

Ophera A. Davis, Ph.D.

AUTHOR • SCHOLAR • DISASTER EXPERT

Bringing a voice to
Black women survivors
of Hurricane Katrina



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OPHERA A. DAVIS,
PH.D.

OPHERA A. DAVIS, PH.D.
P.O. BOX 65173
VIRGINIA BEACH 23467

WWW.OPHERAADAVIS.COM
CONTACT@OPHERAADAVIS.COM
(617) 454-4438



Biography

Dr. Ophera A. Davis was born in the Mississippi Delta. Her father took the family to the Mississippi Gulf Coast for vacations because her mother loved the palm trees and beautiful oceanfront. When Dr. Davis heard that Hurricane Katrina had decimated the Gulf of Mexico, she had her beloved Mississippi Coastline in mind.

Her book project started shortly after Hurricane Katrina and brings the experiences of a group of Mississippi Black women Hurricane Katrina survivors front and center. The women's narratives of resilience and recovery over a 15-year period is grounded in their cultural orientation. Moreover, her work contributes to the disaster canon by adding the voices and experiences of a missing group because there are no books in the United States on Black women disaster survivors. She attended an HBCU - Jackson State University in Mississippi. For over 20 years Dr. Davis has taught courses at colleges in Boston and Virginia.



Talking Points

- What kind of research went into writing this book?
- What role does gender, race, and class play in who survives disasters vs. who are the most vulnerable?
- In the book, you use narrative theory to center the perspective of black women survivors of Hurricane Katrina. Was there one narrative, in particular, that really impacted you while writing?
- The last chapters in your book, a 15-year longitudinal study, highlight where the women are today. Can you discuss how these survivors moved toward recovery?
- When most people think about Hurricane Katrina, they think of New Orleans. Why did you decide to write a book on Mississippi Hurricane Katrina survivors?
- How can people mitigate disasters before they happen?
- From your research, what can you tell us about the stages people experience during and immediately after disasters?
- After Hurricane Katrina people wanted someone to blame for those left behind. Does it matter “whose fault it is” after natural disasters?
- What does your research show was most helpful to disaster survivors immediately afterwards?
- Do you think the increase in natural disasters is related to ‘climate change’?
- What ‘lessons learned’ can you share that you found during your research on the women survivors after Hurricane Katrina?
- How do you think the average person will benefit from reading your book? What about disaster survivors?



Get in touch

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