

# the breach: BEARING WITNESS

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Report of the Katrina National Justice Commission

Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.

Iva E. Carruthers  
Bernice Powell Jackson  
Co-Editors

***Pre-Publication Copy  
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Congressional Black Caucus  
Security and Reconstruction Begin at Home***

**REPORT OF THE  
KATRINA NATIONAL JUSTICE  
COMMISSION**

**SAMUEL DEWITT PROCTOR  
CONFERENCE, INC.**

**September, 2006**

the breach: BEARING WITNESS

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*In America, because of our diversity, our freedoms, our economic adequacy, our youth as a nation, our unquestioned status as leader of the world, it becomes us to give the needed direction toward the fulfillment of the highest and best that the human spirit can embrace.*

Samuel DeWitt Proctor



The late Reverend Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor was Pastor Emeritus of the Abyssinian Baptist Church of New York City and Professor Emeritus at Rutgers University. Dr. Proctor was president of Virginia Union University and North Carolina AT&T State University. He held administrative positions with the Peace Corps in Nigeria and Washington, DC and the National Council of Churches. He was awarded honorary doctorate degrees from more than 50 colleges and universities. Dr. Proctor, 20th century prolific writer and preacher, understood social justice to be at the heart of the Christian gospel. It is in the spirit of Samuel DeWitt Proctor's legacy that the Katrina National Justice Commission was convened.

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## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 6, 2006

Dr. Iva Carruthers  
General Secretary  
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference  
4533 S. Lake Park Avenue,  
Chicago, Illinois 60653

Dear Dr. Carruthers:

Please accept this note of congratulations on the completion of the Proctor Conference's report, *the breach: Bearing Witness*.

As you highlight in this report, the victims of Hurricane Katrina have been forgotten in many ways, and for too long. In his first major nationally televised address after the storm, President Bush proclaimed: "All who question the future of the Crescent City need to know there is no way to imagine America without New Orleans. . . . We'll not just rebuild, we'll build higher and better." That is a noble sentiment. But the reality is that a year has passed, and too many Gulf Coast residents are still waiting – not just for their cities to be rebuilt, but for their lives to be restored. And now that the searing images of the devastation are gone from the nightly news and newspaper front pages, the urgency of the work left undone is receding in our public consciousness.

With *The Breach*, you and the rest of the Proctor Conference have taken a significant step towards placing this sense of urgency back in the public mind. And this is critically important, because we must not forget the images we witnessed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina – the people and their suffering. We must not forget the daily struggles of families that even now are trying to rebuild their lives. We must not forget the President's promise to do what it takes for families along the Gulf Coast or his commitment to confront the human suffering we saw with bold action. And we must not forget our duty to make sure that assistance is managed effectively so that the victims of Hurricane Katrina actually get the help they need to get back on their feet.

I hope the President, Congress and the American people will re-engage in this debate in a more meaningful way as Congress considers further emergency relief funding. I am glad to have the Proctor Conference as a partner in this process, and I again extend my sincere congratulations on the publication of *The Breach*.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama  
United States Senator



## Introduction

The title of this report, *the breach: Bearing Witness*, was born and revealed in the moments of spoken word and testimony.

“We survived Katrina; it was the levees that killed us.” This spoken word of one who had come to share and testify was a prelude to what was to come.

“For folks who evacuated...who were left in the City because either they chose to be here or they had no resources, or no means of which to escape the City....They were alive and celebrating after the Hurricane passed. Little did anyone know, who evacuated or that were in the City, that our levee wall, our levees, and our floodwalls were cracking, breaching, and water was flowing through.” (Attorney Monique Hardin, Co-Director, Advocates for Environmental Human Rights)

This poignant testimony of Monique Hardin is akin to the traditional invocation of Spirit, through song, moments before the preached word. And here in this report, the texts are Isaiah 58:12, “*you shall be called repairer of the breach*” and Ezekiel 22:30, “*And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me.*”

A sermon is not an event. A report is more than the writing and a tragedy is more than the outcomes. Underneath each one is a process – a journey towards the telling of a story – God’s story, a people’s story, and a personal story. And so it is with *the breach: Bearing Witness*.

Over a year before Katrina left the shores of Africa, a federal contract was awarded to Innovative Emergency Management, Inc. to coordinate a simulation exercise of a Category Type 4 Hurricane upon the New Orleans area. Local, state, federal and volunteer organizational emergency officials collaborated in this simulation and exercise. The Hurricane Pam exercise, as it was tagged, had all the ingredients of a virtual storm with winds of 120 mph and up to 20 inches of rain, topping the levees and flooding the New Orleans area. What was forecasted was 300,000 people would not evacuate in advance; 1000 shelters would be needed; 97 percent of all communications would be down; boats and helicopters would be needed for thousands

of rescues; 175,000 people would be injured; 200,000 would become sick and 60,000 would be killed; over 500,000 buildings would be destroyed. The Delta was on alert - stand-by in New Orleans!

Despite this investment and revelations in a make believe exercise, all levels of government failed to coordinate resources and adequately prepare and respond. In retrospect, “Katrina highlighted many, many weaknesses that either were not anticipated by Pam, or were lessons learned but not heeded ... the most painful thing about Katrina, and the tragic loss of life: the foreseeability of it all.”

Chairman Tom Davis, Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina Hearing, December 14, 2005

Before Hurricane Katrina hit coastal Florida, Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi, the poor, the elderly, the infirm, the marginalized and many African Americans were figuratively exiled on dry land. With the Monday, August 29, 2005, event of Katrina and the subsequent breach in the levees, these same people were now literally exiled in the water.

*“We survived Katrina; we could not survive the breaching of the levees.”*

The images captured the heart of a nation, pierced the soul of a people and provided a media frenzy for the world. And what appeared to be surreal was in fact real, true and ugly. America’s perennial Achilles heel was exposed. The world’s wealthiest nation, with capacity to effect pre-emptive strikes, war, relief and reconstruction throughout the world, saw itself unable to handle the unfolding disaster on its territory. The U.S. State Department, which issued global human rights standards for persons displaced within their own country, ignored those very standards and protocols in the wake of its greatest natural and national disaster. The gap between what was and what should have been was epitomized by the label of American citizens as “refugees” and the angry refrain of the victims, “Where is my country?”

And what unfolded was a breach, literally and figuratively - a breach in the levee system of New Orleans *and* a breach between citizens’ expectations and governments’ immediate, short and long-term policies and responses to a natural disaster and a national tragedy.



It was only the eventual presence of the First Army, under the command of General Russel Honoré, that government at all levels seemed to get focus and that there was a concerted action agenda towards some order and humanitarian aid. But the fault lines had already been drawn and human tragedy of epic proportion had unfolded.

Through it all, the African American Church has been a strong safety net, empowered by an Isaiah faith to step into the gap. The Black Church continues to provide food, shelter and clothing to the hurting, displaced and those left behind. The Black Church continues to minister to the souls and spirits of those in mourning and in exile on native land. And the Black Church continues to confront the powerful and issue a clarion call to those behind desks of decisions who have responsibility, authority and capacity to address Katrina and its aftermath.

On September 20, 2005, a small group of ten African American faith leaders were able to respond to a call by The Honorable James Clyburn and Nancy Pelosi to meet with a representative group of Congressional Democrats. At that table with 12 elected officials, six senators and six representatives, it became crystal clear that the authority and power from within Congress was insufficient to ensure just and speedy remedies, recovery and restoration efforts to those most devastated by the Hurricane and the breach, without outside and sustained pressure. The White House had opposed the appointment of an independent Katrina Commission, akin to the 911 Commission, and what was being called a House Bipartisan Committee was, in fact, not the case.

It was in those moments that, whatever the cost, the vision for a Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference Katrina National Justice Commission was born in my spirit, heart and mind. Such a Commission was in order because of our organizational mission and mandate. Such a Commission was in order because silence was not an option. And, where God provides the vision, God also provides the provision.

Over the next several months, the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference became actively engaged in using its influence and resources to appropriately and uniquely respond to the Katrina disaster. We participated in an interfaith delegation to see the devastation; we were represented at several Congressional briefings on the status of federal response; we were awarded and re-granted funding to those on the ground to support the establishment of Balm in Gilead Counseling Centers; and we hosted a

special Katrina Roundtable at the 2006 Proctor national conference.

Our further commitment to take on the sacred act of remembering, bearing witness and standing in the gap as repairers of the breach, culminated with the calling and implementation of the Katrina National Justice Commission. This Commission represented the first national independent body composed of African American clergy, academic and professional leaders.

The hearings were held June 15 and June 16, 2006, Lutheran Church of the Reformation, Washington, DC; June 29 and June 30, 2006, Sheraton Hotel, New Orleans, LA; July 27 and July 28, 2006, Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, Houston, TX. Twenty-nine (29) commissioners heard and or recorded official testimony from fifty-seven (57) persons.

We listened, we empathized, we encouraged and we cried. After many rains, however, rainbows do appear as a sign of new life and hope. And so it was, on the first year mark of this natural disaster, the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference distributed a special worship litany and resolution to churches throughout the nation. National services of remembrance, renewal and solidarity were held at Riverside Church, New York, NY, and Shiloh Baptist Church, Washington, DC. The gateway churches of our trustees were joined by hundreds of other churches across the nation, incorporating the litany in special services and programs of commemoration. Audio files of our hearings were made available to the media for selected distribution. The full transcripts, representing three volumes in excess of 1000 pages of the testimony, are made available for the public record and support future educational and archival purposes.

*the breach: Bearing Witness* was released for distribution at the 36th Annual Legislative Conference of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Weekend. Without apology, we humbly and forthrightly submit these key recommendations and findings to those who care, those who are empowered and resourced to act and to those who are elected to represent the people. We do so, in large part, because we are called to bear witness for the least of these of our people. If not us, then who?

Not to know is bad.  
Not to want to know is worse.  
Not to hope is unthinkable.  
Not to care is unforgivable.  
*African Proverb*

*For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. Acts 4:20*

## **Special Acknowledgements**

The work of the Katrina National Justice Commission was called into being to remember those who lost their lives during the storms; to honor survivors who remain unaided, marginalized and displaced; to celebrate those who risked their lives to save others; to remind the nation that suffering throughout the Gulf Coast states continues; and to hold public officials accountable for promises and commitments made to restore and rebuild the region.

The work of the Katrina National Justice Commission was made possible by the minds, hearts and hands of many. For each one who came to testify in the spirit of justice, restoration and hope, this nation, especially the African American community, owes a deep debt of gratitude. I am appreciative of the special presentation given to the Commission by General Russel Honoré. I am especially appreciative of the assistance provided by Senator Barack Obama and his staff to secure senior level participation and testimony from FEMA. In the final analysis, the testimonies are the unbreakable threads that bind our commitments to right what is wrong and make stronger our resolve for the fulfillment of the best of the human spirit and healing of our communities.

When one examines the list of those who served as National Commissioners, one immediately recognizes the breadth, depth and quality of those who were entrusted to carry forth this work. Those who served as Commissioners gave freely of their time and gifts to bear witness and affirm hope. I thank each one of them for their sacrifices and on-going commitments to make this world a better place. The Commission was especially blessed to have Rev. Dr. Susan Smith, Trustee, Samuel DeWitt Proctor

Conference, as Chair. Her compassionate spirit and superb leadership orchestrated the mighty work of the Commissioners.

The sacrificial labors of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor staff and consultant team gave life to this sacred task. Behind the scenes, by day and in the middle of the nights, they gave of their talents, time and resources because they were called to carry forth this ministry. Special administrative assistance was provided by Angie Powell and L. Julie Parker. Mary Crayton, Rev. Anthony Hollins, Rev. Thelma Hogg, Lois Johnson, Dr. Maurice McNeil and Tyra Newell labored endlessly until all the work was done. Phyllis Doggett and Bernice Brown made the logistics planning for these hearings seamless and painless. The fruit of this ministry will be available for future generations because of the videography and technical support received from Tony Carpenter and Jeri Wright, Trinity United Church of Christ, Media Department; Cynthia Gray, Scribes, LLC; and Aaron Mervin, Head Shot Studios. Rhoda McKinney Jones kept knocking through the barriers of an all too often silent national media and, with the assistance of Katie Barge, Faith in Public Life, brought new eyes and ears to bear witness. The discerning spirit and masterful skills of Rev. Bernice Powell Jackson, co-editor, brought a special lens and pen through which the message, ***the breach: Bearing Witness***, took its shape and form.

The Katrina National Justice Hearings were implemented in partnership with and support from Rev. Dr. Aidsand Wright Riggins, III, Executive Director and Rev. Marilyn Turner, Associate Executive Director, the National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA.

The Board of Trustees of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc. and I offer our deepest gratitude to all those who continue to share and support our mission, vision and ministry.

Iva E. Carruthers, PhD  
General Secretary  
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.

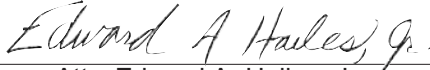
## Commissioners

  
Cody Anderson

  
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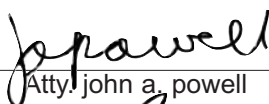
  
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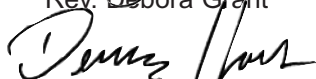
  
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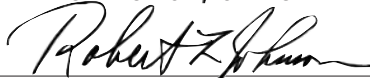
  
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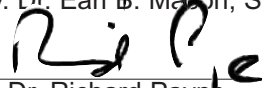
  
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Dr. Richard Payne

  
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Dr. Ronald Walters

  
Rev. Dr. Susan K. Smith

Commissioners On Assignment





## Bearing Witness



## **Executive Summary**

A year after the landfall of Katrina, August 29, 2006, with its devastating impact, the images of the elderly, the children, the poorest of the poor – the very “least of these” spoken of by Jesus – being abandoned by all levels of government and by much of the disaster relief community have remained with African American leaders from across the nation. More powerful than these images, however, is the apparent impotence of this nation to engage expeditiously and forthrightly in a restoration effort that affirms the compassionate caring and total commitment of a nation to assess and document what happened and to provide the assistance and assurances needed to the thousands of American families most devastated by this unprecedented natural disaster and national tragedy.

While many in the country may have already forgotten or want the nation to forget the tragedy and move on, some of us recognize that a great human tragedy is still unfolding before our eyes. Many persons, men, women, children, the elderly and disabled, the poor, low income and middle income families, business owners and retirees have been emotionally, physically, psychologically and economically devastated. Restoration of and restitution to families, individuals, and communities are far from realization. We must not be lulled into forgetfulness.

The Katrina National Justice Commission Hearings were held as sacred acts of remembrance, restoration and rebuilding of the Gulf Coast and indeed this nation. Further, the work of The Commission afforded the African American community the opportunity to tell its own story and perspective of what happened in late August, 2005, and since that time. And the Commission is charged to make recommendations to government officials, at all levels, as well as to non-profit disaster relief organizations and African American churches and community-based organizations concerning both the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and future disasters in our communities.

It is important to say that these hearings, two days in each location, only

began to scratch the surface of the multitude of stories of the people of the Gulf Coast. Every effort was made to identify a representative and credible group of persons to tell the story so that we might have breadth and depth to the testimonies offered from various perspectives. For obvious reasons, much of the focus was on New Orleans; however, testimony was heard from representatives from other places in the Gulf Coast, e.g. Biloxi, MS and Baton Rouge, LA as well as cities from across the nation where evacuees had been sent. In the final analysis, this is a national tragedy with tentacles and consequences throughout the geographical and institutional fabric of this country.

