without assistance compared with 35 percent in the southeast and 34 percent in Baton Rouge. Consequently families
in New Orleans faced higher housing costs relative to their incomes before the storm hit. Rent or mortgage costs equaled or exceeded 40 percent of household income for over one-third of New Orleans’ low-income families in 2002, compared with 16 percent of similar families in the southeast region.\textsuperscript{51}

Despite the affordability crisis many of the public housing developments faced demolition by the late 1990s. For example, demolition of the St. Thomas development was to be followed by a mixed-income complex, the largest federal Hope VI project in the nation, former residents complained that the mixed-income formula systematically excluded them. The hundred building Desire development was demolished in 2003 while the Lafitte development was scheduled for demolition before the storm hit. On the eve of Katrina, only 5,100 public housing units remained in the city. No doubt, a lack of public and other affordable housing contributed to homelessness estimated to be 6,450 persons living in a variety of situations: 13 percent on the streets; 25 percent in emergency shelters; 39 percent in transitional housing or treatment facilities; 16 percent in permanent supportive housing; and 5 percent evicted or discharged with whereabouts unknown (Unity for the Homeless 2004). Families represented 35 percent of the population.

Indeed, approximately 76 percent of the city’s owner-occupied homes suffered significant damage from Hurricane Katrina.\textsuperscript{52} Although housing has occupied a central place in post-Katrina development debates, compensation for homeowners and real estate speculation have dominated much of the official policy discourse. Low income residents; public housing, those who lived in the most devastated neighborhoods, and renters have staged numerous protests to have their concerns heard. According to PolicyLink, 70 percent of low-cost rental housing units; 81 percent of public housing; 80 percent of units receiving housing vouchers; and 80 percent of section 8 units was significantly damaged or destroyed.\textsuperscript{53} Commonly, rents have tripled, resulting in two, three or more families living in a single apartment. As a cultural worker put it:

\textit{One of the main challenges is low income housing. They changed the definition of affordable housing... It used to be $300 to $400 in New Orleans... Now the definition is $800 to $1200. We need low-income housing to get the people back ...because the wages are still the same. The wages are still $6 or $6.25 but everything else went up...To gas to food to housing...}

Also, the policy debate excludes the dramatic rise in homelessness in the city and the simultaneous decline in the number of shelter beds available, from 1100 to 450 in 2006.\textsuperscript{54} In the aftermath of Katrina, the profile of the homeless individual is inclusive of the displaced population residing outside the city and in FEMA trailers. However, the lack of federal documentation on still displaced residents can read as part of a larger effort to deny these residents a role in the future of the city. A New Orleans community leader who has spent the majority of his time working with the displaced offered the following estimates in July of 2007:

\textit{There are 175,000 in trailer parks, 30,000 in homeless shelters, 8000 in New York (many of whom are in homeless shelters), and 65,000 in Houston living worst than they lived here.}

The displaced persons in Louisiana’s FEMA trailer parks were surveyed in the spring of 2007. Among the findings from the sample population: 29 percent of the respondents owned their pre-hurricane residences; “nearly half the sample were either unable or unwilling to speculate as to how much longer they would stay at their current location”; half said it was
unsafe for their children to play in the parks; although 55 percent were employed full time before the storm more than two-thirds were currently unemployed. On average three people live in a trailer. Many reported the deterioration of their health since the evacuation. High levels of diabetes and depression are found throughout these camps. One New Orleans’ community leader argued that private sector and governmental policies exacerbated the growth of the rural trailer parks:

In October 2005, there was a moratorium on evictions and still people’s shit was being thrown out of the street. We arranged with a judge to stop this... We have people in St. Charles Parish and East Baton Rouge Parish in what I call gulags. There is plenty of land on high ground in New Orleans that could have been used to build trailer parks to bring people home. The mayor and the governor could have used their emergency powers to put trailer parks in the city. They refused. Therefore, there is no affordable housing in the city.

Community, Economic Development, and Jobs

Stemming back to over four centuries, the residents of New Orleans have created one of the most important cultural heritage centers in the modern world. Not only is it the home of numerous American traditions, it occupies a central place in the definition of black identity as the most “Africanized City in the nation”. The numerous cultural, faith and other organizations weaving and holding together New Orleans’ rich community fabric in the midst of the makings of its decades-long social ruination prior to Hurricane Katrina, while some continue, were severely impacted in the aftermath of storm. In addition, generational repercussions can be expected due to the enormous Katrina-related job displacement and eradication of wealth and security. Loss of wages and dual incomes, benefits, seniority, mobility, and increased travel time and costs are exacerbated by the erosion of workers rights. According to one respondent:

Post-Katrina, I’ve seen a lot of anti-black racism; especially in the context of workers rights...black workers have been historically exploited. Now they are not viewed as workers. They are talked about as day laborers, evacuees, and guest workers ...It has been really painful for me. We have kind of loss that worker identity and that immigrant rights groups rightfully talk about labor exploitation but ignore the plight of black workers. There is a lack of a multiracial multi-sector responses and not wanting to address the exploitation of black workers.

