

A Look into Hurricane Katrina: Antoine's Dairy

A State Underwater

Everyone living in Louisiana knows of the infamous hurricane that wrecked our crescent city, destroyed our bayous, and relocated thousands of Louisianians. This hurricane is, of course, Hurricane Katrina. A category 5 hurricane that pushed the ideas of how destructive these natural disasters could be. The tragedy cannot be understated. Thousands lost their homes, way of life, and had to start over again with just the clothes on their backs. The article "Moral Outrage and Teaching about Hurricane Katrina" explains it well, "considering its aftermath in regards to injustice, ... why certain populations were so vulnerable and why the response ... to the tragedy and its aftermath was so flawed." (Crocoo, 272) The horror that was the levees breaking and the flooding waters that just kept coming. Our once beautiful and historic city of New Orleans was drowning. Her people were stranded on their roofs. They, the victims of both natural and manmade disasters.

New Orleans, though given national attention at the highest regard, was hardly the only community affected. Towns like Chalmette were almost entirely destroyed and their communities, like New Orleans, took decades to recover. In the Lower 9th Ward, where the majority of the diary entries center around, the demographics tell the story for itself. The population dropped from 14,008 people in 2000 to 4,305 people in 2016-2020. (datacenterresearch). For an entire neighborhood to lose two-thirds of its population is a tragedy. It begs the simplest question. Why? Could this tragedy have been avoided? In my creative writing I write from the perspective of a teenager and his

family having lived through the absolute worst encounters of the storm. His story, though fictitious, points to the families that really experienced this tragedy. Their lives were forever changed. While this tragedy was nearly two decades ago, we of Louisiana will never forget.

Antoine's Diary Entries

September 2005

I just got this notebook today. They were handing out supplies and Momma told me to grab one to pass the time. She's right, I got everything if I got time. It's been 1 week since Katrina hit us. Just yesterday we were bussed to Lafayette. I've never been here before. To tell you the truth, I'm mad. This place was barely touched and my home is gone. Why did they get to avoid the hurricane? I'm living in this place they call the Cajundome. What a corny name for a stadium. The Saints have the Superdome. Now that is a great name.

My name is Antoine Brown. I am a 15 year old going to George Washington Carver High School. I saw on the news what Katrina did to the school. It was trashed. You could see the water level on the concrete walls. My homeroom class on the first floor had its windows busted and the desks were trashed. The camera crew was showing the damage of the storm. I couldn't believe it. It wasn't two weeks ago that I was joking with Jamal and Ms. Furgeuson threw her eraser at us. Now Jamal is in Houston with his Uncle James. I haven't talked to him since I got to the *CAJUNDOME*. He asked how I was doing and I told him I was fine. I lied. I am not fine. All I have is a small suitcase with my Gameboy, a few pairs of clothes, some medals, and my football. Pops says that we are one of the lucky ones. It's hard to say yes sir to that. How are we lucky? Where am I gonna play football and go to school? I just started playing varsity. This sucks man.

October 2005

We came back to the 9th Ward and tried to find our house. There was so much trash. It was everywhere. Ms. Johnson was sitting on her porch. Her house was just gone. My momma took her into her arms and told us “go on”. So we did. It usually takes us 5 minutes to walk to our house from Ms. Johnson’s. This time it took us 20. So many of the houses were just gone.

When we got there, we saw that we were hit hard too. Our house was still standing but you could tell that it flooded. I had a feeling it was going to be bad but I had no idea it would be that bad. I can’t find anything in this trash. And that’s being kind to it. It smells so bad. I can’t recognize my room, man. This sucks.

I saw my Pops cry for the first time today. He was just sitting on our ruined coffee table with his hands covering his face. And he was just bawling. I didn’t know what to do. I was frozen there. He told me a man never cries. He didn’t see me. I know that. I walked away as quiet as I could on the water soaked boards of our living room. I went outside to get some fresher air, and Magnolia was there. My sister was picking flowers in our yard. She looked so happy then. It was the first time she didn’t look worried. She didn’t deserve this.

December 2005

We're living in a FEMA trailer. That's us four all in a 2 bedroom/ 1 bathroom trailer. We don't have much to fill the space, but it still feels so stuffy here. I find myself walking to the Mississippi River when it gets too much. I just feel like I am a crawfish in a pot, just burning alive. I'm sitting here, writing out my thoughts, and I can't help but feel that things are not gonna get any better. The houses of so many of my neighbors

June 2006

Momma says that Mayor Nagin let us down. All of us. I didn't ask her what she meant, I knew my momma was ready to blow up. Pops get angry all the time but Momma has always been cool. When she's mad? Don't mess with her. She kept her cool the whole time last year, come to think of it. Yeah, my Momma's strong. For sure. I've been talking to Jamal more often, too. He had a great year at Houston, considering. Made some new friends, plays varsity, and uncle plays poker on Sunday's and he joins in sometimes.

I still miss my home. It doesn't look like it's gonna get rebuilt anytime soon. That trailer is so cramped now. I really want things to be the same.

August 2006

I moved into Jamal's Uncle's house. Jamal talked to his coach over there, since he moved, and they said I can try out for their team when school starts! I know I'm going to miss my Momma, Pops, and Magnolia. But I think this fresh start is what I need. There's just too much back home. I love New Orleans but it just hurts walking around and seeing all the houses gone. I'm hoping this change will change me.

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