

Spotlight on New Orleans

# The Water Was Slowly Rising

Jennie Gorden

My family was living in the Lafitte Housing development in New Orleans. When Hurricane Katrina landed, I was looking out of the window. I watched the water slowly rising. I did not know what to do. I was not just worried about myself but also my family. I was with my daughter, her two kids, plus another grandchild.

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My family and I stayed on the second floor of the apartment for two days, but we had no electricity, gas, or running water. We had to leave.

We walked through the water to the ramp of Interstate I-10, which was higher ground. We stayed there for five days. We didn't have any

When the storm passed we had three and a half feet of water in the house and rain coming in the roof.

shelter. The sun was hot; at times it was still raining. We had no way of doing anything for ourselves, but to try to survive with God on our side.

I brought some water and canned food. After that was gone, we didn't have anything. The military dropped food to us from a higher level of the bridge. That's how they treated us.

The military started to pick people up. They took us to Austin, Texas. I stayed in a shelter for a few weeks, and then went to San Antonio to live with one of my sister's kids. I finally made it back to New Orleans a year later. I brought my family. We stayed together the whole time. We are still together.

I feel that the military and the government could have handled the situation much better than they did. Too many people lost their lives. They didn't help me get home. I got home on my own.

Communities need to stick together—families and friends need to support each other. We have to get together to make sure everything will be okay.

I thank God for every day I'm here to see my family and to know that we survived Katrina. I depend on my community. They hold me up and make me strong.



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*Jennie Gorden is a GED student at the St. Vincent de Paul Adult Learning Center in New Orleans. She is still struggling with the effects of Katrina and still trying to be strong—especially for her family. Photos of Jennie Gorden and Lenora Morrow by Sarah Fischer.*