

Documentary looks at struggles to rebuild New Orleans

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newwave@tulane.edu



An ongoing project by Tulane instructor Luisa Dantas presents the stories of people in post-Katrina New Orleans. (Photo from Luisa Dantas)

In August 2005, the lives of countless New Orleans natives were forever changed when Hurricane Katrina decimated the city. In December of the same year, Luisa Dantas began work on *Land of Opportunity*, a documentary and upcoming interactive site designed to capture the ongoing efforts to rebuild the city and return residents to their homes.

[Land of Opportunity](#) screened at the Tulane Hillel Mintz Center near the uptown campus recently, followed by a question-and-answer session with Dantas, who is producer, director and editor of the project. Dantas is an adjunct faculty member in the Tulane University [English Department](#).

Viewers of the film were rewarded with a glimpse into the very heart of New Orleans via stories shared by people from all walks of life. Brazilian immigrant workers, Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood activists, children forced to move across the country and public housing residents thrust from their homes each had a different story to tell.

Unafraid to expose the negative effects of disaster capitalism, *Land of Opportunity* humanizes the story in a way that makes it relatable to all audiences. The film shows many different perspectives that, when combined, explain the cultural conundrum of post-Katrina New Orleans.

“It was quite a journey of being here full time and becoming close to these people and their families,” said Dantas. She spends her days teaching Tulane students to view filmmaking and screen writing in an entirely new light. Through her Place-Based Storytelling in New Orleans course, she has helped students discover the atmosphere of today's New Orleans through partnerships with local middle and high schools.

“It's been interesting having Tulane students take a look at these issues,” Dantas said. Her ultimate goal, both in the film project and class, is to share the knowledge that the story of post-Katrina New Orleans reflects the struggle of urban America as a whole.

Land of Opportunity is an interactive and multi-layered look at the (re)construction of the nation's urban centers, Dantas said. The [interactive site](#) will be unveiled in October.

Jamie Logan is a first-year Newcomb-Tulane College student.