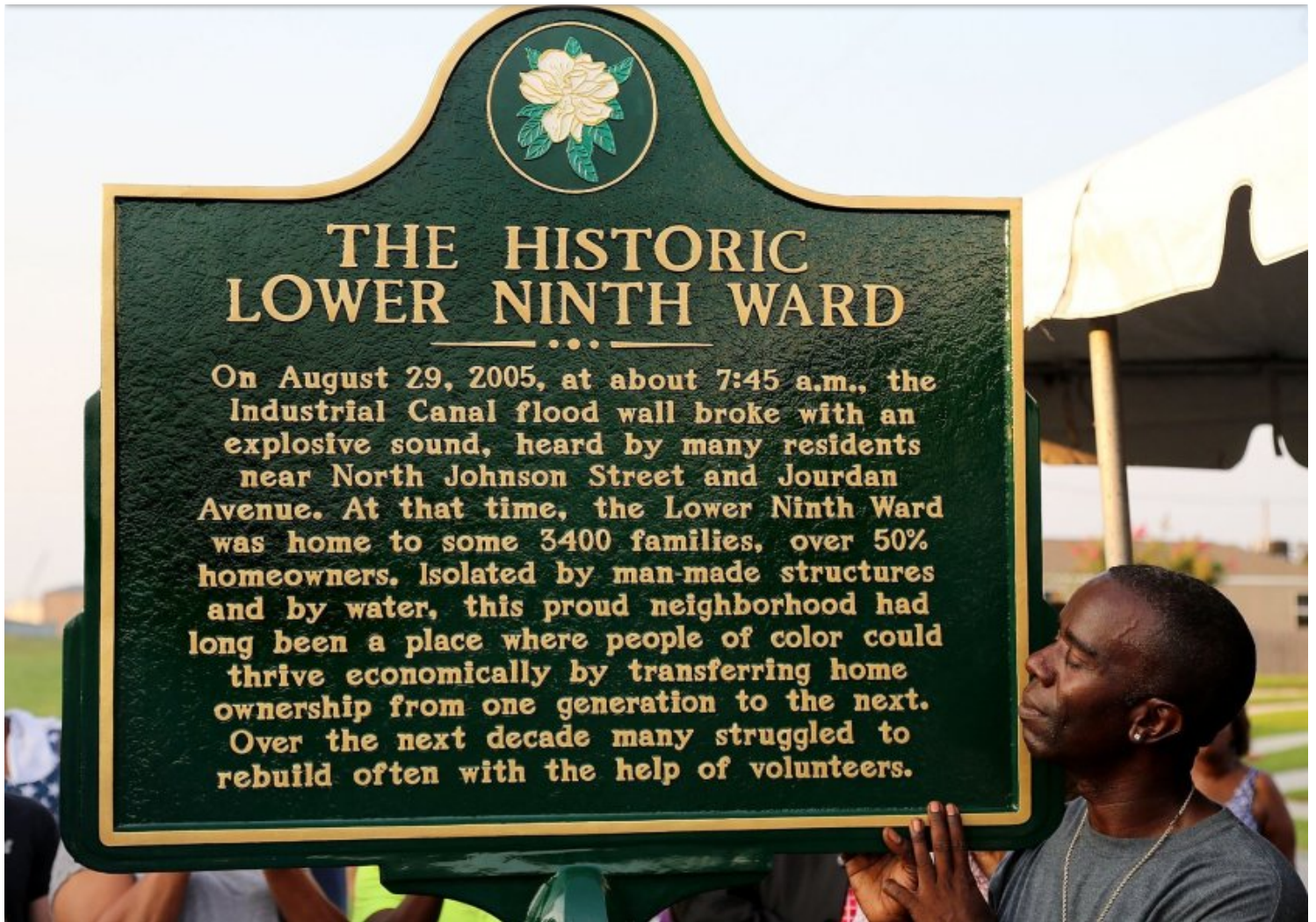




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Lower Ninth Ward resident Burnell Cotlon touches a historic marker during an unveiling event at Jourdan Avenue and North Johnson Street, Monday, Aug. 24, 2015, in New Orleans. The marker tells the story of the area flooding during Hurricane Katrina, which hit New Orleans nearly a decade ago. (Eliot Kamenitz/The Advocate via AP) MAGS OUT; INTERNET OUT; NO SALES; TV OUT; NO FORNS; LOUISIANA BUSINESS INC. OUT (INCLUDING GREATER BATON ROUGE BUSINESS REPORT, 225, 10/12, INREGISTER, LBI CUSTOM); MANDATORY CREDIT The Associated Press

By CAIN BURDEAU ASSOCIATED PRESS

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NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The catastrophe

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marker

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The plaque was erected Monday and unveiled during an emotional ceremony. Dozens of residents from the Lower 9th Ward came out for the unveiling of the bright green commemorative marker, which is located on a grassy city-owned levee slope on Jourdan Road.

On Aug. 29, 2005, the floodwall along the Industrial Canal catastrophically failed. The resulting flood wiped out the African-American neighborhood and killed scores of people.

The marker is located at the approximate location where the floodwall along the Industrial Canal broke at 7:45 a.m., the Monday morning when Katrina swept in to Louisiana.

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The ceremony was headlined with musician Al Johnson, who appeared wearing a gold crown. He lived on Tennessee Street, near the breach, when Katrina hit. He played a new hit song he's written about the storm called "The Lower 9th Ward Blues."

Others recited poetry, sang gospel songs or gave personal testimonies, and residents welcomed the new marker with open arms.

"It gives the general public a chance to pass through here and see where the hole in our life is at," said Ronald Lewis, director of the local House of Dance & Feathers, a Mardi Gras Indian museum, social and pleasure club and cultural center destroyed by Katrina.

Before Katrina, the Lower 9th Ward was a working-class and predominantly African-American neighborhood just outside the city's historic center. Ten years ago, the area was essentially a white-collar neighborhood.

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The neighborhood is the birthplace of and home to notable artists and musicians. New Orleans legend Fats Domino lived there before Katrina.

Getting the plaque erected was the work of Levees.org, a citizens group that formed after Katrina to push for reforms in levee building and oversight.

The group led efforts to erect two similar historical markers at the breach sites along the 17th Street Canal and London Avenue Canal. The three breaches where plaques are now standing caused the majority of the flooding during Katrina.

Levees.org also recently opened an exhibition and rain garden near the site of the London Avenue breach where visitors can learn about what happened to cause the flooding of New Orleans. The group aims to make the exhibit permanent and get it placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sandy Rosenthal, president of Levees.org, said her group wants to make sure Katrina is properly remembered. The group has long pushed to, as members have put it, “bust the myths of the flooding during Katrina.”

The group has sought to expose the engineering failures by the Army Corps of Engineers that led to the flooding of more than 80 percent of New Orleans.

Following Katrina, the Army Corps took responsibility for the flood and has overseen a massive, \$14.5 billion upgrading of the city’s flood- protection system. The city is far better protected today against hurricanes than it was 10 years ago.

Rosenthal said the new plaque is “both a commemoration of a pivotal moment in history and a memorial to those lost.”

“For the past 10 years there’s been nothing at the breach site to teach visitors,” she said. “It’s a plaque that will last more than 100 years.”

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