It is also important to state that without the subpoena power of an official government commission, this hearing could only request that organizations and government agencies testify. We were pleased that many agreed to do so. We are also pleased that General Russel Honoré of the 1st Army provided a special session presentation to the Commissioners.

With all these considerations, the testimony and presentations we did receive soon made it clear that there were and are important moral and practical questions that must be addressed and redressed. These include possible human rights violations, the preservation of human life versus preservation of property, the treatment and honoring of the dead, evacuation policies concerning families, the elderly and disabled, and the right of evacuees to return and be restored quickly and effectively. Indeed, we believe that the respect for human life and dignity, even in death, needs to undergird all of our national conversations.

The magnitude of Hurricane Katrina's fury and the resultant floods was unprecedented in the United States. It became immediately clear that many of the heroes and sheroes of Hurricane Katrina were the residents of New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Atlanta, Houston, Biloxi, and other surrounding communities who, without fanfare and often without outside resources, saved lives and provided not only food, shelter and clothing, but love and care for their brothers and sisters in the days, weeks and months after the hurricane. And easily overlooked, is the fact that many heroes and sheroes were victims themselves, who selflessly risked their own well-being and the well-being of their families to help others.

It is also important to lift up an assumption that undergirded so much of the testimony heard during the hearings – Hurricane Katrina was a natural disaster, but the breaking of the levees was a national tragedy spawned by years of governmental neglect and incubated in the existence of America’s poor and marginalized communities.

The hurricane struck, the levees failed and thousands of residents of New Orleans lost their homes, their jobs and much of their lives – a fact forgotten by many outside the Gulf Coast. But the abandonment of the people of New Orleans, who faced high poverty rates, a dysfunctional public education system, high crime rates, a lack of affordable, quality housing and disproportionately high rates of life threatening and debilitating illnesses, began long before Hurricane Katrina. In the words of Dr. Colon of Dillard University, “Among the disaster’s outcomes are the shocking revelation to some and the stark reminder to others of the deeply entrenched social contradictions in American society and the attitudes, structures and processes of inequality which perpetrate them.”

All of these factors had monumental implications during the days and weeks after the hurricane. All of these factors continue to have monumental implications for processes of healing and restoration of Gulf Coast communities, its people and this nation.

Throughout the hearings, it became clear that the residents of New Orleans, those who have returned, those who want to return and those who will never be able to return, have a deep love for this unique American city. It also became clear to us that the people of New Orleans have a strong sense of family, faith, culture and community, deeply rooted in the bayous of the Gulf Coast and its rich history. Indeed, all Americans owe a debt of gratitude to this great city for its many contributions to the culture and economy of our nation.

Our nation can do better. We must re-commit ourselves and our nation to the re-building of the Gulf Coast and devastated communities in general, and New Orleans in particular, to become, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, “repairers of the breach and restorers of streets to live in.”

It was Senator Hillary Clinton who, in her testimony, referred to the persistence of the families of the 9/11 tragedy when they insisted that their stories be heard and that the government hold official hearings of that national tragedy and be held accountable for their actions or inactions. And in his testimony, the Rev. Dr. Welton Gaddy, President of the Interfaith Alliance, urged us not to just blame the government for its failures, because we are the government.

Likewise, we call upon members of the African American community across this land to insist that our communities stories not be lost and that action be taken to ensure healing for those whose lives were destroyed by this natural disaster and the failures which occurred afterwards.

We offer to this nation and the African American community these key recommendations and findings, along with the stories that helped to weave this report, as a part of our sacred task, lest we forget.

This report is substantially organized into four sections:

- 1. Disaster and Relief Issues**
- 2. Restoration Issues**
- 3. Public Policy Issues**
- 4. African American Church and Community-based Organizations Preparedness**

Each section includes recommendations for action, key findings and supporting testimony or reflection as needed. Selected data and pictures are also included to bear witness effectively.

There are three major foundational recommendations of the Katrina National Justice Commission Report:

**First, a Federal Hurricane Katrina Victims Assistance Fund be established and HR 4197 be passed to deal with the myriad of concerns and issues still facing victims of the hurricane. These include questions of housing reimbursement, insurance, mental health issues for adults and especially children,**

**job training, affordable housing for those returning, retaining the cultural legacy of New Orleans, and re-establishing functioning and high quality health and educational systems for the people of New Orleans. Like the national tragedy of 9/11, the goal of making whole the people of New Orleans, who experienced the nation's worst natural disaster, should be a priority for all Americans.**

**Second, African American churches and community-based organizations must be represented at every level of the national disaster relief planning tables before the disaster and at disaster coordinating tables during and afterwards. This is critical since large numbers of African Americans still live in large enclaves within this nation and 42% of all Americans live within 20 miles of waterways.**

**Third, an independent bipartisan fully empowered Congressional Commission, as outlined in Senate Bill 1748, be established and supported.**

Major Recommendations of this report are:

## **1. DISASTER AND RELIEF ISSUES**

**1.1 We must find multiple ways to tell and learn from the stories of the people of New Orleans and the Coastal areas – the stories of survival as well as of struggle. This was a national tragedy whose documentation should be memorialized for both adult and children audiences. These stories might be told in video documentary form, curriculum materials or in art form such as photography, theater, poetry, and music. These stories should be shared, particularly in African American communities across the nation. The adage “lest we forget” must be taken seriously. We applaud the efforts of Spike Lee and others to share these stories, and we encourage others to find ways for artists and citizens to tell their stories.**

**1.2 FEMA must immediately coordinate an emergency plan for natural disasters with state and local officials across the nation, most especially in the Gulf Coast. Such a plan should be widely communicated to the public.**



**Moreover, FEMA is compelled to hire African Americans at all levels of management of the agency and should do much more sensitivity training for its employees. It must adopt a policy of using minority and women owned vendors, as well as vendors and contractors from the affected area, as much as possible. FEMA must reach out to African American churches and community based organizations to work in partnership to provide food, shelter and other services for future evacuees.**

**FEMA is obligated to find better ways of communicating with evacuees. Many told stories of calling FEMA's telephone numbers continuously and only being able to get through at 2 a.m. Others told of receiving inaccurate information from FEMA operators. Many African American churches and community organizations, that might have been eligible to receive FEMA re-imbursements, never received any information.**

**In the future, the process for applying and processing of Small Business Administration (SBA) loans should be changed. Most small businesses in New Orleans were unable to qualify even for short-term loans, which might have helped them get up and running until the New Orleans convention business returned. In addition, many found it difficult to reach the SBA.**

**1.3 The lessons learned by the U.S. Army from this experience should be widely shared throughout government and private industry, especially on the Gulf Coast. New evacuation plans and protocols should be shared immediately with the public, with special attention being given to poor communities, communities of color, the elderly and disabled who confront greater barriers to evacuation. Safe spaces and related contingency logistic planning must be pre-designated for special populations.**

**Prior to storms, evacuation procedures must be made clear among federal, state and local officials as to how responsibilities are to be shared and coordinated.**

**1.4 The American Red Cross should re-double its efforts to reach out to the African American community, particularly to churches and community**

based organizations. New partnerships must be created with these communities, including contractual relationships for feeding and managing shelters. The Red Cross must increase the ethnic/racial diversity of its staff at all levels and in all parts of the country. On-going anti-racism training should be required for both its staff and volunteers.

**1.5** The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the City of New Orleans should name civil rights and criminal justice commissions composed of representatives from the criminal justice system, church, community organizations and citizens to investigate issues around vigilante activity and police treatment and arrests after Hurricane Katrina. The findings must be made public and violators brought to justice.

**1.6** A national database system, such as the one proposed in Senate Bill 1630, National Emergency Family Locator Act, must be set up to ensure that families may be quickly re-united. We understand there are many complexities in setting up and protecting such a system. However, there must be a policy that seeks not to preclude the separation of family members in evacuation processes in the future. And, such policies must extend to protecting the rights of those incarcerated and their families, despite increased privatization of the criminal justice system.

## **2. RESTORATION ISSUES**

**2.1** The U.S. State Department guidelines for the treatment of Internally Displaced Persons should be used and effected to implement relief and restoration going forward for all the displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina and that those guidelines should become integral to the disaster and emergency planning tables throughout this nation.

**2.2** H.R. 4197, the Hurricane Katrina Recovery, Reclamation, Restoration, Reconstruction and Reunion Act of 2005 should be immediately passed and funded to ensure that every New Orleanian who wants to return be able to do so and be restored to their status quo ante. This was the underlying spirit for the victims of 9/11 and we believe it should also be true for Hurricane Katrina

victims. In the spirit of this Act, a multitude of relevant key findings are noted.

**2.3** The role of the media in shaping the events and perceptions of the events to the public is critical. Candid and critical review of the ways in which the media played a positive and negative role is recommended as a step towards building new partnerships and understandings in the media. Open, informed, accessible and diverse perspectives are necessary markings of media in a democracy.

### **3. PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES**

**3.1** Senate Bill 1748 should be passed and the Congressional Black Caucus should be supported in introducing legislation concerning planning and coordination and accountability practices in the event of future natural or man-made disasters. Making clear lines of authority and coordination and encouraging ways of public/private partnership in such emergencies are required.

**3.2** The Louisiana State Legislature, in particular, and other states, in general, should make provisions for special out-of-state voting in case of future disasters and large temporary evacuation of its citizens. Voting rights organizations such as the NAACP, the Advancement Project and the National Bar Association ought to be consulted in order to establish policies to ensure the enfranchisement of citizens who have been evacuated. The Civil Rights division of the U.S. Department of Justice should be mandated to look into allegations of disenfranchisement of large numbers of African American voters in the 2006 New Orleans mayoral election.

**3.3** The legislation being proposed by the Children's Defense Fund for health care for all of America's children should be passed by the U.S. Congress and supported by the Congressional Black Caucus. We call upon members of the African American community to support this legislation and to be in touch with their Congressional representatives immediately. Katrina's Children, and indeed every American child, must have health care, no matter where they live or where they move. This is a basic human right.

**3.4 The Congressional Black Caucus should introduce legislation that will establish a special cultural legacy fund to preserve the cultural legacy of African Americans in New Orleans.**

**4. AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH AND  
COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS PREPAREDNESS**

**4.1 A national reconstruction initiative and training program in disaster and evacuation planning should be set up for African American churches and community-based organizations. Such a program must be culturally sensitive and based on models of community collaboration, accommodating the diversity within communities. Such a program must be based in the assumption that the reconstitution and restoration of community has as a centerpiece the rich legacy and resources of the African American church. As one testifier proclaimed, “This is the period of the third Reconstruction.”**

**4.2 That African American churches and not for profit and civic community engage in a concerted effort to strengthen, coordinate and credential an African American Volunteer Corps. Such a volunteer corps should seek partnerships and coalitions with national emergency and disaster relief organizations and the National Voluntary Organizations Active In Disaster (NVOAD).**

**4.3 African American churches need increased connectivity through strategic and intentional capacity building initiatives for computer and related technologies.**

**4.4 Significant attention must be given to reconstituting of community through supporting the re-establishment of churches. Technical assistance that links community development to issues of church start-ups and mergers is needed.**

**4.5 The Organization of Blacks in Philanthropy and the United Black Fund ought to work in partnership with others to strengthen an infrastructure for charitable giving from and equitable distribution to the African American community. This should also include the creation of an accountability scorecard for major emergency and disaster organizations that regularly solicit contributions.**

**4.6 Recommendation: Every effort be made to sustain and support an emergency preparedness and management council comprised of representatives from African American professional and civic organizations and faith leaders. Such a council would facilitate identification and dissemination of essential expertise and information in the case of another national emergency or disaster.**

**4.7 The National Bar Association should continue its review and oversight of areas where there may be justification for class action remedies for relief and restoration. This is especially true in the areas of land and property protection, environmental safety, labor practices and business contracting.**

**4.8 August 29, 2005, will long be remembered by those who lived in New Orleans and in areas of the Gulf Coast devastated by Hurricane Katrina. August 29th in the years to come is a day on which those who perished in the storm and its aftermath must be honored. The African American church and civic community should be engaged in supporting the establishment of memorial sites to forever mark this national tragedy.**

*What follows is the full report of recommendations, briefings and supporting testimonies.*

**the breach:**  
**BEARING WITNESS**

**Full Report**



There are **three major foundational recommendations** of the Katrina National Justice Commission Report:

- I. A Federal Hurricane Katrina Victims Assistance Fund be established and HR 4197 be passed to deal with the myriad of concerns and issues still facing victims of the hurricane. These include questions of housing reimbursement, insurance, mental health issues for adults and especially children, job training, affordable housing for those returning, retaining the cultural legacy of New Orleans, and re-establishing functioning and high quality health and educational systems for the people of New Orleans. Like the national tragedy of 9/11, the goal of making whole the people of New Orleans, who experienced the nation's worst natural disaster, should be a priority for all Americans.**
- II. African American churches and community-based organizations must be represented at every level of the national disaster relief planning tables before the disaster and at disaster coordinating tables during and afterwards. This is critical since large numbers of African Americans still live in large enclaves within this nation and 42% of all Americans live within 20 miles of waterways.**
- III. An independent bipartisan fully empowered Congressional Commission, as outlined in Senate Bill 1748, be established and supported.**

# 1. DISASTER AND RELIEF ISSUES

The undergirding principle for all disaster and relief work must be that in order to have effective relief of disasters, either natural or man-made, there must be logistics capability, clear lines of authority, as well as logistics and coordination of efforts. These basics seemed to have been lacking during and in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.



Dr. Cheryl Taylor, Commissioner  
Professor, Southern University

**1.1 Recommendation: We must find multiple ways to tell and learn from the stories of the people of New Orleans and the Coastal areas – the stories of survival as well as of struggle. This was a national tragedy whose documentation should be memorialized for both adult and children audiences. These stories might be told in video documentary form, curriculum materials or in art form such as photography, theater, poetry, music. These stories should be shared, particularly in African American communities across the nation. The adage “lest we forget” must be taken seriously. We applaud the efforts of Spike Lee and others to share these stories, and we encourage others to find ways for artists and citizens to tell their stories.**

**Key finding: There were many courageous stories of African Americans saving their neighbors and their community during and after the hurricane. Some paddled boats, some took care of the dead, and some worked in hospitals and prisons and universities; some opened their homes and their churches. All of them followed Jesus’ commandment to love their neighbor as themselves. Too few of these stories have been told.**



*My name is Earl Barthé...I represent a group of young men and some honorary young women of the Soul Patrol...We were the first responders.....I was in a boat for 12 days....I cannot tell you the exact times of the so-called breaches...I was oblivious to time on the water. It was only day time and night time.*

**Earl Barthé, Soul Patrol**

### Supporting Testimony:

There were many poignant stories that the commissioners heard from New Orleans residents. One was the story of the “Soul Patrol,” a group of African American men who banded together to save their neighbors in the days and nights immediately after the levees broke. These men, with little help from outside sources, were able to save elderly and disabled women and men caught in their attics by the water, and to provide food and water to many who, otherwise, would have had none. Likewise, there was the story of another group of African American men who remained in the Algiers community and who took it upon themselves to cover the bodies they found on the streets every evening and again every morning.



