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Faith Over Fear: A Hurricane Katrina Story: 18 Years Later

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Faith Over Fear:
A Hurricane Katrina Story: 18 Years Later

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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*This paper is dedicated to The City of New Orleans
and all the people who were displaced,
and/ or lost their lives as a result of Hurricane Katrina.*

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"A sister is a gift to the heart, a friend to the spirit, a golden thread to the meaning of life"

-Isadora James

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Introduction

Joshua, a 44 year old African American male was twenty-six at the time of the storm. He lived what he would consider a joyful life with his wife and two small children. Before the hurricane, he didn't have many worries, other than providing for his family. Once the storm occurred, Joshua as well as many other residents' lives flipped upside down. Joshua lost many family members, friends, and memories due to the large inflow of water into the city. "A disaster occurs when the hazard potential is realized, or a hazardous weather-related or physical event occurs that involves extensive social disruption and loss" (Arcaya, Raker, & Waters, 2020). Hurricane Katrina left thousands of people homeless and left a city many loved unrecognizable. Think about it, Joshua was fairly still young when Hurricane Katrina hit, and possibly trying to still figure out his everyday life just to be uprooted from everything he's ever known or loved. How would you feel if you were in Joshua's shoes on August 29th 2005? Joshua emphasizes, "I think...the one thing I take from Katrina is to never take any storm like that. If they say evacuate and leave I'm leaving...I try to keep money on the side or a credit card or some,...a reliable source of transportation to leave so I don't put myself in that position again." This project will be exploring the stories of New Orleans residents before, during, and after the Hurricane Katrina storm in order to give us some insight into the overarching question: Why did residents decide to return back to New Orleans after experiencing displacement for such a long period of time, as well as why and how people made different decisions around migration?

Throughout this paper, I will be examining the overarching long term effects New Orleans residents experienced after being displaced due to Hurricane Katrina. The main focus of this paper will be examining the lives of New Orleans residents before Hurricane Katrina made

landfall onto New Orleans, displacements of residents after the storm, and their process for returning back to the city. While Hurricane Katrina did affect two other major areas in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, this paper will only analyze different areas within New Orleans. Areas that were affected by the Hurricane Katrina storm include Orleans Parish, Plaquemines Parish, Jefferson Parish, St. Bernard St. Charles, and St. Tammany Parish. While all of these areas did receive impacts from the storm, this paper will focus specifically on areas within Orleans and Jefferson Parish. In order to examine these three categories closer, I have created four chapters, which will help outline and shape a better understanding of the residents experience's and evolving changes after the storm's occurrence. The first chapter, which is titled "Before the Storm," goes through the preparation orders or precautions taken by the residents, as well as mandated by the city. The second chapter, titled "The Storm's History: Why wasn't New Orleans Ready" provides background information about previous storms that impacted the city of New Orleans, and how their effects impacted New Orleans years later during Hurricane Katrina. Within this chapter, different participants elaborate on their experiences of Hurricane Katrina through the media, and how it is different from those who were stuck in the city during the hurricane.

The third chapter titled "After the Storm" starts off by examining the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and its negative effects for displaced residents. This chapter has four categories which are labeled as "Guilt", "Assistance/ Resources", "Stereotypes", and "Religion: Faith vs. Fear". The first section titled, "Guilt" starts off by examining the emotions of various participants. The second section titled, "Assistance/ Resources" dives deeper into the assistance and resources residents may have received after the storm, whether this is supported by the government or residents in other communities outside of New Orleans. The third section labeled

stereotypes talks about some of the personal negative experiences New Orleans residents experienced after displacement in other cities or states. Last but not least the fourth sections titled, “Religion: Faith vs. Fear” dives deeper into the participants' religious beliefs and how they were used in a time of struggle.

The last and final chapter titled, “Returning Home” evaluates two sections. The first section is labeled as “Life Differed” which dives deeper into what participants believed what they're life may have looked like if the Hurricane Katrina storm never occurred. The second category for this section is labeled as “Returning Home” which dives deeper into the different reasons residents decided to return back to New Orleans after experiencing displacement as well as migrants for a long period of time. With that being said, the overarching question for this paper is why did residents decide to return back to New Orleans after experiencing displacement for such a long period of time? In addition to the four chapters, there is also a framing section which allows the readers to better analyze and compare other storms such as Hurricane Galveston, Hurricane Harvey, and Hurricane Otis to Hurricane Katrina impacts, resulting in migration as well as displacement for numerous residents within these areas. A methods section follows which takes my readers through the process of creating the structure on this paper. A background section which travels deeper into the history of Hurricane Katrina, what happened, and why New Orleans residents traveled through their problems of displacement. Last but not least the conclusion wraps up the entire paper helping better understand the overarching question present once again: Why did residents decide to return back to New Orleans after experiencing displacement for such a long period of time?

Framing

Every year, numerous tropical storms occur within the city each year, with the possibility of becoming a hurricane but none of them compare to the long lasting impacts of Hurricane Katrina. While there are no storms exactly like Hurricane Katrina, I've found two storms that occurred prior to Hurricane Katrina, and one after that caused major effects towards many different cities, as well as presents the lack of government response before and after the storm. The three storm's I've chosen are Hurricane Harvey which affected Southeast Texas and Southwest Louisiana, Hurricane Galveston which affected Galveston, Texas, and Hurricane Otis which affected Acapulco, Mexico. Similar to New Orleans, all three of these hurricanes hit different cities around the world that weren't prepared for the storm's impact. Hurricanes play a major role and the restructuring of one's life as well as one's environment. Due to transformation, as well as intensive damages caused upon these cities, residents are forced to migrate into new environments. Due to the lack of preparation between the city and the government officials, residents have continued to be placed in dangerous situations, and uprooted from their homes. I've found that many scholars have noticed that leaders and government officials consistently underestimate storms, have no prior knowledge of an evacuation plan, and leave difficult decisions to the individuals. If government officials' jobs are to aid and protect the people, aren't they essentially failing their citizens? In addition, I believe residents decide to return home for various reasons, but one of the main reasons deals with the thoughts of having nowhere else to evacuate due to the lack of preparation prior to a storm's landfall.

I. Hurricane Galveston

Fifteen years prior to Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Galveston made landfall into Galveston, Texas on Saturday, September 8, 1900 as a category 4 storm. While Hurricane Galveston was a terrible storm, “In 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in part because of government negligence, but not a inability to accurately predict and communicate the storm’s path... but without functional emergency plans for mass evacuation, cities end up suffering from natural disasters- even if they can see them coming” (Little,2023). Hurricane Galveston was just one of many storms that caused thousands of residents to forcefully migrate from their homes, unfortunately losing everything. During this time, many residents along with the chief meteorologist of the U.S. Weather Bureau, Isaac Cline, did not believe a hurricane as bad as Hurricane Galveston could occur until it did and it was too late. At this time, The US Weather Bureau was in charge of relay data and weather reports received from Washington D.C when tracking storms. Leading up to the day of the storm

“The US Weather Bureau knew of the storm as early as Aug. 30. It drenched Cuba on Sept. 4. Cline received multiple storm reports that week, but amid a growing power struggle over who could issue storm warnings, the bureau chief in Washington D.C., downplayed Cuba reports that the hurricane was likely headed west. Without ship-to-shore communication, forecasters lost track of the storm just as it intensified in the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico and headed straight toward the Texas coast” (Zalzal, 2016).

Galveston Texas didn’t complete any protocol measured prior to the storm making landfall onto the city. There were eight days to call a mandatory evacuation, along with creating safety

precautions for those who possibly couldn't evacuate to protect the residents within the city. Instead no measures were taken, resulting in the killing of thousands of innocent lives, damaged home, and extreme flooding across the entire city. In addition, "Meteorologist Isaac Cline... [believed] it was impossible for any cyclone to...materialy injure the city" (Zalzal, 2016). As stated earlier, there were multiple storm reports, resulting in Hurricane Galveston hitting the city, but instead Issac Cline decided to ignore these reports to trust in his gut feeling that nothing would happen. He was extremely wrong. While a lot of the technology used around the 1900 wasn't as advanced as it is today, it was still very acute for those who read and followed them correctly. If meteorologist Issac Cline would have given better evacuation orders and believed hurricanes were something that could negatively affect thousands of people in Galveston, Texas this incident could have been prevented and saved a lot of innocent lives. Because of his faulty beliefs and in unreliable ways, thousands of people lose their lives, loved ones, memories, and homes.

Similar to Cline, many people believe "we knew a storm was coming, but we had no idea that it was as bad as it was." (Burnett, 2017). At 4am, there started to be noticed of the storm actions upon Galveston, and as the day went on the water in flow from the beach, along with the rain increased, along with the heavy winds began towering over the city. "By 2:00pm the winds exceeded 50 miles per hour and the Gulf storm surge flooded the city" eventually causing buildings to collapse as well as endangering the lives of many residents. (Thiesen, 2023). At this time, the storm was already too close to the city, and people were unable to evacuate to safer environments. Their only hope was to buckle down in their homes and hope for the best. Around 4-5pm, "by early Saturday evening, the anemometer at Galevston's Weather Bureau registered over 100 miles per hour before a wind gust tore it off the roof of the building. Weather Bureau

officials estimated that the sustained wind speed had increased to 120 miles per hour ” (Thiesen, 2023). The storm began to reach unsustainable winds, resulting in the entire city being submerged in water up to many residents waist to chin levels reaching up to 10 feet in some area, therefore endangering many of those who stayed behind.

For those who stayed behind in the storm, the storm was described as “like a thousand little devils shrieking and whistling, of 6-foot waves coming down Broadway Avenue, of a grand piano riding the crest of one”(Burnett, 2017). This storm was frightening and dangerous for many residents. Many residents experienced the fear of building tearing apart piece by piece from the strong winds as they flew through the air, as well as seeing loved ones drown from the intense amount of water in the city or struck and killed by large pieces of timber flying in the air. While the city had previous storms that were frightening in the city, Hurricane Galveston was the worst storm to ever hit this area Galveston, Texas. This may be the result of the unpreparedness of the city. Since the city had never had a storm this powerful before, residents along with the mediologist underestimate it, and possibly may not have known how to prepare for a storm as powerful as this one. The “Weather Bureau officials recorded an instantaneous rise in water level of four feet in Galveston. Experts estimate that wind speeds that night likely reached 150 miles per hour with wind gusts up to 200” (Thiesen, 2023). With wind intensity that high along with water levels, there was no way people could survive out a storm as bad as this one. Many people died during this storm, found but not identified, along with 3,600 buildings being destroyed (Little, 2023). At this rate the city and those who remained in it would be forced to start from scratch and build something out of absolutely nothing. There was a negative image replayed over and over for those who survived where their loved one and those unidentified layed.

In addition, the “estimates of the death toll ranged from 6,000 to 12,000, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. Tragically, the magnitude of the disaster could’ve been lessened if the U.S. The Weather Bureau hadn’t implemented such poor communication policies”(Little, 2023). Hurricane Galveston was a storm that very much could have been prevented if The Weather Bureau had better communicated with the discussion of the status of the hurricane overall, as well as the citizens. While there was nothing that could prevent the actions of the storm occurring especially see there was an “estimated tidal surge of 15 feet”, damaging the city and many homes, precautions could have definitely been made to protect the citizens during this time (Burnett, 2017). If it wasn’t for the faulty decisions of The Weather Bureau, thousands of people during this time would have still been alive.

As a result, many people during this time experienced forced migration, along with displacements from their homes, since there was absolutely nothing to come back to. The city was surrounded by dead bodies and debris that later led to the reconstruction of the city over time. “Many of those buried at sea washed back to shore. Afraid of disease outbreaks and desperate to get rid of the stench, residents lit fires at several sites in the city to function as funeral pyres, which burned for weeks.”(Zalzal, 2016). While many may have not wanted to get rid of their loved ones, as well as the unknown bodies, residents were stuck in a situation to figure out what left to do to move on with their lives after what was considered a horrible and tragic situation. The residents worked together to help rebuild the city, and things started to come back up and running on August 12th, four days after Hurricane Galveston hit. On August 15th, “by Saturday, at least one mule-drawn streetcar was operating, and electricity had been restored to a few homes and stores” (Weatherwise, 2000). Along with this, the city made a decision to build a seawall that stretches nearly 17 kilometers and raise the entire city 3 meters off the

ground in hopes of protecting the city in future cases if a storm like Hurricane Galveston was to ever occur again. The implementation of the sea wall, along with raising the entire city did in fact protect the city from future storms. Furthermore, while Hurricane Galveston impacted many lives through displacement, death, and homelessness, the city's long recovery was nowhere near as disruptive as Hurricane Katrina.

II. Hurricane Harvey

Twelve years after Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Southeast Texas as well as Southwest Louisiana as a Category 4 storm on August 25th 2017. Hurricane Harvey once again was one of many storms that caused intense damages to a city many loved and considered home. While the Hurricane Harvey storm didn't cause much damage to the city, the infrastructure of the levee system did. Similar to New Orleans, the infrastructure of the levee system deconstructing, as well as the faulty mandate and preparation orders given by the government caused thousands of people to be placed in a life threatening situation. Hurricane Harvey constructed the same path Hurricane Katrina did, and twelve years later experienced a lot of the same negative effects. Once again the government didn't follow in their goal to protect aid the people in the time of disaster.

The Hurricane Harvey storm sustained winds of 115 kt, surpassing 130 mph. While Hurricane Harvey impacted both different areas with Texas and Louisiana, this paper will only focus on San Jose Island, and Rockport, Texas. Hurricane Harvey was a very unexpected storm many residents were prepared for. There was no mandatory evacuation called for the city,

because the city was prepared to only withstand large amounts of rainfall. At the time, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner encouraged people not to evacuate, and stay put within their homes. “Houston officials say their decision not to call for evacuation was influenced by the fact that they were looking at a rain event.” (Domonoske, 2017) There were no expectations for high winds or storm surge, therefore the Mayor at the time believed there was no need to put residents in greater danger by leaving their home if they were only looking for rain. In addition, Mayor Turner believed by calling a mandatory evacuation order it would create more chaos on the road for everyone to get out of the city, so he didn't. “You literally cannot put 6.5 million people on the road, Mayor Turner said Sunday, explaining his decision not to call for evacuations. If you think the situation right now is bad, you give an order to evacuate, you are creating a nightmare.” (Domonoske, 2017) In addition, he questioned how difficult it would be to evacuate those who didn't have the means to leave, and where would they go? Also if the storm only caused flooding, he believed it would be more dangerous for residents to be stuck on the road with flooding rather than protected in their safe homes. Why encourage residents to leave if the storm won't be that bad?

While Mayor Turner discouraged residents from evacuating, Gov. Greg Abbott opposed this statement by encouraging people to evacuate, and shelter along with resources will be provided for the residents. In the end most residents decided to listen to the Mayor and stay, unfortunately not being aware of the danger they would later be in. When Hurricane Harvey made landfall, “Harvey ended up stalling over south Texas for about 12 to 14...The storm's slow movement meant that bands of heavy rainfall remained in place, leading to the catastrophic flooding currently submerging homes, businesses and roads” (Weisberger, 2017) By the storm sitting in one spot for a long period of time, it caused way more damage than residents expected.

In the case of Hurricane Katrina, the storm moved relatively quickly and out of the way. The storm “dumped up to 60 inches of rain on southeast Texas” total causing many neighborhood homes to flood, resulting in many residents losing everything. (Mulligan, 2018) Many residents were placed in a life-threatening situation due to the fault calls from the mayor. This mistake has caused residents to become very hesitant when listening to the government, seeing that their job is to protect the citizens of Texas.

