

Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal Archive)

Volume 0 *Special Volume 2 (2009)*
*AESTHETICS AND RACE: NEW PHILOSOPHICAL
PERSPECTIVES*

Article 2

2009

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Recommended Citation

Ortega, Mariana (2009) "Othering the Other: The Spectacle of Katrina for our Racial Entertainment Pleasure," *Contemporary Aesthetics (Journal Archive)*: Vol. 0 , Article 2.

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Othering the Other: The Spectacle of Katrina for our Racial Entertainment Pleasure

Mariana Ortega

Abstract

The following essay examines visual representations of hurricane Katrina in popular media in order to show how photography continues to be enlisted in the production of the racial spectacle, the transformation of the plight of people of color into entertainment. The essay also analyzes how such a use of the visual serves to solidify the understanding of people of color by way of a black-white binary that does not do justice to current U.S. demographics. The essay provides a glimpse into the intertwining between the visual and racial thinking.

Key Words

black-white binary, Katrina, Latinos, photography, race, spectacle, visual

To designate a hell is not, of course, to tell us anything about

how to extract people from that hell, how to moderate hell's flames.

Susan Sontag

An object that tells of the loss, destruction, disappearance of objects.

Does not speak of itself. Tells of others. Will it include them?

Jasper Johns

1. Introduction

There is no need for those of us who care about the issue of race in this country, for those of us who struggle to find ways to diminish the seemingly endless incidents of day-to-day racism, to re-live, to recount the ways in which race and racism became a spectacle for viewing pleasure: the World Fairs that brought specimens of the dark other, the countless visual representations of exotic, strange peoples in far-away lands, the "comedy" of the black-face, the sublime family postcards of a day spent by nice Christian families witnessing the lynching of so-called subhuman beings -- strange fruit indeed. [1]

We know the history well, and those who don't need to learn it. As Susan Sontag says, "No one after a certain age has the right to this kind of innocence, to this degree of ignorance or amnesia." [2] But learning about the fact that there is pain -- so much pain that others are suffering, have suffered and will continue to suffer -- is not enough. We need to care. We also need to analyze the way in which such pain is produced, shaped, represented, interpreted, understood, even ignored, disregarded, and misunderstood. Paradoxically, the realm of art which offers us the opportunity to engage with the beautiful, whether through paint, light, clay, film, stone, or other media is implicated in the reinforcement of views that are conducive to oppression and pain. What a sad story it is to recognize the way in which photography has been enlisted in the production of the spectacle of race.

First considered a mirror of nature, now an art, photography has played a crucial role in the desire to classify difference and otherness. Coupled with nineteenth century "sciences" such as physiognomics, phrenology, criminology, and the emerging science of anthropology, the photograph became not just an innocent writing with light but a tool of power. [3] In her early essay on photography, Sontag warns of the less noble side of this modern technological invention and its offspring, the visual archive of the world, its things, and its people, especially those not deemed as human as us. To photograph, she says, is to appropriate the world, to objectify. [4]

Such photographic appropriations and objectifications persist. They continue to make a spectacle of race and racism, and now the story of this spectacle has a new chapter called Katrina. In this paper I would like to point to the function of visual representations of hurricane Katrina in popular media as helping to "other" the other in various dangerous ways and providing additional racial entertainment that further sediments views about the so-called black-white experience in this country. [5] The story of Katrina that we witnessed through newspapers, photos, television, perhaps even in person, was a story of enormous pain and suffering, of enormous grief and loss, that could have "made a tenuous 'we' of us all." [6] It did for a brief but important moment, as countless numbers of U.S citizens of various races denounced the structural racism that turned a

natural disaster into an unnatural one and demanded that justice be served, that this country repair its classist and racist ways. [7] However, doubts ensued as dark bodies were “shown” looting, misbehaving in the “safe” ground of the Superdome or the Convention Center, misbehaving everywhere and creating chaos, and other “illegal” bodies showed up from all over the U.S., Mexico, Central and South America in the aftermath of the storm. In the end, we got a new racial spectacle, an attempt to hold on to our so dear black-white racial dichotomy despite the facts of the make-up of the U.S. population, and a convenient “othering” of the other which guarantees further fragmentation among those who are already vulnerable and forgotten and in the bottom steps of the ladder of economic success and social respectability.

