

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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### Environmental Justice:

*A field of research and grassroots community action that is concerned with the equitable treatment and involvement of all people, especially minority and low-income populations, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Studies in environmental justice focus on the adverse and disparate environmental burden impacting marginalized populations and communities all over the world. Importantly studies in environmental justice take a broad view of “environment”, focusing on urban centers, housing, the workplace, and industry, in addition to areas that are more traditional associated with the environmental movement such as recreational, wilderness and protected areas.*

Hurricane Katrina is a case study illustrating many of the concerns that are central to environmental justice. It is also a window into structural problems of racism and poverty in the United States, especially in terms of differential burdens of environmental harms. And it provides a vivid example of Americans’ perceptions and understanding of race.

Surviving Hurricane Katrina and rebuilding a life is an amazing story of perseverance and resilience in the face of many obstacles including out right racial discrimination. Trouble the Water chronicles the amazing fortitude of three Ninth Ward Residents, Kimberly, Scott and Brian. As important as they are as individuals, they represent only three of the thousands of other people in similar or worse circumstances. The real power in the film is that it sends an even larger message about the depth of structural racism in America; racism that is much harder to see, but much more powerful in terms of its cumulative impact on minorities. The film shows the impact of a level of racism that many Americans deny exists. It also raises questions about what is a natural disaster and the role citizens and the government had in making Hurricane Katrina a “man-made disaster.”

### The three environmental justice modules are:

1. What is the “environment” in environmentalism?
2. The effects of structural racism on individual choice
3. Governmental responsibility



*France Street, 9th Ward, from the Roberts’ attic in a scene from Trouble the Water; Aug. 29, 2005. Courtesy Elsewhere Films.*

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### Module 1: What is the “environment” in environmentalism?

#### Learning Objective of Module 1

- Explore how the environment in New Orleans is portrayed in Trouble the Water, as well as through the eyes of Kim and Scott
- Consider different representations of the environment
- Discuss various understanding of what environment means
- Consider the different ways in which we interact with the environment
- Understand how the concerns of environmental justice, researchers, and advocates differ from traditional environmental issues.



#### A. Watch *Trouble the Water* for the various ways in which “environment” is represented

#### Note to teacher on relevant points in the film

Throughout chapter 1 and 2 (0 - 14:51 minutes)

- Kimberly’s documentation of her neighborhood, the Ninth Ward, the day before and the morning of Katrina
- The importance that Kimberly seemed to place on her community when crisis hit, and the way she created relationships with her neighbors
- Children’s understanding of hurricanes (4:34)
- Kim: “Showing the world we did have a world” (6:32)

#### Chapter 2 (9:59-14:51)

- Hurricane is described as a force of God (10:34)
- Dramatic shots of the flooded city (11:15)
- Scott says he believes the Ninth Ward might look the same after the hurricane: “Slum conditions wherever you go” (12:45)
- Shots of the destruction of the Ninth Ward; recognizing what is left of their neighborhood (13:15) lm
- Kim: “hurts me in the heart” that she can not see her neighborhood (14:13)

#### Chapter 3 (14:52-24:05)

- Beginning sequence on how destructive the hurricane was

#### Chapter 4 (24:06-28:53)

- Returning to their community in the Ninth Ward (24:06)
- Dead pets on the ground (24:19)
- “We are on lake; this is the Lord’s work” (27:55)

#### Chapter 5 (28:54-41:31)

- The cleaning up of the Ninth Ward
- No lights and no water in a neighbor’s house (29:30)
- Brian: “Listen to this. Don’t sound right no more” in reference to the quiet on the street (32:12)

#### Chapter 6 (41:32-52:36)

- The living conditions or environment of the Red Cross shelter in Alexandria (42:41)

#### Chapter 8: (57:12-01:06:52)

- Scott expresses surprise at the size of the yards and amount of grass; Kim: “This the black peoples area?...Every house has a big lawn” (01:03:35)

#### Chapter 11 (01:19:32- 01:25:51)

- Clean up of New Orleans focusing on the French Quarter contrasted with the failure to clean up the Ninth Ward (01:22:02)
- Long segment panning through the destruction of Ninth Ward (01:23:53)
- Scott saying, “the hood is always the last place to get cleaned up” (01:24: 43)

#### Chapter 12 (01:25:52- 01:30:58)

- Ending rally for rent control and right of return (01:29:26)

#### Key questions on the various representations of the environment in the film

- How was “environment” represented in the film? When you think of the environment what do you usually think of?
- Is this representation of the environment similar or different than your own?
- Do you usually consider the urban environment when you think of environmentalism?
- Can you explain why Scott was surprised that black people could live in an area with large, green lawns?
- New Orleans has several very different environments. Can you think of some contrasting ones presented in the film?
- What can we take away from the fact that the tourist section of the French Quarter was cleaned up before the Ninth Ward? Consider the economic, environmental and racial explanations for this discrepancy.
- What were some of the reasons you think that Kimberly and Scott returned to the Ninth Ward in New Orleans? What did they say in the film?

