

"Trouble the Water" Filmmakers Discuss Social Ills

December 09, 2010 11:30 AM Cody Wild
newwave@tulane.edu

The Academy Award-nominated documentary *Trouble the Water*, which follows the plight of several New Orleanians in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, recently was screened at Tulane, where a post-screening panel discussion with the filmmakers and protagonists quickly broadened to a conversation about social ills.



Kimberly Roberts, center, signs CDs after the screening of the documentary that details the post-Hurricane Katrina experiences of Roberts, her family and companions. (Photo by Trina Beck)

Directed by Tia Lessin and Carl Deal, *Trouble the Water* chronicles the journey of Kimberly Rivers Roberts, an aspiring African-American Ninth Ward rapper, her family and companions as they rely on the generosity of others and their own resilience to combat the obstacles that stand between them and eventual sanctuary from Hurricane Katrina.

The movie's tagline, "It's not about a hurricane, it's about America," resonated with the question-and-answer period following the film, as Lessin, Deal, Roberts, her

husband, Scott, and friend Brian Nobles engaged questions and conversation about cyclical poverty and disparity in modern America.

“It's poverty that divides people, that's causing all this violence,” said Kim Roberts, who expressed the wish that “NOLA invest in building better citizens” by “not giving them fish, but teaching them to fish.”

Scott Roberts said, “A lot of our young people want to get out of the 'hood, but there's no way out.” Kim Roberts added, “And if people don't fight for change, it'll pretty much stay the same.”

Panel members agreed that the New Orleans education system needed to be improved in order to reduce crime and give more of the populace the chance for prosperity. Their sentiment was that although these problems are clear and identifiable, prevailing apathy in the country stands in the way of real change.

Despite the film's eventual success, the filmmakers were confronted by similarly disturbing attitudes as they searched for funding to bring the story to life. Lessin recalled the words of one film industry executive: “Find us some white characters. Our audience won't connect with this.”

The event was sponsored by the Newcomb-Tulane College [Reading Project](#).

Cody Wild is a first-year student studying English and political economy.