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New Orleans: Human Gifts, Human Lessons

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Introduction

Imagine a large bowl surrounded by water. The bowl, for what lives inside it, seems expansive enough, but the reality one can choose to forget from that vantage point is that the bowl is faithfully sinking with each passing year. The water surrounding the bowl stays out only thanks to human-created structures that form the bowl's sides and rim. What has been created can be destroyed. It is indeed a perilous perch, this bowl. Its name is New Orleans.

In introducing my ninth grade students to our study of New Orleans via the interdisciplinary science and humanities Natural Disaster Project, I will help them envision this city using the imagery of the bowl as both geographic reality and metaphor. The bowl helps explain New Orleans' precarious position as a city largely living below sea level and sinking every year, separated from the banks and the swells of the Mississippi and Lake Pontchartrain only by human-made levees, which history has sorely demonstrated are quite breachable. The metaphor of New Orleans as bowl can begin to explain the unique and fascinating evolution of this city as one unlike any other in the United States, a city whose location was central to the migrations of enslaved and free people of color during its early colonial years and in the centuries since, has continued to host and nurture a mix of, among others, artisans, sex workers, poets, shrimpers, migrants and immigrants, writers, blue-collar workers, and generations of families whose roots trace back to the antebellum era. New Orleans does figure as one of the world's most fascinating cities, in part, as Kathleen Wilson articulates, because of "[T]he relentless migrations—of people, ideas, goods, and practices—that created, and continue to re-cast ...New Orleans", producing a *"tradition of performance that refused to fade"*.¹ It is largely the rituals of performance that have drawn millions of visitors to the Big Easy over the centuries; the flair and unique cultural meshing of New Orleans' performance, coupled with a sense that different rules apply here, have also inspired countless travelers to come and *stay* in New Orleans.

Because of its richness of culture, traditions, intermixing of peoples and natural geography,—a geography, like anywhere else, that has been duly shaped and imprinted by human desires, needs and accompanying choices—young people can gain a lot both for the sake of New Orleans and also for the sake of their better knowing and understanding the richness they carry through their families' lives and within themselves. The tragedy and lessons of Katrina will provide my students with a complicated and illuminating look at how much the effects of natural disasters are impacted and exacerbated by human choices. This unit will provide

students with a vibrant forum to engage with social action in the face of injustice. We will explore the following types of questions: What choices did people make as Katrina headed to the Gulf Coast? How did civic leaders and community members respond to the crises around them? What could have been possible? What actions are necessary once the devastation has hit? Ideally, this unit will also help students consider the unnamed value not only of their own cultural traditions but also of their and the larger community's actions as they connect to the continued existence of the earth.

Objectives and Rationale

I teach at Oceana High School, a public college prep high school in Pacifica, just south of San Francisco, California, where major collaborative and solo student projects are key parts of the curriculum grades nine through twelve. Among the five school-wide outcomes are that students will demonstrate that they are reflective and critical thinkers. A central piece of the existing ninth grade humanities and science curriculum, the Natural Disaster Project (NDP), provides both a laboratory and showcase through which students can demonstrate these emerging skills. This unit "New Orleans: Human Gifts, Human Lessons" will enhance the existing NDP by allowing students to use New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina as a case study to ground their future research and analysis of other natural disasters. This unit will also allow them to explore the Cultural Division of UNESCO's concept of "Intangible Heritage", which seeks to name and preserve among others, oral, artistic, linguistic and/or cultural traditions that are valuable not only to the practitioners but to all of humanity. ² I hope that in taking a look at examples of New Orleans' rich intangible heritage, we will explore what examples of intangible heritage exist and thrive in the places my students call home, and indeed, within the students themselves. (A quick note: given the time restrictions of the ninth grade curriculum, I will not be able to focus on the students' uncovering their intangible heritages until the start of their sophomore year, when I meet them again). This unit will serve as the starting point for the humanities component of the NDP, and will last from between three and four weeks, meeting daily. It could also serve an eleventh grade humanities or social studies course equally well and could be adapted for an English or science class.

My objectives are to help my students engage critically with real world problems, using New Orleans as a starting point and from New Orleans, to begin to apply their new knowledge to other "natural" disasters closer to home; to grasp the legacy of African- and African-American cultural heritage which permeates U.S. culture today; to learn about the existence of "Intangible Heritage"; to provide them the space for imagination of some real-world solutions, taking into account the presence of culture and human relationships; and to gain some skill in deciphering maps. The central question guiding this unit is: How "natural" are natural disasters? Other questions which will shape our study: What is the responsibility of humans towards themselves, one another and the natural world? We will narrow our focus by asking: What is the responsibility of the government in caring for its people pre- during and post-disaster? What is the role of the *public* in demanding accountability from major power holders in the face of natural and human-made disaster? What inspiration can we take away from a city that refuses to die? What does *intangible heritage* mean? Where are examples of *intangible heritage* closer to home?

The NDP is an interdisciplinary unit in the Humanities and Science Departments in the Freshmen/Sophomore House or 9/10 in which I teach. The 9/10 House groups incoming freshmen into pods in which students share the same humanities and earth science classes; they continue with their same humanities teacher and often, the same science teacher their sophomore year and experience some mixing of the pods. The House was

created to better support underclassmen as they adjust to high school and in their sophomore years, as they try not to get lost in the fray. Students and teachers gain much from the chance to grow more as a continuous learning community. A central component of the House is interdisciplinary collaboration; the NDP is the product of this intention. Among the goals of the NDP are that students learn about and analyze various types of natural disasters not solely through a scientific but also a humanities lens; they are to draw conclusions about the severity and impact of a natural disaster based on a series of scientific and demographic factors. What is currently less prominent in the project is a clear vehicle by which students can make informed judgments. In short, they need more tools: to be able to make sense out of demographic figures molded by socio-political and economic structures and by human decisions which shape the impacts of any natural disaster. My colleagues and I agreed this year that some focused study of a U.S.-based natural disaster, before our ninth graders are asked to research and draw conclusions about their group's assigned disaster, would strengthen this project and lead to stronger outcomes. New Orleans, still recovering and rebuilding since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, provides ample ground on which to build our students' emerging consciousness about the intersections between natural and human-made disasters. Further, New Orleans is simply a fascinating and inspiring city that warrants getting to know.