#### B. Read Handout 1

#### Discussion questions for handout, broader questions relating to environmental justice in the USA

- Discuss these different ways of thinking about the environment as illustrated in the quotes from Muir, Carson, and others.
- Read the EPA definition of Environmental Justice and compare it to the principle written by First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit.
- Is environmental justice more about human rights than environmentalism? Is there such a thing as universal environmental rights?
- “Take the poisons out of our community and put them elsewhere”; “No community should have to live with poisons.” These two quotes demonstrate a central debate in environmental justice: how much attention should be focused on future distributional equity, and how much should be focused on the development of sustainable futures? Discuss this dilemma and consider what actions you would take to correct current inequities.
- Some environmentalists see the preservation of wilderness and protected areas as the top priority for the conservation movement. Others see the goals of environmental justice,

focusing on people, urban environments and the right to a clean and healthy environment as the current priority. Are these different forms of environmentalism? Why or why not? How do they relate to each other? What are your thoughts on environmental priorities? Consider this discussion in light of the fact that nearly 80% of the USA population lived in urban areas, according to the 2000 census.

### C. Dig Deeper: further research on environmental justice

There are two different sides of environmental justice. One is the unequal access to valuable resources and another is unequal exposure to toxic resources. Furthermore, environmental justice has both domestic and international components.

Conservation of endangered species and protection of ecosystems carries both benefits and burdens for people marginalized people around the world. Read the Dowie article and discuss.

Resource: Dowie, Mark. 2005. "Conservation Refugees: When Protecting Nature Means Kicking People Out". Orion November/December 2005, 8 pages.

Shipping our hazardous waste to the developing world for processing by the cheapest methods (usually the most unsafe

methods in terms of environmental and human health) by people living in poverty is a problem that has many different perspectives. Often shipping our hazardous waste to other countries is the outcome of stringent environmental regulation in the USA. Read the Langewiesche article and discuss.

Resource: Langewiesche, William. 2000. "The Shipbreakers." *Atlantic Monthly*. August, 4-part article, 25 pages.

### D. Additional Resources

Explore University of Michigan Case studies in environmental justice <http://www.umich.edu/~snre492/cases.html>

Explore Colby College case studies <http://wiki.colby.edu/display/es298b/Case+Studies+in+Environmental+Justice>

Explore: Social Enquiry and the Environment in the Arctic <http://arcticcircle.uconn.edu/SEEJ/>



*New Orleans 9th Ward, days after the floodwaters have receded. Elsewhere Films.*

## HANDOUT MODULE 1: WHAT IS THE “ENVIRONMENT” IN ENVIRONMENTALISM?

### **John Muir 1901**

*Walk away quietly in any direction and taste the freedom of the mountaineer. Camp out among the grasses and gentians of glacial meadows, in craggy garden nooks full of nature’s darlings. Climb the mountains and get their good tidings, Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.*

### **Pennsylvania Salt Mfg. Co. advertisement in *LIFE Magazine*, 1947**

*The great expectations held for DDT have been realized. During 1946, exhaustive scientific tests have shown that when properly used, DDT kills a host of destructive insect pests, and is a benefactor of all humanity...watch the bugs ‘bite the dust’.*

### **Rachel Carson, 1962**

*In an age when man has forgotten his origins and is blind even to his most essential needs for survival, water along with other resources has become the victim of his indifference” “Over increasingly large areas of the United States, spring now comes unheralded by the return of the birds, and the early mornings are strangely silent where once they were filled with the beauty of bird song.*

### **Preamble to Principles of Environmental Justice written at First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, 1991**

***WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR***, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages

and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice.

