



**Third Wave Foundation Newsletter**  
***See it? Tell it. Change it!* Fall/Winter 2005**

**Funding for Abortion in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina**  
**By Stephanie Poggi, Executive Director and Lynn Jackson, National Case Manager**

In the days immediately after hurricane Katrina, the National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF) began to receive a huge increase in calls for abortion funding from women who had been forced to leave their homes and their lives in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. The need for assistance was so acute that we set up a national emergency fund. Many of our 108 member funds around the country have also been raising additional money to help women from the region.

Today, the calls for assistance continue to pour in. Many women who call have lost their jobs because of the hurricanes, and many are still living in shelters or are doubled up with family and friends in cities and states far from home. Some women who had been in educational or training programs now find that the programs no longer exist. Others are still searching for family members. Often, women have had to delay their abortions in order to deal with evacuation, address other survival issues, and work to put their lives back together. This means that many women need second trimester abortions, which are far more costly and more difficult to obtain.

An enormous difficulty is the fact that many abortion clinics in the region shut down altogether or temporarily closed their doors, adding additional travel for many women. This extra burden of travel comes on top of the great distances many women in the South already have to travel to find abortion care. Also, most of the states in the region mandate 24-hour waiting periods (mandatory delay), so that women need to find a way to travel to the clinic, stay somewhere over night, and return once again.

One woman who called us had two children and had been living in New Orleans. She was scheduled to have an abortion the day hurricane Katrina hit. She evacuated to Houston along with her children and cousins. She re-scheduled her abortion at a clinic in Houston. Once more, on the day she was to go for her procedure, she was forced to evacuate – this time for hurricane Rita. When she first called us, she had raised \$100 toward the cost of the abortion. When we talked again, she had been forced to use the \$100 on gas money to travel out of the storm's path. NNAF funded the additional cost.

Another young woman was a college student who also worked at a hospital in Louisiana. She is now living in another part of the state and doesn't know what will happen with school or her job. She has two children. She was planning to continue the pregnancy but since Katrina hit, her boyfriend has been missing. At the time she reached us, she had been trying to arrange for the abortion for several weeks and was looking for funding. She expected to be able to contribute \$500 towards the procedure, and the clinic had said they would try to help her find other monies. We were able to offer \$1000. She called the night before the abortion was to start and said she had been counting on her FEMA check to give her the portion she was to contribute and the clinic had been unsuccessful in finding any other help. The FEMA money had not come through and this was her last day to have it at the clinic because she was at 24 weeks. NNAF was able to fund the whole procedure.

Another young woman, 17 years old, lived in Mississippi. When her mother called they were returning home after they had evacuated. But in order to get her abortion, she needed to travel out of state again because the Mississippi clinic could not perform this later procedure. She and her mother raised \$200 and NNAF funded the rest of the cost.

To date, out of our emergency fund (not counting the funding by our individual member funds, which is also substantial), NNAF has funded abortions for 32 women for a total of \$18,000. While we do not have complete information about each woman, we know that the majority of the women are African American and a little under half are white. Twenty-six of the women are under 30 years old. Approximately half of the women have needed abortions in the second trimester. Our contribution per woman has ranged from \$50 to \$2000. Women have gone to clinics in Louisiana, Texas, and Alabama – as well as to Georgia, Florida, Arkansas, and Iowa.

The NNAF national case manager is continuing to coordinate the NNAF emergency fund for women in need. Women and girls from the hurricane region can call NNAF for assistance, as well as clinics assisting women from the region, and our member funds who need additional funding to support women traveling to various parts of the country.

While the current focus of the Katrina Fund is on helping to pay for abortions, NNAF also has an ongoing field organizing project to support and build the capacity of abortion funds in the South. This work is more necessary than ever.

We would like to thank the Third Wave Foundation for generous support of this emergency fund, as well as the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation and the Ms. Foundation for Women, and all of the generous individuals who have contributed.

Finally, in addition to this emergency campaign, NNAF is continuing to support abortion funding and full reproductive health care for poor women, women of color, and young women across the country. Last year, the 108 member funds – including the Third Wave Foundation – raised over 2 million dollars to help over 20,000 women and girls pay for abortions. We also work at the national and grassroots levels to fight unfair and discriminatory bans on Medicaid funding for abortion and for the right of low-income women to take care of their children with dignity.