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## Public Policy and Publics in Post-Katrina New Orleans: How Critical Topics Circulate and Shape Recovery Policy

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### Introduction

*Anne M. Lovell, Samuel Bordreuil, Vincanne Adams*

New Orleans in recovery after Katrina set the scene for a politically vivid theater of public life played out in an abundance of public arenas: neighborhood meetings, public hearings, rallies, forums, *charettes*, idea exchanges, the blogosphere, and others. As pre-disaster networks and organizations have been revitalized, emerging publics have also crystallized around issues crucial to the city's future – from rebuilding the battered healthcare system to planning and zoning the damaged residential and commercial areas; from eliminating corruption in recovery procedures to assuring a socially just policy of sustainability; from projecting an economic future to ensuring ethnic diversity and fighting social inequality. Public issues circulate between such forums, linking institutional policy procedures with a broad array of citizen participation. Alongside more or less formally organized policy events (like public hearings), an abundance of web-based sites and informal exchanges, from blogs to talk radio, continue to investigate and debate post-Katrina issues.

Five years after the storm, this panel, organized at the request of the AAA Public Policy Committee, took stock of how recovery policy is affected by and in turn affects the influx and creation of citizens as publics. By publics, we meant entities less bounded than communities. At the same time, publics may become communities – bodies that share a same concern. As the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde<sup>1</sup> wrote more than one century ago, the readership of a newspaper becomes that kind of community, albeit an imaginary one. He wrote that whenever you read news about an unfolding story or ongoing problem waiting to be solved, you are aware that you are not alone in focusing your attention on that problematic matter. You know that you are part of a public. This collateral and collective awareness is what publics are made of. Thus, in order for publics to emerge, there must be some common ground on the basis of which concerns are expressed and common physical venues enabling one to express them in front of persons he or she might not know, or some media support, be they paper media or Web-

based.

We think that these abstract considerations are relevant to New Orleans and the long period of recovery from the storm. A strength of the work represented by our panel members has been their ability to make things public – *res publica* – which, as Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel remind us, is the root of “republic,” in the sense of the political institution.<sup>2</sup> And rather than taking public things, public policies, or public institutions for granted, they are and they were kept alive by the actions of people on a daily basis – a sort of post-Katrina New Orleans *res publica*.

We hope that anthropological research such as ours can contribute to the debates on these processes in at least two ways: by carving out additional streams for circulation of knowledge, and by building perspectives and drawing lessons in collaboration with citizen participants central to the production and circulation of knowledge, and this from multiple vantage points.

In this spirit, and to draw some lessons from the experience of public arenas in New Orleans recovery policy, the panel brought together citizen activists, community organizers, and policy makers to share their views about the politics of recovery policy, such as: How have citizen activists, elected officials and policy makers been interlinked in the process of policy making post-Katrina? How does the circulation and control of information as a public good shape public policy? On the contrary, when do elected officials and policy makers sidestep the public sphere in their decision-making process? When does planning fatigue emerge, do participations shift or does the process itself lose credibility? Has privatization of former public sectors impacted this process? What are the politics of inclusion and exclusion in relation to the new public-private partnership formations?

To frame the problematic and kick off the discussion, panelists were asked to address two sets of questions. The first set concerned publics, politics, and policy-making: *All of you are part of this very vivid theater of public life after Katrina. In retrospect, how would you assess the impact of your engagement or your bringing of crucial issues to public attention? What effect have these actions had in areas like health, housing, urban planning, environmental protection, education, disaster preparedness? How and on what issues have community groups in public arenas made a difference to public policy? Conversely, what have been the shortcomings of public involvement on impacting policy? How would you analyze these weaknesses?*

The second set of orienting questions involved the role, form, and tangibility of policy today, in relation to politics and funding: *Broadly speaking, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of all types and levels, from local, national, to transnational, continue to pay a key role in rebuilding post-Katrina New Orleans. Some view NGOs as more responsive to local concerns and more effective than government programs. Others are concerned that the rise of private sector NGOs will be accompanied by an eventual reduction in and increasing competition for funding for important public sector activities, especially among those social justice groups who decidedly do not consider themselves NGOs. Has your organization engaged in policy discussions about these concerns? What is policy today? Has it been replaced by contracts? With whom and in what ways is your organization impacted by this? How are these policies impacted by different forms of NGO infrastructure emerging in the city and in the nation?*

## Panel Transcript

**Jacques Morial:** You know, it's very appropriate that we're gathered in this hotel and actually this very room. Back in fall of 2005 this place became known in my neighborhood as "White City Hall." It was the effective seat of government, but more importantly it was ground zero in a fierce battle for certain stakeholder rights – rejection of the "Bring Back New Orleans Green Dot Plan." And this is the place where the spirit of defiance that really was the foundation for this growing civic engagement that has carried the recovery from the grassroots began.

Why would my neighbors call this "White City Hall?" Well, after Katrina there was a secret meeting of the civic leadership of the city held in Dallas, about two weeks after the storm, on September 8th. And we weren't supposed to know about this meeting at all, but a friendly and thoughtful *Wall Street Journal* reporter who had spent some time in New Orleans learned about the meeting from a little bird and wrote about it the day before the meeting actually occurred.

The civic leadership at this meeting was not at all representative of the victims of Katrina. There were about 18 people at this meeting, and there were two African Americans present, including Mayor Nagin. At this meeting, several important decisions were made that guided the early days of the recovery and inspired the spirit of defiance. One of the decisions that was made at that meeting was that the public school system would not open for the 2005-2006 academic year, and that in fact when it did reopen it would not be a public school system that you would recognize as such. It was also decided at this meeting that the footprint of the city would be shrunk, and that some neighborhoods would be turned into green space. It was a unilateral decision not really based on any information and certainly with no respect or input from the actual stakeholders. And it was also decided at this meeting that a commission would be appointed, the Bring New Orleans Back Commission, commonly known as BNOB, and this commission was made up of about fifteen, mostly business leaders. The chair of the commission did not even live in New Orleans, and of the members of the commission, only I think two had lost their homes in the flood that followed Katrina.

So all of these decisions had been made by the end of the second week of September. But to validate these positions, the Bring New Orleans Back Commission hired the Urban Land Institute to develop a plan, and this is where the plan that was until recently known as the "Green Dot" came out of. Unilaterally, it was decided that several neighborhoods would not be rebuilt. The footprint would shrink, and New Orleans East, which was all of the black middle class – Gentilly, a mixed owner neighborhood near the Lakefront; Broadmoor, Latoya's neighborhood; Pontchartrain Park, the oldest black subdivision in the United States – these were neighborhoods that would not be rebuilt.

When we learned of this, and when displaced New Orleanians who lived in these neighborhoods learned of this, of course they were outraged. Nobody asked them what they thought. Nobody asked them if they had any intention to return, if they wanted to rebuild, or if they had a voice in the recovery. So during this period, all of these meetings were happening in this building. In fact, I can remember one meeting in this very room. It was a meeting of the Cultural Committee of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission. And at this meeting, one of my neighbors asked the Chairman of this

particular subcommittee if he had ever been to Preservation Hall, if he had ever been to a second line, and if he had ever heard of the Backstreet Museum. And the answer to all of these questions, from the Chairman of the Cultural Subcommittee, was “No,” but it wasn’t just “No.” It was like, “No, what does that have to do with anything?” So that gives you an idea of the sorts of characters that were guiding development. Essentially it was a shadow government of the social and civic elite. I like to call them the biological and ideological descendants of the Confederate gentry. Those are the interests that they represent – privilege and entitlement. And this is one of the things that has held New Orleans back for 200 years, because these forces have so much inertia. We often in New Orleans beat ourselves up, compare ourselves to Houston or Atlanta, but we have to keep in mind that New Orleans is a hundred years or more older than those cities, and this antebellum social order is so much more entrenched. And we see it today. It’s fashionable for civic-minded people, or people who claim themselves to be civic-minded, to deny it. But all of us up here, I think, see it every day and fight against it every day, whether most of your work is on health care or criminal justice, and even on the most fundamental issues, issues of transparency. These are people who have contempt for democracy, plain and simple.

