

## FROM THE EDITORS

Early September, 2005. Vicki Tobias's first in a series of articles on "blogging" (pp. 11-17) is timely. This "hottest trend on the Internet" has shown some of its true value and versatility in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. From the live postings of some New Orleanian citizens from their homes even as the storm hit, to personal blogs converted to disaster-information clearinghouses, to the "Katrina Blog" on the website of French-Quarter-based station WWL-TV (operating out of borrowed studios in Baton Rouge), to insightful, non-mainstream commentary on some of the very feminist weblogs Vicki has reviewed, the "blogosphere" has provided alternatives to CNN and so much more.

Other types of websites have also provided forums for thinking about our national disaster and its implications, including its feminist ones. As this issue was being readied for printing, the following thought-provoking comments from Mab Segrest appeared on the NWSA home page. With her permission they are reproduced here:

### **Academic Feminist Response to Katrina Disasters**

*As have many of us, I have spent exhausting hours watching social disaster unfold on top of natural disaster on the Gulf Coast. Many of us were hosted by our friends and colleagues in New Orleans at NWSA two years ago and have those particular and shared memories of New Orleans even as we are quite literally watching people die before our eyes on multiple cable stations. Clearly, this is a disaster the proportions of which most people — and most evidently the people in charge — have not yet understood. Those of us on dry, and high, ground have some responsibility to do some forward thinking from the comfort of our jobs and homes for those people mired along the coast. For people outside of the*

*Gulf region, the event is making itself personally felt first at the gas pumps and anticipating the cost of winter heating bills. But the effects are national and global and they will be multiple.*

*The slowness of response in the South comes not only because of the unprecedented level of catastrophe but because of the psychic distance of the Delta and the Gulf Coast from other parts of "America" and because so many of its victims had already been written off anyway. (All of the events of this week not only were predictable but had been predicted.) The Mississippi Delta is historically one of the poorest regions in the United States — a third world in the first — as are the poorest 20% of the population trapped inside New Orleans, those who had no cars to leave or who were too old, too young, or too sick to leave (and those caretakers who stayed behind).*

*Clearly but hardly officially observed, poor African American women and children are bearing the brunt of the disaster of disaster relief. Many reporters have observed that it is difficult to believe that the events in New Orleans are unfolding in "an American city" — which is to imply that those of us living in advanced industrial nations are supposed to be protected, somehow, from natural and human disasters and that there are not fast and growing groups of us who do not share in the affluence. The people I have seen sitting outside the Convention Center and the Superdome know exactly what is happening to them, and why. I noticed in the NY Times this morning, finally, an article noticing that*

*most of the people still trapped in New Orleans are black and poor.*

*How do those of us with the comfort and privilege of intact jobs and homes respond to this event? How should feminists in the academy use our resources and our roles as public intellectuals? How will this event shape our worlds, including our research and writing and activism? How do we help, including helping colleges and universities affected in the region; and how do we help them help their constituencies once they are up again and running?*

*These are some of my questions this week. Let's start thinking now about how to put feminist solidarity into action in response to this event.*

*[Two weeks out from Katrina's landfall, it's clear that we have the immediate responsibility to cut through the racist stereotypes and false reports that were propagated in the media. They are resulting in the criminalization of the people already traumatized by the flood and its aftermath and then displaced to other cities.]*

*Thanks.*

*Mab Segrest  
Chair, Gender and Women's  
Studies, Connecticut College  
Email: [mmseg@conncoll.edu](mailto:mmseg@conncoll.edu)*



*Miriam Greenwald*