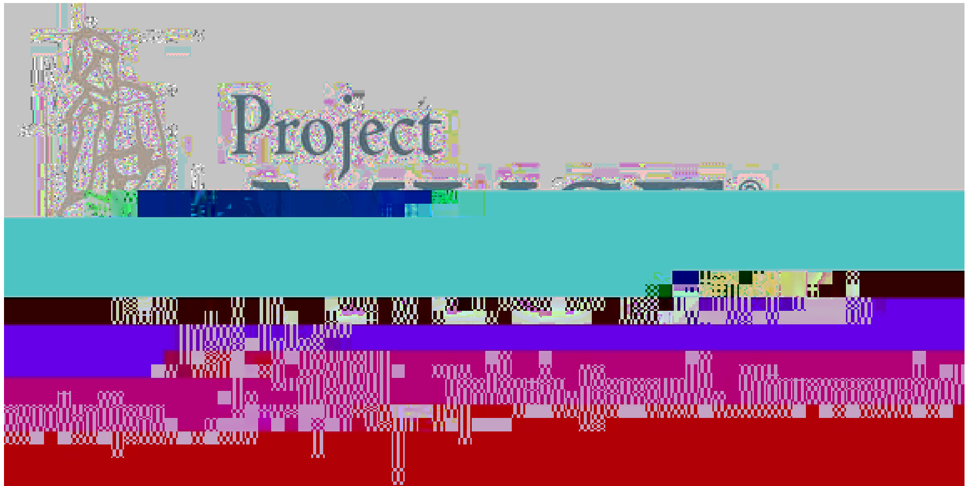
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E. L

In New Orleans, in late summer 2008, commemoration of the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina was punctuated by preparations for Hurricane Gustav. While groups were launching their memorial events, radios and televisions droned steadily as the countdown to Gustav intensified. City, state, and federal officials bridged the three-year span by contextualizing their announcements about the first significant hurricane threat to the city since Katrina, in Katrina itself: Gustav-related city-assisted evacuation plans, status of levee protections, National Guard activation, and shelter availability were framed and assessed with regard to the hurricane events of 2005.[1] R. David Paulison, FEMA Administrator, exemplified these tendencies on September 1, 2008, the day Gustav made landfall, and three days after the Katrina anniversary of August 29:

> It's unprecedented cooperation among all the federal agencies. . . . And what it allows us to do is share information with what's going on so we don't end up with what happened in Katrina. . . . During Katrina you noticed that buses didn't come in until after the storm hit landfall; urban search and rescue teams didn't come until after landfall; ambulances didn't come until after landfall. All of these things are put in place ahead of the storm this time.[2]

As the region braced for Gustav, Katrina was remade as a staging ground for what officials promised would be a better coordinated, more humane, and more efficient storm management operation. Whether or not the government *w* as prepared as its self-congratulatory discourse implied—and early assessments were clearly mixed—there was no mistaking the attempt to show that lessons had been learned, systems overhauled, and communications improved. State framing of Gustav was as much about Katrina as it was about the impending storm.

Government officials were not the only actors to have studied the Katrina events and learned some lessons. Grassroots social justice organizers in New

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Orleans and their allies demonstrated during Gustav the cultivation of a new disaster action repertoire based on their experience of Katrina. Although composed of fewer pronouncements (but equally influenced by Katrina's aftermath), this repertoire functioned as a parallel and interacting universe to official hurricane operations. Before, during, and after Gustav, social movement organizers both anticipated and responded to State actions.[3] Their efforts operationalized key strategic and tactical insights developed in the years since Katrina. These insights have guided social movement activity since the hurricanes of 2005, and come together to form post-Katrina emergent movement orientations.

This article examines leading New Orleans–based, grassroots movement orientations in what I describe as the second generation of Katrina social movements. I characterize the development of these orientations and provide some examples of their articulation and utilization during and after Hurricane Gustav. As the first meaningful disaster threat to the region since Katrina, Hurricane Gustav provides an opportunity to examine strategic and tactical movement lessons as they cycle back to inform disaster preparedness and response. The orientations are still unfolding and are neither unitary nor shared

observation in post-Katrina New Orleans–based movements for a just reconstruction. Over the three and a half years since Katrina, I have attended hundreds of community and organizational meetings and shared many informal conversations with movement leaders and their constituents. Additionally, I have conducted a dozen formal interviews with local and regional movement leaders and forty-nine interviews with displaced New Orleans residents who

