

**Previously On Piety**  
**A Travelling Group of Large Scale Multidisciplinary Installations**  
**at**  
**Contemporary Arts Center**  
**April 17 – July 12, 2009**  
**900 Camp St. New Orleans, LA 70130 — 504.528.3805**



**FLOODWALL Curriculum Guide:**  
**A resource for students and teachers to**  
**accompany the exhibit**

**Packet created by the**



## ***Floodwall* Curriculum Guide**

### **Table of Contents**

#### I. Introduction to *Floodwall* and the artists

- What is *Floodwall*? (3)
- Previous exhibitions (7)
- Selected *Floodwall* story transcriptions (8)

##### Meet the artists

- Jana Napoli: Artist's Statement (11)
- Rondell Crier: Artist's Statement (11-12)

##### Media

- Selected newspaper articles and reviews of *Floodwall* (13)
- Photographs (18)

#### II. Putting it in Context: Hurricane Katrina

##### Fast Facts

- Timeline of New Orleans (21)
- What is a hurricane? (26)
- What is a levee system? (27)

##### The Pressroom: Articles

- Insufficient emergency response/relief from FEMA (28)
- Homelessness and displacement after Hurricane Katrina (31)
- Newspaper articles about racism controversy/lingering problems (32)

#### III. Why *Floodwall* is so important

- Personal histories and oral narratives help us connect to New Orleans and what happened there during and after Hurricane Katrina. Compare the *Floodwall* narratives to the Densho project archives. (36)

#### IV. Creative Project Ideas (36)

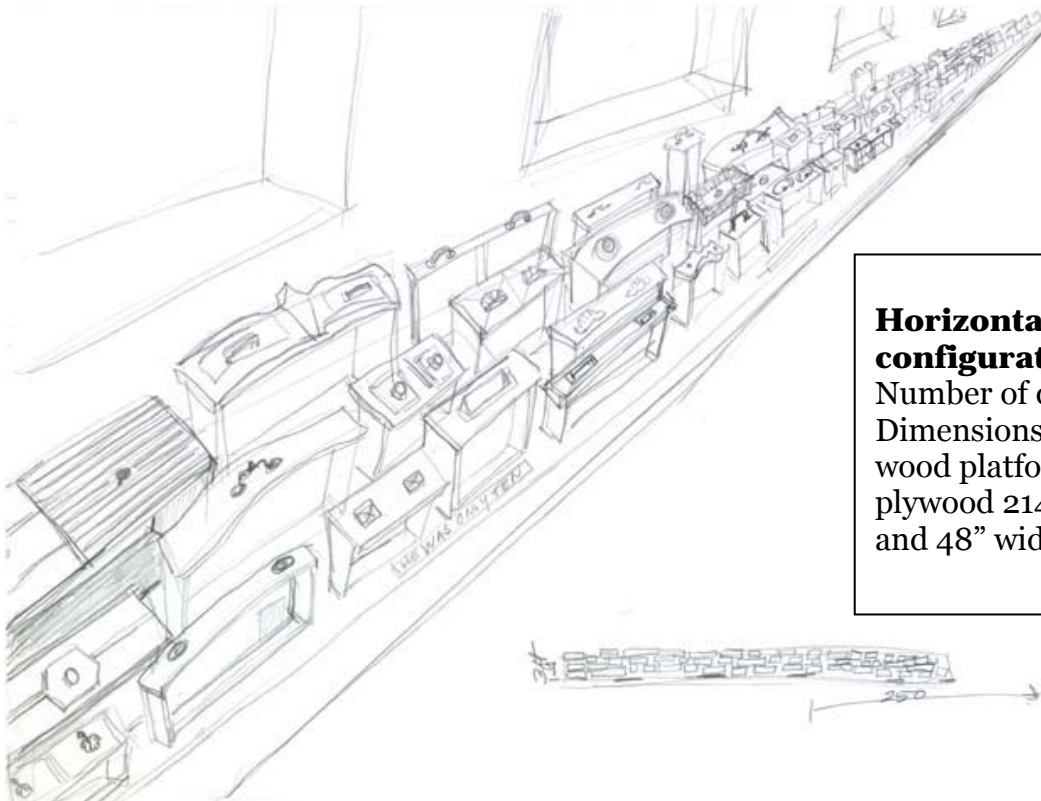
#### V. Online Resources (37)

## **I. INTRODUCTION TO FLOODWALL AND THE ARTISTS**

(Text taken from <http://www.floodwall.org>)

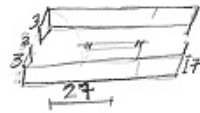
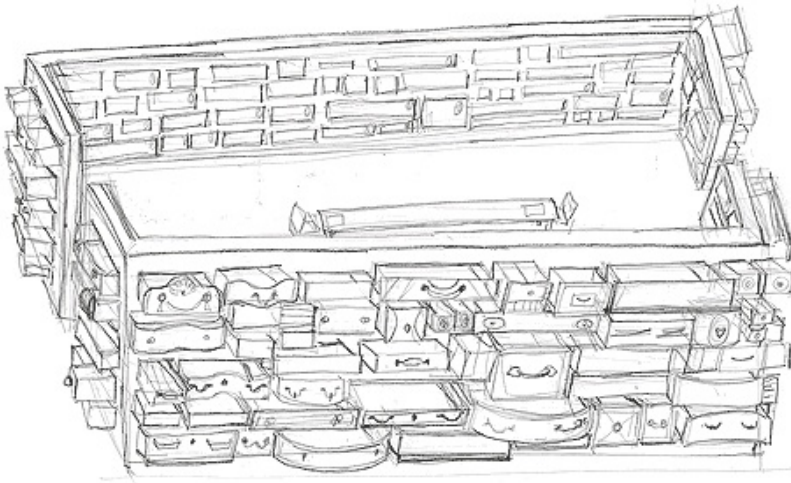
When Jana Napoli returned to New Orleans two months after Hurricane Katrina and the collapse of the levee system had ravaged her native city, she found the sodden and damaged remnants of people's lives cast out on the sidewalks. Though they were signs of a painful salvaging of life by returning inhabitants taking stock of their homes, they represented as well the radical obliteration of their past. Every day for the next four months, Napoli wandered amid the rotting and moldy debris of the city's neighborhoods, first instinctively and then deliberately, gathering household drawers. The 710 drawers that she retrieved, from dressers, kitchen cabinets, desks and bureaus, empty of their contents but suffused with memories, are the bricks of this installation.

Napoli constructs her installation in three ways. When it stands as a wall, 8 feet tall and stretching as much as 192 feet, Floodwall is a monument of immeasurable loss; when it lies in serried array on the floor like tombstones in a cemetery, it is a memorial, a sentinel of the past; and when it is configured as a room that envelops the spectator in close intimacy, it has the unutterable loneliness of deep mourning. At all times, this is Napoli's floodwall against the erasure of the ordinary people and the everyday rhythms of life from which great cities are formed.