Overall, the economic recovery in the metropolitan region has stalled and as of July 2007, three major sectors of the economy were still a combined total of 60,000 jobs below 2005 levels: government (72 percent); health care, (74.2 percent); and the low-wage $9.6 billion tourism industry, (75.6 percent). Even construction sector may be stalling. “From November 2005 to June 2006, the area added 7,400 jobs a month, and then slowed by December 2006 to 2,000 monthly. In June 2007, the gain was only 300 jobs.” The authors of the Metropolitan Report suggest the slowed recovery is due to the failure to focus on the immediate reestablishment of the social safety net among other reasons:

Some of the causes for the slowdown in local growth in the second year are: a shortage of affordable housing has resulted in a labor shortage and substantially higher wages for low-skilled workers; high insurance costs; uncertainty about the safety of levees; slower than expected flow of insurance and Road Home money; and quality of life issues such as inadequate availability of medical care, limited public school availability in Orleans Parish, and damaged infrastructure.
Summation of Findings

Post-Katrina New Orleans faces numerous challenges. The sense of loss is palpable. Many people find themselves trapped by institutions often in conflict with each other. In some instances, there seems to be no legacy of social policy planning to build upon. However, this would be a misreading of New Orleans history. The deep social networks in the city, particularly in the African American community have redistributive traditions and ethics unimaginable in other parts of the country and by many outside observers. The question faced in the city is whether public and private sector policies will attempt to further fragment these networks or support them by creating sustainable neighborhoods, long-lasting employment, and a comprehensive social welfare system.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lacking interstate governmental alliance between Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana with regard to Gulf Coast recovery, the collaborations among various other groups should not go unnoticed. Collaborations around education in Mobile that affirm the role of schools in community normalcy and vitality, decades-old networks of associations in New Orleans attempting to combat the assault on the social safety net, and new networks of primarily nascent organizations along with some existing groups now struggling in Mississippi to promote social justice and human development. Initially after the storm, citizen participation with collaborations and alliances that transcended race and class boundaries was reported to be at an all time high. Moreover, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina revealed a moral center not often witnessed in the USA. The commitment shown across the country and the world brings us to the realization that there is a broad constituency that supports basic needs through volunteerism. Alternatively, it must also go unnoticed that collaborations, volunteerism and philanthropic contributions do not necessarily lead to the institutionalized systemic and structural changes at the levels of government required for the advancement of human development along the gulf coast.

The major impediment to meeting Gulf Coast human development and recovery needs is a prevailing ideology of devolution and privatization driving policies that work to the detriment of the social safety net and fabric of the region. Federally-sanctioned policies stemming from this ideology are particularly harmful against the poor, blacks, and labor who experience punitive sanctions and lack participation in the upward mobility of wealth as a result. Indeed, the federal response only reinforced an existing political economy in the Gulf Coast region informed by a legacy of class and racial agendas. Exacerbated by FEMA fragmented lines of authority, responsibility and slow federal response, state-sanctioned policies in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana continue to be crafted without oversight or grassroots community representation and support, exhibiting less of the cohesion experienced initially after Hurricane Katrina and prohibiting the emergence of a social vision from any level of government. The desire to intensify market approaches to disaster recovery, primarily on racial, class and political difference, and the disarray and continued representation of local citizens in the redevelopment process are other impediments hinged on the ideology of devolution and privatization.

Federal Experimentation

Discussions at the federal level serving as an impediment to the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast and New Orleans, in particular, consisted of three primary arguments. The first position argued against rebuilding much of New Orleans. The second and related position argued
against providing significant assistance to displaced residents. A third perspective viewed the disaster as an opportunity to launch a large scale experiment with free market privatization initiative previously untried in a major disaster zone. Rep. Mike Pence (R. Indiana) declared: “[the] desire to bring conservative, free-market ideas to the Gulf Coast is white hot. We want to turn the Gulf Coast into a magnet for free enterprise,” which prompted Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D., Ill.) to state they’re “going back to the playbook on issues like tort reform, school vouchers and freeing business from environmental rules to achieve ideological objectives they haven’t been able to get in the normal legislative process.”

These sentiments help to explain the unevenness of the redevelopment process across the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The restoration of several sectors almost immediately, including tourism, oil, and the NFL’s Saints, while other sectors offering more social redistribution and security have witnessed little progress in two years.

Race, Class, Economics and Politics

For many, the evidence appears to support the statement made by Kanye West in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina that “George Bush does not care about black people.” Respondents across that Gulf Coast region believe certain actions are expressed in terms of economic objectives only to cloak policy implementation that makes it more palatable to widen the gap between the haves and have-nots, facilitating an upward redistribution of wealth and racial inequity. Certainly, while Mississippi and Alabama received lackluster federal response, the case was particularly acute for the predominately black and democratic City of New Orleans and its environs.

Only after receiving pressure from the new democratically-controlled Congress did President Bush sign a bill waiving a 10 percent match requirement for receipt of federal funds to the city and state. While the waiver occurred almost immediately for New York after September 11th and for Florida after several hurricanes, it took the president 20 months (May 2007) to do the same for New Orleans and the resulting “bureaucratic nightmare has left the financing for roughly 20,000 projects in limbo, while generating 2.6 million documents and the attendant overhead costs.” State officials noted that the federal administration also allocated disproportionately more funds to Mississippi; although, Louisiana received exponentially more damage to its housing, health care facilities, workforce, and to its colleges and universities. According to the Washington Post, allies from across the world attempted to provide $854 million in relief and aid to Katrina victims but only $40 million ever reached the victims due to federal inaction.

