



This month's circle tale announces Christina's newest book—***Storycatcher, Making Sense of our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story*** (New World Library, 2005). This incredible testimony to the necessity and soul of story in our lives is available on our website and through bookstores, or amazon.com. In sharing word of this project, Christina decided to write a circle tale based on current events that illustrate the nature of story. And check Christina's website dedicated to the movement growing out of this book: <http://www.storycatcher.net>. Spread the word—story is out of the box!

## Circle Tale, October 2005 Stories from Hurricane Katrina

The stories of ordinary people communicate our shared humanity. Through story, we see beyond race, class, religion, or nationality and are reminded that most people want similar things: we desire lives that allow us to fulfill our talents and we want to promise our children that they can have lives that allow them to fulfill their talents. We love. We get outraged. When we feel part of community we take care of community; when we feel alienated from community we abandon this sense of commonality.

As this book came into the print, we were reminded of the power of story in a very public way. After hurricane Katrina ripped through the southern gulf coast of the United States, ordinary people who were left stranded in the storm's aftermath and suffering the shocking disorganization of US governmental and agency response stood before television cameras and through their stories became the brothers and sisters, the children and parents of ordinary people everywhere. This is one miracle of story: it creates empathy and compassion for people living in very different circumstances than our own.

Most of the people who stepped into camera range do not usually have voice in America, certainly not in the halls of the powerful or the living rooms of the comfortable. But millions of people sat in front of our televisions deeply moved at their directness, their desperation, and their endurance. In front of a watching world, Katrina's people entered the survivor's story. And here is the second miracle of story: inundated with their faces and voices, I moved around in my comfortable routines and saw the shared humanity of people of varying colors and class who live in my neighborhood. I understood the ways we belong to each other, so I smiled and sought out opportunities to exchange a few sentences of connection. Others responded and we took little social risks intended to reinforce our sense of community. What went wrong in New Orleans was based on a million missed opportunities to connect with the people around us; and what went right in the aftermath of the storm was the way that ordinary people leapt into action across class and racial barriers and worked to set a new story in place.

Talking to a man in a Baton Rouge shelter, Oprah receives his story, "I was watchin' TV and I just couldn't take it any more...so my buddies and I commandeered some boats and went in there and got several hundred people offa their roof-tops."

He smiles shyly when Oprah asks, "What do you mean 'commandeered'? Did you steal those boats?"

"They back now. But they wasn't all splintered up and no one else was doin' it..." The new story will use the mountains of rubble and the flooded sagging houses as a strong foundation for the community they are capable of creating—now.

If we all respond boldly, Katrina's people will have the assistance they need to remake lives that are better for having gone through this trauma. The stories, hundreds of thousands of them, will reference this event for generations.

If we all respond boldly communities in America and beyond will look at themselves differently and ask: Who is my neighbor? Are we prepared to act together in whatever challenges and disasters come our



way? What do we need to understand about each other now to function as a community then? Whose stories do I need hear, today? What stories about myself do I need to share?

If we all respond boldly, Katrina's people will become cultural teachers whose stories will serve to activate communities beyond their imagining. And this is the third miracle of story: The teaching tales that grow from the survivor's stories can travel way beyond the lives of anyone directly involved and change the course of our behavior toward the common good.

May it be so.

*If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.*

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at [www.peerspirit.com](http://www.peerspirit.com) and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter using the subscription mechanism at the top right of the page. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*