As stated in the jacket of the paperback edition of Andrei Codrescu's *New Orleans, Mon Amour*, "New Orleans has always been a little more fabulous than anywhere else." ³ Indeed, New Orleans has figured as a unique place in the United States and in fact, the world, in terms of culture, economy and geography for more than three centuries. The "Gifts" part of this unit will focus on students becoming familiar with New Orleans as a *still* viable place of unique and resilient African American, Creole, Cajun and new immigrant southern culture and life. They will deepen their knowledge and understanding of U.S. history, of colonization, resistance and reemergence by getting to know New Orleans: some of the past inspiration it has provided poets and other writers and the current sources of resilience and questions which this incredible city pushes people to wrestle with today. On "Lessons": students will gain a more nuanced and realistic picture of the choices that policymakers, business leaders, and defenders of the state have made on behalf of certain residents of this country. They will *complexify* the meaning of "natural disasters" as they learn just how much the suffering of a significant population of New Orleans was rooted in the decisions of federal, state and local power holders before and after Hurricane Katrina.

I believe a good portion of my work as an educator is to help my students develop more concrete understandings of the systems in place in their lives. The specific and targeted ways in which the city and people of New Orleans were neglected tells us quite a bit about how a socio-political-economy informs human choice and action or inaction. The majority of my students are first-, second- or third-generation U.S. Americans. Most of them can trace their ancestry to the Pacific Islands, China, or Latin America, and many of those students maintain family ties to those ancestral homelands. A minority of my students is of mixed African-American descent, and I believe they will relish the opportunity to learn about the rich legacy of New Orleans in terms of their own cultural heritages. Almost all of my students fall somewhere between the working poor, lower-middle and middle class brackets and so are situated in particular places with which to make sense out of the economic realities of their families. All of my students live within a socio-political-economy directly connected to that of New Orleans and are to varying degrees cognizant of its effects on their lives; they deserve to further develop their understandings of this system that has such bearing in their world.

Background

New Orleans' Cultural Roots

The German writer and New Orleans transplant Baron Ludwig von Reizenstein aptly summarized New Orleans as "the spring from which so many thousands have drawn their wealth, but it is also a bitter cup of suffering, misery, and despair".⁴ Indeed, New Orleans has served as a centrally important port city since the French first began their colonial project after the founding of New Orleans in 1718.⁵ In 1685 the French monarchy produced its first *Code Noir* or Black Code, which outlined specifically the rules and regulations governing both enslaved and master in the colonial Indies and was then applied to French Louisiana.⁶ The first eight articles of the *Code Noir* outline official sanction of only the "Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion."⁷ Article I approves the 1615 edict of the French monarchy which ordered the driving out of all Jews within the monarchy's reaches. Article V forbids Protestant subjects from hindering "even...their slaves, in the free exercise of the Catholic" religion.⁸ Here is a marked difference between French and Anglo colonial rule; under the French, enslaved Africans were considered to have souls worth saving, a designation not made by Anglo-Saxons.⁹ Understanding this helps to make more sense out of the rules governing the different subjects and their interrelationships in French Louisiana.

Of particular interest to me is Article III. An exploration of this article sheds even more light on the evolution of New Orleans in the centuries after it was first implemented. Article III states emphatically that only Catholicism may be *publicly* exercised; "violators shall be punished as rebels..." and the article allows both enslaved and permissive masters to be subject to punishment for violation of this edict.¹⁰ It would be interesting to deconstruct this article with my students. First there is the language, which is prohibitive—and also a great avenue to put my classroom dictionaries to use—but then there is *the language!* What does it mean to banish all but one religion from the *public*? With a careful reading, my students could have a useful conversation about public versus private ritual, reflecting on their own practices in connection to this idea. This is not to make light of the risk of severe danger and punishments meted out for "violators" of this edict, but rather to honor the fact that *in spite of* sure risk, the subjects of colonial France, as in other places of colonization, did continue to nourish their own cultural and religious traditions, in part by blending them into the officially-sanctioned and enforced religion. Present-day New Orleans is testament to this living practice.¹¹

In spite of the *Code Noir*, and the more restrictive revision of it in 1724, New Orleans emerged as home to the "largest community of free people of color in the United States" who like their fellow New Orleanians, operated simultaneously within and outside the dictates of the Code.¹² Historians note the differences between French then Spanish then French control of the burgeoning New Orleans population, which included a growing mix of enslaved Africans brought directly from western Africa—primarily from Ouidah (today Benin) and Senegal,¹³ — enslaved peoples born in the Americas or the West Indies, Indians such as the Houma of the Choctaw, free blacks, Europeans and more and more Creoles, and that of colonial Anglo-America to the east and to the north.¹⁴ Certain customs became part and parcel to the development of New Orleans, norms such as the French encouragement of intermixing between European men and African-descended women or the allowance of enslaved peoples to earn money to gain their freedom. These are important differences between Louisiana and the rest of colonized Anglo-U.S. America and taking a look at them helps to lay the foundation for understanding the uniqueness of New Orleans some almost 300 years later.

One historic and tangible place which opens the door to understanding New Orleans' resplendent African-descended cultural tradition remains Congo Square, or as it was called during French colonial times, *Place de Negres*. Congo Square provided a space where the enslaved could, on Sundays, sell and barter their produce and wares at market; it also offered a meeting place for singing, drumming and dancing where "African Americans could congregate and remember who they were".¹⁵ Various indigenous communities also congregated and sold produce there.¹⁶ Congo Square served as a node that helped to deconstruct multiple borders seen and unseen. Not only was it as Sublette determines but one place where an "African American music was coming into existence," it was also a space where to continue to demonstrate such "overt manifestations of Africanness...was a tremendous act of will, memory, and resistance."¹⁷ It was this incredible spirit of resistance and survival that rooted New Orleans as a cultural hub for Africanized music and dance in the United States. This same city would birth jazz and the now-famous Second Line jazz parades. Blues then R & B and later hip hop (not to mention the myriad musical and dance genres which have drawn from each of these) are also testament to this willful resistance and resilience of African-descended peoples in the Americas. I hope for my students to glimpse the connections between the various musical and dance genres they readily enjoy today with the cultural participants of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Congo Square, even if at their current levels of intellectual development they are limited in how deeply they can get it.

These glimpses of what makes New Orleans New Orleans, illustrate what historians, ethnographers, and New Orleans residents themselves continue to remind the rest of the world: "New Orleans is America's most African city."¹⁸ This is really important. It is critical to acknowledge this when engaging with students about this city because 1) the africanized nature of New Orleans has so much to do with the soul of the city, which is directly connected to its popularity as a major tourist destination and 2) in 2011 amidst discussions of a "post-racial America" in light of the election of a mixed-race African American president, the vast majority of our nation's students sorely lack exposure to substantive learning about the immeasurable influence of African and African American political, cultural, spiritual, social, and economic presence in this country's evolution.