Chaotic and Exclusionary Redevelopment Processes

Overall, with little variance among the three states, the redevelopment process continues to focus on infrastructure and physical revitalization favoring middle-class and upper-income homeowners over the shelter needs of renters and other low-wealth individuals. In New Orleans, the initial local recovery plans advocating permanent rebuilding moratoriums for entire predominantly low-income black neighborhoods and public housing developments by the Heritage Foundation, the Urban Land Institute, and environmental organizations during the first 18 months continue to fuel numerous racial, class, and neighborhood conflicts. In New Orleans, Mississippi and Alabama the attendant real estate speculation accelerated demolitions and dramatic rent increases in a severely truncated rental supply. Regarding the South Bay, the lack of public attention to persistent needs stems from what advocates consider the “ambivalence” of several state and local public officials in seeking Hurricane recovery and redevelopment dollars.
beyond the initial relief dollars of FEMA and charitable groups for unincorporated areas like Coden serves as the impediment. Many residents and government officials in all three states realize participation by insurance companies and banks (or the lack thereof) will determine the future development of the region. Moving beyond the physical, very little attention has been afforded to building capacities and expanding the social fabric amongst community-based organizations along the gulf coast by government entities.

The focus on established sectors, infrastructure and middle- and upper-class homeowners should not eliminate efforts to strengthen the social safety net and fabric that benefits all. The Gulf Coast states and jurisdictions of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana cannot establish modern social welfare systems encompassing a high level of human security on their own. Their legacy will not permit it. Federal action is called for, matched with true representation from below and resulting in empowered communities.

Now is the time to advocate for a Gulf Coast Region Reconstruction Plan “the Plan” with transcendent humanitarian, social, political and economic aims that move beyond rebuilding the region to the way it was before Hurricane Katrina, and instead, to a place in sink with our national vision of what can be. Such an approach is not new. About 60 years ago, the US citizenry supported the implementation the Marshall Plan. Totaling $13 billion ($100 billion today) over four years, the Marshall Plan is not just credited for the rebuilding of Western Europe after catastrophic destruction of World War II; it also is recognized for modernizing the region and setting it on a path of prosperity it enjoys today (Behrman 2007). Alternatively, the four years of the current Iraqi War cost the US over $456 billion, and another $151.8 billion has been requested for Fiscal Year 2008 (National Priorities Project 2008). As late as January of 2008, literal “tent cities” exists in New Orleans where citizens are forced to in encampments near major thoroughfares due the city’s continuing affordable housing crisis. In South Mississippi, Gov. Haley Barbour has requested the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reallocate $600 million of the Homeowners Assistance Program toward port redevelopment when several thousands of families, especially in East Biloxi, have been denied any assistance because of the state’s refusal to cover wind-damaged structures that were not pre-insured. In Coden and other parts of South Mobile, there are likely more than a hundred families who neither have access to affordable rental housing nor the desire/ability to purchase FEMA trailers that are replete with health hazards. The point made from these examples is: the US maintains the resources to construct a social structure that will bring about a political and economic prosperity resulting in human security inclusive of all the citizens along the Gulf Coast affected by Hurricane Katrina. Still, what remains is the building of a national political will to ensure appropriate policies for the reconstruction of the Gulf Coast region are put in place.

The democratic and economic rights of low-wealth individuals must be realized along with the rights of others. Consequently, this report concludes with the optimal recommendation for the formulation and implementation of the Plan over a period of eight years and totaling approximately $307 billion in federal investment. The subsections that follow briefly focus on some major pillars of the Plan that will require advocacy and must be put in place in order to realize the full vision of what the Gulf Coast region can be by 2016.

Culture:

The region is the site of several national cultural centers and New Orleans is one of the preeminent cultural centers in the world. It is also home to dozens of unique cultures not present anywhere else in the world. Several of the Native American and African American cultural communities devastated by the hurricanes view the current reconstruction agenda as a
form of ethnocide. Yet, the policy debate over culture is traditionally limited to examinations of the role of indigenous culture as entertainment and as an adjunct of the tourism development agenda. Also, though not debated, it is assumed that significant reconstruction resources will be directed to preserving the cultural institutions of the region’s racial and class elite. The resources devoted to indigenous Native American and African American communities generally are designed to provided artists subsistence and to a lesser extent organizational subsistence. There is a dangerous conception of culture being deployed, which “museumifies” a few strands at the sake of the fabric of community.

The cultural recommendations that evolved from the Bring New Orleans Back Commission to the current city-wide Unified New Orleans Plan are being implemented and contain numerous positive features with regards to cultural planning. Yet, it makes many of the fragile racial and ethnic communities an addendum to a larger elite project. Two key goals were identified in the Bring New Orleans Back Cultural Plan. The first: invest in a creative talent pool by assisting artists, cultural institutions, and cultural entrepreneurs. And, the second: support neighborhood-based cultural traditions, repair damaged cultural facilities and build new cultural venues.

Two programs were proposed to meet the recovery needs of the cultural community.

“The NOLA REstored Cultural Program is a program that invests in the return of cultural organizations, artists, and cultural tradition-bearers to their pre-Katrina strength. These projects are monitored by a nominated advisory committee and implemented/managed by selected cultural Intermediaries. All project support is distributed based on an application for support that is reviewed by the advisory committee. The project components of this program are: Project 1: CULTURE INVESTS PROJECT: A fund that supports the operations of cultural institutions, musical organizations, performing arts organizations, community-based cultural organizations and tradition-bearers. These funds can be used for stabilizing an organization’s infrastructure and/or for organizational planning in the post-Katrina reality. Various intermediaries would be used to ensure that a diverse segment of the cultural population is reached. Project 2: CULTURE WORKS PROJECT: A cultural employment project that supports 1) visual artists’ efforts to create public art in the repair of parks, schools, libraries and other public spaces; 2) writers, filmmakers, and photographers efforts to document the city, creating histories and guides that adequately present the city in its new reality; and 3) architects, master builders, craftsmen, etc. efforts to restore the city’s built environment. This project would allow employers to hire and subsidize the salary or stipends of workers.

