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sarah ruhl's

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december 7-16

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november 3 & 4
at 8pm

free!!

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lower depths
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**Artists Bios**

**Marsha Ginsberg** (Scenery) is a set and costume designer for Theaters and Opera. Previously at UR: sets & costumes for *The Pazzle Locker*, by W... David Hancock. Ms. Ginsberg collaborates regularly with directors Christopher Alden and Roy Gallo. Recent work: *Carmen* (National Theater, Mannheim Germany); *Inescort* (Glimmerglass Opera & NYCO); In Mahler’s Shadow (Eos Orchestra; NYC); Three One-Arty (Rita, Piucco Matatu, Serva Padrona) at SFO; Electra, Bluebeard’s Castle (Long Beach Opera); and La Finta Giardiniera (SPF Center). Currently with C. Alden, she is designing Mozart’s *Le Nozze*, Don Giovanni, Diva Basel Opera, Switzerland. Her theater work has been seen regionally and in NYC at NYTW, CSC, the Public Theater, Juilliard, Summer Play Festival, Target Margin Theater, Ma-Yi Theater, New Georges, Tectonic Theater Project, etc. with directors Sam Gold, Michael Sexton, David Herskovits, Moses Kaufman, Will Pomerantz, and Brian Kulick. She is currently working on *Pina*, a new play by Rogueo Margule. She sits on the faculty at Swarthmore College and the University of Rochester. Her designs for the stage will be part of this year’s Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial (Dec. 2006). She is also a photographer and is showing work at Gallery Magnus Muller in Berlin.

**Thomas Dunn** (Lighting) is pleased to have another opportunity to work at the U of R (he created the lighting design for last season’s *Killer Joe*). Thomas works primarily on the creation and development of new works in NYC and abroad. Recent company credits include *Brink*, Human Future Dance Corps, Sono Productions, SPP and Trajal Harrell Dance Styles.

Jessica Gaffney (Costume) is a costume and set designer for theatre and film. She received her MFA in design from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. Off Broadway: *No Child* (dir. Hal Brooks; Epic Theater Ensemble). Other credits include: *The Internationalist* (dir. Ken Rus Schmoll; 13P/FAIRFAX Theatre Co.); *Wet* (dir. Kent Nichelson; SPF/The Beckett); *Crumble* (dir. Katie Pearl; Chubbish Thumb); *Buckeye House of Baseball* (dir. Mary Kate Burke); *The Fly*, *Marble Red Pants*, *Eastern*, and *Fun and Starts the Sacred Heart* (Over The Top Productions); *Giants, Rolling Stones, and The Fly* (dir. Daniel Guy); *Penny Skies* (Desdes University). This year the short film *Reach*, a production she designed, was included as part of the Tribeca Film Festival. Jessica is the costume designer and an adjunct faculty member for Baruch College (CUNY).

Oladiah Eaves (Sound) This marks Oladiah’s twelfth year designing for the University of Rochester. He recently designed sound for *The Lieutenants of Los Altos* and *Shining City* on Broadway, and has created sound and music for the world premieres of works by such playwrights as David Mamet, Woody Allen, Stanmark-Lord Parks, Jon Robin Baitz. He won the 2005 Lortel Award for Outstanding Sound Design for his work on *Nine Parts of Desire* (Manhattan Ensemble Theater and national tour), and an Aудelco Viv Award for *Picking* at (The Public). Other work includes: *Birdie Blue* (Second Stage), *Moonlight and Magnolias* (Manhattan Theater Club), *The Arguments*, *Beautiful Child*, *Stepping Traffic* (all at Vineyard Theatre), *Celebration* and *The Room*, *The Bald Soprano/The Lesson* (Atlantic), *Hamlet*, *Rufino* in *The T balls* and *Make Me Hot* (The Public/NYSP), Poo (Playwrights Horizons) and *Helen* (APAC). His music for television can be heard on HBO Family, Comedy Central, and The Learning Channel, and he has appeared as a session violinist and mandolinist in numerous film and television scenes. His band, “Big Hair,” has released two nationally distributed CDs. Oladiah is a UR International Theatre Program Master Artist.

