

The GULF COAST RECOVERS

Newsletter

Our Principles of Recovery

- * Creating a space for ALL displaced people of Hurricane Katrina to recover *effectively*.
- * Protecting the vulnerable communities in the Gulf Coast region.
- * Reconnecting the social network to promote the "Right to Return" home.
- * Responding to the health needs of those affected by Hurricane Katrina.
- * Promoting and improving the overall wellness of individuals, families, groups, and communities of the Gulf Coast affected by Hurricane Katrina.



Gulf Coast Recovers Activities

Gulf Coast Recovers is an organization started by Mailman Public Health students wishing to promote equitable rebuilding in the immediate aftermath of the devastating hurricanes of 2005, Katrina and Rita.

This semester, we have done several activities supporting residents of the Gulf Coast.

In September, we focused our energy on welcoming students from Tulane and LSU to our school. We organized a meet-and-greet session for our new classmates, all of whom had missed orientation week activities and the opportunity to build connections with fellow students.

On October 5th, a Teach-In was organized with Drs. Robert Fullilove, Mindy Fullilove,

Lesley Green, and Lourdes Hernandez-Cordero. This session focused on historical precedents to the rebuilding effort, community building, and the obstacles faced by the Gulf Coast population in their attempts to recreate their community.

On October 15th, Gulf Coast Recovers held a street fair in Washington Heights to raise money for hurricane relief. Attendees at the fair participated in a raffle for a \$100 grocery store voucher donated by Bravo and donated \$300, as well as 200 cans of food, about 35 boxes of clothing and shoes.

December 20 was our Holiday Happy Hour at Amsterdam Bar and Lounge. In the spirit of holiday healing, this was a chance to celebrate the time we spent with Tulane and LSU students, and spend time together as a community.

Mardi Gras Beads!!! 3 for \$1

Throughout the Fall semester, we have sold bracelets. We sold Mardi Gras beads in the official Mardi Gras colors: purple, gold, and green, representing justice, faith, and power. They serve as outward act of support for the survivors of the hurricane.

The funds we have raised have gone to support three organizations:

- People's Hurricane Fund,**
www.communitylaborunited.net
- Common Ground Relief,**
www.commongroundrelief.org
- Children's Health Fund,**
www.childrenshealthfund.org/

These organizations are actively doing work in the Gulf Coast area and have collaborated with other local grass root organizations based in disaster areas. We chose these organizations based on the complimentary components of their missions with ours.

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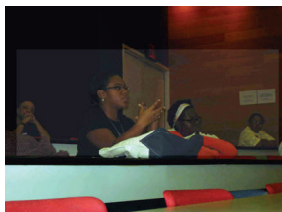


Image from the October teach-in



Mardi Gras Carnival!

On February 28th, GCR in partnership with the Black and Latino Student Caucus at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health celebrated Mardi Gras with students at Highbridge Recreation Center in Washington Heights, NY. This event started out with dancing, New Orleans music and a brief history of tragedy that occurred in the Gulf Coast. Students were invited to make their own Mardi Gras beads, floats, cards to send to survivors of the Gulf. They were able to try authentic King Cake, complete with a baby or two! Several Kings and Queens were crowned for the day.



Students made their own beads and had their face painted

Nothing has Changed.... 7 Months later!!!

Approximately 15 public health students volunteered during spring break with Common Ground Relief, a grassroots organization located in New Orleans, LA. Common Ground provided an opportunity for students to volunteer their talents and skills to support people from New Orleans who have returned home to rebuild their lives. Each student participated in various activities which ranged from gutting out homes with the owners, helping to plan an educational reform conference in June, working with the women's shelter, assisting in the coordination of community organization efforts with other students and groups, and research policies related to the storm and the government's response.

"What message are we trying to send? Is it more important to salvage the Ritz Carlton or someone's life."

Most students had a chance to visit the lower 9th Ward, where Hurricane Katrina had its most devastating effects. Many of the homes were untouched and unsearched by government officials until as late as October of 2005. Several students also visited the Superdome and Convention Center where survivors of the storms stayed. One student commented about her observations: "The walk from the lower 9th to the Convention Center is long on a good day. I can't imagine the walk families had to endure during the storm. There is also a stark difference between downtown New Orleans and the lower 9th ward: in one place there's progress in another there's not. In downtown New Orleans you can see construction workers, police officers an open Starbucks...life. In the lower 9th ward, you mostly see grassroots organizations and a occasional Red Cross van to supply the locals with low quality meals. What message are we trying to send here? Is it more important to salvage the Ritz Carlton or someone's life." Each student left New Orleans with more than what they bargained for; a sense of responsibility to support a community who has been forgotten.



A group of volunteers preparing to gut out a house in the Upper 9th Ward.

An Act of Solidarity New York Students Speak Out!

On March 23, 2006, students from various programs and schools at Columbia University and several students from NYU, Fordham and City College, served as panelists for a "Report from New Orleans: Student Speak Out and Action" session. This session was sponsored by the Black and Latino Student Caucus, the Student Government Association and the Community Research Group (New York Psychiatric Institute) and held on the Health Sciences campus of Columbia University.

More than 60 students attended this session. Those who volunteered in the Gulf were invited to share their stories." Each panelist depicted a different layer to many consequences that have impacted the Gulf Coast and its displaced community. Topics of discussion included FEMA and housing, racism, community organizing, changing demographics, and educational reform.



Students from Mailman voicing concerns regarding racism in America..

Participants were allowed to voice their concerns, comments, and reflections. The session was concluded with several actions steps student could participate in as an act of solidarity with the Gulf Coast Community. These events include an Educational Reform Conference, a bake sale, and a Walk of Solidarity:Walk-a-Thon. Each activity will be planned by students at Mailman. It was encouraged that students share other ideas with the group to gain support in working on those initiatives.

Gulf Coast Recovers serves as an organization that welcomes the ideas and projects from any student interested in working in areas of disaster. If you have any suggestions or action plans please email admin@gulfrecovers.org.

For more Information on Gulf Coast Recovers & our future initiatives please email kcales@gulfrecovers.org or visit our website at www.gulfrecovers.org.

For an Efficient, Effective, & Equitable Recovery