

Film Review: Trouble the Water

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In the documentary *Trouble the Water*, the film follows the survival of two people in New Orleans, Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina. The couple, Kimberly and Scott Roberts, shows their own personal perspective of the hurricane and they reveal the damages the hurricane has placed on their lives and in their neighborhood. *Trouble the Water* contains footage from the past so the audience can see how strong and harsh Hurricane Katrina really was and the destruction left in its path. Given the severity of the disaster caused by Hurricane Katrina, the colored and poor people of New Orleans were segregated from the privileged and rich citizens.

Even before the storm hit, Kimberly and Scott Roberts were stranded in their home waiting for help that would never come. Many who were left behind were of colour and were poor which made it clear that there was a prejudice against the black community. This was just the beginning of the injustices that would impact New Orleans. The couple could not afford a car to escape the city and neither could her neighbours. There were no means of transportation and even the city's government wasn't providing any help. The Roberts patiently waited for the storm to approach and the remainder of the city bunkered down. As Hurricane Katrina approached, the couple filmed the evacuation of the city. Residents were urged to evacuate through television broadcasts, but many in the black community were forgotten and left. The film showed firsthand the situation that the black community was living in and the discrimination they faced before, during and after the storm. This was an injustice done to them because the better off had cars to get out, credit cards and bank accounts for emergency hotels and supplies,

their immediate families likely had resources to support their evacuation, and the wealthier also had the insurance policies for rebuilding. (Smith, 2006) The poor however, had nothing left but the small amount of supplies needed to survive the storm.

During the storm, the help they desperately need does not come even in the most dire situation. Roberts family's house had flooded causing them to find shelter in the attic along with one of their neighbours. As the house fills with water, the family is forced to call 9-1-1 as a last resort in order to prevent their family from drowning. However, operators at the other side of the line turned them down saying that there was no one to rescue them any time soon. The authorities were not going to help them at all and they were not going to risk their troops and rescue teams to save the stranded people. This was a basic issue of inequality and social justice and America did not let the black community and the poor have those rights even though in their American Declaration of Independence stated that all men are equal. (Mkoren, 2010) It was just words on paper and there were no actions to help the disfavoured group of people. This was not the case in this natural disaster because many coloured individuals and poor people were treated like they were animals and outcasts of society. As the storm passed and the water receded a bit, the whole community was stranded on top of their roofs waiting for the National Guards and rescuers to come. It definitely did not come for a long time.

After the storm, there was still a huge amount of prejudice towards the poor and the coloured community and there was no response from the government. The Roberts Family and many others had approached a nearby Navy base for refuge except the base was closed and the gates were locked. As soon as they got close, soldiers turned them away at gunpoint and were forced to leave the perimeters. (Erbert, 2008) The soldiers that came to help were under orders

from their superiors and were commanded not to share their water supplies. It was like they were at a war zone and criminals were roaming the streets. At one point of the movie, Kimberly states that they had felt like they were not U.S. citizens." (Erbert, 2008) As rescue teams weren't sent in, they took the matters to their own hands. Eventually they stole a truck and retreated to the shelter in Alexandria, LA. As they left the city, there were streets lined with people who desperately need water, food and shelter. This definitely broke my heart because these people didn't deserve being treated in such a horrid way. They had lost everything and yet the government did not even bother to send actual help except soldiers to keep the city in order. At one point of the movie, President Bush had said to rely on private organizations for help and bluntly reminded the people of Orleans that help from the government was not going to come. After weeks of waiting, the Bush government had finally responded to the needs of the people after outcry from other states. The Roberts family stayed at Kimberly's uncle's house and tried to find the means to survive. FEMA had provided people with money and other essentials however, Scotts Roberts could not receive it due to the fact that he did not has an address in New Orleans. Even though the family had lived there for years, they had no proof that they lived there because of the storm that emptied and drenched their belongings with water. This was the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Many people were left with nothing and could not get help through and agency sent up to bring relief and support to families. Majority of the population was the black community who were left in the dust while the white community had already returned to their homes and started rebuilding their lives. The rich and powerful had the advantages of the Hurricane while the black and poor community had nothing. This was a clear example of prejudice.

Trouble the Water illustrated the idea that the “disaster” of Hurricane Katrina caused much more than the devastating effects of a “natural” disaster. The devastation of the storm impacted some people more than others even before the storm and the societal factors shaped the impact that the storm had on New Orleans both before and after. They were left behind while the rich fled and were thrown into the storm to survive on their own. During the storm, the Roberts’ family were abandoned in the flooded area and rescue teams were not sent out to help. At the end, through many difficult complications, they were able to survive and adapt to the many obstacles thrown at them.

Reference List

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