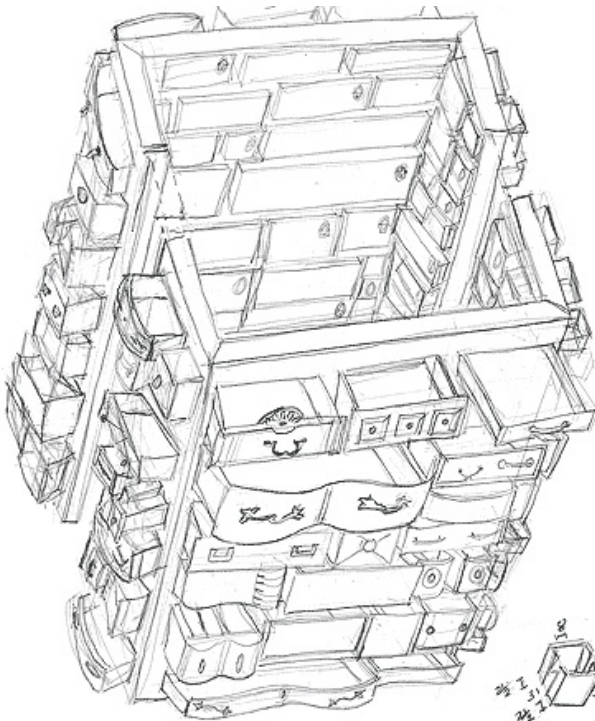
**Horizontal or “tombstone” configuration (see New York)**

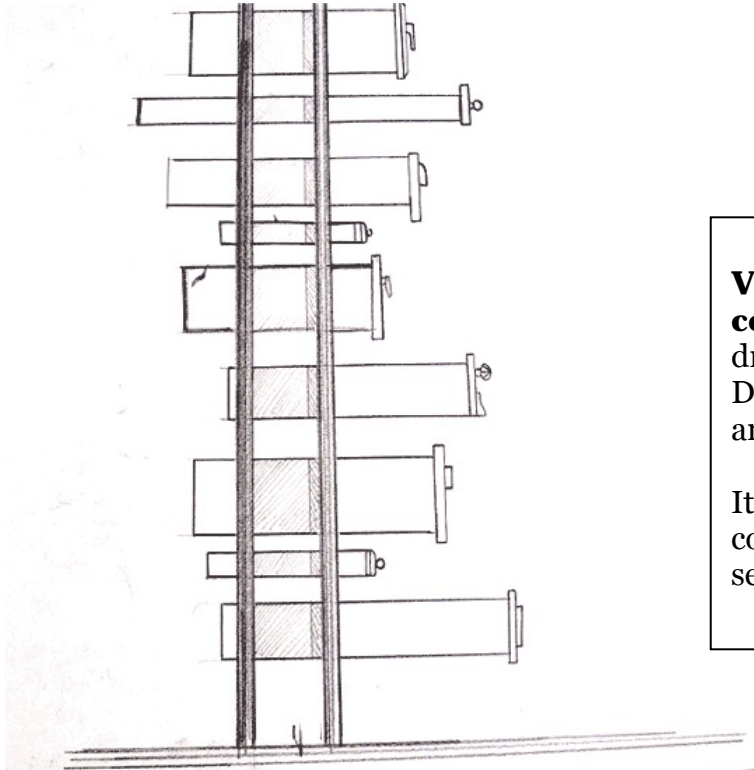
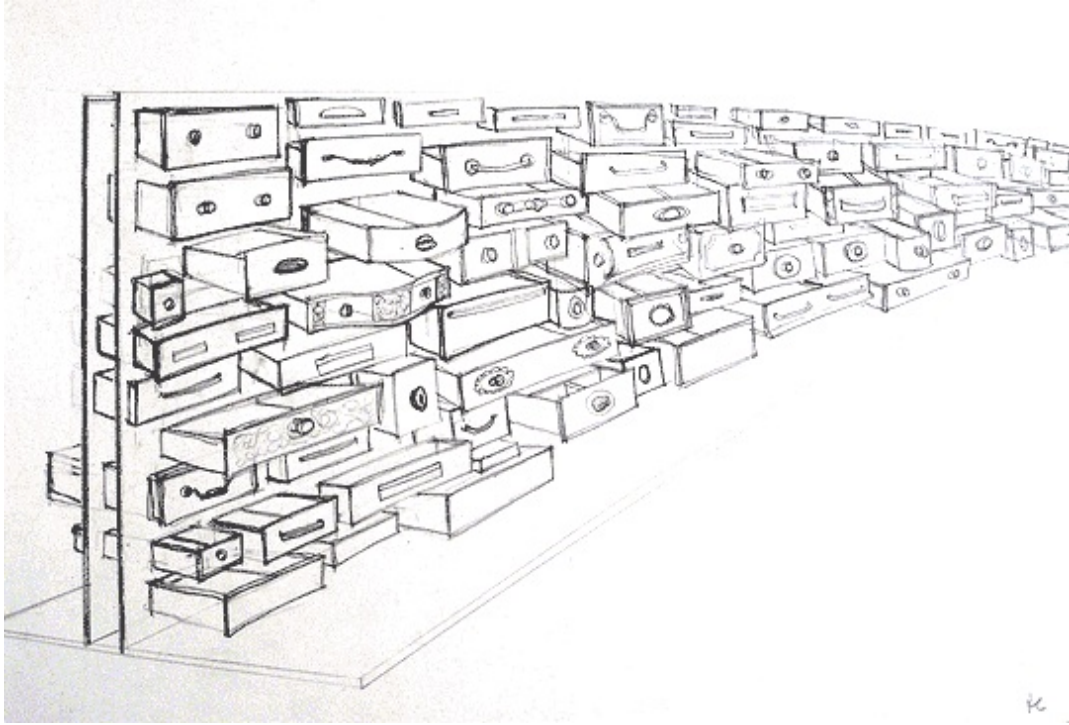
Number of drawers: 350 drawers  
Dimensions: Drawers placed on wood platform constructed on  $\frac{3}{4}$ ” plywood 214 ft 9.5” long, 7.5” high and 48” wide



**Enclosed or “room” configurations**

Number of drawers: varies depending upon configuration  
Dimensions: 27 ft long, 10 ft wide, 8 ft. 6” high or 10 ft square, 8 ft. 6” high





**Vertical or “wall” configuration** Number of drawers: 348  
Dimensions: 8 ft. 6” high, 96 ft long and 2 ft 6” deep

It can be displayed as one continuous wall or in three 32 feet sections.

If the floodwalls of the levee system did not contain the rising waters, this one does not restrain its city either. Its stories spill out of these empty drawers still redolent with the



textures of daily life — quotidian systems of order, sly and delicious secrets, dusty neglect, absent-minded forgetfulness, beloved mementos and childhood treasures.

Napoli labeled each drawer with the address from which it was retrieved. Over the past three years, she and her colleague, Rondell Crier, have numbered, photographed and catalogued each drawer to create an interactive database which contains information about its condition, its provenance as well as the fate of the flooded household from which it was discarded. They have also begun to collect oral histories from the original drawer owners, a project that is on-going and grows daily wider with the migration of New Orleanians to other parts of the country. The audio recordings of these interviews form part of the exhibition, releasing poignant yet unsettling presences into this immense installation of aching absence.