*....Thursday night was the worst night I have ever had as a physician....I was...with two couples, one married about 60-plus years and one married over 40 years. Both husbands were quite ill before the storm and both died less than an hour apart.... For both of these wives...married a combined 100 years, I needed to get them on the truck to be evacuated. I did not have time for them to say goodbye. I did not have time for them to mourn.*

**Dr. Nicole Davis, M.D.**  
**Veteran's Administration Hospital**  
**New Orleans, LA**

Then there were the stories of two young women. One had worked as a deputy sheriff in the prison system. She, along with all prison personnel, was required to report to work, only to find that no plans for the evacuation of prisoners or personnel seemed to have been made. After several days of being locked in the prison, the prisoners were taken to the nearby highway overpass, without food or water. (We will come back to the rest of her story later.) Another young woman was an intern at the Veterans Hospital and she, too, saw firsthand the lack of planning for evacuation. On the third or fourth day after the levees broke, she found herself forcing an older woman, whose husband of 60 years had just passed away, to leave his body not knowing what would happen to it in order to be evacuated herself.

And there were the stories of two African American churches in Baton Rouge (one in conjunction with a New Orleans pastor) which opened their buildings as shelters and which provided housing, food, clothing and support services for those they brought into their church family. In both cases, these churches provided safe spaces for families, dignity for the elderly, comfort, food and love in addition to a bed to sleep in and sustenance to live on.

**1.2 Recommendations: FEMA must immediately coordinate an emergency plan for natural disasters with state and local officials across the nation, most especially in the Gulf Coast. Such a plan must be communicated to the public.**

**Moreover, FEMA is compelled to hire African Americans at all levels of management of the agency and should do much more sensitivity training for its employees. It must adopt a policy of using minority and women owned vendors, as well as vendors and contractors from the affected area, as much as possible. FEMA must reach out to African American churches and community based organizations to work in partnership to provide food, shelter and other services for future evacuees.**

**FEMA is obligated to find better ways of communicating with evacuees. Many told stories of calling FEMA's telephone numbers continuously and only being able to get through at 2 a.m. Others told of receiving inaccurate information from FEMA operators. Many African American churches and community organizations, that might have been eligible to receive FEMA re-imbursements, never received any information.**

**In the future, the process for applying and processing of Small Business Administration loans (SBA) should be changed. Most small businesses in New Orleans were unable to qualify even for short-term loans, which might have helped them get up and running until the New Orleans convention business returned. In addition, many found it difficult to reach the SBA.**

**Key Finding: FEMA is in need of a massive overhaul regarding its ability to deliver effective and efficient disaster relief to communities. While there were many assurances by FEMA officials that changes had been made, there is little to give us confidence that this is true.**

**In addition, other federal agencies must streamline their procedures and policies for emergency situations and must be more sensitive to the needs of disaster victims and in particular, the African American community.**

Supporting Testimony:

All of us saw pictures on television of the failure of all levels of government to evacuate safely and expeditiously the most vulnerable of New Orleans. The city of New Orleans abysmally failed its most vulnerable citizens in its plans for evacuation,

*Part of the power of a department of 180,000 people is now coming to bear a little bit more...*

*...when you [have] one of the largest reorganizations in the history of government in over 50 years, those things do not gel overnight. We are now beginning to see and feel the power and capabilities of the Department in a lot of areas. I think this will help us in the future. I think it will make us a stronger country in the future, but it is not there yet. I do not believe the answer is to pull FEMA back out again at this moment in history. It is a fair issue and a fair public policy question that we ought to explore...*

**Bob Shea, Acting Director of Operations, FEMA**

seemingly not even planning for those incarcerated, those in hospitals and the elderly and disabled. If it had such plans, clearly they were not implemented. Likewise, the state had failed in its planning for emergency call up of the National Guard. There seems to have been a total lack of planning and cooperation between city, state and federal government agencies, which resulted in long delays of assistance arriving to those trapped in New Orleans.

Moreover, the federal government, particularly FEMA, failed in a multitude of ways. While the testimony of FEMA personnel made it clear that FEMA does not consider the immediate evacuation of those impacted by the hurricane part of its mandate, it is clear that it was woefully unprepared before the hurricane (despite the Hurricane Pam simulation nearly a year before, which should have warned that New Orleans was ill-prepared for such a storm) and that it failed the people of New Orleans in the weeks and months after the storm.

*What we saw along our Gulf Coast was shameful. It was a great indictment of our government...It is imperative that we come together in a united fashion to ensure that we fix the problems.... Last September, I authored S.1748, a bill to establish the Katrina Commission. ...just like the 9/11 Commission...appointed on a bipartisan, bicameral basis...charged with reporting on the federal, state and local response to the devastation...to advise on planning for future catastrophic events and determine what kind of decision making process we needed in order for people to feel involved in rebuilding their lives and neighborhoods.*

**Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton**  
U.S. Senate, New York



Moreover, there is some indication that FEMA officials or their surrogates may have given disparate treatment to African American communities throughout the Gulf Coast. For example, we heard stories of how water and ice and tarp distribution was often set up in white communities, without anyone advising those in the African American communities that they were available and thus requiring African Americans to walk long distances through unfamiliar streets to get to the supplies they desperately needed. In Mississippi it took weeks for supplies to arrive, we were told.

When we asked what percentage of FEMA contracts were given to African American groups or vendors, we were not given an answer and to date we have not been given that information. We know that in the days immediately following the hurricane President Bush signed orders effectively dropping the normal bidding requirements for government contracts, the



use of prevailing wages and the use of minority and women-owned vendors. This action was ultimately changed. However, it can only be assumed, then, that the numbers of minority contractors used are quite small, despite the billions of government dollars spent.

We saw no evidence that FEMA reached out to the institutions of the African American community, either before the hurricane or afterward. These churches and community-based organizations might have been able to assist in the relief work in a more humane, culturally sensitive and timely way.

Likewise, we heard frustrations expressed concerning the process of expediting and approving SBA loans in affected areas and anger at the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the closing of public housing which had only been minimally damaged. Many residents were not even allowed back into these apartments to see if any of their belongings could be salvaged.

**1.3 Recommendation: The lessons learned by the U.S. Army from this experience should be widely shared throughout government and private industry, especially on the Gulf Coast. New evacuation plans and protocols should be shared immediately with the public, with special attention being given to poor communities, communities of color, the elderly and disabled who confront greater barriers to evacuation. Safe spaces and related contingency logistic planning must be pre-designated for special populations.**

**Prior to storms, evacuation procedures must be made clear among federal, state and local officials as to how responsibilities are to be shared and coordinated.**

**Key Finding: In a natural disaster of the magnitude of Katrina, only the U.S. military has the necessary capability and authority to deal with many of the major challenges.**

**And only the federal government can ensure that costs absorbed by municipalities to support the relief effort of a national disaster of this magnitude are expeditiously and fairly reimbursed to sustain infrastructure and vital services.**

**If there is a positive story of federal government assistance, it would be the use of the military in New Orleans. The Coast Guard worked to evacuate many of the people who stayed in their homes. Moreover, it was only after the arrival of the U.S. Army into New Orleans that order was restored; that vigilante groups were disbanded and that large numbers of people began to be evacuated in an orderly manner.**

Supporting Testimony:

General Russel Honoré made a very informative and sobering closed session presentation to the Commission. His unique insights speak not only to his logistics training, but his organizational and cultural competency to navigate a difficult and diverse situation.

Key points to consider:

*The magnitude of the disaster and the exposure of the communications network:* “What you had was a storm that was over 420 miles wide; about 200 miles on each side....it did what we portend to want to do in the military....cut off the enemy’s communication. That storm did that.” (do not confuse media technology with your communications network)

*Logistics planning requires a clear understanding about lines of demarcation.* “In these situations, you have a situation of “ability or capacity and one of authority....much of this is about logistics.”



General Russel Honoré  
1st U.S. Army

*Disaster planning is a collaborative process that begins before a disaster. “The plan starts at home. It goes to the broader community, the church and the school ... It is the local community’s preparation prior to the need for a response that is going to be the long-term solution.”*

*Leadership requires skills, cultural understanding and compassion. What helped [me] was having lived and grown up in Louisiana. I understand the culture. I understand the people. I understand the people of the south. I lived through hurricanes and the capacity of them.”...*

*First responders are often victims and the church is to be commended. “In this case the first responders and their families were also the victims.... The churches took care of people and showed compassion and leadership when our Nation needed it...I thank you for that.”*

Testimony also suggested that a fairly effective model of establishing a virtual city, by the city of Houston, TX, appears to have many lessons for the nation. And, it appears that Houston has assumed a partnership, advocacy and active role to assist other municipalities, including New Orleans, as they seek to reconstitute and prepare for the transition of citizens who have made a decision to return home.

*... There were evacuees and there were survivors. The first people we saw were evacuees. They had their purses, their wallets, their prescriptions, everything, for the most part. The survivors came in off the roofs and from the Convention Center.*

**Terence H. Fontaine, Chief of Staff  
Mayor’s Office, Houston, TX**

Evacuees reported feeling like outsiders in recipient cities and symbols of robbing Peter to pay Paul. In some cases, the tiers of new homeless replacing old homeless, or new

hungry replacing old hungry were evident. Understanding certain nuances in language and how one provided service is also key. As one front line pastor noted, there was a difference between providing help to evacuees, people who came of their volition with some capacity, and survivors, who came in crisis, with nothing.

**1.4 Recommendation: The American Red Cross should re-double its efforts to reach out to the African American community, particularly to churches and community based organizations. New partnerships must be created with these communities, including contractual relationships for feeding and managing shelters. The Red Cross must increase the ethnic/racial diversity of its staff at all levels and in all parts of the country. On-going anti-racism training should be required for both its staff and volunteers.**

**Key Finding: The American Red Cross must work to overcome its reputation of insensitivity that is prevalent in much of the African American community. This reputation preceded Hurricane Katrina, but was exacerbated by it.**

#### Supporting Testimony:

While many in the larger American community were aware of some deficiencies in service by the American Red Cross, we heard stories of the absence of the Red Cross in African American communities and stories of cultural insensitivity by Red Cross workers and volunteers. In one instance, for example, an African American female clinical psychologist was not believed qualified when she



*The middle of the disaster is not the time to get to know each other... We have asked our local chapters to reach out to the right partners to help us serve the diverse community and help us serve, geographically, where we would have trouble reaching.*

**Joe Becker, Senior Vice President,  
Preparedness and Response, American Red Cross**

offered to help with those needing counseling. The next day, when she returned to help with more mundane tasks, she was taunted about saying she was a psychologist the day before.

There were also worrisome stories concerning the Red Cross shelters in Baton Rouge, where evacuees felt they had been denied free access and where many indignities had



*When we opened the gate, we let in a flood. The next day, we started seeing 90 to 100 families a day.*

**Ms. Elizabeth Williams-Omilami, Director  
Hosea Feed The Hungry, Atlanta, GA**

occurred. Moreover, the question of contracts for feeding also was mentioned since few, if any, African American churches or community-based organizations had received such contracts. Those who tried to bring hot food to evacuees were turned away. The realities of racism in America mean that the Red Cross faces a real challenge when it blindly uses volunteers and even some paid workers who have never received anti-racism training. These workers became the face of the American Red Cross to those in need. The candid acknowledgements of these problems on behalf of senior management of the Red Cross should be noted.

“... It was about 20 times bigger than the largest relief effort that the American Red Cross had ever mounted.

...As we have moved forward since last fall, we have had two key areas that we have been focused on, what we learned and what we are doing about it. The first test has to do with capacity. The second has to do with partnerships. We are doing a lot of the obvious capacity things.

... More important for us is to change who we are and how we serve. That has to do with partnerships.”

**1.5 Recommendation: The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the City of New Orleans should name civil rights and criminal justice commissions composed of representatives from the criminal justice system and church, community organizations and citizens to investigate issues around vigilante activity and police treatment and arrests after Hurricane Katrina. The findings must be made public and violators brought to justice.**

**Key finding: There were significant civil rights and criminal justice system issues reported, including vigilante activity and false arrests, which remain largely ignored and unresolved. Without such a resolution, these issues will remain alive and unsettled within the New Orleans and larger African American community.**

*During this time in Algiers, whites were able to form "vigilante groups" to make sure that their community was protected ...*

**Mr. Malik Rahim, Founder and Director  
Common Ground Collective Relief, New Orleans, LA**

**Supporting Testimony:**

The Commission heard testimony from a number of persons regarding possible human rights violations relating to lack of evacuation of prisoners, including those with serious physical illnesses, such as HIV/AIDS and amputations. There were also reports of actions taken by law enforcement officials who refused, at gunpoint, to allow persons to walk across bridges into Gretna and Algiers in order to evacuate the flooded areas of New Orleans. Those turned away included African Americans who owned property in those areas as well as unarmed women and children and the elderly. Despite the fact that one such incident was reported widely in the media, there has reportedly been no official action taken to investigate and punish those responsible for such activities. This must be taken very seriously because it challenges the fundamental freedom of American citizens to move from community to community.



*I represented more than 17 individuals who were detained, who later were let free of bogus charges.*

**Atty. Kwame Asante, State Director  
Louisiana NAACP, Baton Rouge, LA  
with Commissioner Barbara Reynolds**

In addition, we heard testimony of African Americans who were falsely arrested under looting charges in the days after the hurricane. Many were held with bonds of \$100,000, which were impossible to fulfill, since many homes had been destroyed. Some of those arrested could not be found by their families for more than two months. Also, the NAACP received over 300 complaints of police brutality in the days after the storm and has already represented over 17 families in cases involving false arrests and/or police brutality.

Moreover, there were several who testified about the presence of vigilantes in the days after the hurricane. These armed vigilante groups were reported to target African American men. There is reason to believe that some of these groups shot at or shot African American men with impunity. While some of this might have been in response to the misinformation about looting, murders and rapes immediately after the hurricane, this is a troubling report and one that requires an official investigation. Unless this is done, these issues will remain unsettled within the African American community and this nation.

**1.6 A national database system, such as the one proposed in Senate Bill 1630, National Emergency Family Locator Act, must be set up to ensure that families may be quickly re-united. We understand there are many complexities in setting up and protecting such a system. However, there must be a policy that seeks not to preclude the separation of family members in evacuation processes in the future. And, such policies must extend to protecting the rights of those incarcerated and their families, despite increased privatization of the criminal justice system.**



**Key finding: There is apparently no national data base system designed to help track and locate those who may be evacuated due to natural or man-made disasters.**

**Supporting Testimony:**

One of the most disturbing aspects of the chaos of the evacuation of those left behind in New Orleans was the separation of families, most especially children and the elderly who were separated from family members. Persons were evacuated to 49

*One of the most tragic things about that whole evacuation effort was that families being separated. Mothers would get on one bus to Houston. The kids could be on a bus to Arkansas or Utah.*

**Oliver M. Thomas, Jr., President  
New Orleans City Council**

states. In many of these cases the family members were not even evacuated to the same cities or same states. It took many relief workers thousands of hours and much dedicated work to reunite these families. Children, who were already traumatized from the flooding, from what they saw in the Superdome or Convention Center, on rooftops or highway bypasses, found themselves separated from parents, who would have been their only point of comfort and familiarity. Likewise, grown children were separated from their elderly or disabled parents. It was

*I could not have made it without the church.... The church rose to the occasion.... The only thing that I have received from New Orleans was a notice of my job termination and political materials.... I was Director of Music for the Orleans Parish Public Schools.*

**Kayla(10) and Kyla(10) Sloan  
and Mrs. Vondell Smith Sloan  
St. John United Methodist Church**

impossible, we were told by many of those affected, to believe that this nation, which has the ability to track complex financial transactions or cows with mad-cow disease, does not have a way to track those who are evacuated in disasters.



