SURVIVING THE STORM: THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS FROM GEE'S BEND TO HURRICANE KATRINA

Except where reference is made to the work of others, the work described in this thesis is my own or was done in collaboration with my advisory committee. This thesis does not include proprietary or classified information.

____

Heather Marie Finch

Certificate of Approval:

________________________ Christopher Forhan Assistant Professor English	________________________ Alicia Carroll, Chair Associate Professor English
________________________ Cedrick May Assistant Professor English	________________________ George T. Flowers Interim Dean Graduate School

SURVIVING A STORM: THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS FROM GEE'S BEND TO HURRICANE KATRINA

Heather Marie Finch

A Thesis

Submitted to

the Graduate Faculty of

Auburn University

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the

Degree of

Master of Arts

Auburn, Alabama
May 10, 2007

SURVIVING THE STORM: THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN

AMERICANS FROM GEE'S BEND TO HURRICANE KATRINA

Heather Marie Finch

Permission is granted to Auburn University to make copies of this thesis at its discretion, upon request of individuals or institutions and at their expense. The author reserves all publication rights.

____

Signature of Author

____

Date of Graduation

THESIS ABSTRACT

SURVIVING THE STORM: THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN

AMERICANS FROM GEE'S BEND TO HURRICANE KATRINA

Heather Marie Finch

Master of Arts, May 10, 2007
(B. A., Tuskegee University, 2005)

54 Typed Pages

Directed by Alicia Carroll

The representation of African Americans has been a difficult subject to discuss and a difficult problem to solve. Different ways of approaching the representation of African Americans are shown in news feeds, newspapers, magazines, documentaries, and poems. There are no known solutions that make the misrepresentation of African Americans a thing of the past, therefore, a continuous discourse must confront the problem.

Representation of African Americans in Gee's Bend and Hurricane Katrina are the particular instances discussed. Photographs, a documentary, and poems show how misrepresentation of African Americans occur and are discussed. These examples are able to show how the framing of information can be detrimental.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Alicia Carroll for being supportive since I first began the research for this topic. I have to thank my mother, Juanita, and my brother, Jonathan, for being all the inspiration needed.

Style manual or journal used: MLA Style Handbook

Computer software used: Microsoft Office Word

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Interpreting Crisis	3
Historicizing Crisis	13
Responding to Katrina and Reshaping Identity	22
Conclusion	42

Introduction

Race is essentially a "socially constructed fiction." It stays alive not only because of visible biological characteristics such as eye and skin color, but also, and more powerfully, because of "ideas, attitudes, and cultural practices" such as photographic and media representations (Babb 9-10). This thesis will argue that in photography and media representations of African Americans in crisis, American national identity itself is often exiled from the African-American experience. Historically, this has been clear in representative photos of "primitive" and distinctly "African" Americans in crisis such as the famous Resettlement/Farm Security Administration photos of Gee's Bend, Alabama, during the Depression. The durability of this tendency in American culture remains clear in the contemporary re-circulation of those Gee's Bend photos and culminates in the abundant use of the term "refugee" when referring to African-American survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

I will explore how, historically, in photography and media representations, African Americans in crisis have been represented as foreign in their own nation and fixed in terms of their relationship to social power. This paradigm will be examined first in a series of representative photos from Gee's Bend and then in Hurricane Katrina images. Figure 1.4 will show a young girl in solitary with no mother or father, and mud and logs surround her, trapping her in a "primitive" frame. Figure 2.9 will show the blatant framing of two photos. In the first photo, the black male is described as a "looter"

and in the second photo, the white male and female are described as "finding" items. I will argue in fact that a critique of the re-circulation of such images is crucial to the "forging of new, and future, national identities" for African Americans (Hall, *Representation* 18). In fact, "by bringing up past origins, traditions, mythologies and boundaries" such as traditional photographic framing of African Americans, new works such as the poetry collection *Hurricane Blues: Poems about Katrina and Rita* and the documentary *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* reshape and contest old identities (Hall, *Representation* 18). In these works, it is clear that this historical paradigm is importantly challenged and contested. My thesis will move from a theoretical discussion of the interpretation of images to an interrogation of raced historical paradigms through the Depression era photos of Gee's Bend, and then move on to a discussion of the paradigm's redeployment and resistance to that redeployment in contemporary culture by poets and film-makers such as Philip C. Kolin, Susan Swartwout, and Spike Lee.

1.

Interpreting Crisis

Frantz Fanon argues that both the colonist and the colonized are "worth just as much"; he speaks of the struggle in bringing representation to equal terms (10). In photography and mainstream media representations, the continual practice of marking whites and blacks as "different" holds back progress for better representation for all. Those who are considered different, such as African Americans, are assessed according to characteristics like religion, skin color, eye color, hair color, language, and class which the "ideology of whiteness" put together (Babb 169). Indeed, Valerie Babb argues that in photography whiteness does not denote any type of cultural status. It is instead linked to "mutable relationships of social power" (Babb 13). I will argue that the fixed photographic state of a people is clear in the Depression era photos of Gee's Bend whose purpose was to gather support for the "resettlement" of Benders in modernity, even as the photos claim the Benders' foreignness and difference as a source of beauty.

The way in which photographs of African Americans in crisis are framed, often even by well-intentioned white photographers, reflects the dominant stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminations that come from the construction of race. Michael D. Harris writes, "[Race] is so deeply embedded in the American consciousness that much

of our language and imagery operates from racial assumptions that seem natural and therefore resist critical inquiry" (1-2). These "racial assumptions" of, for example, African American poverty or violence become a frame that highlights the "difference" of African Americans in crisis. Such assumptions may be visible as a literal frame in the textual captions that accompany the Hurricane Katrina photos. This text acts as a traditional literary term "frame," meaning a narrative that complements of the narrative it contains (Barry). The Gee's Bend and Hurricane Katrina photos, *When the Levees Broke*, and selections from *Hurricane Blues* will be discussed by looking at the actual words that surround the photos and are included in the documentary and book projects. Also, the rhetoric that surrounds these works will also be discussed because they are important to the frames.

The framing of African American people as violent and impoverished and as fixed in violence and poverty complicates the representation of them in moments of national crisis. With fixed identities, African Americans in crisis have little power within the frame. Without much power, African Americans have a difficult time gaining some of the control over their representations. We are left out and not able to completely take part in America, both past and present, because of the social power being located in one group (Babb 38). The English were able to give a good reason for the exclusion of those "not like them" in the beginning stages of the new nation (Babb 58). Contemporary Americans, particularly in moments of national crisis, practice exclusion to, for example, maintain "security," order, and authority. In the primary discussion of photos of Gee's Bend community members and Hurricane Katrina survivors, I will discuss how concern about "security" contributes to the fixity of African Americans' identities. Brett Story,

author of “Politics as Usual: The Criminalization of Asylum Seekers in the United States,” discusses security and how it is, according to W. B. Gallie, “an essentially contested concept” (Gallie in Story 4). Indeed, a perceived has historically a sharp increase in the contesting of citizenship. Moments of crisis then intensify the already present national discomfort with difference:

> Each encounter with someone from a different racial classification potentially necessitates a response to alleviate this discomfort. Such responses can range from the seemingly innocuous ‘I never see you as _________, I just see you as a person,’ which marks a person’s difference as something not human to more pernicious demonizing of difference that creates stereotypic apparitions – drug lords, welfare queens, terrorists, muggers, foreign competitors – to rationalize feelings of discomfort. (172)

In my discussion of images of African Americans in crisis in Gee’s Bend and Katrina, I will discuss the ways in which, for example, “locals” are either primitives who must be “secured” for the good of America or “security threats” to the city of New Orleans. These marks of difference are deployed in the construction of stereotypes that give good reason for the dominant society’s control over American society and its restriction and regulation of African Americans equal opportunity to take part in the “American dream” (Abraham 87).