In trying to grasp enough to provide a basic overview of the makings of New Orleans, I feel it also imperative to note that part of the city's rich cultural heritage has roots in the cross-migration between colonial New Orleans and St. Domingue (Haiti) and Cuba. Mary Gehman explains in her chronicle of the varied and vivid life of free people of color or Creoles in New Orleans, that "[F]rom the very beginning of New Orleans there were some free blacks who came either from the Caribbean or via France."¹⁹ Further, enslaved peoples were brought from the islands of St. Domingue and Cuba until the imposition of a ban in 1763.²⁰ Certainly in the dances practiced and witnessed in Congo Square, one could see the influences of enslaved communities from the Caribbean islands. Sublette examines these cross-flows of African-rooted rhythm in considering the use of the word *tango bailes de negros* (blacks' dances) in Governor Estevan Miró's *Bando de Buen Bando* (Edict of Good Government).²¹ Sublette goes into more detailed analysis of the tango both as dance and as label imposed in legal doctrine in an attempt to control the practitioners of it. He writes: "Robert Farris Thompson, who wrote a book on the African roots of tango...traces *tango* to Kikongo: it's 'more than a word. It's a semantic spectrum....And on both sides of the Atlantic, it means a dance, a place of dance, the people who dance it, the beat of the dance, and many other things.'"²² This analysis reinforces my belief that Congo Square, as one of the places where the so-called *tango* was danced, served a vital role not only in antebellum New Orleans but also in the numerous musical and dance traditions developed in that city since. Further, the fact that the tango would emerge in Argentina a century after Miró's writing of it only reinforces the notion that the African influence runs deep and wide, and neither national borders or legal edicts can contain the flow and pulse of people's love for and commitment to practice what comes from within and out onto the dance floor.

New Orleans and the Impact of Class

There is no doubt that enslaved New Orleanians, along with the growing class of free people of color who in turn developed interesting and often lifelong relationships with French and Spanish settlers and colonizers, contributed immeasurably to the cultural wealth of New Orleans. And it was largely thanks to the sophisticated knowledge and skill in the cultivation of rice and indigo and in the artisanship of western Africans that French, Spanish and then English colonizers gained their material wealth. ²³ What then, of those who have drunk from the sour cup of heartache and misery of which von Reizenstein writes? While both the written laws and practiced customs of antebellum Louisiana and New Orleans in particular were looser and even encouraging of Afro-European mixing, slavery was still slavery. Further, there existed a hierarchy that also governed the privileges and status of different European groups. The last phase of European occupation and colonization came along with the English; they would shut down many of the customs that prevailed in a more culturally fluid Louisiana. They also imparted their brand of European supremacy, with Anglos clearly at the top of a chain that linked in descending order, those of Spanish or French, Creole, Cajun, Indigenous and African descent. Thus, today Cajun communities in the southern bayous of Louisiana make up some of the poorest "white" residents of Louisiana. ²⁴

As Reizeinstein also indicates in the quote I cited above, New Orleans has been no stranger to poverty. The misery of yellow fever of a bygone time has transformed into the more contemporary suffering of "poverty, neglect and social decay" that affects all of New Orleans poor residents. ²⁵ However, New Orleans, particularly through the spotlight of Katrina and the governments' horrifically inadequate responses, is a microcosm of a larger system in which the intersections of race and class are very pronounced. What had once been a far more integrated center of "bustling ethnic and racial interactions" became increasingly segregated "as suburbanization made New Orleans blacker" in the later part of the twentieth century. ²⁶ As Dyson so succinctly states, as "the city got blacker, it got poorer," a trend which was being mirrored across the country. ²⁷ Fast forward to 2005 when Katrina struck, when the hardest-hit states: Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana each was home to more than 90,000 people who earned less than \$10,000 a year. Blacks in these areas earned incomes 40 percent less than those of whites. Further, New Orleans had a poverty rate of 23 percent, far higher than the national average and ranking seventh poorest out of 290 large U.S. counties. ²⁸ Dyson points further to the intersection of class and race oppression in the United States with another telling figure: lack of access to vehicles in late 2005 was grossly different among poor black New Orleanians compared to poor whites, at 53 percent and 17 percent, respectively. ²⁹ This is a concrete reality which my students, so many of whom are dependent on *both* family and public transportation, can readily grasp as they develop a more informed awareness of the tragic inability of thousands of impoverished New Orleanians to leave ahead of Katrina. Ultimately, my students will be able to articulate a more complete and fair understanding of this simple equation than many of the federal and state power holders have in the wake of the storm.

New Orleans' Particular Geography

Certainly there were numerous factors that resulted in so many thousands of people being stranded in their well-loved city. My students will need to understand the particulars of how and why Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast as it did and so, they will need to learn something about its geography. While the science side of the NDP will explore in detail the relevance of ecology on disaster-vulnerability and impacts, the humanities portion of the project will draw on knowledge of geography and find its interrelatedness to demographics and socio-political consequences.

As mentioned in the introduction, New Orleans, also called the Crescent City because of how it is shaped by the flow of the Mississippi River, is like a bowl. Its founding was a particular labor of love (as well as ego and imperialist expansion) given that French settlers wanted to establish a post in the swamps of a major river delta. Douglas Brinkley, history professor at Tulane University, describes those early attempts to found and maintain New Orleans:

Born amid willow and cypress swamps atop squishy delta soils, the city originally perched on the high ground formed by over-wash deposits from annual river floods. Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, actually had to wait for the water to recede before he could plant the French flag in 1718. A flood destroyed the village the year after he founded it, and hurricanes wiped it off the map in 1722 and again a year later. *In its 289-year history, major hurricanes or river floods have put the city under 27 times, about once every 11 years.* Each time, the fractious French, Spanish, blacks, Creoles, and Cajuns raised the levees and rebuilt. ³⁰

Andrei Codrescu describes this precarious relationship of city and water by naming New Orleans "a creature of the river" which, because of its positioning around and beside the Mississippi, "does not follow the cardinal points". ³¹ The city map—the geographic or two-dimensional map, but also and perhaps more so, the map that Joseph Roach names the "pop-up" map or "map of desire"—duly reflects its interdependency with the river. ³² And still, human needs and desires have dramatically impacted the shape of New Orleans and so also, the flow of the waterways that at one time ran far freer courses into the Gulf of Mexico. Thanks to a complicated system of pumps and levees, the twentieth century has seen the city grow up and around the mighty Mississippi and onto former swampland closer to Lake Pontchartrain to the north. ³³

Walling off the Mississippi so that New Orleans might exist has produced tangible consequences for the city itself and for the Louisiana Gulf Coast to the south. Mike Tidwell explains that "the lower Mississippi River...is now straitjacketed with flood levees so high" that it cannot flood and so provide the sediment for the marsh lands or *bayous* (a Choctaw word meaning "sluggish, slow-moving stream" ³⁴) and thus ensure not only the Louisiana Gulf Coast's but also New Orleans' survival, as wetlands actually provide one of the surest protections against storm surge. ³⁵ This is a difficult question with which I want my students to grapple as they dig deeper into their Natural Disaster Projects.