While Hurricane Harvey caused a large amount of damage to Texas due to its intense rainfall, along with strong wind surge of “130 mph winds,” the state also experienced a levee breaching (Cobler, 2018). For many residents this problem puts them more at risk, seeing that the storm has already created large amounts of damage. Many residents lost many of their personal belongings, homes, and memories during this event in the flood water. “In the case of the greater Houston, the levee system is used to control the flooding of the Brazos River in Fort Bend County, Texas. The levee system was initially constructed in 1913,” and over time has to continue to be improved to protect residents within the area (McGowan, 2020). Over time the levees tend to change in height due to different forms of weather which may impact the protection residents may receive from the levee system. Scott McGowan highlights the “500-year flood zones were exceeded and two flood control reservoirs in the Houston area were breached” (McGowan, 2020). Some residents felt the breaching of the levees were the result of not only the government's problem but also blamed the Army Corps of Engineers for their failure to protect residents in their time of need. This is the exact problem that occurred in the New Orleans Hurricane Katrina storm, which makes many question why the system wasn't updated. The hurricane itself didn't cause much damage to the city. The infrastructure of the levee system

not continuously being updated, as well as the faulty mandate of the government caused thousands of many people to be forcefully displaced.

After the levees were breached many were encouraged to leave if they could but for many this was somewhat difficult. The “effect of the surge and tide produced maximum inundation level of 6 to 10 ft above ground level to the north and east of Harvey’s center landfalls in Texas in the back bays between Port Aransas and Matagorda, including Copano Bay, Aransas Bay, San Antonio Bay, and Matagorda Bay” (Blake & Zelinsky, 2018) making difficult for many residents to evacuate within these areas. While Hurricane Harvey didn’t experience as many casualties as Hurricane Katrina, they did experience many of the same life long impacts causing residents to become displaced and restart their lives. Furthermore, Hurricane Harvey “storm’s damage was both a natural and man-made disaster” (Mulligan, 2018). Due to the city’s lack of preparation to evacuate residents from a dangerous environment prior to the storm, destruction of the levees system resulting in water inflowing into low line areas, and large amounts of rainfall pouring into the city, Hurricane Harvey was considered both a natural and man-made disaster. While some measures could have been prevented to better protect residents, the city chose a different path ultimately putting thousands of residents' lives at risk. Furthermore, Hurricane Harvey was very similar to what Hurricane Katrina did to the infrastructure of the levee system deconstructing causing water to inflow into the city, along with the horrible preparation order given to evacuate residents outside the city.

III. Hurricane Otis

Eighteen years after Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Otis made landfall near Acapulco, Mexico southern pacific coast as a category 5 storm at 165 miles per hour on Wednesday,

October 25, 2023. While Hurricane Otis differs from the Hurricane Katrina storm because the deconstruction of a levee system causing an inflow of water onto the city, Hurricane Otis effects after the storm were very similar. Similar to Hurricane Katrina, residents in Acapulco, Mexico lost many of their homes, loved ones, and memories due to the lack of preparation or evacuation orders announced by government officials. While Hurricane Katrina is a unique case that can be somewhat hard to connect to other situations, eighteen years later, it's clear to see many residents are still being affected by the same problems. The government's failure to give proper aid in protecting the people inside and outside of New Orleans has once again placed thousands of residents in danger.

Hurricane Otis was the strongest storm to ever make landfall in this region of Mexico, resulting in the destruction of many homes and lives. While this storm was a very heavy wind driven storm, similar to Hurricane Galveston and Hurricane Harvey as mentioned above, Acapulco did receive large amounts of flooding and mudslides as well. When observing the storm path, meteorologist notices "because the storm intensified so quickly, with wind speeds increasing by 115 mph with 24 hours," created very little time for residents to prepare for the monstrous storm before it made landfall onto Acapulco. (Department of Commerce, 2023) There was no time for residents to make evacuation plans, as well as the mediologist to give notice for residents to leave the city or look for high protective shelter. Similar to the Hurricane Galveston storm, residents had to buckle down in their homes or what they considered safe environments and hope for the best.

The storm caused extreme damages to structural buildings such hotels and businesses, "as well as [impacted the environment resulting in] drowned trees, severe flooding, and mudslides" (Department of Commerce, 2023). The intense destruction onto the city caused numerous

problems for residents who survived after the storm such as lack of necessities including no food, water, or additional resources. With this being said, railroad tracks, the Acapulco International Airport and “existing roads were completely destroyed. The town had been cut off for over a week,” seeing that the city received extreme amounts of damage trapping all residents inside and those who may have been visiting in Acapulco after the storm’s horrible impacts (Smith, 2023). These damages prevented crews from traveling into the city to provide aid and other resources to the residents impacted in Acapulco.

Acapulco also had a hard time receiving funding in some cases because a year ago prior to the storm, the president pushed for budget cuts across the federal government. “By law, the fund received 0.4 percent of Mexico’s federal budget every year, and if the money went unspent, then it rolled into the next year. Now the country no longer had a regulated percent of the federal budget meant for disaster relief. Instead, the budget is revised every year and fluctuates based on other priorities”(Cantu, Mega, & Kanno-Youngs, 2023). Due to the government's decision to fluctuate the city’s budget, the town unfortunately wasn’t financially prepared or equipped for a storm such as Hurricane Otis, seeing that the funds were placed for other means. Thomas Graham highlights the horrible position many residents are currently in when he says, “no one has insurance or a plan B”. (Graham, 2023) Furthermore, the government essentially played a role in the endangerment of the residents prior to the storm occurring.

It took around a week for the Mexican Red Cross to respond and provide aid, while “more than 1,600 people remain in shelter in both Acapulco and Coyuca de Benitez” (Department of Commerce 2023). Within this week of no assistance from the government resulting in residents suffering from the lack of power resources, clean drinking water, and food. Many people survived the storm, although there was a bigger fear around residents having

“Diarrhea [that] could kill more people than the hurricane due to the lack of oral rehydration salts and drinkable water in the area” (Smith, 2023). People are suffering and have no assistance or resources to help them survive during these harsh conditions. Noah Smith highlights that “the time after a natural disaster is oftentimes more deadly than the disaster itself,” because residents have no resources to help make it through the next few days within horrible conditions (Smith, 2023). While residents in Acapulco may have endeavored the horrible rocky conditions during the storm, they are left confused during the next steps of survival after the storm's conclusion.

As a result of this problem, many residents were looting stores in the city to provide for their families. “Residents could be seen carrying necessities - bags of food, toilet paper and mattresses - through waist-deep flooded streets. Some people carried boxes of beer and alcohol out of a convenience store, and one group of men hoisted a safe” (Cantu, Mega, & Kanno-Youngs, 2023). Looting is something that can be portrayed in a very negative and positive way. For some residents they’re making the decision to support their families by taking food, water, and other necessities to help with their survival since there is no means of getting money or assistance at this time. On the other hand, some looters decide to take unnecessary things, such as a safe for the satisfaction of it, which unfortunately creates labels and negative stereotypes for all those negatively affected as a whole.

Hurricane Otis has caused many unfortunate deaths that people weren’t prepared for. After the storm it’s been concluded so far “at least 58 people are still missing, according to the Mexican government. Among the missing are 18 foreign nationals, including 11 American,” [as well as a number for fisherman and boat crews at sea] a week later (El-Bawab, & Finnegan, 2023). Hurricane Otis is a very recent storm that occurred this year, so the government, along with many search teams are most likely still determining these numbers so they are unfortunately

not final. In addition to the number of missing individuals, “46 people have been confirmed dead” thus far, but some speculate if the government's numbers are accurate (El-Bawab, & Finnegan, 2023). Once again these numbers are most likely still being determined, but this is 46 people so far who were prepared for the outcomes of Hurricane Otis due to the meteorologists faulty preparation for the storm’s rapid intensity, these residents didn’t survive.

Furthermore, author Nadline El-Bawab and Conor Finnegan summarize in her article by highlighting that while Hurricane Otis was terrible “it wasn’t that bad for us because when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, there were 2,000 deaths”(El-Bawab, & Finnegan, 2023). While the impacts after the storm were very similar to New Orleans Hurricane Katrina’s storm due to it’s long lasting destruction of homes as well as the overall environment, Acapulco, Mexico’s Hurricane Otis storm experienced nowhere near as many deaths as Hurricane Katrina caused. In addition, both cities experienced a lack of preparation as well as a lack of assistance preparation even though they’re situations were very different, they were left with harsh impacts to the city that will be hard to recover from somewhat similar impacts. Hurricane Otis is another example of what continues to occur every year in cities all over the world that aren’t prepared for storms when it becomes close to a time of endangerment.

While these hurricanes are very similar to Hurricane Katrina aftermath in the forms of financial struggles, the lack of emergency funding for survivors, forced migration, and the lack of preparation, there is no storm that can compare to the effects New Orleans residents experienced after Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Galveston, Hurricane Harvey, and Hurricane Otis are three storms that all experienced similar long term effects as Hurricane Katrina. While the recovery in some cases may not have been as severe as Hurricane Katrina, its impact caused long term displacement and migration for thousands of residents. Many people experienced the

destruction of homes, neighborhoods, and death of many lives. The conditions of these storms made what many people recognized as home unlivable and weren't able to return back for months, possibly years. With each storm that causes destruction, there seems to be some form of blame present, seeing that these storms possibly could have been prevented if the correct measures were taken. Every year cities around the world continue to get hit by hurricanes due to the lack of some form of preparation that can be prevented, although those in high authority choose not to. These decisions result in the changing of the neighborhood as well as its demographics in a very quick span of time. Furthermore, while many storms are horrible and seem to experience somewhat horrible conditions just as bad as Hurricane Katrina, they haven't. Hurricane Katrina is a very unique storm that cannot be compared due to its lack of effective preparation, along with the improper infrastructure of the levee system killing thousands of residents and displacing thousands of others.

Hurricane Katrina, as well as the many other storms discussed within this paper caused lifelong damages, which resulted in forced migration. The main reason in which residents are forced to migrate deals with the lack of preparation and orders given by government officials prior to a storm's landfall. Disasters cause migration which "one cannot predict which specific individuals will be affected and when," although the government can create preparation orders and follow proper evacuation procedures in order to protect residents (Arcaya, Raker, & Waters, 2020). In the case of Hurricane Katrina and many other storms, there were no preparations orders prior to the storm making landfall due to the government's failure to announce preparation orders as well as an evacuation plan. Many residents were placed in dangerous situations, resulting in their forced migration. In addition, the impacts of the storm determine "the need to differentiate between short- and long- term recovery trajectories, and (c) the changing role of government and

how it has exacerbated inequality in recovery and created feedback loops that create greater vulnerability” (Arcaya, Raker, & Waters, 2020). While residents who experience Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Otis may have endeavored horrible effects after the storm, their recovery time may have been much shorter than residents who experienced Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Galveston seeing that these residents also dealt with the deconstruction of the levee system. Migration can be defined as “displacement, forced movement for people from their places of residence due to climate-related disaster; [as well as the] relocation (also referred to as resettlement, retreat, realignment), permanent movement of infrastructure and people away from hazards and settlement into a new location”(McMichael, 2020). While migration can be considered either done forcefully or voluntarily, when there are no proper evacuation procedures announced, it automatically becomes forced. Furthermore, “Climate events do not cause mobility, but rather it is prompted by associated effects such as loss in land productivity, disrupted livelihood, food and water insecurity, and reduced habitability of place.”(McMichael, 2020) Hurricanes typically make it very difficult to return back home for many residents due to the destruction on one’s land. With this being the case, some residents have found the decision to return back home tends to be much easier if they have something to come back to, whereas for others this may differ.

Scholars have found that the main reason residents return back home after hurricanes depends on the destruction presented within their homes location. Anne Polivka emphasizes “an individual’s decision to return depends on the individual’s stock of locations-specific capital before the storm, the degree in which the stock was destroyed by the storm, and the extent to which location-specific capital can be restored” (Poliva, 2010). If an individual’s home is considered somewhat liveable or able to be reconstructed, residents are more likely to return

back to their damages. Another reason residents decide to return home is based on their feeling towards the environment of the home before migrating. If a resident considers themselves to have a strong attachment to their post damaged environment, they may consider returning home. Anne Plivka once again highlights “to the extent that evacuees are tied to their pre-Katrina areas by a sense of place and cannot reconstitute this elsewhere, they will want to return” (Poliva, 2010). These two reasons help evaluate the question I asked previously within this paper: why did residents decide to return back to the city of New Orleans after displacement for such a long period of time.

Methods

In October of 2002, I became a New Orleans resident. It wasn't until three years later did the 2005 Hurricane Katrina storm occur. I personally don't remember the storm or its effects since I was so young, although many family and friends always talked about the ways in which the storm negatively affected their lives and how life may have been different. Many residents were forced to stay away for long periods of time, forced to start over from within unknown areas. In order to find out more about these experiences, I conducted research along with interviews to learn more about the way in which Hurricane Katrina residents were displaced due to the storm, their evacuation process, and returning process. I interviewed eleven participants, and compared their answers to the research and data found to analyze their differences in personal experiences to factual evidence.

After my first semester of conducting research, I was left with a story pertaining to Hurricane Katrina that didn't necessarily make sense as far as timelines and dates. The story seemed to be missing guidelines for what happened prior to the storm, and ways in which the city as well as residents prepared for the storm. While many articles I analyzed spoke about the breaching of the levee system, there weren't many details to how this event occurred and why residents were left in the situation they were in after Hurricane Katrina's landfall. While I was able to find important events for the storm such as the date of impact and aftermath, there was no evidence located as to the cause of the August 29th 2005 storm. Due to this confusion, I decided to interview people to hopefully connect the clues of missing evidence for the story of Hurricane Katrina.

Over the Summer break, I conducted interviews with eleven participants. Ten out of the

eleven identified as African American while the other one identified as white, as well as ages ranging from 11 being the youngest and 41 being the oldest during the storm. Eight out of the total eleven participants also evacuated the city before Hurricane Katrina made landfall onto New Orleans, while the other three, identified as Jackson, Malik, and Joshua experienced Hurricane Katrina in the city. During the time of the storm, New Orleans had a very large population of African Americans who were affected by the storm which may have possibly affected the interviewing population. This decision to interview mostly African Americans was done without previous consideration. I interviewed African American low-income neighborhoods that were mostly affected in New Orleans by the Hurricane Katrina storm. In addition, the majority of my participants are represented in the low income bracket due to their current jobs, personal struggles, or issues with employment reflected from the 2005 storm. Residents who were adults around the age of thirty or older during the time of the storm, seem to endeavor more financial problems now resulting in the placement of lower brackets incomes, whereas those who were young around the ages of twenty and younger are experiencing less financial problems and are in higher income brackets. This may be due to the effect of displacement, as well as forced migration due to the effects of the Hurricane Katrina storm.

Throughout my interviews I asked a series of questions regarding my participants' first thoughts or emotions towards Hurricane Katrina, how their lives were impacted after the storm, and reasons for residents deciding to return back to New Orleans after their harsh displacement. Each of my participants gave detailed stories referencing their lives before, during, and after the Hurricane Katrina storm. While explaining their experience some participants became emotional and questioned why Hurricane Katrina had to affect their lives in such a negative way, resulting in many residents still working to recover from the storm til this day.

Below is a chart of the eleven participants interviewed. The chart is broken down into nine categories that displays important information about each participant prior to and after the storm's impacts. The first six categories include the participants name, age, race/ ethnicity, gender, income, and where the resident resided prior to the storm. The seventh category included where the participant evacuated to and for how long. The eighth category gives some insight to if the participant experienced the Hurricane Katrina storm in the city or if the evacuated prior to the storm's landfall, as well as their occupation. The final category states where the participant currently resides as of this year.