the most studied disaster in history. Yet academic documentation of social movement activity is almost nonexistent.[7] The SSRC's bibliography has no area entry for social movements. A review of its titles suggests that perhaps six articles include social movements as a primary focus. But some have implied that Katrina-related grievances are among the most compelling of our time.[8] Immediately after the hurricane, some movement leaders expected that Katrina would rekindle a mass movement in the United States. Chokwe Lumumba, for example, founder of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and a significant contributor to the People's Hurricane Relief Fund, called Katrina "the Emmett Till of our generation." Although there was no national uprising, the amount of movement activity on the Gulf Coast has been remarkable, especially in light of the fact that much of the population remains displaced and poor people have notoriously low levels of movement participation.[9] The relatively scant literature on disaster and social movements suggests that, although disaster can be a galvanizing force, new "na-tech" disasters—part natural, part human-made—can have corrosive effects on community solidarity.[10] This article is a response to both the amount of movement activity in New Orleans since

of a loose local network called "Community Labor United," together with local and national Black Liberation leaders and other progressives. Its goal was to build a reconstruction movement that would organize Black, low-income New Orleanians to challenge a looming State- and corporate-driven recovery. When Muhammad left PHRF in spring 2006, Kali Akuno, a thirty-four-year-old organizer from the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement became executive director. Meanwhile Muhammad founded the People's Organizing Committee (POC), and both PHRF and POC pursued community organizing and political education among those most severely affected by Katrina. Each strove to establish a reconstruction agenda based on principles of participatory democracy, self-determination, and accountability. These four groups dominated the local movement landscape in the first two years after Katrina, as they sought, to varying degrees, to make resistance to State recovery policy central to the reconstruction. All were cofounded by baby boomer men and run by Black men who had the local and national movement capital to convene groups,

with counseling on mortgage and foreclosure relief. The groups also organized protest activity directed at FEMA, HUD, the Louisiana Recovery Association, the Bring New Orleans Back Commission, and the Red Cross.

The Second Generation

Within the first generation of movement groups, the seeds of the second were germinating. By 2006, a different set of leaders had founded new organizations. Most were younger (in their late twenties and early thirties), more than half were women, and they were more racially diverse, including Latinos and Asians as well as Blacks. The new organizations were a response to the first generation of movement groups as much as they were to Hurricane Katrina. Though built from pre-Katrina political visions, three of the leading groups of the second generation had begun as PHRF work groups; their organizers left the first-generation groups and founded independent organizations. The three groups are paradigmatic of the second generation because of the nature of their ties to the first generation, their movement-building leadership after the waning of first generation groups, and certain shared political and tactical orientations.

together and demanding changes."[11] Founded in December 2005 by Norris Henderson and Xochitl Bervera, SSSC made its first priority "to help those individuals who had been in Orleans Parish Prison prior to Katrina, many of whom were being held illegally for minor, nonviolent offenses. In the early days, right after the storm, Safe Streets was basically performing triage for a broken system.'"[12] Henderson, a Black formerly incarcerated person, was joined a year later by Latina codirector Rosana Cruz, and soon they were directing their attention to the criminal justice system itself, as part of what local independent journalist Jordan Flaherty called "the long-term catastrophe that the city is still in."[13] SSSC focuses on three areas of reform: indigent defense,

decentralized social justice network that came together to work on certain issues, such as the defense of public housing in late 2007, and the third anniversary Katrina commemoration. By the time Hurricane Gustav made landfall in September 2008, New Orleans was beginning its fourth year after Katrina and was well into the second generation of post-Katrina movement activity.

Second-Generation Katrina Movement Orientations

tions that produce daily risk, suffering, and trauma. It also helps to explain the behavior of people who already experience daily hazards because they live at the intersection of poverty, racism, and/or sexism when they face what appears to be a discrete disaster.[21]

Within weeks of Hurricane Katrina's landfall, social scientists were publish-

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control. From this perspective, the attending conditions of natural disaster, such as evacuation and reentry, are decentered; they are then reinterpreted as [illegible], either for social control [illegible] for resistance, where in this case resistance means reproductive justice. Griffin explained, “I’m less interested

Although Black radicals debated the risks and costs of providing services at the time, by the 1970s and 1980s, many more social movement leaders who had similarly sought to link service provision to movement building and structural change were observing that their resistance efforts were increasingly swallowed by demands for services.[34] The State had also responded to the social movements of the 1960s with a host of community programs, and after a generation of nonprofit professionalism dependent on State and foundation funding, there was a sense among movement leaders that these State-sponsored programs had usurped the forces of radical social transformation. More recently, the revival of localism and anarchism has sparked renewed social movement interest in the creation of a parallel infrastructure that meets people's needs independently of corporate and State sponsorship.