So these are the kind of people who were guiding the recovery in the early days, and when word got out what their plans were. The final BNOB<sup>3</sup> plan for redevelopment was presented in this ballroom of this building – I think it was the first week of December. And when word of that meeting got out about five days before, people who had been displaced and hadn’t ever returned came back to New Orleans to make their voices heard. You could not get inside this building. You could not drive your car within two blocks of here, because people driving here would just park in the middle of the street. They had to be at this meeting. And at this meeting, people asserted their rights, and this spirit of defiance was a great political theater, but it sent a very important message. I can remember one speaker told the Chairman of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission, “If you try to come and take my house, it’s gonna be Baby Iraq on my street.” So the threat that a community would be unilaterally wiped off the map, essentially what they were trying to do, inspired this fierce spirit of defiance, and that’s what really drove the recovery in the early days. This defiance was fueled by the disrespect of stakeholder rights and the lack of basic information. Now, I must say, in defense of the descendants of the Confederate gentry, that reliable information was hard to come by – the social networks that we relied upon for valid information had disintegrated. But at the same time, if you respect the rights of stakeholders, you understand you can’t make collective decisions in that sort of environment unless reliable information is available.

I’m going to stop there, because I want to leave a lot more time for discussion, both among the panel, but also from you all. I wanted to set the stage and remind you that you are in a very historic place. This particular building, like I said, was ground zero in the battle to assert stakeholder rights after Katrina.

**Latoya Cantrell:** Good afternoon. Again, my name is Latoya Cantrell. When these bureaucrats and planners, and so-called experts, drew these green dots around our communities, Broadmoor was one of the neighborhoods that said it definitely wasn’t going to happen. I was quoted saying that all hell was going to break loose, and it actually

did. January 11th was when *The Times-Picayune* released the plans from the Bring New Orleans Back Commission, and it was on that day that residents really learned the plans for their communities. I was still displaced in Houston at the time. Many of the board members affiliated with the Broadmoor Improvement Association were also displaced, but we did have a few people on the ground. It was that January 11th that we learned about this, and on January 18th, the Broadmoor Improvement Association held its first community meeting. But prior to that, a couple days before that, we had a rally, and we named it “Broadmoor Lives,” just to proclaim that the community was going to come back, that the people were behind it, and that they were going to lead the efforts to make sure that the community did come back. We used that rally as an opportunity to get the word out to residents about our neighborhood meeting that was going to be held on January 18th.

So we had about three hundred people at the rally, which transferred into about six hundred people at the neighborhood meeting. Now, the Broadmoor community – and you know 80 percent of the city was under water – but Broadmoor was 2,400 properties home to 7,232 residents. We had a public school, public library, a fire station – all of our civic institutions were destroyed as well, so a place to gather was something that we did not have. But as a result of that, we pretty much broke the treasury of our organization, which was about three thousand dollars at the time, but we needed to do that in order to rent a tent so we could gather. It was winter, so we had to rent heat lamps and lighting and A/V and sound equipment and chairs and everything that would show the community that we were organized, we would be on task, and we were prepared and ready to plan for our futures. At that meeting we took a vote, and it was for everyone to have the right to return, that we were going to ensure that not one section of Broadmoor would be singled out as the green dot, but that the entire community was going to come back, and come back better than it was before. On that same night, we recognized the social ills that plagued our community pre-Katrina, whether it was slumlords, blight, mediocre libraries, substandard or low-performance schools – those types of social issues had to be embedded in our process of recovery and planning.

The community voted unanimously that this was what we were going to do together, and I then appointed two committees. One was the Repopulation Committee, so I asked for two co-chairs to lead that. The Repopulation Committee would be charged with finding our people, finding out what their needs are, whether there are barriers for their return, what are their intentions for coming home. The second committee was the Revitalization Committee, so not only do you have to find your people, if you find them and they want to come home, you have to have a plan of action. So the Revitalization Committee would then set the groundwork to plan for that to happen. We then met over a hundred twenty times as a community within the three months that followed. There was a little rumor out there that your neighborhood had to prove its viability, and over 50 percent of your residents would have to say that they wanted to return, in order for you to be considered viable. And you had to do this by May – you know, some of this was rumor, but you had to do this by May.

So we set out to plan. We completed our Redevelopment Plan by July of 2006, but surely by that time the mayor had come out and said that people have the right to return and they can rebuild wherever they choose to. So the green dot was no longer a

threat to us, but the work that we had undergone was totally important to the recovery of the neighborhood. The strategy that we adopted was going to be through forming public-private partnerships in order to build those relationships, form those alliances, and get the help you need, the resources you need to do that.

So over the past five years, we have now a public school that has been built, 30 million dollar renovation and expansion, built. And we started a charter school, so it's governed by the Broadmoor Charter School Board. We've had to start a development corporation, which is the Broadmoor Development Corp, that deals with housing. All of these different entities had to be established in order to really start stabilizing the community and for folks to come home and rebuild their lives. And so today, 83.5 percent of the community is back. We're focusing on the 16 percent of housing stock and people that are not back. They represent the needs that are the greatest, the hardest hit or challenged cases, whether it's people who did not have adequate funding to rebuild – they were ripped off by contractors, ripped off by mortgage companies, all of these things. It is imperative that we continue to stay focused on rebuilding community, but now we're transitioning into more of neighborhood stabilization. We continue to look out for housing, but we're really looking at social services and programming in order to meet the needs of our residents and make sure the neighborhood is truly back, better than it was before.

These were the organizing structures that we used, and I can say that the Redevelopment Plan that was drafted by the Broadmoor community was adopted in every planning process – I believe it was four of them – that we went through throughout the city. So the plan is being implemented as we speak, and we're making great strides and truly a great comeback of being better than we were. Thank you.

**Karen Gadbois:** Good afternoon. My name is Karen Gadbois, and before Katrina I was a textile designer. I once said that my civic engagement was sweeping my sidewalk. That's about as engaged as I was. I had moved recently to New Orleans in 2002 from Mexico, and quite liked the city the way it was, in many ways – at least from a visual standpoint.

So when I came back after the storm – I came back the last day of December. I was also undergoing chemotherapy – I was at Charity Hospital right before the storm, being treated for breast cancer. So I came back the day I finished my radiation. I said I wanted to spend the last day of 2005 in New Orleans, not in Austin, Texas, where I was. When I came back, I had a lot of time to think about what I was going to do. My house was underwater. I was in one of the little green dot neighborhoods called Hollygrove. At the time I referred to it as “neighborhood genocide,” where people would stand outside, point down the street, and say, “No, that's where they're going to demolish, right at the end of the street. Just past your house. Or just past my house.” And so we were all encouraged to, sort of, participate in a way where we could point to where it would be okay to get rid of neighborhoods, and I firmly believed that my job was not to decide who was going to be annihilated but to lift up our neighborhood.

