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“American Sodom: New Orleans Faces Its Critics and an Uncertain Future”

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Randy Sparks

"American Sodom: New Orleans Faces Its Critics and an Uncertain Future"

- 1 In a recently televised debate between Ray Nagin and Mitch Landrieu, candidates for mayor of New Orleans, Chris Matthews, a national news anchor on MSNBC, asked, "Why should a guy working in this country, a woman working in this country, pay for somebody to build or rebuild a house below sea level down here in New Orleans?"¹ It is a question that has been posed by a wide range of individuals since Hurricane Katrina devastated the city. In the months after the storm hit, Lt. Governor Landrieu said that he thought it would be a year before we knew if the city would be rebuilt, and he gave it only a 50-50 chance. Why this reluctance on the part of the nation to rebuild a major city destroyed not by the effects of the hurricane, but by the design and construction flaws of its man-made levee system? Part of the answer to that question lies in the city's reputation for immorality and corruption, a view of the city that first emerged in the colonial period. Like most European colonial outposts, Louisiana was a frontier where standards of morality differed sharply from those in the mother country. Most successful colonies in the New World moved through several stages of development. Over time, most colonies moved beyond the stage where lax morals were the norm, but New Orleans never lost its reputation for loose morals. Indeed, by the 19th Century the city began to employ that image to encourage tourism, but events since Hurricane Katrina devastated the region have demonstrated the dangers that image poses for the reconstruction of the city.
- 2 The fear that life in the wilds of the New World would lead to moral degeneracy was widespread among Europeans who saw the strict enforcement of religious morals as one means of avoiding moral decay. As early as 1704, Pontchartrain ordered Bienville to "see to it that divine worship is conducted with as much decency as the place can permit [and] that the impious blasphemers and people who cause scandal are repressed according to his Majesty's intentions." Symbolically, religion stood at the very center of French colonial life. New Orleans, like other French settlements, was built around an open square dominated by a church. But even so, his Majesty's intentions proved exceedingly difficult to enforce on a population made up of soldiers and wandering Indian traders and trappers who turned to Native American women for sexual partners. One French governor described the residents of Louisiana as "jailbirds without subordination for religion and for government, addicted to vice principally with the Indian women for sexual partners. One French governor described the residents of Louisiana as "jailbirds without subordination for religion and for government, addicted to vice principally with the Indian women whom they prefer to French women." In 1717 John Law's Company of the Indies took control of Louisiana and brought in more European settlers and African slaves. Once slave imports began, European men in New Orleans turned to enslaved African women for partners. Even the arrival of more European women did not solve the problem. In an effort to stop interracial unions, the French government sought to increase the number of European women in the colony by sending women from the poorhouses and prisons of Paris. Their arrival only created further problems. The women refused to marry, bore children out of wedlock, openly defied and ridiculed the priests, and created other scandals. One local official pleaded with the Company to "send us girls who have at least some appearance of virtue."
- 3 Despite these efforts to populate Louisiana, disease and desertion took a high toll. Of 7,000 white immigrants who came to the colony between 1717 and 1721, half were dead or gone by 1725, and only 900 of the 2,000 Africans survived. Only a handful of priests arrived in the colony, never enough to minister to the scattered settlements. In 1733 Bienville reported

that religious life suffered because of a lack of priests, bickering between the Jesuits and Capuchins, and limited financial resources. He wrote, "It is disgraceful for religion that from ten leagues above New Orleans as far as ten leagues below, there is only the single curacy of the city ...many inhabitants ... pass entire years without hearing mass and who forget, so to speak, that they are Christians."

4 The later decades of French rule were dominated by Indian wars and economic troubles. The colony carried on a limited commerce in deer skins, naval stores, tobacco, indigo and rice, but never prospered. A series of Indian wars, beginning with the devastating Natchez Massacre in 1729, further weakened Louisiana and the French commitment to it. French rule ended when Louisiana became a bargaining chip in the negotiations ending the Seven Years War in 1763. French territory west of the Mississippi, including the Isle of Orleans, became Spanish Louisiana while the territory east of the river became British West Florida.