Michael Eric Dyson explains in his book *Come Hell or High Water* that Southern blacks have to deal with more than just race. He writes, “Southern blacks, especially poor ones, are viewed as the worst possible combination of troubled elements – region, race, and class – that on their own make life difficult enough. They are stereotyped as

being backward, belligerently opposed to enlightenment, and tethered to self-defeating cultural habits that undermined their upward thrust from a life of penury and ignorance" (21). Dyson articulates the complexity of the issues that affect the identities of southern African Americans in crisis.

Living in a region already located close to nature and opposed to culture in the cultural imaginary, southern black people are more likely to be minimized to nature. Representation of black southerners in crisis are doubly framed by race and place so that difference also becomes fixed (Hall, *Cultural Representation* 245). Binary oppositions such as civilized/savage are underscored by location. It even becomes a culture/nature situation. Since the "positive" end of the binary is dominated by white people located elsewhere, an African American group of people, rural or urban, is placed on the "negative" end. They can be referred to as "savages" and not even part of the human race. The difference is manipulated to provide a controlling aspect of difference that the majority uses to construct an oppositional identity. Blacks are being continually "reduced to their essence" (Hall, *Cultural Representation* 245).

Because the establishment of what is normal and "different" involves a power struggle, the dominant groups use exclusion as a tool in order to focus on difference. Stereotypes survive best in an atmosphere where there are "gross inequalities of power." The dominant cultures, in these cases the Resettlement/Farm Security Administration and some members of the mainstream media, continue to use "difference" and stereotypes that affect not only African-American identities but also the absence of an American identity in their experiences. These classifications result in them having the power to give minority groups such as African Americans the title of "Other" separating them and

their images from being a part of the American culture as a whole (Hall, *Cultural Representations* 258-259).

The power to represent people and things in a certain way affects African Americans in crisis and the "knowledge" of them. Hall writes, "Power not only constrains and prevents: It is also productive. It produces new discourses, new kinds of knowledge (i.e. Orientalism), new objects of knowledge (the Orient), it shapes new practices (colonization) and institutions (colonial government)" (*Cultural Representations* 261). This power produces knowledge that does not contribute to actually understanding other people and their cultures. Hall writes, "[The] discourse produces, through different practices of representation […] a form of racialized knowledge of the Other deeply implicated in the operations of power" (*Cultural Representations* 260). The frame of Gee's Bend community members and Hurricane Katrina survivors has been racialized.

This knowledge that surfaces as a result of the power of representation affects those who have and do not have the power. Hall writes, "The argument is that everyone – the powerful and the powerless – is caught up, though not on equal terms, in power's circulation. No one – neither its apparent victims nor its agents – can stand wholly outside its field of operation" (Hall, *Cultural Representations* 261). It is apparent that no one has been able to escape this "circulation" because the photos of Gee's Bend and Hurricane Katrina continue to impact viewers, whether through *The Quilts of Gee's Bend Exhibit* and its accompanying materials or through the new material that discusses Hurricane Katrina in depth. The current redeployment of the Resettlement/Farm Security Administration images of Gee's Bend in the current exhibit and catalogue of *The Quilts*

of Gee's Bend, in plays such as *Gee's Bend,* and on the internet is like the re-circulation of Hurricane Katrina photos because it becomes a way to point out "differences" and eternally re-construct stereotypical images. These stereotypes perpetuate the use of difference as a sign (Hall, *Cultural Representations*, 230).

The recirculation of such Depression Era photos, their availability on the internet and in a national exhibit contributes to the fixing of African Americans in poverty and objection in the cultural imaginary. Information creates a "frame" that influences how photographs are perceived by others. Photographers along with other journalists work to place the photographs in the frames they decide would be appropriate for it. Hall writes, "Their selection, placing and framing, their connection with the content of the text, their captioning, all provide ample evidence that the meanings available to the viewer/reader on the basis of a documentary photograph are a complex representational construction" (Hall, *Representation* 86). Knowing that most photographs are placed in a "frame" for the viewer, it becomes even more important to pay attention to the captions and other texts that surround the photos. Since the photographs of Gee's Bend and Hurricane Katrina events circulate with good accessibility, they are the connection that viewers have to African Americans in crisis.

The surrounding text can also be manipulated to perpetuate stereotypes and difference. Some meanings that are associated with photographs can be unclear, but most of the meanings are used because they are the "preferred meaning" (Hall, *Cultural Representations* 228). Hall writes, "Roland Barthes argues that, frequently, it is the caption which selects one out of the many possible meanings from the image, and anchors it with words. The 'meaning' of the photograph, then, does not lie exclusively in

the image, but in the conjunction of image and text" (*Cultural Representations* 228). This conjunction of the image and text places the power of representation in the hands of those in control of the images.

Some viewers truly believe in a photo journalist's desire to be honest in his/her intentions, and they have every right to see the photographs as a photographer's honest account. However, John Berger, author of *Ways of Seeing*, points out, "We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice" (8). He does not allow the viewer to escape responsibility for his/her choice to look. Berger also reminds us that the viewer is aware that the photographer selected an image in the midst of many other photo opportunities (10). While it is important to understand the freedom of the viewer, it is also important to understand that most of the time the viewer also considers the conversations and discussions that frame an image. They cannot ignore, for example, the "primitive" frame around the Gee's Bend photos or the "refugee" frame around the Hurricane Katrina photos. The power of spoken and unspoken frames cannot be denied.

Hall writes, "The important point is that stereotypes refer as much to what is imagined in fantasy as to what is perceived as 'real.' And, what is visually produced, by the practices of representation, is only half the story. The other half – the deeper meaning – lies in what is not being said, but is being fantasized, what is implied but cannot be shown" (*Cultural Representations* 262). This shows how photographs can be problematic because stereotypes hold so much weight in the consciousness of people; even in the absence of framing texts or stereotypical frame can be created within the minds of people. The Resettlement/Farm Security Administration Gee's Bend

photographs and the Hurricane Katrina photographs will show how stereotypical frames are concrete and span over a large amount of time.

This look at photographs of African Americans in crisis becomes important in evaluating how stereotypes continue to exist in the area of photography. Photography is an important visual part of information exchange, whether it is for a federal government report or for the daily exchange of information that occurs in the mainstream media. It can be argued that photography is the favored documentation method because we "believe our eyes" (Hall, *Representation* 82). There is satisfaction in feeling that what you see with your own eyes speaks the truth louder than any written text. Many people believe this because "the photograph is held to be an objective representation of something factual, the image a way of presenting 'facts' about its subject in a purely informational way" (Hall, *Representation* 81). The photographs and videos can be a result of subjective representation. This means "the document's informational value is mediated through the perspective of the person making it, and it is presented as a mixture of emotion and information" (Hall, *Representation* 83). False information can be provided with photographs and can change an image into something that might not be in relation to the event at hand (Hall, *Representation* 81).

