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# "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud": Organizing Since Katrina

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## Introduction

In 2005 Hurricane Katrina swept across the Gulf Coast and New Orleans. Thousands of people, mostly Black people, were unable to leave New Orleans as the flooding destroyed their houses and left them to fend for themselves on roofs, on bridges, and in the Superdome. Millions of people from around the world sent clothes, food, and other assistance to the people of the region. Many of the hardships they endured reminded us of the Middle Passage and slavery as family members were separated from each other, people were lost in the water, and thousands of people were sent places with little or information about where they were going or what they would do once they got there (Harriford and Thompson, 2008). The disaster laid bare decades of racism and classism as those with the fewest resources were the least likely to be able to protect their families and their property, hold onto jobs and health care benefits, and gain access to vital recovery resources. While the disaster threw us back in time—to the history of slavery in the United States—the organizing since Katrina has catapulted us forward, with activist strategies that both draw upon the race and class consciousness of the 1960s while extending a reach transnationally. This organizing is providing a multiracial, feminist, model of organizing that we believe is both unprecedented and transformative.

## Double Consciousness after Katrina

One of the most striking contradictions that emerged during and after the hurricane was the lack of leadership from the government in response to the crisis, while the people of New Orleans demonstrated breathtaking acts of courage and community in order to try to save themselves. The Bush administration, including Condoleezza Rice, refused to see racism as key in leaving people to fend for themselves. Her unwillingness to identify with the poor and black people who were displaced in New Orleans led us to lament that Rice is among a growing number of black and Latino conservatives who have lost what, in 1903, W. E. B. Du Bois termed "double consciousness"—a collective conscience that cannot be separated from one's roots. For black people double consciousness is a simultaneous sense of oneself as dynamic and evolving along- side the sense of being despised. Double consciousness requires recognizing oneself as both African and American, as both denied fundamental rights and capable of seeing the pathology of such denial, as both misinterpreted and misrepresented.

Juxtaposed to Rice's lack of double consciousness was the consciousness we saw among many people in New Orleans. For example, for many days after the flooding, elderly men sat in front of their houses refusing to leave even as officials were threatening them that they must abandon their land. The elders knew that, as free human beings, they had a right to determine their own lives and deaths. If they were going to die, they would do so in their own homes, rather than in a stranger's land. These men were manifesting a consciousness that Du Bois identified when he wrote The Souls of Black Folk, a consciousness that is connected to land and ancestors. He tapped into black souls, the collective, intimate, historical, and spiritual connections that tie black people to each other across oceans, rivers

and levees—a consciousness the elderly men from New Orleans were protecting.

Another quintessential example that showed the link between double consciousness and historical memory could be seen on the murals adorning the exterior of the Ernie K-Doe Mother-in-Law Lounge. The namesake for this beloved club, Ernie K-Doe, is perhaps best known for his famous 1961 song, "Mother in Law," hence the name of the club, along with his avant-garde style and sense of self.[1] One mural on the outside of this club, which re-opened around the first anniversary of the hurricane, shows two men and a woman, all from the African Diaspora, who are in a circular embrace that also includes a large egg, a parrot, and a handkerchief with a peacock design.

This mural, like double consciousness, is reaching back and forward at the same time, back to the Caribbean and other stops along the slave trade route among people whose blood has mixed on more than one continent and forward to a jazz club in its latest incarnation. Historical memory is communicated in song, as a medium that got people through in the fields, at the washboard, in their runs for freedom, and in the haunting look in one of the men's eyes painted on the mural—a soulful yearning, an intensity and a relaxation, a wondering and an immediate presence. Another mural of an elderly woman stands above the first on the wall of the connected building, watching over the mural below, keeping eye on the neighborhood in its current transition. There is an interconnectedness to the images, even though they are on different walls, perhaps painted at different times. Meanwhile, a man on the second rung of a ladder is working on a new mural on another side of the building, painting into concrete, new memory.