Table 1: Summary of Interview Participants

Participants Name	Age	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Income	Life Before the Storm	Displaced for how long until returned back and where	Experienced the storm in the city and Occupation during the storm	Currently Resides
Jackson	46	Black, African American	Male	46,000	New Orleans, LA (Gentilly)	Baton Rouge: A year or so	In the city, Sheriff	New Orleans, LA
Malik	50	Black, African	Male	27,000	New Orleans, LA	Arkansas (Seven	In the city Unemployed	New Orleans, LA

		American			(MidCity)	months- 1 year)		
Jean	48	Black, African American	Female	46,000	New Orleans, LA (Algiers)	Jonesville Louisiana (August 2006- 1 year)	IEvacuated, East Jefferson Hospital	New Orleans, LA
Katie	56	Black, African American	Female	12,500	Gretna Louisiana (In New Orleans)	Baton Rouge -> Texas (About 3 years)	Evacuated Medical, Unemployed	New Orleans, LA
Cassidy	41	White	Female	75,000 (Househ old)	Algiers Point (In New Orleans)	Baton Rouge (October - for a weekend, permanently December)	Evacuated, College Student	New Orleans, LA
Aniyah	53	Black, African American	Female	82,000	Uptown New Orleans, LA	Texas -> Baton Rouge (Two months &	Evacuated, State of Louisiana	New Orleans, LA

						two weeks)		
Mia	47	Black, African American	Female	27,000	New Orleans, LA (Gentilly)	Baton Rouge (Didn't say maybe a year)	Evacuated, (Didn't say)	New Orleans, LA (Westbank)
Joshua	44	Black, African American	Male	75,000	New Orleans East	In the city Layfayette -> Lake Charles (Roughly Two Weeks)	In the City, Unloaded Ship Carcage	Terrytown, (In New Orleans, LA)
Michelle	61	Black, African American	Female	Rather Not Say	Downtown, New Orleans, LA	Memphis Tennessee -> Baton Rouge (Didn't say couple maybe to a year)	Evacuated, Childcare	Downtown, New Orleans, LA
Zaniyah	29	Black, African American	Female	72,000	MidCity	Houston Texas (About six	Evacuated, Middle School	Westbank -> Houston, Texas

						months)		
John	30	Black, African American	Male	150,000	Downtown, New Orleans, LA	Tennessee-> Baton Rouge (November - 3 months)	Evacuated, Middle School	Downtown, Houston Texas

After conducting interviews I was left with a source of blame from the results of Hurricane Katrina. Many residents argued against the factors of how the storm damaged the city, and who was to blame for the disorder preparation as well as coverage for the city. Some argue the infrastructure of the levee system wasn't properly built, and maintained over the years by the Army Corps of Engineers therefore causing the levees to erupt, pouring water into the city. Others argue there was a potential bombing of the levees to protect specific neighborhoods in New Orleans. After research and conducting interviews, I was left with the conclusion that the Army Corps of Engineers didn't keep up with the infrastructure of the levee system causing it to erupt. As a result, "damage due to high winds and storm surge in significant devastation, but flooding largely resulted from breached levees and flood walls, after the greatest number of people, with much of New Orleans flooded." (Collier, Balakrishnan, & Zha, 2020) While this is my conclusion, there are many conspiracy theories to what may actually occur, but like one of my participants Michelle stated, "one of these days we might be all dead and gone, somebody gon tell the real story of what happened."

For my final semester, I transcribed all my interviews, and looked for patterns between my participants' responses. I started off by finding responses that aligned with one another and

created categories based on their responses. Majority if not all my participants spoke about a variety of emotions after the storm which form the guilt category. Each participant was asked about resources or assistance they receive if any, which created the Assistance/ Resource category. Throughout each participant's interview they shared some form of relationship with their religious beliefs, which created the Religion category. These are just some of the many categories that will be discussed throughout this paper as well as how they were constructed.

Background

In 1717, The Mississippi Levee system was created, but unfortunately wasn't designed properly for its original goal. The Levee system was originally constructed to prevent continuous flooding from occurring. In 1927 a horrible flood occurred, creating the "1928 Flood Control Act, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers" to begin construction upon the present Mississippi River levee system the following year. On September 9, 1965 Hurricane Betsey made landfall as a category 4 storm to New Orleans, Louisiana. The storm caused horrible flooding in multiple areas of the city due to "the overtopping and breaches of levees and floodwalls" along the canal. Thirty Eight years later, the Flood Control Act of 1965 allowed Congress to give direct order to "the Army Corps of Engineers to protect New Orleans." In doing so, they were responsible for designing a hurricane-proof structure that would prevent water from flooding the city. Two models were presented for the construction of the levee system. The SLOTH model and the ADCIRC model. Neither of these models were equipped for protecting the city, seeing that they were built below the ideal breach level. Hurricane Katrina reached five feet, but the design was built to equip one to two feet, which the Army Corps of Engineers were well informed of. Katrina was the failure of a "man-made" project and "could have been prevented." The 1965 project couldn't "legally pass responsibility for major maintenance" problems, therefore upgrades couldn't be created for the improvements of the levees (Heerden 2007). This is a man-made problem simply stuck in its original situation. Still till this day, New Orleans suffers from multiple flooding problems, which seems to be the Army Corps of Engineers fault.

The levee system has unfortunately put more people at risk, rather than serving its job to protect the people due to faulty construction errors. One of the main problems when thinking

about Hurricane Katrina was the levees couldn't withhold the stand of the water. The levee was constructed to withhold small storm surges, rather than its original goal to withhold hurricanes. So much water entered the city, "parts of New Orleans were under 10 feet of water within an hour of the first breached levee" (Cigler 2007). This would've never occurred if the levees were constructed properly for its original purpose. When thinking about the problems of water, the levee system isn't the only one. While the levees are created to prevent large amounts of water from flowing into the city, the city must also "run pumping stations to remove water from its storm sewer system into draining canals" from the slightest rainstorms. The city's pumping system is another reason for horrible results from the Hurricane Katrina storm. The pumping system failed during the Hurricane Katrina storm, because the pumps "lost power, cooling water, or that were untended could not pump out rain" causing it to sit in place and build up until overtopping homes, restaurants, and schools (O'Neill 2008). For many residents who decided to stay in the city when Hurricane Katrina occurred, the failure of the levees resulted in many people evacuating to their attics or roofs for safety. "Due to the city's social and economic composition, the storm impacted heavily on the poor and African American" community. (Collier, Balakrishnan, & Zha, 2020) If the levees were originally constructed correctly to protect residents, specifically majority African American low income neighborhoods in New Orleans from large category storms, New Orleans never would have endeavored such horrible water damage. This is a long term problem continuing to collect in thousands of dollars as the years pass by.

The levee system was originally constructed to withstand a category 3 storm, therefore wasn't prepared for Hurricane Katrina storm winds surge and intense rain. If the construction of the levee system is meant to protect residents from not experiencing structural migrants, the

levees should be created to protect different forms of destruction upon the city. The damage caused to the city of New Orleans on August 29th reveals that the system failed to do its job, especially seeing that Hurricane Betsy was a category 4 storm which was 40 years prior to Hurricane Katrina. This was more than enough time for New Orleans to produce a more effective and efficient storm plan to protect the city.

Chapter 1:

Before the Storm: Preparation

Prior to the Hurricane Katrina storm, many people didn't prepare for the storm's impacts, because they unfortunately didn't know it would occur. This problem resulted in a variety of additional problems, although the main reason was due to the government's lack of preparation for the citizens of New Orleans. Since the government didn't have a prior evacuation plan as well as announced proper protocol for evacuating the city in the case of a storm such as Hurricane Katrina, many residents were left to fend for their own. The government failed their responsibility to protect thousands of citizens resulting in the death of many lives. If the government handled this situation differently, the results of this storm and its impacts may have played out differently.

In 2005, New Orleans classified the Hurricane Katrina storm as a Natural Disaster. While some may argue against this, others may say otherwise. A natural disaster is a storm that throws off the everyday life patterns of a city and its residents. This event occurs when something horrible and detrimental causes many catastrophes, hazardous environments, and destroys the area or environment in which someone resides. A natural disaster also leaves behind the damages in which it caused within the area. (Griffin, Lachlan, Spence 2007). There are many examples of what can be considered a natural disaster such as hurricanes, tropical storms, landslides, debris flow, tornadoes, flooding, and droughts. If not some, all of these things occurred within the New Orleans Hurricane Katrina storm of 2005.

While all of these events can occur on their own within the environment, they can also occur with the factors of individual impacts. Hurricane Katrina left behind detrimental impacts

due to the storm winds being extremely high ranging from 135-175 miles per hour, also creating a storm surge of 20-25 feet (Brunsmas et al 2016). Along with this, “Katrina breached the levee system that protected New Orleans, submerging large areas of the city”, and endangering many residents who decided to stay behind for the storm to pass (Bell et al. 2008). The flood water “submerged 80% of the city”, towering over many homes, schools, and businesses (Fussell 2010). Many residents described life after Hurricane Katrina as a sunny normal day, of course with some damages here and there, but their main argument consists of the deconstruction of the levee system, causing water to flood the city in the matter of hours. In addition, many residents also agreed that they did not hear evacuation orders or heard a lack of instructions for the storm (Fussell, 2015). This being, there seems to be a much bigger issue dealing with the government authority to protect its people on the rise of life threatening issues.

Due to the lack of preparation from most residents and overall knowledge of the storm, it's clear that residents didn't leave for numerous reasons. One of these reasons includes transportation resources not being accessible and residents leaving the city with the expectation that residents wouldn't be away from their homes for very long. Hurricane Katrina was a storm believed to have “failed the weakest and most vulnerable in New Orleans.” People who most likely weren't able to evacuate were “nondrivers, children, the disabled, the homeless, the sick and the elderly” seeing that they were considered weak or vulnerable (Bullard 2008). With that being said, evacuation for these groups of individuals seemed extremely hard or almost impossible leading to the endangerment of these residents most likely being stuck in the city when the storm occurred. Those who identified within the poverty bracket or vulnerable population within New Orleans possibly didn't have transportation prior to the storm to evacuate, therefore “in order to evacuate from the storm, these households would have been dependent on

other nonresident family members, friends, neighbors, or public or specially arranged transportation” (Collier, Balakrishnan, & Zha, 2020). Therefore, endangering those who unfortunately didn’t have the means to evacuate the city prior to the storm’s landfall.

Once again while many will argue Katrina was classified as a Natural Disaster storm, others will say this was a man-made disaster due to not only the infrastructure of the levee system but also the city’s pumping system dysfunctioning. Mayor Ray Nagin at the time of the storm seemed to have warned residents the “levees weren’t equipped to handle a major storm” a year before Hurricane Katrina occurred during a previous storm, Hurricane Ivan (LeMalle 2006). The levee system was originally equipped to handle a category 3 storm. Unlike Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Ivan was considered a category 3 storm, so it wouldn’t have done much damage seeing that the levees were built to withstand its destruction. While a natural disaster is fully an environmental problem, some things, such as reconstruction and development to the levee system can be enforced to prevent further or worsened problems.

After Hurricane Katrina occurred, the storm was described as something that was devastating. It’s something many people didn’t expect to happen, leaving them confused and hopeless. Aniyah, a 54 year old black African American woman starts off my saying, “let me just put that out there, no intentions on evacuating because prior to Hurricane Katrina, I think there was a Hurricane maybe a couple months before that that was supposed to come to New Orleans but it did but it was like oh not as bad as people thought it was gonna be.” Aniyah goes on to highlight how her father “had been in New Orleans for every hurricane that had umm came prior to that all his life so he never evacuated then.” Aniyah’s father, similar to many other residents, decided not to leave the comfort of their own homes, spending unnecessary money just to return back within a couple of days. Cassidy, a 42 year old white female evacuated before the storm

made landfall. Like many others she debated on leaving for the storm, but believed nothing was going to occur and made the decision to stay. It wasn't until Cassidy's mother convinced her otherwise did she finally leave prior to the storm. Cassidy agrees with Aniyah by highlighting residents of New Orleans "really didn't believe hurricanes were ever going to be something that I mean we had them, we dealt with them but until Katrina I never evacuated so for umm twenty-two years before that and my parents had never evacuated. They'd been in New Orleans for twenty years before I was born." Hurricanes for the city of New Orleans were nothing out of the ordinary the residents experienced, so the choice to stay behind was normal. For different reasons such as personal income, transportation, work, and family, many people decided not to travel out of the city to unknown places for what was believed to be only a short period of time.

On August 26th, three days before the storm occurred, Governor Kathleen Blanco declared a state of emergency at 11pm. for all residents to evacuate the city. The next day, August 27th the storm was not only expected to be a category 4 storm, but the "National Hurricane Center Director Max Mayfield advised New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin to order a mandatory evacuation. At 5:00 PM Nagin declared a state of emergency and issued a voluntary evacuation order." (Litt 2008). Finally, Nagin returned to his audience once again at 11 a.m. to announce a mandatory evacuation as well as establish ten shelters along with the Superdome for individuals who couldn't evacuate as a last resort option (Litt 2008). With that being said, New Orleans residents were only given two days between August 26th and the actual day of the storm, August 29th to quickly make plans and relocate out of the city before the storm made landfall.

Evacuating for Hurricane Katrina wasn't an easy decision for many residents, because many people didn't know where to go or what to do during this time but knew they had to make

a decision in the best interest for their families. Jean, a 48 year old African American female highlights “two or three days prior to the storm hitting, Bob Breck was the meteorologist [at the time] and kept saying leave and a lot of people wasn’t leaving because the year prior to that I can’t remember there was a hurricane that was supposed to hit and a lot of people left.”

Evacuating for storms can be somewhat expensive, especially for low-income families. Many residents were opposed to evacuating for the storm, because they possibly didn’t have or chose not to use the little funds they had for a storm that possibly wouldn't cause much damage. “Ray Nagan was the mayor of New Orleans then and when he said write your name with a permit... write your name and your social security number on your arm with a permit marker because they was shutting the city down and if you stayed they weren't gonna have nobody like to come help you.... All they was gonna do was later identify your body and that was the purpose of you putting your name on [your arm].” Once Jean and other residents heard this announcement, they saw it as a wake up call to evacuate the city before the storm started, while other residents believed this may once again be a close call and decided to wait out the storm. Jean had two very small children and knew she needed to do what was best in the interest to protect her family. On the other hand, some still didn’t know what to do. Aniyah also recalled “Mayor Ray Nagan, he was on the news and he said if your going, he said this was a very treacherous storm and if you decide to stay, make sure that you write you name in a permanent marker, your name and your social security number so if you stay and you die somebody will be able to identify you.” One day before the hurricane made landfall, on August 28th it was pronounced as a category five storm and a mandatory evacuation was issued for the city of New Orleans. This was considered the last time residents were able to evacuate before the city shut down allowing no one to re-enter or exit the city until it was announced the storm was over. Hurricane Katrina was a storm

that occurred at the end of the month, meaning many residents already paid bills for their homes, and possibly didn't have money left over to evacuate during the time. With all this being said, is one day really enough time for people in poverty, financial issues, and without transportation to evacuate the city? No, it's not!

While residents like Jean were fortunate to evacuate before the disastrous storm to a safe environment with her small children, this unfortunately wasn't possible for everyone. Malik, a 50 year old black African American male who was unemployed at the time, decided to stay in the city because as he explains "I really stayed behind because my mama didn't leave, but I think our family just never left for no storms or none so I was just content with whatever went on I guess til it happened. I never, you know. I never experience nothing like that before but. It was an eye opener." Malik wasn't the only person who made this decision to either evacuate with family or not at all, but for Malik and many others this decision turned out to be life changing. Malik described his days in the city as "the day the storm hit, I mean it was like it came through and flooded what it flooded, it was gone and everything was like normal. The next- the next day (laugh) it was a whole nother ball game." The residents of New Orleans didn't know what to expect from this storm, and prepared in the best ways they knew possible but unfortunately weren't prepared for the results.

Aniyah goes on to say "on the twenty ninth when the storm hit of course it hit, it was you know a category four, five but it was more wind damage than water damage right." Many people described life after the storm occurred as a normal sunny day. People were essentially happy they made it through what is known as the worst storm to ever travel through New Orleans and could possibly move on with life. While some people used this opportunity after the storm to evacuate

the city to other places in the world such as Baton Rouge and Texas that were pretty close to home, other residents decided to stay behind believing that was the conclusion of the storm.