5 The transfer of Louisiana to the United States in 1803 brought a rapid influx of settlers into New Orleans, though at first religion was not of great concern to the immigrants. According to an 1810 census, more than 76,000 people, about half black and half white, resided in the Territory of Orleans (the state of Louisiana except for the parishes east of the Mississippi River). Already, the future contours of society in the Lower South had largely taken shape, and the elements that would dominate the region throughout the antebellum period – plantation agriculture and slavery – were firmly in place. Architect Benjamin Latrobe visited New Orleans in the early 19th Century and found that "the state of society at any time is puzzling. There are, in fact, three societies here – first, the French; second, the American; and third, the mixed." He noted that all of society agreed on one score, "Their business is to make money ... Their limbs, their heads, and their hearts move to that sole object."

6 Most of the new immigrants to New Orleans were Americans who were Protestant if they acknowledged any religion at all. Evangelical Protestantism expanded rapidly across the South in the wake of the Great Revival, and religious leaders attempted to spread the movement to Louisiana, but growth there was extremely slow. A tradition Creole saying holds that "good coffee and the Protestant religion can seldom if ever be found together," a reference to the sharp division between the northern and southern parts of Louisiana. Protestant missionaries had some success in creating churches in the northern part of the state, but struggled to gain a foothold in Catholic New Orleans. Early Protestant missionaries to the city were shocked by what they found in the Crescent City. One of the first missionaries to arrive was Elisha Bowman, a native of Virginia and son of a Methodist preacher. When he arrived in New Orleans he was "disappointed in finding but few American people there, and a majority of that few may truly be called the beasts of men." He preached in the open air to "a few drunken sailors and Frenchmen," but could get few listeners since Sunday was "the day of general rant in this city." After several weeks of this, he left the city for good, and happily "shook off the dirt from my feet against this ungodly city of New Orleans." Like the Methodists, the Baptists found it difficult to gain a foothold in New Orleans. The Baptists sent James Raynoldson as a missionary to the city in 1816. His congregation included sixteen whites and thirty-two black members. Raynoldson left after two years, glad to leave behind the city he referred to as "the stronghold of Satan."

7 As New Orleans grew in size and wealth during the antebellum period, it maintained its reputation as sin city. In 1836 a Virginia visitor wrote, "I am now in this great Southern Babylon – the mighty receptacle of wealth, depravity and misery." Prostitution flourished in the bustling port city where sailors, flatboatmen, and tourists created a ready market. The largest city in the South, the region's banking, commercial, and intellectual center, the city was also known for its huge slave market, sex across the color line, and its large, well-educated, and prosperous free black community. Along with Catholicism, one of the most important

and lasting contributions from the French and Spanish colonizers was a different racial code from the Anglo-South.

8 From the end of the Civil War in 1865 to around 1920, New Orleans' image as a sinful, sensual place came to play a critical role in the city's cultural, economic, and political life. Pleasure-seekers, writers, artists, and gays fled rural areas and small towns in the Deep South for the more tolerant atmosphere of New Orleans. As the South became increasingly identified with Protestant fundamentalism, New Orleans stood even further apart. With the emergence of tourism, the city's freewheeling reputation became an important asset. In 1897 the city created a vice district known as Storyville which quickly earned a regional and national reputation where interracial sex, gambling, and jazz were the chief attractions. Storyville flourished until World War I when the Secretary of the Navy ordered the district closed to protect military bases in the city. Of course, prostitution continued to thrive, and the city's reputation for sin remained undiminished. In the 1920s one guide book promised that tourists bound for New Orleans, a group the writer referred to as "hell-bound people," would find "plenty of liquor ... gambling dens, cabarets ... nightclubs, and a total lack of reformers." As a part of his general campaign against New Orleans, Huey Long launched a major clean-up campaign that put the city back in the national headlines; *Vanity Fair*, for instance, referred to New Orleans as "a Wicked City."