In New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, movement organizations of the first generation differed in their approaches to service provision. Among them, Common Ground was the most closely identified with relief. Founder Malik Rahim, with his background in both the BPP and Green Party environmentalism, and other CG leaders with strong anarchist and do-it-yourself orientations sought to "fill the void created by federal, state, and city governments' unprecedented and catastrophic failure. . . . The work itself has often been to fill the shoes of a government gone AWOL—providing such basic services as potable water, medical services, and garbage pickup—proactively addressing needs normally assigned to our government by way of the social contract."[35] The goal was that residents would eventually replace outside volunteers.[36] Although many of the large-scale relief activities were curtailed by 2007, several CG-founded organizations with specific service missions remain active as of this writing, most notably, the Common Ground Health Clinic on the west bank of the Mississippi River, and the Women's Shelter of the lower Ninth Ward, now an independent nonprofit.

At the other end of the first generation spectrum, the People's Hurricane Relief Fund defined its agenda as building a resistance movement and took a public stand against directly providing services to those affected by Katrina. A mission statement announced:

> Political power is the only guarantee of relief. . . . We organize to build strong political coalitions locally, nationally, and internationally to win the demands of the Survivors. . . . We support and network service providers of housing, health care, case management and legal services to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and residents. We do not provide direct services.

Second-generation leaders operationalize service provision as a base-building strategy in a variety of ways. The leaders of Safe Streets, Strong Communities focus on criminal justice system reform through political action. Periodically, they also initiate specific campaigns in the service of these reforms, intended to directly assist community members. In March 2008, for example, together with other local prison reform and abolition groups, SSSC put on "Expungement Day: Road to Public Safety," which they publicized as follows:

> Have you been turned down for jobs, housing or other opportunities because of your criminal or arrest record? Do you want to get your record expunged but can't afford it? Then you should come to the Expungement, Jobs and Services Fair at the Treme Community Center on Saturday March 29. There will be free attorneys, judges, job and housing advocates who can help address the challenges you and your family face and put you on a path to success.[44]

The event was deemed a success. Over four hundred people came to seek expungement for qualifying nonviolent arrests. There were sixteen lawyers available, and a crew of volunteer law students from the Student Hurricane Network, a national law student association organized by Tulane University law students after Katrina.

The New Orleans Women's Health Clinic and the Women's Health and Justice Initiative provide a second example of the relationship between service provision and political organizing. The organizers intentionally created sister organizations with different legal standings. Whereas the clinic is a nonprofit, the Initiative is an independent collective. As such, it can conduct overtly political and autonomous work, such as a popular education campaign about the links between domestic violence against women, street and police violence against transgendered people, and State violence against people of color and immigrant communities.

On Wednesday, August 27, 2008, five days before Hurricane Gustav made landfall, clinic interim director Shana Griffin sent an e-mail message asking the staff, board, and volunteers of the two groups to gather the following day at the clinic to think through how to support their constituency. At that point, she believed she had little to offer, but was driven by a strong sense

Evacuation Plan (CAEP), and designed to provide information about the free evacuation buses and shuttle times and locations: "If we were telling them to call that number," she explained, "I had to know what we were referring people to." After repeated attempts that ended in busy signals, she finally got through and was placed on hold for twenty-six minutes, only to reach a recording that the system was experiencing technical difficulties. Over the course of the following day, she and other staff and volunteers called the 311 line hundreds of times to no avail.

By Thursday morning, August 28, 2008, NOWHC and NOWHJI members and volunteers had prepared packets with evacuation maps, some shelter resources around the state, and lists of what to take for evacuation and what to have on hand for sheltering in place. Between Thursday morning and Friday night, twenty-two NOWHC and NOWHJI organizers made between seven and eight hundred phone calls, trying to make contact with every woman who had ever received services at the clinic. Spanish interpreters were available to assist Spanish-speaking clients. Griffin asked the organizers to start the conversation by saying, "We're making a courtesy call to see if you have an evacuation plan, or if you're preparing to stay." She also directed them to pull charts for follow-up when asked by former patients about gas cards or infant formula, and to call back should they receive information about either. They bought a handful of flashlights and gallon water jugs, and retrieved some Wal-Mart gift cards left over from a prior event, offering them to people who were planning to stay and had no supplies. Middle-class supporters raised

greater accountability and protections. After Hurricane Gustav, for example, NOWCRJ's answer to the failure of Louisiana's evacuation services was to mount a grassroots political campaign directed at the Louisiana Department of Social Services (DSS).