Aniyah emphasizes “on August thirty people heard a boom. A big boom like, like an explosion sound and that was the levees breaching so I know it was the seventeenth street canal, ...the canal downtown in the lower ninth ward then the seventeenth street canal, it...breached as well.” Aniyah helps provide some insight into the amount of water flowing into the city due to the levees' infrastructure breaking in two different parts of the city. She goes on to elaborate, the “levee coming from downtown when it breached actually that’s where all the water ... overflowed in the ninth ward, but the main levee that really affected New Orleans was the Downtown levee. The Seventeenth Street Canal levee that breached, [caused the] damage that Metairie and Kenner had gotten from water, but more so Metairie was from the Seventeenth Street Canal, because the seventeenth street canal is the canal right between Jefferson Orleans Parish line.” The water towered over the city, resulting in five to fifteen feet of water depending on the part of the city. Some might even describe the city as somewhat of a gumbo pot filled with toxic water. While residents may have been able to prepare for the hurricane by boarding up their homes with plywood and finding a safe environment to wait out the storm, nothing could prepare them for the deconstruction of the levee system.

The deconstruction of the levee system is believed to be from the results of the Army Corps of Engineers not maintaining them properly. The flooding caused residents to lose their cars, homes, and many of the things they loved, held dear to their hearts, and unfortunately couldn't be replaced. Aniyah goes on to highlight how many people within these areas lost everything. Some of these things consist of things such as

pictures... things that they cherished..., important documents, ... their birth certificates, insurance policies, ... because a lot of times when we left a lot of people didn't think about hey let me grab all these things because ... when they said evacuate they were telling you to evacuate to get three days worth of clothes, your three days worth of medicine, make sure you had things like that so it was a lot [of] things people didn't you know take with them.

While an evacuation announcement for the city of New Orleans was called for Hurricane Katrina, many residents chose not to evacuate. Prior to the storm there were no procedures created in the case of the deconstruction of the levees.

Jackson, a 46 year old black African American male was a sheriff on duty at one of New Orleans prisons at the time of the storm occurring. He described his shift prior to the storm occurring as “you went to work early and just was prepared to be locked in and deal with the emergency... prepare the emergency preparation of what it took to make sure the jail and the people in the jail maintained in a safe environment.” While Jackson, like many others knew a horrific storm was directed for the city of New Orleans, he decided to continue working his normal work shift. Jackson's shares that he “was a sheriff deputy and it didn't feed into the financial constructive thing of my normal shift, was Sunday so I worked Sunday morning onto a Sunday evening.” In Jackson's case, the main reason he decided to stay in the city was due to the time frame of his work schedule occurring at the same time as the storm. Jackson goes on to highlight how his shift consisted of “mandatory overtime, [because] the sheriff would call for us to all be called in, be on the clock twenty-four seven.” For Jackson, he was in a position where he was forced to put other lives before his own due to the work path he decided to pursue. Unfortunately, he was placed in a position where all he could do was hope and prepare for the

worst, since there was nothing else he could do. The storm hit New Orleans, leaving Jackson as well as numerous inmates and other shieffs to endure horrible conditions for four days. Four days after the storm, Jackson highlights the prisons were finally evacuated to Angola State Prison by their tactical response team, better known as a swat team from the Louisiana Department of Corrections. While the inmates in Jackson's facility were evacuated to a safer environment that could accommodate them, the rest of New Orleans was left to fend for themselves hoping and praying for help everyday. Furthermore, Jackson emphasizes the lack of preparation provided for New Orleans residents. He says, "we were not prepared, the levees were not prepared, the infrastructure was not prepared. The idea of evacuation was not prepared. There was only one shelter of last resort, and there was no plan to get people either in or out in an expedient fashion, so it was not prepared. At that time it was not prepared."

Joshua, a 44 year old African American male also decided to stay in the city for work, because he was employed through a company unloading ship car cages. He was stuck in the city with his wife and two small children in an apartment he just moved into a couple weeks prior to the storm making landfall. Joshua highlighted that he was "twenty four at the time and [had] two small kids so I couldn't leave to evacuate because they said if I leave I would get fired." In Joshua's eyes, he believed it was more important to stay in the city and work to provide for his family, rather than evacuating for a storm no one knew the effects it may have. Unfortunately, for Joshua and many others he ended up in a bad situation, not only putting his life at risk, but also his family.

Three days after the storm hit, someone came to rescue Joshua, his family and some elderly people from a nursing home. They were transported to the Convention Center which wasn't officially set up as a shelter by the city. He recalled "when we unloaded at the Convention

Center one of the people we picked up from the nursing home had died so I kind of remember that a little bit because we sat him on the neutral ground and put the blanket over his head basically.” (16) At this time there was nothing people could do. They were relying on one another to get to safe grounds, protect themselves and their families in hopes of escaping their life changing situation. Joshua talks about his experience trying to evacuate the city as something unfortunate and scary. Joshua and his family traveled “up on the Westbank Expressway... around the camp exit and all that by the World War II Museum and... we was gonna try to walk over to the Westbank but the Gretna police officer ... in Jefferson Parish ... wasn’t letting any evacuees from Orleans come into Jefferson Parish so we had to turn around on the bridge and walk back the other way.” It became very clear that most of the damage towards the city impacted Orleans Parish, therefore Gretna police were stationed to protect Jefferson Parish from looters breaking into homes and stores. While residents who were stuck in the city after the impacts of the storm may not have wanted to steal from the stores, they saw this as their only means of survival since no one else was providing food or water.

Joshua knew the conditions New Orleans residents were expected to live in for days wasn’t reasonable. What was most important to Joshua during this time was to keep his family safe as well as evacuating the city as quickly as possible after three days of struggle with the unknown. After three days, Joshua and his family found “a truck... [a] Kenworth truck... with the keys in there... [came] back up the bridge, took all the water off the truck and gave it to you know the other... people that was out there and that’s how we evacuated, on the Kenworth water truck. ... We went down Highway Ninety until we got pulled over by the police. Uhh the police pulled us over, put the gun on us, check all our names for warrants and you know anything outstanding and uhh what they did? They brought us to a HeadStart and fed us and then end up

bringing us to Lafayette where we stood the rest of the days until you know I got in contact with family.” For Joshua his family was fortunate to escape safely and receive assistance after only three days, but this wasn’t the case for many others. Those who were still stuck in the city once again resulted in the unknown of when they would be able to leave and how.

Cassidy believes “New Orleans was not at all prepared for Hurricane Katrina umm yea no. I mean the country...they failed miserably on a federal level with FEMA and you know their response to actually trying to get people out of the city. I mean at the end of the day like, the Superdome had always been the shelter of last resort.” Jackson seems to agree with this statement highlighting the question of higher authority. Where are “the people who had the responsibility to aim the system to make sure that we were gonna be okay, ...and the government has a responsibility to maintain its people as best as it can when the people cannot maintain themselves.” He goes on to say “when disasters happen, [the] government has a responsibility to aid and assist the people in their next phase of life and give them the opportunity to make it right.” (1) For Jackson and many others there is a serious question about authority present in evaluating the city’s preparation orders for residents during the Hurricane Katrina storm. When thinking about this problem, the overarching questions rise to what makes residents decide to return back to New Orleans after knowing how unprepared New Orleans was as a city, and if New Orleans will be prepared for something like this in the future?

Chapter 2:

Storm's History: Why wasn't New Orleans ready?

Prior to the Hurricane Katrina storm, there were numerous storms that occurred within the years span. Every year a number of tropical storms appear with the possibility of becoming a hurricane. With the previous knowledge of prior storms, New Orleans was given ample time to create an evacuation plan in the case of destruction. This section will evaluate the different ways in which New Orleans wasn't prepared for the 2005 detrimental storm, and ways in which this problem could have been prevented. Within this section, two storms will be identified, Hurricane Betsy and Hurricane Camille which are two well known storms to have whipped out different parts of Louisiana. Hurricane Betsy and Hurricane Camille both impacted Louisiana years prior to Hurricane Katrina which gave the New Orleans government officials more than enough time to create a plan, enforce it, and protect New Orleans residents.

On September 9, 1965 Hurricane Betsy made landfall onto New Orleans as a category 4 hurricane, forty years prior to Hurricane Katrina occurring. Forty years prior to Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans levee system failed once again causing large amounts of water to flood the city. Observing that Hurricane Katrina had many similar effects to Hurricane Betsy, the problem raised many questions for me. Some of these questions included why weren't the levees constructed to withstand this problem? Why wasn't the pumping system working within the city? Did the government call for a mandatory evacuation? Betsy was considered a water storm, so if there was a possibility of something like this happening in the future, why wasn't an evacuation plan and procedures created forty years prior to Hurricane Katrina occurring? The purpose of a levee system is to "construct and maintained to restrict movement of flood waters from reaching

communities and structures in the proximity of areas known to be flood prone,” although the New Orleans system failed to uphold this goal. (McGowan, 2020) The improper maintenance of the levees system has unfortunately caused worst problems for the future, resulting in Hurricane Katrina years later.

Cassidy highlights “we knew this could happen again because Betsy was awful. Betsy destroyed many of the same areas Katrina did, like when you think of places in the lower ninth ward, Betsy did that too and yet nothing in the city every change to like make it so... that we could actually take care of our people and like when the storm was coming there was no coordinated effort to get people out. They called a mandatory evacuation like what twenty hours before landfall, fifteen hours before landfall like what were people supposed to do?” When evaluating the results of Hurricane Katrina, one of the main problems with this storm is that no one ever experienced anything like it, therefore no one knew how to prepare for it. Many people who experienced Hurricane Katrina weren’t alive to experience Hurricane Betsy. In addition, Hurricane Betsy’s emergency response order doesn’t state anything about preparing for a hurricane like such in the future. While there was an emergency plan created called Operation Arm of CD which “prior to Hurricane Betsy, a temporary set of plans had been drawn up consisting of a five-divisional break-down with the director as chief coordinator responsible only to the mayor. The five divisions were: welfare, technical, protective, administrative, and medical” but didn’t include any form of protocol for an emergency flooding situation. (Forrest 1979). As a result there were a number of problems that arose, including thousands of dollars in damages.

The city’s original evacuation plan for Hurricane Betsy was no longer fully implemented, because it couldn’t accommodate all of the occurring problems at the time. These problems

included “the provision of food and shelter for 20,000 to 65,000 refugees, the unexpected and intensive flooding, and the coordination of convergent organizational responses,” along with the breakage of the canal. (Forrest 1979). Furthermore, the same problem Hurricane Betsy caused, so did Hurricane Katrina. When evaluating the entirety of the Hurricane Betsy evacuation plan, it clearly states there was “no specific preparation had been made to house this emergency type evacuation,” specifically the deconstruction of the levee system (New Orleans Army Base, 1965). This is once again a case hard to prepare for when there is no knowledge of it occurring, although there are questions as to why there wasn't an updated plan created for future storms such as Hurricane Katrina.

Michelle, a 61 year old African American female had two children at the time when Katrina occurred. She believes

Governor Kathleen Blanco, she's deceased now and stuff ... she never had dealt with anything like this either so she didn't make any good calls either as it relates. Lets get some... emergency preparedness down there now in New Orleans you know to get these people out. I mean days and days but I mean she couldn't... make a move because again she had to wait on the president to say do xyz or for the president to declare a state of emergency for the funds and stuff.

Michelle highlights not only the lack of authority present but also efficiency to protect those in horrible conditions. Once a disaster occurs, it's the responsibility of the government officials to aid those in need of assistance, although in the case of Hurricane Katrina government officials were unable to assist residents if they lacked prior knowledge of a situation.

While the government plays a large role in their failure to prepare for Hurricane Katrina due to their fault preparation orders, Joshua believes the residents also play a large role in not

being prepared on their own. Joshua emphasizes that hurricanes aren't anything new for New Orleans residents when he says,

I think the people underestimate this storm like a lot of people. I think a lot of people were so used to staying for so many storms and nothing never hit the city like that in a real long time since like Betsy and Camille... cause like a lot of time you would just get like water in the streets maybe you know two feet or so and you know it wouldn't be much. I think the city didn't have a good evacuation plan because you have a lot of poor people in New Orleans and a lot of people in New Orleans don't have vehicles to leave or even money to leave to afford a hotel or something and that's one thing that keep a lot of people back because you know... their resources to leave. Umm I know the city gave everybody more than enough time you know... this gonna be a strong storm to leave.... They had buses, shelters and stuff like that but I just think, I don't think nobody expected... Katrina to happen like it did so I would say either the city or the people weren't prepared for that type of storm.

Joshua believes many people who identified within the poverty bracket in New Orleans were already at a disadvantage for the storm. This was due to the lack of transportation, along with financial barriers, therefore preventing residents within the poverty bracket from evacuating prior to the storm's landfall. Those who were placed at a disadvantage for evacuating prior to the storm, possibly would still be met with this disadvantage after the storm. Furthermore, "those who were poor before the storm, and those who have become poor following the storm, are likely to face a particularly difficult time in reestablishing their lives, having few if any financial resources upon which to draw" (Collier, Balakrishnan, & Zha, 2020). Before Hurricane Katrina

impacted the storm, along with the infrastructure of the levee system, residents within the poverty bracket may have struggled from everyday life challenges, although their conditions are more likely to worsen since their poverty disadvantages have also worsened. These residents went from not having much, to absolutely nothing.

On August 17, 1969, four years after Hurricane Betsy, Hurricane Camille made landfall as a Category 5 hurricane. While the storm didn't directly hit New Orleans, the storm surge was so extreme, it caused billions of dollars in damage to the city. While Hurricane Camille didn't cause as much water damage as Hurricane Betsy, it's still known to have one of the strongest storm surges to destroy many parts of Louisiana such as Bolivar. With the background knowledge and historical understanding of what Hurricane Betsy and Hurricane Camille did to New Orleans, the question becomes once again why wasn't New Orleans prepared to deal with a storm such as Katrina. There is a clear understanding that no one knew the levees would break, although since the same problem arose forty years earlier why wasn't the city prepared for what could once again be encountered in the future? Aniyah agrees with this statement by emphasizing "you would think that after Betsy destroyed New Orleans, the city should have been well prepared with levees, the pumping stations are absolutely awful." The pumping stations are a problem New Orleans unfortunately still deals with today. Due to the failure of the pumping systems, different parts of the city continue to flood, causing thousands of people to lose many of the things they worked extremely hard for. While this flooding is nowhere near the amount of water that towered over the city during Hurricane Katrina, many question if the pumping systems will be equipped to handle another situation like Hurricane Katrina if they can't handle rain water currently.

While many argue the responsibility of Hurricane Katrina should be entirely blamed on the government, Michelle argues otherwise. Similar to Joshua's argument, Michelle believes, there was enough time. Again we did not take heat to thinking that it was just gonna be another typical storm where we would just get... the rain and everything...[will] blow over. We will be back at home so I feel that's why a lot of people did not believe, leave. Umm again we are low poverty... down here where were living from check to check. A lot of people... didn't have [the]... means to say let's go because we didn't have the money so I feel like that's why a lot of people did not leave, not that they did not warn us. I feel like they did warn us, but because... we didn't have the financial... resources so that's why I feel that a lot of people stayed. Had we had that I feel like it would have been we would have left more in time.

Michelle believes the government aren't the only ones to blame for Hurricane Katrina, because many people were stuck in their heads about what happened in the past. Every year, New Orleans residents receive warnings about hurricanes that sometimes turn into tropical storms. Michelle emphasizes many people prior to Hurricane Katrina were stuck in financial barriers. Rather than evacuating prior to the storm's landfall, many residents felt a better decision was to sit home and wait out a storm, rather than find unnecessary funds they possibly didn't have.

"I think... a lot has to do with the fact that we just did not have the money" Michelle goes on to emphasize that when it comes to preparation for a storm, the residents must be prepared for themselves regardless of what's happened in the past or what you may believe might occur. She emphasizes

it's imperative that people watch the news. It's called you gotta have common sense when they start saying how big that hurricane was gon' to get, everybody had enough time to

get out. People choose not to leave. People, you had time to make a decision to get out because again, you gon' have the stubborn ones who saying they not leaving regardless, I'm not going nowhere. But again, a lesson learned is you know hurricane season coming up, that means have your ducks in a row.

While Michelle argues there is clearly a poverty issue present that restricts residents from making certain decisions, residents have enough time throughout the year to figure out an evacuation plan. There is enough time throughout the year to put enough money to the side specifically for transportation, food, and shelter. In addition, she believes many people are stubborn, and choose not to leave. When it comes to hurricane season, she believes we have to have common sense in the decisions when thinking about not only our lives but also our family lives.