**Video installation:** Graphic artist, Rondell Crier, wandered the streets of his hometown after Katrina, taking photographs. Over 500 photographs and hours of videotape could not capture the magnitude of the devastation. There was not a person to be found in the photographs but the objects that made up their lives, now rusted, moldy and warped, were everywhere. As Napoli was collecting her drawers, Crier thought of breathing life into them by creating a digital, interactive installation. He began to archive every drawer, these objects that still held the traces of the small gestures of life that were once their owners. Napoli and Crier began to work with a small group of others to identify these original owners and to gather their recollections — of their drawers and what they held and thereby, of a way of life that once animated New Orleans and hopefully, will do so again. These oral histories form an audio component to Napoli's installation and eventually, will also be integrated into the database.

**Previous *Floodwall* Exhibitions**

*The Flight after the Flood. New Orleans – The City Left Behind*

German Emigration Center

Bremerhaven, Germany

February 2, 2009 - May 10, 2009

*On Piety* - A parallel venue to the Prospect.1 Biennial in New Orleans

New Orleans, LA

November 1, 2008 – January 18, 2009

Clifton Cultural Arts Center

Cincinnati, OH

August 28 – September 14, 2008

The Blanton Museum of Art

University of Texas at Austin

February 16 – May 25, 2008

Attendance Figures: Austin, over 30,000 people in 3 just over months

Louisiana State Museum

Baton Rouge, LA

July 13 – October 13, 2007

Attendance Figures: Baton Rouge, 4,600 people in 3 months

World Financial Center, NY

Liberty Street Bridge

New York, NY

January 4 – February 9, 2007

Attendance Figures: New York, over 1 million people in 1 month

**Story transcriptions from [http://www.floodwall.org/drawers\\_stories.html](http://www.floodwall.org/drawers_stories.html)**

No. 32—Norma Jackson, FRERET

“That was one of the most devastating experiences I’ve had in my life: I did not evacuate from the storm. So the National Guards came in a canoe, boat or whatever, to us, over to the house, and told us, he walked up the steps with his hand on his gun [laughs] and told us ‘You all *have* to get out. I,’ you know, ‘We are insisting that you all leave the area because we think it’s natural gas burning in that fire which was two blocks away.’ So he said, ‘I’m sorry but you all have to get out.’ Well, where we gonna go, you know?”



Norma Jackson’s drawer

---

No. 75—Charles Bishop, PARKVIEW

“...And I think that we were kind of hysterical. We threw out a bunch of stuff in Iris’ apartment that we really could have kept. It was kind of demented, it was kind of odd hysteria. We threw out Iris’ clothes, and those we, that was when we were in communication. She said ‘Oh,’ she didn’t want them, and I opened a drawer and here was all her sweet, fluffy little underwear. I remember it seemed like sacrilege, or a violation or something to just dump it so I put it in a box or something and kinda neatly closed it up so at least it was private, and then put it in a trashbag or whatever.”



Charles Bishop’s drawer

---

No. 481—Jonathon Wallick, UPPER RICKERVILLE

“From the day of the flooding I started planning the repairs and the recovery for the property, and I was bound and determined to come back no matter what. I came in with plywood and a ladder and some tools that I had purchased, and a couple of guns ‘cause I heard that things were kind of wild...”





Jonathon Wallick's drawer

---

No. 20—Barbara Terance, ESPLANADE RIDGE

“Well, in that drawer my mother would usually keep a pink gown that she wanted to be buried in, her insurance papers, her social security card, her Medicare card, and some letters from my daddy.”

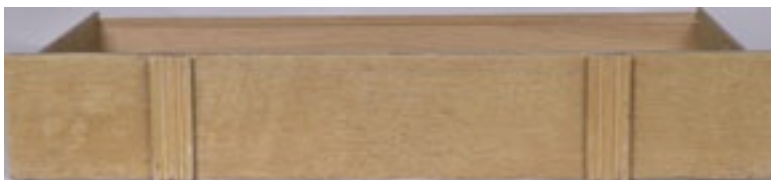


Barbara Terance's drawer

---

No. 1—Honorine Weiss, SOUTH LAKEVIEW

“There's a lot to say about that drawer. That drawer as been all over the place, and it's a very sentimental piece of furniture. I remember I had a set of placemats in it, that someone gave me for a wedding gift, and they must have been in there for thirty years, I never used them...”



Honorine Weiss' drawer

---

No. 539—Alvin Gauthier, LITTLE WOODS

“I lived on a plantation, so I’ve been working ever since I could pick cotton, and I baled hay and stuff like that. And so when you look at where I came from and to where I am now, this is heaven for me. My dad told me that one of the greatest things you will ever do is own a home, and this is my home.”



Alvin Gauthier’s drawer

## **THE ARTISTS AND THEIR STATEMENTS**

### **Jana Napoli:**

“Returning to New Orleans in October 2005, I found an enormous, silent, colorless city. As I went out early each morning to stay ahead of the trucks, the heat and the flies, I had no words for the profound sadness around me. I started picking drawers off the curbside where the interiors of homes had to be discarded. I knew I must give voice to the intimacy and loss that stretched in front of me. I made a promise to the people of New Orleans that I would tell their story, through these drawers which seemed to still hold their hopes and fears.

I wanted to take this intimate and homely detritus out of this sodden world. I wanted to take the wrenching cry of grief and transform it into a wailing wall where all of us could mourn. This emotional response quickly grew into a sculptural and historical work that would allow the people of New Orleans to speak, to talk about what they value and why. Anyone who sees the drawers is drawn to them in a personal way because it is such a familiar object. They think of their own lives, their own drawers and what they hold to be precious and sacred.

New Orleans was one of America’s great port cities, formed by the crossroads of international trade. I have always wanted Floodwall to travel – as a memorial that would express our loss but also one that would once more connect the world to us. I hope that bond with others will protect us in this journey to rebuild ourselves.”

### **Rondell Crier:**

“Sometimes I find myself wondering about the origins of an object. For what purpose was it created? What did it take to design and fabricate it? Who owns it and why did they choose that particular item? How is it used and why is it discarded and replaced?

It may seem odd to consider that non-breathing things have a life, but when you compare the existence of a physical object to a human, there are many core elements that are shared: the birth of humans by humans as to the creation of items by humans; the race, class, and character of a human as to the color, size and character of an item; and the aging and death of a human being as to the aging and discarding of an object. These basic similarities show that items are as real as we are. They have a life filled with a purpose, a need, and a place to exist.

When Jana told me about her collecting the drawers, I immediately thought that this would be my opportunity to create an interactive art piece that would represent the life of an item – or in this case 610 items – in hopes that others would also appreciate experiencing the depth of life of an item.

My vision is to create a living database of the drawers, so that people can view and listen to information about them – to understand that objects are essentially living like we are. They have a creation date (birth), a definite death (destruction/disposal), a color, a

purpose for existing, a name, and many other attributes that are associated with defining an existence.

Walking the streets of my hometown, New Orleans, after the storm was an experience that could not be put into words. So, I took pictures with my camera. Even the powerful imagery of the 500 plus photos I took wasn't enough to represent the mass destruction. I mounted a camcorder on my car and videotaped as I drove around the city, sometimes for over thirty minutes straight. This still wasn't enough to capture the devastation. Then I realized that these things on the street were the representatives of the people in these neighborhoods and homes. The presence of people was absent from all my shots, but life wasn't. Personal belongings were all that was left to identify life. I captured many pictures — things that were rusted from the salt water, ceiling fans with bent wooden blades from mold and moisture, houses in the middle of the street, a child's toy doll laying in the street never to be played with again, broken plates from a kitchen bursting out of a huge crack in the corner of a house, a car buried under sand and dirt with only the roof exposed, and a beautiful tile floor of a home -- lit by the sun because the rest of the house was completely gone. The vast amount of loss due to the flood was seen in our personal belongings. Things that were all a part of our lives because we hand-picked them and loved them. I realized that I could explain the magnitude and meaning of loss through objects, forcing others to connect on a direct personal level.”