9 The city's pre-Lenten festival, Mardi Gras, also gained national attention and added to the city's reputation for wickedness. The city's French residents began to celebrate Mardi Gras early in the 18th Century, and these celebrations grew to include all ranks and races in this multi-cultural setting. After the Spanish took control of the city they prohibited black persons from being masked, wearing feathers, and attending night balls. By the 19th Century, most of the features that we associate with Mardi Gras today – krewes, balls, parades, masking – were well established. In 1875 Mardi Gras became a legal holiday in Louisiana, and it continued to expand. In 1908, the Reverend Charles L. Collins of the Kentucky Anti-Saloon League visited New Orleans during the celebrations. He declared that "no city on the continent offers harder problems for the reformer." "As to the Mardi Gras festivities proper," the preacher wrote, "I am both delighted and shocked beyond measure." So were national audiences when the first movie about the festival, "Mardi Gras Mix-Up," hit the silver screen in 1912. World War I forced the cancellation of the vent for two years. Prohibition also dampened festivities, but after its repeal celebrations were back in full swing. Nationwide radio broadcasts of the festival began in 1930. World War II again interrupted the celebration, but once peace was restored Mardi Gras gained even wider national attention and a celebrity following. Though hardly known for her wild streak, First Lady Bess Truman attended in 1948, and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor in 1950. In 1949 Zulu became the first krewe to chose a celebrity as its king, native son Louis Armstrong. That practice became commonplace by the late 1960s with the emergence of larger, more open "super-krewes," which staged more lavish parades with national celebrities on board, and Mardi Gras earned its reputation as the "Greatest Free Show on Earth."

10 By the 1990s Mardi Gras attracted millions of tourists, widespread international media coverage, and brought \$1 billion into the local economy. Much of media coverage focused on the rowdier aspects of the festival and helped fuel such behavior. As early as 1889, the New Orleans *Times-Democrat* condemned the "degree of immodesty exhibited by nearly all female masqueraders seen on the streets," but by the 1980s the sexually charged atmosphere of Carnival came to define it for most Americans. The March 2000 edition of *Playboy* included an eight-page spread highlighting the most outrageous aspects of Mardi Gras in the French Quarter. The magazine described a "nonstop bacchanalia" where young women bared their breasts for colorful strands of beads, a practice the magazine called "outrageously contagious." *Playboy* followed that publication with a one-hour video called "The Girls of

Mardi Gras,” which encouraged viewers to “embark on a sinfully satisfying journey to the city where hedonism reigns supreme.” That view of Carnival quickly took hold on the national imagination; in 1998 a *New York Times* article declared that “As cameras for MTV, true-life crime shows and tabloid news programs roll in the French Quarter, the drunken partying has grown so extreme – flashes of nudity have given way to the actual performance of oral sex acts on Bourbon Street – that it is the drunkenness and obscenity itself that threatens to become Carnival’s theme.” Those of us who live in New Orleans understand that Carnival has a double face – symbolized by the masks of Comedy and Tragedy. In part, Mardi Gras remains largely the preserve of the rich and well-connected – staged by elite, secretive krewes which also serve as debutante societies and private clubs controlled by the white establishment – and another side that lampoons that very segment of society through black krewes like Zulu and their African tribal attire to the open parading of whores, homosexuals and drag queens. A significant aspect of Carnival is and has been since the beginning subversive, an overturning of the social order, a celebration of freedom through open transgressions of the social mores that define the ruling elite whether in the 18th or 21st Century. Is it a coincidence that Mardi Gras has grown more outrageous as the nation has become increasingly conservative? Should we be surprised that the people’s Carnival challenges the mores upheld by the religious fundamentalists whose numbers have exploded in America since the 1980s?

11 It is important to pause here and consider the aspects of fundamentalism that led them to consider Katrina as God’s punishment on a sinful city. Fundamentalism is difficult to define, but a group of religious historians have identified a number of characteristics common to religious fundamentalists. Those characteristics include a belief that they are a part of a cosmic struggle between good and evil, they interpret historical events in light of this conflict, and they tend to demonize their opponents.² Not surprisingly, some fundamentalists interpreted the devastation of New Orleans by Katrina as God’s punishment. Michael Marcavage, the director of a conservative group called Repent America, said that God destroyed New Orleans to stop Southern Decadence, a popular annual gay festival scheduled for the weekend the disaster struck. Marcavage said, “Although the loss of lives is deeply saddening, this act of God destroyed a wicked city. From ‘Girls Gone Wild’ to ‘Southern Decadence,’ New Orleans was a city that had its doors wide open to the public celebration of sin. May it never be the same ... we must note that the citizens of New Orleans tolerated and welcomed the wickedness in their city for so long.” It is a religious world view shared by Pat Robertson, a major figure in fundamentalist political circles whose TV program, “The 700 Club,” has almost a million viewers every day. He warned that terrorist attacks and natural disasters were God’s judgement on a sinful people, that the nation will “lose its possession, and ... be vomited out.” Other well-known Christian broadcasters expressed similar sentiments. Scholars of American religion estimate that about half of the U.S. population believe that God sends his judgement through hurricanes, floods and natural disasters.