The Hurricane Katrina photos provide an excellent example of how the accusations made by the mainstream media's framing of African Americans in crisis can present false information. The term "looter" used in the captions make the African Americans in the photos seem guilty without any proof. Cheryl I. Harris and Devon W. Carbado, authors of "Loot or Find: Fact or Frame?" feel that facts do not "speak for themselves" (90). They continue by writing, "As we process and make sense of an event,

we take account of and simultaneously ignore facts that do not fit the frame, and sometimes we supply ones that are missing. Thus, it is sometimes said that 'frames trump facts'" (91). Even if a viewer chooses not to believe that a frame has been created for her, she can possibly better understand how she constructs a frame herself.

When looking at photographs that show African Americans in crisis, the viewer needs to understand the context, and the context becomes important. A photograph never truly stands alone. When considering the photograph and the information that accompanies it, John Berger writes, "It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled" (7). This causes confusion for viewers who have to deal with not only what they see, but also the knowledge they are provided with. The Resettlement/Farm Security Gee's Bend photographs and the Hurricane Katrina photographs are accompanied with information, and I will discuss below how these words contribute to stereotypical frames.

It seems that in crisis in American culture, the language of binary opposition is highlighted and results in extreme representations that deploy extreme terms disassociated with American identity such as "primitive," "African," ("Tenant Farmers") and "refugee." John Berger clearly states, "The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe" (8). The accompanying text that uses the term "primitive" to describe Benders or "refugees" to describe American hurricane survivors, shows viewers can interpret the photographs. Farm Security Administration text about the "primitive" lifestyle of the residents of Gee's Bend definitely affects the way viewers saw and

continue to see these photographs. This information for some people is knowledge they have retained.

2.

Historicizing Crisis

.

The Resettlement/Farm Security Administration was a New Deal program implemented to help poor farmers during the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. Roy Stryker headed the Resettlement/Farm Security Administration's photographic section from 1935-1942 ("The Farm Security Administration"). He sent photographers all over the country to take photographs that would be included with the reports prepared to lobby support from Congress for poor farmers. Since the Resettlement/Farm Security Administration wanted to present visual images to support their written reports, they did not want images of happiness. When Stryker sent photographer Arthur Rothstein to Gee's Bend, Alabama, he did not want Rothstein to photograph the community members as being joyous because that would not help the report about poverty. Rothstein had been a student of Stryker at Columbia, and he had experience taking photographs dealing with matters in agriculture ("Tenant Farmers").

During February and April of 1937, Roy Stryker sent Rothstein to Gee's Bend because Beverly Smith, a journalist, had informed him of this tenant farming community. Stryker considered it to be "the most primitive set-up he has ever heard of" and even looked forward to it becoming a feature story in *Life* magazine ("Tenant Farmers"). While Stryker seemed to be concerned with the marketability of the photographs of Gee's Bend,

he and Beverly Smith discussed the Gee's Bend community by using terms such as "African," "primitive," and "tribal like," and this discussion continued to circulate with the information about the Gee's Bend community ("Tenant Farmers"). These terms and ideas framed a restricted look for black southerners, especially in Gee's Bend. Rothstein collected fifty-one photographs, yet most of them were "primitive," while only a few "less primitive" photographs were presented with this collection ("Tenant Farmers"). Stryker and Smith automatically considered the people of Gee's Bend as "primitive" because of some of their customs that have African roots ("Tenant Farmers"). Stryker and Smith used these binary oppositions in purely subjective ways, but because the majority has established particular groups of people as meaning one or the other throughout history, these oppositions have become somewhat of an objective truth when it comes to representation. This reigns true for the photographs of the Gee's Bend community in 1937. The frame surrounding the Benders during this crisis continuously consisted of how "primitive" things were for them.

The overwhelming amount of "primitive" photos continued to reinforce the frame that the discussions had created ("Tenant Farmers"). The term "primitive" causes the frame of the Farm Security Administration photos to become problematic because the term "primitive" highlights the Benders' "difference." For example, Figure 1.1 shows an example of the homes and buildings of those in the Gee's Bend community. The discussion, which focuses on the "primitive" state of the African Americans in Gee's Bend, frames them as being "different" from many people throughout the United States. This makes it difficult for the Benders to have a "secure" American identity. Their way of life is termed as having an extreme "difference" that can not be easily understood.

However, during this period in American history, all types of people were tenant farming, sharecropping, and living in poor conditions. In fact, the reports included a diverse set of photographs. By using the terms such as "primitive," the government administration could stay at a distance instead of confronting policies and events that led to the Gee's Bend community's poverty.

Cabins and outbuildings on the former Pettway plantation.

FIGURE 1.1 Rothstein, Arthur. "Gee's Bend, Alabama, February and April 1937 Resettlement Administration, Lot 1616."

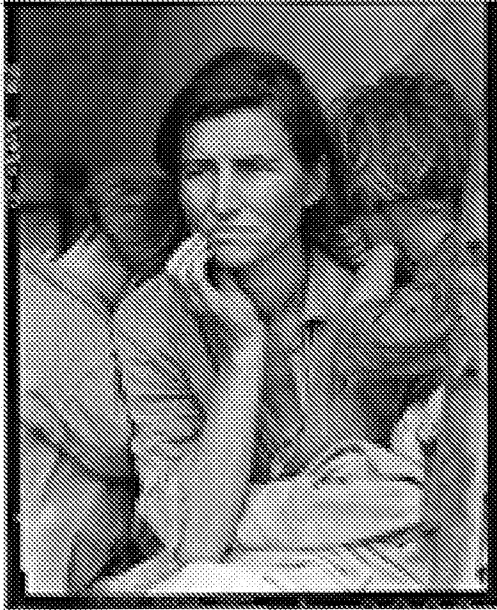


FIGURE 1.2 Lange, Dorothea. *Migrant Mother*. 1937.

It can be fruitful to compare photos of white families from the Farm Security Administration project as a way of understanding the raced framing of African Americans in crisis. One such example of a Resettlement/Farm Security Administration photo is Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother." Lange was a photographer hired by Stryker to capture migrant workers in California during 1937. She had always been aware of social issues and had previously worked for the California State Emergency Relief Administration ("Migrant Workers"). From Lange's collection, FIGURE 1.2 is a photograph that Stryker would consider to be "the ultimate…*the* picture of Farm Security" (qtd. in Davidov 3-4). Stryker's claim that this mother "*the* picture" raises concerns about who the Farm Security Administration was providing "security" for during the Depression era. Also it raises the question of what the Farm Security Administration would be "securing" for the migrant mother. The Benders do not seem to

have been the people the Farm Security Administration looked to provide "security" for during the poor tenant farmers' crisis. If the "security" was in fact all about poverty, the Benders were to be included. However, Stryker, of all the photos, chose a white mother as for whom the Farm Security Administration was providing "security."

