

- ◆ Ask participants to consider how the *total* number of casualties from an event like Katrina should be measured. Should these costs be shouldered by individuals, private insurance companies, the community, the state or federal government? Are there other ways to address these costs?

In addition to the dialogue questions above, participants can review the handouts and reflect on the new information they gained.

### Closure

Ask participants to discuss what, if any, change in perspective they have had about governmental and individual responsibility after viewing and discussing the documentary? What, for example, might have been done to protect the wetlands? Should

that protection have been the responsibility of the federal government; the responsibility of the people who would be most directly endangered by the loss of the wetlands, or of some independent advocacy group? Should federal money, collected in the form of income taxes across the country, have been used to save the wetlands in Louisiana? Who are the most vulnerable populations in such circumstances? Why? Finally, discuss how we can improve the safety of these groups.

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## HANDOUT 1 Program 1 of Adult Curriculum

### “America Gets a Dose of the Corps’ Inaction”

—By Jarvis DeBerry, editorial in *Times-Picayune*,  
January 30, 2007

One struggles at times not to wish this experience on others. After all, hurricanes and civil engineering failures kill. Kill in bunches. Therefore, one tells himself, if it takes people experiencing such destruction to comprehend what it’s like to lose a city, it’s better that they never understand.

Even so, the desire to be understood, to have one’s grief, one’s depression, one’s discombobulation fully appreciated and respected remains as strong as the desire to have others understand that the Katrina tragedy was less an act of God and more a failure of man to act intelligently. In this instance, man is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the government agency that poorly designed some of the floodwalls in New Orleans and, on top of that, built some in ways that failed to meet the design specifications.

We are so well informed of the corps’ failures that very few local people choose to call what happened to us a “natural” disaster. We know there’s nothing natural about the corps not driving sheet piling far enough into the ground to anchor its floodwalls, know there’s nothing natural about a storm that misses a city simultaneously laying waste to it.

But we wonder: Do other Americans know? Do they know how important a job the corps has been assigned? Do they know that a failure by the corps has the potential to kill innocent and unsuspecting Americans? Do they know of the agency’s father-knows-best public relations philosophy or how its officials are forever loath to accept responsibilities for the agency’s failures?

The corps has now revealed that there are 146 levees around the United States that are at real risk of failing during a flood. According to a chart published by *USA Today*, 42 of those levees are in California, 14 are in Oregon and 13 are in Arkansas. Louisiana, which is already home to the most infamous levee breaks in recent memory, still has six levees in danger of giving way during a major flood.

Upon hearing that news, which of us wouldn’t ask, “But where in Louisiana?” And surely, residents of other states

want to know which of their levees have been poorly maintained. However, the corps—in typical corps fashion—has heretofore declined to give the exact locations of those 146 potential disasters.

A spokesperson told *USA Today* that before it releases a list, the corps would rather wait until it’s inspected all its levees and until every community with a faulty levee has been notified. A good way to notify those communities would be to release the information to a national newspaper. The corps decision to withhold such vital information is inexplicable and indefensible. But it’s not at all a surprise.

Meanwhile, FEMA officials say that if the faulty levees aren’t strengthened they would no longer qualify as sufficient flood protection and the people who live near those levees would need to purchase flood insurance.

But how are consumers going to know if flood insurance is recommended for them if the corps continues being so cagey?

This, America, is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in action. This is the agency that told New Orleans we had a level of flood protection we did not have. This is the agency culpable in the drowning deaths of more than 1,000 New Orleanians. This is the agency that knows of more than 12 dozen suspect levees nationwide and feels justified in keeping their locations secret. This is the agency that’s supposed to be protecting you.

We don’t wish broken levees and the subsequent flooding on anybody. We know that misery all too well and pray that no one else ever experiences it.

But there is some satisfaction, however perverse, in knowing that at least 146 other communities are about to get a lesson in Corps Frustration 101. One hopes such dealings create empathy and that as those other communities come to realize their own peril they demand greater accountability from the agency that imperiled us.

*Note:* The complete list of levees in jeopardy is now available at the Army Corps of Engineers Web site: <http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/cepa/releases/leveesafety.htm>

**HANDOUT 2**  
**Program 1 of Adult Curriculum****“Report: Up to 35,000 Kids Still Having Major Katrina Problems”**

—By Janet McConnaughey, excerpt from NOLA.com, February 2, 2007

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Up to 35,000 children—one-third of those across the Gulf Coast still displaced by Hurricane Katrina—are having major problems with mental health, behavior or school, a new study indicates.

To make things worse, many of their parents are depressed as well, leaving them less able to help the children, said Dr. Irwin Redlener, director of Columbia University’s National Center for Disaster Preparedness and president of the Children’s Health Fund, which conducted the study together.

More than 60 percent of the parents and caregivers tested high for anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, the report said. That is well above what is usually seen among people with debilitating chronic diseases, and even higher than Louisiana caregivers reported six months after the storm, it said.