12 The rise of fundamentalism and its growing political clout, heavily concentrated in the Republican Party, has had important consequences for the way the Republican administration has responded to Katrina. After touring the devastation Gulf Coast region, Senator Hank Erwin, a Republican from Alabama, said, “New Orleans ... [has] always been known for ... sin and wickedness ... It is the kind of behavior that ultimately brings the judgement of God ... If you are a believer and read the Bible, you know sin had judgement New Orleans has always been known for sin ... The wages of sin is death.” Representative Richard B. Baker, a ten-term Republican from Baton Rouge, said, “we finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn’t do it, but God did.” Such attitudes in the Party’s right wing provided the cover for national leaders like Republican Speaker of the House who questioned the wisdom of rebuilding a city that lies below sea level. “That doesn’t make sense to me,” he replied to a reporter’s question. “I think it’s a question that certainly we should ask. And, you know,”

he added, "it looks like a lot of that place could be bulldozed." Religious fundamentalism, once relegated to the "lunatic fringe" of the party, has moved to the heart of the party. A former defense official told a reporter for the *New Yorker* that "the President has become more detached, leaving more issues to Karl Rove and Vice-President Cheney. They keep him in the gray world of religious idealism, where he wants to be anyway." The president's detachment was on display as he showed little awareness of the magnitude of the disaster as events unfolded.³

13 New Orleanians were shocked and bewildered by the reluctance of politicians in Washington to commit to rebuilding the city and strengthening its levee system. An editorial in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* expressed this view; "Some voices in Washington are arguing against us. We were foolish, they say. We settled in a place that is lower than the sea. We should have expected to drown. They act as if we are a burden. They act as if we wore our skirts too short and invited trouble."⁴ Another editorial asked the same question, "I wonder what New Orleans did to the rest of the country that makes them hate us so?"⁵ Only New Orleans' "otherness," its marginalization from American culture, its peculiar history and culture that set it so far outside the national mainstream, can explain such attitudes. Not only is New Orleans different, it is defiantly so. The city's residents treasure its peculiarities and embrace its distinctive culture that has so far withstood the homogenization that has erased so much regional distinctiveness in America. That tenacious dedication to the city's traditional way of life infuriates critics outside the city who want to see New Orleans abandon its evil ways and embrace "progress," to model itself on Houston, for example. A *Los Angeles Times* editorial surveyed all the problems that plagued New Orleans – high rates of poverty and crime, a weak economic base, deep-seated political corruption – and concluded that "New Orleans should take its destruction as an opportunity to change course." The editorial concluded that "having a strong gay community, lively street culture, great food, tremendous music and lively arts have not been enough."

14 For the people of New Orleans, however, holding onto the city's history and culture is essential. The Reverend Michael Jacques, a priest who serves a predominately black Catholic Church, described the determination of his parishioners to return to their homes. He held a traditional jazz funeral honoring the victims of Katrina where the Black Men of Labor marched proudly ahead of the Young Tuxedo Jazz Band as they led a joyous street procession through the French Quarter. As Jacques explained to his congregation, "We stand on our ancestors. We stand on their shoulders. It makes us a little bigger. We stand on their hope, their faith." So the city stands today at a crossroads, or perhaps at loggerheads. Across the nation, politicians, newspapers editorialists, members of the religious right, and other advocates of progress, tie funding to rebuild the city and strengthen its levee system to an agreement that New Orleans join the American mainstream. New Orleanians, on the other hand, remain just as determined to rebuild the city they love while honoring their ancestors and preserving their rich legacy. Despite what the rest of the nation seems to want, the people of New Orleans refuse to acknowledge the evil of their ways or the superiority of Houston or Los Angeles as blueprints for reconstruction. Christina Dolan, who lost her job as a high school history teacher as a result of Katrina, wrote a guest editorial in the *Times-Picayune* where she tried to explain her own attachment to her adopted home and her inability to convey that emotion to people outside the city. She wrote, "It used to be fine with people in New Orleans that we were terribly misunderstood by the rest of America. We were content to be left alone, and not homogenized into some greater American culture. But now the rest of America is looking at us and demanding an explanation. Why should we exist? No other city has ever been asked to justify its existence the way we have. We must make sure our neighbors in the rest of America hear us when we remind them that we're Americans, too. Please don't abandon us just because you don't understand us."

