



## **AFTER THE DELUGE: FIGHTING THE IMPACTS OF KATRINA AND RITA**

**A Report from  
The Twenty-First Century Foundation**

**January, 2007**

### **A Nation's Failure**

After September 11, 2001, the biggest terrorist attack in our history, the White House created the Federal National Response Plan to better react to terrorism and other large-scale challenges.

Yet inexplicably, the government found itself incapable of preparing for or dealing with the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, even with ample warning from the meteorological community. Governmental indifference, incompetence and neglect allowed these storms to become the most devastating natural disaster in the history of the United States—a “perfect storm” of catastrophes that illustrated systemic racism and marginalization of the poor.

As a direct result, Katrina was America's first disaster, natural or human-made, to approach the *\$100 billion dollar mark* in estimated damages. Among the other horrifying impacts of this failure:

- Over 1,300 Gulf Coast residents were killed and over 2,000 others were reported missing (most of the people killed and missing were over 60 years old);
- Approximately 80% of New Orleans was flooded underneath 6-20 feet of water;
- The storm devastated almost 93,000 square miles across 138 parishes and counties;
- An estimated 1.85 million housing units were destroyed or damaged by the storm;
- Around 1.1 million people were displaced from their homes; six months after the storm, approximately half of those who were evacuated had still not returned;
- The unemployment rate soared as high as 28%;
- Over 25,000 businesses throughout the region have suffered;
- Approximately 60.3 million cubic yards of debris will need to be removed; and
- Roughly 1/3 of hospitals and schools are still closed.

The scales of economic loss may someday be balanced. But *there can be no recompense for the loss of human life and the disintegration of homes, memories and spirits that have afflicted hundreds of thousands of people*—primarily Black and poor Americans who were unable to escape the storms' wrath, or care for themselves in the chaos that followed.

## The Twenty-First Century Foundation Responds

*“You couldn’t watch your TV and not be moved into action.”*

--Erica Hunt, President, 21CF

The Twenty-First Century Foundation (21CF) has long been in the vanguard of championing Black philanthropy to create strategic and systemic change. Within days after the first storm made landfall, 21CF had created the **Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund** to provide targeted grants focused on relief, recovery, and rebuilding.

Ten days later, the Fund’s first grants were distributed.

The extraordinary speed of this distribution was possible because of 21CF’s network of past and present grantees and allies in the South. “Thanks to these relationships, we were able to quickly identify and reach those in greatest need,” says 21CF Program Director Rev. John Vaughn.

Since then,

- The Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund has made \$1.3 million in grants to 84 organizations (135 grants total) since its inception in September 2005 to proven organizations throughout Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi, and to national organizations committed to rebuilding the Gulf Coast.
- These grants have directly improved over 250,000 people’s lives
- And—through its support for New Orleans community-based organizations that are successfully advocating for a more transparent and inclusive city-wide community planning process—21CF’s efforts will help speed the release of federal dollars targeted for rebuilding.

21CF has created several partnerships as result of the work of the Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund:

- **Gulf South Allied Funders (GSAF)** is an alliance of progressive donors formed in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and the ensuing chaos of their aftermaths. GSAF members have committed to raising \$3 million, to be granted by 21CF, to fund equitable rebuilding while addressing the local and national implications of the ongoing catastrophes in the Gulf Coast. Participating networks include members of Resource Generation, Women Donors Network and Threshold.
- The **United Jewish Appeal** has donated to the Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund, affirming its reliance on 21CF’s ability to deliver resources to the communities that need them most, through the organizations that are best prepared to help.

Additionally, 21CF has built cooperative foundation partnerships with:

- Ford Foundation
- Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation
- Open Society Institute
- Oxfam America
- Ms. Foundation for Women
- Southern Partners Fund
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation

***Our gratitude extends to all of our gracious contributors,  
and to all who have supported and continue to support a just recovery in the Gulf.***

21CF engages in other actions of vital importance for post-Katrina recovery and rebuilding:

- Helped catalyze the formation of the STEPS Coalition—a group of more than 40 organizations promoting cooperative, proactive and equitable rebuilding strategies along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. STEPS recently got the state of Mississippi to double the federal dollars being provided to lower-income homeowners to rebuild their homes—from \$50,000 to \$100,000.
- Convened thirty New Orleans community-based organizations to explore creating a coalition for collaborative, strategic civic engagement.
- Has initiated the organization of a summit with Biloxi’s non-profit leaders, city government and local casinos to explore possible ground on equitable rebuilding and affordable housing.
- Co-founded and Co-chair a powerful coalition of over 100 foundations and individual donors, Gulf Coast Funders. Originally formed by 21CF’s Program Director, the group’s activities have grown from a monthly conference call to (1) mapping the flow of private philanthropic dollars into the Gulf Coast, (2) developing additional collaborative funding strategies, (3) creating a pool of funds targeted for rural efforts and new initiatives, (4) creating a philanthropic platform that engages foundations as advocates, and (5) identifying expanded funding opportunities in such areas as community organizing, mental health, and issues concerning immigrants and refugees.

All of these activities are possible because of the success of 21CF’s Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund.

## Focus on the Fund's Grantees

*“The support of 21CF allows us to tell the story of the people most impacted, and fight for justice for those who can’t speak loud enough on their own.”*

--Melissa Sawyer, Youth Empowerment Project,  
A Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund Grantee

While government turns its back on local needs, the sheer size of the region’s challenges has threatened to overwhelm many local non-profits. Organizations are struggling with the loss of office space, the relocation of staff members and damage to critical equipment.

For this reason, the majority of Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund grants have been *unrestricted*, so that they can be used for general support. Grantees have used 21CF grants to increase capacity, repair infrastructure, or expand outreach; to feed, cloth and house Gulf Coast residents; and to educate and influence key decision-makers to pursue a just rebuilding process.

Each of our Grantees is unique, each with their own history and mission that are as diverse as the needs they seek to address.

As you’ll see, however, what unites 21CF Grantees is their passion for social justice, and the tireless energy they bring to its pursuit.

## Providing Relief in the First Days

Many of the Fund’s first Grantees were Black churches, which were extremely active in the days after the Hurricane, serving as shelters, food banks, and command centers for volunteers.

To date, 15% of all grants from the Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund have gone to faith-based organizations such as these two:

*Immediately following the disaster, the 8<sup>th</sup> District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Jackson, Mississippi developed a series of response units throughout Mississippi and Louisiana to meet the immediate needs of survivors. Each center served as a place where families could access resources from the government, as well as public and private organizations including the American Red Cross and FEMA.*

*These response units partnered with local and national organizations to provide referrals for key social services. Anita Smith, Director of the Response Units, said, “The centers recognize the emotional impact of this disaster and are committed to acting as advocates and bridges between the population served and the community.”*

*To date, the centers have served approximately 30,000 lower-to-middle income African Americans, providing them with emergency food and financial resources, supplies and additional services. They have also delivered food, toiletries, and*

*household supplies to FEMA trailer sites. The 8<sup>th</sup> District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church hopes to maintain these long-term relief centers for at least the next three years.*

\* \* \*

*In Gulfport, Mississippi, the **Little Rock Missionary Baptist Church** used its 21CF grant to support their disaster relief center, which provided refuge for more than 50 families during the Hurricane. The church also created a tent city for families, and mobilized members of their congregation, who volunteered to clear debris and make essential repairs to homes. And church volunteers provided outreach to seniors and the disabled, assessing and meeting their needs.*

*In anticipation of the long-range community development challenge, the church has also created its own Katrina Relief Fund. “We must work to get roofs covered before the next storms come, and must purchase needed building materials,” said Rev. Lee Adams, Jr., Pastor. This initiative is joined by an online educational program, targeted to young people, that provides training and encourages them to take an active role in the rebuilding process.*

## **Housing--The Greatest Challenge**

The estimated \$67 billion dollars in damage to the Gulf Coast housing stock has resulted in all-too familiar discrimination against African Americans who are looking for new homes. A study by the National Fair Housing Alliance, completed after Katrina, found that black home seekers were:

- Treated less favorably than white evacuees 66% of the time
- Told that vacant, livable units were unavailable
- Denied special inducements, like lower security deposits, that were offered to white counterparts
- Charged more rent than white renters for the same property

And—in a stark flashback to the Civil Rights struggle—The Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, a 21CF Grantee, reported that signs declaring “Whites Only” appeared on homes in rural areas throughout the Gulf Coast.