“I’ve been doing advocacy and direct services for kids for more than 30 years. I’ve never seen anything like this,” Redlener said in an interview Friday.

Every day in the continued post-Katrina instability many are living through damages their chances of recovery, he said.

“What I’m concerned about is the long-term consequences for these kids will be horrendous in terms of academic achievement, mental health conditions and long-term ability to recover,” he said.

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**PROGRAM 2****Government Responsibility for Citizens’ Safety, Health, and Well-Being****Guiding Questions**

- ◆ What social guarantees should citizens expect in a democratic society?
- ◆ How does the documentary portray the individual responsibility and/or culpability of public officials for the Katrina disaster?
- ◆ What responsibilities should individuals have for their own well-being and for the health and safety of those

around them? What is the proper relationship between individual and government responsibility?

- ◆ What does it mean to be a hero? What is the difference between a hero and a celebrity? Are there any heroes in the documentary?
- ◆ When does “just doing your job” or taking care of family and neighbors move from being civic duty to heroism?

**Note to Facilitator**

Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent breaching of the levees in New Orleans exposed vulnerability in a major crisis. Many perceive the performance of FEMA and other government agencies as contrasting sharply with the swift response of emergency aid and resources following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the assistance offered to tsunami victims in South Asia in December 2004. In the absence of immediate governmental assistance in the aftermath of the hurricane and the subsequent flooding, Gulf State residents frequently received help from each other and the hundreds of volunteers who responded from all over the country and across the globe. While the hurricane brought out the best in many people, the crisis also prompted many to explore what social guarantees and protections citizens should anticipate, or can expect, in our democracy. This program explores both the social responsibilities of government and the responsibilities that individuals have for themselves and for others.

**Materials Used in the Program**

Film footage, discussion questions, and one handout (Katrina’s Toll).

**Activities Before Viewing the Documentary**

Write the following on a flip chart: “People in a democratic society should expect. . . .” On a separate sheet of paper write: “Individuals in a democracy should be responsible for. . . .” Participant discussion should generate two lists from these two stems. In generating the lists, expect that participants will raise the issue of circumstance. This is important to explore and is an opportunity to clarify different points of view on this issue. It is not important or even desirable for the group to come to consensus on these issues. If it does not come up spontaneously, ask the group to discuss whether or not their judgment about the proper balance of responsibility might shift during a crisis.

**Viewing the Film: Dialogue Questions**

- ◆ What is a right? What is a responsibility?
- ◆ What is a need? What is a want?
- ◆ How do we think of government responsibility for insuring citizens’ “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”?
- ◆ Concretely, which of the following should people expect from a democratic government?
  - ◆ Educational equity?
  - ◆ Access to the best schools their money can buy them?
  - ◆ Fair and livable wages?
  - ◆ The opportunity to compete freely for financial success?
  - ◆ Access to affordable universal health care, including mental health services?
  - ◆ The opportunity to save their own money to spend on health care as they see fit?

**HANDOUT**  
Program 2 of Adult Curriculum**Katrina's Toll**

The Earth Institute at Columbia University is supporting a project compiling an online list of all Gulf Coast residents who died as a result of Katrina—both during the storm and as a result of conditions related to the storm. Review their results.

**Katrina Death and Missing Persons Toll**

Total records	1,837
Number of missing	564
Number of deceased	1,273
Number of John Does*	6
Number of Jane Does*	3
Number of Jane/John Does*	84

\*Note: These names are used because bodies could not be identified.

**Breakdown by Residence**

New Orleans, LA	882
Gulfport, MS	9
Biloxi, MS	20
Houston, TX	2
Hancock Co., MS	16
Other	441

**Breakdown by Gender**

Male	925
Female	807
No gender specified	105

**Breakdown by Race**

African American	799
Caucasian	537
Hispanic	34
Native American	6
Asian/Pacific Islander	13
Other	0
No race specified	443

**Breakdown by Age**

Over 75	554
65–74	183
45–64	471
25–44	241
1–24	130
Less than 1	9
No age specified	249

**“Scientist Seeks Full Picture of Katrina’s Toll: Official Count Fails to Accurately Measure Storm’s Impact, He Says”**

—Excerpt from Associated Press, October 29, 2006

NEW YORK—For now the official Hurricane Katrina death toll stands at 1,697.

But Columbia University geophysicist and earth scientist John Mutter believes the number is “well in excess of 2,000.”

Dr. Mutter isn’t just counting people who drowned in Katrina’s waters or were crushed because of the storm’s powerful winds.

His count also would include the despondent evacuee who committed suicide, the looting suspect who was fatally shot and the dialysis patient who died because the storm interrupted treatment. . . .

Among the Gulf Coast states, there are no set criteria for counting victims. In Mississippi, for example, the 231 deaths are classified as a direct result of the storm, said Reed O’Brien, a spokesman at that state’s Emergency Management Agency.