## 2. RESTORATION ISSUES

If we are to take seriously Isaiah's call to become restorers of the breach, then there are many issues which must be addressed in order for the citizens of the Gulf Coast, especially New Orleans, to be made whole. Most especially, it is important to acknowledge that pre-Katrina New Orleans was a microcosm of the systemic racial and class disparities endemic to the United States. Nothing in this report should be construed to suggest the restoration of dysfunctional infrastructures of service delivery systems or racial and class disparate systems. Thus, the restoration plan must have the well being of people at its center and as a priority, without ignoring the requirements for economic and industrial redevelopment.

**2.1 Recommendation: The U.S. State Department guidelines for the treatment of Internally Displaced Persons should be used and effected to implement relief and restoration going forward for all the displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina and that those guidelines should become integral to the disaster and emergency planning tables throughout this nation.**

**Key Finding: Many of the past and continuing evidences of woefully inadequate and insensitive relief efforts for restoration and sustainability of those most directly impacted by Katrina would be alleviated if the federal government had led the nation in utilizing its articulated policies. “Leave No One Behind” should be an underlying principle for restoration.**

Supporting Testimony:

Repeatedly, there was a sense of governmental abandonment of those in dire need. This sense of abandonment, failure and callousness towards those who suffered and continue to suffer, with limited recourse in the aftermath of Katrina, is especially leveled at the national government for its lateness and



continued lack of responsiveness to the restoration needs of those who suffered the most. Though large numbers of the victims were of African American descent, it should be noted

*We need a partnership between religious institutions, the Federal government, and private philanthropy that draws upon the respective resources of each and protects the integrity of all of those....I work with 75 different religious traditions. People in all those traditions are concerned about justice.*

**Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, President  
Interfaith Alliance**



that poor whites, marginalized and recent immigrants, Hispanics and others were likewise victims of this disaster. This feeling is exacerbated by the past evidences of how quickly and efficiently the U.S. federal government has demonstrated its capacity to gear up and implement relief and restoration efforts in other parts of the world.

**2.2 Recommendation: H.R. 4197, the Hurricane Katrina Recovery, Reclamation, Restoration, Reconstruction and Reunion Act of 2005 should be immediately passed and funded to ensure that every New Orleanian who wants to return be able to do so and be restored to their status quo ante. This was the underlying spirit for the victims of 9/11 and we believe it should also be true for Hurricane Katrina victims. In the spirit of this Act, a multitude of relevant key findings are noted.**

**Key Finding: Adequate and affordable housing must be a priority in the restoration plan.**

**Key Finding: Insurance and financial companies must be held to a standard of high accountability and equitable dispensation for the victims of Katrina.**

Supporting Testimony:

We heard many horror stories of residents who did have insurance, but who were denied payments of claims because the insurance company said the damage was from flooding rather than the hurricane. Others were denied short-term housing



assistance from FEMA because they had insurance. Threats of mortgage foreclosures and lack of access to loans and credit further reduces the potential for the victims to overcome the odds.

*In addition to co-sponsoring H.R.4197, Congresswoman Lee has called for the establishment of a Commission to study the genesis of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina.*

Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee  
U.S. House of Representatives -

This is especially true when FEMA policies about eligibility and processes for implementing programs appear to lack uniformity and stability, but are rather moving targets day by day.

Some persons have received payments and settlements on their insurance claims, only to find out that the cost of lifting the foundation of their home to new requirements will cost more than they received for the house and its contents. There are many who, nearly a year after the hurricane, are paying mortgage payments on uninhabitable houses, as well as exorbitant rents in Baton Rouge or New Orleans or Houston and other parts of the nation. At all levels, many are undeniably suffering, financially, emotionally and physically, as a result of bureaucratic ineptness and misplaced priorities on the focus of public and private restoration activities.

The story of the young deputy prison warden mentioned earlier is a case in point. When she and her husband and two-year old daughter were finally re-united in Baton Rouge, she was still traumatized from her experience and unable to work. Her husband was unable to find a job that would cover the



*On April 9th of this year, my life changed again. My husband, a former Marine who proudly served his country in the Persian Gulf War, took a gun and ended his life. He could no longer take the pain of not being able to take care of his family... My husband was 36 years old....*

Karla Weaver, Evacuee, Former Corporal,  
Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff's Office  
with Dr. Iva Carruthers, SDPC

expenses of their Baton Rouge apartment and their New Orleans house note and other living costs. In February 2006, this 36 year-old former Marine committed suicide.

**Key Finding: Presently, there is evidence that New Orleans is not a healthy environment for those with respiratory illnesses, compromised immune systems or the elderly and infirmed.**

**Key Finding: The health care system of New Orleans is in a crisis mode. Katrina exposed a fragmented health system and the failed responses in this disaster exacerbated people's health conditions, contributing to death and disability. Moreover, many of the survivors continue to be plagued with Katrina related health challenges.**

Supporting Testimony:

High amounts of mercury, arsenic, lead, mold, mildew and other toxic materials are still in much of the soil. Some of it is most likely sediment from industrial discharge of the 200 chemical plants located between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Thus, it is dangerous for residents to grow vegetable gardens or for children to play in the dirt. Some of those who have returned to New Orleans, including some who were previously healthy, are showing signs of respiratory and other illnesses. Because of very limited medical services in New Orleans, they have to go to Baton Rouge or Houston for treatment. Many cannot afford to purchase or cannot readily find in the stores the protective gear that should be used in the clean-up of their property. Concern about the health of children, elders, men, women and families, pre, during and post Katrina permeated the testimonies. With very limited hospital care now available in New Orleans, many residents are forced to go to Baton Rouge for anything other than primary care needs. And, any toxic environment will predictably increase illness and disease in the city.

Although the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has ruled that New Orleans is environmentally safe, many believe that this may very well be an overly optimistic assessment. Public and transparent disclosure of environmental hazards, pre- and post-Katrina, should be made. New Yorkers were told there was nothing environmentally dangerous in the air after 9/11 and now many of the first responders are facing serious medical conditions.

**Key Finding: Living wage jobs must be created so that families will be able to return, re-build and plan for a viable future.**



*... When private industry is allowed to compete for the cheapest worker, everybody is pitted against each other in a race to the bottom. That race to the bottom is a race to the bottom in terms of wages and also living conditions and rights. What we are seeing in post-Katrina New Orleans is a race to the bottom....*

**Saket Soni, Organizer  
New Orleans Worker Justice Coalition**

#### Supporting Testimony:

The use of immigrant labor brought in immediately after the hurricane, and often under specious conditions, has created a labor market environment characterized by exploitation and “a race to the bottom in terms of wages, living conditions and rights.” This environment effectively creates a public policy based on competition for the cheapest workers. These workers are largely unprotected by labor laws and many live in unhealthy circumstances. They are being pitted against low wage, primarily African American, workers in a race to the bottom of labor conditions.

As stated earlier, many New Orleanians had been left behind before Hurricane Katrina. Employment was one such

area in which this was the case. Many of the jobs were low wage, low or no benefits service industry jobs connected with the tourism industry. Many of these jobs disappeared with the storm. Construction jobs, which could and should provide a multitude of opportunities for local workers, have been farmed out to the immigrant work force brought in after the hurricane for below minimum wage.

Jobs of low wage workers were not the only ones destroyed by the aftermath of the hurricane. School teachers and educational administrators have also lost their jobs, wiping out a significant part of the New Orleans middle class. Retired school teachers were particularly hard-hit, losing benefits as well as homes. Likewise, many New Orleans business persons, including medical professionals, lost not only their homes, but also their businesses and most have received little immediate assistance.

**Key Finding: A restoration of educational systems which work for all New Orleanians and throughout the Gulf Coast is an essential ingredient to a just restoration plan.**

*My first recommendation is that we assure that the preservation of life is a priority.... My second one is to avoid changes to local government structures, protocols, procedures, and practices, which eliminate or disenfranchise constituents.*

Dr. Brenda Mitchell, President  
United Teachers Union of New Orleans

#### Supporting Testimony:

In New Orleans, many people are angry at the State takeover of the New Orleans public schools and the ensuing decision to turn the overwhelming majority of New Orleans public schools into charter schools without the approval of the people of the city. Without sufficient public participation, it is reported that public buildings, for example, have been turned



Ms. Leah Chase  
Dooky Chase Restaurant, New Orleans



Commissioners touring Southern  
University-New Orleans campus.



over to private interests. While it is understood that with fewer students there will be fewer schools, massive closing of public schools and school libraries vs planned repopulation of public schools is not commensurate with an agenda to encourage former residents to return.



*We have people in Atlanta who have already been informed that if you do not come and claim your property by a certain time period, then it reverts back to the government.*

**Rev. Timothy McDonald, Senior Pastor  
First Iconium Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA**

Those who have decided not to return to New Orleans worry about the ability of their children to succeed at schools not only in Baton Rouge, but in other cities and states in which they live. Because American education is grounded in state standards and quantitative measurements, this takes on critical significance. Testimony was offered about children being at risk without access to mental health support and their academic records.

But public school education is not the only educational system in trouble. Higher education institutions in New Orleans have suffered enormous setbacks. Dillard University, in particular, still has significant facilities restoration challenges to face. Faculty, administrators and students of all these institutions face enormous personal, as well as institutional, obstacles. The operative phrase they used to describe themselves is “tired, at the verge of exhaustion.” New Orleans desperately needs its higher education system if it is to have future generations of local leaders. This cannot be left to chance. Southern University is the only African American university system in the nation. Presently, the New Orleans campus is functioning in trailers. Its rich tradition, legacy and institutional strengths should be protected and expanded in the restoration efforts.

**Key Finding: Perhaps the single most voiced concern was the right of return for those who wish to come back to New Orleans. The fear that the land is being grabbed by developers and speculators was palpable.**

*We found out on June 2nd that they took the land we owned in the Ninth Ward. They just took the land on June 2nd. It was around 8:30 that morning, and my grandmother did not handle it well. She died right around 8:30 that night.*

Ms. Kiri Harvey, Student  
Dillard University, New Orleans, LA



### Supporting Testimony:

There was the story of the Dillard freshman whose grandmother died after finding that her home had been taken or the story of another grandmother, now living in Houston, who will soon be forced to choose between paying for medication and paying the mortgage for her home in New Orleans. In the words of another New Orleanian, “a spirit of greed has descended upon the city.”

The African American pre-Katrina population in New Orleans was 67%. We have often heard the words “the shrinking footprint of the city” and for African Americans, who currently only make up about 25% of the returned population, that shrinking footprint seems to mean their part of the city will disappear. 20th century American history tells us that African American communities are most vulnerable to gentrification, urbanization, highway and mass transit projects. Thus it is not difficult to see how vulnerable African American home owners in New Orleans are. Yet we know that African Americans have played significant roles in the economic, cultural, political, gastronomic and social life of this unique American city for more than 400 years. Will there be a place for African American jazz musicians struggling to survive? Will there be a place for some of the unknown African American chefs in America? Will there be a place for



African American workers in the most important port in the U.S.? Will there be a place for African American educators and nurses and fire fighters? Will there be a place for African American artists and poets?

**Key Finding:** All of the above assumes the necessity to restore and protect the coastline. This nation can no longer afford the nation's infrastructure and the interests of the public welfare to be held hostage by political inertia and funding roulette. Plans to restore the coastline, repair and improve the levees must be made public, debated and decided upon through an inclusive process and one that ensures accountability and best practices for future generations.

**Key Finding:** Honoring the thousands of New Orleanians killed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina must be a federal, state and local priority. Just as 9/11 families insisted that the World Trade Center must be considered hallowed ground, so too must there be hallowed ground and a place of memorial established for those who were lost.



*The human experience is one that encompasses life and death....It is important how you treat your dead....the Louisiana Funeral Directors and Embalmers Task Force... offered assistance...They spent millions of dollars with this company from Texas...who did not know how to get downtown, where the canals were...which way the streets ran. They went and retrieved these bodies and put them in some central collection site in maybe a mile radius area, unlabeled, untagged...*

**Joan Rhodes, President  
Rhodes Funeral Homes and Rhodes Life Insurance**

**Supporting Testimony:**

One of the most grievous moments in the hearings was hearing the testimony of a third generation funeral home owner, Joan Rhodes, Rhodes Funeral Home. Owners of New Orleans Funeral Homes had come together to offer their services in culturally appropriate ways regarding the proper collection, identification and disposal of bodies. They sent their proposal to the Governor, only to find that a million dollar contract had been

given to a Texas funeral group, which had no connection to the New Orleans community, no knowledge of New Orleans communities and street layout and seemingly little interest in treating the New Orleans dead with appropriate dignity, honor and respect. Moreover, many deaths that are Katrina related deaths are not being appropriately identified as such nor tracked. These deaths include those still being found in New Orleans houses, as well as survivors and evacuees who have had subsequent medical problems that eventuated in death.

**2.3 Recommendation: The role of the media in shaping the events and perceptions of the events to the public is critical. Candid and critical review of the ways in which the media played a positive and negative role is recommended as a step towards building new partnerships and understandings in the media. Open, informed, accessible and diverse perspectives are necessary markings of media in a democracy.**

**Key Finding: From the on-set, American media was insensitive to the power of language in shaping the perception of the event. Tensions around language, imagery and portrayal, and selective and mis-reporting were and are issues.**

Supporting testimony:

African American broadcasters and journalists around the country were often ignored in trying to get their peers to understand certain basics, like the power of naming the victims who are U.S. citizens, “refugees.” Repeated focus on looting and clear differences in



characterizing the same act by virtue of the racial makeup of who was being portrayed, i.e. taking food, did much damage.



*It was a teenage boy....driving a school bus that they had basically commandeered on the orders, he said, of a police officer who said if anybody can drive this bus, take as many people as you can and get out of here. That boy drove the bus all the way from New Orleans and arrived at the Astrodome.*

**Sherry Williams, Newscaster  
KHWB Houston, TX**

Cultural and linguistic competency should be an expectation in front line reporting to the public. Keeping real and human the story of people's suffering is a moral obligation. And above all, politicians and others must not stage and misuse photo opportunities to misrepresent what is in fact the truth. Other fine, yet significant, differences should also be noted for future planning and preparation. Indeed there is a difference in perception and real need between evacuee and survivor. There is a difference between an "evacuee" and one who is "exiled" and taken away from family and friends to a completely different part of the country. This disaster impacted hundreds of municipalities and diverse populations and categories of people. Diversity by income, race, age and profession, just to name a few categories, was far more normative than was reported. How these messages are conveyed is critical to the public's understanding of what is going on and the consequences.

### **3. PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES**

Beneath many of the disaster relief and restoration issues lay significant public policy issues. The underlying principles for such issues must be the right to return for all who wish to do so and the right of all persons to be restored and made whole. In 2004, the United States State Department signed on to international guidelines for the treatment of Internally Displaced Persons, which recognizes certain human rights for such

*We have to make the country understand that this is not a Black issue. This is an issue of human rights. This is an issue of human dignity.... This country has failed miserably...*

**William Stallworth, Ward 2 Councilman  
Biloxi, Mississippi**



citizens. This international agreement establishes the right to return for such persons, as well as access to humanitarian and transition assistance. In the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world, relief and restoration for internally displaced persons rest on the will of the nation, public policy and the allocation of public resources to that end.

Budgets and resource allocations are barometers for what and who are valued. The will of the nation and appropriation of funding of just public policies (understanding where such policies require budget) will ultimately determine the ability of thousands of families and individuals to be healed and made whole.

