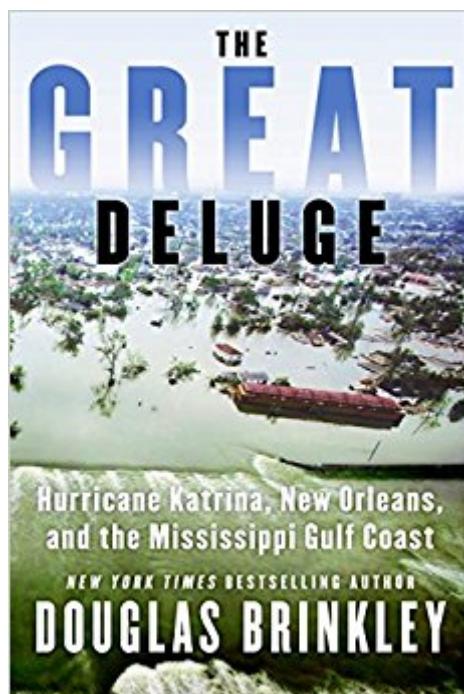


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# The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, And The Mississippi Gulf Coast



## Synopsis

In the span of five violent hours on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina destroyed major Gulf Coast cities and flattened 150 miles of coastline. Yet those wind-torn hours represented only the first stage of the relentless triple tragedy that Katrina brought to the entire Gulf Coast, from Louisiana to Mississippi to Alabama. First came the hurricane, one of the three strongest ever to make landfall in the United States -- 150-mile-per-hour winds, with gusts measuring more than 180 miles per hour ripping buildings to pieces. Second, the storm-surge flooding, which submerged a half million homes, creating the largest domestic refugee crisis since the Civil War. Eighty percent of New Orleans was under water, as debris and sewage coursed through the streets, and whole towns in south-eastern Louisiana ceased to exist. And third, the human tragedy of government mis-management, which proved as cruel as the natural disaster itself. Ray Nagin, the mayor of New Orleans, implemented an evacuation plan that favored the rich and healthy. Kathleen Blanco, governor of Louisiana, dithered in the most important aspect of her job: providing leadership in a time of fear and confusion. Michael C. Brown, the FEMA director, seemed more concerned with his sartorial splendor than the specter of death and horror that was taking New Orleans into its grip. In *The Great Deluge*, bestselling author Douglas Brinkley, a New Orleans resident and professor of history at Tulane University, rips the story of Katrina apart and relates what the Category 3 hurricane was like from every point of view. The book finds the true heroes -- such as Coast Guard officer Jimmy Duckworth and hurricane jock Tony Zumbado. Throughout the book, Brinkley lets the Katrina survivors tell their own stories, masterly allowing them to record the nightmare that was Katrina. The Great Deluge investigates the failure of government at every level and breaks important new stories. Packed with interviews and original research, it traces the character flaws, inexperience, and ulterior motives that allowed the Katrina disaster to devastate the Gulf Coast.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Bestselling historian Douglas Brinkley, a professor at Tulane University, lived through the destruction of Hurricane Katrina with his fellow New Orleans residents, and now in *The Great Deluge* he has written one of the first complete accounts of that harrowing week, which sorts out the bewildering events of the storm and its aftermath, telling the stories of unsung heroes and incompetent officials alike. Get a sample of his story--and clarify your own memories--by looking through the detailed timeline he has put together of the preparation, the hurricane, and the response to one of the worst disasters in American history.

Historian Brinkley (Tour of Duty, etc.) opens his detailed examination of the awful events that took place on the Gulf Coast late last summer by describing how a New Orleans animal shelter began evacuating its charges at the first notice of the impending storm. The Louisiana SPCA, Brinkley none too coyly points out, was better prepared for Katrina than the city of New Orleans. It's groups like the SPCA, as well as compassionate citizens who used their own resources to help others, whom Brinkley hails as heroes in his heavy, powerful account"and, unsurprisingly, authorities like Mayor Ray Nagin, Gov. Kathleen Blanco and former FEMA director Michael C. Brown whom he lambastes most fiercely. The book covers August 27 through September 3, 2005, and uses multiple narrative threads, an effect that is disorienting but appropriate for a book chronicling the helter-skelter environment of much of New Orleans once the storm had passed, the levees had been breached, and the city was awash in "toxic gumbo." Naturally outraged at the damage wrought by the storm and worsened by the ill-prepared authorities, Brinkley, a New Orleans resident, is generally levelheaded, even when reporting on Brown's shallow e-mails to friends while "the trapped were dying" or recounting heretofore unreported atrocities, such as looters defecating on property as a mark of empowerment. Photos. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

I'm a survivor of the hell of the Dome and I wrote "Left to Die-A first-hand account of life in the Superdome during Hurricane Katrina." After seven years of nightmares, I'm finally able to read accounts of the events without becoming an emotional wreck. It was with enthusiasm that I read