But in Louisiana, officials appear to classify deaths more fluidly, counting indirect deaths, said Kristen Meyer, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Health and Hospitals.

Dr. Mutter, who studies disparities in earthquake tolls in economically poor countries, said he was frustrated that he couldn’t get an accurate count.

“I’m not surprised in poor countries, but I was surprised that it would be difficult to get a good number” here, he said.

**Questions for Discussion**

- ◆ Do the statistics surprise you? What do you notice about them?
- ◆ What conclusions can you draw from the data presented?

**PROGRAM 3****Citizens’ Accountability for Their Own Safety****Guiding Questions**

- ◆ Should private citizens be held accountable for what they did or did not do to save themselves or others? What is the difference between “civic duty” and heroism?
- ◆ Did the disaster following the breaching of the levees reveal major fault lines along race and class in New Orleans? Do those fault lines exist throughout American society?
- ◆ Did the coverage of Hurricane Katrina change views about race in America?

**Note to Facilitator**

Discussing race and class in America is not easy. In a multiracial, multiethnic group, participants often become either polarized or silent. Hurricane Katrina, as Wynton Marsalis notes, provided a “signature moment” for looking at America’s racial

and class inequities. In this program, participants are encouraged to ask why so many of the people most vulnerable to the hurricane were Black. The focus is intended to expand the conversation about race and class in this country.

**Materials Used in the Program**

Film footage, discussion questions, and two handouts:

1. “Racism—Fact or Faith?”
2. Concentrated Poverty in New Orleans

**Activities Before Viewing the Film**

Post the following quote:

*You simply get chills every time you see these poor individuals . . . so many of these people . . . are so poor and they are so Black, and this is going to raise lots of questions for people who are watching this story unfold.*

—Wolf Blitzer on CNN, September 1, 2005

If they watched the hurricane story unfold on television, ask participants to discuss what they recall about the images they

saw. What was their reaction? How did they feel about what they saw? What questions, if any, did Hurricane Katrina raise for them? Did the representation of Hurricane Katrina's victims' race on television jibe with Spike Lee's portrayal of the victims?

### Viewing the Film: Dialogue Questions

Review Handout 1.

- ◆ Would the events of Katrina have unfolded differently if New Orleans were a “Whiter” city? What evidence supports your view?
- ◆ Does the structure of our cities, our taxation policies, and our transportation systems disadvantage the urban poor and people of color? What evidence supports your view? What about the role of charities and social service agencies in big cities?
- ◆ Based on the presentation by Spike Lee's film and your own experiences, how do you explain the concentration of poverty in the largely Black neighborhoods of New Orleans?
- ◆ From what you know, are these problems of recent vintage or longstanding duration in New Orleans?

### Relevant Sections of the Film

#### Act I, Chapter 6, “The City That Care Forgot” (10 minutes)

The media are accused of calling Black residents “looters” while describing White residents as taking things for their survival. Does this representation match your recollection of the ways in which the media portrayed looters and survivors? Were there different reasons for residents taking goods from local stores in the aftermath of Katrina?

- ◆ How did the media characterize the victims of Katrina? Do viewers feel they were reflecting public opinion or creating it? Does the media, through such coverage, perpetuate racism?

#### Act II, Chapter 1, “Jeffersonia” (9½ minutes)

People are stranded for days with little food and water. Soledad O'Brien reports that conditions at the Superdome are horrendous. The President of Jefferson Parish says armed police would not permit anyone from Orleans Parish to cross the bridge into the city of Gretna. Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu attributes this to widespread rumors from the media about lootings and shootings. NAACP lawyer Vanita Gupta says this was clearly aimed at keeping Blacks out.

- ◆ What do you make of these disagreements? Do they reveal fundamental racism or favoring of Whites by law enforcement agencies? Or something else? What do you think the perspective of the filmmaker is? Do you share this point of view?

#### Act II, Chapter 2, “We Shoot Looters” (9 minutes)

A Black man describes how he and his cousin were attacked by White men carrying guns in Algiers, a community within the city of New Orleans.

- ◆ In the midst of a major crisis, does such an incident surprise you? How do you account for such behaviors? What do you feel it reflects?

#### Act III, Chapter 2, “Polarized” (10½ minutes)

Kanye West goes on national TV saying that George Bush doesn't care about Black people.

- ◆ Why do you think this segment of the film is repeated? What message is the director trying to convey? Do you agree with his judgment?
- ◆ How do various characters in the film react to West's statement?

#### Act IV, Chapter 4, “Where Is My Government?” (9½ minutes)

Historian Douglas Brinkley says he has never seen a time when the U.S. government has turned its back on its people, “people in such dire need, getting such little help from the federal government while they are screaming for help. I think it's unprecedented.”

- ◆ What do you think of this comment?