Project 3: CULTURE RETURNS PROJECT: Cultural employment opportunities that create jobs for performing artists to perform in parades, festivals and other important community or neighborhood-based cultural activities. This project could also support displaced New Orleans artists by allowing employers to bring artists back to the city to perform. Project support would be flexible and could be use for artists’ fees, travel and/or housing. Project 4: CULTURE TRANSFORMS PROJECT: Cultural employment that 1) returns arts educators to the schools, and/or 2) utilizes partnerships between cultural organizations and schools to bring students to cultural facilities and/or send the organization’s artists into the schools. Integral to this project is a data collection and documentation process for creating a coordinated effort of identifying and informing education administrators, teachers and artists of arts education and arts-in-education opportunities.
The NOLA REbuilds Cultural Program is a program that invests in the recovery of our cultural facilities and in finding housing and/or facilities for cultural workers, artists, educators and organizations displaced by Hurricane Katrina. The program is overseen, managed and implemented by a Cultural Community Development Corporation that will: 1) Document and coordinate the various efforts currently focused on artist housing and workspace needs, such as Sweet Home New Orleans (a partnership of many groups including Jazz and Heritage Foundation and Festival, Tipitina's Foundation, Arabi Wrecking Crew, Neighborhood Housing Services, the Musician’s Union, etc.); Side by Side (Ashe Cultural Arts Center, LANO); Habitat for Humanity; Arts Council of New Orleans; National Performance Network; Contemporary Arts Center; New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation and Festival; New Orleans Performing Arts Coalition; Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs Task Force; Actors Fund (national); Music Cares (national); Jazz Federation of America (national); Artspace (national); Urban Main Street projects; and the Louisiana Cultural Economy Foundation. 2) Identify and develop additional strategies that address housing and workspace needs through the use of low and no-interest loans, sweat equity, rent subsidies and partnerships. 3) Identify and acquire neighborhood/community facilities that are no longer being used and can be reused to address the shortage of housing and workspace for artists, cultural workers and organizations. These facilities could be places that are totally repurposed for the cultural community, or places that can become multi-use workspaces and be shared by the cultural community (such as school auditoriums, park & recreation centers, empty store fronts, etc.). 4) Administer a fund that supports uninsured damage to cultural facilities.

The absence of autonomy over cultural vision and projects threatens the fragile ethnic, racial, and working class cultures of the regions in new ways. The cultural health of these communities and their use of dynamic culture as a moral center have been compromised. Policies which do not recognize the historic processes of cultural marginalization and suppression present in the region support the continuation of these processes in the present period. Also, polices which do not recognize the profound presence of racism and white supremacy tourism in the region will perpetuate these traditions in a region defined by heightened cultural, racial, ethnic, and class tensions. Therefore, three primary recommendations making up the culture component of the Plan should receive a federal allocation of $3 billion to begin addressing these regional realities along the Gulf Coast.

Anti-racism education and policies should be put in place recognizing the cultural history of the region and the patterns of cultural exclusion and denigration that have dominated the Gulf Coast region for several hundred years. The history of Native Americans and other ethnic groups in the region is still actively marginalized. Knowledge of many African American traditions is due in part to centuries long history of major human and cultural rights conflicts that have continues into the post-Katrina environment. The 2001 Durban Declaration of the United Nations’ World Conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance viewed African Americans as a special protected class due to the trauma of slavery and current manifestations in the form of racism and poverty. Principle 18 notes that “We emphasize that poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion and economic disparities are closely associated with racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and contribute to the persistence of racist attitudes and practices which in turn generate more poverty.”

The Durban Declaration also recommended that racism can only be addressed if special attention is paid to the conditions of several sectors of society including indigenous people, marginalized ethnic groups, migrants, girls, women and youth. The numerous recommendations
in the declaration suggest that systematic studies of the many facets of racism in the region before and after Hurricane Katrina need to be undertaken. In addition to studies and community dialogues, special policies should be designed and implemented for uniquely vulnerable populations. A truth and reconciliation commission should be established to resolve the many instance of human and cultural rights violation that occurred after Hurricane Katrina. A program advocating cultural understanding, exchanges, and the elimination of cultural supremacist policies and practices should be implemented. Civil Rights museums and educational programs must be established in Louisiana and Mississippi. Native American and African American museums and educational projects should be established in the three states. Public and private initiatives should be directed toward supporting community preservation programs in which culture is used as both an ethical and an economic development tool.

Cultural traditions and institutions should be supported to carryout the cultural, cooperative, and advocacy traditions existing among African American, Native Americans, and other historically marginalized communities in order to produce sustainable and stable communities. This includes advocacy for the right of displaced communities to return. Another recommendation is that historic neighborhood-based cultural organizations with a public purpose (social and pleasure clubs, Mardi Gras Indian organizations, youth centers, senior centers, historic bands, schools, writers’ organizations, women’s groups, community centers, libraries, schools, art centers, etc.) receive grants directly to implement programs autonomous of the dominant regional cultural institutions. Additionally, communities organized around specific cultural practices would receive similar support. Communities of women and youth would also receive funds to work autonomously. Commissions for each racial and ethnic group should be established for the purpose of setting an independent agenda for revitalizing their culture. Only cultural, cooperative, and advocacy projects emanating from the neighborhood, practices, or commission sectors should be considered by larger funding or political bodies. Organizations within these sectors should receive eight-year funding commitments that included allocations, for salaries, buildings, services, and an endowment. The organizations would also participate in the cooperative provision of social services, education, and employment.