Michelle goes on to emphasize there is a bigger issue here and it all has to do with politics. She says, "if I had to put my money on it ima say it was politics at the end of the day... not because you want the black people out because at the end of the day you start trying to talking about, oh we want to save the French Quarters if we blow it up this way, all these people gonna get washed out but yet the French Quarters still will be standing." Michelle is referring to the ongoing conspiracy theory pertaining to Hurricane Katrina. Many New Orleans residents question whether the levees breached on their own or were blown up to protect specific neighborhoods in New Orleans. She believes that residents can't wait until the last minute and listen to what the government says. When you're in a detrimental situation like Hurricane Katrina, you have to think smart for yourself and leave. You have to have common sense, because the government isn't always here to benefit you, they worry about politics as Michelle refers to when protecting themselves and ways to make money. She believes it's all about

“politics at the end of the day, and one of these days we might be all dead and gone, somebody gon tell the real story of what happened.” Furthermore, Michelle believes relying on the government will not always protect you. She believes we have to do what’s right in the best interest of our personal safety, because the government wasn’t thinking about the best interest for residents during Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina was a tragedy that placed thousands of people in danger, and when danger comes it’s important to create a safety plan in the case of an emergency.

Michelle goes on to highlight that hurricanes aren’t anything to play with, and there isn’t always knowledge for how bad the storm will be, but you have to prepare. In this case some people do have the means of leaving, but you gotta watch the news and you gotta make [that] decisions and I think a lot of people just slept on it cause by that Friday they basically was really saying hey I...should be, I gotta get out of here but when they realized it was it too late, but the plan was, nobody knew that levee was gonna blow up. Cause they was fine again and people will tell you people...everything was good until that levee broke. Everything was good until that levee broke because then it people start saying they hear a big boom and hey that's the key to everything, the boom.

Michelle believes the process when thinking about a storm, you have to think for yourself and not everyone else. When you believe something bad may occur you must act on it. You shouldn’t put yourself in a bad position, because of the choices of others. She believes you can’t decide “Oh my mama don’t want leave, my grandma don’t want leave so I stayed. They better learn what to do with them old people, talking about where they ain’t going, pick they behinds up and you throw them in the car, let’s rock and roll verses you having a heart attack or you still going out your mind cause you don’t know where grandma and mama at because they done made some

bad decisions to leave.” Michelle believes Hurricane Katrina, like many other storms, was a life or death situation that didn’t have much time for second thoughts. When you believe something bad is going to happen, follow that guilt feeling to safety rather than waiting to see what will happen. When you wait for a dangerous situation to occur, later on it may be too hard to get out of.

After almost a week after the storm, a decision was made to finally evacuate trapped New Orleans residents from the Superdome, Convention Center, and rooftops of residents home to the Astrodome in Houston Texas and other cities that would be able to possibly accommodate these residents (Miller, Rivera 2007). “During the weekend of September 2, 2005, the Augustin Convention Center received between 5,000 and 7,000 evacuees,” from New Orleans, and quickly worked to support in as many ways as possible (Bell et al. 2008). These support systems included shelter, schools for children, meals, clothing, social worker assistance, housing assistance, and finding family support. Many residents were transported by bus systems out of the city and to their future destinations. After three days to a week of being stuck in the storm for Malik and other residents, he said “I guess the government, military people they had like a couple bus services, Greyhound, umm Trailways. It was a few different bus companies they had.” The buses were directed to transport residents to different places outside of New Orleans, residents weren’t knowledgeable of at the time. During this time,

it was like, most of the family that was together, they split them up like they was just sending them to different cities, which I don’t see why they did this. They probably could have let them travel together but I guess it was just- like- I guess the transportation, they couldn’t get all the families on one bus or whatever. So it was just like they was just shipping everybody to different places and just promising them you know the majority of

your family [will be] in spot. We gonna send the rest of y'all there. You know it was just like trying to get everybody from out the city at the time so it was- ...that was crazy too. Malik and his family were transported to Arkansas and eventually made their way back to New Orleans after a long period of time. Many other residents were also faced with this problem, being thousands of miles away from a place they called home.

Mia, a 47- year-old African American female dealt with a similar situation with one of her cousins. Her cousin stayed in the city during Hurricane Katrina, and she couldn't recall how long she was there for, "but when we did get in contact with him (cough)..., he was in Houston and it took us awhile. He said [he was]... stuck here for a while,... it was crazy because he was like he almost gave up because they didn't have any food, they didn't have no water, umm when people did come around you know everything was scarce." Hurricane Katrina left many people in an uncomfortable situation, not knowing what to do. For almost a week, residents didn't know whether their loved ones were alive or not in the city, because the city was no longer functioning. Similar to Mia's cousin, many people didn't know if they would make it out of the city to see their loved ones again, and were placed in a situation of the unknown.

Throughout this entire experience, Joshua highlights "one thing I take from Katrina is to never take any storm like that. If they say evacuate and leave I'm leaving umm I try to keep money on the side or a credit card or some you know uhh a reliable source of transportation to leave so I don't put myself in that position again." Joshua seems to have learned a very important lesson for future hurricanes or horrible situations, although the thriving question still stands out. After thousands of residents endured a terrible storm and horrible living conditions, what makes them want to return back to New Orleans after staying away for such a long amount of time? Hurricane Katrina was a man-made disaster no one was prepared for. There was not

only a lack of preparation due to the deconstruction of the levees on the Army Corps of Engineers end, but also blame placed on the government as well. After Hurricane Katrina, it's easy to label the government as untrustworthy in many ways for not protecting and providing for the residents in low-income disadvantaged situations. While a mandatory evacuation was called for the residents of New Orleans, there are questions as to where the government was in the time of assistance when people in poverty issues no longer could help themselves let alone their families. Hurricane Katrina is a storm of many mysteries, and till this day, twenty years later has still left behind long-lasting poverty issues residents are struggling with.

For many residents, once the water started to overtake the city, they were stuck in attics, on top of roofs, resulting in the Superdome, or unfortunately died. For many this life changing experience without any food, water, or any other necessities took anywhere from three days to a week to escape the city. While some residents dealt with the horrible challenges of being stuck in the city, others were grateful to already be evacuated before the storm's landfall. While those who evacuated were in safe environments, they unfortunately saw many of the horrible effects from the storm in the media. Seeing these horrible events take place left many residents uncomfortable to know many of their loved ones were left behind to experience so many tragedies. Five Days At Memorial was a documentary referred to me by 54 year old African American female Aniyah, seeing that she lived only five blocks away from the hospital at the time of the storm. Aniyah believes the Five Days At Memorial documentary was important because a well known doctor by the name of Dr. Anna Pou was responsible for the deaths of many patients during the Hurricane Katrina storm. During the time of the storm, Memorial Hospital took in numerous patients from LifeCare. The condition began to worsen over time and

Dr. Pou believed it was more important to save her Memorial patients, leaving the LifeCare patients to die.

Since LifeCare patients wouldn't be evacuated Dr. Pou highlighted "the intent was to provide comfort, but the result was to hasten death and Cook knew it." (Fink, 2009) She filled syringes and gave LifeCare patients illegal doses of morphine and midazolam to decrease their breathing until they passed away. When doing so, she told patients "I'm going to give you something to make you feel better" (Fink, 2009). With Aniyah's home being so close to these events taking place, she became very uncomfortable and concerned for many of the unlawful things that occurred in the city she loved so much. Once again the question rises to why did residents decide to return back to New Orleans after experiencing displacement for such a long period of time, especially hearing about the horrible conditions many people went through?

The hospital was later renamed to Baptist Hospital, which it is now referred to years later. Aniyah describes her experience of New Orleans through the media as, "when you would see Claiborne Avenue and Napoleon, the water was like up to the ceiling in some houses, then as the days were going by, day one, day two and stuff, they kept showing Baptist Hospital umm where people were dying cause the water just went in, they didn't have the generators went down, there wasn't nothing." Aniyah not only was fearful for her home being flooded, but also thought the selfish acts the doctors made during the time deserved recognition for what was right and wrong during the time of the storm. Hurricane Katrina was a nerve wracking situation, because many people didn't know the outcome of the situation. Aniyah highlights "so as far as I knew home, my home was not livable because you're watching the news and like I said you see where Baptist is going underwater, the houses in your area you know like a block this way may have gone under, but a block this way everything was still standing." Since Aniyah's home was so close to

Baptist Hospital she feared that everything she loved was gone. The media portrayed a visual that made it very difficult to tell what was happening in the city at the time, so many people feared what life would be like when they returned home.

Chapter 3: After the Storm

I. Guilt

After the Hurricane Katrina storm, many people were left with long term impacts of destruction. Once someone is uprooted from their home, they're expected to pick up the pieces and support their families in the best way possible. For many residents who experienced Hurricane Katrina, this was easier said than done. Thousands of residents were forcefully displaced to other cities around the world, left to worry about their loved ones who were either displaced in other locations or stuck in the city during the storm. This section will highlight some of the struggles New Orleans residents endeavor after migration both emotionally and physically.

After the storm ended, and the water continued to rise in the city, many residents who evacuated prior to disaster approaching felt a rise of different emotions for the people still stuck in the city at the time, along with many of the things they lost in the storm and unfortunately would never be able to get again. Some of these emotions consist of sadness, fear, hopelessness, and mostly guilt. Jackson, who was stuck in the city during the time of Hurricane Katrina was extremely thankful for his life, although felt a form of guilt and sadness because he was in a position like many others where he wasn't "able to deal with and... quantify what it is to lose somebody and not be able to mourn and go through that process. For a long time after the storm struck New Orleans, many residents didn't know what happened to their loved ones or if they were still alive at all. For some, this process took a couple days while for others it may have taken months, maybe even years. Overall it was a difficult process for many and ultimately a waiting game. One example of this is seen through 29 year old African American female, Zaniyah's experience. Zaniyah was in middle school when Hurricane Katrina occurred, and she

recalls “watching the news in Houston, ... my mom just fell to the floor crying because she was just like I can’t believe you know [we left] my grandmother in New Orleans while all this was happening so uh at that moment we just felt horrible just watching like the flood, the flooding in the streets.” Zaniyah and her family evacuated prior to the storm making landfall. They not only felt guilt for leaving her grandmother behind in the city, but also fear. While the storm occurred, there was no way to ensure that her grandmother was safe or alive.

For each individual person during the time, guilt looked somewhat different depending on the situation. Guilt is an emotion that drives other decisions and emotions to evolve, or in this case plays an important role in the decision making. Before the storm occurred Joshua and his family couldn’t decide whether they wanted to evacuate or not, so they chose to stay.

Unfortunately, Joshua resulted in blaming himself for this choice. Joshua says

me personally I felt as though I let my family down, by putting my job before my family but like I said I was what twenty- four at the time, twenty-four or twenty-five. So you know I thought I was doing the best thing by staying because when you got a supervisor who telling you if you leave you're fired. So I know I need my job to take care of my family but at the end of the day I felt as though I put my job before my family and if you would’ve been somewhere else we possibly could’ve died or lost my family.

Joshua believed he initially made the best decision to support his family financially by staying for the storm, but ultimately put his family in jeopardy for not making the best decision for his household in the means of protection and survival. When thinking about what it means to survive, a lot of people during this time felt like they could’ve done a lot better to prepare and prevent a situation such as Hurricane Katrina occurring, although the overall question leads to how can you prepare for something you don’t know will occur?

For residents who were stuck in the city after the storm, many of them did things that weren't exactly legal but did so for the means of survival. Cassidy talks about a family friend she knew of who was stuck in the city, "weeks later [after the storm occurred] and saying just how difficult it was for him to like go, and I feel like I was stealing or I was a thief and I felt so embarrassed of having to do that... but we had to. Like there was no other choice, there was no food. There was nothing." Cassidy talks about her friend's guilt in relation to the action of committing an unlawful crime without any further legal actions taken. Cassidy's friend clearly didn't want to commit an action, such as stealing but felt a need to do so to survive since there wasn't any assistance at the time in the city.

John, a 30 year old African American male was also in middle school when Hurricane Katrina struck. He relays his experience of guilt as something being seen towards his mother at the time. John emphasizes life was somewhat of a struggle after the hurricane struck New Orleans, but his mother was always there to support him. John says, "she still tried to make sure I didn't want for anything, and I still had my new shoes but I realized she was like pulling out her retirement money to make sure I was taken care of." After the storm ended and some time passed, John and his mother made a collective decision for him to return back to New Orleans to continue his education, while his mother stayed in Baton Rouge to support his older sister. At this time, John felt guilt in the form of selfishness seeing that his mother was struggling in secrecy similar to many others to make sure he was still taken care of regardless of their separation at the time. While his mother made sacrifices to benefit his family, John felt some of it was selfish on his part. Last but not least, Jean speaks for everyone when she highlights guilt and pain through the memories residents lost.

Jean emphasizes that

all your previous memories was lost. Everything you worked so hard for in life was gone, and you was just messed up, you didn't know how to start over. You didn't know how to think, you didn't know how to feel. It was mixed emotions. All you could do was cry, and just- I mean you don't know what to do. If New Orleans is all you know how do you- how do you start over? Where do you go? What happens? What do you do with your children? (Participant gets emotional)

Jean, like many others, expressed multiple emotions of not knowing what to do and how to provide for their families through such a hard time. Many residents from New Orleans felt guilt for not knowing how to protect their families and move on from a life changing experience. Regardless if people decided to stay in the city or evacuate for the storm, a ray of emotions were felt by each and every last resident in New Orleans. Guilt is an emotion combined with many other emotions that will sometimes not make sense. Furthermore, guilt is something that can't always be solved, but eventually becomes something we learn to deal with. With that being said, I question: After experiencing such a ray of different emotions, once again what attracts residents to return back to New Orleans after experiencing displacement for such a long period of time?

II. Assistance/ Resources

When someone is forcefully displaced from their homes, no longer receiving employment, how are they expected to provide for their families? This was an ongoing question many residents worried about. After the storm, many people didn't know what to do, and how they would reach stability once again, but relied on government funding or everyday people to

help support them. This section will discuss different resources residents were provided after the storm, and their processes for receiving them. For each individual this process looked somewhat different from the next.

After five miserable days spent stuck on their roofs, attics, or the Superdome, New Orleans residents were finally evacuated. Many were transported by different bus systems to different facilities around the world such as the Astrodome in Houston Texas that could accommodate them. Once residents arrived at these facilities, they were given different forms of assistance. These support systems included shelter, schools for children, meals, clothing, social worker assistance, housing assistance, and finding family support. The process of residents' finding their loved ones could be somewhat challenging at times, because "all the cell service went down in New Orleans, [and] you couldn't get in touch with anybody. You couldn't text message people, you couldn't call people, nothing worked if you had a 504 number," Cassidy says. Although this process seemed to be challenging, there were procedures set in place for residents to get in contact with their loved ones.

Zariyah, a 29 year old African American female, highlighted that she was very young at the time of the storm, but she

was at a age where I understood what was happening so we couldn't find my grandfather and for months we thought something bad happened to him. Um we called like the AstroDome, you know all the places where a lot of places where...being evacuated to, and we could not find him so, "I wanna say maybe after four months we ended up finding him and he was in like San Antonio...living with a family out there that he didn't know..

Even though all the cell service was down in New Orleans, preventing all New Orleans residents from getting in contact with their families, many residents were grateful for the resources set up

to help find their loved one. While this process may have not been very quick and easy, it helped many people who were worried, eventually reuniting them with their loved ones.