**3.1 Recommendation: The Congressional Black Caucus should be supported in introducing legislation concerning planning and coordination and accountability practices in the event of future natural or man-made disasters. Making clear lines of authority and coordination and encouraging ways of public/private partnership in such emergencies are required.**

**Key Finding:** The massive failure of all levels of government was partially due to inadequate preparation and coordination of government agencies. It was unclear to the military and to civilian agencies who was in charge of what and when. There were private businesses that had the needed emergency provisions as well as available transportation, but were unable to be resourced. Federal suspension of certain requirements, while imposing others, clearly did not favor those who were most impacted and often served those who were least impacted.

For example, the suspension of the Davis-Bacon Act, affirmative action and small business regulations served many outsiders who did and do financially benefit from the disaster, without regard for effectively contracting with those most impacted and giving them the opportunity to participate in their own restoration.

Imposing conflicting and unattainable prerequisite eligibility requirements for FEMA grants was another problem clearly identified. There is little evidence that this has changed or that if a similar disaster happened today that it would be much different.

**3.2 Recommendation: The Louisiana State Legislature, in particular, and other states, in general, should make provisions for special out-of-state voting in case of future disasters and large temporary evacuation of its citizens. Voting rights organizations such as the NAACP, the Advancement Project and the National Bar Association ought to be consulted in order to establish policies to ensure the enfranchisement of citizens who have been evacuated. The Civil Rights division of the U.S. Department of Justice should be mandated to look into allegations of disenfranchisement of large numbers of African American voters in the 2006 New Orleans mayoral election.**

**Key Finding: It is clear that voter disenfranchisement occurred in the recent mayoral election, despite the efforts of many groups to educate evacuees about their right to vote and despite any electoral outcome.**

Supporting Testimony:

The Louisiana State Legislature required that New Orleans citizens return to Louisiana in order to vote, despite the fact that thousands were living in Houston and Atlanta and as far away as Omaha, NEss, Salt Lake City, UT and New York, NY. Indeed, evacuees are located in 49 states. Even though some buses were provided from Houston for voters to return to vote, there was no way for many citizens to do so. Thus, their

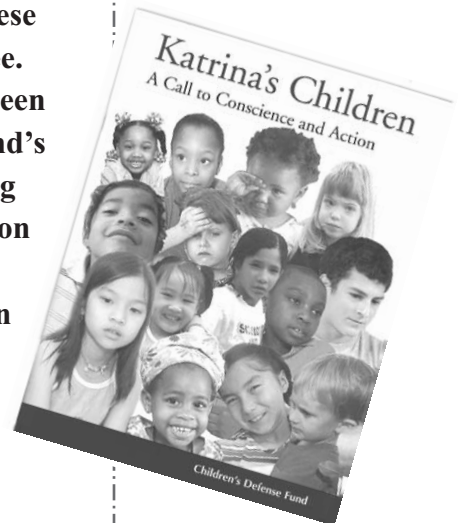


right to vote was effectively taken away.

Despite the efforts of many groups to get this action rescinded, it was not. Thus, while this nation was able to provide off-site voting for Iraqi Americans who voted in the recent Iraqi elections at several locations in the U.S., this nation was not willing or able to provide such a basic freedom to New Orleanians who had experienced the worst natural disaster in this nation's history.

**3.3 Recommendation: The legislation being proposed by the Children's Defense Fund for health care for all of America's children should be passed by the U.S. Congress and supported by the Congressional Black Caucus. We call upon members of the African American community to support this legislation and to be in touch with their Congressional representatives immediately. Katrina's Children, and indeed every American child, must have health care, no matter where they live or where they move. This is a basic human right.**

**Key Finding: It will take a massive national commitment to restore the mental, emotional and physical well-being of the children of the Gulf Coast, including New Orleans. These children saw things that no child should ever have to see. The credo of the Children's Defense Fund has always been "Leave No Child Behind." The Children's Defense Fund's *Katrina Children* is a definitive report on the devastating and unique consequences of Katrina and its aftermath on children. Even more significant than the material or physical displacement, the psychological toll on children who experienced and survived this national tragedy is unfathomable. The need for free and total access to specialized and professional mental health services for children is essential.**



### Supporting Testimony:

Some children have moved four, five and six times since the hurricane occurred. Some of them have lost beloved grandparents or other family members. Many have been displaced and have changed not only schools, but school systems. These children have lost track of their friends; most have lost their toys and all their possessions. They live in unfamiliar, and in some cases, unfriendly communities. Because their families moved from one state to another, some have lost Medicaid health benefits. Many suffer from increased incidences of asthma or other serious illnesses.



*The health and mental health services ....were bad before Katrina, and one of our goals is to make sure that these children and families have a better life after Katrina than they had before Katrina.*

Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President  
Children's Defense Fund

Children are manifesting all the symptoms of post traumatic stress syndrome. They have experienced repeated nightmares, are now on medications for psychological and sleep related disorders and have manifested adverse reactions to being in water. One poignant example of unexpected consequences was the experience of a pastor who accommodated a request by a parent to baptize the child, only to experience the complete horror the child exhibited during the ritual. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the evacuation of many across state lines, it is perfectly clear that health care for all America's Katrina Children, and indeed all of America's children, must be a national priority. Because many of those evacuated were eligible for Medicaid, which is a state-by-state specific program,



*A 15 year old young man, stayed with us for 45 days without knowing where his mother was ....his mother had been changed to three or four places in Arkansas. Hurricane Katrina was a storm that we knew was coming, but the evacuation process that was used was not planned for success.*

Rev. Marjorie Cobb-Thomas, Pastor  
Bethel Istrouma AME Church, Baton Rouge, LA

many children and their families, the sickest, the oldest and the youngest, have gone without health care at a time when they most needed it. We heard testimony of some who, nearly a year later, still have not been able to transfer their Medicaid benefits to another state.

For the above reasons these children, and their parents, need unfettered access to critical and immediate health assessments and mental health counseling. Many studies have shown that children of depressed parents suffer in a variety of ways. Moreover, recent reports of the children of Hurricane Katrina show a critical need for mental health counseling to help these children cope with all that has happened to them. Without these crucial interventions, the children of Hurricane Katrina will suffer for decades and never reach their God-given potential.

### **3.4 Recommendation: The Congressional Black Caucus should introduce legislation which will establish a special cultural legacy fund to preserve the cultural legacy of African Americans in New Orleans.**

**Key Finding: Katrina has devastated or put at risk a substantial part of the cultural legacy and the history of African Americans in this nation. New Orleans is one of the oldest American cities and was the largest American slave-trading site. New Orleans has special significance for African Americans. Many of the architectural institutions, including church buildings, as well as those relating to jazz and New Orleans culture are at risk. Many special collections and historical documents are also at risk.**

#### **Supporting Testimony:**

Several major and rare collections, art and paper, related to the African American experience have been severely damaged or destroyed. There has been a marked reduction in the numbers

*Right now, we are collecting oral histories about the experiences of our evacuees, trying to document our communities.....we have lost much in the personal collections of people in the city, people who continued to hold on to family documents that had been passed on for generations, and people who were collectors of artwork, of photography, of historic documents...*

**Brenda Billups Square, Director  
Archives and Library, Amistad Research Center**

of trained professionals in New Orleans who are actively engaged in cultural archiving and institutional development. Some institutions have not been able to sustain staff and their operations. Moreover, with the physical dispersion of so many people also went the dispersion of the collective memory and consciousness of a people that is important for next generation education. There needs to be a concerted effort to support oral history projects, in addition to providing resources for trained professionals to salvage and restore archival materials.

#### **4. AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS PREPAREDNESS**

Because so many African Americans live along the Gulf Coast, areas most vulnerable to hurricanes, as well as in California, in cities most vulnerable to earthquakes, and in major metropolitan communities across the U.S., areas most vulnerable to terrorist attack or pandemics, we believe it is critical for African American churches and community-based organizations to develop plans for emergency evacuation and disaster relief. The underlying principle for this work should be that the African American community builds up its capacity for emergency preparedness and self-sufficiency during times of disaster. We cannot assume that others can provide all the relief that will be required.

Each church must have its own plan for its building and its members; and each church must make its members aware of

*I think creating a culture of preparedness would be step one....admitting that something can happen that can be beyond our control, and honestly assessing what our capability and response can be...training the trainer in the congregations...identifying in every faith community a person who will be responsible for equipping volunteers in the event of an emergency.*

**Rev. Rudy Rasmus, Co-Pastor  
St. Johns United Methodist Church**



such plans and train them intensively and periodically in emergency preparedness and execution. We suspect that many churches do not even have fire drill plans or practices, despite the fact that church buildings often house large numbers of children and the elderly. Moreover, most do not have plans that would help their members to evacuate their city in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. For example, many churches in New Orleans had buses which might have helped to evacuate elderly and disabled members or those who had no funds or transportation. Yet, in most cases, these buses were not used and remained behind, only to be flooded.

**4.1 Recommendation: A national reconstruction initiative and training program in disaster and evacuation planning should be set up for African American churches and community-based organizations. Such a program must be culturally sensitive and based on models of community collaboration, accommodating the diversity within communities. Such a program must be based on the assumption that the reconstitution and restoration of community has as a centerpiece the rich legacy and resources of the African American church. As one testifier proclaimed, “This is the period of the third Reconstruction.”**

*There have been two reconstructions in the history of the United States that African American people have been rather central to.... Katrina and the ongoing dilemma she produced....dramatized the severity of long-standing problems of political, social, and economic underdevelopment across the country. This unprecedented national catastrophe requires nothing short of a third, but this time successful, reconstruction in the U.S. and in Black America.*

**Dr. Alan Colon, Dillard University**



**4.2 Recommendation: That African American churches and not for profit and civic community engage in a concerted effort to strengthen, coordinate and credential an African American Volunteer Corps. Such a volunteer corps should seek partnerships and coalitions with national emergency and disaster relief organizations and the National Voluntary Organizations Active In Disaster (NVOAD).**

**Key Finding: The winds of Katrina truly uncovered centuries and layers of the consequence of unfulfilled enfranchisement of a group of people, specifically African Americans. The winds of Katrina also revealed the continued need for restoration and reconciliation of a nation based on its principles of equality and justice for all. Thus, the 21st century experiences and images of shattered Gulf Coast communities were reminders of a nation in the valley of a post-slavery period of Reconstruction and the tumultuous times of a second Reconstruction: the Civil Rights movement that transformed the world. The images of marginalized people, by race and class, helpless people in states of abandonment and distress were painful reminders of what America purports to the world, yet could not manifest at home. And thus, one testifier would cry out, “Where is my country?” Then and now, the African American church stood in the gap.**

*In the Wake of Katrina:  
Lest We Forget ... Call To Renewal*  
*For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. - Acts 4:20 (NIV)*

**LITANY**

**We Will Repair the Breach: A Litany in Memoriam of the Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina**  
*On the Coast of the Gulf of Mexico, U.S.A.*

*Leader: The storms had names - Katrina, Rita, Wilma - but the faces of the storms were the uncertainty of a nation's sin: our broken responsibility for the least among us.*

*People: We will repair the breach; we will raise the foundations again; we will restore the streets and make them livable again.*

*Leader: They left trails of branches and tears, our houses and our hopes shattered.*

*People: We will repair the breach; we will raise the foundations again; we will restore the streets and make them livable again.*

*Leader: They left trails of branches and tears, our houses and our hopes shattered.*

*People: We will repair the breach; we will raise the foundations again; we will restore the streets and make them livable again.*

*Leader: They left trails of branches and tears, our houses and our hopes shattered.*

*People: We will repair the breach; we will raise the foundations again; we will restore the streets and make them livable again.*

*Leader: Years of neglect floated up in the floods that followed, uncovered our shame as a nation.*

*People: And we are witnesses.*

*Leader: We vended the poor and needy; robbing them of dignity and losing them of pride.*

*People: And we are witnesses.*

*Leader: Walk lightly in the streets where our kin have floated into history: the streets are sacred, as also are the memories.*

*People: We will honor the lives of the dead and the living by acting in justice.*

*Leader: Speak softly in the house where our kin have disappeared; the music is holy, as also are the memories.*

*People: We will honor the lives of the dead and the living by acting in justice.*

*Leader: We will be changed to repair the walls, to stand in the place of our nation; to very sin and to do justice.*

*People: We will repair the breach; we will raise the foundations again; we will restore the streets and make them livable again.*

*In Remembrance of the Natural and National Disasters that Hit the Gulf Coast and their Aftermath*  
*Prepared for the Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference, Inc. by Valerie Bridgeman Davis, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew and Worship, Memphis Theological Seminary, August 27, 2006, ©2006.*

Based on Isaiah 61:1  
Based on Isaiah 61:1

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### Supporting Testimony:

Many testimonies affirmed the phenomenal extent of volunteerism that emerged from African American churches and not for profit and civic community organizations. In some cases, African American volunteers were not favorably received and their credentials questioned. In many cases, new coalitions and collaborations proved essential and beneficial towards the relief efforts. The viability of many organizations is compromised because few have been reimbursed.

**4.3 Recommendation: African American churches need increased connectivity through strategic and intentional capacity building initiatives for computer and related technologies.**

**4.4 Recommendation: Significant attention must be given to reconstituting of community through supporting the re-establishment of churches. Technical assistance that links community development to issues of church start-ups and mergers is needed.**

**Key Finding: African American clergy were simultaneously victims and first responders. They are still reeling from the destruction of their sanctuaries and dispersion of their congregations. Many clergy have never engaged in ground zero start up activity before, nor do they have the resources to sustain themselves and their families and still reach out to their membership scattered across the country. There is a need for African American church-to-church partnership programs. Technical assistance and training and community and economic development initiatives are being spearheaded as self-determinant initiatives and should be supported by the philanthropic community.**

*Rebuilding neighborhoods is much more than just rebuilding a house ... It is rebuilding and holding families together and rebuilding emotions ... you cannot build a city and a community without the communities of faith being involved....my neighborhood is going to be rebuilt.....*

**Joseph Givens, National Consultant  
Churches Supporting Churches**





**4.5 Recommendation: The Organization of Blacks in Philanthropy and the United Black Fund ought to work in partnership with others to strengthen an infrastructure for charitable giving from and equitable distribution to the African American community. This should also include the creation of an accountability scorecard for major emergency and disaster organizations that regularly solicit contributions.**

**Key Finding: Seventy-five percent of philanthropic and charitable giving from the African American community goes through churches. Additionally, African Americans contributed significantly towards the more than \$3.7 Billion raised in charitable giving in the immediate aftermath of Katrina. African Americans were seeking to ensure that gifts and donations went to funding and service sources that reflected accountability and equitable distribution of the resources. Without question, there still needs to be official documentation of and accountability for the billions of dollars collected through charitable giving channels and those public funds appropriated by federal, state and local entities.**

**4.6 Recommendation: Every effort be made to sustain and support an emergency preparedness and management council comprised of representatives from African American professional and civic organizations and faith leaders. Such a council would facilitate identification and dissemination of essential expertise and information in the case of another national emergency or disaster.**

**Key Finding: During the course of Katrina, new collaborations and partnerships between African American professional and civic organizations resulted in various relief efforts, brain trusts and strategic planning around disaster preparedness. Such consultations effected during the course of this disaster should be transformed into preventative and preemptive capacity to benefit the community at large.**

**4.7 Recommendation:** The National Bar Association continue its review and oversight of areas where there may be justification for class action remedies for relief and restoration. This is especially true in the areas of land and property protection, environmental safety, labor practices and business contracting.

**Key Finding:** The loss of family land and property to outside developers without fair and adequate compensation is a real concern. The restoration plan in ways that further marginalize the victims is a real concern. The lack of transparent and public disclosure of bidding processes (or suspension thereof), and public contracts is a real concern.

