

1 dead in attic

Post-Katrina stories by
Times-Picayune columnist
Chris Rose

*JSC Common
Reading Initiative*

**SUMMER 2008
BOOKGUIDE**



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Dear Johnson State College Students:

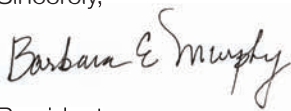
Welcome to the JSC community! Your decision to attend Johnson State College is the first step in exploring a world of new ideas and experiences. That exploration begins today when you open *1 dead in attic* by Chris Rose.

As a first year student, you will be participating in the College's Common Reading Initiative, a program of lectures, discussions, exhibitions, films, and concerts that complement the book. A highlight of the semester will be an on campus visit by the book's author, Chris Rose.

We've designed the program to introduce you to the academic and intellectual culture of the College through a common reading experience. A committee of faculty, staff, and students met this spring to choose a book for the entire incoming class to read during the summer. This fall, you will have many opportunities to share and compare ideas about the common book. Your Peer Orientation Leaders, as well as many faculty, staff, and returning students will also have read *1 dead in attic*, providing a broad base for discussion and integration into the JSC community.

Please take a look at the background material presented in this brochure, and keep in mind the discussion questions listed as you read *1 dead in attic*. We hope that you will read and reflect on the issues presented in the book and look forward to seeing you at all the related events.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara E. Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "B".

President

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND BOOK

Chris Rose began working at *The Times-Picayune* in the summer of 1984, covering crime in the suburb of Jefferson Parish and the politics of two small incorporated cities. Over the years, he covered local and national politics, general features, regional culture and economics, and New Orleans nightlife, music and personalities. Upon his return to New Orleans on the Monday after Hurricane Katrina, he began to cover the early stirrings of life in the streets and has stayed with that beat ever since, chronicling the city as it puts itself back together, shakes off its trauma, and tries to find footing as a viable community. The Pulitzer Prize Board named him a finalist in the commentary category for his post-Katrina columns. Rose, who was born in Washington, D.C. in 1960 and graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1982, is a frequent commentator for National Public Radio's *Morning Edition* and a writer/performer of several critically acclaimed stage shows in New Orleans.

1 dead in attic is a collection of stories by *Times-Picayune* columnist Chris Rose, recounting the harrowing months of life in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Celebrated as a local treasure and heaped with national praise, Rose provides a rollercoaster ride of observation, commentary, emotion, tragedy and even humor—in a way that only he could find in a devastated wasteland.

They are stories of the dead and the living, stories of survivors and believers, stories of hope and despair. And stories about refrigerators.

1 dead in attic freeze-frames New Orleans, caught between an old era and a new, during its most desperate time, as it struggles out of the floodwaters and wills itself back to life.

FALL 2008 COMMON READING INITIATIVE EVENTS

Musical Events



The Soul Rebels - With a sound that spans the wide spectrum of African-American musical styles from the brass band tradition to hip hop, the Soul Rebels are among New Orleans' finest and most innovative groups. In addition to their own recordings, the Soul Rebels can be heard on the title track to Galactic's most recent release, *From the Corner to the Block*.

<http://www.soulrebelsbrassband.com/>



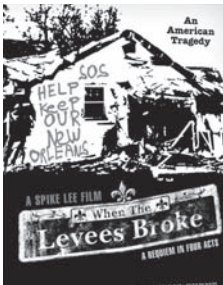
Dumpstaphunk - In a city renowned for its musical families, there's probably no more respected name in New Orleans than Neville. Dumpstaphunk, led by Ivan Neville, expands upon the funk style pioneered by his uncle Art's band, the Meters. Their CD, *Listen Hear*, was named one of the best records of 2007 by offBeat magazine.

<http://www.dumpstaphunk.com/>

Mango Jam - Mango Jam has been described as one of Vermont's leading bands. They draw their inspiration from the music of South Louisiana and the Caribbean incorporating Zydeco, Cajun, New Orleans R&B and Mardi Gras songs along with Ska and Reggae.