A cultural corps—a combination of the WPA and CETA employment projects—would support programs for skilled artist, writers, craftpersons, musicians, etc. It would also include arts training, arts management, production, and distribution programs; arts facilities projects; the preservation of cultural organizations; the production of oral histories, films, and other educational projects. Support for an economic development and employment strategy focused on the film, music, crafts, literature, culinary and other arts-centered sectors should be a part of this corps. Approximately, half of the all funds allocated to the cultural corps should be restricted to providing employees to cultural, cooperative, and advocacy projects emanating from the neighborhood, practices, or African American/Native American commission sectors.

### Culture Proposal 2008-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Racism Education and Policies</td>
<td>$1,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Traditions and Institutions</td>
<td>$1,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Education:

Education stands out as a major section of the Plan and this recommendation calls for an allocation of $97 billion. To begin, the federal government should invigorate public school systems by providing substantial funding in the amount of $80,000,000,000 for public school construction, equipment, performance, and making teacher salaries on par with the national average. Resources should be geared towards preparing students to excel in the knowledge-based economy of the global market place; substantial more resources for education in this regard amounting to $4 billion should make practical linkages in education to economic development and regional growth. Therefore, given the desire for societal transformation of the political and social environment in which children will grow up as well as the influence economic factors will have on their human capital development, now more so than ever before, early childhood education should receive a higher level of priority and an allocation of funding amounting to $8 billion.

Schools should serve as a catalyst for empowerment and community building. Schools ensure contact with children, facilitate parental involvement, host neighborhood events and employ individuals whose energies often extend beyond meeting student needs to actively engaging and enhancing civic participation. It is recommended that with a federal funding allocation of $4 billion, collaboration and alliances should be pursued as public schools transform to become the center of community development. However, in order for this to occur, conditions should be in place that will institutionalize changed relationships (Stone, Doherty, Jones and Ross 1999).

Building trust and social bonds should be pursued as an important ingredient for institutionalizing changed relationships that heighten a willingness of others to contribute. An accomplishable feat, the glue necessary to sustained changed relationships was evident in numerous examples in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, as individuals, rich and poor, black, white, Latino, Vietnamese and others, worked together in common cause and purpose. Alternatively, moves such as the firing of 7,000 teachers in New Orleans or the closing of a new school in East Biloxi because white households strongly oppose their children attending school in a predominately low-income community of color, creates a deep sense of distrust and works against the spirit of a “right to return” to the region.

To reiterate, federal resources should ensure job security for educators and the restoration of public schools systems in New Orleans and other parts of the Gulf Coast region in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana affected by Hurricane Katrina. Moreover, through its resources and leadership, the federal government must emphasize the mutual benefits that will result from collaboration and shared expectations. Alba Elementary and Mobile County Public Schools in partnership with MAEF in Bayou La Batre serves as a specific example with regard to education that, with significant federal funding, should be enhanced and expanded upon throughout the Gulf Coast region in a manner that links public school systems with regional colleges and universities.
Federal funding for public schools should extend beyond standardized test scores and transmitting existing cultural norms to transforming social structures. As in the case of East Biloxi, Mississippi, state of the art school buildings do not guarantee empowerment and community building. Therefore, a federal allocation of $4 billion should go towards institutionalizing an education structure that fosters values and behaviors of social equality, equitable development and economic prosperity.

**Education Proposal 2008-2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure and Restoration</td>
<td>$80,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Education Program</td>
<td>$8,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Collaboration Grants</td>
<td>$1,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge-Based Program</td>
<td>$4,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality, Equity and Economic Prosperity Program</td>
<td>$4,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$97,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Employment:**

Historically employment programs have been central features of regional and national development projects: the Marshall Plan, the New Deal, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the War on Poverty, and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). The employment component of these initiatives helped communities transition through crises generated by economic and technological transformations. After three decades of devolution policies and practices, federal, state and local governments rarely engage in the creation of comprehensive and large scale employment projects. The lack of an emphasis on employment programs in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina marks both a continuation of existing policy approaches and a crossroads where change in existing policy is required.

Evidence presented in the initial report reveals that there was a significant loss of major employers in the Gulf Coast region prior to Hurricane Katrina. The heavy emphasis on tourism and service sectors fostered the belief that low-wages must be maintained. High levels of structural unemployment and low-wages combined to suppress economic activity while intensifying regional poverty. In addition to producing multiple forms of desperation in low-income communities, these realities and policies acted as a deterrent to the movement of professionals and new investment into the region. After the disaster many employers left the hardest hit areas for surrounding parishes, counties, and states. Many low-income workers were either not able to return to previous jobs or blocked by rising housing costs, the lack of day care, the lack of health care, and the absence of family and community support networks.
Many residents were also excluded from new construction activity due to racial discrimination. In addition, the employment and subsistence networks centered upon family and other social institutions remain fragmented. City and state and federal training programs are minimal. Finally, the economic activity exhibited after the first year has slowed, particularly in the construction sector.

Hahn (2005) estimated the cost of rebuilding New Orleans could top $75 billion and nearly $150 billion would be needed for the entire region. Conversely, the Congressional Research Service estimated that by August of 2006, $122 billion had been spent on Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma with $87 billion spent just on emergency projects. Strategies to improve employment opportunities for dispossessed and displaced residents are still relevant two years after the disaster. Subsequently, the recommendations below first suggest several regional principals before discussing specific items for the Plan implementation.

**General employment development principles**

A long-term commitment of support of eight years or more should be made to individuals and communities victimized by the storm and the flood. In addition to adopting policies to guarantee full employment, the minimum wage in the region should be increased to a livable wage rate. Employers should be required to place a priority on hiring pre-Katrina residents. Organizational and business grants should adopt this priority. Given the long history of racial discrimination in hiring, African Americans should also be designated as a priority population.