2. The Double Function of Visual Representation

The event that concerns us, Katrina, has already been shaped in various ways by its photographic representations. I wonder which photograph comes to mind when I mention Katrina, in the way that September 11 is imprinted in our minds with a photograph of a fireman carrying a baby to safety, or the Vietnam War is exemplified by that child running naked in the middle of the street after a napalm attack. Memory is a tricky thing and photographs come to its rescue. Of the many photographs of tragedy and suffering, only a few are bound to become iconic, representative of the event. Which one will it be for Katrina? What visual representation of Katrina will become fixed in your consciousness, in our national consciousness?



©Associated Press - A WOMAN CRIES AS SHE WAITS WITH OTHER FLOOD VICTIMS AT THE CONVENTION CENTER IN NEW ORLEANS, THURSDAY, SEPT. 1, 2005. OFFICIALS CALLED FOR A MANDATORY EVACUATION OF THE CITY, BUT MANY RESIDENTS REMAINED IN THE CITY AND HAD TO BE RESCUED FROM FLOODED HOMES AND HOTELS AND REMAIN IN THE CITY AWAITING A WAY OUT. (APPHOTO/ERIC GAY)



©Associated Press - HURRICANE KATRINA EVACUEES FROM LOUISIANA LINE UP FOR DONATED CLOTHING AT A PARKING LOT ACROSS FROM THE ASTRODOME THURSDAY, SEPT. 1, 2005, IN HOUSTON. THE IMPROMPTU DONATION CENTER SPRANG UP AFTER PEOPLE WERE TURNED AWAY FROM THE SHELTER AT THE ASTRODOME. THE WOMEN DID NOT WISH TO BE IDENTIFIED. (AP PHOTO/PAT SULLIVAN)



©Associated Press - MILVERTHA HENDRICKS, 84, CENTER WAITS IN THE RAIN WITH OTHER FLOOD VICTIMS OUTSIDE THE CONVENTION CENTER IN NEW ORLEANS, THURSDAY, SEPT. 1, 2005. OFFICIALS CALLED FOR A MANDATORY EVACUATION OF THE CITY, BUT MANY RESIDENTS REMAINED IN THE CITY AND HAD TO BE RESCUED FROM FLOODED HOMES AND HOTELS AND REMAIN IN THE CITY AWAITING A WAY OUT. (AP PHOTO/ERIC GAY)

Will it be the photograph of those with whom you identify, whose suffering gets to your heart? Or will it be the photograph of regular, law-complying people just trying to save their loved ones? Can the photograph that points to the unruliness of the poor of color who will act up just as expected even in a moment of crisis be the chosen one? Or will you, us, the "nation" choose the iconic beautiful, sad photograph representing a nation in crisis, the photograph that demands justice for those who have been forgotten? And it is important to ask, What about the photographs we didn't see, photographs representing people that were also affected but whose photographs were not taken and if they were, they were not shown to us, photographs of the Hondurans and other Latinos, of the many Vietnamese who were affected, of the Native Americans living in the Isle de Jean Charles? [8]

In her last musings on photography, Sontag revisits her early position on the negative function of photography and offers a revised interpretation of the role of photographs regarding the suffering of others. She says that photographs of suffering carry a double message: "They show a suffering that is outrageous, unjust, and should be repaired" and "They confirm that this is the sort of thing which happens in that place." [9] How could we not be outraged, saddened, grief-stricken by the suffering of Katrina victims represented in the photographs we saw in newspapers and magazines? But very soon the stories of the suffering of the victims are supplanted by stories and images of unruliness and of misbehaving dark bodies. Somehow, the media find it more profitable to show representations of looters instead of victims -- of scandal and chaos instead of patient, virtuous victims waiting for relief. Dark bodies are represented as "looting" while light-skinned ones are represented "finding bread and soda from a local grocery store." Conscious or unconscious beliefs about those people, "those others" are confirmed: that *is* the sort of thing that happens in that place.

The moment of mourning brought about by the heart-wrenching images of people on top of roofs, sweaty, vanquished African-Americans waiting for relief, the old, the young, the strong, the weak, all in the same helpless situation, is transformed. Images of angry African-Americans tired of waiting; images of chaos and disorder; images of that is what those people do -- of that is what happens there, trickle in and take over. The discussion no longer emphasizes the pain, the tragedy that people are suffering but their terrible, undesirable behavior. And the spectacle for our racial entertainment continues with another chapter in a tradition in the exhibition of the

otherness of the other.

