Mississippi Oral History Project

Hurricane Katrina Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

Jessica Broadus

Interviewer: Beth Morgan

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This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi. The interview is with Jessica Broadus and is taking place on October 27, 2005. The interviewer is Beth Morgan.

**Morgan:** I am at headquarters for American Medical Response in Gulfport, Mississippi, with Jessica Broadus. Jessica, what is your job here with AMR?

**Broadus:** I’m a Regional Finance Manager that supports the South Central Division, which takes up four states.

**Morgan:** And in preparing for Katrina, what were your duties?

**Broadus:** I didn’t have any duties here to prepare for the storm; I came right after the storm. Pretty much I handled the financial statements, the finances for this particular area. And so for storm-related, really the only thing that I actually handled is made sure that the business unit actually had enough cash because we knew the banks would be down; so really that’s all I really had to prepare for the storm.

**Morgan:** OK. Were you here in your official capacity during the storm, or were you able to be in your home?

**Broadus:** During the storm we actually left and went to Dothan, Alabama, because—and I’m glad we did because when we came back we only had a slab. So we were not, we did not stay here. I have two children, a six year old and a three year old, and growing up on the Coast I’ve always known not to stay in hurricanes; so we always leave with our other family members. So we all left and went to Dothan and came back Wednesday.

**Morgan:** And how early did you evacuate?

**Broadus:** We left the day before the hurricane hit; so we left Sunday night, Sunday afternoon.

**Morgan:** OK. How about your neighbors? Was everyone like you taking it seriously?

**Broadus:** I would say yes and no. No one stayed in our neighborhood. We live in Back Bay, Biloxi, so we didn’t, none of us stayed. Our neighbor across the street, who
we’re really close to because they have a son four months younger than our son, they were staying at their mother’s, going to her mother’s and father’s house that they lived in Back Bay, Biloxi, closer to the water than we did. We’re not even a mile from the water, and they live, her parents live exactly on the water. And we asked them to leave because when we woke up Sunday morning—we had a kind of a get-together Saturday night with all of our neighbors and things. We all came to our house, and we were all having a good time, and we stayed up till like two in the morning watching the hurricane on the TV. And all of us were talking at that time that it’s probably going to go to Louisiana, and it’s going to be, you know, we might have Category-Two weather or something like that, but we didn’t anticipate it actually coming up and hitting our area. And it was funny because Sunday morning when we got up, I immediately went to the TV, and I cut it on, and I was like, “Oh, my word!” And so I was, like, waking my husband, “Get up; we got to go. We got to get out of here because it’s a lot worse than what it was.” So we actually started packing bags and putting everything into the truck, and he called his family, his father—he has a little sister who’s nine, and so we always leave together because they’ll real close to my daughter who’s six. And we left with them by four o’clock in the afternoon. But we told our neighbors across the street; we were over there going, “What are y’all doing? Like, y’all really need to leave.” Because a couple of months before that, I think it was Hurricane Dennis, and it was kind of scary for all of us, and they ended up staying, and we ended up leaving for Baton Rouge. And he was worried at that time when the storm was coming; said he wouldn’t stay again, but now they’re talking about just going to their father, her mother and father’s house. So we tried to talk them into going as well, but they didn’t go. So I’d say, yeah, they took it seriously but not to the extent of what we got. And we always left, so.

Morgan: So for you overnight the whole situation changed from Saturday night to Sunday morning?