**Ruth Childs** (Voice and Acting Coach) is a voice/dialect coach, director, and actor. She was born in Cornwall, England, but has lived and traveled all over Europe and the US. She completed a BA in Theatre and German at Grinnell College in Iowa, and an MFA in Acting from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. She has worked at many theatres and universities, including The Guthrie Theatre, Geva Theatre Centre, SUNY Albany, and Grinnell College. She is certified teacher of Fitzmaurice VoiceWork. She is an Assistant Professor of Theatre at SUNY College at Brockport. Previous voice and acting coaching/teaching for the University of Rochester International Theatre Program includes Shaw’s *Major Barbara*, Dario Fo’s *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, and Gertrude Stein’s *The Love Play*.

**Ray Daniels (Trumpet)** is a local horn player. Born in Americus, Ga, Ray has made Rochester his home for over forty years. He is a lifetime member of Musicians Local 866. Ray also retired First Sergeant of the U.S. Army, where he was conductor of the 98th Division Army Band. He plays currently with his own band, The Ray Daniels Orchestra.

**Ellis T. Clanton** ( Sax) is currently a member of a local gospel group, The Spiritual Uplifters. Mr. Clanton contributes his musical talent to many praise and worship services throughout the Monroe County area. He has been a member of the S.W.A.N. Community Band for the past ten years, a member of the Ray Daniels Orchestra, and has jammed with the likes of Her- man Fisher, Marian McPartland, and Spider Martin.

**Jeffrey Klein** (Drums) is studying Physics and Electrical and Computer Engineering at the UR. He plays percussion in the Symphony Orchestra on River Campus, and comes from Virginia.

**Patrick McLaughlin** (Trumpet) is a Senior at the UR studying Physics. He has been playing the trumpet since he was 10, and jazz since he was 15. This is his Todd Theatre debut.

the university of rochester international theatre program presents

*Lower Depths*

by maxim gorki
adapted by nigel maister

directed by nigel maister
set design by marsha gibnsberg
costume design by jessica gaffney
lighting design by thomas dunn
sound design by obadiah eaves

voice and acting coaching by ruth childs

production staff

production stage manager..................daniel mauro
assistant stage managers..................emily borgna/costumes
..............................................martin harrison cozens/sound
..............................................brian lobenstein/props
..............................................montoa davis/lights
master electrician..........................julia cosse
assistant master electrician..................mike levine
audiovisual engineer..........................emily pye
assistant director.............................eugene vaynberg

costume stitcher.............................irena kuvicicz

this production runs two hours and twenty minutes with one ten minute intermission
please be aware that incense is lit during the performance
please remember to switch off all cellphones and electronic devices
Born Aleksei Maksimovich Peshkov on March 28, 1868 in the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod, Peshkov adopted the last name Gorki in 1892 while working for a newspaper in Tiflis. Gorki translates as “the bitter one,” a moniker that would become an accurate description of the man who fought against the injustices visited on the lower classes and championed the socialist realism doctrine that dominated Soviet culture.

Orphaned at nine years old, Gorki was subsequently raised by his grandmother, whose fondness for literature and compassion for the downtrodden influenced him deeply. Gorki left home at the age of twelve and traveled across Russia for five years, working as a baker’s boy, fruit seller, railway employee, biscuit factory worker, clerk to an advocate, and operative in a salt mill, all the while living and interacting with the poor working class. In 1884 he failed to enter Kazan University, and a few years later was arrested for revolutionary activities. In 1887 he attempted suicide, but survived when the bullet missed his heart. He then began landing jobs with various provincial newspapers, and soon his combination of talent, and candid exposure of the Tsarist regime got the attention of many influential people. After being arrested again for publicly opposing the government, he met and befriended many revolutionaries, including Vladimir Lenin in 1902. The publishing of his three volume Sketches and Stories between 1898 and 1899 and his first novel called Fama Gordeyev also established his reputation as a fiction writer.

Gorki’s so called revolutionary activities continued in 1902 when he exposed Matvey Golovniov for attempting to secretly arrange pro-government coverage in the press. That same year, Gorki published his most famous play, The Lower Depths, which successfully debuted at the Moscow Arts Theater under the direction of Konstantin Stanislavsky. His successes in literature earned him an appointment as Honorary Academician of Literature.

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in New York, he wrote *City of the Yellow Devil*, which condemns American capitalism. In October 1917, the Bolsheviks finally succeeded in overthrowing the Tsarist regime, and Lenin's socialist agenda went into full swing.