### Closure

The facilitator, based on the group's interests and concerns, should choose from among these topics as follow-ups to discussion of the video segments:

- Review the table in Handout 2, which presents statistics from *Key Indicators of Entrenched Poverty*, a 2005 report from The Brookings Institution. How do participants account for the data?



## HANDOUT 1 Program 3 of Adult Curriculum

### “Racism—Fact or Faith?”

—By Shelby Steele, excerpt from *Los Angeles Times*,  
December 23, 2006, Part A33

Is racism now a powerful, subterranean force in our society? Is it so subtly infused into the White American subconscious as to be both involuntary and invisible to the racist himself? A recent CNN poll tells us that 84% of Blacks and 66% of Whites think racism is a “very serious” or “somewhat serious” problem in American life. Is this true? . . .

Yet a belief in the ongoing power of racism is, today, an article of faith for “good” Whites and “truth-telling” Blacks. . . . The problem is that this truth blames the victim. It suggests that Black progress will come more from Black effort than from White goodwill—even though White oppression caused the underdevelopment in the first place. . . . Here, racism lives as faith rather than fact. It is something you believe in out of unacknowledged self-interest. . . .

The great mistake Americans made after the civil rights victories of the '60s was to allow race to become a government-approved means to power. Here was the incentive to make racism into a faith. And its subsequent life as a faith has destroyed our ability to know the reality of racism in America. Today we live in a terrible ignorance that will no doubt last until we take race out of every aspect of public life—until we learn, as we did with religion, to separate it from the state.

**HANDOUT 2**  
**Program 3 of Adult Curriculum****Concentrated Poverty in New Orleans**

Read statistics and data about the problem of entrenched poverty across most areas of New Orleans. The table below is an excerpt from *Key Indicators of Entrenched Poverty*, The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2005, available at [http://www.brookings.edu/metro/20050920\\_povertynumbers.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/metro/20050920_povertynumbers.pdf)

	New Orleans		Jefferson Parish	
	Black	White	Black	White
<b>2004 (Census)</b>				
Population	302,041	124,591	117,657	303,992
Percent	68%	28%	25%	68%
<b>2000 (Census)</b>				
Households	113,136	67,518	33,964	131,745
Households with no car	39,340	10,286	6,385	9,158
Percent of households with no car	34.8%	15.2%	18.8%	7.0%
Home owner	43.2%	62.1%	49.0%	74.8%
Renter	56.7%	37.9%	51.0%	25.2%
<b>2005 (HUD)</b>				
Race of public housing residents	100%	0%	100%	0%
Public subsidized housing: Total units		17,913		2,842
Length of stay: Total families in public housing				
20+ years		31%		20%
10–20 years		29%		17%
<b>1999 (Census)</b>				
Number of families below poverty	24,611	1,422	6,935	5,165
Percent	31.3%	4.7%	27.1%	6.0%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Questions for Discussion**

- ◆ How do participants account for these data? Is there anything here you find surprising?

- Read, reflect, and discuss quotes on the handouts. Do you agree or disagree with these perspectives?
- Some people have said, “Katrina changed everything,” referring to the nation’s views about race, class, poverty, and emergency preparedness. Do you believe that anything has changed?
- See the Web site ([www.teachingthelevees.org](http://www.teachingthelevees.org)) for ideas on engaging public policy issues from across the political spectrum.

- ◆ Why do the many immigrants to the United States—both legal and illegal—come here?
- ◆ Is there another country in which you might want to live?
- ◆ Did the breaching of the levees and its much publicized aftermath change the way in which race (and class?) is perceived in America? Did it change public perception of what it means to be an American?

**Note to Facilitator**

Images of the devastation resulting from Hurricane Katrina were graphically portrayed in the media and in the documentary. These images, coupled with the events that followed, prompted commentators in the media (as well as people in the documentary film) to raise the question of what it means to be an American. This program addresses the significance of these questions.

**Materials Used in the Program**

Film footage, discussion questions, and five handouts:

1. “Six Core Values”
2. “Katrina Has Only Modest Impact on Basic Public Values”

**PROGRAM 4****Perception of Race, Class, and Citizenship  
After Katrina**

*It’s tough to be proud to be an American.*  
—Terence Blanchard, Act V

**Guiding Questions**

- ◆ Does “being an American” say more about a person than that he or she has U.S. citizenship?
- ◆ Should it mean more than that?

3. “The Wake-Up Call”
4. Interview With Richard Rodriguez
5. The Racial Divide

### Activities Before Viewing the Documentary

In Act V, Terence Blanchard says, “It’s tough to be proud to be an American.” Do you think much about “being an American”? If you do, are you connecting your identity to the actual practices and policies of the federal government, to values you consider uniquely American, to a sense of loyalty you feel to other people living in this country, or to something else? Have you ever felt the way Terence Blanchard says he does?

