

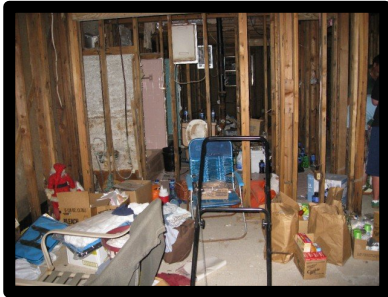
KATRINA POVERTY, PUPPIES, AND PAPA FRITA



My senior year of high school a group of friends and I traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana. My motivation was a road trip, free food, and travel. I did not realize that my understanding of poverty, my world, and myself would deeply change for the better.

For me, being poor meant that my parents said “no” more often than “yes.” It meant we ate more spaghetti and less steak. It meant I got a job at 16.

To the people of New Orleans, especially after Katrina hit, it meant something different. Something more damaged. It didn't mean a lack of choice, it meant no choice at all.



I learned quickly that this was not about a road trip. It was about making something, again. Building, again. Creating, again. Providing, again.



We fixed what we could. We fixed what we knew how.



It never seemed like enough.



Ever.



We learned to appreciate simple things.



We fixed the roof of a man's house who was upset his favorite lawn statue was ruined, but happy that it made it through. The man lovingly referred to the statue as "Papa Frita." We restored him.



That's what the trip was really about: restoration.