Broadus: That is correct. And then, you know, Sunday morning we got up, and it was like, “We really need to pack and just, like, get out of here because we think it’s going to be, you know, it might hit us, and we just don’t want to take the chance.” So at that time my husband was—I packed all the kids’ stuff and our stuff, just enough to take with us for a couple of days. And then as we were gearing down and his family was coming to the house for all of us to leave together, we were like, he said, “Well, maybe we need to just pack some more stuff.” And I was like, “Well, I don’t know. Do we really need to pack as much?” Because we’d just built our home about three years ago, and it was 6700 square feet, and you live on the second story of the home, and the bottom story is more, was meant for storage and built up on pilings. But my husband’s an engineer, so we closed in the bottom, built it above flood level, closed in the bottom, and we made it all living area downstairs. So we didn’t really have anything downstairs except for an entertainment room and like a gym that I had and a bathroom and some storage, but we didn’t live, like, on the bottom story. The second story started about twenty-five feet above sea level. So I always said, “Well, if it floods, it’ll get the bottom; I’m not worried about that. We’ll just, you know, I’m just worried about the upstairs and what’s the chances
of it actually coming above there? And if it floods, then OK, there’s really nothing
down there.” Well, from Hurricane Dennis, I already had all of our pictures packed in
a box; so I already took all of those pictures, and then my husband said, “Well, maybe
you need to go in and take all the pictures off the walls just in case something
happens.” And I said, “OK.” Because Ian was always worried that the roof would
come off the house, you know, the way that it was built, the way our house was built.
It extended on porches, so a lot of that could catch, the wind could catch underneath,
you know, because it took over the porches, too, which is open to the exterior part of
the home. So I was like, OK. So I went up there and took all those down, and then I
got downstairs, and I was like, “Well, I’ve got all that.” And he was like, “All right,
while I’m packing all this stuff, why don’t you go back inside and maybe grab all of
our clothes?” So I got all the kids’ stuff packed up, of all their clothes just sitting
in—not all of their winter stuff and everything, just things that were sitting in there,
and I packed that in a couple of bags and stuff and brought those downstairs. And he
said, “Well, why don’t you go back in and get our stuff?” And I walked up there, and
I have—me and him have these huge closets, and I’ve been developing my career
clothes for, I guess, the last eight years. So I was like, “Do I really want to start
dragging this down, because I could probably fill up a truck.” So I went back down,
and I was like, “Baby, do you know how much clothes we have in there, like in our
closets?” And he was like, “I know.” So we both said, “Well, what are the chances?
Let’s not, don’t worry about it. It’s all right, you know it’s just clothes. No big deal.”
Yeah.

Morgan: Well, having built your house with an engineer husband, you were feeling
like you’re pretty much hurricane-proof outside of maybe roof damage.

Broadus: Well, and we thought, yeah, because he engineered the house like you
wouldn’t believe. You know, he put two-by-eight walls in; everything was filled with
concrete. Any pilings we had that were supporting the porches, all of that was filled
with concrete. He brought in these huge steel beams to support the top story and
everything that he had cranes come in and lift them because it was so heavy. Oh yeah,
we had hurricane-proof doors and windows, you know, on the house, and that cost us
a lot of money, but that’s why we did it because we didn’t want to have any
windstorm, you know, or just even wind coming in and hearing it blow; sometimes
you can [hear] the wind blow through. He didn’t want any of that. So we, yeah, we
did a lot, you know, to the house.

Morgan: Had you both grown up on the Coast?

Broadus: We have both grown up on the Coast. I’m from over here, and he, actually
St. Martin where we live in Back Bay, Biloxi, is where I’m from, and he’s from
Pascagoula. So we’ve always been here.

Morgan: So where were you when the storm hit?

Broadus: We were in Dothan, Alabama, in a hotel in Dothan.
Morgan: And what were you doing during those hours?

