

B A C K FROM THE ASHES

On the tenth anniversary of the devastating Hurricane Katrina, the city of Gulfport stands strong.



The then-battered Beach Boulevard has been reverted back into the beautiful shores we know. Photo courtesy of Ellen Buntyn

10.5

miles high all debris would reach if stacked onto a football field.

27

feet of water in the storm's highest surge

1,000,000+

Gulf Coast residents displaced by the storm.

6.5 billion

dollars in philanthropic donations.

108 billion

dollars in damage, making it the costliest storm in US history.

120.5 billion

dollars in federal spending for relief and rebuilding.

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, The Data Center, Fox News

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In Gulfport, Mississippi, the night of August 28, 2005 passed like any other. Sure, residents knew a storm was headed for them, but many were prepared to board up their windows and stock up on plastic water bottles. Many had evacuated, but without any sense of urgency; a few possessions and changes of clothes had been thrown into suitcases. They were from the Gulf Coast; they were used to hurricane

season. They could handle this. And yet, the spiraling monster of Hurricane Katrina was severely underestimated. The storm made landfall on the morning of August 29th, a vicious cyclone, tidal wave, and earthquake all in one. The Gulf of Mexico turned into the deadliest weapon one could fathom, destroying the city with its pure ferocity. The storm ravaged on for hours, but

to those who were hanging on to life, it felt as if it were the return of the Great Flood of biblical times. Would the wind ever stop?

As the storm slowly slunk away, it took the life of the city with it. When light finally shined upon Gulfport once more, it was all but unrecognizable. Gone were the beautiful, beach-front homes; the iconic coastal businesses; the churches; the entities residents had grown up knowing. The casinos of Biloxi were strewn about as if they had been kicked over; cars lay

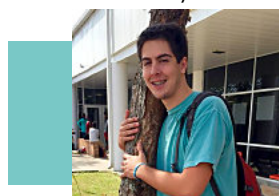
upside down as if they were made of plastic and the victims of child's play. "It's gone," was the status report of each building on Highway 90. "It's all gone." But along with the desolation, came hope and sights on a comeback. Under the leadership of then-Mayor Brent Warr, then-Governor Haley Barbour, and former President George W Bush, Gulfport began to pick up the pieces. Today, this is

"IT'S ALL GONE..."



more apparent than ever. Downtown is returning at full-speed, with several new restaurants and businesses set to open in the area in 2015. These recovered restaurants include El Agave, reopened on Highway 49 after its original beachfront property was completely destroyed. "Returning to do businesses after Katrina was one of the most exciting things because I am a peoples' person," says owner

Mercedes Carranza. "I knew I was going to reconnect with all my friends' families and customers, but I was worried also because of the economic situation of this country. But I knew that for this country to move forward it was going to take all of us, and I'm going to do my part every day. After all, when you do what you love doing, it's like you never go to work." And when you love your community, you won't stop until it's risen from the ashes once again.



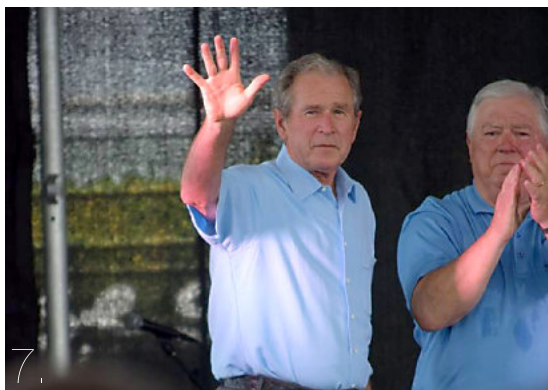
"During Katrina, my family all stayed at my grandparents' house. Trees were falling in the yard and crashing into the house. I was in the second grade...it was nerve wracking to say the least. I thought I was going to die. I think two, maybe three, trees came through the roof. Whenever you live through something like that, you realize just how badly you want to see another day."
-Tim Bellapanni, (12)

TRIM LINE

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A TALE OF DESTRUCTION

- 1. An American flag flies proudly in front of the destroyed First Baptist Church. *Photo courtesy of Ellen Buntyn.*
- 2. The Copa Casino barge floated to a parking lot near Downtown. *Photo courtesy of David Purdy, The Sun Herald.*
- 3. Shipping containers and cargo being strewn over a Gulfport neighborhood. *Photo courtesy of David Purdy, The Sun Herald.*
- 4. The Coast's Casino Strip laid in ruins. *Photo courtesy of Tim Isbell, The Sun Herald.*
- 5. A baby doll lies amidst the wreckage of a park on Second Street. *Photo courtesy of Tim Isbell, The Sun Herald.*
- 6. Marine Life, a popular oceanarium, was completely destroyed by the fierce wind and waves. *Photo courtesy of James Edward Bates, The Sun Herald.*



"YOU DON'T CELEBRATE A DISASTER..."

you commemorate it or remember it." These words, spoken by Haley Barbour, exemplified the morale behind the Katrina +10 Memorial, an event held in the recently revamped Jones Park. The gathering, featuring guest speakers Mayor Billy Hewes, Haley Barbour, Governor Phil Bryant, and President George W. Bush, was organized to honor the selfless first responders who risked their lives in the terrifying hours immediately after the worst of the storm. "What made us come back so fast, that resilience, stems from the strength and character of a very strong people. And that's why we're here today... to thank these first responders who made it easier for those strong people to come through," said Haley Barbour, as he remembered the seemingly helpless nature of the situation in 2005. And yet, the event focused on the recovery of the city. Governor Bryant is hopeful of his future plans for the Gulf Coast. "You're going to see continued growth and expansion on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the next four years," he remarked with pride. Through the fortitude of a remarkable people, including the noble first responders, Gulfport and surrounding cities are here to say that they are back and better than ever.

- 6. Annual Staff Co-Editor Julia Grant (12) interviews Haley Barbour at the Katrina+10 event.
- 7. George Bush waves to the Gulf Coast, which he visited over ten times in the year following the storm.
- 8. Governor Phil Bryant commemorates the hurricane with a heartfelt speech.
- 9. The Katrina+10 event honored these selfless Civil Servicemen.