Despite her poverty, the migrant mother connects to an American identity. In addition to the Stryker comment, the influential art critic George Elliott also makes references to this photograph as representing "the humanly universal" (qtd. in Davidov 4). There is no mention of the migrant workers as "primitive." They are described as people from the Midwest who were temporarily displaced, forced to seek work in the West because of "unemployment, drought, and loss of farm tenancy" ("Migrant Workers"). African Americans, particularly Gee's Bend community members, have difficulty connecting to America through their identities because of the framing that accompanies the photograph of the migrant mother as *the* representation of a government agency.

In contrast to the famed and often re-circulated photo of the migrant mother photograph, the Gee's Bend collection does not include photos that offer a look at the human interactions of the Benders. Two of the most famous and most re-circulated FSA photographs show the residents alone. In Figure 1.3, the young girl is not pictured with her mother as the children of the migrant mother are. If the migrant mother photo represents "the humanly universal," the young girl is excluded from what has been framed as American because she is not shown clinging to her mother, a "humanly universal" characteristic.

On the Pettway plantation. Probably Adell Pettway.

FIGURE 1.3 Rothstein, Arthur. “Gee's Bend, Alabama, February and April 1937 Resettlement Administration, Lot 1616.”

This young girl does not have the opportunity to establish an American identity because she is not accompanied by anything that would show her as the children in Figure 1.2. She is not with any adult, especially her mother. Nothing in this photograph provides any of the humanizing characteristics that are assigned to Figure1.2. The young girl’s identity is trapped in a frame that naturalizes her to a “primitive” way of life and a past that seems to include only “tribal-like” activities and an “African” origin. Stryker did not even discuss slavery and its effects, and an at length discussion of slavery by the Farm Security Administration would give the Benders some link to an American identity. It is

slavery that places them in the tenant farming community because there is no credit available to them. This important information, which would give more light on situation for people in Gee's Bend, and the Farm Security Administration did not give this a lot of attention. Instead Stryker critiqued their cultural practices which led to a critique more so of their identities rather than their crisis.

Girl at Gee's Bend

FIGURE 1.4 Rothstein, Arthur. "Gee's Bend, Alabama, February and April 1937 Resettlement Administration, Lot 1616."

The "Girl at Gee's Bend" (Figure1.4) photograph is a widespread photograph. In contrast to the "Migrant Mother" photo, this photo shows the girl in a solitary state. She is framed by the mud and logs, equating her with nature. Next to her by the window is a weathered newspaper piece which shows a white woman serving dinner presumably to her family. The white woman who seems like a mother is pictured with more humanization than the little girl. Even the absence of another parent, especially her mother, frames her in a "different" way. Everything surrounding her indicates how "primitive" she is in Gee's Bend. With a photograph such as "Migrant Mother" circulating as "humanly universal" in America, this young girl along with the other Gee's Bend photos are seen as "different" and "primitive" during their crisis in America.

As these photographers, on assignment for the Farm Security Administration, went throughout America, they were careful to exclude happy photographs. It is important to remember that photos showing happy faces were "killed" by the FSA head Roy Striker as counterproductive to the language of economic crisis the photos were intended to communicate. However, poverty does not necessarily mean that there are no times of happiness, love, commitment, companionship, and all the variety of emotions that humans can have. Figure 1.2 does not show happiness, but the photograph and its frame show her humanism. It can be concluded that these emotions are experienced by her because she is human. When Stryker and Smith used terms such as "primitive", they raised questions of the status of the people of Gees Bend's humanity. If they are "primitive," do they love or share any of the other emotions those who are "civilized" have?

The discussion Stryker and Smith had also leaves room for current culture to misinterpret any successes or progress, such as the quilt exhibit *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* as being "miraculous" because contemporary knowledge of the community is as a desolate, "primitive" community (Kimmelman). This type of framing also continues to permeate the representation of the present Gee's Bend community on a local level and African Americans as a whole on the national level as we will see with the Hurricane Katrina materials. In times of crisis, African Americans are still being framed with terms such as "refugee" and "looter" that raise issues surrounding their American identities.

3.

Responding to Katrina and Reshaping Identity

"I am a U. S. Citizen." – Joseph Melancon, *When the Levees Broke*

Just as the photographs of people in crisis in Gee's Bend are framed with language such as "primitive," "African," and "tribal-like," the photographs of the Hurricane Katrina survivors in crisis are framed in the same way with terms such as "refugee" and "looter." The two sets of photo collections show African Americans in crisis at different times in America, but the sets' connection with an American identity is jeopardized both times. By connecting the two, I will show that much has not changed when representing African Americans in crisis, and it has not been a lengthy discussion. The Hurricane Katrina photographs will also show how the terms "refugee" and "looter" raise questions of American identity for African Americans because of what these terms can mean.

During this crisis, the titles and the captions that accompanied the Hurricane Katrina photographs in the mainstream media had a great deal to do with the anger that erupted from viewers. The aforementioned terms "refugee" and "looter," floated throughout the media in the immediate days after the storm to describe African Americans in this crisis. The definition of "refugee," according to *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, is "one who flees in search of refuge, as in times of war" (1170).

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin on Thursday issued a "desperate SOS" for thousands of people stranded at the New Orleans Convention Center. "The convention center is unsanitary and unsafe and we are running out of supplies for (15,000 to 20,000) people," the mayor said in a statement.

FIGURE 2.1 “Photo Gallery: Hurricane Katrina: Desperation and Despair.” 1 Sept. 2005.

The mainstream media irresponsibly used this term for African Americans who are citizens of the country and were not fleeing but were stranded primarily due to the government’s lack of experience with a natural disaster of this scale. The framing that the mainstream media provided for the Hurricane Katrina photos compares to the Gee’s Bend photographs of African Americans in crisis when Stryker and Smith talked about the people and area as being “primitive” and more “African” than American.

Indeed, the term “refugee” calls for the questioning of African Americans’ American identity. In Spike Lee’s documentary *When the Levees Broke*, Joseph Melancon, a resident of the Third Ward of New Orleans, and Gralen B. Banks, Director of Security at the Hyatt Hotel, cultural activist, and resident of the Uptown section of

New Orleans, vividly expressed how the use of "refugee" made them feel anything but American. Melancon says that hearing the term used "made me drop my head. I'm a U. S. citizen." Banks asks the question, "Katrina blew away our citizenship?" These men immediately recognized that the frame of African Americans as not having a definite recognizable citizenship in America prevailed in the aftermath of Katrina. Viewers have the option to disregard the term as constricting to conversations on the citizenship of African Americans, but it is important to understand that the mainstream media began to circulate information that framed the photographs with majority African Americans in them as people with unstable identities in the U. S. during this crisis. Michael Eric Dyson discusses that there is a deeper situation occurring when African Americans object to the use of the term refugee. He writes, "[…] the spiritual truth of black identity […] rested more in connotation than denotation, more in signification than grammar" (176). When reviewing their identities in this crisis, African Americans understand that it is the term's most associated meaning that makes it difficult for them to have an American identity.

Frustration sometimes spilled over into anger at the convention center.