Broadus: Watching TV. And the kids slept. And we tried to, you know, entertain them, but really in the morning, you know, I pretty much couldn’t sleep that night because we knew it was coming through, and the more we watched, the worse it got, you know, because we were driving, actually, when the storm was coming through because Dothan’s about six, seven hours from here. So we didn’t get in till probably about 12:30, one o’clock in the morning up in Dothan, from stopping and eating with the kids and stuff. So when we got in, we were just watching the TV, and after that it’s really hard to sleep whenever you can see what it’s doing. And then that, when the storm was actually coming through that next morning, the neighbor that we were trying to get to leave called us from his mother-in-law’s house and said they were on the second story, and the water was coming in. And just, we were scared then because we knew then it was like, “Oh, my gosh, this is worse; thank God we left.” But then we were worried about our neighbors that lived across the street. And we’ve got Brody because he’s two, the same age as my son, and I was, like, thinking about them and, “Oh, my God, they’re on the second story.” And he was like, “You’re not going to believe this, but a barge just came through, and I’m not kidding you, like, we were just praying that it wouldn’t hit the house.” Because they’re right on the water in Back Bay, so when the waters came—so we were scared. Then the phone cuts off. So we were worried about them the rest of the time, but he did call back later on that [night] because the storm came through Monday morning, and he called us Monday morning some time to tell us that they were on the second story and that everything’s underwater and that they’re scared, and they just wanted to let us know that they were OK right now and stuff, but wanted to let somebody to know where they were if anything was to happen. So we continued to watch what we could on TV, like, basically the National Weather Center, you know the Weather Channel or something. And then I called at that time to make a claim on the house because I knew then, like, if their house is underwater that our house was probably underwater and that something had to happen. So I started calling all my insurance companies to let them know, “Hey, I just want to make a claim even though I don’t know exactly what’s wrong yet; I know that there’s got to be some damage, so let me just put my name in line.” And then he called later on that night saying he was OK, him and his family were, they were OK, but that he was in our neighborhood and that we didn’t have anything in our neighborhood. Every house in our neighborhood was gone. So that was pretty emotional with the kids and stuff. And I’d say that was 12:30 the next day. Let’s see, the next night, so that would be what? Tuesday morning at 12:30 after the storm had come through, and the water had subsided, he came and called us up at the hotel and told us that there wasn’t anything there.

Morgan: Were there other evacuees at the hotel with you?

Broadus: Yes, there were. There was a lot.

Morgan: Was it full?
Broadus: Yeah. Oh yeah, it was full.

Morgan: And were you able to talk or socialize with any of them and get the feel for—

Broadus: You could hear a lot, but like I said, our in-laws were there; my father-in-law and my mother-in-law and my husband’s dad and stepmom were there, and they had a child, and she’s nine. Jenna’s fixing to be seven, so they’re only, like, two and a half years apart from each other.

Morgan: Were your in-laws able to find out about their house?

Broadus: No.

Morgan: Specifically?

Broadus: No, unh-uh.

Morgan: Because so many of the people I interviewed—weeks, they sat around for weeks not knowing.

Broadus: It was. It was. We actually came back. We left Dothan. We left Dothan Tuesday morning, and we drove to Tampa where my brother—my husband has a—well, see, that’s my brother-in-law; he has a home in Tampa where he and his wife live. And neither one of them have children and said, “Just bring the kids down here, and we’ll watch them.” So my husband and I left Tuesday morning and drove all three of the kids, our two children and Elizabeth, which is my sister-in-law, down to their house. And then my husband—we stayed that night, and my husband and I got up the next morning and drove home. Now, my father-in-law and mother-in-law left Tuesday morning and drove straight back home, and they were able to get in. So they knew about their house, went Tuesday night when we got to Tampa. So they called and said their house was fine. They may have gotten maybe an inch of water in their house that what looks like it was more blown in from the bottom of the floor, you know, under the doors, but they didn’t have any other damage to their house. So we prayed, you know, thank God for them and stuff.

Morgan: Is that where you’re living now?

Broadus: No, we’re living with my father who lives maybe about a mile from where our house used to stand and nothing, nothing to their subdivision at all, nothing at all.

Morgan: Well, tell me about the first visit back to your neighborhood.

Broadus: That was very difficult. I guess when you think about—my husband and I have been together thirteen years. And I don’t come from money; my husband doesn’t
come from money, and when you, the first shocker is that you just can’t believe. Even though somebody tells you, like you know your house is not there, you’re not prepared for what you see. And I guess you’re more in awe and in shock when you first get there because you can’t believe.

**Morgan:** Describe it for me, if you can.

**Broadus:** My feelings are what I saw. Driving up to our house, it’s probably a couple of blocks from the main road, not very far from the interstate, so I’d say it’s not even a mile from the interstate [10].

