New Orleans & Biloxi: Community Empowerment and Rebuilding Strategies
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Dear Participants,

We are so excited that you chose to be apart of New Orleans & Biloxi 2010 Alternative Spring Break (ASB). We are looking forward to getting to know each of you as we embark on this amazing experience. Both of us attended the ASB to New Orleans in March 2009. We both became really passionate about the issues that affect New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. So as you can imagine, we are very excited about being able to lead this trip. We hope that over these next few months you all will gain a similar passion for these issues and social justice issues in general.

This packet will provide you with all the information that you will need in these upcoming months leading to our trip. There is information about New Orleans and Biloxi, safety and security information, payments/fundraising, pre-departure meetings, packing lists, and our itinerary. There is also a reading/viewing list. It is strongly encouraged that you read/watch these items so that you can better understands the issues that we will be discussing.

Look out for emails from us over break to coordinate meeting times for our weekly pre-departure sessions.

Your Leaders,
Ayana and Keesha

“Be the Change You Wish to See in the World” - Ghandi
WELCOME TO ALTERNATIVE BREAKS!!!!

Congratulations on being selected to participate in an Alternative Break trip! You are about to embark on a journey of transformation, reflection, activism, and community involvement. As you know, the Alternative Break program is student-run, with the Community Service Center (CSC) and the Alternative Break Coordinator serving as resources for the student leaders of each trip.

Please read this letter carefully for important information about

FORMS YOU MUST TURN IN TO CSC: ON WEBSITE: www.american.edu/altbreak under “Participant Applications & Forms”

1. Medical/Emergency Contact form
2. Copy of health insurance card
3. Consent & Release Waiver Form
4. Copy of passport (for international trips)
5. Code of Conduct Signature form
PAYMENT DEADLINES:
Monthly payment installments are due according to your payment schedule.
**Payments Due:** 12/5, 1/15, 2/5

ONLINE PAYMENT INSTRUCTIONS:
1. Log-on to my.american.edu, click on the Finances or Life@AU tab.
2. Under your personalized links, click on “Alternative Break E-payment.”
3. Choose your trip.
4. Enter your credit card information and click submit!
5. Payments are non-refundable.

PAYMENT INSTRUCTIONS VIA CASH OR CHECK:
1. Obtain deposit slip from Community Service Center with the trip Account # to ensure that the payment is placed in the correct account.
2. Bring payment and Deposit Record to the payment windows in Student Accounts (before 4:30 PM in Asbury 300).
3. Bring the original payment receipt back to the Community Service Center (MGC 273). You must keep a copy of the receipt for yourself. **If you do not bring back the receipt we have no way of knowing if you paid!!!**
4. Put the receipt in your trip box in the CSC.
5. Payments are non-refundable.
Alternative Break Welcome Letter cont.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

- The pre-departure meetings are **MANDATORY.** You must attend in order to get to know other students on your trip, learn about your destination and talk about health/safety issues.

- **You are responsible for making an appointment with your doctor** to find out which immunizations you need.

- You are covered under AU’s international travel insurance (information from Alt Break website: [http://www.american.edu/finance/rmehs/inttravel.cfm](http://www.american.edu/finance/rmehs/inttravel.cfm))

- Safety, US State Department, CDC immunizations, and other links are on the Alternative Break website. [www.american.edu/altbreak](http://www.american.edu/altbreak)

- Your leader is responsible for providing the trip itinerary and destination information. Please ask them any questions you have.

- **Academic credits:** You can either do an **independent study** with a professor of your choice or take **SIS 386: Selected Topics in Global Social Justice.** (Register through Alternative Break office.)

- **Fundraising for your trip:** If you solicit checks from individuals or businesses, they should be made out to “American University” and mailed to the AU Development Office. See the Alternative Break website for more information.
Alternative Break Welcome Letter cont.

AU EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION:
202-885-3636  Public Safety
1st Shoshanna Sumka, Alternative Break Coordinator; Work:
2nd Marcy Campos, Community Service Center Director; work:
202-885-7378, cell: 301-996-6343, home: 301-270-6343
3rd Fanta Aw, Assistant Vice President, Campus Life; work: 202-
885-3357 home: 301-562 1499, cell: 240-413-2277
EXPECTATIONS & CODE OF CONDUCT:

The following is a list of minimum expectations; your individual trip groups will discuss and formulate additional participant expectations as necessary.