3. The Grief of Seeing Only Black and White

Let's face it. We're undone by each other.

And if we're not, we're missing something.

Judith Butler

While photographic representations along with media analysis of Katrina further reinforced why those others are others as well as the public's need to receive confirmation of this fact, we also need to remember that the tragedy of Katrina is a lesson in what Judith Butler calls "corporeal vulnerability." In *Precarious Life*, a text in which Butler discusses her reflections on September 11 and in which she tries to answer the question, "What can be made of grief besides a cry for war?" [10] we are introduced to the important notion of corporeal vulnerability, the fact that we are vulnerable by virtue of our embodiment being exposed to others, for their loving attachments or for their violent desires. In virtue of their social constitution, some bodies are more vulnerable than others; they are also less grievable. We don't need to think hard to discover which bodies these are: bodies of the poor, dark bodies, sexually "deviant" bodies, the bodies of the so-called other who is unwanted in the regular confines of society.

In addition to offering the account of corporeal vulnerability, Butler revives the feeling and concept of grief so as to make it a basis for political community. Grief, she says, "displays the thrall in which our relations with others hold us." [11] In so doing, it brings to the fore the relational ties that bind us to other people. Experiencing loss and the grief that follows from it points to the fact that we are not as autonomous as we thought, that we are not in control, that others are important to us, that we are implicated in the lives of others -- in a sense that we are ec-static or beside/outside ourselves. [12] Grief, according to Butler, points to the "fundamental sociality of embodied life." [13]

But what has happened after the grief brought by representations, both visual and narrative, of the tragedy of Katrina? Has the grief (if felt) made a "tenuous we" out of us? Perhaps, if only for a brief period. The other answer is that representations of Katrina, in addition to calling forth the grief that should be felt when seeing a photograph of suffering, have made already vulnerable bodies even more vulnerable. Dark bodies are seen as unruly dark bodies looting, shooting at the rescuers, shooting each other. Some even thought that Katrina ended up being a good thing. [14] The "nation" continues to be divided by black and white and black always ends up being the problem.

The photographs we were shown depicted primarily African-Americans. If we didn't know anything about the Gulf Coast area, we would think that indeed only poor African-Americans and some whites were affected by Katrina. It is indeed the case that it was African-Americans who were primarily affected. Yet, as a 2006 National Council of La Raza Report indicates, there were approximately 230,000 Latinos in the states affected by Katrina (Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana) and there were 115,000 persons of Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipino, and Korean origin, among others. [15] The images, in addition to confirming certain views about the people who were affected, confirmed the cherished, still very healthy, traditional dichotomy of black and white. Ronald Sundstrom, in his insightful and in-depth analysis of the black-white binary, hits the nail on the head:

Hurricane Katrina forced the nation to confront the presence and legacy of anti-black racism. Its most dramatic, destructive event was the deluge of New Orleans, and the majority of its victims were black, poor, and elderly. Discussions about historical patterns of anti-black racism and systematic neglect of African-American urban communities quickly spread across the nation through major news sources, leaving long behind the context of New Orleans and demonstrating that the nation was not finished with the black-white binary." [16]

The visual representations of the event further reinforced this dichotomous vision of the story of race in this country. If only watching all that suffering could have led to the grief that could open up a "new understanding of the vulnerability of others." [17] Instead, for many in this country Katrina became a spectacle of race to be watched comfortably in the safety on one's home, a spectacle confirming the unruliness of dark bodies.

4. FEMA: Find Every Mexican Available -- Rebuilding New Orleans

(T-Shirt Logo) [18]

How do I make sure that New Orleans

is not overrun by Mexican workers?

Ray Nagin,

quoted on NPR Nov. 2, 2005

Here I would like to go beyond visual representations, since there aren't that many photographs of those I would like to discuss, Latinos who were also victims of Katrina's devastation, and Latinos who went to New Orleans (and they were not only Mexican) in order to help in the cleanup. I also want to stress the fact that post-Katrina narratives, discussions, commentaries, governmental actions, individuals' actions, contractors' actions, and the history of the spectacle of race are all intertwined in a further othering of the other whereby already vulnerable bodies are pitted against other vulnerable bodies in the fight for survival. That sounds like a mouthful but it is a simple familiar idea which has been a part of the spectacle of race and racism from the beginning: divide and conquer -- just watch how they will destroy each other.