**Morgan:** Interstate 10?

**Broadus:** Interstate 10. And that’s north. My house is about a mile south of Interstate 10 in Ocean—well, Biloxi, Back Bay Biloxi. And when you’re getting off the interstate and you’re coming down, everything looks fine. You can tell that there’s some destruction, more trees down than any homes. And at that time when we’re coming in, you still can’t tell who was flooded and who wasn’t flooded because at that time all you can see—there’s just some debris that looked like it was more from the wind blowing. And then you come off that main road, and you go south for a little bit further; I would say probably about three blocks south from that road, that main road, and as you’re driving there is when you start seeing houses. All the houses are gutted, and there’s a bunch of debris everywhere. The houses that were sitting up, maybe on, not tall pilings but just on like maybe one or two blocks, you know, maybe two or three feet off the ground, all their houses are off of that and on the ground shifted in different places. And the houses that were attached to like a slab, all of those, the studs are there, but they were completely gutted. The roofs are somewhat there. All the shingles are blown off it. *All* of the rest of it is just completely gutted out.

**Morgan:** Did that give you some inkling of hope? “Well maybe there’s something, *something* left of my house.”

**Broadus:** Not really because basically our neighbor called and said, I mean, “There’s nothing in our subdivision.” And we were like saying, “Well, is there like *debris*; like I mean, does it just fall in?” And he’s like, “No, I’m not kidding you. When I tell you that there is a slab, I mean there is a slab.” So we knew that we were going to come home, but you just don’t know to what extent you’re going to come—I knew that there wasn’t a structure there, but you think that maybe you can look across the street and find, like, maybe the roof or like a piece of your house or something. So I guess I knew there wasn’t anything there like what I was seeing, but you just still can’t believe how close, you know, far up. You’re just like how many people—then you start thinking of how many people have lost their homes. Like it isn’t just our twelve people in our subdivision or the twelve people in our subdivision homes; we’re talking like hundreds of homes now because this, these subdivisions coming towards my house are *huge*. And it’s like, “How many people have lost their houses?” And you’re just, you can’t believe that they’ve been gutted, like completely gutted. And
then as you get closer to the house, like I said about two or three blocks and you get right up to the road that’s coming towards our subdivision, that’s when you start seeing some of the homes gone. And when you turn the corner and you normally could see all the houses in our subdivision because they were pretty big homes, and most of them lived on the second story—nothing anymore. There are some trees; all the lines are down, but there are no homes whatsoever, and that’s where you get the first feeling of, “You have got to be kidding me, right?” And as you drive in, there’s like shingles, or you can see a TV, or you can see a couch cushion, but literally the houses are not there. None of the houses are there. So—

Morgan: Then there weren’t even piles of debris—

Broadus: Not really piles of debris.

Morgan: —that you could identify as part of my house?

Broadus: No. No. So when you get to the house—I had, like, my gym set that was sitting downstairs is all mangled, and it’s sitting in the front yard. My husband’s truck that was sitting in the garage is in the front yard, and it is like completely mangled. You know, like, all four tires are—it sunk in the ground—all four tires are smashed in; I mean flat. The front windshield is completely smashed in. And all the sides of the truck are just like crushed, you know. And there’s not one stud. I have, like, two or three pilings in the back that have fallen over that are still attached to the rebar; everything’s still attached, but there’s nothing of my house, not anything of my house. So then you see all the shingles. You can tell there’s shingles all over and everywhere in the yard, shingles everywhere. There’s some trees snapped off, but really mainly all the trees—and what’s funny is when you look around, you can tell bark has been ripped off the trees at a certain level where it must’ve like, debris was getting stuck into the trees, and that was pretty neat to see because you kind of get an idea about the flood level of where the debris was hitting. And then when we got out of the truck, we were like, you know, just him and I, my husband and I were just standing there, and we just couldn’t believe it. Then we started walking. Across the street from us, there was an empty lot on the water in the back, a little bayou that came behind. We lived on two cul-de-sacs, and there was a bayou that came behind the cul-de-sacs. And our neighbors live—that we were talking to—lived across the street on the bayou, and we lived across the street from them that wasn’t on the bayou, on the inner part of it, and right next door to them was an empty lot. Well, when we got out and started looking, we could tell that a lot of our stuff somewhat went that way because you can pick; you will find bits and pieces of your house, you know, not just of your house but items you had in your house. And then, so we started looking through there, and actually on that day I really couldn’t do a lot of looking because it hurt me too bad. It hurt too bad to actually find things that used to be yours that would spark a memory, and now and then it would just, it was very overwhelming. I found some of Jacob’s toys which—that’s when my husband and I started crying. I’m going to try not to cry.