21CF grantees like the NAACP of Mississippi are working to combat these conditions, but their efforts to involve local government have been discouraging:

*NAACP State President Johnson served as Vice Chair of Mississippi’s Rebuilding Commission, which developed an aggressive, statewide affordable housing agenda. The Commission’s recommendations went unheeded.*

*In addition, the NAACP put forth a 12-point rebuilding legislative agenda. Seven points of the agenda, including a controversial bill giving the legislature*

*oversight of federal rebuilding funds, were passed in the Mississippi House of Representatives—only to be vetoed by Governor Haley Barbour.*

Direct action by Grantees has often proved far more effective:

***Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS)** is tackling the housing problem in New Orleans. NHS is a 30-year old nonprofit focused on a holistic approach to community revitalization. Their goal is to reduce the number of substandard and vacant properties, and to increase homeownership for people who might not qualify through traditional means.*

***NHS's Beacon of Light Neighborhood Center** provides support, encouragement, and critically needed resources for residents whose homes and lives have been damaged. Open seven days a week, and staffed by a trained housing counselor who is able to originate loans and provide necessary referrals. The Beacon of Light Center also helps create financing packages that combine loans and grants.*

*For existing home owners, **NHS Construction Management** staff provide a wide range of rebuilding services, including technical advice to help families avoid being victimized by unscrupulous contractors. NHS plans to open 13 Beacon of Light Neighborhood Centers, one in each planning district of the city, and to offer residents and contractors much-needed meeting space to review building plans and to track the progress of construction.*

## **Protecting the Gulf's Eco-System**

Natural, as well as man-made eco-systems, are endangered, in part from years of neglect and compounded by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In the North Gulfport area of Mississippi, a 21CF Grantee is fighting to preserve a historic estuary that was first settled by African American freedmen following the Civil War.

*"It's hard to help people understand that everything we do impacts the health of the estuary," said Derrick Evans, founding Executive Director of the **Turkey Creek Community Initiative (TCCI)**, which is engaged in comprehensive revitalization of the area. TCCI is also providing relief efforts, and offers ongoing support related to cultural and environmental conservation, education, and community planning.*

*Because of concern that redevelopment might further harm the area's watershed, TCCI works with outside groups and volunteers to help better manage community efforts. One of their most innovative initiatives is a temporary camp for volunteer workers, established in partnership with Harrison County and Virginia Tech.*

*The lack of appropriate facilities to house volunteers from out of state had left the North Gulfport area—long the most disinvested and marginalized community in Mississippi—with few human resources. Now, with a volunteer camp that includes two 35-person sea-huts, six outdoor showers, two bathrooms, a kitchen*

*facility, and even wi-fi access, the city of Gulfport can work with willing volunteers to begin the reconstruction process while preserving a precious ecosystem.*

## **Reuniting Families with their Loved Ones**

A sad reality during the Hurricanes was that many people were unable to locate their loved ones including over 100,000 prisoners incarcerated throughout the Gulf Coast area. Not only were they unable to relocate during the storm, they also could not confirm that their family members were safe.

*One 21CF Grantee is addressing for the needs of Louisiana's youth, especially those involved, or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.. The **Family and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children (FFLIC)** worked during the Hurricane to confirm that families of their members had survived by searching recovery shelters. They also provided resources to relocate families, and advocated for member families to receive housing vouchers to leave the Astrodome and other shelters.*

*Today, FFLIC also works to collect the stories of people who suffered through the Hurricane, encouraging members to take an active role in the documentation process. "We're hoping to use this information to build demand for an independent review of the failings into the disaster," said Xochitl Bervera, Executive Director of FFLIC.*

## More than Money: How 21CF is Building for the Long Haul

### Building Coalitions Towards Recovery

Successful coalitions have the ability to engage residents, nonprofit organizations, politicians, private sector leaders and faith-based organizations in a comprehensive effort to achieve positive results. They are able to galvanize financial resources, ideas, people and commitment that magnify participants' efforts and better serve their constituents.