### Viewing the Film: Dialogue Questions

- ◆ In what ways, if any, did the images of post-Katrina New Orleans challenge beliefs we might have had about how Americans take care of their vulnerable populations?
- ◆ What, if any, are the shared values and standards of behavior that Americans think of as essential to our national identity?
- ◆ How is national identity shaped?

### Relevant Sections of the Film

#### Act I, Chapter 5, “The Cajun Navy” (13½ minutes)

The second day after Katrina, striking images of stranded people were being televised and broadcast throughout the world. The world responded in disbelief.

- ◆ In what ways do images correspond to or challenge viewers’ perceptions of America?
- ◆ What does the “Cajun Navy” imply about civic duty or responsibility in America?
- ◆ How is civic duty engaged during times of crisis? Who are the first responders supposed to be?

#### Act II, Chapter 5, “General Honoré” (12 minutes)

The army arrives in New Orleans and the formal post-Katrina evacuation process begins.

- ◆ How do the images of evacuation impress viewers?
- ◆ What implications are there in the documentary’s portrayal of having to leave the dead behind?
- ◆ How do you feel Spike Lee feels about Russel Honoré? Is he portrayed as the “All American” hero, as Mayor Nagin later says?

#### Act II, Chapter 6, “An Ancient Memory” (10 minutes)

The chapter starts with a BBC segment on the conditions on the third day after Hurricane Katrina struck.

- ◆ How does international coverage contrast with domestic coverage?
- ◆ What do you feel about the portrayal of foreign countries’ offers of aid and their response time?
- ◆ Do you know why these offers were rejected? If not, it might be useful to explore this question.

#### Act III, Chapter 3, “American Citizens” (14 minutes)

TV news broadcaster Brian Williams does a nationally televised segment on “refugee displacement.” Former First Lady Barbara Bush visits Katrina victims and says many are better off.

- ◆ How do the statistics regarding poverty and crime impress viewers?
- ◆ Is it possible to be a refugee in your own country?
- ◆ Does becoming a refugee/evacuee while being a citizen redefine what kind of country this is?

#### Act IV, Chapter 5, “A Signature Moment” (13½ minutes)

Wynton Marsalis refers to the Katrina events as a “signature moment” in America. Plans for the future of New Orleans are presented.



## HANDOUT 1

### Program 4 of Adult Curriculum

#### “Six Core Values”

—Excerpted and paraphrased from The Opportunity Agenda’s statement on *Dimensions of Opportunity*, 2006, available at [http://www.opportunityagenda.org/site/c.mwL5KkNOLvH/b.1624523/k.7560/Dimensions\\_of\\_Opportunity.htm](http://www.opportunityagenda.org/site/c.mwL5KkNOLvH/b.1624523/k.7560/Dimensions_of_Opportunity.htm)

We believe that true opportunity requires a commitment to a core set of values. These values are integrally related to the principle of human rights. Equal treatment, a voice in societal decisions, a chance to start over, and the tools to meet our own basic needs are not just good policy ideas. They are the right of every human being simply by virtue of his or her humanity.

**Mobility**—All of us who work hard must be afforded the opportunity to advance and participate fully in the economic, political, and cultural life of the nation, notwithstanding our status at birth.

**Equality**—We all must have full access to the benefits, responsibilities, and burdens of our society regardless of race, gender, national origin, or socioeconomic status.

**Voice**—We embrace democracy as a system that depends on the ability of all of us to participate, debate, and have real ownership in the public dialogue.

**Redemption**—We recognize that humans are responsive and evolving beings, and that those who falter in their efforts or break societal rules warrant the chance for rehabilitation and redemption.

**Community**—We share responsibility for each other, just as we are responsible for ourselves. The strength of our people and our nation depends on the vibrancy and cohesiveness of our diverse communities.

**Security**—We are all entitled to the level of education, economic well-being, health care, and other protections necessary to human dignity, without which it is impossible to access society’s other rights and responsibilities.

#### Questions for Discussion

- ◆ How adequately do the above values address the challenges of *When the Levees Broke*?
- ◆ Do they represent a shared vision of what America stands for?

**HANDOUT 2**  
Program 4 of Adult Curriculum**“Katrina Has Only Modest Impact on Basic Public Values”**

—By The Pew Research Center, excerpt, September 22, 2005, available at <http://people-press.org/commentary/display.php3?AnalysisID=117>

As the Hurricane Katrina recovery effort unfolds along the Gulf Coast, there has been considerable speculation about the disaster’s possible impact on fundamental public attitudes on such questions as the role of government, the plight of the poor and the extent of racial progress in the U.S.

On the left, some have expressed the hope that Katrina will turn the public’s attention to the ongoing hardships of the poor and needy, leading to a revival of support for government assistance programs. Some on the right believe the widespread perception that government failed in responding to the crisis could bolster conservative efforts to limit government’s role generally. . . . Many wonder if the fact that so many of Katrina’s victims were Black will trigger a re-evaluation of race relations in this country.

