

INTERCONNECTIONS 21

Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2005-06

In the Aftermath of Katrina: Healing, Teaching and Learning



Hurricane Katrina brought about an enormous humanitarian crisis, and there has been a global response to the urgent needs of the displaced. Many ASPnet/USA schools contacted InterConnections 21 to ask if they could help schools in New Orleans, particularly McDonogh 35 High School and Eleanor McMain Secondary School. Both schools were involved in UNESCO's Transatlantic Slave Trade Project (TST) coordinated by Dr. Sylvia Frey of Tulane University, member of the International TST Task Force.

While the future of these and other New Orleans schools is uncertain at this time, an initiative sponsored by the Benjamin Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of Memphis is responding to longer-term implications of Katrina. "The Saddest Days: Katrina's Aftermath and Impact on the New Orleans African (American) Community," is giving a "voice to the voiceless" through interviews with survivors. The project is documenting stories of heroism and terror, prejudice and generosity, and displacement and rebuilding in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The Hooks Institute is a public policy research center that honors Dr. Benjamin Hooks' years of leadership in the American Civil Rights Movement. The Institute advances understanding of this and other movements for social justice through teaching, research and community programs. It is also the institutional partner for schools in Tennessee and Mississippi that participate in UNESCO's TST project.

Project components

"It was during the first several days after the hurricane, when I was evacuated, looking at people stranded on the interstate and hearing the stories coming out of the Superdome, that I thought,



Valerie Love, Archivist at the Benjamin Hooks Institute for Social Change, works to restore family photos and other historical documents that were damaged by flooding during Hurricane Katrina.

How to Contribute to "Saddest Days"

Many ASPnet/USA schools have held fundraising drives for survivors of Hurricane Katrina (see story on page 2). To become involved in longer-term recovery efforts, schools may wish to contribute to "The Saddest Days" initiative. Donations can be sent to the Hooks Institute for Social Change, 405 University Center, University of Memphis, Memphis TN 38152. Please make checks payable to "The University of Memphis Foundation" and include the Benjamin Hooks Institute's "Saddest Days" project in the memo line. More information is available at <http://benhooks.memphis.edu>, or contact Dr. D'Ann Penner at dpenner@memphis.edu (phone: 901-219-0507).

"These are truly the saddest days. Our pain has never ceased," says Dr. Clyde Robertson, Director of Africana and Multicultural Studies for the New Orleans Public School District. Now displaced and living near Atlanta, Dr. Robertson, a Hooks Visiting Scholar and former co-director of the New Orleans TST project, developed the idea for "The Saddest Days" along with Dr. D'Ann Penner (Director of the Hooks Institute) and other University staff and displaced New Orleans teachers.

Interviews with Katrina survivors are being carried out primarily in Louisiana, Georgia, Texas, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina. Results will be shared through a bi-weekly newsletter. Interview transcripts will be analyzed, in partnership with the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, for evidence of human rights violations, and recommendations for action will be made. The result will be an archive of materials created by the survivors, and a book entitled *The Saddest Days*, based on interviews and primary sources written from an African-American point of view, which has been historically under-represented in mainstream press.

According to Dr. Robertson, "It is important that a cultural component be part of this project; it is through culture that we teach, heal and learn." In addition to the interviews, a dance presentation of the experience of survivors will be choreographed by Baderinwa Ain (dance teacher from New Orleans, Hooks Visiting Artist-in-Residence, and Coordinator of the TST project). Shriff Hasan, a New Orleans teacher who was stranded in the Convention Center and is now living in Houston, will write a dramatic piece based on his and others' experiences. In Atlanta, a storytelling proj-

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ASPnet Schools Respond to Hurricane Katrina



Raking in the Money

Students at the Sussex School in Missoula, MT, are using their baking and raking skills to rake in donations for Hurricane Katrina Relief. The eight grade class raised \$140 by selling delicious treats like chocolate silk pie and peach cobbler during their gourmet bake sale, and are now raking leaves for donations. Students will also be using traditional New Orleans cuisine to raise funds during a Cajun lunch, at which they will serve gumbo and jambalaya.

“Dress Down Days” and Dances

Bodine High School for International Affairs in Philadelphia, PA, raised \$2,064 to support Katrina hurricane disaster relief efforts. A Bodine student, Justin Rollins, mobilized several other students to organize a school dance. Entrance to the dance cost \$3/student, and all proceeds were contributed to disaster relief. In addition, students negotiated with administration for disaster relief “dress down days” during which each participating student could contribute \$2 not to wear their uniforms. In addition to these fundraising efforts, several students wrote poems about their perspectives on the dis-

aster that they read over the loudspeaker during a special morning program in recognition of those who have died.