### **EPA definition of Environmental Justice**

*The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes and educational levels with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies. Meaningful involvement means that: (1) people have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health; (2) the public’s contribution can influence the regulatory agency’s decision; (3) their concerns will be considered in the decision making process; and (4) the decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.*

**Module 2: The effects of structural racism on individual choice**

Learning Objective of Module 2

- Understand the difference between targeted racism and structural racism
- Analyze the impact of structural racism on the lives of Kimberly, Scott, Brian and others in the Lower Ninth Ward.
- Learn about the ways in which white privilege gives some people unearned advantages
- Understand the connections between race and poverty
- Discuss the pros and cons of color-blind versus race conscious policies.
- Consider the impact of poverty on freedom of choice

**A. Watch *Trouble the Water* for the various ways in which race and class are represented. Consider the relationship between race and poverty and how poverty may impact the choices available to Kim and Scott in the movie.**

Note to teacher on relevant points in the film

Chapter 1 (0-9:58)

- News report (voice of Chris Matthews): “Do you think the country would have the same reaction if they were all white people?” (0:49)
- “on my own”; The police won’t come (7:30)
- Sell it to the white folks (7:50)

Chapter 2 (9:59-14:51)

- Scott: “We were living in slum conditions anyway you go... the bottom of the barrel” (12:51)

Chapter 4 (24:06-28:53)

- Kim’s mother’s illness and death, and Kim’s story of trying to survive in the streets of New Orleans (25:11)
- Scott: “Don’t know where we are going to go and what we are going to do” (26:40)

Chapter 5 (28:54-41:31)

- Kim and Brian express dismay that the houses in the Ninth Ward have not been inspected for dead people two weeks after the flood (28:54)
- Brian: “This is our war right here” (31:50)
- Navy officer: “They were destitute” (34:41)
- Navy officer: “Protect the interest of the government” (36:11)
- Scott: “Government let us down” referring to when the Coast Guard would not let them into the empty barracks (36:20)
- National guardsman: Civilian people have no concept how to survival (37:23)
- Army Colonel assumes people broke windows out of vandalism versus the need to breath (38:26)
- Kim, referring to army sitting around: “Waiting for something violent to happen so they can shot someone” (40:35)

- Brian: “We got war in the streets” (41:06)
- Scott “That’s why I am leaving. I don’t want to see no more” (41:11)

Chapter 6 (41:32-52:36)

- Scott: “I had a dream, I had to get transportation no matter what it took to get my people out of New Orleans” (41:53)
- Miss Daisy: “no TV, no electric lights” (48:07)
- Miss Daisy has no family, savings or other support system in Alexandria at the shelter; Kim will not leave on her own (49:57)

Chapter 8: (57:12-01:06:52)

- Scott: “the way I was going in New Orleans is was in jail or underground” (57:51)
- Scott talks about the easiest way to make money when you do not have a GED is to sell drugs (58:00)
- Scott: “I hated my life; it was horrible. I wouldn’t wish that on my worst enemy, I want to start my life all over and see how it is to do it right from the beginning” (58:41)
- Hoping for a fresh start in Tennessee (01:00:17)
- Kim: I am already at the bottom , can’t go anywhere but up (01:00:23)
- Kim: Trying to better my life, I can see it now, I couldn’t see it before (01:00:43)
- Scott: “I believe freedom exists somewhere” (1:02:15)
- Give us opportunity to see different parts of the world (1:02:50)
- Kim’s family friend: “That the type of stuff you see in Third World countries. This is America, this shouldn’t not be happening here” (1:04:55)
- Kim’s family friend : “If you don’t have money, don’t have status, you don’t have government” (1:04:40)
- Kim: “treated us like we lost our citizenship” (1:05:02)
- Kim’s family friend, saying there’s no way she will allow her son to join the army: “you’re going to college even if I have to wash someone’s floor to make sure you go” (1:05:27)
- Kim’s family friend: Tells her son “you will not fight for country that does not give a damn for you” (1:05:40)

Chapter 9 (01:06:53-01:15:27)

- Excitement over new beginning in Memphis; ultimately find same barriers to jobs, etc. (1:07:06)
- Brian can not get FEMA assistance since he has no proof of residency in New Orleans (1:07:56)
- Wink’s experience in prison “they didn’t tell us the hurricane was coming; took all the TVs”; no food for prisoners; eating paper and toothpaste All deputies and guards left us to die (1:10:33)
- Wink: living like slaves; “why they do us like that?” (1:11:57)
- Kim’s Grandmother left in Memorial hospital. Read New York Times on memorial hospital
- Kim describing her childhood with mom as an addict; living in the streets (1:14:01)
- Kim: drugs took her out of the “misery of not having” (poverty) (1:14:52)

### Chapter 10 (01:15:28-01:19:31)

- Kim’s autobiographical rap “Amazing” deals with her struggles in growing up in poverty: facing drugs, neglect, abuse (1:15:54)