Affirmative action programs for this group and for women should be adopted throughout the region. Priority should be given to other groups historically marginalized by regional labor markets: youth, single mothers, seniors and the formerly incarcerated. These principles should extend to displaced persons no matter where they currently reside. One of the goals of regional employment bureaus would be to create employment pathways back into the region for the displaced. Several other related recommendations would support innovative and equity building economic practices: collective bargaining, community-based research and development, municipal enterprises, community co-operatives and land trusts, etc. Finally, Unemployment Compensation and Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) should be extended for another two years for unemployed victims of the disaster.

**Items for the Plan Implementation**

*Employment*

The FY 2005 national budget of the federal Dislocated Worker Program was $1.5 billion. Approximately, $157.8 million of this allocation was dedicated to the Dislocated Worker National Reserve, which provided National Emergency Grants (NEG) to state and local workforce investment boards (WIB) for disaster relief employment defined as cleanup, restoration, and humanitarian assistance to communities. Subsequently, through implementation of the Plan, the following projects could be supported: an infrastructure construction corps, a wetlands restoration corps, an education corps, a cultural corps, a preservation corps, a public health corps, a housing construction corps, a civil service corps, a Head Start/ day care corps, a non-profit organization corps, a youth training, an environmental clean-up corps, and a green conversion corps, a media corps, a community development organization corps, a music performance and industry corps, a youth anti-violence corps, a new technology corps, a senior corps, a tourism corps, and a entrepreneurship corps. One of the projects presented in the Congressional Black Caucus’ H.R.4197, Hurricane Katrina Recovery, Reclamation, Restoration,
Reconstruction and Reunion Act of 2005 [sec. 407], calls for the significant expansion of YouthBuild programs. In this existing program, “low-income youth, ages 16-24 years, work toward their GED or high school diploma, learn job skills and serve their communities by building affordable housing, and transform their own lives and roles in society.” The argument can be made that an emergency situation still prevails in the Gulf Coast region and that $8 billion over five years should be spent to realize these employment objectives.

**Training**

In the Congressional Research Service’s 2006 report “Unemployment and Employment Programs Available to Workers from Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi Affected by Hurricane Katrina,” it is recommended that priorities in the distribution of Adult and Dislocated Worker Training funds should be established based on the following guideline: “priority for intensive and training services must be given to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals. Of special interest to those workers dislocated by Hurricane Katrina, a person who qualifies as homeless under subsections (a) and © of Section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Act (P.L. 100-77) is automatically considered to be a low-income person.” Also H.R. 3976, the Worker Recovery Act of 2005, would have amended the Workforce Investment Act to provide workers recovery accounts of up to $5,000 to meet the employment and training needs of individuals affected by Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita. Finally, four years of no cost training, vocational education, or undergraduate education should be offered to the most impoverished residents in the region to permanently break the cycle of poverty. The suggestion here is that the above recommendation should be implemented in the Plan through a federal allocation of $16 billion.

**Small Business**

An amount totaling $4 billion should be provided to support employment creation, asset building and small business development based on cooperative, employee ownership, and micro-lending models. Specific programs would be created to target historically marginalized groups: low-income women, youth, and the formerly incarcerated. The cities and the states should ensure that local individual residents, community-based businesses, and community-based organizations should take the lead in and benefit from reconstruction contracts and SBA loans.

**Sectorial Strategies**

Firms and projects that prioritize the general community principles above should be supported by governmental, non-profit and private entities through the creation of regional agreements or compacts. Hiring practices and contracting practices should be monitored. In the Gulf Coast region, major sectors such as shipping oil, gas, tourism, and gaming have stabilized. These sectors have not demonstrated an interest in transforming the region’s low wage economy and high levels of structural unemployment. New infrastructure and housing projects provide a rare opportunity to help residents who have lived in an economic recession since the mid 1980s. Additionally, the region could specialize in environmental clean-up and wetlands restoration projects. With federal and international assistance, the Gulf Coast region could be the testing ground for a new green technology urbanization that could serve as an international
model. These projects would also generate skilled employees. The total amount allocated for these sectorial strategies is $8 billion.

**Leadership**

Historically, local and state leadership in the region has been highly resistant to any initiative that would fundamentally transform existing labor markets. Consequently, communities trapped in these low wage labor markets must be supported and allowed to innovate. The programs outlined above enable a transition period to a higher wage and a more stable employment structure while generating wealth for all sectors in the region. Therefore, it is extremely important that community-based organization should be able to independently access public and private support as was the case during the federal Community Action programs of the 1960s and 1970s. Organization should also be granted funds, properties, and other assets totally $2.4 billion to insure their ability to act independently.

**Employment Proposal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>$8,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>$16,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Business</td>
<td>$4,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectorial Strategies</td>
<td>$8,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>$2,400,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$28,400,000,000.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Health Care:**

The health care needs along the Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana Gulf Coast can be grouped into four categories, which should receive federal support amount to $96 billion over the life of the Plan. First, the reopening of all public health care facilities closed since Hurricane Katrina should receive the highest level of priority. As the largest metropolitan area affected by the storm, particular attention should be given to expediting the reopening New Orleans’ Charity Hospital and outpatient clinics. Priority should also fulfill the need for new and expanded services (dialysis, heart, etc.) at numerous clinics serving less populated areas along the Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama Gulf coasts. Federal support for these activities total $40 billion.
Another area deserving attention is the long-term mental health care needs of the region. The federal government should provide substantial financial and human resources through and allocation of $8 billion to tackle the acute mental health care needs that now exist in child, youth and adult populations. Reaching these populations will require unconventional and innovative approaches as stigma exists more so among African American, Latino and Vietnamese communities for seeking health care treatment than amongst the population more generally.

