



Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now

ACORN Katrina Survivors Association

What the people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast experienced in the wake of Hurricane Katrina was not just a tragic natural disaster, but a brutal display of the consequences of racial and economic injustices that many of us already know too well. As a national organization of Katrina survivors, and a part of the largest community-based organization of low- and moderate-income families in New Orleans and the nation, we are committed to fighting for and winning a voice and a better future for all those whose lives have been shattered by Hurricane Katrina. The **ACORN Katrina Survivors Association** demands:

1 – Respect and a Voice

Respect for us – the people of New Orleans – and our views is a fundamental principal. We need to be treated with fairness, and with dignity. Our voices need to be at the center of developing and implementing relief and reconstruction programs.

2 – Right of Return

We must be able to return to our homes and our city. We will not let ourselves be shut out, either by deliberate attempts to change the make-up of New Orleans, or by neglect which gives the richer and more powerful first access to choices and resources, and leaves the rest of us behind. Making a right of return real includes housing options as close to home as possible as soon as possible, help in saving those homes that can be saved, and a commitment to preserving our communities. It also means first access to jobs, cleaning and rebuilding our city, and a clear commitment to our right to vote in New Orleans elections, even though we may be temporarily located in other cities and states.

3 – The Means to Take Care of Ourselves and Our Families

Many of us have lost almost everything; our homes, our clothes, our keepsakes, our furniture, our jobs, our community. We have a lot of work to do to rebuild our lives, and we cannot succeed without adequate help. To start with the most obvious, we need health care, especially after this trauma; we need housing; we need money to pay for transportation and childcare; we need adequate income from unemployment and other programs. And the families – and strangers – who have in many cases taken us in, need help too.

4 – Rebuilding the Right Way

The low- and moderate-income people and people of color who have been the majority population of New Orleans must have a say in all the major decisions about the city's reconstruction. The city we rebuild must have enough good and affordable housing – both rental and ownership properties – for all of us; we do not want to be shut out of a New Orleans we cannot afford. We need an economy that provides living wage jobs, not just minimum wages cleaning up behind others. Suspending Davis Bacon and affirmative action rules was a serious step in the wrong direction, and must be reversed. And we need schools that will help prepare our children well for those jobs.

5 – Recovering Together

Help for survivors must be in addition to, not instead of, doing more to help struggling families and communities across the country. We are outraged by proposals to use Hurricanes Katrina and Rita as excuses to cut funds that pay for things like health care, and food for low income families. We are outraged by plans to deprive families and communities of support for their basic needs while cutting taxes for millionaires.

6 – Accountability and Honesty

The nation needs an independent investigation so we can understand what went wrong in preparing for and responding to Katrina, and so protect ourselves better in the future. It would be wrong not to do everything possible to make sure our families and communities are safer. And we need honest oversight of the reconstruction process. Billions of taxpayer dollars will be spent. We need to make sure that the best use possible is made of this money.