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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

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Welcome to Stanford University's Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity course on "Confronting Katrina: Race, Class, and Disaster in America." Thank you all for joining us this evening. My name is Lawrence Bobo and I am the director of CCSRE.

Like the rest of the nation, the Faculty of the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity was profoundly moved by the images of suffering and neglect we all witnessed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, images that you now see playing around you. Throughout the country and here on the Stanford campus people are struggling to understand what went wrong and why. We felt it imperative that a great university like Stanford should be in the forefront of informing our students and the larger community about the sorts of long-standing problems of entrenched poverty, racial inequality, and bureaucratic indifference and failure so much at the root of the human devastation seen in the Gulf Coast States. Thus, with the support of the Provost John Etchemendy, who we thank for his immediate and unwavering commitment to this endeavor, the Faculty of CCSRE, the program in African and African American Studies, Stanford's Continuing Studies program and the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences and a number of other individuals and units around the university launch this special one-unit course, open

to all students and to the public, called "Confronting Katrina: Race, Class, and Disaster in American Society".

There many different valuable strategies of involvement including donating money, one's time, and other material resources. We encourage all of you to reach out to those who's lives have been up-ended by Katrina in these and other ways.

But a different type of obligation attaches to scholars and thinkers at a major university. We are obligated to be a site of serious thinking, assessment, and sense-making when faced with an issue of this kind. As a result, we want to be part of keeping our eye on the problems, the divisions, the as yet unfilled dreams for American democracy that Katrina brought to light. We want to help deepen an appreciation for the historical roots, current complexity and dynamics, and future prospects for better addressing racial and class inequality. And we want to provide a forum for civic discourse and exchange of ideas and information about a major social issue of concern to us all.

Of course, in just four sessions we cannot hope to address all of the issues, concerns, needs and challenges raised by devastation left in Katrina's wake. But we are committed to providing much needed perspective on the roots of the problems so painfully and powerfully brought back into focus by the hurricane and to consider some of the lessons and directions for the future that we hope are impressed upon us all.

The course will have four sessions taught by Stanford faculty and distinguished outside guests. The themes for each of four sessions are as follows: (1) The Foundations of Neglect; (2) Media, Culture, and the Politics of Representation: Viewing a Racialized Disaster; (3) Organizations as the Solution and the Problem; and (4) Lessons from

Katrina. We see this course as providing the background, knowledge, and perspective necessary to make sense of the complex problems and issues brought to light by Katrina. It will also be a forum for serious discussion and probing examination of what we need to do as a nation to avoid such a calamity in the future. We invite all students, faculty, staff, and the general public to come and join in this effort to honestly 'Confront Katrina' and the tough dilemmas it raises for us as a nation.

When thinking of those scenes from the Gulf Coast States, especially of the images of homes engulfed by water, of people struggling to get to the safety of dry ground, of thousands upon thousands of people huddled at the Superdome, and even of dead bodies and debris floating through the streets of New Orleans for several horrifying days and one hopes that this calamity is, at a minimum, a clarifying moment and perhaps ultimately an inspirational and redemptive moment. For many these images, now indelibly etched into the nation's consciousness—indeed the world's consciousness—brought squarely into view the deep divides of class and race that are otherwise so often hustled out of view if not actively denied in so much popular, mainstream discourse. You've all heard the pointed questions: Can this happen in America? How can the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth be so unprepared and so slow in responding to the needs of its own citizens? Is the racial divide still that severe a problem in America? Are there still two Americas? And what can we do to avert this sort of tragedy in the future?

Those images, and these types of questions bring us here this evening. At its core CCSRE—through our courses in Asian American Studies, Chicano/a Studies, Native American Studies, African and African American Studies and the Comparative major and

in many traditional disciplinary departments—focus on understanding how race and ethnicity have shaped identities, social and political institutions, and material life chances in the U.S. and around the world. We try to bring the information, the needed conceptual lenses and vocabularies necessary if we as scholars and as concerned citizens are ever to come to grips with and work to resolve the ways that class inequality, racial inequality, and the ways they intersect to drive wedges between people. Tonight in particular we will consider some of the key Foundations of the Neglect seen in the wake of Katrina. We'll consider some of the demographic, sociological, historical, and political underpinnings of what was wrong and what went wrong. And in taking stock of these conditions we will be pointing toward a clearer view of what must be done in the future.

I want to now introduce Professor Matt Snipp, part of the leadership of CCSRE, who will moderate our session this evening and introduce our other two speakers. Professor Snipp is currently director of Undergraduate Programs for CCSRE, of the Native American Studies program, and of our Comparative major. Before moving to Stanford's sociology department in 1996, he was a Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin -- Madison. He has been a Research Fellow at the U.S. Bureau of the Census and a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. Professor Snipp has published 3 books and over 60 articles and book chapters on demography, economic development, poverty and unemployment. His current research and writing deals with the methodology of racial measurement, changes in the social and economic well-being of American ethnic minorities, and poverty and unemployment on American Indian reservations. He currently serves as an appointed member of the Census Bureau's Racial and Ethnic Advisory Committee, several advisory working

groups evaluating the 2000 census, two National Academy of Science panels charged with designing the 2010 census and is a member of the Board of Scientific Counselors for the Centers for Disease Control and the National Center for Health Statistics. Please welcome Matt Snipp who will moderate and begin our substantive panel on the “Foundations of Neglect.”