

views

# Two Days in New Orleans

BY BARUCH ZEICHNER

**Friday 2 December 2005 7:20 PM:** Things are hopping here in New Orleans. Here's a rundown of the last two days.

Yesterday, Thursday, December 1 was the first day residents of the lower ninth ward in New Orleans were allowed back to their neighborhoods to see what was left, or in most cases to see that nothing was left, of their homes. Contrary to representations in corporate media, many of these people owned their homes. This was an area populated by many professionals: doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc. The corporate media and the government have portrayed the residents of the lower ninth ward as impoverished urban blacks, when in fact they were professional, economically stable people living in homes that had been in some families for generations. This is just another example of the way racial stereotypes are institutionalized and perpetuated in the United States.



**Common Ground Health**

Clinic had a mobile clinic at the checkpoint/entry to the neighborhood. We were under one of two large tents with tables and chairs, all provided by FEMA or the city, I'm not sure. Traffic was directed alternately by local police and National Guard wearing M-16's on shoulder straps to be prepared for...what exactly? FEMA was there, the (now a profit corporation) Red Cross, EPA, a prayer chapel in a trailer, the Salvation Army, Hand to Hand had a clinic going. It was very hectic.

The clinic was staffed by a doctor, a physician's assistant, two medical students, two nurses, a street medic, a multi-talented "nonprofessional" and myself. The medic, the multi-guy and I did intake with people, which was a great way to make contact with people, have some time to talk with them and listen to them while they waited for their turn with a practitioner. These folks had either just seen the wreckage for the first time in person or were on their way in. They came to us for tetanus shots, hepatitis B vaccine, flu shots, blood pressure checks, one guy had a bad sore on his leg. From 10 AM to 2 PM we saw about 70 people.

I made contact with a lot of people. Most of the people who were coming from having seen their house wreckage were in shock, unable to concentrate, dazed, stunned. There were hundreds of people around and a lot of them were walking in a daze. Some people I saw were able to feel some (positiveness), and a few were absolutely beaming with gladness to be alive. Some people were finding friends and neighbors, and that was beautiful to witness; the excitement and joy. There was one woman screaming to her friend across the parking lot, there were four older women who were just all smiles seeing each other, taking pictures of each other in pairs. All these people lost everything. Every momento,

every bit of physical connection to their lives other than their bodies and the clothes on their backs.

I continue to hear from different people their certainties that the levee was blown up, and that it wasn't. That discussion continues to be spoken all around the city. Both arguments are plausible. I don't know what to believe.

I spent some time on the phone with a person who was in crisis, did laundry, and now I'm finally getting down to writing. All in all, two good days.

What I'm finding at the clinic is that if I do massage with people, they usually talk, cry, laugh, and it's working as a way to make contact. The days of sitting in the waiting room and doing impromptu counseling are done at least for now. The massage is a great way to connect, I'm loving it.

In terms of my thoughts about the bigger picture, I continue to see that the United States is essentially winding

down. The corrupt politicians and corporate greed and warmongers are in control of so many resources, including the greatest one: the minds of many of the people. The propaganda machine and the psychological effects of the ways the lies are put out has so many people numbed and essentially walking in lockstep, and yet there is a revolution happening in this country. It's not a thing trying to happen, it's happening. This all with the backdrop of, among other things, an ongoing war against people of color. I know for a lot of white people, my saying that there is a war against people of color may seem hyperbolic, but from what black people say to me, many of them see that the United States is killing people of color around the world, and certainly here at home. We all know who's on death row, and it's mostly men of color. The worldwide white supremacy movement which Hitler was part of and which Bush & Co. are part of, rolls on. The Bush family provided part of the financial support for the explorations into eugenics at Yale University in the 1920's.

People are making new ways of being in new kinds of communities. New Orleans is just one example. The possibilities here are amazing. If some solar and wind power folks would get jazzed about New Orleans and be willing to donate some good demo projects, I'm sure that the projects would receive community support, fuck the politicians, and the good will towards those who made the projects would be significant nationally. If anyone reading this knows of folks like that, please talk with them or email me or something.

"American" United States culture is in such a state of decay, and yet nature uses decay for food and makes new things from it, and I believe that is what's happening here. ▼

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