**4.8 August 29, 2005, will long be remembered by those who lived in New Orleans and in areas of the Gulf Coast devastated by Hurricane Katrina. August 29th in the years to come is a day on which those who perished in the storm and its aftermath must be honored. The African American church and civic community should be engaged in supporting the establishment of memorial sites to forever mark this national tragedy.**

**Key Finding:** African American churches had special commemorative services and sacred acts of remembrance on the first anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

African American churches will continue to reach out to evacuees in their community, to welcome the stranger and assist now, especially in providing spiritual and mental health counseling during this one year anniversary time.

The winds of Katrina have given new breath to the commitment and capacity of the African American church to Bear Witness and to be Repairers of the Breach.



*Shaken but not destroyed...*



### **FYI.**

In 1900, a large part of Galveston, Texas was destroyed by a storm. At least 6,000 people were killed. An African American population of 25% enjoyed relative prosperity and political influence prior to the storm. The restructure of Galveston was reduced both as a result of their unequal treatment as victims and the implementation of “Jim Crow Laws” in the reconstruction.

**Lest We Forget ... Call to Renewal!**

*By The Testimonies of My People...*



**Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference**  
*Katrina National Justice Hearings*  
June 15-16, 2006  
Washington, DC  
Lutheran Church of the Reformation



**Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference**  
*Katrina National Justice Hearings*

June 29 - 30, 2006  
New Orleans, LA  
Sheraton Hotel



**Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference**  
*Katrina National Justice Hearings*  
July 27 - 28, 2006  
Houston, Texas  
Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church

## EPILOGUE

### **The Reason Rachel Weeps**

To have served on this Commission, hearing the stories and the plights of the victims of Hurricane Katrina, has been life changing. A familiar passage of scripture comes to mind. “A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more.”

Surely, Rachel is weeping. Surely, God is not pleased with the way Rachel’s children have behaved toward their brothers and sisters. And surely, as the book of Jeremiah says in the 31st chapter, God must be ready to make a new covenant.

The people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast were abandoned by the government – local, state and federal. The government and its agencies choked, while the people died, cried out for help, roasted in the hot sun, drowned, and starved. The government choked at the sight of so many poor, black and white people suffering and starving and dying. Because many to most of the victims were poor and black, their suffering was both a stark reminder of their positioning in Pre Katrina America and America’s unpreparedness to deal with disasters of such magnitude. This double-edged sword is why Rachel’s children are crying. But, the grass roots of America jumped to the task. Black people, white people and Hispanics jumped in and helped where the government stood quietly by, paralyzed by the untreated disease of systemic racism and its secondary illness, classism. The wealthiest, most powerful nation in the world saw its ugliest underbelly; for a few days, America’s contradictions were blown full screen before the eyes of its people and the rest of the world.

Yes, it was the lack of communication, the lack of planning, and the lack of a workable disaster relief plan that hindered the relief efforts. But it was also the racism and classism, which exacerbated the relief efforts and continues to shape the restoration efforts. That is why in the height of the disaster, the media could so quickly turn to pictures of a few looters, ignoring literally thousands of silent, suffering victims on the sidewalks, in front of the convention center, and in the Superdome. That is why in the midst of current debates on restoration, the media and politicians continue to insinuate scenarios of “blame the victim” rather than forge concrete and just solutions to address the enormity of loss and human suffering.

Rachel's children are weeping because they are angry and hurt. Angry and hurt because they felt abandoned and betrayed. Angry and hurt because, in the richest country in the world, they were treated worse than America treats victims in developing countries. Angry and hurt because a year later, they are still struggling to find a way out and a way up. And angry and hurt because Katrina and its aftermath revealed so much of what too many Americans still deny.

What the Katrina National Justice Commission has done is prepare a record and forge another path for the nation and the world to follow. The recommendations which flow forth are a call for immediate, short and long-term action. If we do not address honestly and forthrightly all of these issues, the fabric of American society will continue to unravel from within. Like the Roman Empire, the great United States will fall victim to its peculiar, unique and contradictory realities.

What we know is that the people who testified brought the story home, and made the experiences real. What incredible courage and strength the victims brought to these hearings, laying aside their personal pain and grief to help us, hopefully, make things better for everyone. I thank them, and the experts who joined them, from the bottom of my heart. They, in fact, gave all of us who served on the Commission eyes and ears that will never forget what we have seen and heard.

I wish to thank all of the Commissioners for their time, their devotion and skill, and their love for justice. I wish to thank Rev. Dr. Iva Carruthers for her vision, her tenacity, her skill and faith. I thank Rev. Bernice Powell Jackson and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference Staff, the photographers, the videographers, the transcribers.

Rachel is weeping for her children, but as we come to the end of this phase of the work, be reminded of an African Liberation phrase: "*A luta continua!*" which means, "*the struggle continues.*" As long as there is poverty, racism, and classism in the United States, the problems which surfaced in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the levee breaches will continue to rear their ugly heads.

Our prayer, my prayer, is that the breach in compassion, caring and concern will one day soon be fixed in America. The life of the nation depends on its will and commitment to repair "the breach."

Rev. Dr. Susan K. Smith  
Katrina National Justice Commission, Chair  
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.





# Appendix





Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference  
Katrina National Justice Hearings  
**Commissioners**



**Mr. Cody Anderson, CEO ACG Associates, President WURD 900 AM Radio, Philadelphia, PA,** is one of Philadelphia's Ten Most Influential African-Americans and is a former member of the Pennsylvania Governor's Advisory Commission on African-American Affairs and former President of the United Black Business Association. Anderson also serves as a member of the Board of Directors of OIC International. He served as Vice- chair of the Strategic Planning committee of Philadelphia Mayor John F. Street's Transition Team and is an Ambassador in the Team Pennsylvania Outreach Program.

**General Harry W. Brooks, U.S. Army (Ret.), Las Vegas, NV,** a retired Major General with a distinguished military career of 29 years, serving in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He served as long-term trustee of the Freedom Forum. He is founder and former CEO of Advanced Consumer Marketing Corporation, named the 1990 Black Enterprise Company of the Year. He is currently chairman of Brooks, International.

**Dr. Iva E. Carruthers, General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Chicago, IL,** continues to foster interdenominational and interfaith dialogue in the United States, Caribbean, South America and Africa. She is also founder of Lois House and serves as a trustee of the Chicago Theological Seminary. Professor Emeritus, at Northeastern Illinois University, she has authored and edited a number of publications, co-produced educational television programs and developed and published educational multimedia software.

**Dr. Nicholas Cooper-Lewter, International Author, Elgin, SC** has served as senior pastor, full professor, distinguished lecturer, workshop facilitator, chaplain mentor and consultant at universities, seminaries, churches, foundations, and institutes in the United States and overseas. He specializes in helping people overcome multigenerational legacies of grief and realize their performance and wellness potentials. He has developed Rites of Passage programs for African American and minority youths. His first book (with Henry H. Mitchell) is *Soul Theology: The Heart of American Black Culture* and his latest book is *Black Grief and Soul Therapy*.

**Rev. Dr. Marcus D. Cosby, Senior Pastor, Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, Houston, TX,** has served on the Board of Trustees of the Morehouse School of Religion and was chosen as one of the Outstanding Young Men of America. Rev. Cosby currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Interfaith Ministries for greater Houston; Home Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention, USA Inc.; Advisory Board of the Gardner C. Taylor Preaching Archives and Listening Room in Atlanta and Houston Area Urban League. He is a trustee of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference.

**Ertharin Cousin, Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President, America's Second Harvest, Chicago, IL,** the nation's largest charitable domestic hunger-relief organization. She has worked with Albertsons, food and drug retailer, as Senior Vice President of Public Affairs; served in the Clinton Administration, with the Democratic Committee and as White House Liaison for the U.S. Department of State. Ms. Cousin has served on the local level in the office of the Illinois Attorney General and the Chicago Ethics Board.

**Rev. Dr. Yvonne V. Delk, Director of The Center for African American Theological Studies (CAATS), Norfolk, VA,** was the first African American woman to be ordained in the United Church of Christ. She has served as executive director of the Community Renewal Society (CRS), a faith based Chicago metropolitan area mission agency. She became the first woman to be nominated as a candidate for the Office of the President of the United Church of Christ. She served as the chair of the Program to Combat Racism in the program unit of the World Council of Churches. She has lectured and taught at Virginia Union University Seminary Consortium for Pastoral Education and Harvard University.

**Rev. Dr. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, Professor, Colby College, Waterville, ME,** is an assistant pastor of the Union Baptist Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Professor of African-American Studies and Sociology at Colby College, Waterville, Maine. Her research, teaching, and writing have specially focused on the diverse roles of black Christian women in the twentieth century. To the radio audience of central Maine, Rev. Gilkes is "Dr. Cheryl," the host of a weekly gospel music program titled, "The Uncloudy Day" on WMHB, Waterville, Colby College's station.

**Rev. Dr. Debora F. Grant, Senior Pastor, St John A.M.E. Church, Columbus, GA,** is an advocate for youth and women's issues and is the co-founder of SALT ministries, a collaborative women's health project. Rev. Grant was a Presidential Scholar at the

Interdenominational Theological Center and is active with the NAACP, Turner Alumni Association, Judicial Alternative of Georgia (JAG), Black Women in Church in Society and Mentor and Director of A.M.E. Women in Ministry in Georgia.

**Atty. Edward A. Hailes, Jr., Senior Attorney, Advancement Project, Washington, DC,** is an experienced civil rights attorney, and an ordained Baptist minister. Formerly served as the General Counsel for the United States Commission on Civil Rights, directing the investigation during the November 2000 presidential election; and the Commission's high-profile hearing on police practices and civil rights in New York City after the police shooting of Amadou Diallo. Mr. Hailes also served for 10 years as a legal counsel for the NAACP.

**Rev. Derrick Harkins, Senior Pastor, Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, Washington, DC,** has partnerships with the National Institutes of Health to address the crisis of HIV AIDS in the African-American community; One Church One Child in advocacy and support for children available for adoption, or in foster care; as well as the Nineteenth Street Community Development Corporation with the aim of enhancing the cultural and economic stability of District of Columbia neighborhoods. He has also served as an adjunct instructor at Howard University School of Divinity.

**Rev. Barbara Headley, Senior Pastor, Faith Congregational Church, Middletown, CT,** is CEO and president of Faith Community Initiative. She also serves on the board of the Plowshares Institute, an international peace organization; the Advisory Board of the Greater Hartford Urban League's Department of Community Health and the Trustee Board of Hartford Seminary, where she is an adjunct professor. Rev. Headley was also the first protestant and first woman chaplain of the Connecticut Senate.

**Mr. Robert "Bob" Johnson, CEO and Chairman, Johnson Bryce, Inc., Chicago, IL.** Johnson Bryce, Inc. was founded as part of an initiative by PepsiCo and Frito-Lay. In 1997, with revenues exceeding \$25 million, The company was named the Frito-Lay Flexible Packaging Supplier of the Year. Active with several organizations and universities, Johnson also serves on the board of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

**Rev. Portia Wills Lee, Senior Pastor and Founder, Trinity Tabernacle Baptist Church, Mableton, GA,** was the first female pastor of a church that joined the New Era State Convention. Her civic and community activities include working with AIDS patients, Head Start programs, and homeless shelters. As a contextual education supervisor, she advises and mentors seminary students enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at the Candler School of Theology. She is a trustee of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference.

**Atty. Mark Lloyd, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress, Washington, DC,** is a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress; focusing on communications policy issues, including universal service, advanced telecommunications deployment, media concentration and diversity. As a Martin Luther King, Jr. visiting scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he taught communications policy, wrote and conducted research on the relationship between communications policy and strong democratic communities. He also served as the executive director of the Civil Rights Forum on Communications Policy, bringing civil rights principles and advocacy to the communications policy debate.

**Dr. Dominic H. Mack MD, MBA, Project Director, Regional Coordinating Center for Hurricane Response, Atlanta, GA,** is also Associate Director for Clinical Affairs at the National Center for Primary Care, Morehouse School of Medicine, with a special focus on underserved populations and on eliminating health disparities.

**Rev. Dr. Earl B. Mason, Founding and Senior Pastor, Bible-Based Fellowship Church of Temple Terrace, Inc, Tampa, FL,** has a congregation and ministry that extend abroad through involvement as co-sponsor of African Relief Burkino Faso, West Africa, and most recently a joint relief effort in The Gambia with the Hillsborough County Center of Excellence. Rev. Mason is President of EBM Ministries, and currently active in the Temple Terrace Chamber of Commerce and the Florida Faith-Based Association. He is a trustee of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference.

**Eleanor Mohammed, Senior Agency Field Specialist, State Farm Insurance, Long Beach, CA,** is former Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Advisor for State Farm Insurance Companies Federal Savings Bank in Bloomington and has over 25 years experience as a marketing communications specialist in the private sector and as an entrepreneur. She has served as an adjunct English Professor at several universities.

**Dr. Richard Payne, Director, Duke University Institute on Care, Durham, NC,** is director of Duke University's Institute on Care at the End of Life. He has given expert testimony to the Congressional Black Caucus National Brain Trust and the President's Cancer Panel in the area of healthcare access disparities in cancer care, palliative medicine and end-of-life care. He also has received a Distinguished Service Award from the American Pain Society, of which he is president; the Humanitarian Award from the Urban Resources Institute; and the Janssen Excellence in Pain Award.

**Atty. John A. Powell, Professor, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH**, is the executive director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University and holds the Williams Chair in Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at The Moritz College of Law. He has worked and lived in Africa and served as a consultant to the governments of Mozambique and South Africa. He is one of the co-founders of The Poverty and Race Research Action Council, (PRRAC), and also founder and director of the Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota.

**Rev. Dr. Barbara Reynolds, President and CEO, Reynolds News Services, Suitland, MD**, is an award winning journalist and author. She is a mentor professor in religion and journalism at Howard University and an ordained elder in the Greater Mt. Calvary Holy Church.

**Rev. Dr. Bernard Richardson, Dean of the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel, Howard University, Washington, DC**, is Chief Executive Officer for religious affairs at Howard University. He coordinates the wide array of ministries sought by students and their parents, faculty, staff, and the wider community, and serves as the liaison between the University and religious organizations at the local, national, and international levels.

**Atty. Alfreda Robinson, Professor, George Washington University Law School, Washington, DC**, is associate Dean for Strategic Planning and Skills Training and Associate Director of the Litigation and Dispute Resolution Program. She also served as a senior trial counsel and trial attorney for the Department of Justice, Civil Division. She is a member of the District of Columbia Bar, the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, the National Naval Association, and the American Bar Association.

**Ms. Carlottia A. W. Scott, Board of Directors, The Twenty-First Century Foundation (21CF), New York, NY**, is a managing partner of La Cause, LLC, a national consulting firm specializing in strategic planning, cultural diversity, community management assistance and capacity-building, both domestically and internationally. Ms. Scott serves on The Twenty First Century Foundation's Committees for Development and Nominations. She is co-founder of the African American Women's Fund and previously served as Chief of Staff to Congresswoman Barbara Lee and former Congressman Ronald V. Dellums.

**Rev. Dr. Susan K. Smith, Senior Pastor, Advent United Church of Christ, Columbus, OH**, is a former journalist and has served as adjunct professor at Methodist



Theological Seminary and on the staff at United Theological Seminary as an instructor. Dr. Smith is a trustee of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference. She is currently completing a documentary manuscript on the events surrounding Katrina.