In order for my students to better wrestle with the complicated mix of ecological realities and the human effects on that ecology and one another, I will provide them an overview of "natural disasters" which preceded Hurricane Katrina. Some of the more written about and recent disasters are the Great Flood of 1927 and Hurricane Betsy in 1965. During the 1927 flood, the Crescent City's government leaders, apparently in response to the urging of bankers and other members of the finance community with so much capital at stake in the port city, ³⁶ authorized the detonation by dynamite of the Caernarvon Levee, which led to the flooding of poor predominantly black neighborhoods. ³⁷ This legacy has figured in the inheritance of memory among New Orleans' working class African American population ever since. Following the devastation of the 1927 flood, the Congressional passage of the Flood Control Act of 1928 authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to expand a network of bigger levees and spillways by the river and throughout the city in what "was billed as a triumph of engineering over nature." ³⁸ Bourne offers an additional viewpoint through the words of Gilbert F. White, the "father of floodplain management." ³⁹ Bourne attributes to White the critique of the "levee effect:" an ever-expanding human-made flood protection system in the floodplain only leads to greater losses because of the simple truth that those manufactured protections are not foolproof. ⁴⁰ A discussion about this "levee effect" could prove extremely useful and informative in the humanities portion of the NDP, as students will have to negotiate the fine line between natural disaster and human decisions which exacerbate the

impacts.

Many New Orleanians who had lived through Hurricane Betsy in 1965 felt they could handle Katrina. Like Hurricane Katrina, Betsy slammed New Orleans and caused a storm surge into Lake Pontchartrain. Hurricane Betsy was no small storm; 65 New Orleanians died in that storm and tens of thousands were forced from their homes as the flood levels rose.⁴¹ That inheritance of memory persisted in the minds of residents of the working poor communities of New Orleans who were flooded out after the breaching of nearby levees; many remain convinced that the city dynamited those levees to once again protect more prime property in the French Quarter. This deep-seated belief resurfaced during the chaos and catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina, to which various informants in Spike Lee's *When the Levees Broke: A Four Part Requiem* speak.

On August 23, 2005, a tropical depression that would come to be called Katrina formed over the southeastern Bahamas. Two days later, after being upgraded to Tropical Storm Katrina, it made landfall in Florida as a Category 1 hurricane where it was responsible for nine deaths.⁴² By afternoon on August 26, Hurricane Katrina's predicted path had shifted from the Florida Panhandle to the Louisiana/Mississippi Gulf Coast.⁴³ In the next 48 hours Katrina would be upgraded once again, eventually reaching the maximum Category 5 designation. That Friday, August 26, Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco declared a state of emergency. That same day Governor Barbour of Mississippi joined Governor Blanco in requesting that the Pentagon authorize National Guard troops to come to the targeted region.⁴⁴ On August 29, Katrina, with winds of 140 miles per hour, struck Louisiana east of New Orleans.⁴⁵ By the next day, 80% of the city of New Orleans was flooded by the waters of the levee-breached Lake Pontchartrain.⁴⁶ Those who had the means and enough skepticism, fear, and/or trust in authorities evacuated ahead of the deluge. That left the poor with no access to vehicles and/or insubstantial savings to foot the bill of evacuation behind to try their best at survival in the uppermost reaches of their homes, in taller abandoned buildings or in the less-than-equipped Superdome or Convention Center.

A number of the texts that I highlight below provide ample detail about the many

ways in which power holders at all levels failed New Orleanians. I want to explore with my students both the tragic consequences of human ineptitude and inaction and the equally powerful examples of decisive human action. As we begin our study of the human reactions to the storm and flood, we may take a look at the examples Brinkley lays out in his opening chapter "Ignoring the Inevitable" in *The Great Deluge*. He provides three instances of hurricane contingency plans successfully put into action prior to Katrina's arrival. The Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (LSPCA), situated in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward, successfully evacuated the 263 stray pets in its charge, each with detailed paperwork, digital photos and collared digital tracking devices.⁴⁷ Both St. Charles and Plaquemines Parishes issued and carried out mandatory evacuations of their entire populations prior to the storm and the people running the Waterford 3 nuclear reactor twenty miles west of New Orleans shut the reactor down completely in advance of a Category 3 storm, in accordance with the site's policy.⁴⁸ Each of these sites was successful in doing what needed doing ahead of the storm to care for their constituencies. Students can sift through this information and hold it up against the too many examples and consequences of a lack of contingency plans elsewhere in New Orleans and Louisiana.

The Grappling

The Natural Disaster Project provides an ideal venue by which students must grapple with the complex problems of human desires smack up against ecological realities. With New Orleans as the case study of this

unit, the NDP can also invite students to consider the worth of places from countless vantage points. Rebecca Solnit, a Bay Area-based writer and cultural critic, elaborates on this point in her incredible work of exploration of the many San Franciscos that make up San Francisco:

Every place deserves an atlas, an atlas is at least implicit in every place, and to say that is to ask first of all what a place is. Places are leaky containers. They always refer beyond themselves, whether island or mainland, and can be imagined in various scales, from the drama of a back alley to transcontinental geopolitical forces and global climate. What we call places are stable locations with unstable converging forces that cannot be delineated either by fences on the ground or by boundaries in the imagination—or by the perimeter of the map. ⁴⁹

My hope in using New Orleans as case study is not only to better ground the students in their own research for the NDP. I want them to get to know New Orleans, as I mentioned in my introduction, simply for the sake of New Orleans. Solnit's insightful point about places and atlases applies to any place; she makes this point later in her introduction. As I read it, with my mind lately so consumed with thoughts of New Orleans, I thought how fitting her words are for this place. So much of the writing people have produced on this complicated, dearly-beloved city cannot be designated by a line on a map or even within the imagination, but surely, as the human disaster of Katrina made woefully clear, real boundaries both seen and unseen are very much alive in this place. And still, New Orleanians maintain fierce pride and love for this place called home.

Environmental journalist Joel K. Bourne attributes the return of die-hard New Orleanians in the months after Katrina to "a typical New Orleans cocktail of denial, faith in the levees, and 100-proof love of home." ⁵⁰ This quote offers three wonderful starting points for discussion with my students: there's the ever-present human capacity to negate what stands in front of us in both tangible form and lived experience; there is the closely-related persistence of belief in human-made structures that are not foolproof; and finally, there are the metaphysical connections we form with our environments. It is this latter point that I find most fascinating and inspiring in terms of my process of becoming familiar with New Orleans. It also offers perhaps the richest place to support my students' becoming, through this process of *defamiliarization* in which the strange (New Orleans) becomes familiar so that upon return to the familiar (home: Daly City, Pacifica, San Francisco, California), certain aspects of what was known become strange. ⁵¹ From that point we will draw some of the most powerful connections.