Many Gulf Coast residents, even if maintaining employment after Hurricane Katrina as many economies where destroyed by the storm, work in low-wage jobs that do not provide coverage and lack the resources to cover the cost for mental and physical health care. Subsequently, the federal government should allot $16 billion to establish a fund that will provide free health coverage for uninsured individuals. In addition, the federal government should make available $32 billion supporting the creation and deployment of a national medical professional corps that will meet long-term mental and physical health care needs.

### Health Care Proposal 2008-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reopening Public Health Care Facilities</td>
<td>$40,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term Mental Health Care Program</td>
<td>$8,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Coverage for the Uninsured</td>
<td>$16,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Medical Corps</td>
<td>$32,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$96,000,000,000.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Housing Needs:

True to other areas of human development, new political will and policy imagination are required to bridge the yawning gaps that still exist in meeting unmet housing needs. Therefore, the federal government should make major new investments to provide much needed aid to affected families still suffering from dislocation, homelessness, and/or housing in disrepair. Such investments can spur new state and local government efforts, create incentives for additional private and philanthropic targeting, and facilitate new collaborations between businesses, governments, and non-profit organizations. Again, the point of the Plan is not to simply re-create old patterns of disparity but to fundamentally build a new and more humane Gulf Coast region.
Beyond the monies Congress and the Bush administration have already committed to meeting housing needs through HUD allocations, this recommendation will cost $76.7 billion over the next eight years. Allocated in equal parts on an annual basis, this amount is a little more than half of the $16 billion committed to only the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program under the original Katrina recovery package. Of course, these funds should be allocated to areas of greatest need, but none of the most affected counties and locales should be denied an equitable share of these dollars.

This recommendation is based upon the baseline proposal of several members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and the House bill H.R. 4197 or the “Hurricane Katrina Recovery, Reclamation, Restoration, Reconstruction, and Reunion Act of 2005.” However, with the advantage of hindsight, the recommendation reflects an understanding of what has not worked under the current market-driven strategy of federal, state, and local governments.

In order to meet the continuing, widespread housing needs of low and moderate income communities in the Gulf Coast region, a fundamental reversal of current public housing policy trends is necessary. As opposed to demolishing units or declaring a relative moratorium upon new construction (outside of HOPE VI), the federal government should provide an additional $48 billion to be spent upon “New Public Housing Construction & Maintenance” in the Gulf Coast region affected by Hurricane Katrina. No less than 80 percent of these dollars must be spent on scattered-site units or upon new units at existing public housing sites as rented by families whose median incomes are 125 percent of the poverty level and below. A portion of this $48 billion (or roughly $4 billion) should go toward the creation and staffing of various “community housing taskforces”—predominantly comprised of public housing tenant leaders as well as various neighborhood stakeholders and housing officials. These groups should be charged with locating sites, marshalling community consensus, and designing plans for these new developments. Given the need to expand the administrative capacity of local public housing authorities, this recommendation calls for an additional $400 million in “Housing Administration Technical Assistance.”

Consequently, there is an extensive debate in cities such as New Orleans as to whether the HOPE VI “mixed-income” program, which calls for public housing demolition and limited construction, has been fairly applied to meet the widespread, unmet needs of the poorly housed. The federal government should revise existing HOPE VI statues and make an additional $8 million available to public housing tenants in the affected areas who want to appeal and revise current HOPE VI plans, when a majority of the former residents find these plans inconsistent with the needs of their low and moderate income communities. As a short term measure to provide those in desperate need of decent and affordable housing, we recommend the funding of an additional $20 billion in emergency housing vouchers. To assist persons in locating affordable rental housing and in the advocacy of housing rights, we likewise call for an added $120 million in Fair Housing Counseling & Landlord-Tenant Aid.

As much as there is a fundamental need for expanded rental housing, homeownership opportunities for low and moderate incomes families should be expanded along with an additional $8 billion allocation for the existing HOME Investment Partnership Program. In addition, community and economic development continues to lag in various parts of Katrina-affected communities; therefore, the addition of $8 billion should be made available in which Congress stipulates that 70 percent of these funds be targeted toward projects that directly benefit low and moderate income communities (as opposed to the current 50 percent threshold.) And to likewise increase the capacity-building of various community housing...
development organizations (CHDOs) the federal government should allocate an additional $80 million in grants.

The extremely successful YouthBuild program should receive $80 million in order to permit CHDOs to augment their efforts at housing rehabilitation while providing young people with important housing construction skills. Only half of all homeowners who have made claims to Louisiana’s “Road Home Program” have had their claims processed, and only a fraction of those have received grants. As a short-gap measure, we call for $8 billion in additional mortgage protection funds.

