

Gulf South Rising: Katrina 10 Week of Action Community Messaging



Purpose of this Document: The purpose of this document is to offer messaging ideas developed through a collective process that prioritized grassroots leadership from the region. The hope is that the voices of those most impacted get lifted-up and that the untold stories of survival, disaster response and disaster recovery get told during the 10 year commemoration of Hurricane Katrina.

About Gulf South Rising: Gulf South Rising (GSR) is a regional movement of coordinated actions and events to highlight the impact of the global climate crisis on the Gulf South region (TX, LA, MS, AL, FL). Through collaborative events and actions around strategic dates in 2015, GSR demands a just transition away from extractive industries, discriminatory policies and unjust practices that hinder equitable recovery from disaster and impedes the development of sustainable communities.

This year-long initiative aims to:

- 1) build regional movement infrastructure;
- 2) connect and convene frontline communities around collective healing and ecological equity;
- 3) advance regional efforts of indigenous tribal and land sovereignty; and,
- 4) shift the regional narrative from resilience to resistance.

Gulf South Rising moves using the Jemez Principles and roots its work in the following agreed upon values: Honor local, frontline leadership; Transparency and accountability of processes; Shared liberation

Community Messaging Process: Through weekly Gulf South Rising community meetings, regional calls and direct input, various voices from frontline communities directly impacted by the hurricanes of 2005 offered their stories around the challenges and victories faced during the 10 years of recovery. Five weeks of processing helped to develop the top line messaging for the 10 year commemoration of Hurricane Katrina.

- *Week 1-* Group of 60+ participants engaged in a conversation on what the nation needs to know about 10 years post-K Gulf Coast. Participants were asked 1) What stories never get told? 2) What do you still want to know? 3) Whose voice needs to be heard? The facilitation team helped to balance conflicting perspectives of opportunity and injustice of disaster. Note takers captured conversation.
- *Week 2-* Group of 50+ participants engaged in an exercise of developing headlines, messages and images and was asked what should/would/will be the headline on August 29th 2015. Responses crossed many ranges of emotion and answers were rooted in justice; satire and resistance. Participants agreed to a process that allowed prioritization of “headlines” offers to be reserved for local folks directly impacted by the storms of 2005.
- *Week 3-* Group of 50+ participants engaged in a 2 hour session of categorization “headlines” and messages into themes that highlighted stories from survivors. Participants acknowledged intersectionality of injustice and the parallel realities of different groups of people. Notes on moments of clear agreement and consensus were captured.
- *Week 4-* Group of 30+ participants compiled themes, finalized slogans, lifted out demands. Working groups to support the community-led events were established. Understanding optics and opportunities was part of the process for finalizing messaging.
- *Week 5-* Groups of 40+ finalized and confirm the top 5 messages summarized from previous weeks. A review of slogans, demand and issues sealed allowed for finalization of messaging. Acknowledging the complex impact and recovery that exists in Katrina recovery, the group confirmed 5 top line messages being careful to add explanations and reminders about which conversations spurred the slogan and demand. A regional message rooted in a recovery issue was not reached. The regional message of Gulf South Rising underscores that collective processes serve as examples of us rising together.

Community Messaging for Katrina 10 Commemoration Week of Action

| Top Line Message(s) | Community Demand(s) | Issue(s) rooted in this message |
|--|---|---|
| 1. <i>Displaced, Misplaced, Replaced</i> | We have a Right to Return. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass Displacement; Mass Disaster-based migration • Right to return as articulated by the Palestinian movement • Right to resist initial displacement • Just Recovery • Gentrification • Human Right to Return • Return of displaced people; return of social and public services; return of opportunities for those here pre-Katrina |
| 2. <i>Gone But Not forgotten</i> | We will not be forgotten. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1800 dead, not all accounted for • Permanent displacement; gone = non-existent • Cutting public and social services is a barrier to recovery • The long-term impact of trauma • Mis-used money. Where did the money go? Billions of tax dollar benefit a few. • 10 years later, we're still rebuilding. We have not fully recovered. • We saved ourselves. The government chose power; corporations chose profits. |
| 3. <i>Our Land and Culture are Under Siege</i> | Value the People, Protect the Land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police state during disaster; residents murdered; prisoners left to die • Coastal land loss caused largely by extractive industry (Oil and Gas) • Climate change • Environmental Racism • Just transition • We're resilient, but no safer now than we were 10 years ago. • We have less land and more contamination. • Our culture is rooted in caring for one another. "How are you doing?" • Racism is at the root of injustice post-Katrina. Everyone is hurt by racism. • Gentrification is destroying our culture |
| 4. <i>Not for Sale: my home, my land, my culture</i> | Recovery must be with us, for us and by us. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic justice in recovery • Commodification of our culture • Privatization of public institutions (jails, schools, hospitals) • Fights for Charity Hospital & Public Housing • Corporate accountability • Disaster Capitalism |
| 5. <i>The illusion of recovery is not progress</i> | We Belong Here. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population numbers does not equal the return of displaced people. • Money in certain areas is not progress for all communities. • Thank you recovery volunteers! You made a difference. |

| Regional Messages | Demand(s) | Issues |
|--|--|---|
| Gulf South Rising: The seas are rising... AND SO ARE WE! | A just transition and equitable recovery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The struggle for equitable and complete recovery continues in the Gulf South. • Gulf South communities deserve industries that make our communities stronger |
| Come Home! | We belong here. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We're committed to coming back stronger • Right to Return |

Protocols for Allies of Gulf South Rising

- Include #gulfsoutrising on all design materials (fliers, memes, press releases, t-shirts etc)
- Reference Gulf South Rising in all press releases/advisories
- Elevate the voices of frontline community folks on the ground (quotes, images, photos etc) – connect media to local #GulfSouthRising spokespeople
- Use #GulfSouthRising vetted messaging
- Share #GulfSouthRising social media posts
- Avoid fleur de lis (and other white supremacist symbols) on design work
- Event fliers and outreach materials proofed by local organizers - either the comms team, or the action/event lead

Statements from the people:

- "I was denied the right to come back home. I was just told I could not come back home. There was no alternative."
- "We are still recovering."
- "We are visiting in our own homes."
- "This land is not for sale. My home is not for sale."
- "We want to just ask the people: How are you doing?"
- "We were class of '05...I can't show my daughters my high school...We can't celebrate our 10th reunion"
- "Hurricane Katrina recovery is a real as Santa Claus."
- "New Orleans 10years later: it's not all that you've heard"
- "New Orleans 10 years later: don't believe the lies; come see the truth"
- "10 years later, we can't celebrate—this is not a party! We march to remember. We dance to heal."
- "10 years after the 100 year storm: Renaissance in New Orleans but for whom?"
- "10 years later: the water is gone but the people are still drowning"
- "New Orleans – the most exploited and gentrified city in America"
- "New Orleans: Never gone; forever strong"
- "Katrina: forever a part of Louisiana"
- "Katrina doesn't define me."

- “They didn’t build the levees right in the first place.”
- “What happened with Charity Hospital is criminal.”
- “When the mayor says we are back and resilient-who is he actually talking about? Charity hospital isn’t back. Public housing isn’t back. People from the lower nine aren’t back.”
- “Gentrification: division and separation”
- “The next storm won’t be different.”
- “Neo-colonialism surges after the storm”
- “Environmental racism is in full effect”
- “No rainbows-10 years after Katrina”
- “Disaster capitalist breaks ground on antebellum futuristic fantasy park-open for business August 29 2005”
- “Healing New Orleans can help heal the nation.”

For more information on Gulf South Rising or the Community events led by local leadership from frontline communities, visit www.gulfsoutrising.org