

## Title:

New Orleans My Home - Katrina My Nightmare

## Word Count:

925

## Summary:

I have lived in Jefferson Parish, Orleans Parish and St. Bernard Parish Louisiana but anytime I'm more than fifty miles away from home I simply say I'm from New Orleans. People understand that. After hurricane Katrina they will understand it much more. What they may not understand is exactly what happened there before, during and after the visitation of Katrina.

## Keywords:

Katrina, New Orleans, Hurricane, fema, evacuation, flood, St Bernard Parish, Louisiana, death toll, Jesse Jackson, Mayor Nagin, destruction, levee, rebuild, Mississippi

## Article Body:

Whether Katrina is seen as a disaster, a scourge or a purge it is hard to believe that it can dislodge the deep culture and uniqueness that makes up this city known as New Orleans. From its long history in the hands of the Spanish the French and then the Americans it has formed a character that cannot be compared to any city in the entire nation.

Every thing is different in New Orleans. This is the City of Lagniappe (something extra), romantic paddle boats, the French Quarter, muffelattas and Mardi Gras. Even the street names speak of New Orleans unusual character. Names like Tchoupitoulas, Melpomene, Chef Menteur, and Terpsichore.

The dialects and colloquialisms spring from Creole, French, African, Irish and many other tongues too numerous to mention. Perhaps most noticeable of all is the common Brooklynese spoken by most New Orleanians as a result of Brooklyn middle school teachers being imported to New Orleans over a hundred years ago to help educate New Orleans children.

Nothing in New Orleans is like any other city in our nation but that also includes its susceptibility to the ravages of Gulf storms and hurricanes. Parts of the city are only three feet below sea level and others are up to twenty feet below sea level. Ducks may love water but this city was a sitting duck for more water than it could ever handle. I knew that like everyone else living there but

I thought preparations and contingencies had been properly made.

As the water begins to recede and people are evacuated and the dead are counted another storm has begun. The storm of criticism now rages throughout the nation. FEMA, the President, the National Guard are all coming under intense scrutiny for their performance or the lack of it.

For those of us down here we didn't mind seeing Jesse Jackson cut short by our news commentators as he flew into tirade about President Bush's slow or inadequate responses. We stand behind Mayor Nagin even though it is reported that he vented a great deal of anger towards both Governor Blanco and President Bush.

We don't blame Sheriff Jack Stephens of St. Bernard Parish for wailing at the FEMA rep who showed up days after his deputies had worked alone and under the worst of conditions and exclaimed he was there to make an assessment. We felt like crying when we saw Governor Blanco holding back her tears as she described the situation in the first hours after Katrina danced its dance of death.

We are listening to our local leaders and our President not to the nay Sayers and critics who comment from afar and above sea level, seeking to further the interests of their party or their own profile. Contrary to what is being said we both hear and see that the help is flowing in and the effort is quite real. Even as I write this article I have stepped outside at the beckoning of my wife to see convoys of military vehicles, electric utilities, tree utilities, passenger busses and police all streaming toward the city of New Orleans down Highway 190 in Baton Rouge. If I had a flag I might have chosen to go out and wave it as I cheered them on.

Critics at this point are like salt on the wound. Hey, its America so they have the right to say whatever they want, but discretion might be calling for a little better timing. Hold off until the dust has settled, or in this case at least until the water recedes.

Between this paragraph and the last my wife and me went to a little church in a small town near Baton Rouge called Erwinville. The Sharon church, a tiny little congregation nestled between fields of sugar cane and soy beans were praying for victims of Katrina when we walked in. With only a small number of people they had already raised over twelve hundred dollars to help feed people staying in a local civic center housing Katrina refugees. They had bought uniforms for children of the victims and helped to enroll them in school classes. Additionally they were bringing supplies and funds to the red cross in New Orleans. These are Louisianans helping Louisianans and that alone made going to

church an inspiration.

I have made my own situation known in more detail on my website. But just in case you think this is the opinion of just another outsider looking in, then I should tell you this. Our church, our house and the houses of almost all our friends and relatives are under ten feet of water as I write this article. We escaped the wrath of Katrina by a hair and were able to bring out an older gentleman who surely would have perished if we had not.

I will not criticize anyone who has made an effort to help us down here from the President to the kind soul who put a dollar in an offering plate set for the relief for Katrina's victims. Some of the people and agencies who responded to this crisis may have been a bit slow, confused by poor communications and caught off guard by the sheer enormity of the disaster but from their first intentions to their long journey to the deepest part of the deep south they have shown themselves to be good neighbors. On behalf of thousands of us beleaguered at this hour in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama I offer not criticism but thanks.