### Chapter 11 (01:19:32- 01:25:51)

- Kim and Scott found it too hard to start over again in a new place (1:21:13)
- Kim: “still treating us third world” (1:22:03)
- Tourism industry spokeswoman: “People don’t want to be reminded of devastation when they’re trying to have a good time on vacation” (1:22:29)
- Scott: “The hood’s always going to be the last to fix; as long as they fix their down town and French Quarter”; “Leave the black folks and the poor folk to get back on their own” (1:24:42)
- First Anniversary of Katrina, Police interrupt their filming of the commemoration of house on France Street (1:25:36)

### Chapter 12 (01:25:52- End)

- Scott: In reference to his new job “Ain’t got to be looking over my shoulder” (1:25:58)
- Kim: “they are not educating us, depriving us of opportunity” (1:29:40)
- Kim: “they are preparing them for future; here in New Orleans they preparing us for prison (1:29:54)

### Key questions on the topic of structural racism and the links between race and poverty in the Film

- Do you think the people that stayed in New Orleans were uneducated or unprepared for the storm? How did you see Kimberly prepare for the storm? What are some of the reasons Kim and Scott said they could not evacuate?
- What do you think you would have done in Kim and Scott’s shoes? Would you have evacuated? How would you have managed it?
- Kim gives some explanation why various people did not evacuate. What are they?
- Why do you think Kim’s family friend in Memphis says she will not let her child join the army?
- Kim talks about the hardships of her childhood and the extremes she had to go to in order to survive. What are your opinions on her choices? Do you think she could have made other choices? What were the obstacles to her ability to make other choices?
- How do Kim and Scott justify their previous activity of selling drugs to make a living? Do you think their arguments are legitimate? Consider how you could break out of a cycle of poverty and violence with no financial savings and little education.
- What is the main message of Kim’s rap?
- Scott repeatedly refers to needing a GED to get a good job. What might have been some of the obstacles to finishing high school?
- What obstacles exist for Brian to re-establish himself in New Orleans?

- What are your thoughts about how the documentary shows the rebuilding of the French Quarter and the tourist district in contrast the failure to rebuilding the Ninth Ward?
- Do you think the Coast Guard would have helped people if they were white, or not “destitute”? What role do you think race played in their decision? What do you think of them asserting that their job is to protect “the government’s interest”? Do you think they might have let people in if there had not been an evacuation notice? What decision would you make in their position?
- Why do you think the police detained Kim, Scott, Wink, and others when they were walking to their former home in the Ninth Ward on the anniversary of the flood?
- Do you think the police would stop people from similar activities in the French Quarter?

### **B. Read Handout 1**

#### Discussion questions for handout on structural racism

#### **Part I:**

- Read the definitions of racism, white privilege and meritocracy. Take time to make sure everyone understands each term. Find examples of overt racism, structural racism and white privilege from students’ own experiences.
- What evidence is there that structural racism played a role in who could evacuate from New Orleans?
- What evidence does the video provide that structural racism might play a role in which areas are being rebuilt?
- Why do you think race and poverty are so closely linked in the USA?
- Policies directed at ending racism can be color-blind or race conscious. Look up definitions of these terms. Discuss what each of the terms means and its implications in terms of evacuation policies in New Orleans.
- Discuss various approaches to alleviating the linkages between race and poverty using either color-blind or race conscious approaches.

#### **Part II**

- Read the quotes that various politicians made regarding the people affected by Hurricane Katrina. Discuss how the quotes provide examples of overt racism, structural racism, and white privilege. What are some of the assumptions in the comments made by different people?
- Read Obama’s quote again. Some might say that passive indifference is the outcome of structural racism. What do you think?
- Political leaders like Newt Gingrich and the director of FEMA, Michael Brown, blame the people in New Orleans, suggesting it was their own fault they became victims of the hurricane for not heeding evacuation warnings. But From *Trouble the Water* and other sources we can see there are many reasons people did not leave. Do you think the local, state and national governmental agencies did enough to help people get out? Is it the government’s responsibility to do more than say, “Get out” when not everyone can afford to evacuate?

- Do you consider the failure to evacuate a “failure of citizenship”?
- If you were in charge of designing an evacuation plan for New Orleans could you construct a plan that took into consideration invisible citizens who need the most support? How would you reach everyone and how would you evacuate them?
- What are your reactions to the comments made by Barbara Bush and Congressman Riley? Do you think evacuees in the Astrodome in Houston were thinking how well things are turning out for them?
- Making a living: Parents find work
- The For Better or Worse: The Neighborhood
- Leaving the nest: Growing up, Moving out
- Cashing in: selling the family home
- Inheriting the future: Max and Byron today

Make 1 card for narrator 2

- The tale is based on a true story

This story should launch an interesting discussion. Solicit people’s responses and see where it takes you.