- 15 Some critics at home and even more across the nation condemned the decision to go ahead with Mardi Gras and Jazzfest in the face of the death and destruction that the hurricane inflicted on the city. But most locals took a different view of the celebration that so defines the city's cultural life. Many people shared the defiant attitude of Louise Maloney who vowed, "I'll get a red wagon, fill it with beads and walk down the street. I don't give a s[hit] what anybody else does. I'm having ... Mardi Gras." She wept as she watched the first parade of the season; "this is what we do," she said, "We take tragedy and make it into beauty and hilarity. And we're also showing pride in being New Orleanians and expressing ourselves like never before." Many Mardi Gras Indian tribes also took to the streets as their members returned from around the country to join in the annual tradition. Otto Dejean, chief of the Hard Head Hunters, led his tribe on an emotional march through their ruined neighborhood. Symbolically, they began their march in prayer at the foot of the Claiborne Bridge over the Industrial Canal near the breach that wiped out the Lower 9th Ward. Dejean said, "It's about keeping up tradition. I'm going to do what was taught to me as a child." Perhaps only locals can fully appreciate the multi-layered meanings of Carnival. When locals worked to revive Mardi Gras after the disruptions of World War II, Robert Tallent, author of a 1947 history of Carnival, wrote, "If there is any world left in which human beings still laugh and still, even on rare occasions, have fun, there will be a Mardi Gras ... It will live through whatever catastrophes occur ... Men cease to laugh only when they are very ill or when they have become beasts ... That is why Mardi Gras is not a trivial matter but a very important one."⁶
- 16 Jazzfest, too, was not so much a music festival as a religious experience. The high-point of the festival came when Bruce Springsteen took the stage and sang "My City of Ruins." An elegy for a lost city, the lyrics summed up the devastation: "The church door's blown open. I can hear the organ's song, but the congregation's gone ... now tell me how do I begin again? My city's in ruins." Thousands stood in hushed silence, in tears, fists raised in defiance and solidarity. Quint Davis, producer of the festival, described the scene best, "they should talk about that forever. I thought it was one of the most extraordinary things I've ever seen ... Springsteen held church and ministered to a flock." Randy Lewis of the *Los Angeles Times*, wrote: "Sometime, somewhere, a more dramatic and exhilarating confluence of music with moment may have existed, but in nearly 40 years of concert-going, I have witnessed one." Like Mardi Gras, the music festival, too, revealed the power and potential of such events. As Davis observed, "What is a festival? What makes a festival great? Festivals go back to medieval times. They're rites, when tribes come together annually and restore something in their lives and souls. Well, this was that."⁷
- 17 Despite New Orleans' reputation as an American Sodom, it is, in fact, a deeply spiritual place with a diverse and rich array of religious traditions, all of which brought their own spiritual forces to bear as Katrina approached. The city's order of Ursuline nuns, who arrived in the infant city in 1727, responded to the threat of Katrina as they did to yellow fever epidemics, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and the many other catastrophes that have hit the city. They prayed. Determined to remain if at all possible, the sisters left only as flood waters rose, and they departed just as they arrived nearly 300 years ago, by boat. Why did they stay, and why were they so eager to return? As Sister Damian explained, "I think our presence makes a difference _ both as history and as a symbol," she says. "It speaks to endurance, perseverance, support. We're a bond between the past and the future. Our job now is to listen and help people get their lives back together." She added, "See, New Orleans has a soul. It's not something that will come and go." They elderly nuns (the youngest is 61) prayed before a statue of the Virgin, found in the attic of a French convent and brought to New Orleans in the 1780s. The little statue is credited with saving the convent and the city during past disasters. Did it protect the city from Katrina? Sister Carolyn observed that the city avoided a direct hit. "It is obvious to us that the storm could have been worse," she said. Gretchen Kane, president of the historic