**Code of Conduct:**

1. Participate in all mandatory weekly pre-departure meetings.
2. Make payments and turn in all necessary forms on time.
3. Travel with the group at all times.
4. Abide by the alcohol and other drug free policy of Alternative Breaks.
5. Prepare individually for your trip by completing required readings.
6. Behave in a safe and responsible manner.
7. Respect the customs and local community.
8. Respect your trip leader, fellow participants & faculty/staff advisor.
9. Process the AB experience individually and with your group through reflection, conversation and other group activities.
10. Follow-up after trip with activism on social justice issues learned.
Program Reminders:
1. Turn in all necessary forms on time.
2. Participants who wish to receive course credit for participation will be required to complete additional criteria.
3. SIS 386 or independent study credit is optional. See individual trip advisor for details.
4. Participants must become aware of relevant health and safety risks relevant to your destination. You are responsible for making an appointment with your doctor to find out which immunizations you need.
5. Make payments on time.
6. All payments made to Alternative Break are non-refundable.

I understand that failure to comply with any of these expectations may result in my inability to participate in the trip, dismissal from trip at my own expense, or may affect future Alternative Break participation.

Print Name: ____________________________________________ AU ID: __________

Signature: ____________________________________________ Date: __________
Background Information

The Hurricanes of 2005

In late August of 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. The most severe loss of life and property occurred in New Orleans, LA due to a failed levee system. After the storm there was a lot of criticism of both the federal and local government response. On the local level there was mismanagement and a lack of leadership in response to the storm. Mayor Nagin and Governor Blanco were criticized for their late response and evacuation plan; leaving many people stranded with no food, water, or shelter. On the federal level, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was not prepared to deal with a catastrophe this severe. Many people were not able to be placed in adequate living arrangements and four years later thousands of people were still living in FEMA trailers.

There are interconnected ethnoracial and socioeconomic factors present in New Orleans, because New Orleans has a very high population of both residents of color and residents of low-income and poor backgrounds. Hurricane Katrina shed light on some of the public policy issues that were already institutionalized in New Orleans such as environmental policy, poverty, crime rates, and unemployment. Now even four years later New Orleans still has not been given the resources it needs and these policy issues are still evident. In places such as the Garden District and downtown New Orleans it has been revitalized but in places such as Lower Ninth Ward it still looks like the storm recently hit. New Orleans still has to deal with issues such as high crime, high HIV/AIDS rates, low performing schools and a lack of government support.

Most often as a community outside of the situation we forget that the damage did not only occur in New Orleans. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita affected the Gulf Coast from Central Florida to Texas. At lease 1,863 people lost their lives and the Hurricanes Caused an estimated $100 billion dollars of damage. Why Biloxi, to open our eyes to the extent of damage that spread outside of New Orleans.

We hope to shed light on the idea that community empowerment can be achieved if both the political and social organizations work together, which is an aspect that really needs to be strengthened in New Orleans. Community empowerment means providing people with the resources that they deserve and need in order to live in a safe environment and a place that they can be proud to call home. We will examine how people in low-income communities’ resources and access to resources are limited and what can be done to change this.
New Orleans is the biggest city in Louisiana. Located in Southeast Louisiana. The city is named after Phillipe II Duc d’Orleans.

New Orleans is known for its multicultural and multilingual community. As well as its cuisine, architecture, music (jazz) celebrations and festivals—its most celebrated is Mardi Gras.

A Parish in Louisiana is county in other states.

KREWE- an organization that puts on a parade or ball during Carnival Season.
Biloxi is located 1.5 hours driving from New Orleans, in the Gulf Coast.

In 1969 Hurricane Camillie caused severe damage in the city.

Hurricanes have devastated Biloxi and the entire Mississippi coast for years.