Almost immediately following the success of the Revolution, Gorki turned against Lenin and the new government. His newspaper *Novaya Zhizn* (New Life) fell under the repression of the communist leaders, and Gorki admonished Lenin and Trotsky for their corruption and suppression of the very civil liberties and freedoms that they had fought so long for. In 1918 he published a collection of critical essays of the Bolsheviks called *Untimely Thoughts*. Following his deteriorating health due to tuberculosis and direct threats from Lenin regarding his stance against his government, Gorki emigrated to Capri in Italy in October, 1921. While there, he wrote what is often considered his best novel, *The Artamov Business*, in 1925.

Gorki made numerous trips back to the USSR, including a famous 1929 trip to a gulag called Solovki. The government had temporarily cleaned up the brutal work camp in preparation for his arrival, and Gorki responded by writing a favorable review of the camp (which had already gained ill fame in the West) and its politics. By 1929, Joseph Stalin had grasped complete control of the Soviet government, and in 1932 he extended an invitation for Gorki to return to his native land permanently. Apparently without money and glory, Gorki accepted the invitation, and his move out of Fascist Italy was a huge propaganda victory for the Soviets. Upon his return, Gorki was decorated with the “Order of Lenin,” given a mansion in Moscow, and a house in the countryside. His birth city, as well as one of the central streets in Moscow, was renamed in honor of him.

As Stalinist repression intensified in the mid-1930s, Gorki was placed under house arrest in Moscow, where he was delivered a special version of the newspaper *Pravda* (Truth), which contained no news about arrests or purges ordered by Stalin. Following the sudden death of his son in 1935, Gorki died in 1936. Speculations that he and his son were poisoned were never proven, although both perished under suspicious circumstances. Stalin himself carried Gorki’s coffin during the funeral.

Gorki's life is often seen as a series of changes of allegiance. He rose to prominence by writing sympathetically and optimistically of gypsies, hobos, down and outs, and in support of the Revolution, only to turn against the revolutionary government he helped to establish. In a critical essay, Rocco Landesman notes, “He ended up doing what every political person this side of Stalin must do – he compromised.” Nonetheless, his work remains socially and politically relevant to this day.
Jean Renoir adapting Maxim Gorki's celebrated play, The Lower Depths. The first adaptation was made by the famous French director, Jean Renoir in 1936, and in 1956, the eminent Japanese director, Akira Kurosawa, created his own version of the play on the big screen. Each director chose a different focus for his film, based on different interpretations and emphases, and thus the implications and philosophical messages of each film are distinct to each other. In comparing the films, there is no real middle ground, and each director has taken his adaptation to an extreme of sorts. Whether or not Renoir's version had an effect on Kurosawa's is unknown, but it may possibly explain why neither film is able to strike a true balance between pure entertainment and a serious philosophical message.

The written play itself is short on narrative events. While this does not present a problem for a live audience, it does make it more difficult to bring to the screen. The plot of Gorki's play can be summed up very quickly, and the majority of it is a dialogue between the ensemble of characters that facilitates the understanding, sympathy, rage and struggle felt by the audience. Attempting to separate himself from the essentially non-plot driven nature of the work, Renoir latches onto elements in the narrative and invents other actions to heighten the drama. He enlarges and decreases roles, creating relationships that never existed, and varies his sets to give the movie more of a narrative drive. For example, the role of the Baron (the Colonel in this production) is significantly enhanced and focused on, as is the romantic struggle between Peppel and Natasha. In contrast, the role of Luka (Luke, in our production), the itinerant pilgrim, is virtually eliminated. While Renoir excelled at developing each of the many characters through perpetual interaction of the group, Renoir chooses to single out specific plotlines and people, emphasizing the dynamics that he felt would carry the film best. This decision leads to an entertaining and quickly moving story, but largely diminishes Gorki's philosophical message.

Renoir perhaps realized that the story should in some way mold itself into a visually appealing work of art. This seems only natural for a filmmaker to do. In some ways he is able to translate the struggle depicted by Gorki between those characters that he actually decided to include in the film, but again he softens the overall message. The power of Gorki's play lies in its ability to combine individualistic ideas into a collective theme. Each character, with perhaps a single exception, is essentially concerned only with himself or herself, and yet an aura of collective struggle and survival (or lack thereof) permeates the stage. There is a consistent philosophical message that lasts through the entire play. Renoir periodically delivers this struggle, but fails to give a deeper meaning to his adapted plot as a whole. The strength of his adaptation lies solely in his ability to creatively entertain and to cinematographically inspire.