Morgan: You’re fine.
Morgan: Well, with the pictures, were you able to get your important papers out? Birth certificates, was all of that packed up?

Broadus: I had birth certificates. I didn’t take—I had all my declaration pages of my insurance policies. When Dennis came, I had everything. I mean all the pictures and stuff I still had, but paperwise, I still had, like, all the birth certificates and social security cards, everything in this one little folder. But the one thing I didn’t take was all the policies, but I had the declaration pages, so you know I could show what coverage I did have in what particular areas. I just didn’t have the actual, you know, thirty-page policies of all of my insurance. Just for the home, but the rest of it I had for a boat and our car and everything. But I took the one truck with me. My husband drives a company vehicle, so he didn’t, that’s what got damaged in the hurricane, pretty much. I mean other than that, yeah. I mean pretty much we got everything that really was our life because I’ll talk to some people who have lost remotely everything, which is all their pictures, everything, which my heart goes out to them because they can never go back and capture how their children grew up or their grandkids or anything. And so I still have that, which is what our life is, and yes, I still have that, and it’s still boxed up in my closet at my dad’s house.

Morgan: How did you tell your children about the house?

Broadus: I didn’t have to; I didn’t really tell them. Right in the beginning you kind of question. Like right when we found out about it, of course I was crying, and they woke up and looked like, “Oh mommy, what’s wrong? What’s wrong?” You know, in the middle of the night. And I told them, “It’s OK.” And they kind of knew a little bit because of what they could see on TV, and I said that I was trying to prepare them, “That’s probably happening to our house,” you know, because you could see from the flood and stuff like that.

Morgan: Did they try to comfort you?

Broadus: Not in the middle of the night, they didn’t because I quit crying, you know, as soon as they got up. I’m very maternal so I didn’t want to affect them in any kind of way. They went to bed, went right back to sleep, and then my husband and I did not go to bed after that. We were fine. So they stayed at my brother-in-law’s house. When my husband and I came back, they stayed down in Tampa for ten days; all three of them did. So we were able to pretty much go through it together, my husband and I, and try to become a little bit stronger and get over the shock of it. And I would say that the good thing about it was NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration], I guess, took some aerial shots, and you could actually get on the Internet and drill down to particulars. And my brother-in-law did drill down to our house where the kids could see it. And so he was saying, you know, “There’s your house. And see, there’s your boat.” And so the kids basically knew that the house
wasn’t there. When they came home, we took them over there that next day. We didn’t take them the night they came home because they came home late that evening. So the next morning we all got up as a family and went to the house. My husband and I didn’t cry because, I mean, it’s been ten days, and you become kind of numb, you know, because you’ve done cried so much. And him and I worked so much that we were more concerned about how the kids were going to react, and so we didn’t hide anything from them. We took them there, and Jenna talked about her Care Bears floating away, and I told her, I said, “That’s OK, baby, because we’ll just go buy you some new Care Bears. Because we still have each other, and we have all our pictures, and we’ll buy a new boat.” So she was hurt a little bit, but as soon as we got to Wal-Mart and was able to buy her some things and her, you know things like that, she kind of understood a little bit. And so we still talk about it. We talk about our house, and we talk about Hurricane Katrina. And Jacob, he’s three, and he doesn’t really, he wasn’t really, I would say, attached to that type, the material things yet like Jenna was. He’s more attached to Mom and Dad. And I think that hurt them more than anything in the ten days, was not being with us, than losing anything. So they’ve come out of it really well.

Morgan: Well, are the children back in school now?

Broadus: They’re back in school.

Morgan: When did they start back?