Biloxi’s biggest income comes from its casino industry and dockside gaming.
SAFETY AND SECURITY

The biggest safety consideration for this trip is work safety at the construction site. However, there will be a supervisor on site at all times and they will explain how to properly use all of the tools and the protocol of the work. Volunteers are not allowed to use any of the heavy or dangerous materials; this is done by the site supervisor or an AmeriCorps member. Also, there are safety and First-Aid kits on site in the event of an injury occurring. The leaders will be on-site working with you and we also have First-Aid kits so if there is a problem; no matter how small please do not hesitate to let us know.

All Alternative Breaks are alcohol free. Remember that this is a service trip and our focus is social justice issues. This does not mean that we will not have fun and there will be many cultural activities for us to experience as a group. We want to make the trip more productive and enjoyable for all participants so once again, NO ALCOHOL. Participants will be sent home at their own expense if they violate this.
Please note that most of the dinners will be held at Camp Hope but note where dinner options will be held elsewhere

Saturday March 6, 2010: Travel to New Orleans. Check in and settle into Housing. Have first Group Discussion in New Orleans about our expectations of the trip and the agenda for the next day.

Sunday: Tour downtown New Orleans and meet with a Tulane grad student that was in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Spend time exploring St. Bernard Parish where Camp Hope is housed and an area that had 100% damage in Hurricane Katrina. Dinner at Housing and nightly reflection.

Monday: Biloxi, MS (1 1/2 hour drive) and work with Hands On Gulf Coast for the day. We will meet with Biloxi NAACP to learn more about their work in housing. Get Dinner and travel back to New Orleans, Group Reflection

Tuesday: 7:45am-3:15pm: work with Habitat for Humanity. Meet with National Low Income Housing Coalition and/or PolicyLink (a government agency focusing on sustainable and equitable development in housing, public investment, and health). Travel back to for Dinner and Group Reflection

Wednesday: 7:45am-3:15pm: Work with Habitat for Humanity. Meet with Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative, Dinner at Housing, Group Reflection

Thursday: 7:45am-3:15pm: Work with Habitat for Humanity. Meet with the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana (JJPL), Dinner at Housing, Group Reflection

Friday: 7:45am-1:00pm :work with Habitat for Humanity. Meet with Father Luke at Mary Queen of Viet Nam Church in New Orleans East, to discuss community organizing. French Quarter for dinner and coffee (at Cafe Du Monde).

Saturday: Travel back to D.C.
Organization Details

Camp Hope: (Volunteer Housing Facility) Camp Hope is the volunteer housing facility located in St. Bernard Parish, which is about five miles east of downtown New Orleans. Most meals will be provided by Camp Hope.  
http://www.camphope.sbpg.net

Hands On Gulf Coast: This is a Mississippi based nonprofit that provides opportunities to volunteer in helping with the recovery of the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina.  
http://handsongulfcoast.org

NOLA Habitat: New Orleans Habitat for Humanity is a nonprofit organization that builds new houses in order to eliminate poverty housing in the New Orleans area.  
http://www.habitat-nola.org

National Low Income Housing Coalition: NLIHC works to assure that low-income people in the country have affordable and decent homes.  
http://www.nlihc.org
**Policy Link**: Policy Link is a national research and action institute devoted to sustainable and equitable development in housing, public investment, and health. [http://www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org)

**Jericho Road Episcopal Housing Initiative**: Jericho Road helps provide high quality, affordable housing opportunities to people returning home to New Orleans. They also focus on neighborhood development to improve the quality of life of the residents in Central City New Orleans. [http://www.jerichohousing.org](http://www.jerichohousing.org)

**Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana (JJPL)**: JJPL works on improving juvenile defense and advocacy. They examine the conditions of juvenile prisons and alternatives /changes to the juvenile justice system so that it works to strengthen the youth and their families. [http://jjpl.org](http://jjpl.org)
Mary Queen of Vietnam: Community Development Corporation Inc: A community development Organization headed up by Father Luke of South East New Orleans Parish, this organization is looking into rebuilding its community through sustainable tools and community empowerment opportunities. [http://www.mqvncdc.org/](http://www.mqvncdc.org/)
Pre-Departure Meetings & Schedule

Note: Pre-Departure Meetings are MANDATORY. We ask that all of you are prepared to set aside 1-2 hours per meeting. Note that some of our meeting times will not be “scheduled” within our Pre-Departure schedule, such as fundraising activities etc.