I began to monitor demolitions in the city. The city before the storm was already a shrinking city in terms of population, so there was disinvestment in the city in general, and with my neighborhood, which was about 60/40 split in terms of renters and property

owners. The property owners were able to come back to some degree, with issues and trouble, but the renters were not, and that left us with a lot of empty houses. A lot of those property owners had already disinvested in the city and moved to the suburbs and had no incentive to rebuild their properties, other than they were being offered free demolitions by the federal government.

My concern was that we were encouraging this further disinvestment in the city, that we were creating vacant lots which would most likely not be rebuilt on, that we were losing voices that could advocate for services in the community, that there were a whole host of issues that were being foisted on us that we weren't able to control. So my blog is really about advocating that these properties not be sold but that they be renovated and reoccupied to create viable neighborhoods. I took it to a broader scale and started looking at development, and I realized that there was this little committee that met to discuss demolitions and pretty much rubber-stamped all the demolitions. I started going to those meetings and monitoring what was happening, and then eventually the city – this is a long story, but I'll try to make it brief – the city then decided they were going to identify what they called “imminent health threats,” and that was about two thousand houses that the city wanted to demolish. The only problem was the people didn't know. They didn't publicly list the people whose houses they were going to tear down – people who had building permits, people who were in the process of renovating. Some people were in the houses, so it was a really classic public-policy-meets-reality nightmare, and trying to get the city to engage in a conversation about it was very difficult. Then the local media – while I don't fault them for not paying attention, they weren't paying attention. The first attention we got for that specific issue was from *The Wall Street Journal*, which seemed pretty ironic. This is a pretty good story that wasn't being covered.

So I started becoming more interested, and often I was labeled as a “preservationist,” which is fine. I like to preserve things – I have nothing against it – but I really was more interested in public access to information. Because anyone who lived in New Orleans understood we were all starving for good public information, and there were many barriers to getting accurate information. You'd get many cross-purposed information messages. So I eventually built the site up to the point now where we have a website called “The Lens,” which is focused on a broader range of issues. It's funded by the Open Society [Foundation], George Soros' foundation; along with Surdna [Foundation] and the Knight Foundations – these you can find out about. We're housed in a local TV station, which is the Fox affiliate – so we totally confused everyone who thinks there are dastardly agendas by both sides – but it's a locally-owned media outlet, so we're able to take stories that may not get much traction on the website and turn them into TV stories which then get a lot more attention. And we've seen results, so we're pretty excited about that collaboration. I started working in textile design again, and that's progress [laughs].

**Maria Ludwick:** Hi. Thank you for inviting us here. My name is Maria Ludwick, and I work for the Louisiana Public Health Institute, and, as many of you can imagine, the healthcare structure was really greatly affected – as every other structure in the city – greatly affected by the devastation that the levees breaking had caused. And not

only were they residents – us, everybody sitting up here probably – they were also our doctors and our specialists, our patients, and also all of the people that worked within the healthcare system. So there was a great lack of understanding of what was next in terms of what was going to happen with the healthcare system, especially for those who were returning back to town, who were uninsured. Even as an insured individual, it's hard to find a doctor and figure out what you were going to do if you really did get hurt trying to fix up your house.

But what I think was really amazing was that there was an inordinate number of healthcare providers that returned to the city and really were trying to set up their practices, just trying to find their patients, going around vigilantly. As you can imagine, it was really a difficult time for them to imagine that they would actually find all of their patients, considering how far people had gone. At the same time, there were grassroots individuals who came to the city and who said, "We want to help." They were also doctors and nurses who really set up shop and really said, "We want to be a part of the recovery of New Orleans, and we're here to stay, even though right now we're not being funded, but we do have some funding from minor sources, or we can dedicate this time in our lives to come here." So it was an interesting mix of people who were sort of cobbling together a healthcare infrastructure. The large Charity Hospital system was closed for so very long, and I know that my colleague and friend here, Jacques, could speak to that, because he speaks to that quite a bit. That was the hub of healthcare. People were born there. People went there. They would wait twelve hours to be seen there. Again, this was for a population of people who were already very disenfranchised, so when they were coming back to town and trying to rebuild their lives, they really didn't have that many alternatives.

Almost two years after the storm, the clamoring for healthcare just got really, really loud. There was no excuse to see modular units behind fences, sitting there waiting to be deployed. Physicians were provided with incentives to return back to the area from the federal government, trying to piece together this healthcare system. A healthcare delegation went to Washington, DC to say, "Enough is enough. We need basic medical care. And we're serving people who are not tied to a payer, so they're not going to pay us. You need to recognize that we need somebody to help us through this time." In July of 2007, the feds issued 100 million dollars – five pieces of paper – and said, "Get this money out the door right away. You have two months to make a payment." The money went to the State of Louisiana, but the feds were smart enough to say, "Oh no. That we know would not work," in order to, sort of say, "We've already waited until it was a crisis," so that would not work. That would only delay getting a stabilized healthcare infrastructure in place. So they said a local partner had to be selected, and Louisiana Public Health was on the ground immediately after the storm, pulling together those community providers, not only the ones that were here before Katrina, but also reaching out and organizing the grassroots community providers that were coming into the fold, that were really interested and committed to staying here for whatever the duration of the recovery was.

So that 100 million dollars really could have been just another grant program, but instead, there was a lot of thought on the part of the community leadership to really redesign the way healthcare was delivered in New Orleans. They looked at trying to

figure out ways, instead of dumping the money on people, to incentivize providers to see more people – one of our policy issues is access to care – see people, especially those that are uninsured, deliver a high quality care that everyone deserves, and also to have a certain continuity of care across the healthcare systems, so that individuals could have behavioral health and primary care. And then not only that, but they would be sustainable business entities eventually. What was great about it was, being from a public health institute perspective, we had a lot of relationships with private foundations like the Commonwealth Fund, who said, “Look, you just got 100 million dollars. Don’t be crazy with this money. Develop a payment methodology that’s going to drive those policy areas.” And that’s what happened. They convened a group of national experts to help us develop this grant program that would really result in increasing the number of people who are served, giving them the highest quality of care that we all deserve.

Over the three-year period, we served 19 percent of the region’s population now. At that time, there were 25 entities that were participating in the program. It was non-competitive. If you offered a minimum level of services at that time, you were able to participate in the program. So there wasn’t any politics behind that, per se. You really just had to be on the ground and operating and have some level of physician and nurse practitioner level of effort. So over the past three years, this program – which incentivized access, incentivized quality – now we have 40 of the clinics that are NCQA-recognized (the National Committee for Quality Assurance) patient-centered medical home recognition, which was the largest concentration in the country a couple months ago – but now it’s not, because the wave of the future is really being patient-centered medical home and offering that to everyone. We also – again, we’re serving 19 percent of the population of the region – we are continuing to develop our relationships to ensure access to specialty care and in-patient care.

One of the areas, though, just was not doable under this grant, and we had a GAO committee saying – the Government Accountability Office finally fessing up that it just wasn’t feasible that these organizations would be sustainable. We did everything in our power to get everybody enrolled with Medicaid who was eligible – well, in this state almost no adults, except the poorest in the deepest of poverty are eligible. There was really no chance that they could become sustainable. Some of our primary care clinics are serving 80 percent uninsured, and when you look at that as a business, it’s just unsustainable. So here we were, yet again, at a crisis point. They had waited until the end of this grant was looming, and now I have to announce that Louisiana has put forward a waiver for individuals 19 to 64 [years old] that are covered for the New Orleans area, and they get access through the primary care network that was established. So that was a huge success, and we’re just getting the word out, because it happened October 1st, and not many people know. Thank you.