## Keeping Women Central

These two early examples of resistance by the people of New Orleans run counter to the dominant narrative in the mainstream media and elsewhere that portrays them as passive and helpless in response to the crisis. Organizing following Katrina also quickly revealed that any long-term effective activism was going to need to keep women at the center of focus. Through the Katrina catastrophe, women faced many of the same hardships men faced: losing their houses, being separated from their children, and witnessing the government's disregard for their humanity. More than a million people were forced to leave New Orleans and the Gulf Coast after Katrina and as many as 50,000 homes had been demolished within a year (Dreier 2006). But women were vulnerable to additional dangers as well. This reality gives example to the work of historian Darlene Clark Hine, who asserts the need to account for black women's "'fiveness': Negro, American, woman, poor, black woman" (1993:338). We need to comprehend this fiveness to understand the impact of Katrina. Women were vastly overrepresented in the shelters, locations that put them at risk of many hazards, including rape and other sexual assault. Without the protection of family and community, women were especially at risk of sexual exploitation. To make matters worse, amid these and other dangers, women had no privacy that would give them a chance to pull away from the crowd, regroup, make sense out of their own reality, and begin to recover so that they could put on a brave face for their children again.

Thrown into chaotic public spaces, black women were exposed emotionally, physically, and sexually in ways largely undocumented. In overcrowded shelters, they had to tap into their deepest resources to simply function. They had few, if any, economic resources to aid them in this process. Since so many women were forced to depend upon men—who have the power to both protect and exploit—many faced compromised relationships in the aftermath of Katrina in ways reminiscent of how they were cornered on slave ships, in auctions, and on plantations.

The frightening parallel to the vulnerability women faced post-Katrina is the danger that black women faced historically when they had to develop both a private and a public persona so that they could survive. Katrina recreated a southern history of black women without access to property—women who were themselves property, at the mercy of men willing to further exploit them. Black women were, again, in situations where men could take advantage of the only property the women had—their bodies.

Darlene Clark Hine identified a coping strategy that black women have historically adopted as a "culture of dissemblance" that includes "behavior and attitudes…that created the appearance of openness and disclosure, but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors" (1995:380). One of the characteristics of the culture of dissemblance is that black women are silent about much of what they endure. After Katrina, while some black women told their stories on television and through print media, there was a haunting silence about the depth of their experiences. This dynamic is why literary scholar Ann duCille refers to black women in the post-civil rights era as simultaneously hyper-visible and super-isolated (1994:605). Their resistance to telling the totality of their experience stems from their concern about being further stigmatized or associated with long-standing demeaning

stereotypes of black women. This concern only adds to the silences about racialized sexual abuse and other injuries that they are especially vulnerable to during crises. Katrina showed us the need to envision a time when black women do not need to dissemble in order to make it through their days.

An understanding of consciousness that accounts for race and gender is one that refuses to trump exploitation primarily aimed at women with terror aimed primarily at men. African-American studies scholar Hazel Carby has documented that "the institutionalization of rape of black women has never been as powerful a symbol of black oppression as the spectacle of lynching."[2] Katrina underscores the need to recognize race and gender and poverty as equally powerful factors in twenty-first century disempowerment. The realities of black women's lives, including the multiple enforced silences about privatized domination, mean that journalistic accounts of the aftermath of Katrina tended to focus on black men's vulnerabilities while sidelining black women. The Katrina disaster amplifies why double consciousness needs to be expanded to account for multiple traumas that black women faced historically—and face currently. We also need to highlight the strategies of resiliency black women have developed.

The vulnerabilities that Black women and other women of color faced following Katrina led INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, a national organization of radical feminists of color, to work closely with the regional chapter in New Orleans. As Janelle L. White (2005), an INCITE member from New Orleans wrote soon after the hurricane, "Progressive activism surrounding the recovery of New Orleans must be driven by the most marginalized members of New Orleans and must center its analysis on race, class and gender."