### Part III

- Look at the demographic data on race, education and income. Discuss what the demographic data tells us about race and poverty in New Orleans and in the USA
- What trends do you see in terms of race, education, and income in the Lower Ninth Ward compared to the USA?
- 40% of the households in the Lower Ninth Ward are lead by a single mother. What do you think causes this and what are some of the implications of this in terms of child care, education and income?
- Why do you think the average income of household earning more than \$200,000 is so high for Lower Ninth Ward? Could one outlier change the nature of these statistics? What conclusion would you draw from the fact that Fats Domino lived in the Lower Ninth Ward?
- **Who is Fats Domino?** Fats Domino made a significant mark in rock and roll history. In the period 1949-1960, he had 23 records that sold a million copies and during his career, has racked up over 65 million in sales. He has also received a Grammy Award for Lifetime Achievement.
- Housing costs in New Orleans has skyrocketed since the hurricane. Low-income housing is not being rebuilt at a rate to replace destroyed units. What effect do you think this will have on the demographics of New Orleans?

### D. Additional Resources on race

<http://blog.newsweek.com/blogs/ejw/archive/2007/08/30/transcript-katrina-and-public-service-law.aspx>

“Race the Power of an Illusion” [http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_General/000\\_00-Home.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm)

### C. Dig Deeper: How is race and poverty connected and perpetuated in the USA? To answer this questions go to:

[http://www.pbs.org/race/006\\_WhereRaceLives/006\\_00-home.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/006_WhereRaceLives/006_00-home.htm)

#### “A Tale of Two Families”

To act out this story find 14 volunteers; 6 for each Max and 6 for Byron and 2 narrators

Make a card for each student. Have the students learn only their cards and then have them read their scripts (from the “Tale of Two Families”) with Max and Bryon paired off for each of the 6 life events as important contrasting views

Make one card for narrator 1:

- How does family wealth make a difference?

Make 2 cards of each life event below, add The Green’s and the Holland’s name to one of each

- Starting out: Parents buy a home

## HANDOUT MODULE 2: THE EFFECTS OF STRUCTURAL RACISM ON INDIVIDUAL CHOICE

### Part I: Definitions of racism

#### **White Privilege:**

“A right, advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by white persons beyond the common advantage of all others; an exemption in many particular cases from certain burdens or liabilities.”

“To invest white persons with a privilege or privileges; to grant to white persons a particular right or immunity; to benefit or favor specially white persons; to invest white persons with special honorable distinctions.”

Kendall Clark, <http://academic.udayton.edu/Race/01race/whiteness05.htm>

#### **Traditional views on racism:**

“Because we associate feelings, beliefs and behaviors primarily with individuals, most accounts imply that racism is first and foremost a matter of individual agency. According to this conception, racism is lodged in the hearts and minds of individuals and made manifest by the words they speak, the actions they perform and the thoughts they harbor. The essentialist tinge of this construction is clear: One is or is not racist, all the time or never. As a rule, people’s words and actions also are interpreted as racist only if they are intentionally enacted to produce outcomes that injure some or benefit others.”

Andrew Grant-Thomas and John A. Powell, <http://www.prrac.org/newsletters/novdec2006.pdf>

#### **Structural racism**

“Structural racism is a principal source of inequality. The Aspen Institute’s Roundtable on Community Change defines structural racism as “the ways in which history, ideology, public policies, institutional practices, and culture interact to maintain a racial hierarchy that allows the privileges associated with whiteness, and the disadvantages associated with color, to endure and adapt over time.” It describes the infusion of a racial sensibility into the visible and invisible fabric of American life—one that sorts, ranks and stratifies Americans in sometimes obvious, but mostly subtle, ways. Fundamentally, it is the embeddedness of racist beliefs and assumptions in what we “know” about individuals and groups of color, and in principles and practices that we consider normal, race-neutral and fair. It is, at its root, a shared set of beliefs about race and social merit that still heavily influences how we allocate”

Keith Lawrence, <http://www.prrac.org/newsletters/novdec2006.pdf>

#### **Meritocracy**

According to the ideology of the American Dream, America is the land of limitless opportunity in which individuals can go as far as their own merit takes them. According to this ideology, you get out of the system what you put into it. Getting ahead is ostensibly based on individual merit, which is generally viewed as a combination of factors including innate abilities, working hard, having the right attitude, and having high moral character and integrity.

Source: Steven McNamee and Robert Miller. 2009. *The Meritocracy Myth*. Rowman and Littlefield, Inc.

### Part II: Quotes from politicians on those affected by Hurricane Katrina

**Newt Gingrich**, Speaker of the House, February 2007:

“How can you have the mess we have in New Orleans, and not have had deep investigations of the federal government, the state government, the city government, and the failure of citizenship in the Ninth Ward, where 22,000 people were so uneducated and so unprepared, they literally couldn’t get out of the way of a hurricane.”