Many Latinos as well as Asians who suffered the devastation of Katrina did not know they were supposed to evacuate. Warnings were not given in their language and many of them do not speak English. In fact, only one Spanish-language radio station, Radio Tropical, advised residents to flee before Katrina hit. [19] Most were left to fend for themselves. For example, 70 to 80 Jamaican, Peruvian, and Brazilian casino workers were left to their own devices. [20] Those who survived did so because of warnings from relatives and word of mouth from other Latinos. Some who were not lucky to be able to leave the area but made it alive and went to Red Cross shelters were harassed by immigration officials. In Harrison County, Mississippi, uniformed officers entered a Red Cross shelter housing victims as well as newly arrived workers and rounded up the people who "looked" Latino and told them that "they had three choices: to go to Atlanta, to go to Houston, or to go straight to Mexico." They were told they had to leave in 48 hours. [21] No announcement was made by the Federal Government (as it had been made after September 11) that immigrants should not fear persecution if they asked for help. FEMA (and indeed FEMA is a four letter word [22]) even used Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers as security.

Thus, paradoxically, while the rhetoric of the black and white binary was being reinforced through various means in the aftermath of Katrina, the so-called "browning" [23] of this nation was coming to the surface and causing trouble. Now there was a "new spice in the gumbo" [24] as Newsweek reporter Arian Campo-Flores announced and, while some African-Americans welcomed it, many did not. An African-American worker is quoted saying in a Town Hall Meeting, "They are bringing in Mexicans and expecting us to work for the same money. Is slavery over or what?" [25] Mayor Nagin fueled the fire with his remarks of Mexicans overrunning New Orleans. It is estimated that after Katrina as many as 30,000 immigrant workers moved to the Gulf Coast from different parts of the U.S., Mexico, Central and South America. [26] Some of these workers worked in dangerous, toxic environments, experiencing wage-theft, mistreatment by contractors, and harassment by the police and immigration officials.

Because of the numerous issues arising from the influx of Latinos into New Orleans willing to work for cheap wages, racial tensions between Latinos and African-Americans increased. Victoria Cintra, a Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance worker says, "Racism has always existed in Mississippi but it was a very unspoken racism. Katrina tore the veil off it." [27] So while the aftermath of Katrina has led many to denounce the structural racism against African-Americans, some Latinos view it as opening the door for justifying the racism of African-Americans against Latinos and of Latinos against African-Americans. Even before Katrina, we noticed tensions building between Latinos and African-Americans because of the official announcements that Latinos were now the "largest minority." But, of course, no official announcements emphasized the fact that Latinos come in many different colors (and some Latinos themselves want to forget the fact that it does) -- and if color is your preferred way to understand people, then think of Latinos as misty rose, pink, flesh, burnt sienna, burnt umber, rosy brown, sepia, sienna, sandy brown, and raw umber.

There are Latinos of all races, but this is not part of the national vision of race that adamantly wishes to retain the black-white paradigm and at the same time to classify African-Americans as Black, Latinos as Brown, and Asians as Yellow. (It is not clear what to do with those of mixed-race.) However, while reinforcing the black-white divide, Katrina's aftermath has also made it

unstable. So have the debates about immigration and Latinos and supporters marching in cities all over the U. S. [28] Even the *New York Times* launched a series, "The Latino South -- A New Rivalry," with its first article entitled, "In Georgia, Immigrants Unsettle Old Sense of Place" (Aug. 4, 2006), and the second article entitled, "A Racial Rift that Isn't Black and White" (Oct. 3 2006). This latter article is about two ministers, one African-American, one Latino, "whose life journeys ultimately led them to the Lord and to each other," but let's not be so moved by such a touching story. The article is introduced in the online version of the *New York Times* by the following statement: "Race relations are changing in many Southern towns with blacks losing ground." I guess there is a new "battle." We should get comfortable and watch the latest racial entertainment. It is too bad we cannot be at the Colosseum and watch some gladiators kill or get mangled by beautiful, ferocious beasts. At least we can see how the blacks and the browns go at each other or we can read the results in the paper while we sip our coffee (or we can watch *Survivor: Cook Islands*). [29] Hopefully, we can get more photographs to confirm that that is just what those others do.