This political awareness underscores the import of the New Orleans Survivor Council, an organization made up of people from poor and working-class Black communities. While both men and women make up this organization, many of the leaders are women. Most housing leases had been in women's names before Katrina and, after Katrina, women were often the ones fighting to be sure that their children had housing and schools to attend. The New Orleans Survivor Council activism included occupying the HUD building on August 28, 2007 (the second anniversary of the hurricane), demanding a list of public housing units that will be opened, and organizing a "Bring our People Home" festival. They also initiated the "Bad Neighbors Campaign" which protested the property seized by the government and identified the inequity that existed when the government allowed certain businesses and non-profit organizations to remain in "blighted areas" even as renters and public housing community members were forced out. The fight for safe and affordable housing is a key feminist concern and a long-term strategy so that poor women and women of color no longer need to uphold a culture of dissemblance in order to survive.

## Organizing Among Immigrant Communities with a Transnational Focus

Organizing following Katrina also reflected the history of New Orleans as a profoundly multiracial, multi-ethnic city. The historical roots of New Orleans have always been multiracial. Before and during the colonization by the French and Spanish, Louisiana was home to many indigenous people, including the Chitimacha and the Houma (Malinowski and Sheets 1998). As a major port of the slave trade, New Orleans has also long had the feel of a city of the African Diaspora. As is true of much of the Diaspora, the multiracial culture reflects layers of slavery, colonialism, and immigration.[3] The Creole population of Louisiana is a blending of French, Spanish, African, and Caribbean people (reflecting consensual relations between free blacks, Spanish, African, French, and Caribbean people, as well as a history of rape under slavery). Creole, a language spoken by many people of African and Caribbean descent, is a blending of French, African, and Caribbean languages that have been spoken in the region for centuries.

In the twenty-first century, Louisiana is the home to people of African descent, many of whose families have been in the area since the slave trade; white people of European descent (German, Spanish, French, English, Irish, etc.); Houma, Biloxi-Chitimacha, and Choctaw native people; and many recent immigrants (primarily communities of color). These immigrants include Hondurans, who first immigrated to the area in the twentieth century to work in the ports and fisheries; Vietnamese, who immigrated to the area in the 1970s following the Vietnam War; and recent Jamaican immigrants.

One reason that the media representation after the hurricane portrayed a city in black and white terms is that many other people of color (Native Americans, Hondurans, Vietnamese, and Jamaicans) had little or no contact with mainstream media or state and federal emergency agencies. The situation of the Honduran community provides a useful case in point. Approximately 120,000 Hondurans lived in the New Orleans area at the time of the crisis (Goodman 2005). Many of the Hondurans were legal residents and have been in the United States for a long time,

some for generations. Some Hondurans came to New Orleans in 1998 after Hurricane Mitch that left 10,000 people dead and many more homeless (Goodman 2005). Those who were not legal residents had no access to resources from FEMA. Many without residency were afraid to seek help—either to be evacuated or after the hurricane—for fear that the border patrol or immigration officials might turn them over for deportation. Even those who were residents were afraid, many of them unable to get access to documents that would prove their residency. A similar scenario of vulnerability existed for Jamaican immigrants; many did not seek help with evacuation or food or shelter following the disaster for fear that they might be deported. For the Honduran and Jamaican communities, the suffering they experienced reflected a combination of barriers to emergency help.

The reporting on recent immigrants and native people by alternative media sources documented their ingenious methods of helping themselves through the crisis. Five hundred members of the Tunica-Biloxi community in central Louisiana took refuge at a casino in the region; nearly 20,000 Vietnamese fled to the Hong Kong strip mall in Houston, where Vietnamese charity groups provided shelter, food, and clothing; Koreans found refuge in family-run Korean stores in Houston; and Hondurans sought out a Honduran restaurant in Houston's mostly Latino neighborhood (Atlan 2005; Norell 2005). All of these groups avoided the Superdome, seeking community-controlled networks instead.