**Lisanne Brown:** Hello. I’ll actually be brief. I just wanted to say a few words about LPHI [Louisiana Public Health Institute]. So we are a private non-profit, an NGO. We get some public funding, but we also have a lot of private funding from various foundations, so we are able to operate fairly independently, of course, within our grant constraints, etcetera. So in addition to really trying to improve the healthcare infrastructure and the access to high-quality care, we’re also very much interested in helping people improve

their own health in their own communities, in their neighborhoods, in their homes. And so I just wanted to briefly mention one initiative that's very much related to making things better than before – I want to piggyback on a few things that Karen said. We want it to be better than before. It was not great before Katrina, so we don't want to replicate what happened before. And one thing – you know, a lot of residents don't really have much access to information. Some don't have access to the Internet. We need to do a better job at helping residents learn about their own health and how to improve their own health. So we have, actually, one private foundation that is funding us for a healthy New Orleans neighborhood project, and we're trying to identify data sources that really have neighborhood-level data. There are all sorts of data out there, but they're only at the state level or the county or parish. We're really trying to get information at as low a geographic level as possible and making it available to residents to help identify priority issues in their own communities, and then working through neighborhood associations or other civic groups within neighborhoods to help them engage, understand information, and figure out how they can use it to improve their own health in their own communities. So we're pretty excited about this.

**Mary Howell:** I'm going to talk about something a little different. My name's Mary Howell. I'm a civil rights attorney here in New Orleans, and I've spent about thirty years trying to deal with the New Orleans Police Department, with very mixed results. And I've gotten to where I'm comparing it to dealing with domestic violence crises. We go through these cycles where we'll have some eruption of terrible violence. There'll be some horrible event. Everyone will get together and say, "We're so sorry. It won't happen again." There's a period of reform, and then we get lulled into thinking that things are better, and it gradually starts to build up again until there's another explosion. And during the course of my work with the department, we've had three major time intervals – in the '80s, '90s, and then during the time immediately around Katrina – where the only thing that's really made a difference, one has been the community response, the community outrage, and, secondly is the Department of Justice, the federal government coming in and, once again, indicting scores of police officers, sending them to federal prison, offering to help clean up the department. And then they leave. And then we sort of slip-slide back to where we were before.

So there's been a kind of brutal history. We've seen hundreds of police officers prosecuted, convicted, sent to prison, for almost virtually every state and federal crime that you can think of. I'm talking bank robberies, arson, rape, drug dealing, and murders. We now have two former police officers on death row. We have the distinction of having the only police officer in the history of the United States who has been convicted for planning the assassination of a citizen who filed a complaint against him as a federal criminal civil rights violation – he is Len Davis, and Kim Marie Groves was a mother of three in the Lower Ninth Ward pre-Katrina, who spoke out against his brutalizing the children of the neighborhood. He had her murdered for that activism. We also have a female police officer who is on death row in this state for having participated in assassinating her partner and a young Vietnamese brother and sister who were studying to be a priest and nun. I say this to you not to just elicit horror, which it does, but to let you know that when we say that we go through these periodic crises of violence and

atrocities, we're not making it up.

And at the same time that we've had this problem, with problems of corruption and police brutality in the department and ongoing problems in terms of crime in our city, at the same time – and I believe there's a direct correlation – we have consistently led the nation in homicides. We are consistently one of the most violent cities in the nation. I've always believed you cannot fight crime with a police department that is corrupt and brutal or which is perceived by a significant part of the population as being corrupt or brutal. We've been a situation here for years where victims of crime – let me repeat that again – victims of crime, victims of violent crime do not report. They do not report that they've been raped. They do not report that they've been shot. They do not report that they've been stabbed. Witnesses obviously, in situations like this, do not come forward. Juries do not convict. And so the cycles continue.

We went through a significant period of reform in 1990, but I have to say that, going into Katrina, we were back to where we were. We were again number one in the nation in homicides. The separation between the police and the community was as desperate as any that I had seen in years. The police had busted up the Mardi Gras Indians on St. Joseph's Night in March of 2005. You're anthropologists, so I won't go into explaining what that ritual is about, but trust me, it's very important to our community. We'd had a whole rash of police shootings again. We'd actually had a police chief that was so desperate they changed their motto. In June of 2005, they had dropped the part that said, "to protect." They dropped the "protect" part, and said they were only going to "serve" us, would no longer be to protect but to serve. We're going, "Excuse me! Excuse me! Can you also protect us?" It was utter chaos, and so going into Katrina, we once again had a department that was on the verge of collapse.

Now, I often say to people that Katrina did not cause the collapse of this police department, just merely exposed it. In the same way it exposed the problems that we have in public education, public housing, and public health, it exposed what was going on in this city, which of course we will not be able to get into a lot of detail here, but which was completely impacted and filtered by race and class issues which had plagued the city for generations. For those of you who saw what happened with Katrina, you watched it unfold on TV. You saw hundreds of police deserting. You probably saw some of the televised lootings that were pretty amazing to see. There were a whole number of incidents that took place, and I will tell you, as we sit here today, we still do not know – we don't have a count of the actual number of homicides that took place during Katrina. We also don't have a count of the actual number of police-involved shootings that happened during Katrina. And I find that shocking, that we don't even have that most basic kind of data. One of the problems was the way the bodies were handled, and we have bodies that actually turned out – reporters have told us that they were discovered to have bullets in them, and the cause of death was written out as "decomposition." Decomposition is what happened after the bullet caused them to die. They didn't die from the decomposition.

So we're in a situation going into Katrina that you have already a collapsed department in terms of leadership, supervision, discipline, and accountability. And what happened during Katrina, at the same time, exposed what had happened in the past and also provided us an opportunity. Once again, the wave of reform began. There

were new organizations – Safe Streets Strong Communities had come about – that built upon prior reform efforts. For years, we'd been trying to get an independent police monitor established with the city. We had some reformers who came on the City Council. Ironically, there was an effort to get an inspector general in to deal with issues of corruption with contracts, different issues like that that had been opposed and resisted. And there were, again, racial and class divisions around the issue of the inspector general. The City Council member who was pushing the independent police monitor had a good idea to tag it in with the inspector general, so that those same parts of the community that might have opposed one supported the other, and in fact we do have, now, an inspector general. We do have an independent police monitor. It took us eight years to get that position filled from the time that we had recommended it as a citizen task force in 2002.

But I think that there's been a difference on those institutional reforms with the police department in dealing with what actually happened during Katrina. And what I've found with that is there's been enormous resistance to actually looking at what did happen, what happened in Danziger, what happened in Algiers, what happened at these different locations, that just now, five years later, the trials are going on. As you all are sitting here today, one of the most notorious ones is going on in federal court. We have trials scheduled all through next year – federal trials. There are 20 indictments. Five officers have pled guilty. We have a number of officers who've been immunized by the feds to come forward and testify.