other homeless and poor residents. By the end of the week, STAND members and organizers had documented the conditions at three of Louisiana's large warehouse shelters, and nine additional shelters in three states. From data collected from "hundreds of interviews with evacuated residents," NOWCRJ and STAND released a report, "Never Again: Lessons from Louisiana's Gustav Evacuation," on September 16, 2008, just over a week after the buses returned residents to the city.[45]

As of this writing, "Never Again" is still the most substantive unofficial account of Hurricane Gustav shelter conditions. Although lacking a detailed description of its methods, the report chronicles the dearth of adequate toilets, showers, sanitation, food, protection from environmental hazards, and information. STAND's primary grievance, however, is what it calls "the state's differential sheltering policy," which houses city-assisted evacuees separately from self-evacuating (i.e., whiter and higher income) residents. STAND and

leadership." Similarly, STAND organizers are quite clear that state reform, even when accomplished successfully, is distinct from a structural redistribution of power and resources, which is their ultimate aim.

Human Rights

Within the first days of Katrina's landfall, local and national Black Liberation Movement leaders were already calling for the "right of return" of Gulf Coast residents to their homes. With floodwaters still high in New Orleans and hundreds of thousands of displaced people not yet arrived at stable evacuation sites, organizers recognized that the ability of the displaced to return home would be at the heart of the struggles ahead.[47] Within the network that would eventually become the People's Hurricane Relief Fund, organizers carefully chose the term [illegible]. They used it to expose return as a contested process and to assert that it was the government's responsibility to ensure it. The host of obstacles to return—which still keep many of the approximately one hundred twenty-five thousand absent New Orleanians from home at the time of this writing in early 2009—include having neither an affordable home to return [illegible] nor transportation back, employment, health care, flood protection or basic infrastructure. Though PHRF organizers understood that it might jeopardize some allegiances, they evoked the Palestinian national struggle, seeing the Katrina response as the latest assault by "the U.S. capitalist system and . . . the system of African American national oppression . . . [which] is in violation of human rights" and a "crime against humanity."[48] In a critical post-Katrina manifesto published by Saladin Muhammad on September 15, 2005, the first-generation language of "right of return" became the slogan of PHRF and the motto of the reconstruction movement, used widely within and beyond movement circles. I include among the emergent orientations the broader human rights framework from which it comes because the framework spans first- and second-generation approaches and has been a noteworthy component of post-Katrina movement strategy.

Though "right of return" is the most popular sign of the human rights discourse that appeared immediately after Katrina, the orientation has expressed itself in a variety of ways. Arguably, its post-Katrina emergence is part of a current wave of U.S. interest in human rights generally, and the rarer but burgeoning application of human rights models to domestic contexts in particular.[49] It also occurs at the convergence of several longer-standing human rights lineages: the Black Liberation Movement's political nationalism, the United Nations' universal rights claims, and nongovernmental organizations' orientation to specific rights, such as housing or health care.[50] Before

addressing how they came together to inform post-Katrina movement efforts, I will briefly introduce the historical background of the first and least widely known of these—the Black Liberation human rights tradition.

According to scholars and participants of the BLM, there is a long African-American tradition of human rights claims making, going back at least as far the eighteenth century.[51] Dr. Kwame-Osagyefo Kalimara explains the origins of the distinction between civil and human rights for American Blacks: "In the sense [that] Africans came and didn't recognize colonial or U.S. jurisdiction, [they were under their] own rule, and that intrinsically puts [them] in the context of [the] international."[52] As national challenges to slavery and to what Grady-Wallis calls "U.S. apartheid," the claims are called "human rights" in the broad sense of supporting humanitarian self-determination.[53]

By the mid-twentieth century, Black Nationalist movements, such as those led by Marcus Garvey and Queen Mother Audley Moore, questioned the notion of American citizenship for Blacks, arguing that African Americans constituted a nation within a nation. The New Afrikan Independence Movement (NAIM) proclaimed that civil rights and citizenship strategies were not only ineffectual for African Americans but the very tools of national oppression, or what Cruikshank calls "technologies of citizenship."[54] NAIM's position was that the Fourteenth Amendment was an illegal imposition of citizenship on a people who, by international law, should have been given a plebiscite, the right to choose their own government.[55]