Additional forms of assistance displaced residents received was FEMA or the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Red Cross, and assistance from the Salvation Army. FEMA assistance is upon request “from the state’s governor, the state's President of the United States can release federal funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with a disaster declaration.”(Arcaya, Raker, & Waters, 2020). FEMA assistance consists of providing funds, necessities, and housing assistance to support families in disaster impacted neighborhoods that are currently uninsured or under-insured, and cannot provide necessities for their families. Once the president declares a disaster in a specific area, a range of federal aid is provided to those affected within the state. The different forms of aid consist of “financial help to occupy alternative housing, provision of temporary housing units, home repair, and aid for other expenses” (Collier, Balakrishnan, & Zha, 2020). While the The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act relief states funding is provided to residents, and doesn’t clarify any stipulations attached, FEMA states otherwise. FEMA tends to have more specific regulations regarding the damage in the area and if individual and housing assistance is available in the area of destruction. FEMA’s regulations as well as qualifications include

- (1) concentration of damage;
- (2) the degree of trauma to a state and communities, such as large numbers of injuries or deaths, large scale disruptions of normal community functions, and emergency needs such as extended or widespread loss of power,
- (3) special populations, such as whether the area includes low-income, elderly or unemployed persons;
- (4) the extent to which state and local or voluntary agencies can

meet needs; (5) the amount of insurance coverage in an area; and (6) the amount of individual assistance provided by the state (Collier, Balakrishnan, & Zha, 2020).

Due to the fluctuation of assistance based on the rules and regulations provided, many residents' experiences regarding assistance for FEMA or other organizational assistance looks somewhat different from the next. Even though all residents were affected by the Hurricane Katrina storm in one way or another, everyone unfortunately didn't receive the same assistance as the next.

FEMA also provided different forms of free housing for residents' homes that were destroyed during the storm. When residents were finally allowed to return home, "FEMA-provided trailers, and apartments, paid for in part with grants from FEMA...[as well as] approved over 265,000 applications for temporary housing payments" (Collier, Balakrishnan, & Zha, 2020). FEMA's different form of assistance helped regulate the lives of many residents in hopes they may return back to some form of normalcy. Once residents signed up for FEMA, they were registered on a data basis that allowed other residents or family members to locate one another. The "database includes information about each person who has registered for assistance after the disaster, including information about where they lived prior to evacuation and where they are living after the disaster, based on postal zipcodes" (Collier, Balakrishnan, & Zha, 2020). While FEMA was concerned about privacy rights, they believed this was enough information for displaced families to locate one another. It's clear FEMA's goal is to help limit disaster and risk, as well as providing a form of stability once again for those affected.

In addition, "The Red Cross provided first month's rent for many evacuees and then the city of Austin entered into an agreement with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide longer-term housing and utilities for evacuees" during their start over process

(Litt 2008). Starting over from absolutely nothing can be entirely stressful for many residents, although with the help of FEMA, Red Cross, and many other resources it helped paved the way for many residents to find stability once again. This process was nowhere near easy, and took a long time for residents to meet their goal of where they wanted to be. Eventually many residents got there, but their paths looked different during their journey. While some people may have received assistance relatively quickly, for others it may have taken a little longer than expected if they received any at all.

Katie, a 56 year old African American female, explained her assistance as something that “was pretty quick because FEMA gave us money and we were able to do a little things, not much but. It happened quick.” While Katie feels her assistance didn’t support all her needs, she was grateful for it, and how quick it came. Cassidy seems to agree with this statement by saying that she “feel[s like] they... got resources and money to us pretty quickly, but there was no sense for when [we] would be able to go home. Once again, Cassidy was grateful for the assistance she received, but was more worried about additional needs such as the standards of her homes’ condition in New Orleans. As far as housing assistance, Aniyah mentioned that “FEMA umm I wanna say they were doing the rental vouchers.” Aniyah emphasizes that similar to Katie and Cassidy, her assistance also came relatively quickly. Jackson elaborates more on this point by stating that his “grandmother’s house, Uptown in Carrollton was not damaged, ... and we got a FEMA trailer put by my grandmothers house, and another trailer that was able to be put by my parents house, so we had a place to stay per say.” Jackson, unlike many other residents, had a strong advantage during Hurricane Katrina because different members within his family were homeowners. He received assistance through his family support which served as a form of shelter. Last but not least, Mia also received assistance from the “Red Cross [which] gave us

some things, some... gift cards, they had other resources around there that [they were] ... giving out [such as]clothing. But other than that ... we was able to get food stamps.”

While some residents didn't have many problems receiving assistance through different organizations such as FEMA, unfortunately this wasn't the case for everyone. Many residents struggled to receive assistance for numerous reasons, causing their process for stability and normalcy to become somewhat delayed. Jean emphasized her struggle after the storm with two small children receiving assistance as something not necessarily easy. She states,

anybody who's been sheltering individuals, they was giving out like five-hundred dollars or something..., other than that I didn't get any help. Umm I had to fight with FEMA for over a year, prior to getting assistance through them, because some kind of way they were saying that the house that I was presently living in didn't get hit by the storm, and it was a coincidence that I was in New Orleans, and I was in the area of the complex and they had management...[there at the time].

Once the city opened back up, Jean traveled back and forward for different reasons such as checking on her property. During this time, residents weren't able to move back into the city, because there were still a lot of things not functioning at the time. For Jean, she highlights that she was grateful to be in the city when FEMA denied her assistance, because she was able to look more into the problem occurring. Jean was extremely confused why she wasn't receiving assistance if she was impacted and displaced by the storm just like many other residents. She took this as an opportunity to look into her situation, and find out exactly what was going on.

Jean goes on to say, “so what had been going on, FEMA was hiring different individuals to umm what would you call this? To go and inspect properties, so I don't know if the individuals were just taking breaks, hiding, whatever they was putting documentation in like they were

inspecting places which they really hadn't." This problem caused Jean, and possibly many other residents to receive delayed assistance or possibly none at all. In Jean's case, she was grateful she was home to look more into her case by talking to the complex management and other staff, while other residents may not have had this option. Jean goes on to talk about her emotional effects of not only her living problem but as her displacement. She says, "it was heartbreaking because if you have this child in diapers, you have no money, I had no money, I had two babies in diapers, FEMA was constantly denying me," what was she expected to do? Jean was placed in a difficult situation where she was uprooted from her home and source of employment, expected to rely on the government for assistance when they weren't providing her with anything. Jean highlights that this process went on for numerous amounts of time before finally receiving any form of assistance.

Jean continues to elaborate the struggle she devoured by stating, "I didn't get emergency housing. Umm, I didn't get emergency shelter. What end up happening was when my parents finally made it to Jonesville,...they opened my grandmother's house up and we resided there." When examining the story of Hurricane Katrina, one of the most important things for a lot of people during this time was family. The ones you held near and dear to your heart who you cared about in every way possible. When there was nothing or no one else, you relied on family for help. In Jean's case her family support was essential seeing that she wasn't receiving any assistance with shelter, food, or any other necessities from the government.

In addition, Jean thought it was important to mention her relationship to FEMA trailers as another form of assistance provided for displaced residents. She mentions that "a lot of the individuals who received trailers was pretty much homeowners." ... "If you wasn't a homeowner you had to go through your landlord or whoever ... you was renting your property through and

they was able to say ye or ne, but a lot of people didn't want the trailers on their property due to the fact that they had to dig up the sewers to run the pipes and all that. So a lot of people didn't want all that on their property. When Jean decided to return back to New Orleans, she mentioned she was in a rough situation with her very young children. For some time, she along with her small children lived in an abandoned home for some time due to the many struggles she went through trying to receive assistance from the government. She mentioned it as something that was very frightening and scary, but she was in a position where she didn't have any family or assistance in the city at the time, she had to make hard decisions, and "prayed for better days."

During this time, some people also dealt with problems receiving assistance, because other people used their New Orleans addresses. In order to receive assistance, residents had to report their New Orleans address to ensure their home received damage and they couldn't return. Joshua mentioned he "ran into some problems because another family member used my address, but at that time my wife was able to get the money, some money to help us you know from FEMA and Red Cross." Similar to Jean, Joshua's assistance became somewhat hard to receive for a different reason, causing his family to struggle and reach stability at a much slower rate than others.

For some residents it took them a little longer to receive assistance from resources such as FEMA if they did at all, so they may have resorted to other places or assistance like the National Guard or regular day people. For Jean, some of this assistance looked like waiting for her sister, who "was a member of the National Guard, and the National Guard was giving out like diapers and blankets and things of that sort." At the time, Jean couldn't rely on the government to help support her during her times of struggle, so she relied on other free resources provided for those in need to make it through. Mia also received other outside assistance that

wasn't provided by the government. Mia says, a "church [that] was really helpful because they allowed us to shelter there. They gave us... free free food, meals rather." While Mia did eventually receive assistance from the government, the beginning of her displacement was a struggle. She didn't have anywhere to go or a plan to help provide for her family, but the assistance she received from the church she grew to love helped her get through her struggling times.

Joshua also mentioned he received additional assistance from a Head Start. Joshua says, "they brought us to a HeadStart and fed us and then end[ed] up bringing us to Lafayette where we stood the rest of the days until you know I got in contact with family. In this statement, Joshua is referring to the police transporting him and his family to a safe place after evacuating the city. The Headstart provided Joshua and his family shelter, food, safety. Last but not least, Aniyah along with her family evacuated to Houston for the storm. She received assistance through her " daughters father [who] lived in Houston as well, so his church that he attends they gave us like clothes you know, umm Waterburger was right next, no they gave us like a hundred vouchers to Waterburger. I think that's why I don't eat Whataburger no more (laugh) now because they literally gave us like a hundred vouchers to Whataburger and then they also ... gave us umm vouchers for a hotel room which was Waterburger and hotels." When residents weren't able to rely on the government for quick and necessary assistance, people around the world stepped in to help assist residents who were displaced by providing them food, shelter, and other necessities. While these residents may have been placed at a disadvantage for not receiving government assistance right away, everyday people helped them along the way.

The final category of assistance displaced residents received I will evaluate was for students enrolled in school during the time the storm occurred. For some students this

displacement may have occurred in the years of elementary to high school, and for others during college. Before Cassidy evacuated for the storm, she was attending The University of New Orleans (UNO). When Katrina occurred, she evacuated to Baton Rouge believing like most people in New Orleans that she would be back home soon to continue her education at UNO. Due to the deconstruction of the levee system, Cassisy wasn't able to return back to New Orleans for a lengthy period of time to continue her education. She spoke highly about Louisiana State University (LSU) welcoming in displaced New Orleans residents to continue their education there. Cassisy says "I remember what was really wonderful was LSU actually in a lot of ways, they I don't know how they got things together so fast but I mean I was registered for school like within a week you know. I mean LSU opened up their campus to everybody, anyone who was a New Orleans student, like whether you were at UNO or Tulane or anywhere you... could register at LSU, like it didn't matter like they immediately got us into classes." Post Katrina, LSU created an amazing opportunity to not only help students who were planning to continue their education and graduate on time, but they also gave them some form of normalcy with all the chaos going on around them. It can be challenging trying to figure out your next steps of life when your world has been flipped upside down, although LSU tried to make a safe space for these students to continue what they started, their education.

Another way in which students received assistance after the storm was seen through Zaniyah's story. As a young girl Zaniyah says, "I remember going to this school in Houston and honestly everyone was especially, like the teachers there was so helpful. I remember this one teacher there, she was my choir teacher, she actually brought all my school uniform.... I remember her bringing like boxes of food to where we were staying, just doing anything she can

to help us out. Zaniyah emphasizes her form of assistance through staff in Texas providing food, clothing, and other necessities to support her family while displaced in Texas.

John, a 30 year old African American male says “I went to school in Baton Rouge for a while. I mean I guess for like half a semester, but they told us the Katrina victims were like automatically... passed to the next grade or something because we were misplaced and we would be behind. In John’s case he was only in middle school when his displacement occurred and already at a disadvantage for possibly being behind compared to other kids around the world his age. Hurricane Katrina was a “disaster [that] affects schooling in three ways: damaging or closing schools themselves, impacting students’ lives, and causing long-term absence or even dropout.” (Arcaya, Raker, & Waters, 2020) For John, and many others Baton Rouge provided him an opportunity to once again create a space of normalcy for children going through displacement, as well as furthering their education. While the adjustment for some may not have been easy compared to others, it was expressed as extremely helpful. Earlier on I revealed the main question for this paper to be: Why did residents decide to return back to New Orleans after experiencing displacement for such a long period of time? In some cases, assistance residents received was helpful, possibly giving them a reason not to return back to New Orleans, but for others this may have not always been the case.

In Jackson's case, returning back home was the best decision for him and his family since his grandmother’s home didn’t receive any damage. Instead of staying somewhere else, it seems to be easier to return home, stay in a trailer provided by FEMA, and help construct any possible minor damages, if any at all. Many residents who owned homes received issuance payments and federal disaster assistance, which gave them the opportunity to rebuild their homes, or if louisiana road home program and FEMA (The Federal Emergency Management Agency) gave

money to homeowners to return and rebuild or sell and relocate their homes (Fussell 2015). While this decision was helpful for many residents, it didn't benefit all. This was an easy decision for someone like Jackson, because he didn't have to fully start over, unlike Jean who couldn't return back to her original home and was unfortunately homeless for some time.

III. Stereotypes

When displacement occurred, many people were expected to settle in different cities around the world, making the best out of the worst situation. Quickly residents found that these cities were nothing like New Orleans. While some residents were welcomed with open arms, others were negatively stereotyped, especially through the media. The media portrayed negative connotations for how New Orleans residents acted or represented, therefore resulting in stereotypes. This section will discuss different negative encounters residents experienced and how these encounters impacted their everyday life.

After Hurricane Katrina occurred, many residents questioned why so many people were stuck in the city for so long, and if this was the product of a racial situation. The city portrayed many African American residents as looters and thieves within these five days of being trapped in the city, whereas whites during this time were categorized as people just trying to survive. One question that seems to continue to rise is if there were more white residents present in the city during this time rather than African Americans as shown through the media, would it have taken as long to evacuate residents outside the city? Through the media, New Orleans residents felt a form of disownment, because "there was the connotation that... [we] were a refugee. Umm

which was actually an very inaccurate statement or a description of us. Ahh then you became an evacuee,...so there were all of these different titles that were applied to the people who were going through an enormous amount of strain, stress, and trauma that most people unless you've experienced it can fathom," Jackson says. For many residents displaced by the results of Hurricane Katrina, this label didn't necessarily make sense. A refugee by definition is defined as a person who comes to the United States from a different country, such as immigrants. In this case New Orleans residents shouldn't have been labeled in such a way seeing that they weren't forced, nor escaped from a different country and traveled to the United States. New Orleans residents forcefully migrated due to a hurricane, as well as the deconstruction of the levee system. Unfortunately, this connotation went on for a long period of time, and was hard to take in for many residents.

Aniyah seems to agree with this statement by affirming "for a lot of people, the news media kept referring to people from New Orleans as refugees, that was the worst thing. You know when your thinking refugees, your thinking umm people that are not United States citizens" When evaluating the definition highlighted above, Aniyah is correct and has all rights to feel upset for the ways in which she and many other residents were treated. Aniyah goes on to highlight this wasn't something that occurred for a short period of time, it went on for a while. She says "it took time for them...to stop calling on us refugees. So like wherever you went for help or assistance, get help, that's what, how they would refer to you, as refugees." With this being said, while many residents were thankful for the assistance they received, they may not have necessarily felt accepted. Since they were already portrayed negatively through the media, and by many others it became somewhat difficult for New Orleans residents to feel accepted by others. How can you be expected to settle into a new environment if you're not accepted there?

Cassidy goes on to highlight this connotation's presence from the perspective of being a college student in Baton Rouge. She says, "I was... in Baton Rouge and listening to some people talk in the bathroom... in the stall and they were like calling... us refugees which I was like not fleeing a war. That's not actually the correct word but I was like it was just this sense of we, this was just not our place." With this being said, many people felt a sense of not belonging or being accepted in other places, compared to New Orleans, thus leading to reasons for wanting to return back to the city.

Another way in which this is seen is through Jean's perspective when she highlights how many people from New Orleans were "labeled as being stupid, ignorant, incompetent, thieves." These stigmas may also have resulted in the ways in which the media portrayed them in a very negative image to the rest of the world. For example, many New Orleanians residents were labeled as looters since the media visualized them stealing food and clothing from stores. Many people didn't look at the perspective from the residents stuck in the city for doing such actions. Residents were stuck in the city for three days to a week without any assistance, so looting stores was their only means of survival at the time. Due to the way in which the media portrayed New Orleans residents, some people from other cities or states outside of New Orleans didn't want New Orleans residents there in fear of actions such as looting would occur.