Now, what I noticed was happening with the police was that there was a certain amount of revisionism that started to creep in, a kind of Katrina exceptionalism. Yes, we want to know why the levees failed. Yes, we want to know what happened in terms of the problems with the wetlands and all of these, sort of, big issues about the flooding of the city. But when it came to what actually happened here on the ground with our police department towards the community that they were supposed to protect and serve, there's a kind of collective amnesia, and a kind of idea that, "Well, we don't want to go there. And if you raise these [issues] then you are hobbling the recovery. You are standing in the way of the positive narrative. We need a positive narrative in order to recover, and talking about what happened back there in that time and place is something that we just all need to 'move on' from." And I think that that's something that we've not fully examined or dealt with in the community. You can see it in terms of the pain that continues in our community and the racial separation that continues in the community and the class separation that continues in the community because there are really two parallel recoveries. There's the recovery of the developers, the people with the big plans, big ideas, and some of the really positive things that the citizens have been able to make happen. But there's also the reality that we have many unhealed, unaddressed, unacknowledged wounds in our community, and this question about what happened with the police, what happened in these different incidents is part of it. The vigilantes – there were rumors for years about vigilante gangs that were shooting black people at random in Algiers, and now there are federal indictments related to that.

I will tell you, if it had not been for two factors, we would not know what we needed to know about that. One was an independent, intrepid investigative reporter from out of town, A.C. Thompson, who came in and just spent years – we could not

get any local media to investigate these incidents, these cases, to the depth that was required. And secondly, there was an election. We had an election in the United States in 2008, and for the first time in years, we had a justice department that actually answered the phone when you called about civil rights complaints and that responded when you came and said, "We have some atrocities that we need investigating." I raise that point in particular because I have fear about where we are today. Right now we're in this moment in time where we have indictments, we have prosecutions, we have police officers who may – indeed, several of them have already been sentenced and will be going to prison. We have an independent police monitor. We have the community pressing for consent decree to address a lot of these different issues that were here. But I will tell you, if we have a different justice department and a different president two years from now, all of this may end. It may stop. That's how fragile this "recovery," if you can call it that, on this issue really is.

So, while we've had some success, we've had some acknowledgment, we've had some places where we've been able to make a difference. I come here today with also some fear and some concern that we have still failed to deal with some very fundamental and terrible events that happened in our city. And we cannot in any way indulge in any sort of satisfaction or looking the other way or thinking for a minute that these problems have really been addressed or cleaned up.

**Martha Ward:** For all the trauma and suffering of the last five and a half years, you listen to these people testify to what has gone on and continues to go on, and then you will understand why I say that my chief reaction is how proud I am to be in that number. We didn't ask for this. New Orleans has had an extremely bad relationship with the federal government since this time in 1803, and the French and Spanish founders of the city, full of free people of color, the most assertive and dynamic and creative community of color in the United States history, of which – I have to point out to Jacques' embarrassment – his and his mother Haydels are some of the oldest Creole families in the city. You know, those people took a look around and they said, "...*qui les américains?*...", "Who are these Americans? What the hell are they doing here?" And it's been like that since. When the Model Cities program came in after Lyndon Johnson, you know, the locals were saying, "Who are those Americans with all that money? Let's just get it and go on our way," and you know we had the whole healthcare scandals that attended that and the Model Cities money. And now, after Katrina, we had the federal government again.

On the one hand, there are these heart-breaking, horrendous, almost insoluble problems that go on and on and get amazingly worse and worse. And on the other hand, we've had 400,000 volunteers down here. That's an astonishing thing. We've had incredible NGOs, faith-based organizations. Faith-based organizations don't have a really good reputation among anthropologists, I have to tell you, and we're wrong about that, as we are about a couple of other things that have happened since Katrina. We had the Saints victory, dammit! We've had the *Tremé* series, which some of these people [on the panel] are not only in, but are played by actors.<sup>4</sup> You know, this is about the survival and recovery and the spirit of this. We have not had good public information – I love that phrase. We have had unique and sometimes unworkable public-private

partnerships.

And I feel that New Orleans is inadvertently on the cutting edge of American culture right now, as we speak. We're not behind. We are ahead, way ahead. We've had the economic recessions, the housing crises. We've had the collapse of the healthcare, the public education system. And we've had everybody watching us through it, I mean everybody. You know, these outsiders – we call them “helicopter researchers” and “helicopter consultants” because they fly in, tell us what we ought to be doing, take their money, and leave, and they never help.

There's so much we could talk about around this two-sided thing, this huge and incredible continuum of ups and downs that we are on, but I just want to start the discussion. First of all, I don't think anthropologists know what public policy is. Having said that, I've asked dozens of anthropologists to name me a public policy that helped around the events of Katrina – maybe one that was in place before Katrina, like FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency], that helped, or came into being after Katrina, that helped. I mean, you've heard the justice department. What were the public policies that helped? In the universities, we have not seen any. We've had the horrors of the Stafford Act in so many areas – I think some of you know how the Stafford [Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance] Act has killed you in one way or another. This is a supposed recovery act of the federal government, which has nearly killed us. Then you have, coupled with those things, the state on our backs all the time, in one way or another. Their policies – God help us – I mean, these have always been unbelievable. They continue to be. We've been punished for being who we are. So anyway, I've asked Gregory Button, who is an expert in public policy and disasters. I said, “Gregory, just name me one policy.” And he can't. So I'm going to ask the panel, can you name a public policy that has helped us through this? Okay, Jacques. I mean, there are some, I know.

**Jacques Morial:** The Primary Care [Access] Stabilization Grant.

**Martha Ward:** Yes, yes. What she said, yes, and I haven't even known about that. That's good.

**Jacques Morial:** [Inaudible]

**Martha Ward:** Ok, but that's good. We got one. He's not an anthropologist, I know, but that's okay. You are the real thing. Okay, anybody else think of any public policies?

**Audience member #1:** A Medicaid waiver.

**Martha Ward:** A Medicaid waiver?

**Audience member #2:** I want to point out that it was put on the pretense of keeping Charity Hospital closed when its workers and the U.S. military had made it ready to reopen on September 20th, 2005, and I find it shameful that folks would take advantage of the disaster capital that is built into that hospital, of literally wrecking it and getting

the full credit, which is going on now for new hospitals, and also seizing the assets of the Disproportionate Share [Hospital, special Medicaid funds] hospital funds. I hate to say this, but LPHI has enabled all of this, and it's been terrible. The stakeholders, us patients, weren't here, and if you want us patients back – because generations of us have gone to Charity Hospital – well why don't you reopen Charity Hospital?

**Audience member #3:** Hear, hear.

**Audience member #2:** I'm sorry. I just ... [laughter from audience].

**Lisanne Brown:** If I could just take a second to respond to that... but I guess one thing that I personally, and I think we both felt, was that what we really need is not to use an emergency room as a primary care center, and that we need neighborhood-level primary care centers and medical homes for people. We also need a hospital – I totally agree with that, but I was always upset at hearing stories of residents having no other source of care but the emergency room at Charity Hospital.

**Audience member #2:** Because they closed those units before the storm.

**Lisanne Brown:** No, no. I'm talking historically. I'm talking long, long before Katrina [crosstalk].

**Audience member #2:** [Crosstalk] But Charity Hospital had 60 outpatient clinics [inaudible].

**Lisanne Brown:** Of course, yes.

**Audience member #2:** I mean, we have chronically... and I'm not saying go back to the original. I served on the board, advised under [former Louisiana Governor Kathleen] Blanco. I was the representative for the uninsured in four parishes of New Orleans, and the thing is, we could have done something different. But to use the disaster and that trauma? That is an answer that I'm still seeking. [Applause]

**Karen Gadbois:** I just want to add one thing about Charity [Hospital], because Charity saved my life, and I will go to my grave – hopefully in a long, long time – saying that. The work that I witnessed at Charity which I think is remarkable – at least to understand the context of Charity – is, three days before Katrina, I wanted to retrieve my records from Charity's record room, which [in the end,] I didn't. I went, and I was sitting down there in the room where you go to get your records, and it was right when school was about to start. And all these mothers were coming in to get their kids' medical records to enroll them in school, and it really was a profound moment when I realized that this is the one piece of stability in very chaotic lives. It really functioned as the womb of the city, and I don't think you can begin to grasp the loss until you recognize that it was the mother of the city, and our mother was shut down. There's nothing – I mean, you talk about replicating my mother, or the place that offered me solace, offered me hope and

life. Make sure you've got another mother in place. Don't talk about having another mother in place in five years, because I'll be dead by then. And I tried to get healthcare at Ochsner [Health System] before the storm, was turned away, yet Ochsner made it through the storm. Since they offer chemotherapy, that's where I ended up after the storm, and it enraged me because I was waiting twelve hours in a high chair, and people were saying, "You had to wait at Charity." Well, you have to wait wherever you go. So I just wanted to stress that theory and policy are great, but when they have to meet reality, which is – where am I going to go today or tomorrow? And [to have] no answer? Then you don't have an answer.

