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A National Call to Students: *Louisiana Winter*

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SAN JOSE, Calif. – On Thursday afternoon, December 14, a simultaneous press conference will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, Gulfport, Mississippi, and San Jose, California to announce a “national call to students” to participate in *Louisiana Winter* this January 14-20.

Louisiana Winter is being billed as this generation’s Mississippi Summer, as teams of 20-40 students will spend five days educating and organizing in towns and cities throughout the Gulf Coast, culminating in a mass rally in New Orleans. In the first week of on-line registration (www.SolvingPoverty.com), 80 students from 13 universities have responded to the call. If current numbers continue, 100s of students from around the nation will participate.

The goals of *Louisiana Winter* are: to turn the nation’s attention to the Gulf Coast; to have students witness first-hand the social suffering of post-Hurricane Katrina; and to promote the immediate passage of the GULF COAST CIVIC WORKS PROJECT. If passed by Congress, the GULF COAST CIVIC WORKS PROJECT will hire 100,000 Gulf Coast residents to rebuild New Orleans and the Mississippi gulf coast. The residents will be provided temporary housing, and then rebuild and repair houses, schools, levees, parks, and other civic buildings.

The NAACP Gulf Coast Advocacy Center is sponsoring the New Orleans press conference at the Federal Courts Building at 3:00 pm CST. Attorney Tracie L. Washington, NAACP Director, states, “The NAACP became involved in *Louisiana Winter* because we must continue to actively engage the nation concerning the suffering of Katrina survivors. The housing crisis is dire.”

LeeAnn Gunn-Rasmussen, an instructor of Social Studies at MS Gulf Coast Community College, and is heading up the Mississippi press conference at the college’s Jefferson Davis Campus, notes, “The significance of students leading the charge to restore the Katrina ravaged areas of Mississippi and Louisiana cannot be overstated. By responding to this national call, students from all walks of life and from all across America are restoring our sense of hope in humanity and in ourselves. The storm has taken away so much: our homes, our sense of community, and our feelings of personal empowerment. Through their participation in *Louisiana Winter*, the students are demonstrating that the Gulf Coast and the nation have a bright future.”

Professor Scott Myers-Lipton, Associate Professor of Sociology at San José State University, and a group of students are organizing the simultaneous press conference at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in San José at 1:00 pm PST. Myers-Lipton wrote the GULF COAST CIVIC WORKS PROJECT after watching Spike Lee’s documentary “When the Levee’s Broke: A Four-Part Requiem” at a student protest against poverty. Myers-Lipton states, “Spike Lee’s movie demonstrates how the social compact between citizen and government has been torn asunder. As citizens, we have various responsibilities—like paying taxes, sitting on juries, and serving our country; at the same time, the government has responsibilities, and one of them is to respond effectively when its citizens are in crisis.” Myers-Lipton believes that passing federal legislation to implement the GULF COAST CIVIC WORKS PROJECT will go a long way in repairing the social compact.

The GULF COAST CIVIC WORKS PROJECT has attracted the attention of several key members of Congress. At the press conference, we will announce the names of the participating students’ universities and colleges, as well as hear from dignitaries who are supporting *Louisiana Winter* and the GULF COAST CIVIC WORKS PROJECT.

The GULF COAST CIVIC WORKS PROJECT is the national effort to pass Congressional legislation to create 100,000 jobs for Gulf Coast residents to rebuild their communities.