5. Conclusion

As a cursory look at photographic representations of Katrina shows, visually representing the suffering of the so-called other is not a simple matter; neither is looking at such representations. We are reminded again of Sontag's discussion of the double function of photographs documenting suffering. While these photographs point to the injustice that the subjects are suffering and thus outrage and sadden us, they also play to our less than noble views and attitudes and thus confirm that such horrible things are just what happens in "that place," to those others. As obvious as this double function of the photograph of suffering may be, it does tell us of the power that the visual has in relation to our knowledge claims and our value claims regarding racialized bodies race in general. Representing, interpreting, deciphering these visual offerings of the so-called other is infused with power, the power to continue to undermine and oppress -- or to break the spell of our fascination with the other as a spectacle for our viewing pleasure. Yes, a picture is still worth a thousand words. Yet, the thousand words or more that rise from a photographic image, especially a photographic depiction of those who differ from us racially, are no mere neutral description. They can be a blessing or a curse; they can affirm or injure.

The reception, interpretation, and presentation of photographic representations of an event like Katrina, which affected a disproportionately large number of people of color, clearly points to the unavoidable connection that the aesthetic has with more than aesthetic considerations. More specifically, in the case of photography, it shows how a photographic representation does not just "mirror nature" but is implicated in the way in which the subjects in the photograph are constructed and thus understood and treated. While it is not the case that one can show a direct causal connection between representations of the racialized body and the oppressive treatment of this body, as there are multiple factors leading to such treatment, one can safely note the intertwining between the visual and racial thinking. As we already know, the history of photography is filled with shameful chapters documenting photography's role in the denigration of the racialized other. The new chapter of racial entertainment that is Katrina supplies us with the images that call for our kindness and humanity but that too quickly were put to the task of affirming our suspicion regarding the inhumanity of others, especially those others whose skin color is different from ours. If only the images had made us *really* regard the pain of others. [30]

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Published July 29, 2009

Endnotes

[1] For a visual exposition of lynching in the U.S, see James Allen, Leon F. Litwack, and Hilton Als, *Without Sanctuary, Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000).

[2] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), p. 114.

[3] Photography's involvement from its beginning (1839) with the classification of the so-called "other" is notorious and has been well documented. See Martin Kemp and Marina Wallace, *Spectacular Bodies*, Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, Maria Morris Hambourg, *The Waking Dream: Photography's First Century*,

Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Shadow and the Substance: Race, Photography, and the Index" in *Only Skin Deep, Changing Visions of the American Self*, eds. Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003). This latter article explicitly discusses how photography was a key tool in the production of racism as spectacle in the U.S. especially after the abolition of slavery.

[4] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), pp. 4 and 14.

[5] It is important to point out that here I am not providing an exhaustive analysis of visual representations of Katrina. I am also not claiming that all representations of Katrina perpetuate the idea of race as a spectacle. However, a cursory look at various representations of Katrina and their treatment in the media shows that there is a sense in which Katrina became another chapter in the history of race as spectacle.

[6] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), p. 20.

[7] I say a natural disaster but Katrina was not just a natural disaster—the devastation caused by Katrina is not only the result of the forces of nature but also the result of the failure of individuals and government to protect the wards that were home to substantial numbers of people of color.

[8] We should also ask, what about the dead? There was the famous photograph of the dead man on Union street that made it to the *New York Times* and had its own feature in that paper ("Macabre Reminder: The Corpse in Union Street," September 8, 2005) and the heart-wrenching photograph "woman with corpse"—of Evelyn Turner crying alongside the corpse of her husband Xavier Bowie (*USA Today*). Sontag has much to say about why we do not wish to see the bodies of "our" dead but are very willing to see the dead of faraway places (*Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 70), thus continuing the tradition of exhibiting "exotic, that is, colonized—human beings" (p. 72). We also do not wish to see the casualties of the United States' wars, especially after the Vietnam War—lest we have our citizens see the nation's own dead and the dead abroad and doubt whether war is really the solution.

[9] Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 71. Interestingly, some critics found Sontag's last book on photography filled with the obvious, too general, and lacking in argumentation. See for example, Peter Conrad's review in *The Observer*, August 3, 2003. However, despite what could be seen as a lack of novelty in Sontag's later vision of the role of photography (what is new in saying that photographs of suffering make us sad but also confirm our suspicions about the other) such a vision is still instructive for those interested in thinking through the relationship between the visual and the ethical.