Here are just some of 21CF's coalition-building activities:

*In Gulfport and Biloxi, 21CF, Oxfam America (a global anti-poverty, hunger, and social justice organization) and the Southern Partners Fund (a public foundation that serves southern communities and organizations seeking social, economic, and environmental justice) co-convened a dialogue among local non-profit leaders that ultimately grew into the STEPS Coalition of 40 community organizations.*

*21CF, Oxfam and SPF also engaged a consultant to analyze the needs and issues facing black and poor communities along the Mississippi and Louisiana coast that were caught in the eye of the hurricane yet have received little-to-no-attention from the public or private sector.*

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*The New York Regional Association of Grantmakers' (NYRAG) Gulf Coast Recovery Task Force is a collaborative of over 40 New York-based funders and corporations that is co-chaired by 21CF President Erica Hunt. The Task Force created the "Donor's Guide to Gulf Coast Relief and Recovery," a comprehensive resource that distills information about the region's issues and provides advice on funding opportunities. The Gulf Coast Recovery Task Force also holds ongoing presentations about topical issues inflicting the Gulf Coast.*

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*Co-founded by 21CF's Program Director, Rev. John Vaughn, the Gulf Coast Funders, a coalition of over 50 institutional and individual funders, is (1) mapping the flow of private philanthropic dollars into the Gulf Coast, (2) developing collaborative funding strategies, (3) creating pooled funds targeted for rural efforts and new initiatives, and (4) creating a philanthropic platform that engages foundations as advocates.*

### Organizing Donors

One of 21CF's most important roles is to link individual donors' passions and interests to community needs in a way that is directed, empowering, and strategic, and to provide articulate and committed donors with hands-on experiences that increase their awareness of the multiple challenges in the Gulf Coast.

## Moving Forward: How You Can Help

### Support the Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund

Through your ongoing support for the Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund, you:

- Invest in real strategies that make real differences;
- Help mobilize political will to catalyze meaningful change, and
- Educate, encourage and influence decision-makers to implement equitable and fair rebuilding policies.

In addition to the groups described in this report, your support for the Fund benefits groups like:

- ***Coastal Women for Change*** in Biloxi, Mississippi—actively shaping the City’s rebuilding plans for East Biloxi
- ***ColorLines Magazine*** in New York City—telling the stories of struggle and hope that most mainstream media outlets are not conveying
- ***Louisiana Interfaith Together (PICO-LIFT)*** in Baton Rouge, Louisiana—organizing and advocating at the State level for policies that promote homecoming for all of coastal Louisiana’s citizens
- ***National Coalition on Black Civic Participation*** in Washington, DC—mobilizing voters for elections in Mississippi and Louisiana, and fighting for easy access to the voting process for all evacuees

### Leverage Your Giving

21CF has a strong track record of building strategic bridges between donors, grantees and the giving community. Our specialty is matching donors with the perfect philanthropic opportunity, and there are many ways for you to increase the power and impact of your gift. Among them:

- Many companies offer matching gift programs that will double or even triple the value of an employee’s donation
- If your employer has a company foundation, encourage them to support organizations and foundations that are focused on equitable rebuilding.
- Join with other friends or colleagues to create a donor-advised fund. A donor-advised fund allows philanthropists to take an active role in the grantmaking process by recommending charitable organizations to receive grants.

## Volunteer

Volunteers are still needed to assist in the rebuilding effort. Especially needed are people with construction skills, including general contractors, electricians, carpenters, and plumbers.

The following organizations post service opportunities:

- Volunteer Match ([www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org))
- Craig's List Katrina site ([www.craigslist.org/about/help/katrina.com](http://www.craigslist.org/about/help/katrina.com))
- Serve Net ([www.servenet.org](http://www.servenet.org))

## Stay Informed

### Reports:

Special Reports by Gulf Coast Reconstruction Watch, A Project of the Institute for Southern Studies/Southern Exposure, <http://www.southernstudies.org> and <http://reconstructionwatch.org>  
“The Mardi Gras Index: The State of New Orleans by Numbers Six Months after Hurricane Katrina” and “One Year After, The State of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast”

Oxfam America, “Forgotten Communities, Unmet Promises: An Unfolding Tragedy on the Gulf Coast”  
<http://www.oxfamamerica.org/>