The Jamaicans, Hondurans, and Vietnamese in New Orleans ask us to include nation and citizenship in organizing since Katrina. Their realities ask us to account for how immigration—often a response to colonization in a country that leaves few options for people other than to flee their homes in search of work—shapes consciousness as well. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), a Chicana theorist offers such a conceptualization through her multilayered analysis of the culture, history, and politics of people living in the Southwest of the United States. Much of what she examines in relation to that border resonates with the realities facing immigrants living in New Orleans. Anzaldúa describes the border between the United States and Mexico as "una herida abierta" (an open wound), "where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (1987:3). The immigrants living in and around New Orleans, who came to the United States in large part because of First World colonization of their lands, give example to Anzaldúa's reference to "una herida abierta." For the immigrants without documentation, bleeding after the hurricane came from knowing that they had contributed much labor to the United States, many for years, and yet did not see U.S. services as an option in a time of crisis.

Anzaldúa asserts that the psychic, linguistic, and geographical location of those sandwiched between cultures nourishes what she has named "mestiza consciousness." Anzaldúa writes, "From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization, an 'alien' consciousness is presently in the making—a new mestiza consciousness, una consciencia de mujer. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands." (77). This consciousness comes from a melding of two realities—in this case the reality of one's country of origin and the reality of the new country—into another, that is larger than the sum of its parts.

Like Du Bois's double consciousness, mestiza consciousness recognizes a clashing of cultures and power inequities. To the equation of slavery and racism, Anzaldúa adds the history of colonialism that creates internal struggles within people's psyches, what she has named "psychic restlessness" (78). This state is characterized by "mental and emotional states of perplexity" as well as "insecurity and indecisiveness" (78). This restlessness comes from the willingness and sometimes the necessity to juggle multiple worldviews simultaneously.

Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness has vertical and horizontal dimensions made possible by living a multicultural reality. While Du Bois assumed a dichotomy between black and white and a linear relationship between two warring poles, Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness is more like a balloon that has been inflated by wind coming from many directions. For Anzaldúa, who recognizes herself as a creation of indigenous, white, and Mexican blood, linear frameworks were not big enough to describe her consciousness.

Because mestiza consciousness takes into account identities that cross borders and are not solely determined by ones national belonging, Anzaldúa allows us to think about how—in a disaster—people remember themselves as connected historically, emotionally, and psychically. For example, following Katrina, Jamaican workers faced fears of deportation if they sought services, yet returning to Jamaica was no real option given the grinding unemployment in that country (largely due to foreign capital intervention).[4] The United States war in Vietnam resulted in the immigration of South Vietnamese to many communities in the United States. The settlement of Vietnamese refugees in Louisiana began after the fall of Saigon in 1975, facilitated by Catholic charities in the region.

There is also a long history of connection between people of African descent in New Orleans and Haiti. A vertical interpretation of New Orleans is one that focuses on the relationship between white and black people. A

horizontal interpretation allows us to see the multilingual, multicultural history of New Orleans and demands that we think beyond national borders.

After Katrina, Haitian American writer Edwidge Danticat raised questions about the many political and media pundits who expressed shock at the devastation after the levees broke by saying that New Orleans looked more like Haiti than the United States. Danticat observes, "It's hard for those of us who are from places like Freetown or Port-au-Prince not to wonder why the so-called developed world needs so desperately to distance itself from us, especially at a time when an unimaginable tragedy shows exactly how much alike we are" (2005:25). Danticat continues, "…we do share a planet that is gradually being warmed by mismanagement, unbalanced exploration, and dismal environmental policies that might one day render us all, First World and Third World residents alike, helpless to more disasters like Hurricane Katrina" (26).

Mestiza consciousness is also a crucial concept for understanding the political dynamics of rebuilding New Orleans. In 2004, Bush proposed his "compassionate immigration plan," which included a three-year "guest worker policy" aimed particularly at Mexican immigrants. Anti-immigration activists opposed this policy because of their long-standing opposition to immigration from countries with brown and black people. Progressives opposed Bush's plan, seeing it as a way to introduce a labor force that could be easily exploited and used to undermine union safeguards. Given the opposition from at least two directions, Bush tabled this proposal until after Katrina when he announced that Congress should pass the previously tangled bill. His logic was that the rebuilding of New Orleans would require labor far surpassing what was currently available from domestic workers (Campbell 2005).