What makes a place "home"? And what makes that place still *home* when it has done one wrong, a sentiment New Orleanians are fair to feel for their beloved city? Why have those residents who had the basic means and the steel will returned to the Lower Ninth Ward, an area of the city that is still the most vulnerable to another major storm to hit the Gulf Coast, as with near surety it will? ⁵² How do we extend the value a community may assign to a place if that community is not accorded value in broader society? How do we think about and engage with *value* outside of and beyond capital in our hyper capitalized world? How do we demand accountability and care from those in structural positions to determine value? How do we build alliances and understanding among disparate groups so that more of us—human beings and the earth—are better served and cared for? These are the root questions driving my excitement for bringing New Orleans to form the heart of the Natural Disaster Project. Perhaps we need to rename the project...something along the lines of the *Natural Disaster Project with a Whole Lot of Heart*.

I hope that, despite the staggering examples of human negligence, my students emerge from this study with firmer belief in human action. A maxim I have applied to my and others' unlearning of racism: if it was learned, it can be unlearned, also relates quite poignantly and in fact, urgently, to New Orleans and the Gulf

Coast. It is human choices and actions that have led to the loss of 2,300 square miles of Louisiana's Gulf Coast in the past 70 years,⁵³ and it is up to human decisions and efforts that this devastating course be altered. The various instances of effective hurricane preparation described by Brinkley which I summarized above, along with the countless other examples of groups of people using their own agency to help themselves and their neighbors in the face of the storm, illustrate the effectiveness of community control. I look forward to invoking in my students the belief that it doesn't have to be this way; it can be better. And finally, that they are the ones that are going to have to make it better. In the process of this learning, New Orleans will join my students' personal maps of places that matter. I can't wait!

Texts and Films

New Orleans, Mon Amour: Twenty Years of Writings from the City

In the course of the unit, we will read from various texts. To give my students some sense of the "differentness" and "specialness" of New Orleans, we will read parts of Andrei Codrescu's *New Orleans, Mon Amour: Twenty Years of Writings from the City*. Besides being a prolific author and NPR commentator, Codrescu is a Transylvanian Romanian, Latin-identified New Orleans transplant.⁵⁴ This collection of work brings to light Codrescu's intense love for his adopted home town as well as the "lover's quarrels [he has] with the city."⁵⁵ A memorable description of the Big Easy's special relationship with time and death is "The Muse is Always Half-Dressed in New Orleans." Certain portions of this chapter will likely go over the heads of the majority of my ninth graders, but lines such as "the real reason for the dearth of clocks is that time is not a big deal here....Buying a newspaper can take half an hour if the vendor feels like telling you a story," offer us a grand opportunity to figure out what makes New Orleans so special, and to analyze dominant culture's relationship to time and to human interaction.⁵⁶

Come Hell or Highwater: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster

In *Come Hell or Highwater*, social critic and renown academic Michael Eric Dyson offers a scathing review of all of the "unnatural" or human-driven disaster that compounded the effects of Katrina. I highly recommend Dyson's book to any educator wanting to teach anything related to the struggle of the Big Easy to make it through Katrina. He provides chronicle after chronicle of the extreme governmental negligence in terms of both disaster preparedness and rescue and aid to those who remained in the storm's path and floodplain. He shares painful information about the extent of bureaucratic ineptitude, negligence and outright governmental disregard of the majority of New Orleans' population in chapters with titles like "Unnatural Disasters," "The Politics of Disaster," "Hurricane and Hesitation," and "Levees and Lies."

In the chapter titled "Does George W. Bush Really Care About Black People?", Dyson provides a far more complete text than was replayed following Kanye West's departure from the script during an NBC telethon to benefit American Red Cross relief efforts in the Gulf Coast. West, with raw and painstaking honesty, expressed his criticism of racism in the media, the need for people to "'help the poor, the black people, the less well-off", and got in "'George Bush doesn't care about black people'" before the camera operators were ordered to pan off West once and for all.⁵⁷ In this same chapter, Dyson examines the stark difference in the "delayed and lackluster response" of the federal government to New Orleanians post-Katrina and its "greater generosity and urgency" to Floridians hit by hurricanes Charley and Francis in 2004.⁵⁸ He cites various critics in their highlighting of the roles of electoral politics and historic bastions of electoral support or opposition in determining the extent to which this particular administration concerned itself with caring for disaster victims. While this book will serve mostly as an instructional tool and not something my students will read to any great

extent, I think excerpts such as these could help to ground us in useful discussion about civic inclusion and holding elected officials accountable. Kanye West, as an extremely popular rapper well-known and, in many cases, well-loved by my students, appears here as a concerned citizen holding the power holders accountable. Surely his analysis will spark healthy conversation among my students as they think more critically about citizenship and the need for community action when that citizenship is disregarded.

Zeitoun

Zeitoun is a nonfiction account written by Dave Eggers which chronicles the immigrant experience of Syrian-born Abdulrahman Zeitoun (generally referred to simply by his surname) in the years he built a home and thriving contractor business with his wife and children in the Uptown neighborhood of New Orleans, and the striking ways in which Zeitoun experiences his immigrant "otherness" in the days after Katrina strikes. He, like Codrescu, has come to view "home" as synonymous with New Orleans, an identification put very much in jeopardy in the second half of the book. *Zeitoun* provides the reader with very vivid, often hauntingly beautiful images of New Orleans as the city is nearly swallowed by water and Zeitoun makes his way from house to house in the family's canoe, checking on neighbors and caring for abandoned dogs in the first days after the flooding. Eggers' writing is not heavily descriptive but rather straightforward, and this helps the reader imagine all that Zeitoun, his increasingly frantic wife Kathy and brother Ahmad face once Zeitoun is apprehended and then disappeared in a Homeland Security prison set up in New Orleans just days after the storm.

Reading *Zeitoun*, I thought over and over how well this book would work in my class as both the language and the drama of the true story make it accessible to my students. Again in trying to support them in naming and deconstructing various systems at work in their lives, I value both the raw narration of the human tragedy of Katrina and the exposure of the impacts of anti-Arab, anti-Muslim racism and racial profiling that has fomented in the U.S. since 9/11. This book will help us examine the prevalence of such sentiment within our communities as it also sheds light on the focus of our study.