Broadus: Two weeks after they came back, so it’s been almost a month that they’ve been back in school, and they’re doing really well. October the third, or something like that, I think, they went back to school, and so they’re doing really well, really well with all of it. I’d say its back to normal for them, as they could get. They got Mom and Dad, and we’re just living in Pawpaw John’s house. And I think that’s helped, is being somewhere that they know who they are and things like that. They have their own room. We bought them a new bunk bed, and so they get to sleep in that, and they got clothes and everything; so they’re doing really good with all of it. I still get emotional, and my husband does, too, sometimes. We just, this past weekend, went to our neighbor’s house that live across the street, and they have their trailer sitting on there, and so we came over there, and that’s a little emotional sometimes because you drive up, and it used to be so pretty and was going to be such a nice place. And it’s going to be a nice place when we eventually build back because I think that’s the support structure we have now with all of us in the neighborhood. We’re all younger. The older people, there were two older couples that were, basically one was retired, and one was semi-retired; they won’t be building back.

Morgan: They’ve decided to move?

Broadus: They’ve already decided, yes, to move. And they’ve already left.

Morgan: Out of the South, off the Coast where they—
Broadus: Off the Coast. I don’t know about—I think that the one couple came from Florida. I don’t know if they’re back in Florida, or they’ve moved somewhere else, but they’re not moving back there. We weren’t as close to them, but the people that lived in our cul-de-sac right down the street, not across the street but over one house from them, we were close to them, and they’re living in Moss Point right now. And they won’t build back there. You know, they’ll probably stay in Moss Point or live somewhere else, but they won’t be moving back in our subdivision.

Morgan: Well, tell me about your rebuilding plans.

Broadus: We loved our house. We actually called the, one of the insurance that wanted some house plans, and my husband was like, you know, he said “Oh, my gosh, I got to build them.” And since we built the house, almost exactly to the spec, he did some minor modifications, what I would say not minor in money but minor in the house plans of putting in the steel beams versus the pilings on the bottom. We closed the whole house in, which it required, but we put like the sheetrock and stuff, or the two-by-eight walls was different. But he called Sater Design and asked them, told them what happened, and so they sent us another set of house plans for free and said, “Thank you for doing business. We’re sorry about your loss. Here.” So he made some copies of that and sent that down. So when looking through that, we think about all the things we went through when we built the house and how beautiful it was, and it’s right on the water and stuff. So we’ll build the same house again. We’ll do some things differently. Of course, they’re going to require us to build up a little bit, which is fine with us because we’re not going to close, we’ll close the bottom in with breakaway walls or something, but we won’t make that living space. It’ll all be storage with the garage and stuff downstairs, but we will not do what we did before—close it in and sheetrock it and try to make it like a living area. And so we’ll be fine with the flood elevation and things like that. It’s scary a little because you think to yourself you don’t know what happened to your home, which we have an engineer coming out to our house. Hopefully next week we’ll get some, I guess, some closure to that piece. Because my house, the top of the house was forty-seven feet above sea level, and I know that because we had to get a variance, you know, for it to be able to go that high. So that’s what’s amazing is you think to yourself, “How could floodwaters that was only about fifteen feet above sea level right there take your whole house away, the whole house?” Not saying it couldn’t be done, but it’s just, it’s not like our house would have been engulfed in water because it was so high. The water would’ve only come up to the second-story part of it, which is the living area of our house, not the whole. So I don’t know. I don’t know what happened. So that’s kind of scary. But I keep telling them, I pick on everybody and say, “Well, all I know is anytime a hurricane comes, we’ll just back a U-Haul up to the house, load everything in it, drive it up about a mile from there and everything will be fine.” You know. (laughter)

Morgan: So it will give you a little peace of mind to have an engineer say, “This is what I think happened.”
**Broadus:** Some closure because no one stayed in our area. The house—well, actually I mean nobody stayed in *our* neighborhood, and the places where people stayed were maybe one or two blocks up in those houses that were gutted. There were some people that stayed, and so they have their story, but they weren’t paying attention to what happened to other peoples’ homes. They’re paying attention to their lives, not what happened there. So you really just want to know what happened in your area. You know, what happened to the house? What happened to everything? Next time I would love to put a camera, you know, in a tree or on a pole somewhere way up high just to take pictures of what really happened, what really happened to the house.