**Audience member #4:** I do know some public policy that kind of helps, NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] and the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106.<sup>5</sup> They did enforce Section 106, the public review process of some demolition and other issues, and they did call for public hearings, so at least there was some opportunity for people to get together like this and have some conversation about the feasibility, about some of the injustice of [inaudible] some of these major redevelopment projects like the redevelopment of all the housing projects and the Charity Hospital. They couldn't really force good change to happen, but they did at least make some conversations happen around redevelopment.

**Jacques Morial:** Well, I don't disagree with Audience Member #2 but I do think that most of these decisions were made long before most people returned. Thankfully, I never left, and I was able to share whatever information I could find on the ground here. But in all of Katrina, after the levees broke, and the city virtually drowned, I was just thinking a moment ago, making a list of the top crimes against humanity that occurred. And one of them – Brad is completely right – was the fact that Charity Hospital couldn't reopen. It was repaired. It was cleaned. It was decontaminated. It was cleaner than it had ever been, because it had never been empty to clean since the day it opened its doors. But the other crimes against humanity that maybe don't measure in the same sort of outrage, the destruction of public housing – more than four thousand homes were destroyed; we face the biggest housing shortage any city or country has ever faced; the decision to close and destroy the public school system; and the crime against humanity of a police department totally out of control, a murderous police department totally out of control. These were all things that we suffered, and you can argue which was worse, which wasn't worse, but they were all preordained. And we had no effective voice to defend ourselves from these, because they are all rooted in decisions and policies that existed before Katrina and decisions made immediately after without any consideration for the stakeholders.

**Latoya Cantrell:** I would add too, another crime against humanity was the State of Louisiana, with that Road Home Program, that we've recently learned was proved to be discriminatory. And it was communities that were predominantly African American that got screwed. It doesn't mean that, "Oh, just African Americans got screwed." No. Whoever lived in that community got screwed. And Broadmoor, I know, was one of them.

**Audience member #5:** Could you explain what it was?

**Latoya Cantrell:** Well, The Road Home Program was designed by the state as being the program that would disburse and allocate federal funds that the state received to help families and people rebuild and recover. And so there was \$150,000 that was allocated per family. So that didn't happen. And we do know now that it was discriminatory, particularly against communities that were predominantly African American, those that suffered the greatest. And that's definitely a crime against humanity. People are suffering right now because of the inability to act and serve people appropriately.

**Mary Howell:** What they did was they told people that they would only give you money based on the value of your house pre-Katrina – so if you lived in a low-income or minority neighborhood, your house had less value – instead of paying you for what it would take to rebuild. So that is why right now we have over one hundred thousand people in our community still displaced who cannot come home. We have the highest rate of blighted housing of any city in the United States. We had a very high rate before Katrina, but now it's even worse, and there's a big push now to go in and destroy these homes. A lot of these are homes of people who got cheated because they didn't get the money, and now there's been a court decision saying it was racially discriminatory because the impact would basically have redlined those communities and prevented them from coming back and rebuilding, and the impact has been disproportionately felt in the African-American community.

**Latoya Cantrell:** Right, and the judgments were with no recourse at all. So basically, you knew you were screwed. We were going, "Hey! Where are these communities [inaudible] right before my eyes." We had to wait five years for the government to come back and tell us, "Oh yeah. You know what? Yeah, you were screwed." Well, thanks a lot. We knew that. So these are some of the things that we continue to live with, and it's going to take some time to make people whole, to make communities whole, to make families and children whole. Not only the trauma – we talked about that – but the mental health and mental illness that people are experiencing, and hey, I know – I'm one of them. I mean, really. Exactly. I know I'm one of them. So, you know, these are things that are real issues that we are currently facing today and every day in our communities and in our public schools, where you see it up close and personal.

**Mary Howell:** I want to address one other policy issue, just very quickly, the tearing down of the Lower Mid-City neighborhood to make way for the new hospitals. I went through that, when they came in to destroy 71 acres of historic neighborhood, and I tell you, after three years of going through all of that, I want my simple life of dealing with police who kill people in the street instead of dealing with that process. It was horrible. All it is is about process. They have to pretend to listen to you, and it really was foreordained. They wanted that land. They wanted those people's homes, and we were just a speed bump in their way. And I tell you, it was a hideous process.

But on policy, there was one huge policy that caused this terrible problem, and

that is that we had a completely collapsed criminal justice system. Completely. We had no courts. We had no laws. We had no morgue. We had none of the apparatus. Nothing. It had completely collapsed, and the justice department has had a policy for years – you may remember the Rodney King case – that they will not come in and investigate civil rights cases unless or until the local authorities are unable or unwilling to proceed. And they wait. And they did that. They stood back and waited for years. We begged them to please come in here. We did not have the ability – the District Attorney’s office undertook a failed and flawed attempt on the Danziger case to prosecute, but we did not have the ability to investigate these serious civil rights cases that were happening, and they refused. They hid behind that policy, which has very good state and federal government reasons under normal circumstances, but the refusal, the decision to suspend that and to say, “We’re coming in. We’re bringing in the FBI. We’re going to investigate these stories now, not in 2009 or 2010, but we’re going to investigate them in the moment, as they happen,” would have made a huge difference in this community, and that was a policy decision the federal government refused to offer.

**Martha Ward:** Let me say something else about policy. Jacques is right. The most hurtful policies, the majority of the policies that I see in operation were *sub rosa* in the works prior to Katrina. And I tell you this because the federal government – you know how they couldn’t rescue anybody; they couldn’t deal with that – within five weeks had specially prepared, beautifully done barriers on the Lafitte Housing Projects, right down here. They were pre-manufactured to measure from the Lafitte Housing Projects, which had not flooded and was in excellent condition – WPA [Works Progress Administration] buildings that were beautiful, as a matter of fact, and had an intact, meaningful community structure. HUD, that is your Housing and Urban Development, I believe, for all of us as citizens, was ready to come in with the private developers when Katrina struck. And they closed it, locked it tight down.

**Audience member #6:** And you can add that they had constructed that Greyhound prison that is described in [Dave Eggers’ book] *Zeitoun*<sup>6</sup> – that was within 48 hours? It’s unbelievable, how prepared they were for that.

**Martha Ward:** Exactly. There’s all kinds of areas. They were prepared at the state level to shut Charity [Hospital] down. They were just waiting. They needed a little bit of an excuse, and they were going to do it.

