The Social Contract, Biopolitics and Hurricane Katrina: Two Perspectives from Sarah Broom's Memoir The Yellow House and Sheri Fink's Five Days at Memorial

Forfatter
Larsen, Richard Westereng

Sammendrag
In 2005, Hurricane Katrina wreaked havoc along the Mexican Gulf Coast, and the aftermaths have (again) revealed the racial inequality that endures in the US. The fact that the US government was unable to protect their weak and most vulnerable citizens points to a fractured social contract. Through the memoir The Yellow House by Sarah Broom, and the non-fiction text Five Days at Memorial by Sheri Fink, using the ideas of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau and Charles Mills and Giorgio Agamben, I will argue how the US government historically, and even in modern times, has failed to uphold the social contract, and that certain places in the US are comparable to a state of nature. In addition, I will critically examine the idea that the US has entered a post-Civil Rights era. Racial inequality and discrimination are shown through the disproportionate number of (poor) African Americans who were left to fend for themselves after Hurricane Katrina. This is tied into Agamben’s theory of biopolitics (following Foucault), and how a government or other authority figures (such as doctors) can judge certain people's lives as disposable, which is what happened at Memorial Hospital following Katrina when doctors performed euthanasia on patients who were unable to evacuate.

Forlag
UIT Norges arktiske universitet
UIT The Arctic University of Norway

Metadata
The Yellow House is a memoir by Sarah M. Broom. It is Broom's first book and it was published on August 13, 2019 by Grove Press. The Yellow House chronicles Broom's family (mapping back approximately 100 years), her life growing up in New Orleans East, and the eventual demise of her beloved childhood home after Hurricane Katrina. Broom also focuses on the aftermath of Katrina and how the disaster altered her family and her neighborhood. At its core, the book examines race, class, politics, family Sarah M Broom was once employed to tell the official story of New Orleans, of the city’s “unlikely recovery” after Hurricane Katrina, which struck on 29 August, 2005. She quit City Hall six months after she arrived and left New Orleans. “By leaving,” she writes, “I reclaimed my voice.” With that voice and with her book, The Yellow House, which won the 2019 US National Book award, she tells a far less romantic tale about this great American city. A far more honest and daring one, too. Most of all, we get an autopsic history of the Yellow House and the people who lived in it: birthdays, near-death accidents, light switches, curtains, possible sinkholes, persimmon trees, missing doorknobs, dress socks, etc, etc.

Facebook. Twitter. Pinterest. You will hear part of an interview with a boy called Simon who is helping to protect the environment. For each question, choose the correct answer A, B or C. You now have 45 seconds to look at the questions. (45 seconds). Now we are ready to start. Listen carefully. You will hear the recording twice. Interviewer: Simon, tell us about yourself. Simon: Well, like lots of kids my age, I've grown up taking my boat onto the rivers in this area.