Mestiza consciousness offers an important intervention into Bush's plan, since it recognizes connections among and between communities that, in political wars, often get pit against each other. As most of the large-scale contracts for rebuilding were quickly granted to companies outside the region, working-class communities, mostly communities of color were forced to compete against each other for jobs, housing, and other fundamental resources. The recent transnational history of New Orleans reflects layers of colonialism, war, and natural disasters. The multilingual, multiracial, multi-ethnic composition of the city is reflected in the uneven and complicated story of how various communities fared following Katrina.

Since Katrina, approximately 100,000 workers of Latino, Native-American, Asian, and African-American descent came to New Orleans and the Mississippi coast for work. This is an example of fast capitalism as contractors quickly tapped their transnational networks to find workers.[5] Their treatment, in many cases, has been miserable as they have been forced to live in abandoned cars, work in toxic conditions, receive inadequate wages, and run from immigration authorities who have intensified their harassment since Katrina while labor laws have been relaxed. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of New Orleans residents have been denied access to meaningful work, denied access to the expanding labor market in their own hometown. The New Orleans Worker Justice Coalition (2007) is a multiracial group that focuses on empowering workers by organizing day laborers while expanding workers' rights statewide. At a point when migrant workers and local black workers could easily compete with each other, the New Orleans Justice Coalition focuses on the common struggle of workers for dignified work.

Organizing since the disaster asks us to expand consciousness beyond the black/white dichotomy that is the foundation of much work on race in the United States. Just as an analysis of race without gender is insufficient to understand the dynamics of organizing after Katrina, a black/white analysis of race in New Orleans is unable to fully identify who was victimized by the storm and how the federal government proceeded following the disaster.

## The International Tribunal: A Model for 21st Century Organizing

The two characteristics of organizing embodied in the work of survivors following Katrina—a focus on women and a transnational lens—were both central in the strategy and priorities of the International Tribunal on Hurricane Katrina and Rita that was held in New Orleans on the second anniversary of the hurricane. This Tribunal was the culmination of two years of intensive organizing on the local, regional, national, and international level.

In December 2005, approximately 2000 survivors and their supporters marched on City Hall demanding justice and the right to return home. In June 2006, activists erected a tent city outside of the St. Bernard Housing Development in response to the government's unwillingness to let them return home. During 2006, the People's Hurricane Relief Fund and many other grassroots organizations began to envision a people's tribunal that would draw upon international law. Since the local, regional and federal government had refused to provide basic housing,

health care, and education for the people of New Orleans, the activists recognized that they would have to draw upon international law regarding human rights violations, especially the right to return, that are guaranteed under United Nations policy on internally displaced people. Through a series of meetings in Atlanta, New York City, and New Orleans, that included both leaders from the United States as well as activists from many other countries (Venezuela, Brazil, Palestine, and elsewhere), the activists began to envision a tribunal that would draw upon the United States policy on internally displaced people as the basis of the claim.

Through the two years of organizing, the activists used the Internet extensively, to get the word out and nurture international connections. In the process, the organizers contradicted the "overwhelmingly negative view of New Orleans as a city of rampant crime, intense poverty, racial tension and other pathologies"— that the mainstream media had projected with stunning speed during the Hurricane (Gotham 2007). The Internet became an antidote to the mainstream representations of the media as the organizers built coalitions in support of the Tribunal.

In August 2007, about 500 people from across the globe met in New Orleans to demand that the U.S. government be put on trial for crimes against humanity. The crimes included removing thousands of people from the Gulf Coast, mismanaging resources set aside for Katrina survivors, refusing to adhere to policies pertaining to the security and well-being of internally displaced people. The national endorsers included a stunning array of grassroots activist organizations: The Center for Constitutional Rights, Critical Resistance, the ACLU, Black Workers for Justice, INCITE!: Women of Color Against Violence, and a range of other groups. The international endorsers included: support committees from Brazil, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Haiti, Ecuador, South Africa, Mexico, and Palestine; The Committee for the Right to return Switzerland, the Afro-Venezuelan Coordinating Committee, and the Committee on Asian Women in Bangkok. The language of the Tribunal drew heavily on international law, referring to the survivors as victims of crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and genocide. The goal of the Tribunal was to demand restitution, advance the Rita–Katrina construction movement, and build a global campaign against the U.S. program of ethnic cleansing.