<http://members.aol.com/dlavi70356/mangojamindex>

Film Series



This semester you will get a chance to see a number of films on campus. Some of them will be lighthearted, like a Halloween time showing of New Orleans' writer Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*. Others, like Spike Lee's documentary *When the Levees Broke*, will be a more serious look at the issues surrounding the storm.

Lecture Series

The devastating Vermont Flood of 1927, the science of hurricanes, the Vermont chapter of the Red Cross' involvement in disaster relief, and JSC Break Away, will be the topics of just a few of the wonderful lectures on campus this fall.

Art Exhibition

The Color of Loss: An Intimate Portrait of New Orleans After Katrina:
Photographs by Dan Burkholder



The devastation of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina has been imprinted in our collective visual memory by thousands of images in the media. Far more intense and poetic than purely documentary photographs, Burkholder's images lure viewers to linger over the artifacts of people's lives—a child's red wagon abandoned in a mud-caked

room, a molding picture of Jesus—to fully understand the havoc thrust upon the people of New Orleans.

http://danburkholder.com/Pages/misc_pages/Color_Of_Loss_Book/Images_Exhibition.html

NEW ORLEANS

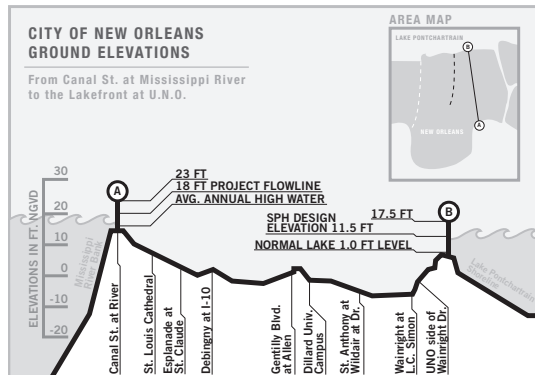


New Orleans is well known for its multicultural heritage, cuisine, architecture, music (particularly as the birthplace of Jazz), and its annual Mardi Gras and other celebrations and festivals. The city is often referred to as the “most unique” city in America.

One of the oldest cities in the United States, it was founded in 1718 as a French colony, and was named after Philippe II, Duc d’Orleans, the Regent of France at the time. In 1803 Napoleon sold the territory to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase, and the city grew rapidly over the years with the influxes of Americans, French, Creole French, and Haitians.

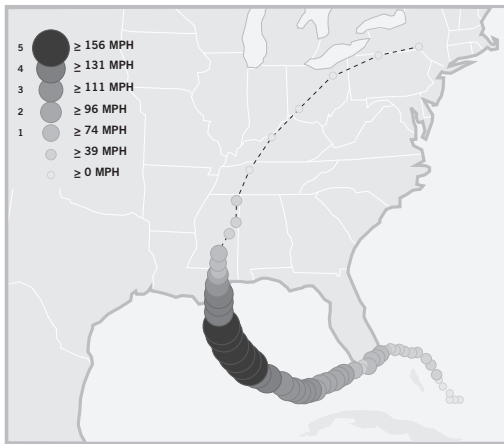
As a principle port, New Orleans had the major role of any city during the pre-Civil War era in the slave trade. At the same time it had the most prosperous community of free persons of color in the South. By 1840 New Orleans had become the wealthiest and third-most populous city in the nation.

In the 20th century, New Orleans was a progressive major city and with the development of a drainage plan in the low-lying areas, it allowed the city to expand into areas that had once been unsuitable for urban development. Over time, rapid sinking of the land, both natural and human-induced, left these new areas several feet below sea level.



New Orleans was vulnerable to flooding even before the age of negative elevation, but after several weather events in the second half of the 20th century the city’s increased vulnerability and the weakness of the pumping system was becoming clear. This realization would lead to the construction of the massive floodwalls and man-made levees built by the US Army Corps to improve New Orleans’ hurricane defenses and restore pumping capacity. These floodwalls and levees would later fail during their encounter with Hurricane Katrina.