FIGURE 2.2 "Photo Gallery: Hurricane Katrina: Desperation and Despair." 1 Sept. 2005

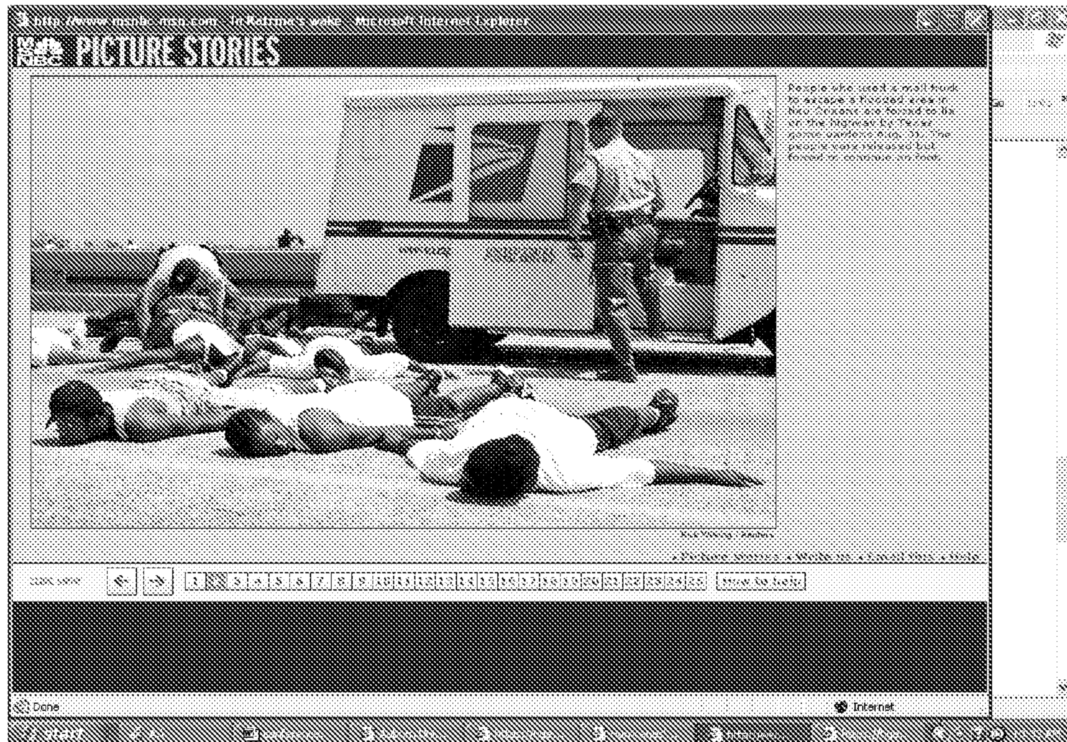
Most of the photographs immediately after the storm deployed the same raced visual vocabulary as the Gee's Bend photos in Figure 2.1 and 2.2. The convention center photographs capture a larger amount of African-American people who are implied through the photographs as people with a questionable identity because of the use of the term "refugee." Even looking at Figure 2.3, the viewer can see there are only African-American people in the United States Postal Service (USPS) vehicle trying to presumably get to a safer place. The USPS vehicle represents an agency formally a part of the federal government. Although the USPS has become a private sector organization, it is still most associated with the federal government. The African Americans in this USPS truck have an opportunity to be linked to an American identity in this photograph. While they are on the truck, the African Americans do not seem to be a threat.

Just when it seems that African Americans in crisis get a chance to be connected to an American identity, another photograph reminds the viewer of the questionable state of African Americans' American identity. The next photograph, Figure 2.4, shows the African Americans being detached from their American identity. For law enforcement, these African Americans in crisis did not have the right to operate an American government vehicle. In Figure 2.3, the African Americans are harmless Americans with the initiative to help themselves in this crisis. In Figure 2.4, they become a "security threat" and are forced to the ground and detached from the USPS truck, which can serve as a symbol of America. It is confusing as to whom the African Americans in crisis were a threat to, and it is not clear whom or what they were being protected from, if in fact they were even being protected.

When considering the issue of "security" found in photos such as Figure 2.4, viewers see that the face of "security" and "threat" look a lot like African Americans in crisis. Harris and Carbado write, "The media mischaracterized and exaggerated the security threat to the rescue mission" (102). This "mischaracterization and exaggeration" caused extra strain on the African Americans' identities. The young African-American men are forced to be face down on the ground with law enforcement agents checking them as if they could be a tremendous threat, when in fact they are survivors in need of assistance. During the migrant mother's time of crisis, she had the opportunity to be an American human in need of aid so that she can have the chance to change. Just as the young girls in the Gee's Bend photos, the African-American males are not humanized in their moment of crisis caught on film.

People ride out of New Orleans by highway in a U.S. Postal Service mail truck. Many vehicles were damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, and gasoline remains a scarce commodity in many areas of the Gulf Coast.

FIGURE 2.3 Tama, Mario/Getty Images. "Photo Gallery: New Orleans Refugees Struggle, Looters Plunder." 31 Aug. 2005



People who used a mail truck to escape a flooded area in New Orleans are forced to lie on the highway by Texas game wardens Aug. 31. The people were released but forced to continue on foot.

FIGURE 2.4 Wilking, Rick/Reuters. "Photo Gallery: In Katrina's Wake." 31 Aug. 2005

Figures 2.5 – 2.9 continue to show the overpowering photographs that link African Americans in crisis to "differences" as opposed to humans in crisis. They are examples of the types of photographs being circulated that show African Americans looting or somehow associated with the "unlawful" entrance into stores to retrieve items. During this crisis, African Americans were not the only survivors trying to find items, yet their identities are fixed upon stereotypical images and texts that insinuate African Americans as criminals. Figures 2.5, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9 have the word "loot" in some form describing the African Americans themselves or their actions.

The caption and photograph of Figure 2.5 inform the viewer of the state of African Americans in crisis in the Gulf Coast area. They are framed as being the "problem," and the discussion of looting presents them as guilty of a crime they have not

Authorities say looting is becoming a problem at a number of stores and casinos along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. These people were photographed exiting a closed store in Biloxi, Mississippi, carrying bags of goods.

FIGURE 2.5 "Photo Gallery: Hurricane Katrina: After the Storm (Aug. 31)"

A man walks past law enforcement personnel in New Orleans. With most of the city submerged and thousands of people trapped by waters strewn with bodies, authorities also fought an outbreak of plundering by locals taking away food, appliances, jewels, clothes, and even guns.

FIGURE 2.6 Nielsen, James/AFP/Getty Images. "Photo Gallery: New Orleans Refugees Struggle, Looters Plunder." 31, Aug. 2005

been convicted of. The only thing they can be guilty of is "exiting a closed store" with bags of unidentified items. Their identities are not framed as Americans who were in need of assistance to survive during their crisis. Instead, their identities are attached to "looting," which, when thought about, poses a threat to possibly only the store owners.

Not much has changed since African Americans in crisis in Gee's Bend were photographed and framed as other than American. There were more references to race with the use of the term "African" making their skin color essential to their identity and cutting off their link to an American identity. This continues to show up in the photographs of African Americans in crisis after Hurricane Katrina, although Linus Abraham writes, "A good deal of racial stereotyping now takes place through visual

message, without any explicit or overt reference to race" (90). Figure 2.6 is an example of this. The African-American male is simply walking down the street with no visible items, and the caption mentions how the "local" people had been taking "food, appliances, jewels, clothes, and even guns." This man is not carrying any of these, and the particular emphasis placed on "even guns" suggests that African Americans in crisis are dangerous. The only person in this photograph with a gun is the "law enforcement." These words attempt to keep the identities of African Americans in crisis after Hurricane Katrina attached to lawlessness.