**Morgan:** Do you have any timeline on the rebuild? Do you see yourself in six months or a year?

**Broadus:** Yeah, immediately. Right now we’re trying to, like everybody else, settle with the insurance. And right now we have to determine what happened to the home because we have just a slab. It’s not like you can say, “Well, the flood did this and the home, you know, or the wind did this.” So we’re at the mercy right now of this engineer to find out, you know, what happened to be able to say—because I mean regardless of what happened, we were covered by insurance; it’s just who’s going to do what.

**Morgan:** Which policy.

**Broadus:** Yeah. And so that’s a frustration because you just want somebody to pay so you at least get started, and that’s what I’ve been conveying to the insurance companies. I have not really called the insurance companies until recently, because, you know, I’m trying to be as patient as possible. We don’t have, our recovery is not as bad as what some people are going through. I mean at least we have a roof over our head at the house and stuff with my dad. We both have our jobs. My husband and I still have our jobs, so it’s not like we’re so far behind the eight ball like everybody else. But really we can’t move forward until we know what’s going to happen; so we’re kind of put on hold, and we’re trying not to purchase a lot of things because we don’t know—and I haven’t been settled on insurance so I’m talking about, just, you know—

(brief interruption)

**Broadus:** —person, now to five people because there’s four in my family and one with him, so he doesn’t have enough towels; he doesn’t have, you know, enough furniture, or he doesn’t have the—he’s got this little, bitty two-seater table, and it’s like, there’s five of us in the family. And so it’s things like that that we have to go purchase, and so you try not to spend a lot of money, you know, buying those things because you don’t know what’s going to happen. You don’t know what insurance is
going to do. You don’t know if you’re going to have to save and rebuild what you had; you just don’t know. And so we’re trying to be conservative at the same time.

**Morgan:** Do you know that the city will allow you to build back where you are? Because some places they’re having that, “No, we’re going to push back off of any water frontage at all.” Are y’all having any of that?

**Broadus:** I think that, because we’re in Back Bay Biloxi, we’re not, we weren’t right on the beach, on the front beach, and we’re in Back Bay, so I think that we’re all able to rebuild. We’re just all going to have build up probably about four or more feet, but for me, I was already, already had my, the house plan is already built where you live on the second story, anyway, so we’re going to be fine doing that.

**Morgan:** So when Rita starting spinning around in the Gulf and you had just gotten back, what were your feelings when you saw, “OK, well, now here comes Rita”?

**Broadus:** Nothing, because you’ve already—for me I’ve already lost everything. I mean what damage—

**Morgan:** (Inaudible) attitude at that point?

**Broadus:** Yeah, what would it have done, you know, for my family. And now, I felt bad for the other families that may have had something left or just some minor damage that it’s weakened their home so much that, “Here I’ve got another hurricane, and it’s just going to cause more damage.” To be honest with you, I would have preferred it more to hit us. Then I would say that, at that time, it should just hit us instead of hitting the poor people in Texas because we’ve already had so much here that while they may lose more, it will not be to the extent that it would be if it turned around and hit another area, and then we’d have two areas that were devastated like us. You know what I’m saying? That much more (inaudible), too. So, you know I guess I have a positive attitude about it just because you’ve lost everything you’ve possibly worked for.

**Morgan:** Tell me a little bit about the spirit of the community right now. How do you find it?

**Broadus:** Positive. I don’t know; I hear more a negative to the older people because, you know, they’ve worked for what they had, or they’re into retirement, and here they’ve lost everything that they’ve had, and now they’ve got to turn around and start back over. And here they are in their later age, or they’ve lost their whole family, all the pictures and everything of their family, so they have it a lot worse than, I feel, we do at my age. I’m in my early thirties, and we still have many years to work, and our kids are really small, and you know you kind of learn from your mistakes. So I think more for the younger crowd, it’s more positive because you just want to get back and not let it take you down, and things like that, so for us it’s more positive. For the community here, like working, coming back to work has been real positive, you know,
a lot of support. And it helps, you know, to be able to talk to other people that have lost things, so it’s almost like you’re AA or you’re psychotherapy or something, you know, for being here than having to go somewhere else.

(end of interview)