On the opposite extreme, we have the famed Akira Kurosawa. It is immediately obvious in his rendition that the image painted by Gorki is to be similarly recreated. The sets present a halfway house of sorts to reality. The tenant in the film is shown as he truly is, carrying his tools, working on the farm, and looking satisfied and purposeful. The worker then becomes the subject of the art. Maxim Gorki took his role as a writer for the socialist cause very seriously. He also saw the role of the artist as much more instrumental than the actual art he produced. In a letter to fellow Russian author, Count Leo Tolstoy, Gorki wrote that every writer should be higher than that which he writes. He believed that culture is shaped by the writer's career, and not necessarily by specific works. He may not have always agreed with the leaders that forged the USSR, and often spoke out against them. By the time he returned from exile, he was put on house arrest in Moscow, and suppressed by the institutions he was so instrumental in creating. But, at the end of the day, his commitment to socialism seems clear. As one critic put it, "With Gorki, there is no such thing as 'art and society.' There is only 'the artist and society.'"

socialist realism cont.

had been thrown into prison on charges of revolutionary activities. This leads her, in the end, to finally join the revolutionary effort. In order to promote the socialist realism style, Gorki also wrote a famous pamphlet called On Socialist Realism. At heart, Gorki was certainly a socialist. He ardently supported and participated in the revolution, and even though he publicly opposed Lenin and Trotsky in 1918 and exiled himself from the USSR shortly following, he remained committed to the socialist cause, even forming a school of socialist thought in Italy. Gorki believed that a writer must stand on a moral high ground, specifically that of socialism, and see clearly all of the crimes of capitalism, and all of the greatness of the heroic activities of the proletariat. As he said, "In a contemporary age, writers assume the mission to play two roles at the same time, that of a midwife [to socialism] and a grave digger [to capitalism]." The entire focus of socialist realism, according to Gorki and the communist government, was to simply further the philosophical socialist worldview and to inspire others to do the same. They did this by elevating the common worker by presenting his life and work as admirable. The worker should in some way model himself after the common worker by presenting his life and work as admirable. The worker should in some way model himself after the artist as much more instrumental than the actual art he produced. In a letter to fellow Russian author, Count Leo Tolstoy, Gorki wrote that every writer should be higher than that which he writes. He believed that culture is shaped by the writer's career, and not necessarily by specific works. He may not have always agreed with the leaders that forged the USSR, and often spoke out against them. By the time he returned from exile, he was put on house arrest in Moscow, and suppressed by the institutions he was so instrumental in creating. But, at the end of the day, his commitment to socialism seems clear. As one critic put it, "With Gorki, there is no such thing as 'art and society.' There is only 'the artist and society.'"

Angola is the largest maximum security prison in the U.S., with 5,108 prisoners and 1,740 staff members. • 85% of prisoners never get out because they are serving sentences without possibility of parole or sentences longer than 20 years. • 52% of prisoners have no parole option • 33% of prisoners are over the age of 45 (nationally 3%). • In 2005, 3 times as many prisoners died in Angola as made parole. • 85 prisoners on death row (64% black, 33% white, 3% other).
socialist realism

With the successful overthrow of the Tsarist government by the Bolsheviks in October 1917, a movement to modify the collective style of art was seen as imperative by the new ruling class. The Bolsheviks began a movement called Proletkult, which stands for the Proletarian Cultural and Enlightenment Organization, and sought to put all of the arts into the service of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Socialist realism is a teleological (study of design, purpose, and finality) style of realistic art that is meant to promote the goals of socialism and communism, and it became state policy in 1932 under Joseph Stalin. One of the main authorities on socialist realism, as well as an important contributor, was Maxim Gorki.

The control of the arts in Russia was not a new concept when the socialists took power. In fact, the Tsarist government had always done the same, even requiring that the official censor clear all books before publication. The Bolsheviks merely continued this policy, but with a different mandated style of art. Many of socialist realism’s ideals stemmed from the reaction by the new government against the so-called “decadent bourgeois art” whose movements began prior to the revolution. It was often the case that a form of art was not necessarily frowned upon because of its particular aesthetic features, but rather because either its style began during the despised Tsarist period, or because it did nothing to further a clear socialist cause. The philosophy of socialist realist art claims that successful art depicts and glorifies the proletariat’s struggles and transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialist realism. The novel tells the story of an uneducated mother being gradually awakened to the class structure of society from a desire to protect her only son, who

centuries, the drawback to film lies in the limit of the viewer to focus on the part of the scene that he desires; to react to the dynamics and tensions occurring between characters. He is directed to look at the individual talking in the moment, and given the lack of movement, the film may, for some, become tedious. Kurosawa magnifies the lack of narrative drive that is present in the written play through his decision to maintain limited perspectives, or simply as a byproduct of choosing to follow Gorki’s directions so closely. In this way, Kurosawa’s effort becomes counterproductive. His goal of presenting the social and philosophical struggles between his characters is often undermined by the faithfulness of his presentation. That being said, the film is justly recognized as a triumph of ensemble acting, and many of the performances by some of Japan’s leading actors such as Toshiro Mifune, are extraordinary.