IV. Religion: Faith vs. Fear

After the storm ended, many residents didn't know how to deal with their problems on their own, so they relied on their religious beliefs as a source of guidance. In some cases,

residents relied on their religion by praying to God during struggling times, and in others they thanked God for helping endeavor their challenges thus far. Since each resident's displacement looked somewhat different from the next, I've found that each resident's religious relations also differed. This section will discuss an emotional aspect many residents had and how they used their religion to get through hard times. This section will also discuss the ways in which residents used their religion as a source of strengthening themselves when they fell broken down.

When interviewing each resident from New Orleans, they were each asked questions in relation to how life was after the storm occurred. Regardless of the struggles each resident went through, they found a sense of hope within their religion. There was a sense of joy created, making it easier for many residents at the time to see a brighter side through their troubling situations. For many people these struggles included looking at the news, observing there was currently nothing to come back to in New Orleans, and figuring out next steps from building up from nothing to something. Before Hurricane Katrina occurred many residents like Aniyah hesitated on leaving before the storm hit the city. At first, like many other residents, Aniyah didn't leave and talks about her experience prior to the storm hitting as being fearful of surviving as she says, "all I kept saying was father God please don't let, I mean I was literally on my knees praying." Aniyah uses her religion as a means of protection through her troubling times. She goes on to continue to emphasize this motion of fear through her words. She says, "I'm saying like Lord this is how we're gonna die because the water steady coming up and even though you go upstairs on the second floor what's gonna, this how I'm thinking because I'm looking at the water outside and stuff and I'm saying what if the water come in if the water come up" Aniyah was in a position where she had to make quick decisions to not only protect herself but also her family at the time and used her sense of religion as a form of guidance and also clarity through

her current fear. Aniyah didn't know what to do at that moment, but leaned on what she knew to get through her troubling times. Happily, her conversation with God, along with her family convinced her to leave for the storm in a reasonable manner where everyone was safe and protected from the damages Hurricane Katrina caused. While Aniyah's beliefs helped protect her in the case of Hurricane Katrina, unfortunately this wasn't the case for everyone during the time.

While Aniyah used her beliefs to help her make decisions prior to the storm hitting, Jackson's belief in faith appeared when talking about life after the storm. After the storm, life was a struggle for many displaced people, but Jackson believes "at the end of the day I'm a man of faith. Whoever I'm supposed to meet, I'm supposed to meet. Wherever I'm supposed to be, I'm supposed to be. The challenges Ima deal with that's what Ima deal with." Jackson believes he has no control of his life, and whatever happens in it, happens with a purpose. Since we can't control life, we must make the best of what we are given. While there will be some challenges that throw us off our path sometimes, it's up to us to get back on our feet and make the best out of a worse situation. Jackson goes on to emphasize "my faith tells me I'm supposed to be doing what I'm supposed to be doing." He believes our paths are not always up to us to be controlled. Sometimes it has to be placed into God's hands, and you have to let him guide you. Jackson believes a storm such as Hurricane Katrina can't determine your entire path in life, the path that's created for is meant to be created and developed, but we don't have all the solutions. The path taken in life unfortunately is never planned, it's only evolved regardless if the results turn out to be negative or positive.

Similar to Jackson's construction of religion, Michelles also highlights how her religion was expressed after the storm ended, and she evacuated out of the city. She states, "I'm about solutions and not problems. How can we push through?... [I] have a lot of family support, so to

me again I'm one of those strong individuals who you can't take my faith." For Michelle, and many others her religious beliefs, along with her family helped push through her struggling times. She believes similar to Jackson, you can't dwell on the situation you're put in, you can only make the best out of your situation. Michelle goes on to talk about her feelings in relation to being alive, and unlike many others she had a home to go back to after the storm ended. Michelle says "I was one of the people that was blessed that my house was still here." After Hurricane Katrina, when residents were allowed to return back to the city, they didn't know what to expect. As mentioned earlier the storm was imaged to be like any other typical storm that caused damage to the city, but didn't result in lengthy displacement for residents. Hurricanes were always something people could recover from. When Hurricane Katrina happened, the complete opposite occurred. This wasn't a storm people could just pick up from and keep moving, but one's beliefs, hopes, and prayers help keep people striving for things to eventually get better.

Jean's religious beliefs are present when she talks about her overall struggle evacuating with three very small children, two of them being babies. Jean struggles to figure out her path in life at the time and chooses to lean on her religious beliefs by saying "all you could [do was] hope, praise, and [lean on] Jesus." Jean was in a position in life like many other people, when she didn't know what to do and how to do it, but she leaned on her religious beliefs similar to Michelle as a form of guidance to help her through. Michelle goes on to highlight that "I did what I had to do and I prayed for better days." Michelle, like many others, was starting life over from absolutely nothing, trying their best to make ends meet. While she may not have made all the right decisions, she did their best to do so. With this being said, Jean's thoughts with religion relate back to Michelle's beliefs of not dwelling on our negative impacts but evolving from them. Furthermore, if you continue to dwell on the past, how can you evolve into the future?

Joshua at the time of the storm was stuck in the city, but similar to Jackson his religious beliefs tend to appear after displacement from the city. He says that “I mean [I was] thankful I was alive but it was still like a day by day... adjustment.” Joshua highlights there were a large number of barriers for not only himself, but also his family after the storm, but assures us that people were still able to make decisions to improve their lives for the better. These advances may have taken months, maybe even years but with consistency and determination, life improved. Last but not least, New Orleans resident Katie who evacuated prior to the storm, spoke about going through a medical surgery that caused her to be disabled at the time of the storm. While this was a challenge that caused many problems after the storm, she decided to still keep her faith through it all. Katie says, “I would say life was good. Being blessed by the lord being here, so life was great.” (5) For many residents, religion was expressed in the form of just being thankful to be alive, because many residents' family members and friends didn't make it through the storm, but for those who did they were grateful for life. With any and all complications Katie went through prior to and after the storm, life was a challenge overall with things she couldn't control but decided to look on the brightside. Katie is thankful for the life she still has today.

Furthermore, everyone eventually travels down a tough path in life, regardless if they can or cannot control it, but it's up to you to make the best out of your incoming challenges. For many residents in New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina was a battle many people didn't choose to fight with, but used their religion as a source of guidance and hope to make it through. Something my mom always told me growing up when I was going through something very difficult was, “I am stronger than I think I am.” In a situation like Katrina, this statement holds a lot of weight and power for many residents in New Orleans during this time. No one in New Orleans knew their lives would flash before their eyes, being completely different forever. While

this challenge was evaluated as a set back for many people, many people also develop ways to advance through their struggles. Earlier on I asked the question, why did residents decide to return back to New Orleans after experiencing displacement for such a long period of time, and religion doesn't necessarily answer this question but it creates a bond that holds people together in the hopes that things will eventually get better.

Chapter 4: Returning Back

I. Life Differd

After eighteen years have passed since Hurricane Katrina made landfall in New Orleans, many residents have moved on with their lives never to look back at the past. In this section, I allowed residents to sit down and evaluate their life structure and what it may have looked like if Hurricane Katrina never occurred. Eighteen years later would residents still be in the same position they are today, or would their life be completely different? What would New Orleans look like if the levee system was never deconstructed, and the government had a proper evacuation plan. Would residents have made many of the same decisions prior to Hurricane Katrina? This section will evaluate my participants' responses to these questions, as well as their overall feelings pertaining to Hurricane Katrina.

One of the last questions I asked my participants was if Hurricane Katrina never occurred, where would you be, and would your life be different and why? I was surprised to see that the majority of my participants predicted their lives to be somewhat similar to how it is now. Cassidy for example, doesn't necessarily know how her path would've turned out, although she says "I'll like to think I probably [would have] still ended up where I am right now in terms of what I wanted with my career but cause I've always been on this track of what I wanted to do with my life, but it got derailed longer I think because of Katrina." Once again, Cassidy like many others path of life was interrupted by something that was not only unexpected but also uncontrollable. While her goals may have taken some extra time to reach because of these challenges, this doesn't mean they aren't possible. At the same time Cassidy seems to question if her life may have differed in some ways or another by saying "I think I would have been in some

sort of counseling position as I am not but now,” but because of these changes we may never know what life would be like or what situations people would be placed in.

Mia agrees with Cassidy by stating that she thinks her life would be very similar to what it was like before the storm. She goes on to say, “I think that I would still be in the place that where I am I feel to believe...I think I would probably still be living yea in a place that I’m in today, because I’m living back on the Westbank.” Mia believes her life would be fairly the same, the only difference she hoped for was to live back on the Westbank where most of her family lived in New Orleans, which she currently does. Compared to most residents, Joshua has a very special perspective for his life after Katrina since he was called back to his job relatively quickly, unloading ship car cages directly after the storm. Twenty years later Joshua is still employed doing the same work.

Joshua says, “I think ion think it would be too much difference, uhh because it’s like now the same stuff I do now I was doing before Katrina happened.” Joshua was one of many people who was fortunate to have a job to go back to after the storm to support his family. Joshua’s story is special compared to other people, because he was placed in a position where he put him and his family’s life in jeopardy to keep his job, and was successfully able to report back after the storm ended. Many people weren’t given this opportunity, which he was grateful for. Furthermore, Joshua believes if Katrina never occurred, his life would be roughly or almost the same. Aniyah agrees with Joshua entirely seeing that she experienced the same situation he did. She says, “It wouldn’t have differed because again like for myself I’m... still on the same career path you know that that umm I was on then. Similar to Joshua, she believed her life would’ve been fairly the same if Hurricane Katrina never occurred, because like Joshua she not only had a job to come back to, but also a home to return back to.

In addition, Michelle believes she would “probably still [be] right here in New Orleans, I would still be here in New Orleans because ... this is where my life is, not so much where my family is, but this is where my life is.” Michelle doesn’t necessarily know how her life would have turned out, but for sure knew that she wanted to return home. Eventually she made her way back after some time. On the other hand, John was very young at the time of the storm, but believes “I think I still probably would have been in the same position that I’m in just because I was so young when Katrina hit.” After the storm John returned back to New Orleans until he became older, making the decision to reside in Texas. While he didn’t necessarily know how his life would have turned out, he believes his path would have fairly been the same as it turned out to be.

Last but not least, prior to Hurricane Katrina, Jackson was in a position where he was trying to figure out where he wanted to be in life and what it looked like. Jackson highlights “there’s a real good chance you know that I would be just going along to get along. I might still be at the sheriff office... finishing with my degree. Umm might be at the sheriff’s office, might be doing something else, might be doing something different.” Jackson’s, similar to many other people, didn’t know what the results of his life would look like. He knew he wanted to finish his future at home, but didn’t necessarily know what his path looked like or how he would get there.

On the other hand, while some people believe their path after Hurricane Katrina may have looked very similar to before Hurricane Katrina, Jean believes otherwise. Jean believes her life would be entirely different. She says, “Actually the day Katrina hit was the day I was supposed to go to closing [for a house] on Cluid street, Cluid and Abundance in the ninth ward.” Jean believes she would be in a more financially stable position if it wasn’t for Hurricane Katrina, because she wouldn’t have to worry about the barriers of renting homes today along

with gentrification. She goes on to highlight that her life “would be fully different, possibly for the better because at one point I end up having to umm go on public assistance, public housing, umm that was miserable, horrible.” Jean shared some medical disadvantages with cancer that caused her to have an uncontrollable step back in life. She feels that if Hurricane Katrina never occurred, while she cannot prevent all medical disadvantages she may be more stable in life today. Last but not least, Jean believes she wouldn’t have income barriers, she would have better stability, and be able to finish the career path she always dreamt of. She says, “I feel like if the storm wouldn’t have hit I would’ve probably been that teacher and that nurse that I always wanted to be, desired to be.” She believes in some cases Hurricane Katrina prevented her from reaching these goals to her full standard, but she’s been able to reach these goals and become successful in other ways.

Specifically, looking at Jean’s story and her ongoing dilemma’s after the storm, I question once again, why did residents decide to return back to New Orleans after experiencing displacement for such a long period of time? For some residents like Joshua and Aniyah who had homes and employment to return back to, returning home was the best decision to support themselves and their family, but for residents like Jean this seemed to be the complete opposite. What makes Jean want to return home after losing everything she worked hard for, and having nothing to return back to?

II. Returning Home

Returning home for most New Orleans residents was something they hoped for, but unfortunately was easier said than done. When returning home many residents had to consider if

they had shelter, and other resources to return back. While this decision was easy for those who didn't receive much damage to their homes, it was somewhat difficult for those who did. This section will discuss the different implications residents endeavored when considering their thoughts for returning home. This section will also discuss some of the emotions residents felt when making this decision.

Returning back to New Orleans took a very long time for many people. For some people the decision to return back was decided without a doubt, although the time difference in which this process took differed. For some it took only a couple months, while for others it took years for them to finally return back home. For many people, returning home meant reminiscing about all of the horrible events that took place in the city on August 29th, 2005 when hundreds of residents were stuck in attics, on top of roofs, resulting to the Superdome, or unfortunately died. Jean elaborates on one of her first times returning back to the city as being extremely scary and nerve racking, by saying when the city first opened back up and people were able to access there damages, " it was just scary overall because we were told that whatever shoes or clothes that we came into the city with, throw em' away don't leave them out...I can't really remember but some kind of I can't remember diseases, and some kind germs were in the water." For Jean and many other people, seeing the city they loved so much broken down into pieces and having to treat it like unwanted garbage was heartbreaking.

Jackson goes on to highlight, "you could smell like decay. You could smell the sourness in the city, because of course you don't have proper electricity, so you don't have proper drains." Jackson and many other residents were shocked to see the city they once loved in such a disgusting state. Hurricane Katrina was "a massive contamination event, with oil, pesticides, fertilizers, and numerous other hazardous and toxic waste in the floodwaters migrating

throughout New Orleans, Saint Bernard Parish, the Lower Ninth Ward, and the Lakeview area” (Brunsma et al. 2016). This toxic waste was also known as toxic gumbo due to the amount of oil and toxic chemicals displayed throughout the city, specifically residents homes. Jackson goes on to describe the Hurricane Katrina storm as a lot to take in when he says,

You see furniture stunned all about. You see ceiling fans drooped from the heat. You see the watermark and mud. There was literally a rug stuck to the ceiling. It was a lot. And I’m looking at a china cabinet that had been purchased by my great great-grandmother with her legal rations and looking at my family history as it decays... has kind of a obiserrated under Katrina water and it's a lot to take in and it was an emotional moment. When we drove up to our neighbors Mr. Jimmy and Ms. Patt kept a little a lil boat in their ally uhh on the side of their house. Well when the water came in the boat floated and ended up on the other side of the fence hung over by our house. So it was just- it’s a lot of imagery and pieces- a lot of pieces and then you see the cross. The x of the cross uhh by the rescue teams as they have gone into houses and then you see at the bottom of those x’s either 0. That denotes how many bodies were in that house.

For Jackson and many others, he watched what may have been known as his home, his history, his life turned upside down never to be the same again. The X Jackson described was an indication of a rescue team coming in to search homes destroyed by Hurricane Katrina after the storm. A big X was spray painted on the outside of the house. On the left side of the X would be the rescue squad's name, the top indicates the time and date when the rescue squad came in, the right side indicated if any hazard or horror was found, and at the bottom of the X indicated how many bodies were found inside the house. So you might ask, after everything each and everyone of these residents saw when inspecting their homes, what makes prior New Orleans residents

want to return back? Why did residents return back to such a dangerous, destroyed, and toxic city after being displaced for such a long period of time?

