

The New York Times

620 EIGHTH AVE.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10018-1405

Jan. 20, 2011

Sandy Rosenthal
Founder and Executive Director
Levees.org
1421 Soniat St.
New Orleans, LA 70115

Dear Sandy Rosenthal,

We seem to have a case of miscommunication here. Nothing I have said should be taken to mean that I believe the damage that occurred during and in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina resulted from anything other than a complex train of events over a long period and in which human action had a significant place.

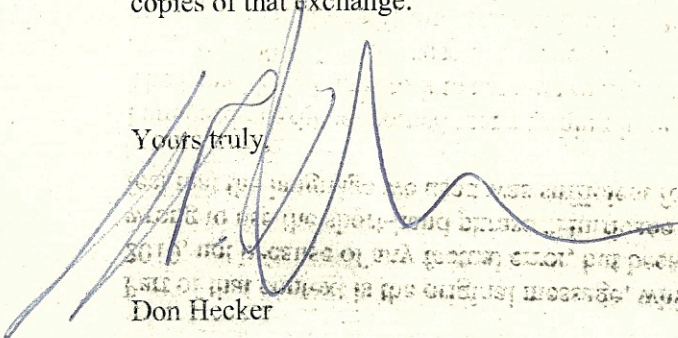
I think my full e-mail message of Dec. 15, 2010 — rather than the single sentence you cite out of context — makes that pretty clear.

Part of that context is the original message, which asked for a correction to an article published Dec. 14, 2010, not because of any factual error, but because the individual who wrote to us believes that it is wrong to use the short-hand phrase "Hurricane Katrina" when referring to the larger series of events. We feel that the language we used was sufficient for the article.

I am particularly concerned that anything in our correspondence may obscure the commitment made by The New York Times to intensively report on the monumental tragedy in New Orleans that began on Aug. 29, 2005. It is because of that commitment that The Times was among the first to signal to the world the magnitude of the disaster. It is because of that commitment that The Times assigned dozens of reporters to disclose to a wider audience every aspect — every aspect — of the disaster. It is because of that commitment that The Times has continued to follow the story, long after most other news organizations have relegated it to some storybook happy ending of a plucky city that was back to normal.

I trust you will share this entire letter, and the complete contents of the original e-mail exchange with your many supporters so that they can make their own judgments. For your convenience I have included copies of that exchange.

Yours truly,



Don Hecker

Inc: E-mail of Dec. 14 from Zoey Bartlett to Letters, NYT
E-mail of Dec. 14 from Don Hecker to Zoey Bartlett

From: NYTimes, Senioreditor <SeniorEditor@nytimes.com>
Subject: RE: SF BAY falters.. Mistake in the article!!!
To: (Redacted)
Date: Wednesday, December 15, 2010, 1:26 PM

Dear (Redacted),

I am sympathetic to your view that many bad decisions led to the damage after Hurricane Katrina. As I hope you are aware, The Times published many article on the subject after the storm and has continued to report from the city. But had there been no Hurricane Katrina, engineering and other decisions would not have caused the damage. So I think we are correct in attributing the cause to Katrina.

Don Hecker

From: Letters, NYT
Sent: Wednesday, December 15, 2010 2:22 PM
To: NYTimes, Senioreditor
Subject: FW: SF BAY falters.. Mistake in the article!!!

In reading your article about the SF Bay area water problems, I could not help but be shocked to read that you think Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans!!
While the hurricane did some damage, the flooding that devastated 80% if the city was a direct cause of the ACOE's failure to maintain the levees properly and to even build the levees correctly in the first place. This has been proven to have been caused directly by the negligence of the ACOE.. our very own federally funded devastators.
I lost a lifetime of priceless, irreplaceable art, family heirlooms, my health, financial and emotional stability.
It is imperative that you correct this article so that people know that this was caused directly by ACOE's negligence and outright laziness.
Please take a moment to visit Levees.org. to verify.. and please let the public know who they should not trust when it comes to engineering projects.
Thank you,
(Redacted)