A.D.: After the Deluge

A.D.: After the Deluge is a graphic novel by Josh Neufeld. It tells the survival stories of a core group of six New Orleanians and their families, using the cartoon frame to powerfully depict their experiences before, during and after Katrina hits New Orleans. The layout and the graphics, in their simplistic poignancy, help the reader conjure images of the destruction, the ensuing panic and the individual choices made by each of the characters, sometimes with their whole family in tow, to survive the storm. The book illustrates the breadth of resources and accompanying recourse available to New Orleans' diverse residents. Neufeld intentionally chooses a varied cast of New Orleanians: the young couple Leo and Michelle, both of whom grew up in the Crescent City, who decide to leave New Orleans to wait out the storm; Denise, sixth-generation New Orleanian who attempts to survive the storm in her family's apartment after the hospital that employs her mother goes back on a commitment to provide them with a private room. Denise and her family end up at the Convention Center with a sea of 1000s more stranded, near abandoned New Orleanians. Then there is Hamid, an Iranian-born New Orleanian who chooses to stay behind to watch over his family's grocery store with the company and help of his friend Darnell. The Doctor experiences the storm with friends in his Uptown home. Finally, Kevin is the son of a pastor who flees with his family to his brother's Tallahassee dorm. He finishes high school in Berkeley, California.

The medium of graphic novel will serve as a welcome read for many of my students, some of whom eat up the latest anime and manga and others, who simply "don't like to read." The book is so usable because of the

power of its stark images, which speak volumes. I see lots of possibility in the chances for students to get to know and get into a family's story in a very concise and clear way. To that end, I will most likely have us read as a class the introductions to each of the characters, and then assign a character to small groups of students who will then jigsaw their reading of the book.

Trouble the Water

Trouble the Water is a documentary film that blends home video footage of New Orleans before and during Katrina with interviews carried out by the documentarians in the two years after Katrina. It spotlights Kimberly Roberts Rivers, a.k.a. MC Black Kold Madina, and her partner Scott who provide the raw footage of the build up and onslaught of the storm as well as the deep commentary about the devastation of not only the physical storm but also the callous disregard by local, state and federal officials in caring for those who were in direct line of the floodwaters which the levees could not contain. This film was received really well by last year's ninth graders, who expressed admiration for the resilience and brutal honesty of Kimberly as well as for her craft as a rising rapper. The sheer force of the film is in its raw depiction of what went down in New Orleans in the days leading up to Katrina and in the complicated months since. Students also seem to thrill off the, again, raw language spoken by Madina. They do not learn any new curse words in this film but they sure do enjoy hearing them in the venue of a classroom. The film provides myriad source points for reflection and animated discussion about the effects of a society that has constructed concepts of "inside" and "outside," demarcating who feels a resulting sense of belonging or exclusion, with very tangible repercussions. It also raises helpful questions about collective responsibility, which could readily support efforts to build consciousness about civic participation and action.

Hurricane on the Bayou

Things come to you at the right time. Upon my return from the intensive summer session at Yale, I was rather randomly scrolling through my instant view Netflix options when I came across this concise and powerful documentary. Narrated in part by actor Meryl Streep, *Hurricane on the Bayou* showcases five Louisiana musicians: pianist Allen Toussant, Zydeco musician Chubby Carrier and Gospel Queen Marva Wright, but principally 14-year-old violinist Amanda Shaw and her mentor, Cajun Blues guitarist and singer Tab Benoit, as they use their wonderful musical talents to educate their audiences about the horrific loss of Gulf wetlands and the directly correlated greater vulnerability of populations and ecology to storm surges. The film is only 42 minutes long, so it is easily workable in a standard class period. It includes some of the most beautiful images of the life of the bayous as well as devastating footage of Katrina survivors and their destroyed homes. The film covers the science of wetlands and the reasons they are so essential to coastal survival. I may ask my science colleagues to show the film in their classes and then have my students process it in our humanities class. It is especially appealing because it features an adolescent who has become passionate in her commitment to strengthen her local ecology. It also provides great footage of some of the examples of New Orleans' incredible musical genius. The one glaring omission is the lack of any mention of the oil industry, and the fact that it is the major culprit for wetlands destruction and erosion in the Gulf Coast. Showing this film late enough in the unit, after students have learned the multiple causes of land erosion, they could note this omission in post-film discussion and analysis.

If God is Willing and da Creek Don't Rise

World-renown director Spike Lee followed up his Katrina-era film *When the Levees Broke: A Four-Part Requiem* with *If God is Willing and da Creek Don't Rise*. Filming began in early 2010 when New Orleans and the so-

called Who Dat Nation ("who dat" has emerged as NOLA's football team's rallying cry) was riding high on the Superbowl win of the Saints. The film takes viewers on a sometimes harrowing, deeply soul-searching journey back into the heart of New Orleans' hardest-hit communities: St. Bernard Parish and the Lower Ninth Ward. We get to find out what happened to some of Lee's key informants from the first film, five years later. We learn about the fractious rebuilding of the city as city planners and developers move forward with development plans that do not include the wishes of the majority of returning Lower Ninthers and other residents of the poorest neighborhoods of New Orleans. Local activists describe the challenges of organizing their splintered communities and trying to level with civic leaders, many of whom have demonstrated negligible concern for those most marginalized by displacement because of Katrina. Various academics, doctors and health care providers discuss the massive residual levels of trauma among Katrina survivors, and actor Brad Pitt discusses the problems with the typical construction that happens in poor communities and how he, with his Make It Right Foundation, is trying to ensure that Lower Ninthers return to sustainable, affordable homes that make ecological sense given New Orleans' bowl geography. Part II of this documentary features shrimping and fishing communities along the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and the devastation of not only massive hurricanes but also the BP oil spill of 2010.

I will likely show portions of this documentary, because in its entirety it is overwhelming and fairly demoralizing. The parts that seem most relevant to the aims of this unit are those showcasing the recovery and rebuilding efforts of community members and community-minded groups that want to see the reemergence of New Orleans and a Gulf Coast that do not seek to control nature but rather live within its generosity and limitations.

Strategies

My teaching strategies largely reflect the overall approach of the school. Students and teachers work together in an environment in which we use a combination of learning approaches that aim to support not only our acquisition of knowledge and application through various skill builders and final assessments but also our metacognition: why do we study what we do? How does our new learning inform what we already know, and vice versa? What do we know now that we did not understand before? Students are asked to engage and process fairly substantial academic texts, make comparisons between texts, analyze the biases and perspectives of an author, artist or film director, and connect course content with their lived experience. The strategies that follow are some of my tried and true, and will be essential to meeting the goals I have set forth in this unit.

KWL

KWL (Know-Want to Understand-Learned) is a strategy that I employ in most every unit, whether or not I have my students complete the KWL chart. I plan to begin this unit asking students to share what they already know about both New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina. I do want them to record this process in the form of the chart, as it will help them articulate their own knowledge and will give me a simple way to assess what knowledge they have gained through the course of this unit.