Each of the adaptations chose to embark on a separate journey in recreating Maxim Gorki’s The Lower Depths. In their own ways, Jean Renoir and Akira Kurosawa paint an interesting representation of Gorki’s plot and message. However, neither ultimately succeeds (in this writer’s opinion) in striking a balance between entertainment and the communication of the struggle painted in the original. Perhaps the play itself inherently limits creating such a balance, or simply makes it extremely difficult. Nonetheless, while each master of cinema has created an enjoyable version in one way or another, perhaps one day the combination of their visions or a new one altogether will result in a film that even more effectively explores the struggles articulated by Gorki back in 1902.

a note about the adaptation

The characters in The Lower Depths are survivors. Homeless, destitute, down-on-their-luck, and desperate to be sure, but survivors nonetheless. Despite their dislocation and their plight, they struggle, through dreams or their insistence on attempting to grapple with “truth,” to continue and even to find joy in their environment. By transposing the play’s action to a post-Katrina world, we have found, I believe, a contemporary equivalent to Gorki’s original setting. That being said, it should be noted that this is not a play about Hurricane Katrina or even about New Orleans. Rather, Gorki’s original paints a vivid picture of souls ignored, left behind, and devalued by the larger world within which they find themselves. Hurricane Katrina and the wreckage of property and lives in the Gulf States exposed the vividness of divisions of class, economies and race within our society. It is against this background that our version of this classic work is set, and it is within this broader socio-political landscape that our characters search—for meaning, truth, love and self-respect in a world made adverse by man and nature.

a note about the program

The program content is compiled by Assistant Director, Eugene Vaynberg. For a complete list of sources and works cited, please contact the editor.

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hurricane katrina

On the morning of August 29, 2005, the third strongest land-falling U.S. hurricane on record touched down in the state of Louisiana. Hurricane Katrina headed directly for New Orleans, and in its wake left destruction more massive than any other natural disaster in the history of the United States. Katrina’s wrath covered 90,000 square miles and killed 1,836 people, most of those in New Orleans. At least 705 people are still unaccounted for. The hurricane and subsequent flooding of 80% of the city destroyed 275,000 homes and created approximately $100 billion worth of damage. Over 300,000 people lost their homes. At least 150,000 people were affected in New Orleans. As flooding caused the majority of the damage within New Orleans, a city already mostly below sea level, questions and blame arose regarding the levee system designed to protect it. Furthermore, and perhaps even most importantly, the government’s response to the tragedy, and its attempt to help the thousands of stranded victims was excruciatingly slow and disorganized, prompting many to question the motives of U.S. leaders toward a city in which the majority was relatively poor and 67% of the population was African American. Whether or not race was an issue will forever remain unanswered, however, it is at the very least blatantly clear that the level of ignorance, apathy, denial, and misinformation that characterized the government response and that continues to characterize their efforts in rebuilding the city to this day remains utterly shocking and shameful.

Nineteen hours before Hurricane Katrina hit land, Ray Nagin, the mayor of New Orleans, finally ordered a mandatory emergency evacuation. Many with vehicles, means, and physical ability to leave the city did so, but upwards of 60,000 others were left behind. Many that stayed simply did not have cars. Others did not believe in the severity of the hurricane, and many were confident that they could ride out Katrina like they had survived numerous other storms in the past. Furthermore, thousands of people who might have decided to leave, given the ability and time to do so, were unable to get away, many ended up in the Superdome, the only available building ready to house and protect large numbers of people. As the hurricane unleashed hell in New Orleans on August 29 and the levees began to fail, the remaining citizens of the city were completely trapped.