**Richard Baker**, Baton Rouge Congressman, September 12, 2005

“We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn’t do it, but God did.”

**Barbara Bush**, Former First Lady, September 6, 2005, viewing the evacuees in the Houston Astrodome

“Everyone is so overwhelmed by the hospitality. And so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this is working very well for them.”

**Senator Barack Obama**, September 6, 2005

“I do not subscribe to the notion that the painfully slow response of FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security was racially-

based. The ineptitude was colorblind. But what must be said is that whoever was in charge of planning and preparing for the worst case scenario appeared to assume that every American has the capacity to load up their family in an SUV, fill it up with \$100 worth of gasoline, stick some bottled water in the trunk, and use a credit card to check in to a hotel on safe ground. I see no evidence of active malice, but I see a continuation of passive indifference on the part of our government ...”

**Part III: Demographic and census data from 2000**

<b>Racial &amp; ethnic diversity (2000)</b>	Lower Ninth Ward	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Black or African American	98.3%	66.6%	32.3%	12.1%
White	0.5%	26.6%	62.6%	69.2%
Asian	0.0%	2.3%	1.2%	3.6%
American Indian	0.0%	0.2%	0.5%	0.7%
Other	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%
2 race categories	0.6%	1.0%	0.9%	1.6%
Hispanic (any race)	0.5%	3.1%	2.4%	12.5%

<b>Households by type (2000)</b>	Lower Ninth Ward	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Total households	4,820	188,251	1,656,053	105,480,101
Female householder (no husband present) with children under 18	24.9%	17.7%	11.9%	8.4%
Male householder (no wife present) with children under 18	3.4%	2.5%	2.6%	2.4%
Married-couple family, with children under 18	14.8%	14.8%	24.3%	24.9%
Nonfamily households, with children under 18	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%
Households with no people under 18 years	56.7%	64.7%	60.8%	63.9%

<b>Children in households (2000)</b>	Lower Ninth Ward	Orleans Parish	Louisiana	United States
Population under 18 years in households	4,293	128,785	1,214,204	71,970,901
Children living as head of household	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Children living with mother only	40.7%	39.2%	24.6%	18.5%
Children living with father only	4.7%	4.7%	4.8%	4.9%
Children living with married parents	25.4%	35.9%	57.0%	66.2%
Children living with grandparents	23.0%	14.9%	9.7%	6.3%

<b>Level of schooling (2000)</b>	<b>Lower Ninth Ward</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Total population 18 years and older	9,720	3355,507	3,250,523	209,279,149
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	11.0%	17.7%	8.4%	7.1%
9-th to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade, no diploma	29.1%	18.2%	17.2%	13.2%
High school diploma or GED	29.7%	24%	32.0%	28.6%
Some college or Associate degree	24.2%	27.5%	25.6%	28.8%
Bachelor's degree or higher	6.0%	23.1%	16.8%	22.3%

<b>Average household income (2000 (2000))</b>	<b>Lower Ninth Ward</b>	<b>Orleans Parish</b>	<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>United States</b>
Average household income	\$27,499	\$43,176	\$44,833	\$56,644
Average household income for household reporting less than \$200,000	\$24,886	\$35,693	\$40,183	\$49,239
Average household income for households reporting more than \$200,000	\$688,347	\$381,840	\$367,701	\$361,490

Source: <http://www.gnocdc.org/orleans/8/22/people.html>

### Module 3: Governmental Responsibility

#### Learning Objective of Module 3

**Watch *Trouble the Water* for themes of failure of citizenship versus failure of government, meritocracy (the notion that those that stayed have same opportunities as those who left), and fear and distrust minorities feel toward government. Many of these points also link back to previous module on structural racism.**

#### Note to teacher on relevant points in the film:

##### Chapter 1 (0-9:58 minutes)

- President Bush: “I don’t think anyone anticipated the breach of the levees” (0:35)
- Nagin’s statement on mandatory evacuation; lack of understanding about those who could not leave (3:42)
- Kim and Scott did prepare; had ice and charcoal (2:43)
- No public transportation (5:47)
- News coverage of those who can not leave (5:40)
- Can’t afford to leave (6:41)
- Police aren’t coming, they are running away (7:17)

##### Chapter 2 (9:59-14:51 minutes)

- Kim: Can’t afford the luxury of leaving (10:17)
- News Clip showing Brown’s inability to describe how they actually are responding to hurricane (16:56)

