

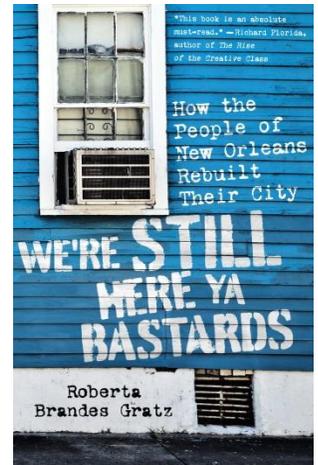
WE'RE STILL HERE YA BASTARDS

How the People of New Orleans Rebuilt Their City

Roberta Brandes Gratz

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“After the Katrina and BP oil-spill disasters, officials in New Orleans only made matters worse through incompetence and self-dealing. It took the unelected citizenry to rise up and put things right. **It's a hell of a story, painstakingly reported and recounted here in stirring detail.**”

—John Berendt, author of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*

“**Do we need another Katrina book? No. Not just any book. We need this one.** Whether the subject is education, healthcare, urban development or environmental preservation, Roberta Gratz has masterfully assembled a chorus of New Orleans voices to tell the story of their city. This book is a clarion call to the nation and the world.”

—Lolis Eric Elie, story editor, HBO's *Treme*

“A great American story: **how people who love New Orleans keep saving it, and big money and bad government keep screwing it over.**”

—Roy Blount Jr., author of *Feet on the Street: Rambles Around New Orleans*

“Gratz provides a moving chronicle of the efforts of real people to rebuild their battered city in the face of bad engineering, cynical politicians, incompetent bureaucrats and greedy developers. It frames the challenges urban revitalization, inequality and gentrification in a smart and nuanced way. This book is **an absolute must read for anyone who cares about the future of our communities and nation.**”

—Richard Florida, author of *The Rise of the Creative Class* and professor at NYU

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is one of the darkest chapters in American history. The storm caused unprecedented destruction, and a toxic combination of government neglect and socioeconomic inequality turned a crisis into a tragedy. But among the rubble, there is hope.

WE'RE STILL HERE YA BASTARDS presents an extraordinary panoramic look at New Orleans' revival in the years following the hurricane. Award-winning journalist Roberta Brandes Gratz shares the stories of people who returned to their homes and have taken the rebuilding of their city into their own hands. She shows how the city—from the Lower Ninth Ward to the storied French Quarter to Bayou Bienvenue—is recovering despite flawed governmental policies that promote disaster capitalism rather than the public good. While tracing positive trends, Gratz also investigates the most fiercely debated issues and challenges facing the city: a violent and corrupt prison system, the tragic closing of Charity Hospital, the future of the public education, and the rise of gentrification.

By telling stories that are often ignored by the mainstream media, *We're Still Here Ya Bastards* shows the strength and resilience of a community that continues to work to rebuild New Orleans, and reveals what Katrina couldn't destroy: the vibrant culture, epic history, and unwavering pride of one of the greatest cities in America.



Roberta Brandes Gratz is an acclaimed urbanist who has published four previous books, including most recently *The Battle for Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs*. Her writing has also appeared in the *Nation*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. She previously served on New York City's Landmark Preservation Commission and NYC's Sustainability Advisory Board. With Jane Jacobs, she founded The Center for the Living City, to build on Jacobs's work. She splits her time between New York and New Orleans.

MORE PRAISE FOR *WE'RE STILL HERE YA BASTARDS*

"No major American event of this century has generated so much myth as the 2005 flooding of New Orleans. Roberta Gratz tackles these assumed truths with two essential tools: the tenacity of an old-style journalist and the devotion of a Jane Jacobs-style urbanist. She chronicles the city's improbable and unpredicted recovery, without the dubious help of big plans, a recovery that, like her reporting, was and is literally ground-up. Most important to me, **she writes not only with understanding, but with deep affection for this incomparable city.**"

—Harry Shearer

"Roberta Gratz knows as much about the way cities work as anyone alive. In *We're Still Here Ya Bastards* she turns her sharp, experienced eye on New Orleans, post-Katrina, and delivers **a lucid assessment of the city's stunning progress as well as its chronic, sometimes toxic, problems.** Drawing on a broad variety of voices, this is a valuable addition to the growing body of literature about this most complex and beautiful city."

—Tom Piazza, author of *Why New Orleans Matters* and *City of Refuge*

"Disaster, even terrible disaster, can also be an opportunity. A decade after Hurricane Katrina, Roberta **Gratz offers a sharp take on what a recovering New Orleans got right — and wrong.** Her assessment is sure to provoke debate. But no one who cares about 'The City that Care Forgot' can ignore this detailed and deeply humane report."

—Jed Horne, author of *Desire Street* and *Breach of Faith*

"Roberta Gratz' collage of post-Katrina New Orleans sparkles with stunning and sometimes controversial insights. Written with grace and deep feeling, **she takes Jane Jacobs' heritage into new territory and confirms the author's status as our leading urbanist.**"

—S. Frederick Starr, Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University

"What happens when one of the United States's urban treasures is damaged, seemingly beyond repair? How does the nation respond—and what does the response tell us of the state of the union? *We're Still Here Ya Bastards* brings to life the immediacy of the struggles to rebuild New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. If you have wondered what has happened in the decade since television cameras recorded the drowning of a great American city—from the Ninth Ward to Lakeview, from the French Quarter and Treme through Uptown and Mid-City—Roberta Gratz's page-turning account is for you.

As a native New Orleanian, I am grateful to her for uncovering these critical histories."

—Leslie Harris, Associate Professor of History and African American Studies, Emory University

"**Roberta Gratz is America's most innovative urban chronicler of our time.** If you really want to know the true story of New Orleans after Katrina, you must read her thorough account of one of America's devastating natural disasters."

—Laurie Beckelman, cultural consultant and former Chair of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

"*We're Still Here Ya Bastards* is **a colorful, authoritative account** of how the unsung people of New Orleans – instead of inept Federal agencies, crooked local 'leaders' and soulless developers – refused to let a great American city die."

—Curtis Carter Wilkie, co-author of *City Adrift: New Orleans Before and After Katrina*

"In this powerful book, Roberta Brandes Gratz turns her deep understanding of the work of Jane Jacobs into an astonishing account of how imaginative community activists like Jacobs emerge and grow in the wake of a disaster like Katrina. In virtually every domain of urban life—in housing, health care, education, economic development, and environmental protection—she discovers New Orleanians whose diagnosis of the problems and alternatives to the solutions are vastly more creative and effective than all the politicians, bureaucrats, and professionals who have dominated our television screens. That we have heard little or nothing about these people says much about our distrust of democracy. **A masterpiece of reportage and analysis!**"

—Richard Rabinowitz, PhD, President, American History Workshop

"New Orleanians don't often light out for the territories. So there was no question of their returning from mandatory exile to this semi-ruined city and rebuilding from the ground up. As **Roberta Gratz shows in this brilliant book,** it was their grassroots activism, reinforced by cadres of voluntourists who came for a week then decided to stay put, that has been bringing this storied town back from disaster."

—Lawrence N. Powell, author of *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans*