

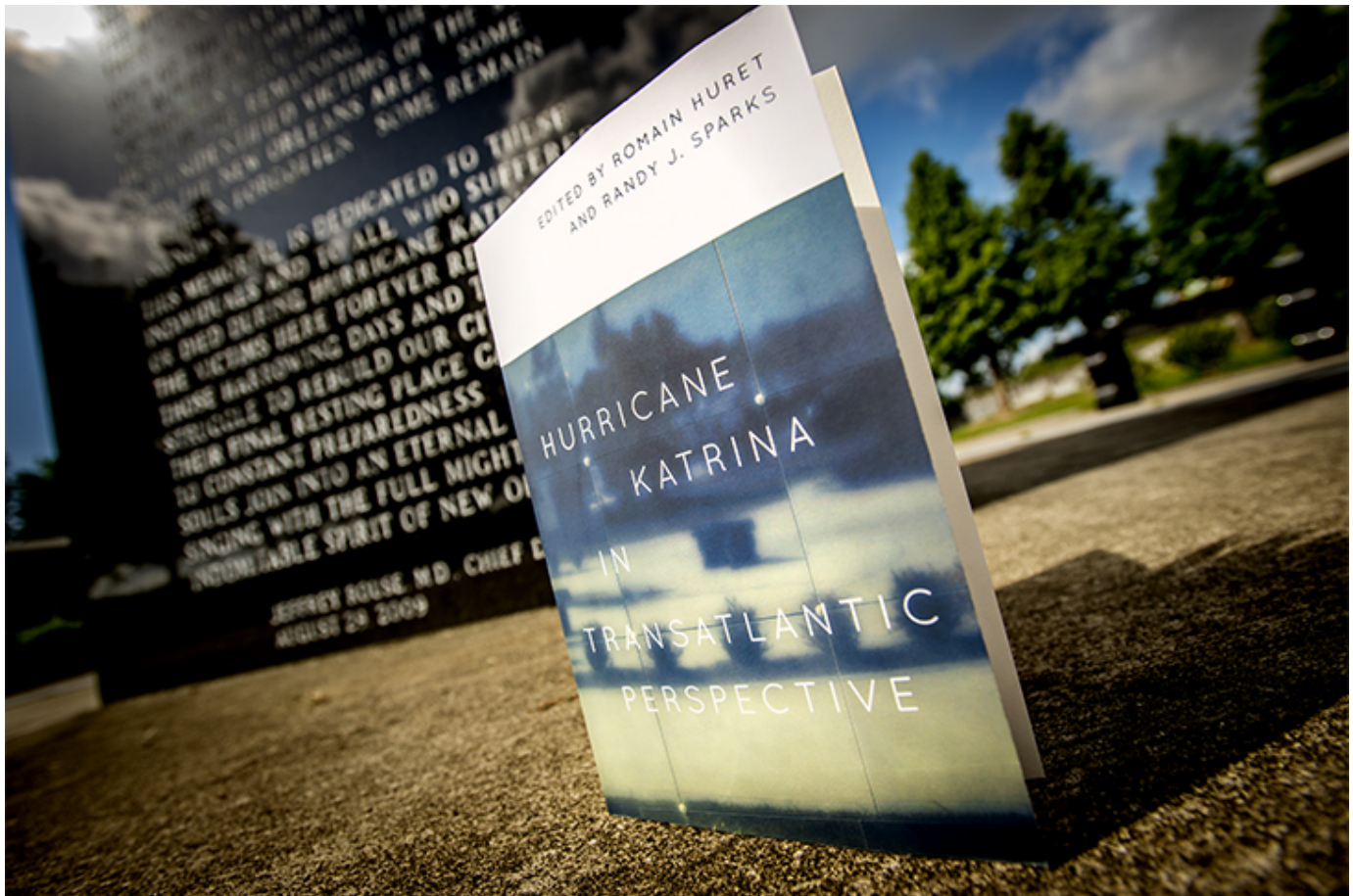
## French and American perspectives on Katrina

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# KATRINA & BEYOND

LOOKING BACK • MOVING FORWARD  
TULANE UNIVERSITY • 2005-2015



*Hurricane Katrina in Transatlantic Perspective* is a book of essays co-edited by Randy J. Sparks, history professor. The New Orleans Katrina Memorial, backdrop for this image of the book, is in the Old Charity Hospital Cemetery, which is located next to St. Patrick Cemetery on Canal Street. Eighty-five unclaimed and unidentified victims of the storm are buried at the site. The memorial is dedicated to those individuals and to all who suffered or died during Hurricane Katrina. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Katrina ? an event of major historical importance ? is something that we are still trying to make sense of.

In a book of 11 essays ? [\*Hurricane Katrina in Transatlantic Perspective\*](#) (Louisiana State University Press, 2014), co-edited by Tulane University history professor [Randy J. Sparks](#) ? scholars make a thoughtful and committed effort to do just that.

Katrina can teach us many lessons, says Sparks.

“The storm's impact was not just limited to our region or country,” he says. “These essays can remind us that there are things we should never forget.”

At probably one of the first academic conferences on Katrina anywhere, a group of French and American scholars ? contributors to the book ? gathered in Paris in December 2005. “Everything was so raw, so uncertain,” recalls Sparks.

These scholars brought different perspectives to understanding Katrina. They met again in New Orleans five years later “to revisit the topic, assess how our early conclusions held up, and look back on the rebuilding process after some time had passed.”

“I think everyone, whether New Orleanian or French, felt a deep engagement with the Katrina experience and the important lessons it had to teach us,” Sparks says.

In his essay, “Why Mardi Gras Matters,” Sparks explores the iconic celebration because, he says, “Is there any aspect of our culture more famous and yet more misunderstood than Mardi Gras?”

The first Carnival after Katrina in February 2006 “provided a means of healing and celebration and resistance,” says Sparks. “So many of us feared that we might lose our culture, that the things that made the city so unique may have drowned in the storm, but I think that first Mardi Gras dispelled some of those fears.”

Other Tulane faculty members who contributed essays to the book are [James M. Boyden](#), [Richard Campanella](#) and [Bruce Boyd Raeburn](#).

&#x201c;Is there any aspect of our culture more famous and yet more misunderstood than Mardi Gras?&#x201d;&mdash; Randy Sparks, professor of history