HURRICANE KATRINA



Hurricane Katrina was the costliest and one of the five deadliest hurricanes in US history. Katrina formed on August 23rd during the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season and first made landfall on August 25th, 2005 in South Florida where it hit as a Category 1 hurricane, with 80 mph winds. As it moved back out, increasing in strength, it left 14 dead in Florida and billions of dollars worth of damage.

Katrina next made landfall in Louisiana on August 29th, as a Category 3 storm, with 125 mph winds. As the eye of the storm swept to the northeast, it subjected the city to hurricane conditions for hours. Katrina's storm surge led to 53 levee breaches in the federally built levee system protecting metro New Orleans, leaving 80% of the city under water. This failure is the worst civil engineering disaster in American history. In the end, over 1500 people died in Louisiana, and the city is still recovering from the destruction left behind.

The Gulf coast of Mississippi also suffered massive damage as Katrina made land fall a third time. Katrina traveled up the entire state, and afterwards all 82 counties were declared disaster areas. 238 people died, 67 were missing and there was billions of dollars in damage. During this surge, Alabama and the Florida panhandle were also both affected by tropical-storm force winds causing lots of damage, but no loss of life.

Hurricane Katrina eventually weakened as it moved inland, but additional tropical-storm force gusts were recorded as far north as Fort Campbell, Kentucky on August 30th, and the winds damaged trees in New York. Finally, the remnants of Katrina were absorbed by a new cyclone to its east across Pennsylvania. This cyclone continued north and affected Canada on August 31st with excessive rains, fallen trees and some flooding before finally dissipating.

QUESTIONS

1. How do the descriptions in Chris Rose's book differ from or jibe with your previous exposure through the media to Katrina's effect on New Orleans?
2. What drew Chris Rose to New Orleans and made him stay? How did Katrina and its aftermath affect his commitment to the city?
3. Hurricane Katrina has had a powerful effect on the residents of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. What are some of the positive and some of the negative ways that Rose and the people he talks about in *1 dead in attic* have coped with the effects of the storm?
4. A community's response to disaster reveals a lot about the area's strengths and weaknesses before the crisis. How would you evaluate the strengths and/or weaknesses of New Orleans as a community before Katrina? How would you imagine your own community would react to a disaster or crisis? The JSC campus community? The local communities around Johnson?
5. What are some of the questions you have about Katrina that you wish Chris Rose would have discussed or that you want to know more about?

1 DEAD IN ATTIC INTERNET RESOURCES

Websites that you can visit to learn more about New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina.

The Times-Picayune New Orleans' Daily Newspaper

<http://www.nola.com/>

New Orleans' Jazz and Heritage Radio Station

<http://www.wwoz.org/>

Visit this site to hear a recent audio interview with Chris Rose and others about New Orleans today.

<http://www.kuow.org/defaultProgram.asp?ID=14124>

Teaching the Levees provides information about Hurricane Katrina, race, and class.

<http://www.teachingthelevees.org/>

To view professional and amateur video clips about Post-Katrina New Orleans visit the National Black Programming Consortium.

<http://www.nbpc.tv/webcasts/katrina/index.php>

Common Ground Relief is a grassroots organization providing relief to victims of Gulf Coast hurricanes.

<http://www.commongroundrelief.org/>

For recent information on the repopulation of New Orleans visit the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center.

<http://www.gnocdc.org/>

Brad Pitt's Make it Right Housing Foundation

<http://www.makeitrightnola.org/>

Voices of New Orleans is a blog about Post-Katrina New Orleans.

<http://www.chinmusicpress.com/books/doyouknow/voices/>

The Arthur Roger Gallery shows the work of contemporary New Orleans artists.

<http://www.arthurorogergallery.com/default.asp>

New Orleans Jazz Fest

<http://www.nojazzfest.com/>

New Orleans Mardi Gras

<http://www.mardigrasneworleans.com/>