**Dr. Cheryl Taylor, PhD, MN, New Orleans, LA**, is director of the Office of Research and Associate Professor at Southern University Agricultural & Mechanical College School of Nursing in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She is Principal Investigator of REACH 2010: At the Heart of New Orleans in 40 churches for the National Black Women's Health Imperative. She teaches PhD level Research and Health Policy courses and contributed to the first generation of research studies on homelessness and chronic mental illness, which is cited in the U. S. Congressional Record - Senate Vol. 136 no. 39, 5378, June 5, 1990. Dr. Taylor designed and taught the first women's health course offered at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and is past president of the Louisiana Coalition of Churches.

**Ms. Tiffany Thomas, Student Minister, Trinity Tabernacle Baptist Church, Mableton, GA**, is currently a College Sophomore majoring in Political Science and Religious Studies. Ms. Thomas is a member of the Alpha Lambda Delta National Honor Society as well as the National Collegiate Scholar Honor Society. She is also a member of the Spelman College Religion Society.

**Dr. Ronald Walters, Professor, University of Maryland**, is director of the African American Leadership Institute and Scholar Practitioner Program, Distinguished Leadership Scholar at the James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership and professor in government and politics at the University of Maryland. Walters is internationally known and has also served as the senior policy staff member for Congressman Charles Diggs, Jr. and Congressman William Gray.

**Rev. Dr. Aidsand Wright-Riggins, Executive Director, National Ministries American Baptist Churches USA, Valley Forge, PA**, is chief executive officer of Judson Press, the publishing arm of American Baptist Churches USA. The National Ministries home mission network includes 5,800 American Baptist churches, 1,100 endorsed chaplains and pastoral counselors, 500 new church planters, Neighborhood Action Christian Centers and hundreds of commissioned home missionaries.



Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference  
Katrina National Justice Hearings  
**Testifiers**



**Rev. Dr. Sampson "Skip" Alexander, Elder/Activist, *People's Defense League*, New Orleans, LA**

**Attorney Kwame Asante, State President, *Louisiana NAACP*, Baton Rouge, LA**

**Mr. Earle Barthé, Evacuee-Omaha, NE, *Soul Patrol***

**Dr. Janice Beal, Medical/Clinical Psychotherapist, *Beal Counseling Associates*, Houston, TX**

**Mr. Joe Becker, Chief Diversity Officer, *American Red Cross*, Washington, DC**

**Mr. Steve Bradberry, Director, *ACORN*, Baton Rouge, LA**

**Ms. Leah Chase, Community Elder, *Dooky Chase Restaurant*, New Orleans, LA**

**Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, *U.S. Senate*, New York, NY**

**Rev. Marjorie Cobb-Thomas, Pastor, *Bethel Istrouma AME Church*, Baton Rouge, LA**

**Dr. Alan Colon, Professor, *Dillard University*, New Orleans, LA**

**Dr. Nicole Davis, Physician, *VA Hospital*, New Orleans, LA**

**Rev. Marjani Dele, Founder, *Exodus Ministries*, New Orleans, LA**

**Attorney Marian Wright Edelman, Founder and President, *Children's Defense Fund*, Washington, DC**

**Mr. Terence H. Fountaine, Chief of Staff, *Mayor's Office*, Houston, TX**

**Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, President, *Interfaith Alliance*, Washington, DC**

**Mr. Joseph Givens, National Consultant, *Churches Supporting Churches*, New Orleans, LA**

**Rev. David E. Goatley. PhD, Executive Director, *Lott Carey International*, Washington, DC**

**Attorney Monique Harden, Co-Director, *Advocate for Environmental Human Rights*, New Orleans, LA**

**Ms. Kiri Harvey, Student, *Dillard University*, New Orleans, LA**

**Ms. Leah Hodges, Director, *Causeway Concentration Camp Foundation for Civil Justice*, New Orleans, LA**

**Ms. Sibal Holt, Evacuee Family, and Former President, *Louisiana AFL-CIO*, Baton Rouge, LA**

**Attorney Kim Keenan, Past President, *National Bar Association*, Washington, DC**

**Mr. Nat LaCour, Secretary/Treasurer, *American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO*, Washington, DC**

**The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee, Congresswoman, *U. S. House of Representatives*, Houston, TX**

**Rev. Tony Lee, Pastor, *Community of Hope AME Church*, Baltimore, MD**

**Rev. Timothy McDonald, Senior Pastor, *First Iconium Baptist Church*, Atlanta, GA**

**Dr. Brenda Mitchell, President, *United Teachers of New Orleans*, Baton Rouge, LA**

**Dr. Gloria Moultrie, Vice Chancellor, *Southern University*, New Orleans, LA**

**Mr. Rick Pogue, Senior Vice President, *American Red Cross*,  
Washington, DC**

**Mr. Malik Rahim, Founder/Director, *Common Ground Collective Relief*,  
New Orleans, LA**

**Rev. Rudy Rasmus, Co-Pastor, *St. John United Methodist Church*,  
Houston, TX**

**Mr. Chris Rebstock, Vice President, Member Support, *America's Second Harvest*, Chicago, IL**

**Ms. Joan Rhodes, Director/President, *Rhodes Funeral Homes/ Rhodes Life Insurance*, New Orleans, LA**

**Mr. Exodie Roe, Student, *Dillard University*, New Orleans, LA**

**Mr. Howard Rogers, Director, *New Orleans Council on Aging*,  
New Orleans, LA**

**Mr. Robert Shea, Acting Director of Operations, *Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)*, Washington, DC**

**Mr. Yonce Shelton, National Policy Coordinator, *Sojourner Call to Renewal*,  
Washington, DC**

**Mrs. Eula Smith, Director, Katrina Programs/First Lady, *Shiloh Baptist Church*, Baton Rouge, LA**

**The Smith Family: Grandmother Rosemary Smith, Mother Vondell Smith Sloan, Mr. Rhemé Sloan (14), and Kayla and Kyla Sloan (10), Evacuees, *St. John United Methodist Church*, Houston, TX**

**Mr. Saket Soni, Organizer, *New Orleans Worker Justice Coalition*, New Orleans, LA**

**Ms. Brenda Billips Square, Director of Archives and Library, *AMISTAD Research Center*, New Orleans, LA**

**Mr. William Stallworth, Councilman, *City of Biloxi*, MS**

**Rev. Mitchell Stevens, Executive Director, *RH Dunn Resurrection Center*,  
New Orleans, LA**

**Ms. Beth Tanner, CFO, *Houston Food Bank*, Houston, TX**

**Mr. Oliver Thomas, Jr., President, *New Orleans City Council*, New Orleans,  
LA**

**Ms. Karla Weaver, Evacuee, *Bethel Istrouma AME Church*, Baton Rouge,  
LA**

**Ms. Kay Wilkins, CEO, *Red Cross-Southeast Louisiana*, Baton Rouge, LA**

**Rev. Angela Williams, Interfaith Liaison, *Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund*,  
Washington, DC**

**Rev. Dr. Patricia Williams, Minister, *Balm In Gilead-Wheeler Avenue  
Baptist Church*, Houston, TX**

**Ms. Sherry Williams, Newscaster, *KHWB Houston*, Houston TX**

**Ms. Elizabeth Williams-Omilami, Director, *Hosea Feed The Hungry*,  
Atlanta, GA**

**Rev. Joseph R. Wilson, Associate Pastor, *St. John United Methodist Church*,  
Houston, TX**

## **Special Briefing Session**

**General Russel Honoré, *1st U.S. Army***

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# *In the Wake of Katrina: Lest We Forget ... Call To Renewal*

*For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. - Acts 4:20 (NIV)*

## **RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS** Hurricane Katrina and the breach of the levees devastated the Gulf Coast region and forced the evacuation and practical exile of literally thousands of residents of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and other parts of the region; and

**WHEREAS** The Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc., convened The Katrina National Justice Commission and conducted hearings on June 15 and 16, 2006 (Washington, DC), June 29 and 30, 2006 (New Orleans, LA) and July 27 and 28, 2006 (Houston, TX) as sacred acts of remembrance, restoration and rebuilding of the Gulf Coast; and

**WHEREAS** the goal of the hearings, commissioned by the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc., was to remind Americans that the rebuilding and restoration of communities and a faithful people must not be bound in red tape or hindered by tangential issues and that Katrina and all she wrought must remain at the forefront of the nation's agenda; and

**WHEREAS** the Commission is the first national independent body of African American clergy and community activists to investigate the events preceding and following the Hurricane Katrina disaster; and

**WHEREAS** we are called to honor those who lost their lives; and

**WHEREAS** we are called to care for those who have been displaced; and

**WHEREAS** we are called to help those who have been further marginalized and disempowered by Katrina; and

**WHEREAS** we are called to restore hope to Katrina victims and in this nation; and

**WHEREAS** we seek to redress the effects of this disaster and to fulfill the promises of American democracy;

### **BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**

That the people's experiences, the nation's compassionate responses, the failures and successes of those engaged in rescue and recovery, and the opportunities for restoration and healing must be documented and widely shared; and

### **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**

That key findings from the Commission's Hearings shall be released as a national report and made available for dissemination; and

### **BE IT MOREOVER RESOLVED**

That all levels of government, local, state and federal, shall do whatever is necessary to provide protection and restitution to the fullest extent possible to all those directly impacted by Katrina and its aftermath; and that they cooperate and be engaged in the development and implementation of plans for emergency preparedness; and

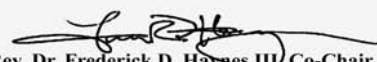
### **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**


That Sunday, August the 27th, 2006, shall be declared a sacred day of national prayer, reflection and solidarity, commemorating this great national tragedy.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the Board of Trustees has formalized this resolution and executed the same on the day, month, and year written below.

**THUS DONE AND SIGNED THIS 20th DAY OF AUGUST, 2006.**

  
Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale, Co-Chair  
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.

  
Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes III, Co-Chair  
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.

  
Rev. Dr. Susan K. Smith, Chair, Katrina National Justice Commission  
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.

  
Dr. Iva E. Carruthers, General Secretary  
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.

*For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.  
Acts 4.20 (NIV)*



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# *In the Wake of Katrina: Lest We Forget ... Call To Renewal*

*For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. - Acts 4:20 (NIV)*

## **LITANY**

**We Will Repair the Breach: A Litany in Memoriam of the Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina  
On the Coast of the Gulf of Mexico, U.S.A.**

**Leader:** The storms had names—Katrina, Rita, Wilma—but the faces of the storms were on every newscast—the underbelly of a nation’s sin: our broken responsibility for the least among us.

**People:** We will repair the breach; we will raise the foundations again; we will restore the streets and make them livable again<sup>1</sup>.

**Leader:** They left trails of heartaches and tears, our houses and our hopes shattered.

**People:** We will repair the breach; we will raise the foundations again; we will restore the streets and make them livable again.

**Leader:** We saw the deaths: mostly poor, mostly very elderly, mostly very young, mostly people of color; as also we saw the scattering. Who will respond?

**People:** We will repair the breach; we will raise the foundations again; we will restore the streets and make them livable again.

**Leader:** Years of neglect floated up in the floods that followed, uncovered our shame as a nation.

**People:** And we are witnesses.

**Leader:** We vexed the poor and needy,<sup>2</sup> robbing them of dignity and looting them of pride.

**People:** And we are witnesses.

**Leader:** Walk lightly in the streets where our kin have floated into history; the streets are sacred, as also are the memories.

**People:** We will honor the lives of the dead and the living by acting in justice.

**Leader:** Speak softly in the bars where our kin have disappeared; the music is holy, as also are the memories.

**People:** We will honor the lives of the dead and the living by acting in justice.

**Leader:** We have been charged to repair the walls, to stand in the gaping holes of our society; to cry out and to do justice.

**People:** We will repair the breach; we will raise the foundations again; we will restore the streets and make them livable again.

*In Remembrance of the Natural and National Disasters that Hit the Gulf Coast and their Aftermaths*

*Prepared for the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc. by Valerie Bridgeman Davis, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Old Testament/Homiletics and Worship, Memphis Theological Seminary, August 27, 2006. ©2006*

<sup>1</sup>Based on Isaiah 58:12

<sup>2</sup>Based on Ezekiel 22:29



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# **Katrina and Its Aftermath**

## **Key Events Timeline**

### **August 26, 2005 through August 31, 2006**

#### **Friday, August 26**

Gov. Kathleen Blanco declares state of emergency in Louisiana [Office of the Governor]  
Gulf Coast States request troop assistance from Pentagon [DOD]

#### **Saturday, August 27**

Gov. Haley Barbour declares state of emergency in Mississippi [Office of the Governor]  
5 AM CDT Katrina upgraded to Category 3 Hurricane [CNN]  
Gov. Blanco asks Bush to declare a federal state of emergency in Louisiana [Office of the Governor]  
Federal emergency declared, DHS and FEMA given full authority to respond to Katrina [White House]

#### **Sunday, August 28**

2 AM CDT Katrina upgraded to Category 4 Hurricane [CNN]  
7 AM CDT Katrina upgraded to Category 5 Hurricane [CNN]  
Morning Louisiana Newspaper Signals Levees May Give [Lafayette Daily Advertiser]  
9:30 AM CDT Mayor Nagin issues first-ever mandatory evacuation of New Orleans: [Times-Picayune]  
Afternoon Bush, Brown, Chertoff warned of levee failure by national hurricane center director [Times-Picayune; St. Petersburg Times]  
4 PM CDT National Weather Service issues special hurricane warning [National Weather Service]  
Late PM Reports Of Water Toppling Over Levee [Times-Picayune]  
Approximately 30,000 Evacuees Gather At Superdome with Roughly 36 Hours Worth Of Food [Times-Picayune]  
Louisiana National Guard Requests 700 Buses from FEMA

for Evacuations [Boston Globe]

### **Monday, August 29**

7 AM. CDT	Katrina Makes Landfall as a Category 4 Hurricane [CNN]
7:30 a.m. CDT	Bush Administration Notified Of the Levee Breach [AP]
8 a.m. CDT	Mayor Nagin Reports That Water Is Flowing Over Levee [NBC's "Today Show"]
11:13 AM CDT	White House Circulates Internal Memo about Levee Breach [AP]
Morning	Brown Warns Bush about the Potential Devastation of Katrina [AP]
Morning	Mayfield Warns Bush about the Topping of the Levees [AP]
Morning	Bush Calls Secretary Chertoff to Discuss Immigration [White House]
Morning	Bush Shares Birthday Cake Photo-Op with Sen. John McCain [White House]
11 AM CDT	Michael Brown Finally Requests That DHS Dispatch 1,000 Employees to Region, Gives Them Two Days to Arrive[AP]
Late Morning	Levee Breached [Times-Picayune]
11 AM CDT	Bush Visits Arizona Resort to Promote Medicare Drug Benefit [White House]
4:30 PM CDT	Bush Travels to California Senior Center to Discuss Medicare Drug Benefit [White House]
8 PM CDT	Gov. Blanco Again Requests Assistance from Bush [Newsweek]
Late PM	Bush Goes To Bed without Acting on Blanco's Requests [Newsweek]

### **Tuesday, August 30**

11 AM CDT	Bush Speaks On Iraq at Naval Base Coronado [White House]
Middy	Chertoff Claims He Finally Becomes Aware That Levee Has Failed [Meet the Press, 9/4/05; AP] Pentagon Claims There Are Enough National Guard Troops in Region [WWL-TV]

Mass Looting Reported, Security Shortage Cited [AP]  
USS Bataan Sits Off Shore, Virtually Unused [Chicago Tribune]  
Bush Returns to Crawford for Final Night of Vacation [AP]