More African Americans' identities connect to criminal activity in Figure 2.7 as the African Americans are photographed in front of a police officer and his gun. The caption describes this ongoing situation with "looting," and, once again, African Americans are associated with it because of their position in the photograph. The police officer's name is even mentioned, but the African Americans are nameless. The items they possess are not very visible either. The caption says that the officer is protecting a convenience store, and this shows they must have been a "threat" to goods of necessity. Whatever the case may be, African Americans in crisis seldom have identities that show they are Americans in need of humanitarian aid.

Another "suspected looter" is "captured" in a photograph (Figure 2.8) that shows an African-American male alone and surrounded by police officers. They contain him as one officer searches a bin to check for what type of items he has. No visible items can be seen to determine what type of "necessity" these items could be, but the caption frames the African-American male as a criminal by naming him a "suspected looter." His

African American identity during this crisis becomes essential to his criminal status instead of his status as a human in need.

Police officer Davis Holston patrols what remains of a convenience store in Pass Christian, Mississippi, to protect it from looters. Looting remains widespread in both rural and urban areas throughout the region affected by Hurricane Katrina.

FIGURE 2.7 Nelson, Andy/The Christian Science Monitor via Getty Images. "Photo Gallery: New Orleans Refugees Struggle, Looters Plunder." 31, Aug. 2005.

Police search a suspected looter on Interstate 10 on August 31, 2005 in New Orleans. Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans early Monday morning.

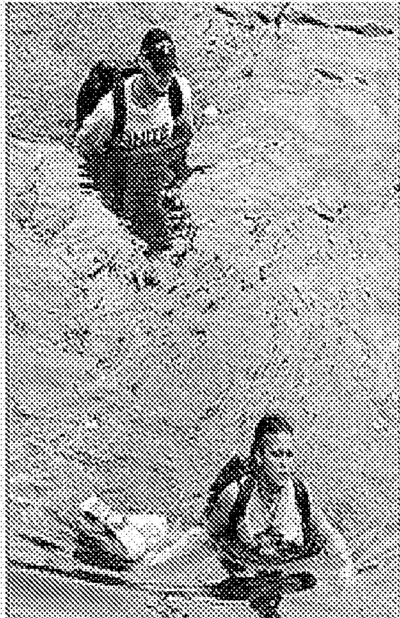
FIGURE 2.8 Thompson, Irwin/Dallas Morning News/Corbis. "Photo Gallery: New Orleans Refugees Struggle, Looters Plunder." 31 Aug. 2005.

AP Associated Press AP - Tue Aug 30,11:31 AM ET

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

Email Photo Print Photo

RECOMMEND THIS PHOTO » Recommended Photos
Recommend It: Average (139 votes)



AFP 3:47 AM ET

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana.(AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

Email Photo Print Photo

RECOMMEND THIS PHOTO » Recommended Photos
Recommend It: Average (211 votes)

RELATED
• Katrina's Effects, at a Glance AP - Tue Aug 30, 1:26 PM ET
Hurricanes & Tropical Storms

FIGURE 2.9 “Loot Loops.”

Figure 2.9 is particularly interesting because the two photos show how the Associated Press uses the term "loot" to describe the actions of a young African-American male, while they use the verb "find" to describe the actions of a white couple. Aside from the apparent framing of the African American as a criminal, his identity as a resident is contested also. The photograph with the white female and male's caption names them as "residents" in the accompanying caption. However, the African American is not given reference as a resident. He is framed as possibly not being at home or even having an American identity while in this crisis. The American identity and citizenship of the white female and male are intact as the caption refers to their "residency."

This specific frame of Figure 2.9 articulates my argument at best. The solid evidence affirms how when shown in crisis African Americans are presented with "difference". Although the blatant frame serves as proper evidence, Harris and Carbado remind us that the Associated Press photo did not even need a frame. The first photo of the young black man shows the lack of law and order to be more of a priority than the lack of humanitarian aid (96). Harris and Carbado still believe, however, that these photographs are more about how they were framed literally than about the focus on violence. Harris and Carbado write, "[There is a] dissonance between the image of black people in those high waters and a caption describing people finding food […] This dissonance is not about facts – whether in fact the black racial association between black people and looting, particularly on the heels of a natural disaster or social upheaval" (95). During this time of crisis, the criminal status most associated with African Americans harmed their identities. The real issue was not all about who was seen as "looting" what

or who were depicted as "authority" figures. African Americans should have been widely photographed and framed as Americans in need in a crisis.

Figure 2.9 definitely speaks loudly about how a frame can corrupt the representation of any one. This particular photograph's frame just continued to damage the representation of African Americans and their identities as Americans. Michael Eric Dyson discusses how this specific framework says much about how the framework needs to be reconstructed. He writes,

> Such a framework, one that weaves white innocence and black guilt into the fabric of cultural myths and racial narratives, is deeply embedded in society and affects every major American institution, including the media. How black folk are 'framed' – how we are discussed, pictured, imagined, conjured to fit a negative idea of blackness, or called on to fill a slot reserved for the outlaw, thug, or savage – shapes how we are frowned on or favored in mainstream society. (165)

Whether the photograph is accompanied with a blatant caption as Figure 2.9 or no caption at all, African Americans identities have always been and continue to be at stake, particularly in times of crisis. As seen in the Resettlement/Farm Security Administration photographs of African Americans in Gee's Bend, tenant farmers were framed as "primitive" and "African" instead of Americans farming on credit in need of assistance to get out of poverty created by American policies. This reference to being "primitive" is something the identity of American does not denote or connote. This focus on whether the Benders were "civilized" or not undermined their identities as Americans and their need to surpass their present state of poverty. African Americans during the Hurricane

Katrina crisis had the same issue with identity, and attention should have been focused on the aid that American citizens needed.

***

The identity crisis of African Americans that has been established in this thesis calls for a diverse approach to representing African Americans in crisis and creating new contemporary identities. Spike Lee's *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* and Philip C. Kolin and Susan Swartwout's book of poetry *Hurricane Blues: Poems about Katrina and Rita* are important because they give African Americans in crisis, and those who support self-framing, a chance to frame their own personal identities and allow them to articulate their American identity. They give African Americans in the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina crisis the agency to control and affirm their identities while telling the story and mourning the losses of Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent recovery efforts.

Spike Lee's documentary incorporates images and information that give the interviewees the opportunity to frame the events of Hurricane Katrina. Lee frames this documentary as an opportunity for the people to be identified with their ranging statuses that show America. By naming his work *A Requiem in Four Acts*, he takes requiem's denotation of a mass for a deceased person and the music expressed for such a mass or person (*The American Heritage Dictionary* 1182) and creates a connotation with his four sections dedicated to people who perished during this crisis. His time and care taken to

choose a wide variety of images and information provides a frame that stands as a testament to those who passed and survived and allows survivors a chance to create new contemporary identities.