##### Chapter 3 (14:52-24:05 minutes)

- Bush: Government has assets and resources to deploy (19:50)
- Absent father, forced to live independently, or on the street at 13
- 911 calls (21:57)

##### Chapter 4 (24:06-28:53 minutes)

- Mom dies of AIDS, Kids live on the street; “Hard out here in NOLA, don’t let anything take your identity (25:20)
- Kim :”We need someone to take us to safety “(28:12)

##### Chapter 5 (28:54-41:31 minutes)

- Woman with daughter who could not walk (29:24)
- No water, no lights, didn’t know the hurricane was coming (29:31)
- news coverage on people in garages and on interstate; walking, hot and tired (33:16)
- Memorial hospital claimed to have evacuated all patients to Texas but # of people were left to drown (34:22)
- Scott: “Government let us down” referring to when the Coast Guard would not let them into the empty barracks

(36:20)

- Civilians have no concept how to survival (37:23)

##### Chapter 6 (41:32-52:36 minutes)

- News report showing “chaos” national guard needed to restore order (41:32)
- Kim’s disdain that the National guard are “chilling” by the casino, “that was pitiful” (42:32)
- Brian: “that’s a hurting feeling just to see thousands and thousands of people, little babies and all that, just crying. They ain’t never sent no help.” (43:02)
- Uncle Jerome: “People were left behind like they were trash” (51:49)

##### Chapter 7 (52:37-57:11 minutes)

- Brian will not trust anyone official in LA again: “they failed us once” (53:38)

##### Chapter 8: (57:12-01:06:52)

- delays in FEM check, 3 weeks later no check, applied Sept 2nd (55:10)
- Mood in disaster recovery center (56:00)
- Scott: “The way I was going the choice was jail or underground” (57:51)
- Jobs need GED (58:13)

- Scott made easy money selling drugs, hated my life (58:25)
  - Opportunity to see different world by going to Arkansas (01:02:48)
  - Kim’s family friend in Memphis: we are supposed to be one of the richest countries in the world (1.04.40)
  - Kim: “Treated us like we lost our citizenship” (1.05.02)
- Chapter 9 (01:06:53-01:15:27)
- Brian can’t get money from FEMA since he cannot prove he lived in New Orleans, he eventually relapses into drug addition (01:07:56)
- Chapter 11 (01:19:32- 01:25:51)
- Kim and Scott return home to an eviction notice (1.19.45)



*National Guard soldiers patrol the 9th Ward in a scene from Trouble the Water. Courtesy Elsewhere Films.*

##### Chapter 12 (01:25:52-end)

- “Stole all the money for the levees” (1.28.37)
- Rally for rent control (1.29.26)
- In other places they are preparing kids for the future, here in New Orleans, we’re preparing them for prison. (1.29.49)

### Key questions on governmental responsibility, citizenship and meritocracy

- Why do you think the man who opened the water to Kim's uncle's house returned and cut it off? Would you make the same decision?
- What are your thoughts on Nagin's statement about evacuation? Did you get a feeling of confidence that this person knew what he was doing?
- Bush states that the government had assets and resources to deploy. What did he mean? Does the Film provide evidence of these resources?
- What are some of the reasons you think Brian unable to get support from FEMA after the hurricane? Do you think this was a good governmental policy?
- What support do you think the government should provide people in Brian's circumstances?
- What sorts of people appeared to fall between the cracks of governmental responsibility during evacuation and recovery in New Orleans? (Film shows drug addicts, homeless, elderly, handicapped, poor; also not shown undocumented immigrants)
- Why does Kim's family friend in Memphis express shock at what happened? Why does Kimberly compare USA to a third world country?
- Listen carefully to the section where Kim's family friend in Memphis talks about her feelings towards the USA government, her son wanting to join the army, making him go to college even if she has to clean floors (1:04:00). Explain her feelings and discuss, from her perspective, the importance of her son not joining the army and getting a college degree, Kim's family friend tells What responsibility does the government have to citizens who did not heed evacuation notices?
- Who should have evacuated the people in New Orleans if they could not do it themselves? Should the government rescue people who did not evacuate, given the warnings?
- How important do you think it is that Scott was given a job and on-the-job training as a carpenter?
- Do you see Kim, Scott and Brian's circumstance a failure of citizenship or a failure of government?
- Was this disaster the result of a natural event or a human failure?

### **B. Read Handout**

#### Discussion questions for handout on governmental responsibility

What similarities and what differences are there in terms of the treatment of African Americans and low income families in the 1912 and 1927 floods and Hurricane Katrina?

