



Floodlines: Community and Resistance from Katrina to the Jena Six

Jordan Flaherty

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"This is the most important book I've read about Katrina and what came after. In the tradition of Howard Zinn this could be called 'The People's History of the Storm.' Jordan Flaherty was there on the front lines."Eve Ensler, playwright of "The Vagina Monologues" and activist and founder of V-Day

"Jordan Flaherty brings the sharp analysis and dedication of a seasoned organizer to his writing, and insightful observation to his reporting. He unfailingly has his ear to the ground in a city that continues to reveal the floodlines of structural racism in America."Tram Nguyen, author of "We Are All Suspects Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities after 9/11"

"Floodlines" is a firsthand account of community, culture, and resistance in New Orleans. The book weaves the stories of gay rappers, Mardi Gras Indians, Arab and Latino immigrants, public housing residents, and grassroots activists in the years before and after Katrina. From post-Katrina evacuee camps to torture testimony at Angola Prison to organizing with the family members of the Jena Six, "Floodlines" tells the stories behind the headlines from an unforgettable time and place in history.

Jordan Flaherty is a writer and community organizer based in New Orleans. In addition to his award-winning post-Katrina journalism, he was the first journalist with a national audience to write about the Jena Six case and played an important role in bringing the story to the attention of the world. He has produced news segments for Al-Jazeera, TeleSur, and "Democracy Now!" and appeared as a guest on a wide range of television and radio shows, including CNN's "American Morning," "Anderson Cooper 360," "CNN Headline News," "GRITtv," "Keep Hope Alive with Reverend Jesse Jackson," and both local and nationally syndicated shows on National Public Radio.

Floodlines: Community and Resistance from Katrina to the Jena Six Details

Date : Published August 17th 2010 by Haymarket Books (first published June 1st 2010)

ISBN : 9781608461127

Author : Jordan Flaherty

Format : ebook 326 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Race, Politics, Cultural, African American



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From Reader Review Floodlines: Community and Resistance from Katrina to the Jena Six for online ebook

Adam says

This is awesome.

Floodlines is unquestionably the best book about New Orleans I've ever read, especially New Orleans following Katrina. I only wish I had been exposed to these stories of struggle and resistance many years ago while trying to find my footing in this city I love so much but can't quite seem to find my place in.

Flaherty is a community organizer and activist who is not unaware of the problems that he brings in telling these stories, as a young, white, male, outside. Yet his collecting these stories for others to hear is so so important.

The activists and organizers Flaherty knows and highlights are incredible, powerful, thoughtful, and remarkable people. They are the ones who fight for criminal justice reform because it affects them most, they are the ones who fight for school funding when their schools are defunded, they are the ones that fight to keep second lining when formal institutions tell them no. They are the storm's first responders, and most resilient rescuers. They are the people of New Orleans.

In watching my younger brother's activism, and those around him, and those around me, I am wholly inspired by the strength, foresight, commitment, and creativity that compels actors to tackle injustices according to their own rules, on their own times, and for the greatest benefit. Sure, there are attorneys in court, teachers in schools, journalists in the field, but the people en masse are who Flaherty highlights, and are who make the most difference in times of need. And we are always in times of need.

A powerful and uplifting read that also tells the truest version of the storm, both as it effected New Orleans and as her people responded. A must read.

Thank you!

Guy Gonzalez says

Floodlines is a bracing, insightful and, ultimately, frustrating read as Jordon Flaherty's paper documentary pulls the curtain back on the systemic issues that turned Hurricane Katrina into much more than a natural disaster. He explores the history of New Orleans and the surrounding region, weaving a variety of compelling individual stories and noteworthy events, before and after Katrina, that illustrate the long-standing socio-political inequities that were fully exposed in the weeks, months, and sadly, years after the flood waters receded.

Where Zeitoun zoomed in on New Orleans with a very personal, Katrina-filtered lens, Floodlines pulls the camera back to show the bigger picture, and it's not always a pretty one. The two books complement each other well and should be read together as they offer the slightest glimmers of hope that something good might eventually come from a disaster whose enormity and repercussions are still difficult to fully grasp.

Recommended!

Katie says

This is an unbelievable book that is important for movement workers everywhere. It is about New Orleans, resistance, and people of color led organizing before and after Hurricane Katrina and a powerful read.

Doreen says

yay on Jordan!

As a citizen-journalist and social justice activist in New Orleans, Jordan Flaherty conveys in powerful and passionate prose the numerous ways in which New Orleans' most economically and politically disenfranchised populations—prisoners, people of color, immigrants, public housing occupants, and urban youth—have been continually subjected to discriminatory practices post-Katrina. While the immediate aftermath of the levee breaks highlighted egregious national government negligence that continues to plague the recovery of the city five years later, Floodlines juxtaposes callous government actions alongside others such as the closing of Charity Hospital, the razing of public of public housing, and the firing nearly all of New Orleans schoolteachers and situating them within the city's history of political corruption, police brutality, and abandonment of public education and affordable healthcare. However, rather than simply critique these oppressive institutional and policies pre- and post-Katrina, Flaherty weaves a narrative of resistance and hope throughout his book, revealing how alternative civic infrastructures such as bookstores, community centers, even architectural urban features such as porch stoops, can be sites of resistance in neglected communities often through the intersection of culture and politics.