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities “Meeting the Basic Needs of Hurricane Katrina Victims: Recommendations to Federal Policymakers,” September 9, 2005 [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)

“Special Edition of the Katrina Index: A One-Year Review of Key Indicators of Recovery in Post-Storm New Orleans,” Amy Liu, Matt Fellow, and Mia Mabanta; The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, August 2006 [www.brookings.edu/metro](http://www.brookings.edu/metro)

A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina - H. Rpt. 109

### Articles:

The Nation, September 18, 2006. Articles include: “Katrina One Year After;” “New Orleans Forsaken,” Gary Younge; “Grassroots Gumbo,” Chris Kromm; “Don’t Mourn, Link,” Michael Tisserand; and “Undone by Neoliberalism,” Adolph Reed, Jr.

The Nation, April 10, 2006. “Who Is Killing New Orleans?” Mike Davis

Dollars & Sense: The Magazine on Economic Justice, March/April 2006. Special Katrina Issue. Articles include: “Gone to Mississippi,” Ben Greenberg; “Activist Perspectives on Katrina: Three Interviews,” Ben Greenberg. Interviews: “Ground Zero of Someone Else’s Future: Mississippi Historian and Activist Derrick Evans;” “The Storm of Life after Katrina: East Biloxi Community Activist Jearlean Osborne;” and “Katrina Hits Cancer Alley: Environmental Justice Activist Monique Harden.”

“Letter from New Orleans: The Lost Year: Behind the Failure to Rebuild,” Dan Baum, The New Yorker, August 21, 2006

Books:

There Is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster: Race, Class, and Hurricane Katrina -Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires, editors

Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast - Mike Tidwell

The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast - Douglas Brinkley

1 Dead in Attic - Chris Rose

Breach of Faith: Hurricane Katrina and the Near Death of a Great American City – Jed Horne

Websites

The Advancement Project [www.advancementproject.org](http://www.advancementproject.org)

ACORN in New Orleans [www.acorn.org](http://www.acorn.org)

ColorLines Magazine [www.colorlines.org](http://www.colorlines.org)

Deep South Center for Environmental Justice [www.dscej.org](http://www.dscej.org)

Democracy Now [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)

Friends and Family of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children [www.fflic.org](http://www.fflic.org)

Friends of New Orleans [www.friendsofneworleans.org](http://www.friendsofneworleans.org)

Greater New Orleans Community Data Center [www.gnocdc.org](http://www.gnocdc.org)

Gulf Restoration Network [www.gulfrestorationnetwork.org](http://www.gulfrestorationnetwork.org)

Katrina Information Network [www.katrinaaction.org](http://www.katrinaaction.org)

Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity [www.kirwaninstitute.org](http://www.kirwaninstitute.org)

Louisiana Bucket Brigade [www.labucketbrigade.org](http://www.labucketbrigade.org)

The Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation [www.louisianahelp.org](http://www.louisianahelp.org)

Louisiana Environmental Action Network [www.leanweb.org](http://www.leanweb.org)

Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance [www.yourmira.org](http://www.yourmira.org)

Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights - [www.msworkerscenter.org](http://www.msworkerscenter.org)

Moore Community House [www.moorecommunityhouse.org/](http://www.moorecommunityhouse.org/)

National Radio Project [www.radioproject.org](http://www.radioproject.org)

NO/AIDS Task Force [www.noaidstaskforce.org](http://www.noaidstaskforce.org)

The Opportunity Agenda [www.opportunityagenda.org](http://www.opportunityagenda.org)

Steps: A Gulf Coast Recovery Coalition [www.stepsouthms.org](http://www.stepsouthms.org)

Southern Mutual Help Association, Inc. [www.southernmutualhelp.org/](http://www.southernmutualhelp.org/)

Turkey Creek Community Initiatives [www.turkey-creek.org/](http://www.turkey-creek.org/)

United Houma Nation [www.unitedhoumanation.org](http://www.unitedhoumanation.org)

*To learn more about the  
Hurricane Katrina Recovery Fund  
and The Twenty-First Century Foundation  
contact us at: 212-662-3700 or [www.21CF.org](http://www.21CF.org)*