[10] Butler, *op. cit.*, xii.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[12] It is important to point out that Butler is here offering an alternative account of selfhood which emphasizes relationality. She is not, however, substituting autonomy with relationality. Instead, she explains that she is looking for a different language to point to the fact that we are not only constituted by our relations but also dispossessed by them (*Precarious Life*, p. 24). We don't always "possess" ourselves; we can be "undone in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel" (p. 24). In other words, we are not neatly bounded selves but are always connected to others in ways that can hurt us and complicate our lives. According to Butler, "This disposition of ourselves outside ourselves seems to follow from bodily life, from its vulnerability and its exposure" (p. 25).

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[14] Consider comments made by the former first lady, Barbara Bush, regarding evacuees being better off now that they were in Texas. The September 7, 2005 *New York Times* reports, "As President Bush battled criticism over the response to Hurricane Katrina, his mother declared it a success for evacuees who "were underprivileged anyway," saying on Monday that many of the poor people she had seen while touring a Houston relocation site were faring better than before the storm hit."

[15] Brenda Muñiz, "In the Eye of the Storm: How the Government and Private Response to Hurricane Katrina Failed Latinos," February 28, 2006 National Council of La Raza (NCLR) Report. Available at www.nclr.org/content/publications/detail/36812/.

[16] Ronald R. Sundstrom, "The Black-White Binary as Racial Anxiety and Demand for Justice," in

The Browning of America and The Evasion of Social Justice (New York: SUNY, 2008). In this chapter Sundstrom provides a much needed in-depth analysis of the black-white binary that is still pervasive not only in the popular imagination but in the work of contemporary race theorists! He provides explanations of five popular instantiations of the binary and explains why this binary cannot simply be dismissed. Rather, it should be analyzed in detail so as to show the different demands of justice that motivate the use of the binary in the first place. Sundstrom, however, ultimately shows the inadequacy of the binary and the need to move beyond it. Also see Linda Martín Alcoff, "Latino/as, Asian Americans, and the Black-White Binary," *Journal of Ethics* 7 (2003), pp. 16-19 and Juan Perea, "The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race" in *The Latino/a Condition*, eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

[17] Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

[18] See article in Spanish by Rafael Cores about Latinos in New Orleans. An image of the T-Shirt with the logo FEMA: Find Every Mexican Available is found here. Available at www.univision.com/content/content.jhtml?cid=941853.

[19] Muñiz, "In the Eye of the Storm", p. 5.

[20] Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance (MIRA) Dec. 6, 2005 Report. Available at www.oxfamamerica.org/newsandpublications/publications/research_reports/research_paper.2005-12-06.4237647120/OA_MIRA_testimony_12.6.05.doc.

[21] NPR Oct. 7, 2005 Report by Jason Derose. Available at www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4949507.

[22] Statement made by Oliver Thomas Jr. President of the New Orleans City Council in March 9, 2006 at Cleveland State University's conference "Rebuilding New Orleans, for Whom?" at the Levin College of Urban Affairs Atrium.

[23] The expression the "browning of America" is becoming more widely used. Coined by writer Richard Rodriguez to denote that fact of racial mixture (Newshour with Jim Lehrer, Feb 18, 1998, "Everywhere America is browning"), it has multiple meanings: the fact that Latinos are supposed to be brown and are now the largest minority, the fact that all minorities are seen as new important consumers that should be targeted by businesses, the fact that the nations' whites are losing ground etc. I find the phrase quite problematic as it reinforces the paradigm in which color is the main criterion to classify races and it glosses over the fact that there are a number of Latinos of African descent.

[24] "A New Spice in the Gumbo, Will Latino Day Laborers locating in New Orleans Change its Complexion" by Arian Campo-Flores. Available at www.msnbc.msn.com/id/1021834/site/newsweek/print/1/displaymode/1098/

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] *New America Media*, June 27, 2006.

[27] MIRA Dec. 6, 2005 Report.

[28] Consider the importance of the May 1 "A Day Without Latinos" marches all over the U.S. especially in 2006.

[29] The spectacle of racism can be regularly watched on primetime TV. See for example, *Survivor: Cook Islands*, in which participants are separated into racial "tribes."

[30] I would like to thank Monique Roelofs for her insightful and helpful comments and suggestions for revisions which helped me finalize this essay. I would also like to thank Matthew Lutts from Associated Press for his help with AP images about Hurricane Katrina.