

3. One year ago, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf region, leaving behind unprecedented damage and rendering thousands of people homeless. Soon afterward, ACORN began fostering communication among displaced residents in need of disaster assistance. In the past year, with the support of many friends and allies, ACORN has preserved homes through its gutting program, organized for the right to return and rebuild, and provided a national voice for displaced families through the national ACORN Katrina Survivors Association.

4. The ACORN Katrina Survivors Association is an ACORN project composed of displaced New Orleans residents and other Katrina survivors and has over 5,000 members. It is the first nationwide organization of displaced New Orleans residents and other Katrina survivors. The Katrina Survivors Association unites members of our communities who seek more effective relief efforts and a voice in the rebuilding process. The ACORN Katrina Survivors Association engages in activities ranging from counseling individual survivors about emergency housing options to conducting dialogue with elected officials and public policy experts to protect the interests of families affected by the disaster. Through these efforts, ACORN seeks a voice for survivors in the rebuilding of New Orleans, the resources needed for families to survive while rebuilding efforts are undertaken, and a rebuilding plan that builds stronger communities for all.

5. I have been involved in ACORN's Katrina and Rita recovery projects for 12 months - since the days following the hurricane. ACORN has devoted significant resources to assist the evacuees and others harmed by the storms. This includes two to three full-time staff in Houston for the past twelve months, one full time staff person in San Antonio and Dallas, and a staff of 8-12 in New Orleans who dedicate nearly 100% of their time to this effort. ACORN has actively met and assisted evacuee members with a variety of activities including helping hundreds of evacuee members with obtaining FEMA assistance. Because of the vague notices and inconsistent information we receive on the phone with FEMA, we have wasted valuable time and resources that we could have used to provide other services for our members. FEMA's process has directly caused ACORN to shift resources away from its other priorities. If not for the problems our members have had with FEMA, and the staff time dedicated to addressing these problems, we would have well over \$1 million in organizational funding to devote to assisting our members to improve neighborhood conditions, housing, and wages just to name a few. Despite our complaints to FEMA since October of last year, and our meetings with high-level FEMA staff in December, February and May (FEMA's Acting Director in February and the Gulf Coast Regional Director in May) and our work with evacuees and other agencies, FEMA's flawed process has continued for over a year. FEMA has frustrated ACORN's purpose to assist our members.

6. We have ACORN offices scattered throughout the United States. In many ACORN offices, staff have been especially assigned to work with Katrina and Rita evacuees. In the Houston ACORN office alone, there are three staff members that have devoted 100% of their time to assisting evacuees. In both San Antonio and Dallas we have had one full time staff person dedicated to working with Katrina Survivors. In Little Rock, one half time staff person. And in

each of these cities, plus Jackson, Mississippi and Atlanta, Georgia, ACORN's head staff-person for the city has dedicated significant time to working on behalf of Katrina survivors. Our staff have also found it necessary to coordinate with other agencies and refer individual cases in order to assist our evacuee members with obtaining FEMA assistance.


Many, many Katrina survivors call the ACORN office - especially in New Orleans, Houston, San Antonio, Dallas and Little Rock - when they have problems with FEMA. ACORN staff work with individuals to try to understand what FEMA seems to be saying, and to document their FEMA problem. Staff answer questions and clarify FEMA policy as best they can. We have brought documented problems directly to FEMA officials. We have had FEMA officials come out to our community meetings to answer questions and help people resolve problems.

Certainly, if ACORN had not needed to assist Katrina and Rita survivors deal with FEMA problems, our staff would have made significant progress on other community priorities identified by our members.

7. FEMA's refusal to provide complete and accurate statements of its reasons for denying housing assistance to disaster evacuees has already cost ACORN a minimum of \$55,000 in staff salaries and benefits, travel, telephone, postage, and other expenses, a figure that will certainly increase if FEMA does not immediately improve its procedures for determining eligibility for continued housing assistance.

8. When inadequate notice leads to eviction proceedings, ACORN staff are often involved on an extensive and emergency basis, which severely disrupts the work of ACORN staff, and diverts them from other matters that are equally important, but not as urgent as an imminent eviction.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.



Date: 9/8/06