

New Orleans: A Raging Flood of Tears (September 11, 2005)

Thursday 28 February 2008, by [OSAYANDE Ewuare X.](#) (Date first published: 11 September 2005).

they are pulling our dead out of the dead water now

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like they pulled Till out of the Tallahatchie River

and even if we did place the blame where it belongs

would they get off like the men who murdered Emmett?

while reporters blamed us for staying

refusing to see the chains that tied us to the catastrophe

that was to come

like when they tied Malcolm Little's dad

to the tracks

and left him for dead

cause they knew the train was coming

they knew the flood was coming

they knew the levees would break

they were warned

but did nothing

they were warned

but did nothing

they refused to prepare

they are pulling our dead out of the dead water now

counting them as if they were tallying votes

but you cannot measure disgrace with a body-count
and no one wins in death
what have we now but our heartbeats?
and tears
and the whys
of our questions keep coming
even Jesus was said
to have fed the poor
with a few fish and some bread
should we not expect more
from the richest nation
in the history of the world?
scabs are being ripped away
like the homes
revealing old wounds
bleeding sores
infected by the toxic scum
of lies we ingest
as the media contrived words to describe the people
when for five days they were treated like slaves
time warped to the days of whips, chains
and names that were not our own
slave ship screams
ancestors haunt in their hollers for help
in front of cameras that don't care
sending an S.O.S. of sorrow

to a world that looks on in pity and contempt
but hope doesn't stop hunger
and faith can't quench a thirst
mouths parched in the parish
surrounded by water
but can't take a drink
yes, this is hell
the smell of rotting flesh and feces
the stench of death
like Bush's breath hot with deceit
burning under a Louisiana sun
merciless as a slave master
hysterical heat
gnashing teeth, bleeding gums
and the children
the babies delirious with grief
and still they were trapped by the help that would come
abandoned by rescue teams on Highway 10
the help that didn't help
the help that held them hostage
at convention centers that became concentration camps
no refuge
no refuge
no refuge
for the women and their children
and the elders dying in their wheel chairs

smuggled to the super dome that became the prison at Abu Ghraib
blind-folded by the darkness
and tortured due to the ineptitude of officials
sinking in a cess pool of paranoia
held hostage by helplessness
how long did it take Africans
in texas to learn that they were free?
we know how slow the gov't can be
when it comes to we
who are Black and poor
families again severed
like before
when the auction block
was swollen with our blood and tears
the years are of no consequence
and now we wander the country
looking for wives and sons,
daughters and fathers,
nanas, poppas, husbands and cousins and lovers and friends and
mothers and nieces, nephews and . . .
tracing the scent of love in hope of embracing them again
on this side
pouring through webpages
hoping to notice a name that sounds like happiness
watching the tv
hoping to recognize a face
that resembles our own

looking for family
longing for home
and I can hear Nina Simone singing
"Mississippi Goddamn" blues
we who picked cotton there
grew families out of the very ground
we never owned
sucked down gristle just to survive
raised God out the dust bowl
and blew life into our bodies
with nothing
nothing
nothing
but the defiant desire to live
and once more nothing is all we have
but the defiant desire to live again
resurrected like the Jeez that is us
who will march a jazz dirge
on down Bourbon Street
to honor those whose bodies still float in the 9th Ward?
who will rebuild the city
that city of saints and haints?
bring the reconstruction that never came after Lee surrendered the war
jim crow knows
let trent lott rot in the rubble of his plantation mansion
for all those that perished unnecessarily
yes there is anger

a raging flood of tears
Bush looted our taxes
sent them overseas
robbed our rights
cracked presidential jokes as the smoke still rose
“the soft bigotry of low expectations” is Bush’s to claim
a smug racism he learned on his mother’s knee
yes, the U.S. is a Third World nation
no corporate press can cover the truth now
where dictators lie, cheat and steal
then kill the poor that would defy them
the emperor has no clothes
his ass is exposed
been stripped naked by his own shame
time to name names
there is a raging flood headed right to the White House
and FEMA can’t rescue you now
what has happened here is a crime
the homicide of an entire city
hear the prophecy my ancestors sung
God showed Noah
by the rainbow sign
said it wont be water but fire next time
the flames are burning!

P.S.

* Ewuare X. Osayande. “A Raging Flood of Tears (September 11, 2005),” PROUDFLESH: A New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics & Consciousness: Issue 4, 2006