

Gospel – TRANSCRIPT

Danielle Trusso, reporter; Miyu Akachi, producer

Gospel

DT: The National Mall is crowded with white tents and hundreds of people. Despite the large crowd, The Friendly Travelers gospel group is easy to spot, with their bright, canary-yellow suits. Almost a year after Hurricane Katrina, the four-member group has traveled from New Orleans to perform in the Folklife Festival's program, "Been In the Storm So Long." Floyd Turner, who co-founded the group 50 years ago, says they bring their lively personas and uplifting music to share with the nation.

Mr. Turner: Our words are positive, and anything you doing or you singing or you talking that's positive is going to have a very good impact; an impact that's going to help them get through, make them smile or make them feel good about themselves. [Duration: 14"]

[Friendly Travelers music: Pray a Prayer for Me]

DT: Three of the group's members are natives of New Orleans. They say storms are common, but they feel blessed to have made it through last year's hurricane season. Alfred Penns, who has been with the Travelers for 35 years, says sharing their storm stories may make a difference to other Katrina survivors.

Mr. Penns: Whenever we have the opportunity to share our experience, then hopefully we can help somebody by doing so. [Duration: 6.5"]

DT: For the Travelers, the past year has brought some hard times, but they remain faithful.

Mr. Turner: We all suffered some things through the storm. Some people are still suffering, where some of us are rebounding. [Duration: 5.5"]

[National mall sounds]

DT: Some people are having a hard time rebounding. Katrina caused one of the largest relocations in U.S. history. The movement out of New Orleans, and its implications for community traditions, worries people like John Franklin, a curator at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Mr. Franklin: We as a Folklife staff are concerned about the tradition bearers. What happens to community-based traditions when the community's gone? [Duration: 10"]

DT: After the storm hit, Franklin began working with Professor Michael White who teaches African American music at Xavier University in New Orleans. White, who served as the program's co-curator, agrees that the New Orleans community is in trouble.

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[White's jazz band]

Dr. White: I come from a musical family that goes back to the earliest days of jazz. It's part of New Orleans – musical family traditions. [Duration:]

DT: White lost a tremendous archive of New Orleans and Louisiana jazz, gospel and blues music when his home was flooded with 10 feet of water. Although it was a devastating loss, the festival offers some hope.

Dr. White: What we're trying to do is recover. And that recovery, it can be spiritual and it can also be musical. And I think by our performing here, this is a healing process for us as individuals but in part a healing process for the nation. [Duration: 15"]

DT: Esther Nobles is among the Katrina survivors recovering in D.C. A week after the hurricane, Nobles, a nurse, came here to rent an apartment from her nephew. Tonight, she wears a bright blue T-shirt that reads, "I survived Katrina."

Ms. Nobles: I'm a Katrina survivor. I'm not a victim. It's been difficult. I'm homesick. I want to go home, but right now, I can't. So, I have to survive. [Duration: "]

DT: At least the festival makes D.C. feel a little more like home.

Ms. Nobles: This is my first experience with this. It's great; I love it because I love music. It reminds me so much of home and our jazz fest. I'm thrilled. I'm having a good time. [Duration: 11"] [Friendly Travelers music: Down by the Riverside]

DT: With many of its residents reluctant to return, the staying power of New Orleans' traditions is uncertain. But from the sound of things on the National Mall, the people and the city's music are survivors. For Intern Edition, I'm Danielle Trusso in Washington, D.C.