**Audience member #7:** I was wondering if you would be able to speak in a little bit more detail about the perils to democracy with the school privatization and the charter schools, the increasing influence of private groups and foundations, like TFA [Teach For America] or Brogue, Gates, the diminishing influence of teachers’ unions. I mean, they fired most of the teachers, right? And also how this transformation might constrain or condition the process by which RSD [Louisiana Recovery School District] schools are supposed to return to some form of local control.

**Jacques Morial:** I’ll be really quick. One, for those of you who don’t know, one of the

decisions that was made in that secret Dallas meeting was not to reopen the schools, and, in spite of a binding collective bargaining agreement, the school district dismissed – fired – all of their teachers. It's clear the underlying objective of all of this was to remake the demographics of the city, and one of the principals at that meeting actually admitted and was quoted in *The Wall Street Journal* saying that their objective was to remake the demographics of the city. They wanted it to be – they wanted fewer black folks, didn't matter if you were poor. They wanted to get rid of the teachers because they represented an independent leadership class with job security and some wealth, mostly equity in their own homes. They wanted to get rid of public housing residents because they represented a formidable political force on their own. And they wanted to get rid of folks who lived in New Orleans East, Gentilly, Pontchartrain Park, Broadmoor, and the Lower Ninth Ward.

**Karen Gadbois:** And Hollygrove.

**Jacques Morial:** And Hollygrove and West Carrollton as well. So I don't know what's going to happen. I know that if the school system is not returned to citizen return, consistent with the statute – that's by early next year – we'll see them in court, and we'll see them in the streets too.

**Karen Gadbois:** We've reported a little bit about schools. We're trying to get some funding for an education reporter [for [thelensnola.org](http://thelensnola.org)]. This is just a slight, sort of, fine point to make. We have a young woman who's been doing the school reporting, so she made a public records request of every single school for their board members, where the board members lived, and the agendas of their meetings. Those are the really simple things. She was thwarted at every turn. So even just the act of monitoring what goes on in the schools is a formidable task because, without a central school board system, you have hundreds of school board systems to monitor, and policies within each school can vary greatly. I mean, there are upsides to charter schools. It's not a painted-all-with-one-brush kind of thing, but understanding that that information is public information in a public should be engaged. You can't denigrate a community for not engaging if you only are denigrating them because you don't like the way they engage. And that's a lot of what happens here. Politicians say, "Well, people aren't engaged," but then again, you just don't like the way they're engaged. That's what it is. They're engaged.

**Audience member #8:** So I've heard a few of you mention in a really negative way the notion of the government or public processes, and then allowing private investors and private groups, but then I hear a lot of you say you've formed public-private partnerships. And so I'm wondering how you are allowing the private portions of your partnerships to affect or to be stakeholders within your own public process. How are you letting outside investors also be stakeholders in your public process?

**Jacques Morial:** I think that most of the public-private partnerships that I've seen are between grassroots legitimate stakeholder-based organizations, like Broadmoor Improvement Association, Holy Cross Neighborhood Association, and mostly private

nonprofit institutions. We're not talking about the big bureaucratic NGOs. I'm talking about institutions of higher learning, faith-based organizations, these sorts of public-private partnerships. I think that we're all very keen and on the look out for disaster capitalists. We've had enough experience. We know how much they stole from us, collectively, since the storm. So I don't know, I'd be interested in what Latoya and Karen and Martha think about what are the more effective public-private partnership models. Are they partnerships with private not-for-profit institutions, faith-based organizations, institutions of higher learning? And if you've had any experience with effective and fruitful partnerships with private for-profits?

**Latoya Cantrell:** Well I think, from my perspective in Broadmoor, in terms of public-private partnerships, it's kind of lopsided. It was the private that came in and renewed the course of blood through our veins, and the public piece, in terms of government, literally just came on in. An example was that we started a development corporation. We did that in 2006, and for a four-year period, it was hundred percent privately funded, so entering into our fifth year, which is now, it's ninety percent publicly funded. Why? Because it took us really four years before governmental programs kind of really started to hit the ground, and so CDBG [Community Development Block Grant] dollars, HUD programs, those kind of things, and then you may have partnerships with, like, [inaudible] and Enterprise, who also has affiliations with HUD. And so on the private side, it was them coming in literally to help, and I think it was up to the community to set the tone as to how that partnership was going to play out. So communities made sure that their interests were the priority, and the partner – like for example, with Broadmoor, the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard was one of our first that we started with, and it wasn't Harvard coming in to tell us what to do, it was Harvard coming in to do research for us based on the redevelopment plans that we had as a neighborhood. Then that translated into other partnerships that grew with other institutions, but also nonprofit or philanthropy – the Carnegie Corporation of New York came in, and we wrote a grant and got two million dollars to rebuild our public library. But it was government that literally stood in our way. We got the [government's] grant approved in 2007. The project just started in April of this year. So it wasn't from the private sector that we got the pushback. It was from government.

**Audience member #9:** Hi. I'm from the federal government. But, I'm also from the Upper Ninth Ward. I keep hearing people say, "They did this," and "They did that." I suspect that there are multiple "they's." Now, dear panel, if you could, it sounds like you're either suggesting or you suspect that perhaps these multiple "they's," some may have been collaborating on some of these perhaps pre-planned efforts or post-Katrina actions in ways that have been very negative. So could you sort of comment on that? I mean, it's the feds, it's the state? It's the city? It's the people uptown? It's this or that?

**Anne Lovell:** We have about five minutes left, so I'm wondering if we should take all the questions. Let's just see how many other people have absolutely pressing questions that can't be discussed over coffee outside or something. Who else wants to ask a question? Ok, well then what we'll do is we'll go ahead and answer your question, and then if we

have time, we'll take more.

**Jacques Morial:** I'll take just 15 seconds to respond to the very first part of your question. I would always tell people, and still do, when we are outraged, frustrated, especially with FEMA, that it's not the people who work for FEMA. It's a dysfunctional, bureaucratic morass that's been created. Don't hold it personally against the people, and I'm not saying this just because you work for the federal government. We refer to it as "they," but we don't mean the people who have a job to do but have to do it within very unreasonable, irrational constraints. I wish the people who work in the frontline in agencies like FEMA and even the Road to Destruction – or The Road Home, had more power to actually be responsive and change systems to help people more.

**Karen Gadbois:** I just want to quickly address this with a brief anecdote. It's because public policies, governmental agencies – there's a demolition policy that was drafted by the city, and they were redrafting an ordinance around blight and code enforcement. So I went into the meeting and said, "What you really need is case management because you are getting to the point where you're finding people with really difficult issues: mental health, physical health... We need a case worker." And the guy said, "No, no, no, we have a case management program." And I asked, "What is it?" And he named some software program. He was talking about how you manage the files, and we're talking about how you manage the people. And I think that's always been this disconnect between the languages. Bureaucracies tend to be out managing the files, communities tend to be managing the people. We can be really nice, but I think that's not our job; our job is to be tenacious and demand opportunities to hear what we're saying. This is what we need; we don't need another software management program.

**Audience member #10:** I think New Orleans needs a Truth Commission. Because I think that's what I'm hearing, it's very mediated, and there's a lot more that's going on. And this question of complicity is always there... But I was a civil rights worker too, and this was the home we used to come to from Alabama to feel okay, from Selma. And the feds were sometimes helpful to the civil rights movement. They weren't always; they covered up a lot of stuff too. But it seems to me that we need a Truth Commission because there are things that are allowed to be said, and there are things that are not allowed to be brought up. But just a little question I had when Ms. Cantrell – you said that 83.5 percent of the population has come back, are they the same people, are they people who have moved into their houses, the relatives? Because demography is kind of a slippery picture.