When the Levees Broke is a gripping documentary covering Hurricane Katrina from the preliminary events to the constant recovery efforts. The events are told by media clips and interviews of people from government officials to residents of the ruined areas of the Gulf Coast. The beginning of the documentary is a mixture of images showing the devastation of the Katrina aftermath and also images from the past such as photographs showing events such as Jim Crow markings of "white" and "colored" and confederate flags. Lee seems to be framing this requiem with the reminder that, as we have seen with the Resettlement/Farm Security Administration's photos of the African Americans of Gee's Bend in crisis, the Katrina photographs and frames continue to affect representation of African Americans' identities and the consideration of their American identities. He meshes the frame of the past with the frame of the present to show that they are similar.

Spike Lee's ability to recognize that the frame informs what we see makes a successful critical attempt to provide a space for people affected by the Katrina crisis to create their own frames for their identities. The people are allowed to express their "truth," and the viewers are given the opportunity to decide what will be "true" to them. One particular moment in the documentary this is best seen is when the residents of New Orleans who believed the levees were bombed to save the more affluent areas were given the opportunity to say what they experienced. Sylvester Francis, Curator of the Backstreet Cultural Museum and resident of the Lower Ninth Ward, is one of the

interviewees able to tell his story about the levees. He says, "They bombed that sucka." There are others who have similar feelings as Mr. Francis, but what Spike Lee does is give those who are not sure what happened as far as the bombing of the levees and those who believe it is preposterous the same space and time (*When the Levees*).

Lee was given a hard time by some for even including the information about the possible bombing of the levees. In an interview, Lee discusses his decision to include these accounts. He believes that dismissing African Americans when they are accusing the government of being the cause of harm to their lives and communities is illogical. He says, "[…] in the collective mind of African-Americans, it is not some science-fiction, hocus-pocus thing to say the government is doing stuff." He goes on to cite instances in history when the government has caused harm, such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment (Vilkomerson). With this comment, Lee critically reminds us that African Americans' identity as American has been so cloudy that they are harshly critiqued when participating in American government's "democratic" ideology by questioning the American government's actions. The inclusion of this subject provides multiple frames for those represented in the documentary and the representation of African Americans' identity that is in crisis on a national level.

In *When the Levees Broke*, the interviewees have the chance to confront issues of representation of African Americans' identities such as the mainstream media referring to African Americans overwhelmingly as "looters." Vanita Gupta, Assistant Counsel of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund, articulates how the framing of African Americans as "thugs" and "looters" affects how they are seen and treated. She believes that when law enforcement stood between

the "thugs and looters" and the city of Gretna, Louisiana, they were standing between black people and Gretna. She also believes that in present day America, when the terms "thug" and "looter" are used, it is in reference to the African-American community and citizens. Even Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu could not deny that there was an overreaction because of the media's focus on the criminal aspect of the Katrina aftermath (*When the Levees Broke*). As seen in the examples of Hurricane Katrina, the stereotypical criminal identity overwhelmingly associated with African-American identities stands out most in this time of crisis.

When Lee's documentary continues to allow interviewees the space and time to discuss crime and safety, one white male survivor discusses the weapons he had on him. He tells Lee he had a nine millimeter and a shotgun. At this point, an invisible Lee asks from behind the camera, "Were you looking for Bin Laden?" An awkward moment follows with an expression of a surprised interviewee who did not expect to be questioned about his right as an American citizen to bear arms. In the same section, Darnnell Herrington, a resident of Algiers, gives his account of being shot multiple times by unidentified white men (*When the Levees Broke*). He gets the opportunity to be an African American whose identity is opposite of that seen in the examples of Hurricane Katrina photos. He is seen as a victim and survivor of a crime that was not widespread in photos of African Americans in crisis circulated after Katrina. These two sections counter the above photographs of Hurricane Katrina and make the identity crisis of African Americans more complex. One survivor, who is not African American, admits carrying weapons, and the other African American survivor shows his bullet wounds as evidence of his experience of being a victim of violence.

The perpetuation of these types of frames shows how some viewers see African Americans in photographs and how they will react when physically close to them. Lee gives the people the opportunity to frame themselves and weaves them among the many other frames such as the frame of residency he creates for them. He brings them "home" and allows some of them to be interviewed in front of their property. At the end of the documentary, each interviewee holds a real frame around his or her face and upper body (or one is placed there for him/her). This act is profound as it calls attention to the idea that most people do not control how they and their stories are framed, and, most importantly, some do not have their own individual frame. It has been shown with the Resettlement/Farm Security Administration's photographs of Gee's Bend and Hurricane Katrina photos that African Americans have been presented excessively as being framed as people with unstable American identities, especially during a crisis. Lee reminds us that we must take control of our own frame for a better attempt at creating new contemporary identities.

Words and other accounts have been crucial in the identity crisis African Americans have endured. Philip C. Kolin and Susan Swartwout offer poetry as a way to discuss events and identity. They believe poetry is an outlet that can belong to everyone (14). The poets have the same opportunity as the interviewees in *When the Levees Broke*. They are able to put down their own words and share their experiences. Kolin and Swartwout determine which poems go in their book, but no one decides the content of one's poetry. Poetry is an expression, and through this expression, the identity issue for African Americans in crisis can be explored.

One poem that exhibits how one with the desire to control some portion of his African American identity can do so is “Hurricane Kwame Offers His Two Cents” by Tara Betts. With the account of a different hurricane, her poem shows how identities do not have to be fixed. She takes control of her story by giving the account of Hurricane Kwame, Katrina’s cousin. The name Kwame is most associated with African names. Betts even connects hurricanes to “Africans, born on the continental coast” (51). By naming Katrina’s cousin Kwame, Betts reconstructs what she heard another journalist say as he/she recommended that the storm be named “Kwame or Keisha.” She writes, “He said this Hurricane / should have been called Kwame or Keisha, but still, / I’m not so sure that was a compliment, since some / hold African names they don’t like / so tight in their jaw, you’d think someone still / made up names for chattel, like unmarked / graves wishing that the family bible remembered them” (51). Betts highlights how the journalist with the “Kwame or Keisha” idea fixes African American identities with the “African” renaming. She then attempts to reconstruct the frame that the process of naming creates for African American identities. She does this by commenting on the meaning of a name, how a name is perceived, and how previously the slave name had been given by someone in a place of power. She also reinforces what this thesis has shown in examples of photography and documentary, the not-so-new frame of “difference” that surrounds African Americans in crisis.

Philip C. Kolin interweaves the African Americans’ identity from two different time periods. He also connects the present acts with those of the past in his poem “Slaver Superdome.” In this poem, he frames the Superdome as a place that was similar to holdings for slaves. This attests to the harm done to African Americans’ identities both

past and present. He intertwines present things such as the Superdome with things from slavery to bring “home” the point of the issue African Americans in crisis have with identity.

He is more direct than Betts because he immediately connects the events of Katrina to slavery. By doing this he changes a more readily received framework of the “facts” and shows how he feels slavery and the present suffering relate. He begins, “Herded down like / The black sheep / Of Internet America / They were sealed in the belly / Of the slaver Superdome” (78). He seems to say that those who remained in New Orleans, the majority of African Americans, were in conditions comparable to slavery. He shows that this event is not where the people were left behind. They had already been left behind in America, a country with technological advancements. Kolin continues to confront the Katrina issue by connecting slavery to it. He writes, “A slave too old to survive / Died slumped in irons. / Million of eyes bought the sight / At auctions nationwide / on white plasma TV” (79). Kolin reminds everyone that his/her interpretation of the issue of the identity of African Americans in crisis calls for participation to help African Americans during their crisis instead of “buying” into the identity framed for them.