"The Great Deluge." I was surprised to find for the most part an accurate rendering of the facts. It did gloss over some events but that is expected due to formatting restraints. I liked the fact that it chronicled the whole Gulf Coast and not just New Orleans. The way the author explains each vignette is great for the reader unfamiliar with New Orleans, its politics or quirky ways. The main players were people I knew and Mr. Brinkley accurately portrays them. You hardly ever hear about the people with a plan. And it is rarer if they use it. The coastal smaller parishes got it and prepared for the Big One. Likewise heroes are seldom acknowledged. Big or small the writer took time to point out some of these unsung champions. The book is well written but does ramble at times. The author flip-flops back and forth on the timeline. The photos were good but were poorly placed. Still it is a book worth reading. I agree with Bishop Paul Morton... Nagin is "A white man in black skin." His aspirations were to rise up the political ladder. When he told Bush we were all evacuated, he left us to die. I'm surprised he was never called to account for his lack of planning and action. So for an accurate account of those horrible days up and down the Gulf Coast, this is the book for you.

I am an avid reader of all books about Hurricane Katrina, and of the volumes I have read, *The Great Deluge* has been the best read. It really gives points of view of all parties involved, and even though the length initially worried me, I couldn't put it down. For those of us who lived near and through this storm and its effects, this book is the real story and puts to rest a lot of rumors that have circulated for the ten years since the event. This was a catastrophic natural disaster of monumental proportions, and Douglas Brinkley brings all of the elements to the surface for you the reader to see and experience. It could well serve as a textbook for the study of this storm.

This is an impressive and even astounding book. Impressive are the book's comprehensive coverage, its first-hand reporting, and its capacity to present the big picture while vividly painting the little stories of heroism and heartbreak. The book is astounding in that the author was able to compose a work of such scope and depth in well less than a year. The level of research - based on an exhaustive mining of the local and national press accompanied by wide-ranging and incisive interviews (including Mayor Ray Nagin, Gov. Kathleen Blanco, FEMA's Michael Brown, and even Jimmy Buffett!) - is that of a book that would take a typical writer two or three years to write. By its nature, focusing on the immediate events - the hurricane and the subsequent flooding - this book will not be the last word on Katrina. The ripple effects - of dispersed populations, ruined infrastructure, reconstruction efforts, and political impacts - will continue for some time, and future historians will add to our understanding. But it is hard to imagine a better "you are there" account of

the bravery, treachery, and sheer incompetence exhibited in the week following Katrina's coming ashore on the morning of Monday, August 29. Although balanced and comprehensive in his coverage of events, Brinkley is not afraid to name the names of heroes and scoundrels. Of the latter, those who stand out in infamy include the Army Corps of Engineers, Mayor Nagin, the New Orleans Police Department, and the obtuse federal triumvirate of Brown, Chertoff, and Bush. With more than enough official fecklessness to go around, greater disaster was staved off by the story's heroes: the U.S. Coast Guard, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries rescuers, the city of Houston (which took in tens of thousands of flood victims), legions of volunteers and medical personnel, and average people who responded, often at great personal risk, to their fellow citizens in need. There is plenty of evidence in this book to make one chagrined at the gross ineptitude of certain public officials and of institutions designed to respond to natural disasters. But there is also enough human empathy and fighting spirit displayed in these events to make one proud of the American people themselves. Brinkley's great achievement is to have provided a full and graphic portrait of both sides of the Katrina tragedy.

Brinkley makes Hurricane Katrina live as it ravaged Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, with special attention to New Orleans that bore the brunt of the storm. A comedy of errors by the New Orleans mayor, FEMA, and the Bush administration is especially revealing. The plight of the poor who, at least ten thousand strong, were jammed in the Dome. It is a strong book that is well researched. For any community faced with a huge emergency, "The Great Deluge" is a primer on what NOT to do.

An incredible story of what went on during Katrina and what roles the players, including heroes and villains, citizens and government employees, and the victims themselves. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to know what REALLY went on during one of this country's most notorious tragedies and how the denizens of New Orleans and the surrounding areas were treated by the storm...and the various entities that should have stepped up to this disaster, but did not!

There was almost no ONE thing that made this far worse than it should have been. It was so sad to see the pathetic response & behavior from Nagin. I lived there prior to Katrina and it is simply unreal how such an incompetent (to put it mildly) city official could have ever been elected. Nagin has a long history of pathetic leadership and sadly he was mayor at a time they needed a great leader the most. I am hardly blaming him only but he was in 1st position to plan long before Katrina was even in the gulf. Sad. My family moved back, but I will only go to visit & not during Hurricane season, this

was why I left. Thanks Brinkley - excellent research & reporting without political bias, just the facts.

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