Week 1: Alt Break 2010 Crew Introductions- We did it! The Krewe is formed, now get to know each other. Today we will formally meet the group and begin the first of many exciting pre-departure meetings!

Week 2: Why New Orleans & Biloxi? – Prior to this meeting we ask all of our Krewe members to research the two cities we will be visiting. Examine why you think we will be serving these two areas. During the meeting we will explore the effects of Hurricane Katrina and Rita in the Summer of 2005.

Week 3: You think you know, but you have no idea- Last session we began to unpack the issues deeply set in New Orleans & Biloxi. Today we are asking you to develop more of your thoughts, by looking more specifically at the issues that were uncovered post-Katrina. These issues include, socioeconomic, ethnoracial and environmental disparities.
Pre-Departure Meetings & Schedule

Week 4: **Give your time?:** It is one thing to learn about what needs to be done, but it is another thing to actually put the theory to practice. This week you will meet local organizations that serve the community in similar ways as the ones we will meet in New Orleans and Biloxi.

Week 5: **Fun with Past Participants:** Have questions? They have answers, informal pizza dinner with last ASB’s participants.

Week 6: **Remember that day?:** As a group we will watch a documentary about Hurricane Katrina. What do you remember of August 29, 2005? What do you remember about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina?
Pre-Departure meetings & Schedule

Week 7: **What if it was you?**: What if it was your community that was badly damaged by a natural disaster, how would you feel and what would you want done?

Week 8: **Final Preparations**: Departure is HERE! Wrap up our pre-departure meetings and go over logistics and last minute concerns. NOLA HERE WE COME!
Payment Schedule

* Please note that we will do our best to help offset the cost of the trip through group fundraising endeavors.

The total trip cost is $940

- First Payment- $300 Due 12/5
- Second Payment- $300 Due 1/15
- Third and Final Payment- $340 Due 2/5

* All payments can be paid through your my.american.edu portal
Fundraising

As a Krewe we will discuss some specific fundraising strategies so that we can lower the cost. Here are some of the general ideas we have so far:

• Event at Z-Burger
• Show a movie related to our issue(s) and encourage donations from the audience
• Have a table on the quad to sell Mardi Gras beads

These are just a few ideas; we feel that it is essential for the entire krewe to be involved in the fundraising process and generating ideas.

• Letter writing party
Packing

- Work clothes - Remember, we will be participating in rebuilding work for 4 days
  - long sleeve shirts
  - pants
  - Shorts
  - T-shirts
- Sturdy tennis shoes or work boots
- A sweatshirt or a jacket
- One or two nice outfits (for our Krew dinners and Cultural activities)
- Sleeping bag and/or sheets, blankets
- Pillow
- Toiletries
- Shower shoes
- Towel
- Sunscreen and Insect repellant
- Reusable water bottles
- A journal and books or cards for free-time
  - Try to avoid expensive things (iPod, computer, etc.)
Readings & viewings

- “Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster.” An indictment of the federal and state government’s failure to protect all citizens, regardless of race or class. Author: Michael Eric Dyson
- “The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast.” The definitive historical timeline of that terrible week August 27 to September 3, 2005. Author: Douglas Brinkley

We will send you further readings for the pre-departure meetings. You are also encouraged to do more research on your own.
Leader Contact Info

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    (240) 838-2096
Keesha Ceran:  nc2663a@american.edu
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cris ayala: ayala@american.edu
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Facebook Group:
Acknowledgments

We would like to give a special thanks to Shoshanna Sumka for all her help and guidance with planning this trip. It would not have been possible without her! We would also like to thank our staff advisor, cris ayala for accepting our invitation to go on this wonderful journey and we know that he will prove to be an amazing asset for all of us.

And we would especially like to thank you- the participants, for wanting to take this incredible journey with us. We are excited for your enthusiasm, your creativity and your open mind. Welcome to Alternative Spring Break 2010!

Much Thanks,
Ayana and Keesha