Journaling

Oceana freshmen and sophomore humanities students are accustomed to opening class at least twice a week with SSW (Sustained Silent Writing) . The prompts I give them range from relating closely to a particular unit to questions designed to help them open up more to me to free-writes (which inevitably achieve the latter goal, too). I find that journaling in this way allows students time to process not only their thoughts but also their feelings about a given topic. This will be especially important as we navigate the rough waters of Hurricane Katrina and the human disasters that made Katrina so devastating. Students' journal writing will also serve as a springboard for partner and class discussions.

Snowball

This exercise works in tandem with journaling. It is perhaps the favorite sharing activity among my freshmen students. After they've written anonymous responses to a prompt, they crumple up their paper and toss it into the center of the room. Once all student responses are in the center, each student picks up a "snowball" and in turn, reads the response aloud. Students tend to be incredibly honest when they know they will "snowball" their responses; that honesty has provided some of the more insightful sharings in my classroom. Certainly this exercise is advisable only after a class has built up a level of trust and collegiality.

Give One/Get One

After students create a written response to a prompt, they have a limited time to travel the classroom and solicit responses from their peers. There is generally higher motivation if there is some reward for acquiring the most responses. I follow the collection of information with a general share out, so I can also assess the quality of the responses.

Read and Summarize/ Read Aloud

To support students' developing literacy skills, they will do a combination of reading silently on their own and reading aloud in small groups or as a whole class. They will then be responsible for writing brief summaries of various passages based on their own annotations as they read.

Jigsaw

The "jigsaw" reading method has proven a valuable way not only to cover multiple texts in a relatively short period of time but also, and more importantly, to increase students' responsibility in grasping the material. Students work in groups with an assigned text, and either as a group, present out to the rest of their class, or in newly-configured groups, educate their peers as to the core content and themes of their assigned reading. I envision reading Neufeld's *A.D.: After the Deluge* using the jigsaw. This way, students get to know one character or set of characters more intimately and hopefully will feel more connection with the particular struggles and outcomes that those characters experience.

Big Paper

"Big Paper" offers a unique way for students to have conversations. Taken directly from my introduction of this learning model in my classroom, the point of a Big Paper conversation is to: help take in and process big issues and to give participants a different way to exchange perspectives. The key element that is initially most strange to my students is the fact that a "Big Paper" conversation is a silent conversation. I plan to print out copies of various photographs of New Orleans (possibly before) but certainly during the days that Katrina raged through the city. Students will, again in groups, sit around a table and one photograph and be asked to

write down on one butcher paper their responses to questions which prompt them to first observe what they see and then ask questions which they can use to then interpret what is in front of them. This exercise benefits all of my students, but with particular consideration for the visual learners and those who are less likely to speak up in class discussion.

Map Reading

A central component of the NDP is students locating the site of "their disaster" on a map and identifying some geographical factors that influenced that disaster. My hope with this focused study on New Orleans and the Gulf Coast is that students will spend more directed time studying multiple maps in order to better understand not only the ecological but also the cultural and social components of the place. While one could argue that in this GPS-dominated world, the skill of map reading is no longer as essential as it once was, I know that map study strengthens not only students' overall literacy but also their understanding of a place. If they can see how the city has grown up around the meandering Mississippi and Lake Pontchartrain, they can then better place the "bowl" that is New Orleans and that will be one of the first aspects of the city to which I plan to introduce them.

Fishbowl

The fishbowl is a difficult but ultimately very rewarding learning medium. A small group of students is randomly or purposefully selected by the teacher to hold a directed discussion in a circle, as the rest of the students sit on the outside of the fishbowl and observe the conversation. Usually, I have the students write in response to a prompt before they are asked to talk in a fishbowl. The exercise works most effectively if the observing students have specific tasks beyond simple note-taking: I give each student a slip of paper which details their task which could be anything from noting who speaks and how often, who introduces a new point, who cites the text, who interrupts to who asks questions. Following the fishbowl discussion, the whole class reconvenes and the observers share their findings, which then leads to a conversation about the dynamics at play during the fishbowl.

Activities

Each class period is 100 minutes long. What follows are specific activities designed for the first six days. Given the breadth and depth of topics, I will likely have to adjust the schedule such that Day Four below may actually be Day Five or Six and so on.

Lesson One-Week One: Hello, New Orleans!

We will begin the unit by locating New Orleans on a map of the United States. We will take a more cursory look at the geography and make some initial speculations about the city's vulnerability to storms. Students will share what they know about New Orleans, and we will draw upon this list as we delve deeper into the social and geographic history. In order to help them understand the cultural wealth of New Orleans, I will show a few short videos of Second Line parades and performances by the Mardi Gras Indians (a quick search on Youtube brings up countless videos). Following the videos, I will have them write down the first words that come to mind as they view the clips; they will then do a Give One/Get One to exchange their reactions to the film, and we will do a whip around the room to hear one unique response from each student.

On this first day, I will do a short lecture on New Orleans' early history, so that students gain a foundation through which to analyze not only the topical maps but also the complicated recent history of the city. My students, at this point in the semester, are skilled in taking Cornell lecture notes and will write a summary on their notes that night. We will do some reading of the *Black Code*, with special attention to Article III, the following day, to achieve the aim outlined in the Background above.

Lesson Four - Week One: Mapping New Orleans

Using a blow-up version of the map students have, we will start mapping New Orleans pre-Katrina through its cultural, political and economic landmarks, adding symbols across the city to mark specific sites. Students will note the locations of Congo Square, the French Quarter and Treme, specifically, key hospitals and universities, the major highways, levees and wharves, as well as the Central Business District, highlighting sites such as the Superdome, the Convention Center, city hall, etc. We will also make note of the districts that figure most prominently in the coming reading. I will ask students to consider similar major sites in their home cities. *An alternative to the mapping of New Orleans, and which ultimately may serve the students more, is to first discuss such key sites of New Orleans, but actually map sites in the students' own neighborhoods. I would have them look not only at the business sites but also attempt to identify the cultural and community-related spaces, intersections and borders of their city/towns (primarily Pacifica, Daly City and San Francisco).

On this same day, we will scrutinize some of New Orleans' 2005 demographic factors: namely employment, infant mortality, health care access rates and GDP and compare these to those in other parts of the country. Students will do an in-class writing assignment in which they make some predictions about disaster-survivability based on these demographics.

Lesson Six - Start of Week Two: Natural or Unnatural Disaster?