However, a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted Sept. 8–11 among 1,523 Americans, suggests that while Katrina’s impact has already been felt politically—in somewhat lower ratings for the president, for instance—it has had far less of an impact on long-term values relating to poverty, race and government. . . . But there is no evidence that basic attitudes on poverty—and the government’s role in addressing the issue—have been altered by Katrina. Currently, a narrow 51% majority expresses the view that poor people have hard lives because government benefits don’t go far enough to help them live decently; 38% think poor people have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing anything in return.

**Questions for Discussion**

- ◆ What accounts for the findings in the above report on public opinion? Do participants find them surprising?
- ◆ Should business and industry assume a greater leadership role in addressing issues of race and poverty in the United States?

- ◆ Do viewers think this was a “mirror” on American values, as suggested by the film?
- ◆ How can America reconcile economic growth with the needs and wishes of its citizens?

**Post Viewing**

See handouts for further discussion of issues related to the film.

**Closure**

Participants discuss the ramifications of Hurricane Katrina on their perceptions of what it means to be American. Focus should be given to beliefs about the fairness, justice, and compassion with which America treats its own citizens, regardless of race or class. Are these beliefs tied to participants’ perceptions of what it means to be an American? Have these beliefs changed in the aftermath of Katrina? How do you define basic human needs and human rights?

**HANDOUT 3**  
Program 4 of Adult Curriculum**“The Wake-Up Call”**

—By Derrick Z. Jackson, excerpt from the *Boston Globe*, November 13, 2006, p. A9

“This election was about scandal, it was about checks and balances, about Iraq,” [Ron Dellums] said. “Also about [Katrina]. Because at a time that this country was saying that we’re in a foreign country for the purposes of security and safety, when it hit home, our response was inept, inadequate, insincere and lacking in compassion. Here’s the wealthiest nation in the world—gave a Third World response to a major catastrophe. In my opinion, Katrina was a metaphor for everything wrong in urban America. What Katrina did was expose the stark reality of the vulnerability of urban life . . . the winds of Katrina blew through the television all of the pain of urban life.” . . . Dellums, 71, the former longtime congressman and mayor-elect of Oakland, said every city is a potential Katrina. . . .

**Questions for Discussion**

- ◆ What about poverty in rural America?
- ◆ Are most poor in the United States White or Black?
- ◆ Has Katrina damaged faith in the United States as a land of opportunity?

**PROGRAM 5****Spirituality, Resilience, and Hope  
in Post-Katrina America****Guiding Questions**

- ◆ How do individuals and communities grapple with feelings of resignation in the face of disaster?
- ◆ Is there hope for the recovery of New Orleans? What kind of country is America? What kind of country do we want it to be? How much do religion and spirituality have to do with the way these questions are answered at the individual level? How much should religion and spirituality have to do with the way these questions are answered at the national level?

**Note to Facilitator**

This program explores how individuals, institutions, and systems can contribute to the growth and development of the country. The role of spirituality, humor, and faith as demonstrated by the voices in the documentary are examined. How do

**HANDOUT 4**  
Program 4 of Adult Curriculum**Interview With Richard Rodriguez**

New Orleans' residents are a rich blend of cultural identities and race. They are self-described as Creole, Cajun, Black, Indian, Asian, and Spanish. Some of the terms used to describe the mixture of people in America include melting pot, tossed salad, and even boiling cauldron. Richard Rodriguez writes about race and ethnicity in America. In an online interview by Scott London, Rodriguez shared some of his thoughts on the concept of America as a melting pot. Excerpts from the interview follow:

**London:** Why do we always talk about race in this country strictly in terms of Black and White?

**Rodriguez:** America has never had a very wide vocabulary for miscegenation. We say we like diversity, but we don't like the idea that our Hispanic neighbor is going to marry our daughter. America has nothing like the Spanish vocabulary for miscegenation. Mulatto, mestizo, Creole—these Spanish and French terms suggest, by their use, that miscegenation is a fact of life. America has only Black and White. In eighteenth-century America, if you had any drop of African blood in you, you were Black . . . there was talk about how the country was splitting in two—one part Black, one part White. It was ludicrous: typical gringo arrogance. It's as though Whites and Blacks can imagine Amer-

ica only in terms of each other. It's mostly White arrogance, in that it places Whites always at the center of the racial equation. But lots of emerging racial tensions in California have nothing to do with Whites: Filipinos and Samoans are fighting it out in San Francisco high schools. Merced is becoming majority Mexican and Cambodian. They may be fighting in gangs right now, but I bet they are also learning each other's language. Cultures, when they meet, influence one another, whether people like it or not. But Americans don't have any way of describing this secret that has been going on for more than two hundred years. The intermarriage of the Indian and the African in America, for example, has been constant and thorough. Colin Powell tells us in his autobiography that he is Scotch, Irish, African, Indian, and British, but all we hear is that he is African.