The Tribunal took place in a hotel three blocks from the revived French Quarter. When Diane (who attended the meeting) entered the convention center, she had an immediate sense of déjà vu, as if she were time traveling. The presence of African clothes; natural, not processed hair; the requisite left wing book tables with posters of Malcolm X, Che and Mandela; and most importantly, a sense of urgency and outrage were reminiscent of much activism of the 1960s. This presence made her immediately aware of what she had been missing in United States based organizing in the last 30 years. While the event reminded her of the best of 1960s organizing, it also felt unprecedented. While the Black, Latino, and Asian activists of the 1960s and 1970s had always envisioned an international scope, in reality, their focus was overwhelmingly domestic. At the Tribunal, activists from all over the world had come—from South Africa, France, Brazil, Cuba, Turkey, Pakistan, Taiwan, and many other countries. People were speaking in many different languages, while standing in solidarity with the people of color and poor people in the Gulf region. They recognized that even though the survivors were from the United States, the richest country in the world, they were poor people whose displacement was strikingly similar to displaced people in their own countries.

The actual tribunal involved two days of testimony by survivors represented by a prosecution team (from seventeen organizations including law schools, human rights organizations, and legal organizations) and tribunal judges (that included lawyers, judges, professors, and trade union activists from eight different countries). Each survivor testified for between 30 minutes to over an hour while the lawyers asked them questions. Those testifying included retired school teachers, community activists, laborers, residents of public housing, people who had been jailed in the aftermath of the crisis, teen leaders, and others. This multiracial group—including Native Americans, African Americans, Hondurans, Peruvians, white people—spoke about the theft of cultural rights (for example, the loss of the Mardi Gras Indians educational and cultural center); the pollution of the soil making it impossible to plant seeds or allow children to play outside; the precipitous increase in asthma since Katrina; the denial of FEMA services; the physical abuse and disrespect of people in the Superdome by the national guard and more.

When the survivors testified, there was a hush in the audience; there was the decorum of a courtroom. There was no laughing or talking as people told of the often horrifying and frightening degradations they and their loved ones had lived through. The culture of dissemblance that Darlene Clark Hine (1995) identified as a long term strategy that black women have developed in order to protect themselves in public spaces fell away as one woman after the next spoke openly and passionately about the stress she lived with during and since Katrina. The structure of the Tribunal made such truth-telling possible, since those testifying were granted the dignity of being able to speak for themselves and those who could not be present. Those testifying did not feel endangered of being trivialized or

misunderstood. They were listened to, their stories were documented both in writing and in video and, there was an understanding that their stories resembled those stories of countless others as well.

## Implications of the Tribunal for Organizers and Social Movement Scholars

There are several reasons why we believe that much scholarly attention needs to be paid to the Tribunal. First, the structure of the Tribunal reframes those who lived through Katrina from being seen and treated as victims to being recognized as survivors. While both the mainstream media and researchers run the risk of talking about and for the people of New Orleans, the Tribunal makes clear that people are speaking for themselves.

Second, the Tribunal offers a model of organizing that moves beyond national boundaries and toward the concept of world citizen and human rights. Many movements historically in the United States have been reform movements where the aggrieved party has looked to the government to redress discrimination. Grassroots organizers saw the dead end in attempting to rely upon the U.S. government to provide adequate resources. As a consequence, they are reaching way beyond the domestic government, to an international body, while building a movement among grassroots organizations from all over the world.