On August 30, the American Red Cross was ready to go in and assist the 25,000 people in the Superdome with food, water, and medical assistance. However, they were repeatedly denied access by the Louisiana Department of Homeland Security who claimed that the presence of the Red Cross would keep people from evacuating and encourage others to come back into the city. Nonetheless, at 10:55pm that same night, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco released a statement ordering that the Superdome be evacuated, but with no plan or timetable in place to do so. Earlier, at 12:30pm, President Bush finally said that at least 15,000 people were affected in New Orleans. As the Superdome was heading back to Washington, People being rescued inside the city throughout the day were told to go to the Convention Center for food and water, only to find that no essentials or sufficient police were there to greet them. Those in the Superdome were similarly struggling, finding themselves without operational facilities, sufficient food, water, and temperatures into the hundreds. By the end of the day, 80% of the city was under water.

Two days after the storm, on August 31, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) finally announced that it had 473 buses to evacuate the stranded citizens of New Orleans. People begin to be moved, traveling for long hours to undisclosed locations spread around the country, with many separated from families and loved ones. It would take days to evacuate people, and three days later, there were still thousands left in the city. On September 2, the Red Cross again requested to enter the city. They claimed that they had adequate supplies, people, and vehicles. Louisiana officials responded that they needed 24 hours to provide escort and prepare for the arrival. 24 hours later, a large-scale evacuation was under way and the Red Cross aid never reached New Orleans. At noon on the 2nd, 4 days after the storm, a military convoy finally reached the Convention Center and delivered the first supplies of food and water to the thousands of people still there. The next day, Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu released a statement that disclosed FEMA’s refusal to accept water-tanker aircraft from the U.S. Forest Service to fight fires in the city or even trains from Amtrak to evacuate citizens. On Monday, September 5th, one week after the storm, workers were finally able to plug the breach in the 17th Street canal. Two weeks after the storm, many bodies still lay uncollected and out in the open.

Multiple statements by President George W. Bush, FEMA and other government officials claimed that they were unaware that the levees holding back the Mississippi River would fail. However, as far back as 2002, numerous media outlets published conclusive articles that this was in fact the case. In June 2002, the major newspaper in New Orleans, the Times-Picayune published a five-part series in which it warned that if a large hurricane hit the city, the levees would break, the city would flood, and thousands would die. Later in August, the New York Times published an article that drew the same conclusion. That same year, the signature nightly news program on National Public Radio, All Things Considered, reported that New Orleans was at risk. Between 2002-2005, the Times-Picayune published at least nine stories reporting that the reallocation and lack of funds for levee projects was overawing dangers for the city. By 2004, ABC’s 20/20 program, and NBC’s Dateline reported similar findings. The Army Corp of Engineers as well as Louisiana’s congressional delegation consistently requested urgent funds to improve the levees, but were repeatedly denied by the Bush administration. The Corp requested $11 million in 2004, but received only $5.5 million, and requested $22.5 million the following year, but again only received $5.5 million. In the summer of 2004, FEMA, in cooperation with the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center, simulated a category 3 hurricane named Pam, and concluded that the levees would break and thousands would drown should such a scenario become a reality. As if the threat were not obvious enough, FEMA itself listed prior to the terrorist attacks on 9/11, that a hurricane of sufficient magnitude hitting New Orleans was one of the three biggest potential catastrophes facing the United States, along with an earthquake in San Francisco and a terrorist attack in New York City.

One year after the devastation of Katrina, the progress in cleaning up and rebuilding the city has been shockingly slow. One-third of the trash has yet to be picked up, and 60% of the homes still have no electricity. Less than half of the city’s pre-storm population of 460,000 has returned. One-half of all physicians are gone, and there is a shortage of 1,000 nurses. Six out of nine hospitals are still closed, and only 60% of public schools have re-opened. Only 17% of buses are operational, there is a 40% hike in rental rates, and the suicide rate has increased by 300%. FEMA has been excruciatingly slow in obtaining shelter for those who lost their homes, and thousands upon thousands of other citizens are scattered around the entire country with nowhere to go, and no life in New Orleans to return to.

The support from the international community has been exceedingly generous. The largest single gift has come from Kuwait in the amount of $500 million, with other countries such as Qatar, South Korea, India, and China also contributing significant sums. Even war-torn Afghanistan was able to donate $100,000 to the cause. Whether or not these funds will ever reach New Orleans remains a question, considering the city is a year removed from the storm and there has still to be significant progress in reconstruction. The response by the United States government in support of its own citizens dealing with such an extraordinary disaster has been appalling on many levels. The event has proven to be an eye opener for the level of commitment being offered the average American in desperate need. One would anticipate that the level of seriousness with which the government deals with the aid of foreign policy would be surpassed by its response to its own people. However, this is apparently not the case. One can only hope that such acts of ignorance and apathy will never be repeated.