The interview was adapted from the radio series *Insight & Outlook*. It appeared in the August 1997 issue of *The Sun* magazine under the title "Crossing Borders."

**Questions for Discussion**

- ◆ Is New Orleans' tremendous cultural diversity known to most Americans?
- ◆ Is such cultural diversity widely appreciated as a positive dimension of a city's identity by Americans?

**HANDOUT 5**  
Program 4 of Adult Curriculum (continued on next page)**The Racial Divide**

—Excerpts from *Two-in-Three Critical of Bush's Relief Efforts: Huge Racial Divide Over Katrina and Its Consequences*, a Survey Report from the Pew Research Center, September 8, 2005, available at <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=255>

**Post-Katrina Views on Bush**

<i>In handling relief efforts, President Bush . . .</i>	<b>Post-Katrina Views on Bush</b>			
	%			
Did all he could	28			
Could have done more	67			
Don't know	5			
<i>Bush job as president</i>	Jan	May	July	Sept
	%	%	%	%
Approve	50	43	44	40
Disapprove	43	50	48	52
Don't know	7	7	8	8
<i>Priority for Bush</i>	<b>Post-Katrina Views on Bush</b>			
	%			
Domestic policy	40	—	—	56
War on terrorism	44	—	—	25
Both/Neither (vol.)	14	—	—	13
Don't know	2	—	—	6

**Katrina Through the Prism of Race**

<i>Gov't response if most victims had been White?</i>	<b>Katrina Through the Prism of Race</b>		
	Total %	White %	Black %
Faster	26	17	66
The same	68	77	27
Don't know	6	6	7
<i>Shows racial inequality still a major problem?</i>	<b>Katrina Through the Prism of Race</b>		
	Total %	White %	Black %
Yes	38	32	71
No	50	56	22
Don't know	12	12	7
Number of cases	(1,000)	(712)	(211)

In order to gain enough interviews to report on this group accurately, the survey includes an oversample of African Americans. For all results based on the total population, statistical adjustments (weighting) are used to ensure that the correct national racial and ethnic characteristics are met.



## HANDOUT 5

### Program 4 of Adult Curriculum (continued)

A Racial Response to the Disaster		
	White %	Black %
<b>Personal reactions . . .</b>		
Have felt depressed	55	73
Have felt angry	46	70
Have a close friend/relative	22	43
<b>To get relief efforts moving</b>		
Bush did all he could	31	11
Could have done more	63	85
Don't know	6	4
<b>Federal gov't response</b>		
Excellent/Good	41	19
Only fair/Poor	55	77
Don't know	4	4
<b>State &amp; local gov't response</b>		
Excellent/Good	41	46
Only fair/Poor	51	48
Don't know	8	6
<b>People who stayed behind</b>		
Wanted to stay	32	16
Didn't have a way to leave	58	77
Don't know	10	7
<b>People taking things during the flooding were . . .</b>		
Ordinary people surviving	38	57
Criminals taking advantage	37	21
Both/Depends (vol.)	20	17
Don't know	5	5
<b>Acts of violence during the flooding were . . .</b>		
Ordinary people who were desperate	38	57
Criminals taking advantage	37	21
Both/Depends (vol.)	20	17
Don't know	5	5
Number of cases	(712)	(211)

Most Closely Followed News Stories 1986–2005		
	Very %	Fairly %
Challenger disaster (7/86)*	80	16
9/11 terrorist attacks (9/01)	74	22
San Francisco earthquake (11/89)	73	22
High price of gasoline (9/05)	71	19
Rodney King verdict & riots (5/92)	70	22
Hurricane Katrina (9/05)	70	21
Crash of TWA flight 800 (7/96)	69	23
Girl trapped in Texas well (10/87)*	69	21
H.S. shooting in Littleton, CO (4/99)	68	24
End of Persian Gulf War (3/91)	67	25
Hurricane Andrew (9/92)	66	27
Floods in the Midwest (8/93)	65	27
Sniper shootings in D.C. (10/02)	65	26
Northridge/L.A. earthquake (1/94)	63	31
Situation in Iraq (5/03)	63	29

\*Asked as part of news stories covered over the past year. All others asked as part of news stories covered over this past month. [Note: Report date September 8, 2005.]

### Questions for Discussion

- ◆ How did many citizens judge the response of the government to Katrina? What other issues do these statistics raise?



Times-Picayune staff photo by Jennifer Zdon

they support human resilience in the face of disaster? Perspectives on whether there is hope for the region and the country can be discussed through consideration of these ideas, along with the images and perspectives found in the documentary. This culminating program seeks to help participants in these discussions to articulate the potential for Hurricane Katrina and the breaching of the levees to shape a positive future.