The decision to sacrifice poor and rural parishes south of the city while saving old New Orleans was made by the financial leaders of the city. For example, the presidents and leaders of the groups listed below were in attendance when the decision was made to dynamite the levee, while no representatives from St. Bernard Parish (the area sacrificed) were present.

Cotton Exchange  
Board of trade  
Stock Exchange  
Dock Board  
Association of Commerce  
Representative of all banks and newspapers

Do you think this was a wise decision in terms of financial survival of New Orleans? In terms of justice and equity?

After reading this history of previous floods and the quote by Denise Moore can you understand why there are persistent rumors that a levee near the Lower Ninth Ward was intentionally dynamited?

Can you see reasons why African-Americans and poor people from New Orleans might distrust the government?

Discuss Brown's statement: The high death toll is "going to be attributable a lot to people who did not heed the advance warnings." Does this statement suggest that there is any governmental personnel who could evacuate and aid in facilitating the evacuation?

### **C. Dig Deeper:**

Go to National Geographic Story "Gone with the Water" <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0410/feature5/>. What date was this story written? Considering this information, how do you evaluate the statements by Michael Chertoff, Homeland Security Secretary under President Bush who said, "government planners did not predict such a disaster ever could occur" and President Bush's statement "no one anticipated the breach of the levees"?

### **Fatal Flood: A Story of Greed, Power and Race**

Print out the timeline of the 1927 flood from the pbs website <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/flood/timeline/timeline2.html>

#### Memorial Hospital

August 30, 2009, the New York Times magazine ran a story on Memorial Hospital and the patients that died during Hurricane Katrina. This was the same hospital Kim's grandmother was in. Read and discuss "Strained by Katrina, a Hospital Faced Deadly Choices" by Sheri Fink.

### **D. Additional Resources**

#### **Katrina Time Line with governmental responses**

<http://thinkprogress.org/katrina-timeline/>

## HANDOUT MODULE 3: GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

### Government treatment of African Americans in previous Mississippi Floods

#### 1. Flood of 1912

*“An engineer who had run out of sandbags ordered...several hundred negroes...to lie on top of the levee and as close together as possible. The black men obeyed, and although the spray frequently dashed over them, they prevented the overflow that might have developed into an ugly crevasse. For an hour and a half this lasted, until the additional sandbags arrived. The Times called the idea ‘brilliant’.”*

Source: John Barry. 1997. *Rising Tide: The Great Flood of 1927 and How it Changed America*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

#### 2. Flood of 1927: “Another Flood That Stunned America”

*“When the rains broke records in April 1927, the Gulf of Mexico was full and worked as a stopper to the Mississippi. The Mississippi was full, too, pushing its own waters up tributaries, breaking levees and causing flooding as far as Ohio and Texas. All that water had to go somewhere. It couldn’t go to New Orleans, panicky city fathers told the Army Corps of Engineers; it would devastate the regional economy.*

*To save New Orleans, the leaders proposed a radical plan. South of the city, the population was mostly rural and poor. The leaders appealed to the federal government to essentially sacrifice those parishes by blowing up an earthen levee and diverting the water to marshland. They promised restitution to people who would lose their homes. Government officials, including Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover, signed off. On April 29, the levee at Caernarvon, 13 miles south of New Orleans, succumbed to 39 tons of dynamite. The river rushed through at 250,000 cubic feet per second. New Orleans was saved, but the misery of the flooded parishes had only started.”*

Source: September 12, 2005 print edition of U.S. News & World Report

#### Headlines in Negro newspapers, reporting on refugees from the 1927 flood read

- *“Refugees herded like cattle to Stop Escape from Peonage”*
- *“Conscript labor gangs keep flood refugees in legal bondage”*
- *“Deny food to flood sufferers”*
- *Relief bodies told African Americans that they had to “work or starve”*

#### Responses to the dynamiting of the levee, from leaders in the Saint Bernard Parish

- *“Where do they get the authority to drown us out, to deprive us of our own homes and our living?”*
- *“Gentlemen, you have today seen the public execution of this parish”*

Source: John Barry. 1997. *Rising Tide: The Great Flood of 1927 and How it Changed America*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

#### Theories that the levees were dynamited during Hurricane Katrina

- Denise Moore: *“And then the story became, “they left us here to die, they’re going to kill us . . . I was almost convinced . . . I hear from somebody that they actually were going to open that floodgate, so by the time the rumors started that the National Guard was gonna kill us, I almost half-way believed it”* (WBEZ Radio, Chicago, 2005, Moore interview).

#### FEMA chief: Victims bear some responsibility

The high death toll is *“going to be attributable a lot to people who did not heed the advance warnings.”*

- Michael Brown, former head of FEMA.