

WR115

### **Don Moss**

*Author's Note:* Since attending Mt. Hood I have moved on to the University of Phoenix in Clackamas to finish my bachelors in Business Management. I have taken with me writing skills from Scarlett Saavedra's Writing 115 course that will assist me throughout my academic and professional life. I know that through practice and persistence my writing skills will continue to improve and I will enjoy the benefits that come from effective writing.

#### **New Orleans: The New Venice?**

While local and national government agencies pursue plans of rebuilding the hurricane torn region of Southern Louisiana, the people that are paying for this mammoth project may be wondering if we should fight nature and rebuild New Orleans to its former self. Many of us look at the current situation awestruck in amazement as though it was the first time that New Orleans has been underwater. The truth is that the city has always been underwater from one point in history to the next. The nature cycle of the Mississippi River has flooded this ill-fated city from year to year; every storm that has passed through the area has left proof of the ebb and flow of the nearby waters, which have developed natural levies.

So why rebuild? Some would point to the billions of dollars of infrastructure that would be left behind if we chose not to reclaim what we lost. Physiologists would point out that just as it's a natural phenomenon for the local New Orleans's waterways to temporarily overtake the land so to is it natural for human nature to undertake reconstruction efforts that are both daunting and redundant. It provides a sense of both purpose and control at a time when residents feel that they may have very little of both. And while there are many physiological reasons to undertake such a task there are practical ones as well. Most likely, the fast route to recovery for a local economy devastated by a natural disaster would be to pump lots of money into the region during a reconstruction project.

Yet again, I point out recovery to what? To a city that both historically and scientifically has been proven to be incapable of holding back the flood waters? This leads us to another question: why are we trying to hold back the water? Civil engineers have long said that this is an almost impossible task and that any local disturbance would

initiate some level of intrusion by Lake Pontchartrain, the Gulf of Mexico or the Mississippi River.

So, why not let the waters in? We have good examples how this might work. Venice, Italy, was built in an unlikely location around 568 A.D. after the influx of refugees from the invasion of the Lombard (Wikipedia). The city is a patchwork of small islands and marshes that have developed on the shores of the Adriatic Sea and the estuary of the Po and Piave rivers. In a city situated much like New Orleans, Venetians had good reason for building upon wood pilings inside a flood zone. During those times invasion was a real and frequent threat. With waters too deep to stand in, this gave the Venetians an advantage over would-be attackers. While New Orleans doesn't have to worry about sword-wielding barbarians beating at its borders, its citizens have a similar situation with respect to the invading waters. So my suggestion is simply this: push back the waters long enough to get a more permanent plan in place and then let it flow. Building the city in such a way that is always above the flood plain seems a much more logical solution. Under normal circumstances New Orleans' economy is primarily based on tourism. What better way to attract tourist from around the globe than with a viable floating city? While some would see this as an impractical transformation to an already bad situation, I would point out that circumstances have never been better for today's engineers, who have a stronger understanding of the surrounding geology and advanced computer models to correct past errors. Like it or not, the time is right for change. Why would we choose to forgo centuries of historical data and instead try to fight nature's plan?

#### Work Cited

*Wikipedia Web Encyclopedia* 2005 <[www.reference.com](http://www.reference.com)>.

***Instructor's Note:*** Don Moss's WR115 Wednesday night class wrote a short essay each week (you don't want to be in my class, right?) and presented it to a quartet of fellow writers. Then the small groups each nominated an essay to be read to the entire class. It was an honor. The class watched Don Moss settle himself in the "chair of honor" several times during the quarter. And each time, most of us sat forward in our chairs and listened carefully. He could tell one of the weirdest, funniest stories in the class, like the time he was five and traveling to Mexico with his grandparents in an old motor home. He gets trapped in the RV's bathroom. He's there for an hour until Grandpa stops at the border. A Mexican border officer finds the boy. Well, I couldn't resist telling you about that.

But on THIS essay, Don is making a point. Like his early narrative, it's kinda weird but hey, it makes you think. Here he tries to persuade his readers that rather than pump all the water out of New Orleans we should carry tourists around the city in gondolas. Like I said, weird.

--*Scarlett Saavedra*