Interestingly, the strategy taken up by the Tribunal makes immediate links to the works of political prisoners and their allies, who, for the last twenty five years, have increasingly looked to international law to oppose racially disparate sentencing and torture in prison. It was precisely because the United States does not recognize the category "political prisoner" (although there are over 150 political prisoners domestically) that U.S. political prisoners and their allies had to reach beyond domestic law in their organizing. Similarly, the government was not recognizing the people of New Orleans as having a legal status. They were not treated as U.S. citizens. They are clearly not refugees since they are residents within their own countries. And, the people of New Orleans refused to see themselves as victims. The legal category that most accurately describes their status is "internally displaced people" which is a category that the United States does not recognize. If the government did recognize this status, it would have to provide housing, education, and health care for internally displaced people. Without that recognition, the People's Hurricane Relief Fund and other organizers of the Tribunal had to reach to international law for legal recognition.

Not coincidentally, one of the first institutions to be reestablished by state and federal officials after Katrina was the network of jails in New Orleans and the outlying areas. With the Tribunal, the strategy of survivors of Katrina and political prisoners has converged, opening up new models for alliance building. Similarly, the fact that the activists organizing the Tribunal drew heavily on the forward thinking Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa speaks volumes to international alliance building, to a willingness, in fact eagerness on the part of U.S. activists, to learn from organizing outside of its national borders.

Third, because the Tribunal is, by necessity focusing on housing, the organizing is attending to the private and public sphere simultaneously while keeping women at the center of analysis. While the Civil Rights Movement often put its focus on the public sphere—voting, school desegregation, public transportation, and public eating—the organizing around housing now is helping to keep women central. To a large extent, this organizing centers on women being able to hold their families together. Women are at the heart of the movement for regeneration. This movement is about the public and private space, a reality that moves us beyond social movement research that focused on private or public space but not both.

Fourth, the methods used to organize the Tribunal speak to ways that the Internet and other sophisticated media sources can be used to undermine mainstream media operations. Through videos and the Internet, the Tribunal organizers contradicted mainstream media representations. The activists who envisioned the International Tribunal, like the organizers for the Jena 6, used media sources in ways that wrestled free of the dominant narrative by putting grassroots organizing at the center of the frame of reference.

Fifth, the Tribunal is the first time that African Americans have been able to link a domestic issue to international law and have been able to make alliances with such a multiracial community. This is not the first time that Blacks have sought an international forum to redress their problems. For example, in the 1950s William Patterson approached the UN for redress against lynching. But this initiative did not have support of a grassroots Black community. Since few Black people at that time had access to international travel, they had little awareness that people outside of the United States, including an international body, such as the UN might rally on their behalf. Since the Civil Rights movement, increased international mobility and the emergence of the Internet has enabled more Black people to

see organizing internationally as a real strategy. The International Tribunal was the first time that Blacks sought international recognition with the support of grassroots black communities. We think this support has occurred, in some measure, because the Internet and satellite television has allowed black people to see beyond their world even if they cannot travel outside of the United States—to see themselves as part of a diasporic African community and not simply as internally colonized people. This change demonstrates one way that globalization has affected black communities as black people are seeing themselves as citizens of the world rather than as second-class citizens in the United States. We expect, and hope, to see more of this consciousness in the years to come.

## Endnotes

1. For many years, Ernie K-Doe adorned himself in a cape and referred to himself as the emperor of the universe. When he died in 2001, he was buried with his mother-in law, who he was very close to, and his second wife, Antoinette, vowed to keep the club open in his name. In 2006, following the hurricane, Antoinette ran him for mayor, professing that Ernie K-Doe was the only one qualified for the job. She made t-shirts that she sold and then forwarded the proceeds to organizations that helped musicians get back on their feet following the hurricane.

2. Quoted in Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," in Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, 380 (New York: The New Press, 1995).

3. Before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Louisiana was settled by the French under Spanish rule. The French ceded Louisiana to Spain in1762, regained it in 1800 and then sold it to Thomas Jefferson in 1803.

4. A long British colonial presence in Jamaica, followed by multiple invasions and interventions by the United States and increasing exploitation by foreign corporations in recent years, have left Jamaica vulnerable to losing its citizens to the United States and other countries in search of employment.

5. In our reference to fast capitalism we are drawing upon the work of Ben Agger (2004) and others who analyze how information and technology, with capital as its fuel, are increasingly linking and complicating lives across the globe.

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