## **MEDIA COVERAGE: ARTICLES AND REVIEWS**

Article from *The New York Times*, published January 5, 2007

([http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/05/arts/design/05bspar.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=floodwall napoli&st=cse&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/05/arts/design/05bspar.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=floodwall%20napoli&st=cse&oref=slogin))

Spare Times – *Floodwall* by Melena Ryzik

**FLOODWALL** When Jana K. Napoli, an artist born and bred in New Orleans, returned to her hometown a few weeks after Hurricane Katrina hit, she sifted through the detritus in her neighborhood. She found sofas and pianos and hand-sewn lace, but she picked up only the abandoned dresser drawers. Originally she envisioned them as receptacles for a new project. But the more drawers she salvaged, the more she saw promise in them alone. “I began to realize that these drawers could be a symbol of the households that were lost,” Ms. Napoli said. She collected 700 drawers from across the city, meticulously labeling each with the address where it was found. They became the basis for “Floodwall,” above, an installation now on view on the Liberty Street Bridge, near the World Financial Center. Balanced along the span of the bridge like luggage left behind, the drawers are revealingly empty: once home to family secrets and worldly goods, they now contain only layers of liner paper and imprints from letters and photographs. But they are not anonymous. Working with neighborhood associations, Ms. Napoli found some of their owners. With a partner, she began an ambitious oral history and database, cataloging the lives of New Orleans residents through this most steadfast of possessions. “My father surprised me with that cedar chest for my trousseau,” one woman recalled; another kept her son’s belongings in a drawer, decades after he was murdered. In “Floodwall,” comments like these are broadcast on LED signs as reminders of the lives these wooden survivors touched. (On the Liberty Street Bridge; enter at One World Financial Center on Liberty Street and South End Avenue, Lower Manhattan. Through Feb. 9. For more information or to be a part of the oral history project: [floodwall.org](http://floodwall.org).)

Article from the Associated Press, published Thursday, 9 March, 2006

(<http://asap.ap.org/stories/427333.s>)

Collecting Katrina's dresser drawers

Jaime Holguin and Derrick J. Lang come across a New Orleans artist who's building a wall to capture the vast, intimate destruction wrought by Katrina.

**NEW ORLEANS**

Taken separately, condoms, false teeth, hair curlers, nail files, a set of playing cards and a dead bird may not have much in common. Taken together, these everyday artifacts paint a telling picture of a moment in time when tens of thousands of lives were abruptly abandoned and irrevocably altered.

"Sort of like Pompeii," says artist and New Orleans native Jana Napoli.

In the weeks after Hurricane Katrina pummeled her city, Napoli set out across its ravaged landscape -- from Bayou Sauvage to the Ninth Ward Lakeview and Algiers Point - - as residents returned to their neighborhoods to salvage and clear out what remained of their homes. In many cases, there was nothing left. Just a slab of concrete.

As grievous as it was to see people's entire lives rotting on the curb, Napoli says witnessing the growing heaps of decayed furniture, mildewed curtains, muddied clothes and disintegrating photos was also comforting and hopeful. The debris, she says, was the first sign that life was returning to the city and that the healing process had begun.

As Napoli maneuvered her pickup around the piles of detritus in once-familiar neighborhoods, one discarded piece of furniture common throughout everyone's refuse caught her attention: the dresser drawer.

This seemingly ordinary item was so poignant to Napoli that she spent the next two months collecting about 600 of them.

"It's where we all store our secrets, our heirlooms, our dream, passions and memories," she says.

Napoli is using the drawers to create an installation that will document the vast and intimate destruction wrought by Katrina. Her "Floodwall," which will measure approximately 60 feet by 10 feet, will let visitors look in each drawer and see what's inside.

Like the city's residents, the drawers she collected came in all colors, sizes and shapes, some extravagant and ornate, others meager and on the verge of falling apart. Bringing the drawers together is a chance for her, she says, to represent "in some small way, all the families who have left the city, who hope to come back but will never have their memories again in any physical form."

Not surprisingly, most of the drawers collected by Napoli had things in them that were too wet to keep. Others were already empty when she found them. The most revealing ones contain people's personal items, like the one containing some tools and a sealed orange Trojan condom. Or the one with a washed-out Bible. Or the one with a sewing kit.

Some contain belongings that were given to Napoli by the relatives of those who died in the tragedy.

One drawer came from the bedroom closet of a home on Transcontinental Drive. Inside it is a graduation book from 1945, along with a prayer book. The son of the woman who owned the house gave the items to Napoli as a way to remember his mom.

As she collected the drawers, Napoli noted the address where each one was found. When possible, she documented information about the family that discarded each drawer.



Initially, she says, it was easy to match up the drawers to specific homes, but it became increasingly difficult once Federal Emergency Management Agency workers moved in and began to consolidate the piles of refuge. Sometimes, the closest Napoli could get to identifying the drawers was a street name.

At the moment, the drawers are piled high inside her studio, some in better condition than others. The next step is to get them all glued and restored before transporting them to the New Orleans Contemporary Art Center, which is letting Napoli use its indoor parking lot to spread out the drawers and start building the "Floodwall."

She is currently in negotiations with the Louisiana State Museum to have the wall shown there as part of a planned Katrina remembrance in the near future.

Her goal is to document the history of each drawer. Each is being cataloged and an interactive database will let people access and share information about the drawers.

Napoli hopes her latest artistic endeavor attracts at least as much attention than her highly praised youth arts guild.

In the late 1980s, Napoli gained national acclaim when she founded "YA/YA" (Young Aspirations/Young Artists, Inc.), an arts and social service organization that aims to empower urban youth by teaching them how to become self-sufficient professional artists. In 1999 she was presented the "Coming Up Taller Award" by the President's Committee for Arts and Humanity, and in 2002 she received Oprah Winfrey's "Use Your Life Award."

And that's just what Napoli is doing: using her creative talent and artistic vision to memorialize and bring attention to her city at a time when it needs it most.

When people in the Ninth Ward asked what she planned on doing with all the drawers, "I told them that we were going to do a show in Washington, D.C. -- a memorial for everyone in the city and their loss."

Across the board, they all had one simple request.

"Tell them we're coming back."

Article from [www.NOLA.com](http://www.NOLA.com), published July 10, 2007  
([http://blog.nola.com/entertainment/2007/07/lt\\_governor\\_announces\\_the\\_open.html](http://blog.nola.com/entertainment/2007/07/lt_governor_announces_the_open.html))

Lt. Governor announces opening of FLOODWALL at La. State Museum

Floodwall, a multi-media, site specific art installation composed of more than 350 household drawers salvaged from trash heaps found in the neighborhoods flooded by Katrina, will be on exhibit at the Louisiana State Museum in Baton Rouge. On display July 13th through October 13th, Floodwall coincides with the 2nd anniversary of Katrina

to pay homage to the people living in the Parishes where the effort to rebuild continues and to honor their indelible spirit and love for Louisiana. The opening reception, Friday, July 13, 2007, 6:00-9:00 p.m. is free and open to the public.