Plenty of Pennies

At Three Rivers Middle School in Cleves, OH, the Student Council and Honor Society sponsored a Penny War to raise money to aid the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Eighth grade Student Council officer and Honor Society member Tara Joseph reports, “We needed to help the hurricane victims. Holding a The Penny War helped us to do that.”

For one week, students competed to see which homeroom could collect the most pennies in their respective containers. As part of the “war,” they were allowed to place silver coins and paper dollars into the containers of competing grades, which counted as “negative money” towards their penny total. The sixth graders won the war, with over \$1200 worth of donations after deducting the negative money. The fundraiser resulted in a \$2625.00 chunk of change, which was earmarked and sent to the American Red Cross for Hurricane Katrina relief.

Other News from ASPnet Schools

Bodine High School Celebrates the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations

To recognize the 60th anniversary of the United Nations, several Bodine High School students attended the anniversary program offered by the United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia at the National Constitution Center, and hosted a speaker to talk to their International Baccalaureate students about the United Nations, and children and health.

Jackson Hole High School Honors Two UN Designated Days

On September 24, students from Jackson Hole High School (JHHS) joined UN “Messenger of Peace” Jane Goodall in a parade to honor the International Day of Peace (September 21). Students flew giant puppets, flown in similar parades from Bahrain to Mongolia, to symbolize dedication to attaining peace and the freedom of the human spirit. Jordan Schreiber relates the experience to

greater problems in the world, saying, “When we were building the dove, there were a lot of problems. I think we can relate the process to the issues facing the world today and the necessary steps to solving them—through communication and trial and error we can work through almost anything.”

To celebrate UN Day (October 24), the Global Connections Club of JHHS organized an “international lunch,” filling tables with international cuisine and decorating the halls with flags from around the world and facts about the UN. Students donated half of the proceeds from the event to aid the victims of the earthquake in Pakistan.



Students and teachers at Jackson Hole High School enjoy food from around the world during their UN Day Celebration.

Katrina Aftermath

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ect will explore the experiences of elementary, middle and high school students.

“Reclaiming Existence”

Another aspect of “The Saddest Days” is the “Reclaiming Existence” project. Flooding in New Orleans jeopardized one of the largest collections of primary source materials documenting the accomplishments, culture, history, and struggles of members of the African Diaspora for over 300 years. Artifacts – photographs, Mardi Gras Indian costumes, slavery records – were not only housed in museums and libraries, but were also kept in private homes as treasured family heirlooms. The “Reclaiming Existence”

project will salvage and conserve these historical materials, ensuring that the record of African and African American culture in New Orleans is not lost forever. “We will return everything we restore to the original owners, but will create a digital archive of the most interesting pieces of the collections, with curricular guides,” says Dr. D’Ann Penner. “We will be able to make family histories that go back to slavery available to classrooms around the world.”

Other educational benefits of “The Saddest Days” will include performances of the drama and dance pieces in schools around the country, and speakers who can give students first-hand accounts of the hurricane, its aftermath, and its larger social implications. Alongside much needed humanitarian efforts, “The Saddest Days” project is both preserving New Orleans’ endangered heritage and documenting living history at this crucial turning point in the life of the city.

UNESCO Youth Forum 2005



This year marked the fourth UNESCO Youth Forum, at which students debated the theme: “Young People and the Dialogue among Civilizations, Cultures and Peoples—Ideas for action in education, the sciences, culture and communication.” Begun in 1999, the Youth Forum has been a permanent feature of the UNESCO General Conference since 2003.

Two hundred thirty-seven youth participated at this year’s Youth Forum, with 189 delegates from 129 countries and 48 observers from international youth networks, governments and national commissions. After debating the 2005 theme in plenary sessions and working groups, youth aged 15-25 produced a final report of recommendations and proposals, available at http://unesco.takingitglobal.org/documents/YouthForum_EN.pdf. The elected Youth Forum President then presented this document at the opening session of the 33rd General Conference on Monday October 3rd. Below, Andrea Feuer, a senior at the Atlanta International School and finalist at the 2003/2004 Daimler Chrysler/UNESCO-sponsored Mondialogo School Contest, recounts her experiences as an observer at the forum and Mondialogo representative.

