



## TEEN SURVIVORS OF HURRICANE KATRINA SHARE THEIR STORIES

September 12, 2005

*Of the thousands of people evacuated from the flooded Gulf Coast region following Hurricane Katrina's destruction, about 300 evacuees were airlifted to Washington, D.C., and have been housed at the D.C. Armory.*

*A small group of those who arrived in D.C. were teens. Soon after arriving at the Armory, they started attending area high schools and tried to make do with their unusual circumstances.*

*Two of the young men, William, 16, a Louisiana native who preferred not to give his last name, and 18-year-old Gerard Broussard, also from Louisiana, told their stories to NewsHour Extra. The stories have been edited for publication.*

### *Gerard Broussard, 18.*

If you can survive Mardi Gras, you can survive anything.

You try to survive until you can't no more, I'm a survivor. I went to my grandpa's house after my house started flooding. It's probably under 20 feet of water by now.

People didn't want to leave because that's their hood. That's where they're from. Like I said before, I'm a survivor. I could've left but I didn't want to leave my grandpa. I knew he wasn't going anywhere. Since my grandpa wasn't running, I wasn't running.

The water at the house started coming up to our thighs, so we went up to the attic and busted a hole in the roof. It wasn't hard getting up there. My grandpa's old, but he's fit like his grandson.

After the storm was over, we slept in the house for eight days. The house was flooded the first day, but then the water went down to our ankles, so we figured it'd be okay to stay there for a while.

The day after the storm, the water was clear, it was green, it was fresh. So me and my pa, we went swimming. Then the water got darker and darker. It was stagnant and black. The toilets started backing up. We knew we had to leave.

We walked over to St. Claude in knee deep water where the police sent us to the convention center. Most of the people who were there before had left. We got on a bus to the airport and stayed there for a day before getting on an airplane.

They told us in the air that we were going to Dulles, but I had no idea where that was. I ain't even know where D.C. was, I just knew that there was a D.C.

So we got here on Tuesday. I'm here with my grandpa, my pa, and my auntie. My ma, sister and other auntie are in Houston. Most of my friends are in Houston, too. I talk to my people everyday ... all my dawgs are good. They thought one of my friends was dead, but then we talked to him a few days ago.

At the Armory, they got TV and video games; it's good, they make it feel as much like home as they can. They've been dropping off clothes. Johnny blaze, two pairs of jeans, some shirts. They gave me a hat, a white New Orleans hat. I'm Mr. Pimp right here. I got some Huaraches too.

I started school at Eastern on Wednesday, but when I'm not there, I'm either going to watch baseball or learning the neighborhood. I'm going to be here for a good li'l minute; I'm going to finish the school year, so I figure that I should learn the neighborhood.

But I don't mind it. It's a lot bigger and cleaner than my old high school. But you're like a museum. "Are you from New Orleans? Are you from New Orleans?" everyone asks you. They let you do whatever you want, but that's okay, cause then it makes you want to do your work.

Everybody's got their opinion on how the relief went. ... I'm not trippin' about it. But we ain't get troops 'til three, four days later.

When we were in my grandpa's house, we had to survive. You're a looter when you're taking stuff you don't need. You're a survivor when you're taking stuff you need to survive. I took some sardines and canned goods. ... I was trying to find water. Once I got water, we were straight. There was eight of us in the house; we had to live.

**-- As told to Brian Wolly of NewsHour Extra**

### *William, 16*

I grew up in New Orleans, in St. Thomas. I lived there with my mom and dad all my life, 16 years. I was in 10th grade at Sarah T. Reed High School.

When the storm hit, I was at my cousin's house for the weekend and I didn't know anything about it. We were watching TV early in the morning Saturday.

I'd left my house at 6 that morning. My family, my mom and dad and two sisters, heard about the storm at 8 and they went straight to Texas. They couldn't reach me so they told my auntie to watch me. They're in Texas now. I had called them when I got here. I told them don't worry about me.

When the storm came, we went to a hotel and stayed at the hotel for six days. I was with my cousins. We had food and water, but then the hotel flooded. We were on the second floor watching the water come up. We went outside on the top porch and watched. On the ground the water was up to my chest. On the sixth day, we heard that marshals were coming to empty the hotel, so we left.

We walked through the water to the bridge. There was nine of us including one dog. A poodle.

A helicopter came and picked us up from the bridge and took us around our house. They said we had two hours to get our stuff and they would come back.

We put the dogs in the backyard, put some food out for the dogs and left. I packed one bag. Once we left the house, the helicopter picked us up and took us to the airport. We stayed there overnight and then an airplane brought us to D.C. the next day. I think that was Tuesday.

When I got here I had to get seven shots, some in my arms some other places, from being in the water. It was contaminated.

There are a lot of old people at the armory, only about seven people my age. I don't have any friends here. My aunties -- Barbara and Gwen -- are with me and my uncle and my six cousins. It's a big dorm, everybody's got their own bed.

I've been to too many Nationals' baseball games since I got here. People keep giving us tickets. I'm going to an Eastern game tonight. I think it's between Eastern High School and Woodson High School.

I'm gonna be starting at Eastern on Monday. It's better than New Orleans' schools. That's what I heard. At least I'm in school, but I'm not sure how long I'll be here. My mom and dad said it's alright for me to go to school. I play football so I'm looking forward to that most.

I ain't too worried about [my situation] that much. It's going to happen, you can't stop it. It's the weather. You can't stop the weather. Some people said they blew up the levee. We stay in the East; if they had blew up that levee all of us would've been swimming.

They have TVs on in the armory talking about New Orleans, but I don't look at it. I don't want to look at it. I don't want to see the bodies I saw. I saw like five dead bodies. The bodies was swollen from being out in the hot sun so long. I saw a police officer cover one of the bodies and just leave it there. They had kids playing by it, playing basketball, bouncing the ball right next to the body. They were kids though, they don't even know what's going on.

-- As told to Kristina Nwazota of NewsHour Extra

© 2005 MacNeil/Lehrer Productions