Performance, story circles, poetry, music---all have become collective forms of resistance, primarily within New Orleanian African American communities, that contribute to community sustenance and rejuvenation and that materially embody social change. Whether it is his discussion of spoken word poets such as Sunni Patterson, transgender bounce performer, Freedie, song and dance by Mardi Grass Indians, or traditional secondline, Flaherty's examples underscore how cultural traditions within historically oppressed communities are politically motivated in their relation to community. His analysis of cultural traditions also points to the ineluctable relationship that space and cultural practices have on developing particular kinds of resistance. As he mentions early on in the book, “Organizing in New Orleans looks different than it does in other places. It is more about building community and family, about sharing stories and meals.”

The dominance of white majority voices in media and publications about New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina has drowned out other stories of survival and resistance primarily those of people of color. As Flaherty notes in his introduction, his own positionality as a white writer is problematic in that he may in some way “be benefiting from others’ struggles,” (2) yet he hopes that through writing this book he has tried “to find systems of accountability by engaging in dialogue and action with the people whose struggles are depicted in this book” (3). Throughout the book, Flaherty maintains this accountability by avoiding what has become a default position among many journalists championing under-represented, marginalized social groups: the heroic journalist who tells the story of those who cannot. Instead his lens consistently remains focused on how social justice organizations already established in New Orleans responded to the recovery process and how their attempts to establish a political agenda during the recovery was thwarted not just by corrupt local and national interests but also well-meaning outsiders: white volunteers, NGOs and

foundations.

This book should be read not solely for its substantive insertion of how social justice movements and cultural practices have played a critical role during the recovery process, but the book is prescient in that the issues and problems magnified by the city's devastation are those many other urban areas are facing as debt-saturated states divest in public education, government-subsidized housing, and affordable healthcare, contributing to an increasingly dysfunctional democracy where only a small percentage of working American can afford what were once basic rights. What has happened to New Orleans since August 2005 (sans the floodlines) can now happen anywhere.

Robyn Letson says

I'm happy that I finally went back and finished this book. *Floodlines* is a rigorously researched, street-level study of New Orleans in the years following Hurricane Katrina (finishing off with the story of the Jena Six). The book's content lays bare the brutal consequences of structural racism and capitalism, while at the same time raising up stories of resistance and struggles for justice. If you're looking for an in-depth analysis of specific aspects of post-Katrina New Orleans, this may not be the book for you - but if you'd like to read about what happened there, from the immediate aftermath to the ongoing consequences of disaster capitalism and institutionalized racism, as told by a respected organizer and journalist, I'd highly recommend it.

Mary Ralph says

This book is a stellar examination of Hurricane Katrina and the organizing in its aftermath. It provides excellent introductions to issues like The Shock Doctrine, Disaster Capitalism, The New Jim Crow, school privatization, the Non-Profit Industrial System, destruction of public housing, and white savior-ism, with depth and nuance. It is a remarkably empowering book with countless examples of folks daring to struggle, daring to win against remarkable odds.

Every white person who seeks justice should read this.

*I got this as a complimentary ebook from Haymarket Books in the days after 2017's hurricanes. Flaherty offers the book for free in a variety of digital formats on his website. The paperback is also available from Haymarket, a publisher that should have all your money anyway.

Wendy says

Best book I have read about community resilience and resistance in a long time. Highly recommend. I wrote a book review for *Bitch* about it, but I cannot say enough good things about this book. He does an amazing job talking about what it means to be an ally, how race, class, gender, and sexuality were at play in Katrina and New Orleans. And he tells a really important story of staggering injustice and people fighting back pre- and post-Katrina.

Dana says

Devastating.

Marcy says

Man-made catastrophe. Demographic threats. Hundreds of thousands of refugees denied the right to return to their homes. A criminal justice system that is motivated by racism. A government that is determined to portray itself as a melting pot all the while pursuing policies that insure a system of inequality will be upheld in all sectors: education, healthcare, safety, housing. Jordan Flaherty's book may be about New Orleans, but it has so much to teach the world about catastrophes and how to resist them in a variety of contexts. His style of journalism is deeply rooted in grassroots organizing and activism. Flaherty paints a vivid picture of New Orleans historically, culturally, and currently. Readers will get an inside view on the devastation of Hurricane Katrina as well as the creative means to resist the ongoing depopulation of New Orleans that targets women, people of color, and the poor. This book is not only essential reading, it is a call to grassroots, leftist organizers. It is filled with ideas and an agenda for taking action not only in New Orleans, but beyond.

Tara says

incendiary. a critical book for anyone interested in New Orleans community organizing and activist history, most recently with regards to Katrina and the flood. A beautifully written, thorough and thoughtful book on many current crises that New Orleans faces.