**Wednesday, August 31**

1:45 AM. CDT	FEMA Requests Ambulances That Do Not Exist [Wall Street Journal]
11:20 AM CDT	FEMA Staff Warned Brown That People Were Dying At the Superdome [AP] National Guard Troops Arrive In Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida [Boston Globe] Tens of Thousands Trapped In Superdome; Conditions Deteriorate [Los Angeles Times, 9/1/05] President Bush Finally Organizes Task Force to Coordinate Federal Response [New York Times, 8/31/05] Jefferson Parish Emergency Director Says Food and Water Supply Gone [WWL-TV] 80,000 Believed Stranded in New Orleans [Reuters] 3,000 Stranded at Convention Center without Food or Water [Times-Picayune] Public Health Emergency Declared For Entire Gulf Coast [WCBS-TV] Bush Surveys Damage from Air Force One [Fox News] Chertoff “Extremely Pleased With the Response” Of the Government [Department Of Homeland Security]
Early AM	Blanco Again Tries To Request Help from Bush [Newsweek]
4 PM CDT	Bush Gives First Major Address on Katrina [New York Times]
7 PM CDT	Condoleezza Rice Takes In A Broadway Show [New York Post, 9/2/05]
8 PM CDT	FEMA Director Brown Claims Surprise Over Size of Storm [CNN]

### **Thursday, September 1**

7 AM CDT Bush Claims No One Expected Levees to Break [Situation Room, 3/2/06]  
Condoleezza Rice Visits U.S. Open [New York Post]  
Still No Command and Control Established [Fox News]  
2 PM CDT Mayor Nagin Issues “Desperate SOS” To Federal Government [Guardian, 9/2/05]  
2 PM CDT Michael Brown Claims Not To Have Heard Of Reports of Violence [CNN]  
New Orleans “Descend[s] Into Anarchy” [AP]  
Michael Brown Finally Learns Of Evacuees in Convention Center [CNN]

### **Friday, September 2**

Rove-Led Campaign to Blame Local Officials Begins [New York Times, 9/5/05]  
Government Agencies Demand That DHS Pay Attention to Worker-Safety [Wall Street Journal]  
Early AM Bush Watches DVD of the Week’s Newscasts Created by Staff Who Thought Bush “Needed to See the Horrific Reports” [Newsweek]  
10 AM CDT President Bush Stages Photo-Op “Briefing”  
10:35 AM CDT Bush Praises Michael Brown “Brownie, You’re Doing a Heck of a Job.” [White House, 9/2/05]  
Bush’s Visit Grounds Food Aid [Times-Picayune]  
Levee Repair Work Orchestrated for President’s Visit [Sen. Mary Landrieu]  
Bush Uses 50 Firefighters as Props in Disaster Area Photo-Op [Salt Lake Tribune; Reuters]  
12 PM CDT Bush “Satisfied With the Response” [AP]  
PM FEMA’s No. 2 Official “Impressed” With Government Response [Time]  
Bush Comments On Sen. Trent Lott’s House” [White House; Time]  
Congress Approves Initial Funding [AP, 9/4/05]

### **Saturday, September 3**

Senior Bush Administration Official Lies To Washington Post; Claims Gov. Blanco Never Declared State Of

9 AM CDT

Emergency 9/4/05]

Bush Blames State and Local Officials [White House, 9/3/05]

8:05pm CDT

FEMA Finalizes Bus Request, 9/13/05

Chertoff Claims That No One Could Have Predicted Katrina [CNN, 9/5/05]

The Louisiana Superdome Is Fully Evacuated [AP, 9/3/05]

### **Monday, September 5**

Former First Lady Patronizes Poor Refugees [American Public Media, 9/5/05]

### **Thursday, September 8**

Bush Suspends Davis-Bacon Act [Washington Post, 9/9/05]

Congress Approves More Relief Funding [Washington Post, 9/9/05]

### **Friday, September 9**

Brown Stripped Of Relief Duties [CTV, 9/9/05]

### **Monday, September 12**

FEMA Director Resigns [CNN, 9/12/05]

### **Tuesday, September 13**

Bush Takes Responsibility for Flawed Response: [New York Times, 9/13/05]

### **Wednesday, September 14**

Independent Investigative Panel Rejected [AP, 9/14/05]

### **Thursday, September 15**

Bush Addresses Nation, Says His Administration Will “Learn the Lessons” Of Katrina [Bush, 9/15/05]

House Establishes Bipartisan Katrina Commission [House, 9/15/05]

### **Tuesday, September 20**

Allstate Refuses To Reimburse Victims [Marketwatch, 9/20/05]

## **October**

- 3rd Iraq War Hinders Katrina Relief [Independent, 10/3/05]
- 13th 600,000 Refugees Living In Hotels [New York Times, 10/13/05]
- 19th Chertoff Testifies, Claims Administration Was Prepared For Katrina [Chertoff, 10/19/05]

## **November**

- 1st Bush Appoints “Katrina Czar” [U.S. News & World Report, 11/3/05]
- 10th Victims Sue FEMA for Aid [New York Times, 11/10/05]
- 16th Evacuees Given 15 Days to Leave [Washington Post, 11/16/05]
- 23rd Thousands Remain Missing [ABC News, 11/23/05]

## **December**

- 4th “The Disaster Is Still Really Going On, In Terms Of Health Care” [USA Today, 12/4/05]
- 13th Victims Take Out Ad to Get Congress’ Attention [New York Times, 12/13/05]
- 14th Houston Ends Voucher Program [Houston Chronicle, 12/14/05]
- 21st President Bush Signs Supplemental Of \$29 Billion for Katrina Relief [Brookings, 3/21/06]

## **January**

- 4th New Orleans Still Not Safe For Displaced [Brookings, 01/04/06]
- 12th President Bush Travels to New Orleans; Spends Less Than 24 Hours in the Region [WSJ, 1/13/06]
- 24th White House Refuses To Cooperate With a Senate Investigation of Katrina [New York Times, 1/24/06]
- 25th Administration Rejects Reconstruction Plan: [Times-Picayune, 1/25/06]
- 31st President Bush Does Not Mention Katrina Once in His State of the Union Address [Bush, 1/31/06]

## **February**

- 1st Government Auditors “Lambast” Secretary Chertoff’s Response to Katrina [CBS News, 2/1/06]
- 10th Michael Brown Testifies [New York Times, 2/11/06]
- 13th GAO Report Concludes That FEMA’s Disaster Aid Program Is



- Riddled With Fraud [USA Today, 2/13/06]
- 15th Bush, Senior Administration Leaders Singled Out In “Blistering”  
House Report on Katrina [Washington Post, 2/12/06]
- 23rd White House Issues Own “Less Scathing” Report [ABC, 2/23/06]
- 27th Only One-Third of Katrina Charity Donations Remain [Washington  
Post, 2/27/06]
- 28th Mardi Gras Finds a Quiet New Orleans [Washington Post, 2/25/06]

### **March**

- 1st Tapes Showing Bush Being Warned Of A Potential Breach in the  
Levees Are Released [Washington Post, 3/1/06]
- 5th Conservatives Criticize Response to Katrina [Fox News, Sunday,  
3/5/06]
- 15th A Study Finds That The White House Has Rejected Hurricane  
Disaster-Recovery Loans At A Higher Rate Than Any Other  
Administration In The Last 15 Years [USA Today, 3/15/06]
- 19th The Broadest Counseling Program Ever Gets Underway [Baltimore  
Sun, 3/20/06]
- 21st The Largest Child-Recovery Effort in U.S. History Ends [USA  
Today, 3/21/06]
- 30th Bush Administration Miscalculates Cost of Rebuilding Levees  
[Washington Post, 3/31/06]

### **April**

- 6th Bush Nominates R. David Paulison to Head FEMA [CBS News,  
4/6/06]
- 12th The Bush Administration Issues Long-Awaited Construction  
Guidelines for Katrina-Affected Regions [WP, 4/13/06]
- 14th The Department Of Homeland Security Faults Itself [CBS News,  
4/14/06]
- 25th Bush Asks Congress for Additional \$2.2 Billion to Repair Levees  
[Bush, 4/25/06]
- 27th Senate Releases 800-Page Report [hsgac.senate.gov, 4/27/06]
- 27th Bush Makes 11th Trip to Damaged Gulf Coast Since Katrina  
Landed [Washington Post, 4/28/06]

## **May**

- 2nd FEMA Closes Its Long-Term Recovery Office in New Orleans [AP, 5/2/06]
- 8th 7.2 Million Tons of Debris Yet To Be Removed As Landfill Debate Rages [New York Times, 5/8/06]
- 10th Louisiana Lawmakers Approve \$7.5 Billion Aid Program for Homeowners [Boston Globe, 5/10/06]
- 20th New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin Is Re-elected [ABC, 5/20/06]

## **June**

- 1st FEMA Closes the Last Four Camps That House and Feed Recovery Volunteers [The Times-Picayune, 5/31/06]
- 5th The First Criminal Trials since Katrina Open [Fox News, 6/6/06]
- 15th President Bush Signs Additional Spending Of \$19.4 Billion for Katrina Relief [Brookings, 7/1/06]
- 15th-16th Katrina National Justice Commission Hearings, Panel I, Washington, DC, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
- 16th Department Of Homeland Security Says That New Orleans Is Not Prepared For another Disaster [DHS, 6/16/06]
- 19th New Orleans Convention Center Reopens [MCCNO.com, 6/20/06]
- 26th \$2 Billion in Tax Dollars for Relief Lost To Waste and Fraud: [New York Times, 6/26/06]
- 29th-30th Katrina National Justice Commission Hearings, Panel II, New Orleans, LA, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

## **July**

- 11th Department Of Housing And Urban Development Approves \$4.2 Billion for Louisiana's Rebuilding Program [USA Today, 7/11/06]
- 21st New Orleans Residents Face Higher Electricity Prices amid Blackouts [New York Times, 7/22/06]
- 26th Mayor Ray Nagin Outlines 100-Day Plan to Rebuild New Orleans [Bayoubuzz.Com, 7/26/06]
- 27th-28th Katrina National Justice Commission Hearings, Panel III, Houston, TX, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
- 28th U.N. Criticizes the U.S. For Failing to Protect the Rights of the Poor [Mississippi Sun Herald, 7/28/06]

## August

- 3rd Grand Jury Investigation of New Orleans Police Department Is Launched [Los Angeles Times, 8/4/06]
- 7th First Wave of New Orleans Schools Open [CNN, 8/7/06]
- 8th New Orleans Still Not Back On Track [Brookings, 8/06]
- 21st Spike Lee's HBO documentary, *When The Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* first airs [HBO, 8/21/06]
- 31st ***the breach: Bearing Witness***, Report of the Katrina National Justice Commission, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Published

Source: [www.thinkprogress.org](http://www.thinkprogress.org)

# Katrina Impact

## *Economic*

- ✓ The most costly natural disaster in U.S. history
- ✓ Total impact to Louisiana and Mississippi estimated at \$150 billion.
- ✓ Hundreds of thousands of residents of southern Louisiana and Mississippi were left unemployed
- ✓ The storm interrupted oil production, importation, and refining in the Gulf area, thus having a major effect on fuel prices
- ✓ At least twenty offshore oil platforms were missing, sunk, or had gone adrift, according to the U.S. Coast Guard
- ✓ Katrina forced many casinos along the Mississippi Gulf Coast to close and evacuate. Biloxi also suffered heavy damage to their gaming barges, some likely beyond repair. Mississippi will lose approximately \$500,000 in tax revenue for each day that the Biloxi-area riverboat casinos are closed, and about \$140,000 per day for the South River region casinos.
- ✓ The USDA declared an additional 31 counties as primary agricultural disaster areas. This made farmers and other agricultural producers eligible for low interest emergency loans to cover losses.
- ✓ Gulfport, Mississippi, serves as a major ocean shipping port for the southern United States, and the port was found to be inoperable for as much as one year.
- ✓ The local electric utility Entergy Corporation was impacted severely. Entergy New Orleans filed for bankruptcy protection, citing lower revenue and storm restoration costs as the primary cause. Number of new migrant workers to the Gulf Coast region since Katrina: 30,000

# Katrina Impact

## *Social*

- ✓ Left hundreds of thousands without access to their homes or jobs, and separated people from their loved ones.
- ✓ Inflicted both physical and mental distress on those who suffered through the storm and its aftermath.
- ✓ Many evacuees from New Orleans, facing months without income, severely damaged or destroyed homes, and little in the way of recoverable possessions have begun expressing desires to permanently resettle elsewhere
- ✓ In Gulfport, Mississippi, several hundred tons of chicken and uncooked shrimp were washed out of their containers at the nearby harbor and could have contaminated the water table.
- ✓ Approximately 8,000 animals were rescued and brought to temporary shelters.
- ✓ Most of the 10,000 fish at the New Orleans Aquarium of the Americas died because the backup power ran out after four days.
- ✓ An estimated 600,000 pets were killed or left without shelter
- ✓ The media has been saturated with apocalyptic-type messages in reference to the hurricane which, in itself, can contribute to the victim's sense of trauma, isolation, and abandonment
- ✓ Approximately 40 percent of New Orleans' pre-Katrina residents who have returned to the city.

# Katrina Impact

## *Infrastructure*

- ✓ All local television stations were disrupted. Local television stations, and newspapers moved quickly to sister locations in nearby cities. Broadcasting and publishing on the Internet became an important means of distributing information to evacuees and the rest of the world.
- ✓ The only route out of the city was west on the Crescent City Connection because the I-10 Twin Span Bridge traveling east towards Slidell, Louisiana, had collapsed
- ✓ In all Katrina affected areas of the Gulf Coast, 302,000 housing units were destroyed or damaged in the storm. Of these units, 216,000 were affordable to low income households, earning 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) or less, and 92,000 were affordable to very low income households earning less than 50% of AMI. Thus, 71% of the housing stock destroyed or damaged by Hurricane Katrina was affordable to low income households and 30% were affordable to very low income households. (National Income Housing Coalition)
- ✓ Number of churches, synagogues, and mosques damaged or destroyed: approximately 900

### Sources:

- ❖ [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
- ❖ National Income Housing Coalition
- ❖ <http://www.throughtheeyeofthestorm.com/KatrinaFacts.htm>

# Katrina Comparison to 9/11

Factor	9/11 (NYC)	Hurricane Katrina
<b>Small business grants/loans</b>	\$1.1 billion disbursed (small businesses “directly” impacted) plus \$3.7 billion under the Supplemental Terrorist Activity Relief (STAR) program	\$2 out of \$10 billion disbursed; two-thirds of loan applications rejected
<b>Disaster area</b>	Contained to lower Manhattan	Entire city of New Orleans and the Gulf Coastal area of 4 states: Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida
<b>Residential housing affected</b>	0	302,000
<b>Physical land space affected</b>	.025 square miles / 16 acres	90,000 square miles
<b>Death</b>	Instant	Prolonged
<b>Amount of debris (million tons)</b>	1.6	22 (to date)
<b>Students displaced</b>	Minimal	450,000+
<b>Recovery time</b>	Months (9)	1+ years (and counting)
<b>Independent Bi-Partisan Congressional Commission formation</b>	Late 2002	None (Congressional approval defeated)
<b>Federal compensation fund</b>	Victim Compensation Fund established 12 days after the disaster. Total fund of \$7 billion with awards ranging \$250,000 to \$5.7 million.	None
<b>Displaced Households</b>	20,000	(as of 2/06) 750,000
<b>Death count</b>	3,000	1,836 (705 missing)

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