Floodwall, created by New Orleans artist Jana Napoli, preserves a small part of what the levees could not. Moved to action by the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, Ms. Napoli collected hundreds of drawers from the flooded and abandoned neighborhoods in the days and months that followed. In this installation, created in partnership with Rondell Crier and Whirlwind Creative, the drawers are mounted as a massive wall standing 8 feet tall and stretching 96 feet long. Embedded in the drawers are audio devices that project the voices of their former drawer owners whose stories replace what the drawers once held. Their words reminisce and mourn:

"I thought New Orleans would be a good place to go for rain and history, and it was." . . .  
"Having to throw your furniture out in front of your house -- your life is sort of taken from you and sort of dumped out in your front yard." . . . "New Orleans was here before America was here and we are a part of America."

"Floodwall is a journey through loss and transformation. It explores the human connection to culture and community expressed through the everyday objects of people," said Jed Horne, author of the acclaimed *Breach of Faith*. "Through found objects and a multi-media interpretive presentation, Floodwall speaks of what was lost to Katrina and what remains of New Orleans."

Floodwall:

<http://www.floodwall.org> first came to life in the fall of 2005 when New Orleans artist Jana Napoli began gathering furniture junked after the floodwaters of Katrina had receded. Ms. Napoli saw this human essence of the disaster, dampened but not dead, reflected in piles of curbside-discarded materials. Sweeping across the city Ms. Napoli collected dresser drawers from the heaps of ravaged belongings in front of flooded homes. In a time of death, destruction, and Diaspora, the artist found no shortage of needs to mourn and memorialize. "We were driven to create a wailing wall that builds intimate and homely detritus from a world destroyed into a wrenching cry of grief," said Ms. Napoli. "This emotional endeavor quickly grew into a sculptural and historical work allowing the people of New Orleans to tell their own story about what they value and why."

Whirlwind Creative produced the premier exhibition of Floodwall in New York City, which opened in January 2007 at the World Financial Center Liberty Street Bridge. This site specific installation was viewed by an audience of nearly one million people and received critical praise in the *New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Wall Street Journal*. Whirlwind Creative is a New York-based multi-disciplinary studio specializing in the design of graphics, media, interactives, and environments. For the Louisiana exhibition, Whirlwind Creative collaborated with Ms. Napoli and Mr. Crier to engineer a unique edifice in contrast to the breached floodwalls.

Floodwall, the exhibit, is complemented by an ongoing oral history project to record interviews with the former drawer owners. Managed and produced by New Orleans native Tatiana Clay, this component of Floodwall aims to empower everyday people by giving them a way to document their own history. Edited by Cramer Sound, excerpts of

these interviews are incorporated in the Baton Rouge installation. The complete collection is archived with the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History at the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge.

Additionally, an interactive media archive on Floodwall's website documents more than 600 salvaged drawers, along with mapping of their provenance, expanded oral history transcriptions, and a photo-archive of the drawers. New Orleans media artist Rondell Crier is creating this living database to document a sense of the magnitude of loss by collecting the minute details of quotidian objects.

Jana Napoli is a New Orleans native and painter who was a pioneer in 1986 of the burgeoning New Orleans Arts District when she established her own gallery in that neighborhood. In 1988, she opened the doors of her studio to the commercial art students of the neighboring vocational high school and YA/YA, the New Orleans-based, acclaimed youth arts collective, was born. Floodwall has evolved to engage several emerging young artists of New Orleans whom Ms. Napoli mentored during her years as the founding director.

The Louisiana State Museum - Baton Rouge is adjacent to the State Capital at 660 North 4th Street. The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5:00 p.m. Admission is \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors, students and active military, and children under 12 are free. For more information, call 225-342-5428 or click <http://lsm.crt.state.la.us>. □ □ Floodwall is made possible by grants and contributions from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, Louisiana State Museum, Greater Baton Rouge Foundation, World Cultural Economic Forum, and the State of Louisiana, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Department of Cultural, Recreation, and Tourism.











**II. PUTTING IT IN CONTEXT: HURRICANE KATRINA**

**FAST FACTS**

**New Orleans Timeline**

1682	April 9: French explorer Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, and a small party arrive at the mouth of the Mississippi River. La Salle claims the region and names it Louisiana in honor of King Louis XIV of France.
1699	Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville, establishes the French colony of Louisiana.
1718	Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, founds the city of New Orleans, then known as <i>La Nouvelle-Orléans</i> .
1723	New Orleans becomes the capital of the Louisiana colony.
1763	February 10: The Treaty of Paris is signed, ending the Seven Years' War and resulting in Spain taking possession of New Orleans from France.
1788	March 21: A large fire sweeps through New Orleans, destroying more than 850 buildings.
1800	October 1: After the signing of the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso, France reacquires Louisiana from Spain.
1803	April 30: The United States purchases the Louisiana Territory from France for about \$15 million. The acquisition doubled the size of the United States.
1812	April 30: Louisiana is admitted to the Union.
1814	December: The Battle of New Orleans begins. By January 1815 General Andrew Jackson and his forces defeat the British.
1835	March 3: An act of Congress authorizes a U.S. Mint in New Orleans.
1840	The country's oldest family-run restaurant, Antoine's, opens its doors in New Orleans. Patrons have included Franklin Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, and Pope John Paul II.
1853	New Orleans suffers its worst epidemic of yellow fever, which kills approximately 9,000 people.
1857	Mardi Gras in its modern form debuts in New Orleans with the establishment of the parading organization called the "Mistick Krewe of Comus."
1861	January 26: Louisiana secedes from the Union. April 12: Confederate forces fire on Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Civil War

	breaks out.
1862	April 28: Under the command of Rear Admiral David G. Farragut, a Union naval fleet captures New Orleans. Union forces control the city until the end of the Civil War.
1868	April: Louisiana's Reconstruction government approves a Constitution that extends voting rights to black males and integrates public schools and public accommodations.  June 25: Louisiana is readmitted to the Union.
1872	The Krewe of Rex, establishing a king of the Carnival, is founded.  Famed French impressionist artist Edgar Degas stays in New Orleans, where he creates at least 22 works of art.
1884	New Orleans hosts the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition.
1890	July 10: The general assembly of Louisiana passes a law requiring segregation of railway cars in the state.
1890	October 20: Considered the first great jazz composer and pianist, Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton is born in New Orleans.
1892	June 7: Homer Plessy, who is categorized as seven-eighths Caucasian and one-eighth African, boards a train in New Orleans reserved for white passengers. He is arrested and will fight the charge all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.
1896	May 18: The U.S. Supreme Court delivers the <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> decision, affirming the Louisiana state law that mandated segregation.
1901	August 4: Louis Armstrong, who would become known as the father of jazz, is born in New Orleans.
1905	Yellow fever strikes New Orleans for the final time, killing more than 400 people.
1909	The U.S. Mint in New Orleans coins its last currency.
1912	The Louisiana state legislature grants a charter to Loyola University in New Orleans.
1913	Albert Baldwin Wood invents the Wood screw pump, which would be used to reduce flooding in New Orleans.
1921	An amendment to the Louisiana Constitution on the preservation of New Orleans' Vieux Carré, also called the French Quarter, leads to the creation of the Vieux Carré Commission to safeguard the area.

