

Example of arnold school of public health usc study examines why african american...

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1.) Why did New Orleans flood? Include both types of levees, a discussion of wetlands and the modification the the Mississippi River.

New Orleans flooded for a variety of reasons. The first and most prominent reason that New Orleans flooded was the fact that it is seven to ten feet below sea level. The city of New Orleans is actually shaped like a bowl, so once water began flooding in, it is just following the course of gravity, which means flooding into the center of the city. In "The Storm that Drowned a City," they describe the shape of the city as "a gigantic soup bowl" (PBS). The earth beneath the city, with the exception of the French quarter, is weak and unstable due to the fact that it used to be wetlands. Because of this problem, levees were created to attempt to hold the Mississippi back from any water that may try to over flow the banks.

In the 1900s, the first sets of manmade levees were broken and the Mississippi flooded New Orleans. These levees were then taken over by the federal government and the Army Corps of Engineers. The engineers completed the levee system in the 1990s, and these levees were intended to withstand a category three hurricane. "Lt. Gen. Robert Flowers, retired chief of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, said New Orleans has a "very extensive" system with two types of levees: One set holds the water back from the Mississippi River; the others provide protection from Lake Pontchartrain when it swells during hurricanes and other storms" (Stuckey). Hurricane Katrina flooded the city of New Orleans because these levees failed to do the job they intended to do. Although they did not receive the full intensity of the storm, they still allowed water into the city. The Army Corps

of Engineers believes that this occurred because the earth under the levees gave way under the pressure of the water, and the levees were then displaced from the ground shifting (PBS). New York Times author Kevin Revkin describes what happened to the levees by saying that the “ concrete flood walls installed over the last several decades along the drainage and barge canals cutting into New Orleans were built in a way that by Army Corps of Engineers standards left them potentially unstable in a flood, according to government documents and interviews. The walls collapsed in several places during the storm” (Revkin).

2.) The french quarter is protected by floodwalls that do not surround the rest of the city of New Orleans, was this the only reason the french quarter did not flood? Why did the french quarter levees not fail when other did fail?

The French quarter experienced different flooding than other parts of the city, because it is the only part of the city that is actually built on dry land. In the 1700s, when the city was founded, the French Quarter was the highest level of ground adjacent from the Mississippi river, and it was the only part of the area that did not regularly flood. Years later, engineers discovered how to drain out the wetlands, and the rest of the city was built on what used to be swampy, always flooding area. The area that used to be the wetlands was a source of natural protection from flooding, because it was undeveloped area that would soak up any excess water from the Mississippi, and it would protect the other areas of the city. But these wetlands have long since disappeared, and there is no longer natural protection against flooding. The levees that were in place to stop the water at the French Quarter were not

overtopped by the water, and did their job to protect against the storm. The other levees that were broken were not overtopped either, but rather they were “breached” or broken (McGarity).

3.) What problems occurred during the evacuations and why didn't more people evacuate?

There are many reasons why people did not evacuate New Orleans during the storm. One of the major reasons was lack of communication. Many people did not believe or understand how dangerous the storm would be. Also, after the storm first hit, phone lines were disconnected and power was out, so those in the lower wards did not know what was coming to them, and many were unprepared because of this. In “The Storm that Drowned a City,” Ivor Van Heerden says “We could have got vehicles driving on the interstates with bullhorns telling people. We even could have used helicopters with bullhorns. We could have warned the people “A big flood's coming, take evasive action.” We didn't” (PBS). This suggests that the level of communication between the authorities and the people needed to be much greater, and that if more action was taken to alert the community, more lives could have been saved. A University of South Carolina study reveals that “Participants said among the reasons they did not evacuate were: they had successfully ridden out a hurricane in the past, they had no money for gasoline to leave the city, they were afraid to leave their homes and have their valuables stolen, and they had a fear that police would stop them if they tried to leave” (Arnold School of Public Health). Many of these people

had lived through other hurricanes that had come through the city, so they believed that they would be fine.

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Stuckey, Mike. (2005 Aug 30) No Quick Fix for New Orleans Breached Levees. MSNBC.

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