“A week before the UNESCO Youth Forum, I received a phone call from Paris inviting me to attend the Forum as a Mondialogo representative. I was thrilled! Not only would I be in one of the most beautiful cities in the world, but I would also be promoting Mondialogo. Kwadwo Ansah, a member of the German Mondialogo team, met up with me in Paris. Together, we worked on an oral presentation that we would present to our working group of around 80 people. Our presentation was in the form of an informational dialogue and it was also supplemented by the CNN News and World Report Mondialogo Video and a Power Point presentation. Our presentation was received well by our working group members and many of them asked us how they could get their schools involved. Mondialogo was also included in the Final Report as an initiative undertaken by UNESCO to protect and promote cultural diversity among the youth. Kwadwo and I were also interviewed and asked to share our Mondialogo experiences. This interview was conducted by ourselves and we asked each other questions using a dialogue format.



Mondialogo Representatives Andrea Feuer and Kwadwo Ansah enjoy engaging with delegates from around the world at the 2005 UNESCO Youth Forum in Paris

At the Forum, I was part of the working group entitled “All different, all unique. Celebrating diversity through dialogue.” (Other working groups included “Safeguarding the future: practising dialogue for sustainable development” and “Learning to live together: promoting dialogue for peace and reconciliation”.) Even though I was an observer, which means I could not vote, I was still allowed to contribute to the discussion and make suggestions. We discussed issues regarding: culture and identity, young people and the protection of culture and heritage, the role of culture in development, threats to cultural diversity and pluralism, local-global cultures, the role of young people in intercultural and inter religious dialogue, and how arts and culture can contribute to a dialogue among civilizations and conflict mediation. I was able to learn about what cultural activities are going on in other countries and meet people from all over the world. I was really amazed by the fact that I am a teenager and I was mainly surrounded by adults. It was very exciting to participate in the forum because I exchanged ideas and experiences with delegates from many different nations and promoted Mondialogo, a project that is fun, educational, creates new friendships and has long-lasting results.”

FLASH!

Growing Interest in the UN Student Conference on Human Rights

Interest in the Eight Annual UN Student Conference on Human Rights surpasses that of previous years. Students from ASPnet/USA schools will join others who will travel from as far as Beijing, Mexico and the Dominican Republic to debate the topic of “Water as a Human Right” on December 1 and 2. Other students from Tanzania, Jordan, Turkey, Mexico, Canada and across the US will participate through videoconferencing. Schools around the world can also follow the proceedings via webcasting and contribute to the discussion on the Student Plan of Action through the online discussion forum on the conference website at <http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/student/2005/about.asp>. For more information, or to read the background document on water issues prepared by IC 21, visit the conference website or www.ic21.org.

New ASPnet/USA School Profiles



The Ursuline School

1354 North Avenue, New Rochelle, NY 10804
(www.ursuline.pvt.k12.ny.us/)

Through clubs such as the Model United Nations and Amnesty International, young women at the Ursuline School take the initiative to become involved in world issues from sixth grade on. Last year, sixth-graders, inspired by an article in Junior Scholastic Magazine about the crisis in Darfur, raised \$900 for refugees in Chad through various events and donated 48 holiday boxes to refugees living in New York City through the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Other students organized participation in "A Night of a Thousand Dinners" by preparing all of the food and arranging to host a speaker who works with landmine victims. Proceeds from the event went to clearing mined fields through the Adopt-A-Landmine program.

The Ursuline School also hosted Dr. Jan Vandermoortele, Principal Adviser and Group Leader on Socio-economic Development at UNDP (United Nations Development Program) in New York and former head of Policy Analysis at the New York branch of UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). Dr. Vandermoortele spoke about the situation in Sudan during the school's model UN conference. Students and teachers at the Ursuline School are planning projects focused on the AIDS pandemic for the current school year.

St. Boniface Preschool

5615 Midnight Pass Road, Sarasota, FL 34242
(www.boniface.cc/preschl.htm)

Guided by the belief that "no one is too young to learn to be a world citizen," teachers at St. Boniface Preschool place strong emphasis on multicultural learning activities with the hope that exposing their students to diversity at an early age will reduce their

likelihood of forming life-long prejudices. Each week, preschoolers at St. Boniface help to make international dishes; listen to music from around the globe; and read books like *Children Like Me*, published by the UN, and *Little Spanish Little Children*, written by Marcie Leach, to learn about other cultures. They also learn to speak Spanish using the Muzzy Language Program.

We are pleased to welcome St. Boniface as the first preschool to become a member of ASPnet/USA, and as an example of the positive influence education and exposure to diversity can have on students during these formative years.



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