1927

April 15: Fifteen inches of rain falls on New Orleans in 18 hours, causing disastrous flooding.

April 29: New Orleans dynamites the Poydras levee in an attempt to direct the flood waters away from the city.

1938

December 26: Fleeing his home in St. Louis, Tennessee Williams arrives in New Orleans. He would become one of the nation's preeminent playwrights and set several of his works in his adopted hometown.

1939

February 13: "The Little Foxes," a play written by New Orleans-native Lillian Hellman about the struggles of a Southern family, opens on Broadway.

1947

The film *New Orleans*, with Louis Armstrong and Billie Holliday, is released.

December 3: Set in New Orleans, "A Streetcar Named Desire" opens on Broadway. The play would win the Pulitzer Prize. A film version starring Marlon Brando would be released in 1951.

1949

March 1: Louis Armstrong is celebrated in his hometown as king of the Mardi Gras by the Zulu Social and Pleasure Club.

1954

May 17: The U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* strikes down the precedent of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

1960

November 14: Six-year-old Ruby Bridges enters the William Frantz Public Elementary School in New Orleans, the first black student to enroll in the formerly all-white school. Her presence triggers protests and an exodus of white students from the school.

1961

Preservation Hall, designed as a venue to showcase the jazz tradition of New Orleans, opens.

1962

December 12: After a lawsuit was filed to desegregate the institution, the board of Tulane University votes to admit black students.

1965

September 9-10: Hurricane Betsy strikes New Orleans, bringing winds of 125 miles per hour, causing widespread flooding, and killing dozens of residents.

1967

September 17: The New Orleans Saints football team plays its inaugural game at Tulane Stadium.

1970	<p>January 11: New Orleans hosts its first Super Bowl. The city has hosted the National Football League championship game a total of nine times.</p> <p>April: The annual New Orleans Jazz &amp; Heritage Festival is held for the first time, with gospel singer and New Orleans-native Mahalia Jackson appearing.</p>
1971	<p>July 6: Renowned jazz trumpeter and vocalist Louis Armstrong dies at his home in Queens, New York.</p>
1975	<p>September 28: The New Orleans Superdome, which hosts the New Orleans Saints and would house survivors of Hurricane Katrina, opens.</p>
1978	<p>May 1: The first black mayor of New Orleans, Ernest Morial is sworn into office.</p>
1984	<p>May 12: The Louisiana World Exposition opens in New Orleans. It becomes the only exposition to declare bankruptcy during its run.</p>
1987	<p>September: Pope John Paul II visits New Orleans during a tour of the United States.</p>
1988	<p>August: The Republican National Convention, which names George H.W. Bush as party nominee for president, is held in New Orleans.</p>

2005

August 28: The National Weather Service issues an advisory, warning that Katrina is a "potentially catastrophic category 5 hurricane."

August 29: Hurricane Katrina makes landfall on the Louisiana coast. Levees are breached in New Orleans, flooding portions of the city.

August 30: Large parts of New Orleans are flooded as residents crowd the Superdome.

August 31: Louisiana Governor Katherine Blanco and New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin order a complete evacuation of the city. The first buses transport residents from the Superdome to Houston.

September 1: President George W. Bush asks Congress for \$10.5 billion in relief funds while National Guard troops help evacuate the Superdome.

September 2: President Bush flies to New Orleans to survey the damage after praising Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) director Michael Brown for his handling of the crisis.

September 4: The Superdome is fully evacuated.

September 12: Under heavy criticism, Michael Brown resigns as director of FEMA as water levels drop in New Orleans.

2006

August 29: President Bush returns to New Orleans on the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, pledging to spend \$110 billion to rebuild the area. The hurricane killed more than 1,600 people and many thousands remain displaced.

Time line from PBS

(<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/neworleans/timeline/index.html>)

## **What is a hurricane?**

An Atlantic hurricane is a large low pressure storm which forms off the coast of Africa and begins to spins counterclockwise. The hurricane starts as a band of thunderstorms. These storms can become a hurricane when warm air over the warm western Atlantic Ocean combines with wind patterns. The counterclockwise motion is perpetuated by strong easterly trade winds and temperate westerlies, and a hurricane is born.

A hurricane forms in three stages:

1. Tropical Depression - Organized thunderstorms with maximum sustained winds of 38 mph or less.
2. Tropical Storm - Same structure as a tropical depression, but with maximum sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph.
3. Hurricane - The storm is officially designated a hurricane when the winds reach a maximum sustained wind speed of 74 mph.

Hurricanes are also recognized by an eye. The eye is an area of calm contained near the rotational axis of the hurricane. The eye is surrounded by thick clouds forming the eye wall and it is kept open by a strong upward air motion. The most violent area of the hurricane is the eye wall.

The thunderstorms and wind associated with hurricanes are not the only things which pose a threat to life and property. Preceding the storm is a storm surge. This is a large dome of water displaced by the low pressure surrounding the hurricane. This water is forced on shore ahead of the hurricane. If the storm surge occurs during high tide, it is called a storm tide and it creates a greater loss of life and property due to the extra amount of water.

Hurricanes weaken when they hit land and are cut off from the warm moist ocean. But this does not stop the on land threat. Hurricanes can still create sustained winds over 100 mph on land as well as spawning tornadoes. Since a hurricane is composed of thunderstorms, the rainfall often saturates the ground and causes massive flash flooding.

(From <http://www.geo.mtu.edu/department/classes/ge404/rjchuhra/hurricane.html>)



### **What is a levee system?**

Levees are earthen embankments whose primary purpose is to furnish flood protection from seasonal high water for a few days or weeks a year. Levees are broadly classified as either urban or agricultural because of the different requirements for each. Urban levees provide protection from flooding in communities; including their industrial, commercial, and residential facilities. Agricultural levees provide protection from flooding in lands used for agricultural purposes. There are five main types of levees:

1. Mainline and Tributary levees: generally parallel the main channel and/or its tributaries.
2. Ring levees: completely encircle or "ring" an area from all directions.
3. Setback levees : generally built as a backup to an existing levee that has become endangered due to such actions as river migration.
4. Sublevees: constructed for the purpose of underseepage control. Sublevees encircle areas landward of the main levee that are flooded, generally by capturing seepage water, during high-water stages thus counterbalancing the hydrostatic pressures beneath the top stratum.
5. Spur levees: project from the main levee and provide protection to the main levee by directing erosive river currents riverward .

(From <http://www.mvm.usace.army.mil/floodcontrol/levees/levees.htm>)

## **THE PRESSROOM: ARTICLES**

### **Insufficient emergency response from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

Article from *American Affairs*, published July 17, 2008

([http://americanaffairs.suite101.com/article.cfm/three\\_years\\_after\\_hurricane\\_katrina](http://americanaffairs.suite101.com/article.cfm/three_years_after_hurricane_katrina))

Three Years After Hurricane Katrina: Have FEMA and the Army Corp of Engineers Learned Anything & Changed? by Frank W. Hardy

Ex-FEMA director Michael Brown & the Army Corp of Engineers fell to widespread criticism & governmental investigation after the costliest natural disaster in US history.