Ursuline Academy agreed, "Many of us were spared and kept safe from harm. In that sense, our prayers were answered."⁸

18 The city's voodoo practitioners also tried to protect the city through their own religious ceremonies, nearly as deeply rooted in New Orleans as the Ursulines' Catholicism. Six weeks before the storm hit, participants in a 9th Ward voodoo ceremony attempted to shield the city from hurricanes. Gracie Leavitt, a volunteer from Bard College who came to New Orleans to help with the clean-up, happened onto a voodoo ceremony where a participant told her that "'the Spirit of Hurricanes is who you pray to in order to bring about sweeping change, and sometimes she comes without being called just because she knows better.'" Leavitt found it to be "a crude and lacking justification for such a tragedy, but one that might offer a scrap of hope." Like the Ursulines, voodoo practitioners, too, believe that their efforts helped spare the city. As Giselle Moller, manager of the Marie Laveau House of Voodoo, observed, "Imagine if the hurricane would have hit us straight on. There would have been no French Quarter." When asked why voodoo did not spare the city from the storm, Brandi Kelly, who owns a voodoo shop in the city, observed, "the rituals were done. The hurricane didn't hit us. The levees did." She discussed the role this religious tradition had to play in rebuilding the city, even though many of the city's voodoo practitioners have scattered across the country.. "We have got to call on the ancestors for help and get real serious about it," Kelley said. "The spirit is in the city. It's the spirit of this city that is going to rise from the ashes."⁹

19 Many world myths describe an Axis Mundi, "a place where things that seem diametrically opposed in the profane world come together ... life and death, emptiness and plenitude, physical and spiritual merge and conjoin ... I think that New Orleans is such a place. Katrina has taught all of us powerful lessons about love and loss, about the fragile nature of all we hold dear. And the lessons of Katrina have reached around the world where people have reached out to the residents of New Orleans. The women of Kireka, a suburb of Kampala, Uganda, earn their living breaking boulders into rocks the size of walnuts to be used in construction projects. They earn \$1.20 a day. Most of the women are refugees, driven out of northern Uganda by civil war, and most are either HIV positive or suffer from full-blown AIDS. When they heard about the devastation of Katrina the women wanted to help. They turned to a Rose Busingye, a nurse who works in their community. "They did it because they relate closely to people who understand loss," she explained. The women understood loss and tragedy, "Those people who are suffering, they belong to us. They are our people. Their problems are our problems. Their children are like our children." Two hundred women pooled their meager resources and raised \$900 for hurricane relief.¹⁰ That at a time when many people in America questioned whether or not the city should be rebuilt or if the city could be trusted to administer relief funds. I do not believe that the most important lessons from Katrina are about the poverty and racism and corruption in New Orleans, but rather the real lessons will come from the mirror that New Orleans holds up for the rest of America to see what it has become. Perhaps the gods have departed, perhaps the spirits have fled, and perhaps the music has died, but I do not believe that time has come. I believe that New Orleans has important lessons left to teach all of us.

Notas

1 New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, May 19, 2006.

2 <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/fund.html>

3 *New Yorker*, December 5, 2005, p. 44.

4 New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, November 20, 2005.

5 *Ibid.*, November 22, 2005.

6 *Ibid.*, 2-19-06.

7 *Ibid.*, 5-13-06

8 <http://www.katc.com/Global/story>

9 The ceremony was recorded as part of a documentary film called "Hexing the Hurricane." See <http://observer.bard.edu/articles/news/175> (first quotation); <http://www.lafilm.org/media/index>; <http://www.abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory> (remaining quotations). <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story>. <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0601/> (second quotation).

10 <http://www.baptiststandard.com/postnuke/>

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Abstract

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans faced critics ranging from members of the religious right who saw the storm as God's judgment on a sinful city, to politicians who condemned the city's free-wheeling lifestyle and history of political corruption. In the face of a disaster that resulted from improperly built levees, the residents of the beleaguered city were forced to defend their city's right to exist. This essay explores the roots of these negative perceptions of the city, the impact of these perceptions on the rebuilding effort, and the spirit of the city's citizens who are determined to rebuild while holding on to the city's distinctive culture.

Keywords : voodoo, religious right, New Orleans, Katrina Hurricane

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