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SYMPOSIUM

RACE AND CLASS IN THE 21ST CENTURY THROUGH THE LENS OF HURRICANE KATRINA

INTRODUCTION

Dorothy A. Brown*

Much has been written about Hurricane Katrina,¹ and the reader must be thinking, is there anything new that could be said here? This symposium was conceived as providing a forum for a more contextualized discussion of Hurricane Katrina and one which would be substantively different from previous efforts. We endeavor to look at race as well as class, and, as this Journal has consistently done, move away from the black/white paradigm.² Even at a time when much of academic discourse resembles a "drive-by debate"³ this symposium was designed to do just the opposite. I will leave it to you, the reader, to judge whether our efforts have been successful.

Professor Susan Kuo's article *Speaking in Tongues: Mandating Multilingual Disaster Warnings in the Public Interest*,⁴ addresses the tragedy which occurred in New Orleans due to the numerous deaths and injuries of Vietnamese, Latinos, and other language minorities because they could not

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¹ A search of LexisNexis' US and Canadian Law Reviews, Combined, database on January 19, 2008 of "Hurricane w/2 Katrina" returned 1,165 entries.

² See, e.g., Dorothy Brown, *Moving Beyond the Black/White Paradigm: An Introduction*, 12 WASH. & LEE J. C.R. & SOC. JUST. 1 (introducing the topic of the April 2005 symposium for the Journal for Civil Rights and Social Justice).

³ See Linda E. Fisher, *A Communitarian Compromise on Speech Codes: Restraining the Hostile Environment Concept*, 44 CATH. U.L. REV. 97, 99-100 n.11 (1994) (describing a term coined by Sheldon Hackney, the former President of University of Pennsylvania, to express the tension in academia between encouraging free expression of ideas and restraining hate speech).

⁴ Susan K. Kuo, *Speaking in Tongues: Mandating Multilingual Disaster Warnings in the Public Interest*, 14 WASH. & LEE J. C.R. & SOC. JUST. 3 (2008).

understand the English-only evacuation orders.⁵ Professor Kuo urges the Federal Communications Commission to ensure that accessible public warnings for non-English speakers be made available in the future.⁶

Professor William P. Quigley's article *Katrina Voting Wrongs: Aftermath of Hurricane and Weak Enforcement Dilute African Americans Voting Rights in New Orleans*,⁷ examines the political aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Professor Quigley examines the impact of the forced relocation of hundreds of thousands of low-income African-Americans from Louisiana and what that means for the future of elected officials in that state and their remaining constituents.⁸ Professor Quigley acknowledges the limitations in the existing voting rights laws and urges reform.⁹

Professor Audrey McFarlane's article *Fighting for the High Ground: Race, Class, Markets and Development Done Right in Post Katrina Recovery*,¹⁰ examines the race and class dimension of both the governmental evacuation and current recovery efforts. Professor McFarlane grapples with the very difficult question of "[w]hat should a post-Katrina New Orleans look like?"¹¹ She answers from a race and class perspective and eloquently concludes: "[s]eeking the high ground is not just a physical place. It's a place of substantive justice."¹² She is right . . . and the struggle continues.

⁵ *Id.* at 4.

⁶ *Id.* at 34.

⁷ William P. Quigley, *Katrina Voting Wrongs: Aftermath of Hurricane and Weak Enforcement Dilute African Americans Voting Rights in New Orleans*, 14 WASH. & LEE J. C.R. & SOC. JUST. 43 (2008).

⁸ *Id.* at 52.

⁹ *Id.* at 57.

¹⁰ Audrey McFarlane, *Fighting for the High Ground: Race, Class, Markets and Development Done Right in Post Katrina Recovery*, 14 WASH. & LEE J. C.R. & SOC. JUST. 69(2008).

¹¹ *Id.* at 79.

¹² *Id.* at 87.