On August 23rd 2005, the deadliest storm in 77 years formed off the Bahamas and when it dissipated, over the Eastern Great Lakes on August 30th, it changed the face of the southern USA forever. Katrina was not just a destructive hurricane - the name itself has become synonymous with governmental incompetence, indifference and failure. As the third anniversary of the storm approaches we ask: have the governmental agencies involved corrected their inefficiencies and ineptitude?

#### Failures

In a September 21, 2005 Washington Post article by Michael Grunwald and Susan B. Glasser, Ivor van Heerden, the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center deputy director said, "The real scandal of Katrina is the 'catastrophic structural failure' of barriers that should have handled the hurricane with relative ease."

After the storm many speculated that the breaches were caused by poor design, faulty construction or some combination. "I don't know if it's bad construction or bad design....", said former representative Bob Livingston in the Post article.

But has it changed? On May 21st 2008 MSNBC quoted Bob Bea, a civil engineer at the University of California at Berkeley: "It [reconstruction of the New Orleans levees] is all based on a 30-year-old defunct model of thinking....They repaired the wall by driving interlocking sheets of steel 60 feet into the ground, compared with about 17 feet before the storm; [but they still] leak."

#### Delays and Attitude

Not all of the problems surrounding the storm centered on levee failures. The Federal Emergency Management Agency received an abundance of criticism for its indifference, slow response, incompetence and absolute managerial failure. Approaching the third anniversary of the storm, Leslie Eaton of the New York Times reported in Feb 2008, "FEMA [only] recently admitted dangerous formaldehyde exists in the trailers given to victims."

Immanuel Wallerstein from the State University of New York at Binghamton wrote in *Katrina: The Politics of Incompetence and Decline*: “Ten days after the crisis began, the government seemed to get its act together....It is the direct result of how the Bush regime operates - poor judgment and active indifference to anything that isn't high on their list of priorities.”

### Incompetence

David Bernstein of the Boston Phoenix stated that the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security reported, prior to Katrina, that FEMA could not track “essential commodities, such as ice and water, needed by disaster victims,” and was hindered “from providing the appropriate number and combination of people and supplies to meet the level of need.”

However, the problem was far deeper. Cronyism, paranoia, jealousy and laissez-faire politics controlled the government agencies. The Houston Chronicle, the New Orleans Times-Picayune and National Geographic Magazine each predicted the problem of a hurricane in New Orleans many years before Katrina. But early in the crisis President Bush cried: “...how could anyone have predicted that the levees would be breached and 80% of the city of New Orleans flooded?”

Professor Wallerstein states: “the Bush style is that...his appointees were deeply suspicious of the...experienced bureaucrats in the government agencies. They ignored them, they intimidated them [and] they overruled them regularly....”

### Conclusions

Michael Brown was removed from his directorship long ago; however, the Bush culture still appears to permeate throughout both agencies. This spring the levees failed, once again, along the Mississippi River causing severe flooding on the watch of the Corp of Engineers.

\* USACE – MSNBC quoted the AP, “...the corps found evidence that canal water is seeping through the joints in the sheet metal [in New Orleans]....” MSNBC continued: “John Schmertmann, a retired University of Florida professor...agreed...that the corps ‘may still be embedding some of these not-properly-considered factors, so the new walls may not do what the corps expects’.”

\* FEMA – Congress mandated the reorganization of the agency in 2006; however, its response to the floods of 2008 suggests the problems continue. According to a June 2008 CNN report by David Mattingly entitled “Insurance not required, FEMA told flooded town” the “experts” miscalculated the chances of a catastrophic flood - again.

Mark Devlin of Industrial Equipment News concludes in a May 2008 article: “We haven’t learned from 1927 or 1993. We haven’t learned from Katrina....When will we learn—and what do we need to learn?”

Article posted from *All Things Considered*, NPR, January 30, 2006  
(<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5178915>)

### Documents Reveal FEMA Mistakes During Katrina by Pam Fessler

In documents released by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committee, FEMA appears to have mismanaged offers of supplies and personnel from other agencies. FEMA also called off its search and rescue just three days after the storm.

Two documents in particular-- an internal FEMA email sent a few days after Katrina, and a letter from the Department of the Interior-- highlight some of the chaos of the rescue efforts.

The letter, written by Interior Assistant Secretary P. Lynn Scarlett, recounted how different agencies in the department prepared and responded to Hurricane Katrina.

It also recounted that immediately after the hurricane, the Interior Department "delivered to FEMA a comprehensive list of deployable assets that were immediately available for humanitarian and emergency assistance." These included dump trucks and other vehicles, heavy equipment, boats, aircraft, maintenance crews, law enforcement officers, rooms, campgrounds, and land sites for evacuee housing and FEMA staging.

The letter continued, "Although the (Interior) Department possesses significant resources that could have improved initial and ongoing responses, many of these resources were not effectively incorporated into the federal response."

The letter also suggested that this was due to FEMA's inadequate coordination of the different agencies' rescue abilities and equipment.

The Department of Homeland Security, which includes FEMA, acknowledges the failures and says it is conducting its own investigation and evaluation of the rescue efforts.

### Documented Breakdowns

A FEMA update e-mail sent 3 days after the storm says, "All assets have ceased operations until National Guard can assist (task forces) with security. (Task forces) are running low on food and water...we don't have information on when (provisions) will be available."

## **Homelessness and Displacement after Hurricane Katrina**

Article from the *New York Times* Opinion section, July 8, 2008  
([http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/08/opinion/08tue2.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/08/opinion/08tue2.html?_r=1&oref=slogin))

### **Katrina's Most Vulnerable**

Louisiana is set to receive \$73 million in desperately needed federal aid to help house some of the region's lowest-income families, including ill and disabled people left homeless by Hurricane Katrina.

Landing the money is only the first challenge. Now begins the delicate and difficult work of setting up permanent housing arrangements for homeless people, many of whom have psychiatric or medical problems that require ongoing counseling and other services.

Homeless-services agencies that work in New Orleans are rightly worried. In a city where rents have skyrocketed and housing is in short supply, they fear that developers who were required to set aside units for the most vulnerable citizens may shy away from tenants with histories of mental illness or homelessness.

Political leaders and policy makers will also have to muster courage and persistence in the face of pessimists, who will inevitably question whether people who were once homeless can be good neighbors and citizens.

The answer is that these projects can work, and work well, when people are given the help and guidance they need. One of the most successful models is found in New York City where Common Ground, a nonprofit agency, has created more than 2,000 units of permanent and transitional housing for the homeless since 1990.

The group's signature program near Times Square includes more than 650 apartments, half of which are occupied by formerly homeless people. Working with other nonprofits, the group provides counseling, job placement and other support to tenants.

The group has shown that people with psychiatric and other problems can better manage them once they are permanently housed and provided with services.

This success is even more impressive because Common Ground deliberately seeks out the most difficult cases, including people who have spent years on the street and cycling in and out of jail. Supportive housing costs substantially less than homeless shelters — and many times less than jail cells or hospital rooms.

The good news is that New Orleans can look to projects like Common Ground's. Political leaders need to understand that getting homeless people off the streets and into permanent housing is not only good for the homeless but essential for the health of the city.

