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The Loss of a Lifetime

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Many people experience loss at some point in their lives, be it the passing of a loved one or the loss of an opportunity. We all know that not everything lasts forever. Nevertheless, knowing doesn't make losing things any easier. This was especially true for the James family, who, like many, lost nearly everything during Hurricane Katrina.

When news of the storm first appeared, the storm didn’t seem like much of a problem. To most New Orleanians, it was just going be another couple of rainy days. But as time progressed, so did the strength of the storm. Katrina was a category-five hurricane. People began to realize Katrina’s potential for destruction, and soon Kori noticed that “little by little people began to flee.” Kori’s family decided that it would be better to wait for a while in order to avoid traffic leaving the state, and because they were just returning from a vacation, some of their things were already packed. They didn’t realize waiting would just make it harder to take everything they needed. On August 29th of 2005, Kori James became one of those who fled. She experienced the loss of a lifetime when her family, like many others, evacuated their home and headed for higher and dryer land.

Kori and her family fled to Boutte, Louisiana to stay with her grandparents and wait for the storm to pass. It was there that Kori felt the most unsafe. She wasn’t fearful of her surroundings, or of the storm itself, but she was afraid of suffering. As a nine-year-old at the time, pain and suffering were not things she thought about on a regular basis. She had fears about live wires hitting water, trees falling on houses, and of starving. Kori went from not having a care in the world to worrying if it was safe to go to the store to get food for her family’s next
meal. Her grandparents were set to retire, but Katrina left their home in need of repair, and looters took the things that Katrina had not destroyed.

So again they fled, this time headed for Texas, with their destination nine hours away at a Holiday Inn. All they could do when they got there was try and make sense of what had happened. Kori listened to radio coverage of the event, and she said it was like hearing of “generations of history being obliterated without a trace.” She was devastated by the loss of two things, the first being a blanket that was given to her as a baby. The blanket was something she never forgot about and still misses till this day. And the second thing she hated to see lost was hope. It hurt her greatly to see the hope for a better future drift from her parents’ eyes as they watched what the storm had done to everything they had. During the storm, they had to avoid watching TV because seeing the destroyed city was too heartbreaking. But when they did tune in, a shot from a helicopter showed that their home had been swept away.

Post Katrina, things for everyone were a lot different. People came home and began to rebuild, not only their homes but also their families. To Kori, Katrina was like a thief who stole a piece of her childhood, no different from the looters who violated her grandparents’ home. She sometimes thinks about what life would have been like if Katrina had not affected her. Recently, Kori reminisced on the storm’s impact, saying, “Katrina changed our family’s entire life path.” With that being said, Kori is proud of her city’s resilience and feels that her ability to attend a college in the heart of a city that was once under water is nothing short of a miracle.