



Malaak Compton-Rock, wife of comedian Chris Rock, brought a group of 26 students from Brooklyn, NY, to rebuild with the St. Bernard Project April 11-14th. Their group, Journey for Change: Empowering Youth Through Global Service, worked on three houses in St. Bernard Parish. Since returning home, Compton-Rock said the students were still on a big high.

“They really loved everything about the trip,” Compton-Rock said. “The interactions with the homeowners and others from the community made all of the difference.”

Compton-Rock said the kids did not fully understand the devastation left behind from Katrina until they experienced it for themselves in the Lower Ninth Ward and St. Bernard Parish. By volunteering, they did more than read about the storm and its effects—they lived it firsthand.

“This trip satisfied the three pillars of the service program: service, education and advocacy,” Compton-Rock said.

CNN has been following the story of Journey for Change since July 2008, giving several of the students personal video cameras to document their international service for a year. Some of this footage will be used for the documentary series “Black in America 2: Solutions”, airing July 2009.

After the Journey for Change group spent two weeks in South Africa volunteering in shanty towns last August, the kids begged for another service opportunity, which Compton-Rock wanted to ensure would be in the USA. CNN anchor Soledad O’Brien recommended the St. Bernard Project as a volunteering program, and Compton-Rock said it seemed like the perfect fit for their group, a grassroots organization itself.



“I wanted the kids to know that they could serve in their own communities,” Compton-Rock said. “They have the will, the opportunity, and the desire to serve, and should do so.”

She said the students enjoyed doing something tangible to help their country and can now spread the stories they have heard. Their follow-up assignment from the SBP trip is to write their congressional leaders, describing what they saw and seeking aid for the Gulf Coast.

For more information on their trip, check out the following:

- [Times-Picayune Article](#)
- [From shanties to studs: South African volunteer shares his experience working to rebuild the Parish](#)
- [Blogs from the students](#)

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