### Housing Proposal 2008-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Public Housing Planning &amp; Construction</td>
<td>$40,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOPE IV Program</td>
<td>$8,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOME Investment Partnership Program</td>
<td>$8,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development Block Grant</td>
<td>$8,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Housing Development Capacity</td>
<td>$80,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouthBuild</td>
<td>$80,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Rental Vouchers (250,000 vouchers)</td>
<td>$20,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Administration Technical Assistance</td>
<td>$400,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Housing Counseling &amp; Landlord-Tenant Aid</td>
<td>$120,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurricane Katrina Mortgage Protection Fund</td>
<td>$8,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$76,696,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Leadership Development

While human development can only be advanced if federal government assumes the mantle of leadership, we also stress the need for non-governmental organizations or more broadly “civil society” to be strengthened in its role as a fundamental, democratic participant in the process. Within the “community-building” or “capacity-building” literature the creation of
indigenous leadership development is a vital element in any effort at reducing poverty (Center for Social Inclusion 2007). Accepting this argument, it is difficult to imagine how any substantive human development gains along the Gulf Coast of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama can be maintained absent the full, participatory investment of grassroots leaders and non-profit organizations/service providers. This approach of direct government funding to non-profit organizations does not represent a radical departure from current policy trajectories, as the Bush administration’s support of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives provides a more recent example. More to the point, the role these groups play is in addition to and not as a surrogate or substitute for government involvement. All total, this leadership development proposal totals $5.4 billion; which should be enacted as a part of HUD budgets.

Towards the ends of encouraging various non-profit, philanthropic, and public agencies to continue existing neighborhood revitalization collaborations or to create new opportunities for community planning (all as partly funded by CDBG funds), the federal government should allocate $800 million for the creation of a Community Collaboration Grant program. There is a need to encourage local governments throughout the Gulf Coast to more deeply involve low and moderate income citizens in efforts at community revitalization. So, this recommendation also call for the creation of a $120 million “Citizen Leadership Program” whose expressed purpose is to subsidize existing groups or to help create “neighborhood planning councils” in communities with median incomes of 125 percent of the poverty level or less. The YouthBuild Program has enjoyed phenomenal success in providing young people with job-training. Likewise, a new $80 million YouthLead pilot program is necessary. Its purpose is to permit non-profit organizations to provide stipends to young people in low and moderate income Hurricane Katrina-affected communities and thus volunteer in after school leadership development and public service activities that positively shape this new generation of citizen leaders and provide alternatives to drugs and crime. The purpose of a $4 billion Volunteer Support Fund is to provide non-profit organizations operating in low and moderate income communities with 50 percent matching grants in their efforts to provide social services and revitalize Hurricane Katrina-affected neighborhoods. Lastly, the Non-Profit Technical Assistance Administration monies of $400 million should be made available to help local governments increase their administrative capacity in overseeing these new community participation and planning initiatives.

Leadership Development Proposal 2008-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Collaboration Grants</td>
<td>$800,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Leadership Program</td>
<td>$120,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouthLead Program</td>
<td>$80,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Support Fund</td>
<td>$4,000,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit Technical Assistance Administration</td>
<td>$400,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Catranis, Ted N, and Bernad H Eichold. 2006 Annual Report: Mobile County Health Department. Mobile, AL: Mobile County Health Department.


Hughes, Jerome. 2007. Hurricaned: Challenges for Families and Communities in Mobile County. The Initiative for Excellence, Development, & Equity. Paper read at Initiative for Regional and Community Transformation, at New Orleans, LA.

Johnson, Derrick. 2007. The Accountability Gap: Unanswered Questions Two Years Later, Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP.

Johnson, Derrick and Roland V. Anglin (eds.). 2006. Envisioning a Better Mississippi: Hurricane Katrina and Mississippi—One Year Later, Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP.


Micher, Theodore F. 2006. RE: "Grandfathering" of existing system located at 8701 Midway, Coden, AL. Coden, AL: Mobile County Health Department.


White, Harvey, and Jerome Hughes. 2006. Snapshots: A Preliminary Assessment of Community Economic Development Challenges in Mobile County, University of South Alabama. Center for Healthy Communities. Mobile, IL: The Community Foundation of South Alabama.


2 Fairclough, 1999, 469.

3 Mary Foster, “Katrina Victims Feel Trapped by Trailers: With No Replacement Housing, Those Displaced by Katrina Feel Trapped in FEMA Trailers,” Associated Press, August 5, 2007


7 Fund. 2007. BCKF State Grants ; Administration. 2007. Two Years of Rebuilding and Recovery in Alabama: FEMA Aid at $946 Million


10 Interviews with Bayou La Batre and Coden residents, July, 2007.


12 Ibid., at New Orleans. p. 120; Law. 2007. Neglected Needs of Low- and Moderate-Income Katrina Victim in the Unincorporated Communities of South Mobile County, edited by Bill Johnson.


15 Catranis and Eichold. 2006 Annual Report: Mobile County Health Department


17 Ibid, 110-111.


Coden, Alabama: A Case Study of Alabama’s Environmental Issues in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina. Paper read at Initiative for Regional and Community Transformation, at

20 Ibid, 112-113

21 Micher. 2006. RE: “Grandfathering” of existing system located at 8701 Midway, Coden, AL


23 Carter. 2007. Alabama Katrina Victim’s Desperate Unmet Needs: Two Years After Katrina. Paper read at Initiative for Regional and Community Transformation, at

24 Bettis. Ibid. State of Housing in Alabama: Pre and Post Hurricane Katrina, at 118; Carter. 2007. Alabama Katrina Victim’s Desperate Unmet Needs: Two Years After Katrina. Paper read at Initiative for Regional and Community Transformation, at 104


37 Zedlewski, 2006, 2.


53 Policy link, Louisiana: Analysis of development Trends, August 2007 http://www.policylink.org/Communities/Louisiana/NewOrleans.html#Analysis


Employment Issues and Challenges in Post-Katrina New Orleans
Author(s): Harry Holzer, Robert I. Lerman
Other Availability: PDF | Printer-Friendly Page
Posted to Web: February 10, 2006


Acknowledgements:
This report is based on research commissioned by American Human Development Project for the American Human Development Report, 2008-2009. The authors thank all of the individuals in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi who shared their time and perspectives.