Today we begin our exploration of the "natural disaster" aspect of our New Orleans case study. The SSW prompt for the day will be the following: *Wildfires are spreading and coming to your area. You have ten minutes to collect what is valuable to you and then leave. What do you take?* After ten to fifteen minutes of writing, students will pair up and share out their responses. In pairs, they will come to a large sheet of paper in the front of the room and list their top three valuable items. My plan is to return to this list at the end of this unit to discover if their lists have changed at all.

I will solicit some student volunteers to help me demonstrate the "bowl" reality. Using a large glass bowl filled with water, with a smaller, empty bowl in the center, we will see just how the bowl of New Orleans could be inundated should the levees not hold. We will again pull out our NOLA maps and remember that the larger "bowl" in which New Orleans sits is made up of land-filled former bayous, a river and a lake, both held back by walls that, like the miniature bowl, are not flood-proof.

At this point we can review the knowledge they've acquired in science class about Hurricane Katrina. Following the review, we will read together excerpts from Dyson's chapter "Hurricane and Hesitation." Students will take notes on this reading in a graphic organizer with the following headings: Problem-Possible Solutions-Outcome-Relevant Quote-Questions I Have. Students will refer to this organizer as they write their essay response to *How "natural" was the natural disaster called Katrina?*

Today's class will close with an introduction to *A.D.: After the Deluge*. Students will receive their character assignment (there will be six to seven groups, with two groups covering Denise's and possibly Leo and Michelle's stories). Students will meet in their groups and have time to attach sticky notes to the first page of

each new installment on their character. We will begin our reading of the book by studying various images from the first twenty pages. Students will take notes on *A.D.* by creating organizers in their notebooks, with categories for What I See-Character(s)' Struggles-Their Solutions. Homework will be to read their character(s)' sections "The City" section of the book.

Annotated Bibliography

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This site compliments the film of the same name and includes various student friendly resources such as a timeline, map, gallery and concise paragraphs outlining key historical moments in New Orleans.

"Black Code." In *Black Code*, in "Collection of Regulations, Edicts, Declarations, and Decrees Concerning the French Colonies in America.. Baton Rouge: Survey of Federal Archives in Louisiana, 1940. 370-390.

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Bourne's article is a concise read about the ecology of the Gulf Coast and the ways in which humans have drastically altered the coast.

Brinkley, Douglas. *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*. New York: Morrow, 2006.

Brinkley's tome provides great historical background according to the book's subtitle and is especially noteworthy because of its rich inclusion of narratives by various informants.

Codrescu, Andrei. *New Orleans, Mon Amour: Twenty Years of Writings from the City*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2006.

This is an invaluable collection of essays that duly illustrate New Orleans' particular mystique and challenges. The essays are generally short, which offer ample possibilities for inclusion in lessons, although the writing may be challenging for students.

Dyson, Michael Eric. *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. New York: Basic Civitas, 2007.

A must-read for any educator seeking to understand the relevance of race and class in the devastation of Katrina and of governmental negligence.

Eggers, Dave. *Zeitoun*. San Francisco: McSweeney's Books, 2009.

This is an expansive, accessible narration of one New Orleanian's bizarre and harrowing survival post-Katrina. Students will readily relate to Zeitoun and others who are part of his story.

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A short but well-researched overview of the expansive free people of color communities in New Orleans before the U.S. Civil War.

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A lesson book for teachers that includes sections on natural disasters and their impacts, case studies, the securing of human rights during and after disasters, and additional resources.

Reizenstein, Ludwig von, and Steven W. Rowan. *The Mysteries of New Orleans*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

A massive and intriguing novel set in antebellum New Orleans, with a superman bent on avenging the sin of slavery, written by a German expatriate who claims New Orleans as home.

Sublette, Ned. *The World that Made New Orleans from Spanish Silver to Congo Square*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008.

Sublette's book explores New Orleans through the stages of colonization to annexation to the United States to the present, with particular emphasis on the cultural developments in this most African of U.S. cities.

Tidwell, Mike. *Bayou Farewell: The Rich Life and Tragic Death of Louisiana's Cajun Coast*. New York: Vintage Books, 2003.

This book sounds a strong warning and call to action through clear accounts of the impacts of wetland loss on the Gulf Coast through the writer's encounters with Gulf Coast shrimping and fishing communities.

Appendix A: California Standards

ELA Content Standards:

2.5 Extend ideas presented in primary or secondary sources through original analysis, evaluation, and elaboration.

History and Social Science Standards:

Section 1.01: Chronological and Spatial Thinking

2. Students relate current events to the physical and human characteristics of places and regions.

Section 1.02: Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View

2. Students understand the meaning, implication, and impact of historical events and recognize that events could have taken other directions.

This unit incorporates each of the above standards. Students will be sifting through multiple primary and secondary sources to draw

conclusions about Katrina's impact on New Orleans (ELA 2.5), examining both the geographic and human ecology of New Orleans (HSS 1.01.2) and evaluating human responses to the disaster of Katrina (HSS 1.02.2).

Notes:

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2. UNESCO, "What is Intangible Heritage?" <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00002> (accessed July 18, 2011).
3. Andrei Codrescu, *New Orleans: Mon Amour*, jacket.
4. Baron Ludwig von Reizenstein, *The Mysteries of New Orleans*, 3.
5. Mary Gehman, "Introduction," in *The Free People of Color in New Orleans: An Introduction*, 2.
6. Conversation in "The Big Easy: Literary New Orleans and Intangible Heritage" seminar with Joseph Roach.
7. "Black Code", in *Collection of Regulations, Edicts, Declarations, and Decrees Concerning the French Colonies in America*, translated by Olivia Blanchard, 370-373.
8. Ibid, 372.
9. Joseph Roach, in seminar, July 13, 2011.
10. "Black Code", 371-372.
11. Joseph Roach highlights "the beauty of Afro-Catholicism" as practiced in New Orleans: it "opened up the space for all of these other religious traditions". Seminar conversation, July 18, 2011.
12. Mary Gehman, 4.
13. Ned Sublette, *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*, 57.
14. Mary Gehman, 8.
15. Joseph Roach, lecture in New Haven, May 7, 2011.
16. Ibid.
17. Ned Sublette, 282.
18. Larry Hayes, in Lee, *If God is Willing and da Creek Don't Rise*.
19. Mary Gehman, 12.
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21. Ned Sublette, 122-123.
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25. Joseph Roach, in seminar, July 18, 2011.
26. Michael Eric Dyson, *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*, 7.
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28. Ibid, 5.
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http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/neworleans/peoplevents/p_butler.html (accessed July 28, 2011).

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41. Douglas Brinkley, 59.
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50. Joel K. Bourne, Jr., 5.
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52. See Joel K. Bourne, Jr.'s extensive article for more on the geographic risks.
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57. Dyson, 27.
58. Ibid, 31.

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