**Latoya Cantrell:** For the community it's 83.5 percent of the houses. Because one of the issues – because the Census Bureau did not have their butts on the ground – another federal agency that should have been here. Because when people are scattered, it's up to the community to have to find people? And now to have to count them? So we had to look at houses. So when those houses came back, the houses represented people who came back. So it's a mixed bag. It's people who've moved in, who have returned, and then those whose homes are still in disrepair.

**Audience member #10:** Then I also understand that the 18 percent missing are houses and not people, necessarily.

**Latoya Cantrell:** Well the homes represent people, and families.

**Audience member #10:** But some of those are renters.

**Latoya Cantrell:** Some of them renters, absolutely.

**Audience member #10:** And they become invisibilized very quickly.

**Latoya Cantrell:** Well it's a mixed bag. And then when the census was conducted this year, they called the neighborhood organization and asked us questions. I said, "You are getting paid for this, and five years later you're calling and asking us? Hell, you should have been here a long time ago." And then this data we won't have for a year, another two years down the line, so communities are having to buy data just to get a real sense of their population, which is very important.

**Mary Howell:** Can I come back to the larger question we're talking about with all this? Just to be very clear: every level of government failed us. Every level. Local, state, federal. And if there's one thing we've learned from them, it's "Don't trust them, don't rely on them." And there are certain things we need government to do. We need government to build the levees. They only fixed the part that broke. The part that didn't break still has the same defective design, the same defective construction. It's ridiculous. They are not addressing the wetlands. We know that. These are huge things that need policy decisions. We need government to come in and do those huge things. Everybody in this city now who was here before – we're here because we want to be here. We're determined to be here. You're going to have to do something worse than Katrina to get rid of us. And that to me is the lesson of this place, we have a place here worth fighting for, we have a place that we love, we have a community that we care about. And we are tougher than we used to be. And we're not as naïve as we used to be. We don't take anything for granted. I have never seen such civic activism in my life. Meetings about the sewerage, the utilities, the electrical, medical care, whatever it is. People are there. The citizenry is engaged. The problem we have is, oftentimes the powers that be don't want us there. They don't want to hear what we have to say, and they don't want to hear our ideas. So there's a constant tension, people feel like we have been shut out. But I tell you, we are a different people in a different place than it was in the past. In some ways it's a good thing. But I think about what Martha said earlier about how in some ways we're the forerunner. I talk to people about Detroit, and Detroit scares me to death... We had a disaster to unify us, we had something that brought us all together. I think this is going to be trickier in the rest of the country, where people are facing unemployment, facing foreclosure, facing the closing of their factories, losing their homes and their livelihood.

**Karen Gadbois:** You'll get shut inside your house. We were forced out of our house. We were thrown out on the sidewalks with our entire possessions. We had to relate to each other.

**Mary Howell:** And you had to have a moment of truth with yourself. Am I going to go back and fight for my home or not? And what is this place called home? You [turning to Karen Gadbois] talked about Mother Home. Our city was our mother, and I know that because we always used to complain about her. [laughter]

**Martha Ward:** My daughter said: "There's New Orleans, so I've discovered post-Katrina, and all the rest of the world is Houston." [applause]

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Anne M. Lovell**, an anthropologist with CERMES3 (Center for Research on Medicine, Mental Health and Society) at the University of Paris-René Descartes, is also Senior Research Scientist at France's national institute of health, INSERM. She has published extensively on marginality, pharmaceuticals, transformations of psychiatry in North America and Europe. She has been researching health transformations after Katrina since 2006.

**Samuel Bordreuil** is a sociologist interested in public space, electronic arts and urban studies. He is Senior Research Scientist with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and directs the Mediterranean Center for Sociology (LAMES) at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (MMSH), Aix-en-Provence, France. His research on endogenous violence and social effects of ecological disasters centers on post-Katrina New Orleans.

**Vincanne Adams** is a medical anthropologist, professor, director and vice-chair of the graduate program in Medical Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. She has been working in New Orleans on recovery and the changing dynamics of the public sector safety net since 2007.

**Jacques Morial**, co-director of the Louisiana Justice Institute, has brought his economics and public administration background (MPA, Harvard) to such diverse areas as the arts, public policy development, capital finance, dispute resolution and strategic communications in the U.S. and beyond. Since Katrina, has been a public advocate for health care access, equitable recovery and other social justice issues.

**Latoya Cantrell** is president of Broadmoor Improvement Association, which pre-existed Katrina but was designated to become parkland, rather than being rebuilt (i.e. "green-dotted") after the floods. BIA became one of the first neighborhood organizations to mobilize after Katrina. A citizen activist and expert on many post-Katrina issues, Cantrell also manages the Greater New Orleans Education Foundation.

**Karen Gadbois**, a textile artist, post-Katrina blogger ([squanderedheritage.com](http://squanderedheritage.com)) and citizen

investigative journalist, received the Peabody Award for her work exposing widespread misuse of city recovery funds. She now edits New Orleans's first non-profit journalism venture, The Lens ([thelensnola.com](http://thelensnola.com)).

**Maria Ludwick** directs the Primary Care Access and Stabilization Grant (PCASG) at the Louisiana Public Health Institute (LPHI), one of the largest such institutes in the U.S. LPHI serves as an umbrella for funding community health clinics and health programs throughout New Orleans.

**Lisanne Brown** is director of the Division of Evaluation at the Louisiana Public Health Institute (LPHI) in New Orleans. She has a PhD in Epidemiology and an MPH from Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and has been managing and implementing research studies both internationally and in New Orleans since 2007.

**Mary Howell**, a plaintiffs' civil rights attorney, received national recognition for her cases involving police misconduct, prisoners' rights and efforts to reform the New Orleans Police Department, which is currently under federal indictment. She represents the Madison family, victims of the 2005 post-Katrina Danziger Bridge incident, for which six New Orleans policemen are currently under federal indictment.

**Martha Ward**, Professor of Anthropology at the University of New Orleans, has authored two books on New Orleans: *Poor Women, Powerful Men*<sup>7</sup>, about Louisiana's family planning experiment; and a history of Marie Laveau<sup>8</sup>. A leading voice for maintaining public higher education in New Orleans post-Katrina, Martha helped prevent the closing of the University of New Orleans.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel de Tarde. 1989. *L'opinion et la Foule*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

<sup>2</sup> Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds. 2005. *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

<sup>3</sup> The Bring New Orleans Back (BNOB) Commission was established by Mayor Ray Nagin after Katrina to advise, assist, plan, and help the City of New Orleans develop recommendations for rebuilding.

<sup>4</sup> *Tremé* is an HBO Television series, created by David Simon and Eric Overmyer, that begins three months after Katrina and follows a network of musicians and other New Orleanians trying to rebuild their lives.

<sup>5</sup> The National Environmental Policy Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act require resource surveys and public review processes before any development project funded by the federal government can be undertaken.

<sup>6</sup> Dave Eggers. 2009. *Zeitoun*. San Francisco: McSweeney's Books. Based on oral histories, the book tells the harrowing experience of a Syrian born New Orleanian, caught between the storm and post-9/11 anti-Muslim sentiment, during Katrina, and imprisoned at Camp Greyhound.

<sup>7</sup> Martha Coonfield Ward. 1986. *Poor Women, Powerful Men: America's Great Experiment in Family Planning*. Boulder: Westview Press.

<sup>8</sup> Martha Coonfield Ward. 2004. *Voodoo Queen: The Spirited Lives of Marie Laveau*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.