For each and every resident their situation for deciding to return back looks somewhat different, but all resulted in New Orleans being a city they loved and considered home. One example of this is seen through Malik's story. After being stuck in the city for days, and forcefully migrating. Malik emphasizes his reason for wanting to return to New Orleans as something that was missing. Malik he says,

I wanna say in Arkansas somewhere...where we went. I forgot what part of Arkansas they brought us to the first time, but they had wind up bringing us to Winewheel Arkansas after they Ion know... It was some type of military base they brought us to when we first went out there. I forgot what place it was, but after that they wind up ...bringing us to Pineway Arkansas. We stood out in a shelter out there for about three weeks I want to say. Then they brought us to Little Rock to another shelter, wind out staying out there for probably a month, then after that, they had wind up giving us like a house to live in, but I left from out there I didn't like it.

While Malik highlighted he and his family were eventually supported through evacuation out of the city after almost a week, they were taken to random places that didn't necessarily feel like home. Malik goes on to emphasize, "Ohh, I feel like I left something, it's my roots, it's where I come from. I'd just rather be here than anywhere else." For Malik and many other residents from New Orleans, he grew up associating one main place as home, and that was New Orleans. While the city as a whole did experience a lot of challenges at the time of the storm, New Orleans was still home for a lot of people. Last but not least Malik highlights that it took him a long time when he says, "yea, it was probably I wanna say almost seven months to a year before I came

back, but he knew it was a goal for him to make it back to New Orleans which he eventually did after some time. Furthermore, Malik's reason for returning back to the city consists of him missing the one place he loved and considered home. For many people, including myself, New Orleans is a very unique place that isn't like many others.

Jean has a very special outlook on Hurricane Katrina, because she moved back to the city for two reasons. The first reason dealt with her being forced to move back to the city due to a custody battle with her oldest child's father, and the second dealt with overall missing home. When Jean evacuated, she evacuated with two of her children and the third traveling with her father. After Katrina Jean says, "I was forced to move back to New Orleans...because they told me that's where she was born and raised at and that's where she would be residing at until she was of age and if I wanted to see her I had to move to New Orleans so I had to make the option: do I come back to New Orleans and have joint custody with her father or do I continue residing up North?" Jean goes on to highlight that at this time in life, she felt like she was just getting back on her feet and didn't know what to do. She originally didn't want to move back to New Orleans, because she felt as if she'd just reached a form of stability, but eventually decided that she loved her daughter more, and decided to return back. When Jean returned back to New Orleans, she lived in an abandoned home with her children, and didn't have much family support around her, but knew she needed to make some sacrifices in order to be with her daughter.

In addition, Jean says, "also what helped me make up my mind in reference to returning back is I began to feel like I was Dorthy off the Wizard of Oz. There's no place like home." (4) Similar to Malik's story, she missed home and the many things she loved that weren't present in other places, such as the food and culture. She highlights "no one treated you like the southern hospitality that you get from New Orleans, the way people said good morning, how you doin'".

Umm the new neighborhoods might bake a cake and welcome you into the community. You didn't have that. You didn't have the seafood. You didn't have the camellia red beans, you didn't have the Double D smoke sausage, you didn't have the Patton hot sausages, you didn't have the seafood. No one knew what a second line was, they didn't understand the culture. No one knew what Mardi Gras parades were." For Jean and many other residents, their displacements consist of adjusting to a place they didn't always consider home. While many people were able to create a form of stability in their new home, Jean emphasizes it just didn't feel like home. There were a lot of things that were missing that you were unable to get anywhere else, and for that reason Jean decided to return home.

Katie openly says, "We'll there's no place like home. I missed New Orleans and I wanted to get back." Katie, like many others, was uprooted from a city she loved with all her heart unaware of when she would be able to return home and when. While she emphasizes that she openly missed New Orleans, this wasn't her only reason for returning. Katie says, "well I came back to New Orleans because after everything was back up and running [I returned back] because I had doctors appointments at the time dealing with my surgery. The brain surgery I had." Katie's main reason for returning home was for medical reasons she was dealing with prior to the storm occurring. While she really missed New Orleans, her main reason for traveling back to the city was for doctors appointments pertaining to her previous surgery. Katie goes on to highlight that it took her awhile to return back to the city like many other people, but she had medical needs she needed to attain at the time. Since she had her surgery in New Orleans, that's where she returned for her remaining doctor appointments and check ups. In addition, Katie says it took "about three years the max" for her to finally return back to the city after staying away for a long period of time.

Cassidy at the time was at the early stages of understanding what it means to be considered an adult. At the time, she was a college student trying to figure out who she was and where she wanted to be. While Cassidy may have been in a difficult stage trying to figure out her future path, she emphasizes, “there was never a doubt that I was coming back to New Orleans. This is where I’m from, where I belong and I don’t know how to not come back.” Cassidy believed there was nothing that could keep her away from the home she loved so much. While the city as a whole went through a lot from Hurricane Katrina at the time, she knew New Orleans was her home, and that’s where she was always meant to be.

While everyone knew something horrible occurred in the city, Cassidy highlights the amount of joy residents expressed when they were finally able to return back. While the city may not have been completely functioning, there was a sense of joy for residents to just be home. Cassidy says, “those first few weeks, few months when people finally returned home and people were coming back and there... was a lot of joy there...because everybody was just excited to be back home. Those couple months of fear and uncertainty for a lot of people vanished when they returned back home. While the city was still under reconstruction for a long time, many people saw a sense of hope when they returned back. Cassidy emphasizes the amount of joy expressed when the city reopened, in “that year the Superdome reopening, the Saints, Mardi Gras happening against all odds, like seeing people... were just so happy to be home and to be there and that just brought me so much joy, like there was nothing [like] the very first time I came back to New Orleans.” Cassidy emphasizes not only a sense of excitement, but also security for residents to return home and enjoy the things they missed.

Aniyah believes her main reason for returning home was stability. Unlike many other residents, she had a home as well as employment to return back to. Aniyah says, “you know how

you asked the question what made you come back, and I said well for me I had something to come back to, other people who came back, they came back because New Orleans is all they know.” Aniyah was thankful to have a home to return back to after the storm because many people didn't have anything to return back to at all. She believed it was easier to return back home and start back off where she left from, rather than uprooting her entire family and starting over. Aniyah says, “we didn’t get any...no water damage or anything so it really was an easy decision so like hey come on back home and...I still had a job to come back to. In Aniyah’s case, moving back to New Orleans was the best decision for not only herself but also her family seeing that she was still financially stable, while also having a stable and safe environment to return back to after the storm.

In addition, like many other residents displaced after Hurricane Katrina, Aniyah missed home, and wanted nothing more at the time than to return back to the city she loved and adored so much. She talks about her and her family traveling back and forth to the city after it reopened by stating, “if the weather permitted, we would just come back to New Orleans just to sit on the porch you know for a couple hours and stuff, and me, and my dad, and my daughter and then before you know the curfew came head back to Baton Rouge. So...I would say at least three, four times a week.” It’s very obvious that Aniyah felt like something was clearly missing in her and her family's lives that they were restricted from at the time. While she couldn’t live in the city at this time, she visited often and spent every moment possibly she could before leaving back out for the curfew. Last but not least Aniyah says “I always said New Orleans is my home.” Aniyah had an attachment to the city that couldn’t keep her away despite the disaster the city currently went through at the time. While Aniyah like many others didn’t know when she would be able to return, she knew returning home was her overall goal.

Mia highlights her main reason for returning back to the city was to support her family after the storm. She says, “I returned back because again, my mother had her house, her and my father. My daddy was a little ...older so...[I] return[ed] back ... to help to basically help them get back on their feet as well and to be closer to them, cause I always said I wouldn’t want to leave and live anywhere else, why because they’re up in age.” Mia knew returning home meant she would be closer to her loved ones. This was something extremely important to her, as well as helping one another reach a form of stability once again. Similar to Aniyah, another reason Mia returned back to the city was because of employment. She highlights “the other good thing was that my job was still available so I was able to pick, that was some part of being back, being back normal.” At this time it seems employment wasn’t something Mia and many others took for granted. Having employment meant that she would be closer to home and closer to reaching stability. While Mia’s path may have not been the easiest, her main reasons for returning home were family and employment.

Joshua agrees with Aniyah and Mia when he highlights his main reason for returning home was employment. Joshua emphasizes after the storm ended, he didn’t spend too much time compared to many other residents from the city since “my job called and asked me ... did I want [to] come back to work and my wife told me go back to work.” Joshua highlights how this decision to return to work and being separated from his family was difficult, but he knew he had to do what was best in the interest of supporting his family. In addition, Joshua says “when I got the phone call asking me did I want to come back to work, I didn’t hesitate but you know, just at that time it made sense to you know go to work.” One of the hardest things a lot of people noticed after the storm was that while Hurricane Katrina stopped a lot of things occurring in New Orleans, it didn’t prevent the rest of the world from moving on. Joshua like many others still had

responsibilities he needed upheld, despite his current challenges. Residents who were required to return back after the storm for employment were required to live in hotels, on cruise ships, or in college dormitories until homes were relivable again. (Fussell 2018). Furthermore, Joshua's main reason for returning home was in the best interest of supporting his family.

Michelle starts off explaining her reason for returning back to New Orleans, by emphasizing her love for the city in different ways, one of these reasons including family. She says her reason for returning back to the city was "because this is my home and I wasn't ready to just move on and say hey I'm not moving back to New Orleans. I had a daughter, I had a son who wanted to be back... in the city. I had a daughter who wanted to go to Dillard University, so I came back." While it took some time for Michelle to finally move back to New Orleans completely, she decided traveling back and forth, similar to Aniyah, was best in supporting her children's future education. Michelle says, "I traveled back and forths because I had a son out here and a daughter in Baton Rouge who was a senior so I came home on the weekends to check on my son, ...during the weekdays I stayed in Baton Rouge because she was graduating from high school." While the decision may have been somewhat difficult or what some may consider as bitter sweet, Michelle decided to send her son back to New Orleans with family to continue his middle school education at the time, while she stayed in Baton Rouge to support her oldest child graduate high school. While she was separated from one of her children at the time, she made consistent trips back and forths to the city for about four months, continuing to support her son in the best ways possible at the time.

Michelle goes on to highlight "the fact that I live in a area where...you have second-lines and parties and events right there, I... see a point in just a lot of culture, so that what kind of drives me to stay and that's what drives a lot of people who don't want to leave New Orleans,

they always want to come back and even if they do they come back for all the big events. So you have people here for Mardi Gras, you have people here for all of the balls when it's time for ...Mardi Gras season so it's just a lot of culture that comes, Jazz Fest, Essence so that's what people come back to." Michelle highlights the importance of the culture represented in the city, not only before Hurricane Katrina but also currently not still till this day. It's something that keeps a lot of people here, and drives many people originally from the city along with lots of tourists to return back. For Michelle, while returning back to the city may have been a challenge, she accomplished many things along the way to future success for herself and her family. One of these things being, her oldest daughter, later on attended and graduated from Dillard University. Furthermore, Michelle's main reason for returning back to the city was her culture and love for the city.

Zaniyah, one of the younger participants I interviewed, highlights her family's decision to move back to New Orleans didn't necessarily have anything to do with her seeing that she was very young at the time. While she didn't have any input in this decision, Zaniyah knew her decision to move back had to do with being closer to the rest of her family. She says, "my mom ...was determined to get back just to be closer to family, and you know kind of get back to our normal lives in New Orleans." Like many others stated above, Zaniyah's also viewed family as a very important component to moving back to the city. Many people once again wanted to reunite with the ones they loved and cared about so deeply. She goes on to say, "we decided to come back mainly because of family,...my mom just couldn't be too far away from my grandmother and my grandfather." Earlier on, Zaniyah's mentioned her mother left her grandmother behind in the storm, and felt very guilty for doing so. The one thing Zaniyah and her family hoped for the

most was reuniting with her loved ones after being separated for so long. Furthermore, Zaniyah's main reason for returning home was for family.

Finally, John, another participant who was very young at the time of Hurricane Katrina, says, "I ended up going to New Orleans to go stay with my aunt and my cousin in that November. I think... I went to Samuel J. Green Middle School and... I didn't have my full parental supervision." For John, similar to Zaniyah at the time, he didn't make many of the decisions for returning back to the city because he was very young at the time. John's mother saw it being in his best interest to be in the environment he was raised in. In John's eye's at such a young age he saw this as an opportunity to improve his grades at the time and be back with a lot of his friends. John says, "I remember wanting to go back to New Orleans, because I remember my report card was bad and I didn't want to get in trouble." John at the time, similar to Zaniyah, seemed to only understand so much about Hurricane Katrina, and in John's case decided to return back to the city in spite of not getting in trouble. He goes on to say, "well I immediately went back because I was scared my mom was gon...whoop me after my report card, so I told her I was just going to go back to New Orleans (chuckle) by my family." While John was very young at the time and was limited to the things he may have understood in the events upon Hurricane Katrina, he became extremely successful as a result. John currently resides in Texas, although there seems to be something that always attracts him back to the city year after year. John was originally born and raised in New Orleans, and still has a lot of family in New Orleans which is one reason that continues to attract him home. Furthermore, John's main reason for returning home was his culture, and family.

For many residents, returning back to New Orleans after the storm wasn't the easiest to decide. Some people didn't have homes, or employment to return back to after the storm,

unfortunately increasing their displacement's length. Each participant I interviewed, all told a unique story about their separation from New Orleans, but their driving connection reuniting them back after months or years of displacement. Some of these reasons included culture, family, employment, or their homes receiving limited damage if any. While these reasons drove some residents to return back to New Orleans quickly, for others this process unfortunately looked much longer. For some residents it may have taken them a month to return back to the city, while for others it took up to three years. While each of these residents went through horrible disadvantages in 2005, there seems to be nothing that could change their decision to return back to the city they loved and cared for. At the end of the day New Orleans is and will always be considered home.

Conclusion

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall onto New Orleans causing detrimental destruction to the city and many residents lives. Hurricane Katrina was labeled a Natural Disaster storm due to its high surge winds, along with its dangerous level of water inflowing and towering over the city. While some may agree with the statement Hurricane Katrina was a Natural Disaster, others may argue otherwise. Hurricane Katrina was a man-made disaster due to the improper maintenance of the infrastructure of the levee system, as well as the lack of preparation orders announced by government officials. Hurricane Katrina is a story replayed over and over again in many different forms. While there are no storms that can compare to Hurricane Katrina, many have similar after effects, such as Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Galveston, and Hurricane Otis. Two out of the three storms mentioned in this paper occurred years after Hurricane Katrina, which gave government officials ample time to create an appropriate evacuation plans. Unfortunately the government failed once again due to the results of Hurricane Katrina with their negligence to protect the citizens of New Orleans.

When the Hurricane Katrina storm occurred, it was estimated to have “the build environment rebuild, replace, or improved-would last 8-11 years” (Fussell 2018). If the city has been estimated to take this long to recover completely, once again the question is asked: Why did residents decide to return back to New Orleans after experiencing displacement for such a long period of time? Today we are in the year 2023 which means the Hurricane Katrina storm occurred eighteen years ago, but doesn’t mean the problem has necessarily been fixed. I currently still reside in New Orleans with my immediate family, experiencing first hands many of the problems New Orleans residents still experience. While we haven’t had any problems with the infrastructure of the levee system since Hurricane Katrina, many residents fear if we have a

storm like it again will we be prepared? Last year Hurricane Ida made landfall onto New Orleans, and many people described it as Hurricane Katrina without the water. While Hurricane Ida was a horrible storm, it still didn't compare to the 2005 Hurricane Katrina storm. Many people were negatively impacted by Hurricane Ida, once again displaced from their homes, but were able to return back in a shorter amount of time compared to when Hurricane Katrina occurred.

No matter what happens in New Orleans, there seems to be an attachment to why residents decide to return back. Some of these reasons include family, employment, a home to return back to, and most importantly culture. Many residents who evacuated for Hurricane Katrina felt New Orleans was their home, and there was no other place like it. As Malik stated earlier, "it's my roots, and where I'm from." (3) New Orleans is a very unique place that's surrounded with joy and happiness, regardless of the things people may encounter. Furthermore, to answer the question, why did residents decide to return back to New Orleans after being displaced for a long period of time? The answer simply is because it is home. Many participants felt even after being displaced for a long time, there was no place that felt like home like New Orleans. No matter what challenges they may face that separates them from New Orleans, that will forever be their home and they will strive to keep it that way.

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