### Materials Used in the Program

Film footage, discussion questions, and three handouts:

1. "Wading Towards Home"
2. "Black New Orleans More Hopeful for City's Recovery"
3. "Buzzwords"

### Activities Before Viewing the Documentary

Post the following quote:

*No man is an island, entire of itself; . . . any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.*

—John Donne, Meditation XVII

Reflect on and discuss the meanings of the words and their relevance to viewers and those affected by Katrina.

- ◆ Have you ever been in a disaster you considered devastating?

**HANDOUT 1**  
Program 5 of Adult Curriculum**“Wading Towards Home”**

—By Michael Lewis, excerpt from the *New York Times*, October 9, 2005

The late great novelist Walker Percy, a lifelong New Orleanian, was attracted to the psychological state of the ex-suicide. The ex-suicide is the man who has tried to kill himself and failed. Before his suicide attempt, he had nothing to live for. Now, expecting to be dead and discovering himself alive, something inside of him awakens: so long as he’s alive he might as well give living a shot. The whole of New Orleans is in this psychological state. The waters did their worst but still left the old city intact. They did to the public schools and the public-housing projects what the government should have done long ago. They called forth tens of billions of dollars in aid, and the attention of energetic people, to a city long starved of capital and energy. For the first time in my life, outsiders are pouring into the city to do something other than drink. For the first time in my life, the city is alive with possibilities. For the first time in my life, it doesn’t matter one bit who is born to be a king. Whatever else New Orleans is right now, it isn’t stagnant. As I left, I thought about what an oddly characteristic thing it would be if it was a flood that saved New Orleans.

**HANDOUT 2**  
Program 5 of Adult Curriculum**“Black New Orleans More Hopeful for City’s Recovery”**

—By Leonard Pitts, excerpt from *The Olympian*, March 16, 2006

Recently, they conducted a poll in New Orleans. Gallup, *USA Today* and CNN asked 399 White people and 311 Black ones about Hurricane Katrina’s effect on their lives. . . . To do it by the numbers: 53 percent of Black respondents told pollsters they lost everything they had when Katrina came ashore. Only 19 percent of White ones did. Blacks are also significantly more likely than Whites to report major difficulties finding work or getting power restored. And yet . . . when asked whether the wounded city will ever heal, 67 percent of Black people thought it would, compared with 52 percent of Whites. Despair becomes too easy. The thing we sometimes forget, the thing quantified in this study, is that we come from people who had—and have—faith in every sense of that word. Faith, determination, courage, hope. . . . Think Marcus Garvey crying, “Up, you mighty race!” Think Fiddler promising Kunta Kinte, “There’s gon’be another day.” Think Al Jarreau singing, “We got by, somehow, we always did, always got by.” So in a sense, this is nothing new. And if you wonder how optimism can flourish the most among those who have the least, well, maybe when you’ve been weaned on hardship, hardship doesn’t impress you. You do what you’ve got to do, suffer what you’ve got to suffer, to get where you’ve got to get. And after you do, you realize how much of the journey was owed to simple, stubborn guts.

**HANDOUT 3**  
Program 5 of Adult Curriculum**“Buzzwords”**

—Excerpt from *Times-Picayune*, January 1, 2007, Living Section, p. 1

**Buzzwords.** We’ve earned our own. Heard, overheard and created by us, we give you our local version of a unique post-K vocabulary.

**Adjuster-Fiable Homicide**—n. The legal concept that may get you reduced prison time for crimes of passion against insurance companies.

**Auntie Depressant**—n. The relative you can’t stand who became a part of your extended family during the evacuation. Medication made her much more likeable.

**Con-Track-Tors**—n. Bounty hunters who track down the unscrupulous guys who take your money and never work on your house.

**Corped**—v. The ‘p’ is silent, rhymes with gored. As in “We’ve been corped!”

**Cat-a-Tonics**—n. People who had to drink lots of gin and tonics to cope with being separated from their cats.

**Disaspora**—n. Mass exodus when a city survives a hurricane, but the levees don’t.

**Dog-Dazed**—adj. The state of stupefied and weary disorientation that comes from evacuating without one’s dog.

**Evaciation**—n. Where you spend your time away from New Orleans.

**Evacuation Preparation Disorientation**—n. What we feel each time hurricane season rolls around.

**Hellavation**—n. The hell one goes through raising a house to meet flood elevations.

**Happy Talk**—n. No, not one of the tunes in the “South Pacific” musical. Any scrap of good news or recovery that lifts the spirits above the strife of post-K life.

**Katrinket**—n. Something you buy post-K to make you feel good.

**Levee-Tation**—n. What’s needed to build a Category 5 levee system.

**Mandacharity**—n. When one is required to volunteer to gut houses and build Habitat Homes.

**Road Wary**—adj. Fear of Louisiana’s treacherous Road Home program.

**Saintxious**—adj. Anxiety about the Saints’ future in the playoffs.