## **Racism controversy and lingering problems**

### **Racism in 2005**

Article from NBC News and news services, Tuesday, December 6, 2005  
(<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10354221/>)

Katrina victims blame racism for slow aid: emotions flare as black survivors testify before special House panel

WASHINGTON - Black survivors of Hurricane Katrina said Tuesday that racism contributed to the slow disaster response, at times likening themselves in emotional congressional testimony to victims of genocide and the Holocaust.

The comparison is inappropriate, according to Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla. "Not a single person was marched into a gas chamber and killed," Miller told the survivors.

"They died from abject neglect," retorted community activist Leah Hodges. "We left body bags behind... The people of New Orleans were stranded in a flood and were allowed to die."

Angry evacuees described being trapped in temporary shelters where one New Orleans resident said she was "one sunrise from being consumed by maggots and flies." Another woman said military troops focused machine gun laser targets on her granddaughter's forehead. Others said their families were called racial epithets by police.

"No one is going to tell me it wasn't a race issue," said New Orleans evacuee Patricia Thompson, 53, who is now living in College Station, Texas. "Yes, it was an issue of race. Because of one thing: when the city had pretty much been evacuated, the people that were left there mostly was black."

According to a recent Gallup poll, NBC News' Kerry Sanders reported on Tuesday, six out of every 10 black New Orleans residents said if most of Katrina's victims were white, relief would have arrived sooner.

Discussions about race began almost immediately after Katrina hit on Aug. 29. On Sept. 9, according to NBC News, President George W. Bush told the public, "The storm didn't discriminate and neither will we in the recovery effort."

But victims disagree.

"I blame local. I blame state. I blame federal," Katrina victim Doreen Keller said at Tuesday's hearings. "I think we got disappointed by every rank of government that exists."

'I just don't frankly believe it'

Not all lawmakers seemed persuaded.

“I don’t want to be offensive when you’ve gone through such incredible challenges,” said Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Conn. But referring to some of the victims’ charges, like the gun pointed at the girl, Shays said: “I just don’t frankly believe it.”

“You believe what you want,” Thompson said.

Shays also questioned a claim that the federal government unleashed this tragedy on New Orleans’ black residents on purpose.

“I was on my front porch,” Diane Cole French said at the hearings. “I have witnesses that they bombed the walls of the levee.”

“I don’t know if that’s theater or the truth,” Shays responded.

‘We have to acknowledge it’

The hearing was held by a special House committee, chaired by Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., investigating the government’s preparations and response to Katrina. It was requested by Rep. Cynthia McKinney, D-Ga., a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

“Racism is something we don’t like to talk about, but we have to acknowledge it,” McKinney said. “And the world saw the effects of American-style racism in the drama as it was outplayed by the Katrina survivors.”

The five white and two black lawmakers who attended the hearing mostly sat quietly during two and a half hours of testimony. But tempers flared when evacuees were asked by Miller to not compare shelter conditions to a concentration camp.

“I’m going to call it what it is,” Hodges said. “That is the only thing I could compare what we went through to.”

Of five black evacuees who testified, only one said he believed the sluggish response was the product of bad government planning for poor residents — not racism.

NBC News’ Kerry Sanders and the Associated Press contributed to this report.

## **Racism in 2008**

Article from the *Times-Picayune*, Friday March 07, 2008

([http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2008/03/un\\_panel\\_questions\\_postkatrina.html](http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2008/03/un_panel_questions_postkatrina.html))

Katrina response had greater negative impact on blacks, UN committee rules by David Hammer

A United Nations treaty committee ruled Friday that the United States' response to Hurricane Katrina has had a greater negative impact on displaced black residents and called on the federal government to do more to guarantee that they can return to affordable housing in their home towns.

The governing UN committee also ruled Friday that the U.S. government must make sure displaced residents have a greater say in plans that affect their return, something housing advocates pointed to as proof that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development failed to consider alternatives to its plans to demolish four large New Orleans public housing complexes.

The United Nations committee included its concerns about the U.S. response to Katrina housing and recovery issues as a part of its concluding decision on what the United States needs to do to remain in compliance with the Conference on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, or CERD, a treaty the U.S. joined in 1994.

"The committee, while noting the efforts undertaken by the State party (government) and civil society organizations to assist the persons displaced by Hurricane Katrina of 2005, remains concerned about the disparate impact that this natural disaster continues to have on low-income African American residents, many of whom continue to be displaced after more than two years after the hurricane," said the CERD report, released Friday in Geneva, Switzerland.

"The committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts in order to facilitate the return of persons displaced by Hurricane Katrina to their homes, if feasible, or to guarantee access to adequate and affordable housing, where possible in their place of habitual residence. In particular, the committee calls on the state party to ensure that every effort is made to ensure genuine consultation and participation of persons displaced by Hurricane Katrina in the design and implementation of all decisions affecting them."



### **III. WHY FLOODWALL SO IMPORTANT: USING STORYTELLING AND PERSONAL NARRATIVE TO PRESERVE CULTURAL MEMORY**

The stories that people can tell about their experiences help us see beyond the headlines. For example, the organization Densho has gathered the testimony of Japanese-Americans who were incarcerated after the attacks on Pearl Harbor during World War II. The introduction to the archives on Densho's website states: "Our interviewees, or narrators, share their life histories to preserve history, educate the public, and promote tolerance" (go to <http://www.densho.org> to explore the archives). *Floodwall* takes advantage of such personal narratives: in addition to the drawers themselves, Napoli and Crier have started to gather the "oral histories from the original drawer owners, a project that is on-going and grows daily wider with the migration of New Orleanians to other parts of the country. The audio recordings of these interviews form part of the exhibition, releasing poignant yet unsettling presences into this immense installation of aching absence" ([www.floodwall.org](http://www.floodwall.org)).

### **IV. CREATIVE PROJECT IDEAS**

- *Floodwall II*  
If you have the ability to do so in your school, show the students the interactive feature on [http://www.floodwall.org/drawers\\_stories.html](http://www.floodwall.org/drawers_stories.html) where you can click on a drawer, and hear the short story its owner has to tell. (If this is not possible, this packet includes transcriptions of six stories.) Ask the students to design their own drawer and tell its story (draw pictures, or use old shoeboxes, paint, and craft materials). Use them to build a floodwall in the classroom. Alternatively, ask the students to imagine their own drawers and histories they represent, and write a poem or an essay describing it.
- The Importance of Home  
A central element in Floodwall and in the stories that the drawers and their owners tell is the notion of home. How do you define home? Is it your house? Your possessions? The town in which you live? Your friends and family? What would you do to help someone who had lost his or her home?
- Mock debate  
Is FEMA at fault for the high number of fatalities during Hurricane Katrina? Starting with the articles included in this packet, students should expand their research to build arguments for and against the adequacy of FEMA's response to the disaster.
- Tell your own story!

What is your favorite drawer in your house? Why?

What is the most interesting thing that you've ever found in a drawer?  
How did you find it? Ask your friends and family, too!

Which drawer would you take with you from home, if you could only pick one? Why?

## **V. ONLINE RESOURCES**

For more information, click on the following links:

- <http://www.floodwall.org>
- <http://www.hurricane-katrina.org/>
- <http://www.densho.org>
- <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2005/katrina/>