Hurricane Blues and *When the Levees Broke* are examples of how we can recognize that frames and identities created for us do not work and must be changed. This has been shown in the examples of photography of African Americans in crisis. With this recognition we have the choice to either accept it as it is or create a new frame. What we are given does not have to be fixed. There should be room for change when it comes to the representation of African Americans in crisis. The Gees Bend photos

should not maintain a “primitive” framework as people discover them. Also the Hurricane Katrina photos should not be overpowered with references to “refugees” and “looters” and the absence of their names and residency.

***

This thesis has shown the need for African Americans in crisis to have more control of their identities and frames of their experiences. They must be associated with more than stereotypes and fixed characteristics such as criminals and the term “primitive.” The coverage of Hurricane Katrina victims in the crucial days after the disaster revealed an identity crisis that had survived even since the Resettlement/Farm Security Administration photos of Gee’s Bend. With a crisis occurring, African Americans are fixed in frames that make their identities questionable. The identities of African Americans in Gee’s Bend during the Depression era are framed by their “African” origins instead of poor American tenant farmers in need of the opportunity to come out of poverty and become owners of property and their identities. More than forty-eight years later, the identity crisis continues as we have seen with the Hurricane Katrina photos. Unfortunately, the identity of African Americans suffered during this crisis as terminology framed their photographs that raised questions about their American identity.

African Americans’ identities must not continue to suffer. People must be attentive to what frameworks they might be consciously or unconsciously working

within, and they must critique them in order for change to occur. Michael Eric Dyson writes,

> Unless the media reframe their very reference to blackness and poverty, which is not likely to occur without intense pressure, they will have not only failed to earn the encomiums they received, but worse, they will have set back the quest to truly expose the problems the black poor face by pretending to have done so. As framers of black life, the media can either illumine for the world our complexity or shutter the dizzying dynamism of our identities behind stale stereotypes and callous clichés. (175-176)

New contemporary African-American identities can be created. It will just take the equal participation of those in control and those who are not in control.

Each of us is responsible for the misrepresentation of African Americans. Dyson writes, "We all have a role to play" (203). He is absolutely right. We must look at the old and continuing identities presented in this thesis, and we must make "new and future national identities" that will not fix African-American identities. Figure 1.4 should not be the most re-circulated photo of the people of Gee's Bend, and the practices highlighted in Figure 2.9 should not happen. We have to join in with the poets and Gulf Coast residents who refuse to stay within a frame and identity they did not create. We all must be triumphant survivors of crisis, and control how we interpret the representation of all people.

Works Cited

Abraham, Linus. "Media Stereotypes of African Americans." Lester and Ross. 87-92.

American Heritage College Dictionary. 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

Babb, Valerie. *Whiteness Visible: The Meaning of Whiteness in American Literature and Culture*. New York: New York UP, 1998.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. New York: Penguin Books, 1972.

Betts, Tara. "Hurricane Kwame Offers His Two Cents." *Hurricane Blues: Poems about Katrina and Rita*. Ed. Philip C. Kolin, and Susan Swartwout. Cape Girardeau: Southeast Missouri State UP, 2006. 51.

Davidov, Judith Fryer. *Women's Camera Work: Self/Body/Other in American Visual Culture*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998.

Dyson, Michael Eric. *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2006.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

"The Farm Security Administration." *Library of Congress*. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsahtml/fsainfo.html>. 14 March 2007.

Hall, Stuart, ed. *Representation*. London: Sage Publications, 1997.

---. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage Publications, 2000.

Harris, Cheryl I. and Devon W. Carbado. "Loot or Find: Fact or Frame?" *After the Storm: Black Intellectuals Explore the Meaning of Hurricane Katrina*. Ed., David Dante Troutt. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006. 89-110.

Harris, Michael D. Introduction. *Colored Pictures: Race and Visual Representation*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Kimmelman, Michael. "ART REVIEW; Jazzy Geometry, Cool Quilters." *The New York Times*. 29 November 2002. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9900E6DF1238F93AA15752C1A9649C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>. 20 March 2007.

Kolin, Philip C. "Slaver Superdome." *Hurricane Blues: Poems about Katrina and Rita*. Ed. Philip C. Kolin, and Susan Swartwout. Cape Girardeau: Southeast Missouri State UP, 2006. 78-79.

Kolin, Philip C. and Susan Swartwout, eds. Introduction. *Hurricane Blues: Poems about Katrina and Rita*. Cape Girardeau: Southeast Missouri State UP, 2006. 14-17.

Lester, Paul Martin and Susan Dente Ross. *Images That Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.

Linn, Travis. "Media Methods That Lead to Stereotypes." Lester and Ross. 23-27.

"Loot Loops." *Snopes.com*. <http://www.snopes.com/katrina/photos/looters.asp>. 5 Nov. 2005.

"Migrant Workers." *Library of Congress*. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsahtml/fachap03.html>. 17 March 2007.

Nelson, Andy/The Christian Science Monitor via Getty Images. "Photo Gallery: New Orleans Refugees Struggle, Looters Plunder." *National Geographic*. 31 Aug. 2005. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/09/photogalleries/neworleans/photo6.html>. 2 Nov. 2005

Nielson, James/AFP/Getty Images. "Photo Gallery: Hurricane Katrina: After the Storm

(Aug. 31)." *National Geographic*. 31 Aug. 2005. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/09/photogalleries/neworleans/photo4.html>. 2 Nov. 2005

"Photo Gallery: Hurricane Katrina: Desperation and Despair." 1. Sept. 2005. *CNN.com*. <http://www.cnn.com>. 2 Nov. 2005.

Rothstein, Arthur. "Gee's Bend, Alabama, February and April 1937 Resettlement Administration, Lot 1616." <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsahtml/fachap05.html>. 27 Oct. 2005.

Story, Brett. "Politics as Usual: The Criminalization of Asylum Seekers in the United States." *The Refugee Studies Centre*. Sept. 2005. <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/PDFs/RSCworkingpaper26.pdf>. 20 March 2007.

Tama, Mario/Getty Images. "Photo Gallery: New Orleans Refugees Struggle, Looters Plunder." *National Geographic*. 31 Aug. 2005. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/09/photogalleries/neworleans/photo3.html>. 2 Nov. 2005.

"Tenant Farmers: Gee's Bend, Alabama, February and April 1937." <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsahtml/fachap05.html>. 20 Feb. 2007.

Thompson, Irwin/Dallas Morning News/Corbis. "Photo Gallery: New Orleans Refugees Struggle, Looters Plunder." *National Geographic*. 31 Aug. 2005. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/09/photogalleries/hurricane_katrina_aftermath/photo6.html>. 2 Nov. 2005.

Vilkomerson, Sara. "Spike's Pique." *The New York Observer* 20 March 2006. Lexis-Nexis. Auburn University Lib. 1 Feb. 2007

<http://web.lexix-nexis.com/universe>.

When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts. Dir. Spike Lee. HBO, 2006.

Wilking, Rick/Reuters. “Photo Gallery: In Katrina’s Wake.” *MSNBC*. 31 Aug. 2005. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9133972>. 5 Nov. 2005.