After Katrina, a range of different actors called for the application of a human rights framework to the disaster aftermath. They came from different sectors and represented different human rights traditions. These traditions converge discursively in rights language, though they differ somewhat with regard to political orientation, tactics, and goals. The Black Liberation Movement approach to human rights came to New Orleans through People's Hurricane Relief Fund leaders, men with roots in the BLM tradition: Curtis Muhammad, Ishmael Muhammad, Malcolm Suber, Chokwe Lumumba,

often appear empty and vague. Akuno noted that although popular embrace of the "right of return" was a significant accomplishment, acceptance of other human rights frames and tactics has come more slowly. Efforts to educate hurricane survivors to understand human rights and their basis in international law have met with limited success, Akuno explained.[67] "Not because there hasn't been attempt, but people's . . . digestion of it, or comprehension of it has been mixed."

Nevertheless, after several years of political education and organizing by

is the relationship between incremental improvement—or meeting people's urgent needs—and long-term structural change? How can lessons learned from disaster mobilization strengthen ongoing movement development through enduring hard times, and what must movements do in order to become disaster-ready? There is still much work to be done.

CdiZh

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1. I include Hurricane Rita, the storm that struck Texas on September 24, 2008, because it also flooded New Orleans and caused damage to the region. For the rest of the article, however, I use the designation Katrina only, both because it had a greater impact on New Orleans and because it has become shorthand for the many social, technological, and natural problems it exposed and exacerbated.
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13. Jordan Flaherty, ibid, 2.
14. STAND, "Never Again: Lessons from Louisiana's Gustav Evacuation," September 16, 2008, http://www.neworleansworkerjustice.org/ (accessed September 20, 2008).
15. George Lipsitz, "Learning from New Orleans: The Social Warrant of Hostile Privatism and Competitive Consumer Citizenship," *C . A* 21.3 (2006): 451–68; Peter Dreier, "Katrina and Power in America," *. A* 41.4 (2006): 528–49; Jamie Peck, "Liberating the City: Between New York and New Orleans," *. G* 27 (2006): 729–33; Kathleen Tierney and Christine Bevc, "Disaster as War: Militarism and the Social Construction of Disaster in New Orleans," in *K . : . . M . C .* , ed. David Overfelt, David L. Brunsma, and J. Steven Picou, 35–49 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).
16. The People's Organizing Committee reemerged in the following year as part of a small, transnational organizing school, before dissolving again.
17. Thomas A. Birkland, *L . . . D . : C . C . E .* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 2; Erikson, , 20; Thomas A. Birkland as quoted in Thomas A. Birkland, *L . . . D .* : 2; Erikson, , 20; see also Ben Wisner, Piers Blaikie, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, *A . : H . , ' .* *. D .* (1994; reprint, London: Routledge, 2006); Erikson, .
18. Wisner et al., *A* ; Shirley Laska and Betty Morrow, "Social Vulnerabilities and Hurricane Katrina: An Unnatural Disaster in New Orleans," *M . . . J .* 40 (2006).
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21. See Cheri Pies, "AIDS, Ethics, and Reproductive Choices: No Easy Answers," in *m . .* *AID : F m . Em m .* , ed. Beth E. Schneider and Nancy E. Stoller: 322-334. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); and Rachel E. Luft, "Making Sense of Tragedy," in *H . K . : . . . .* , ed. John Brown Childs; 17-22. (Santa Cruz: New Pacific Press, 2008).
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23. Saladin Muhammad, "Hurricane Katrina: The Black Nation's 9/11," http://www.greens.org/s-r/39/39-05.html; see also Janelle White, "New Orleans and Women of Color: Connecting the Personal and Political," (2005), http://www.cwsworkshop.org/katrinareader/node/421/ (accessed January 2, 2006).
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34. Nancy A. Matthews, *C t : F m t A t- M m t t t t* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Cedric Johnson, *t t L : B w t M A Am t* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
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62. Chris Kromm and Sue Sturgis, "Hurricane Katrina and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: A Global Human Rights Perspective on a National Disaster," in *t . E .* XXXVI, 1 and 2 (Durham, NC: Institute for Southern Studies, 2008).
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64. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, "Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 9 of the Convention" (Geneva: United Nations, 2008).
65.