



Season of Prayer

An examination of rebuilding efforts along the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita with an emphasis on displaced populations, inadequacy of government responses, and inequitable development strategies.

Weekly Update ~ 07.14.06

Reports:

- A coalition of over 100 non-profit organizations have submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Committee who will meet this week to review the document along with an official report submitted by the US State Department. The secondary report submitted by the coalition covers alleged human rights violations not only from recent hurricanes, but also relating to immigration, the death penalty, privacy violations, prison conditions and minority rights. The UN is expecting to release its findings at the end of July.

Source: Jones, Susan. "Blame America: US Groups Detail Alleged US Human Rights Violations." *CNSNews.com*. July 12, 2006.

<http://www.cnsnews.com/ViewNation.asp?Page=/Nation/archive/200607/NAT20060712a.html>
- The National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI) released a report focusing on, "The Human Right to Housing: Access for survivors in the Gulf." Human rights standards are the obligation and responsibility of governments. The deplorable conditions present before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were infringements on internationally recognized human rights to housing. Even after the devastating effects of these storms, US government investment in housing rights has not changed significantly. Guiding principles for the rights of displaced persons are not only being neglected in redevelopment initiatives, but blatantly opposed. State and national government responses waste funds and refuse cost effective solutions which continues to threaten public housing.

Source: NESRI, "The Human Rights of Hurricane Survivors." Accessed July 11, 2006.

http://www.nesri.org/fact_sheets_pubs/Human%20Right%20to%20Housing%20Issue%20Brief.pdf
- The Advancement Project released a report entitled, "[And Injustice for All: Workers' Lives in the Reconstruction of New Orleans](#)," examining structural racism and working conditions in New Orleans. Hundreds of thousands of workers – mostly African American - lost their jobs as an effect of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Today, barriers to return to New Orleans keep many jobless, homeless, or both. Additionally, the area has received an extensive influx of migrant labor – predominantly Latino/a. Media attention and political discourse create the false image of job competition between these groups and pit workers against workers as a strategy to continue

exploitation of all laborers. This report details worker exploitation across race through the synthesis of 700 interviews conducted between January and April, 2006. The report seeks to show clearly that despite constructed conflict between black, Latino, Asian, and American Indian workers, all are painfully aware that New Orleans is being rebuilt, "by them, not for them." Source: The Advancement Project, "And Injustice for All: Workers' Lives in the Reconstruction of New Orleans." Accessed July 11, 2006.

<http://www.advancementproject.org/reports/workersreport.pdf>

Events:

- Leaders within faith-based communities began a four day summit in New Orleans on July 13, 2006. The summit will focus on planning for sustainable and permanent recovery of Gulf Coast communities emphasizing family rebuilding and small business entrepreneurship.

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Source: "Rebuild 2006—Rebuilding Families, Rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast." *eMedia Wire*. July 13,2006. <http://www.emediawire.com/releases/2006/7/emw411014.htm>

- According to official campaign finance reports, the Mayoral election in New Orleans ended up being the most costly in history, as the five main candidates spent almost all of the \$10.8 million they raised. Mayor Ray Nagin, who ended up being re-elected, has scheduled a \$2,500 per couple fundraiser, possibly to help pay some outstanding loans and other campaign-related costs. It seems that while New Orleans lacked (and continues to lack) a solid recovery plan, political elites had no trouble raising millions of dollars and running extensive campaigns. Source: Russell, Gordon. "N.O. mayor's race is costliest in history." *Times-Picayune*. http://www.nola.com/newslogs/topnews/index.ssf?mtlogs/nola_topnews/archives/2006_07_12.html#160237

Plans and Funds:

- Mayor Nagin projects New Orleans will have a comprehensive blueprint for reconstruction by December, 2006. Under the new plan neighborhoods will create their own reconstruction initiatives which will then be fused into a city wide plan. Even with the excitement over genuine community involvement, few are impressed with the timeline. Source: Agence France-Presse. "New Orleans lacks recovery plan nearly a year after Katrina." *SAWF News*. July 11, 2006. <http://news.sawf.org/Lifestyle/15847.aspx>
- Housing prices have risen and fallen in areas in the Gulf Coast region. In the suburban areas of New Orleans that did not flood during Hurricane Katrina, prices and sales are up 30%. Those looking to rebuild have had to take into consideration a shortage of builders as well as a 20% price increase in building materials. Source: Osborne, Laurie. "Hurricane Katrina boosts house prices." *In2perspective*. July 10, 2006. <http://www.in2perspective.com/nr/2006/07/katrina-boosts-house-prices-gives-world-katrina-c.jsp>
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced the release of \$4.2 billion in emergency funding to Louisiana and \$3 billion to Mississippi in order to assist recovery

in both states. The money in both instances is aimed at providing qualified homeowners up to \$150,000 in housing grant checks, which can be used to rebuild and repair or, in some cases, toward government buyouts.

Source: "HUD released \$3 billion in Katrina homeowner grants." *Associated Press*. July 10, 2006.

<http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/news/politics/15006960.htm>

"HUD OKs \$5.2B for Katrina Rebuilding". *Associated Press*. July 11, 2006.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/07/11/katrina/main1794036.shtml>

- The Louisiana Recovery Authority expects to have checks to residents to compensate for home loss by late summer. This program is part of "The Road Home" a LRA program to assist with individual rebuilding efforts.
Source: Martel, Brett. "5.2 billion earmarked for storm victims." *The Associated Press*. July 12, 2006. http://www.theeagle.com/stories/071206/nation_20060712014.php
- A lawsuit filed against Louisiana's state property insurance plan of last resort has been elevated to class action status. The lawsuit claims that the Louisiana Citizens Fair Plan did not process claims according to state law. By law, the claims adjustment process should "begin within 30 days of a catastrophic loss" and the claim should be paid "within 30 days of a satisfactory proof of loss." Lawyers representing the claimants suggest that all of 65,000 people covered by the Citizens Fair Plan could be included in the class lawsuit.
Source: Judice, Mary. "Insurance lawsuit gets class status." *Times-Picayune*. July 12, 2006. <http://www.nola.com/business/t-p/index.ssf?/base/money-0/11526839934350.xml&coll=1>
- Homeowners and Business owners in Louisiana will be allowed up to two years to take necessary legal action against property insurance providers. Jim Donelon, the state's Insurance Commissioner, ordered insurance providers to comply with the proposed extension considering that a number of homeowners are still unsure whether the settlements they have already received are sufficient to cover the damage to their homes. Louisiana's one year statute of limitations on filing lawsuits regarding insurance claims is considered to be the shortest in the country.
Source: Mowbray, Rebecca. "State forces insurers to extend lawsuit deadlines." *Times-Picayune*. http://www.nola.com/newslogs/topnews/index.ssf?/mtlogs/nola_topnews/archives/2006_07_12.html#160244

Living Conditions:

- Mold levels, especially indoor levels in homes flooded, pose a dangerous health risk to New Orleans residents. The first scientific study of air quality in New Orleans post Katrina was recently conducted and released by collaborating universities with alarming results. Currently, no governmental agencies are monitoring air quality in New Orleans.
Source: Smith, Sandy. "Study finds high mold levels in post-Katrina New Orleans air." *Homeland Response*. Accessed July 11, 2006. <http://www.homelandresponse.org/500/News/Article/False/21673/News>
- Schools began registration at a sliver of pre-Katrina capacity. School registration processes are specific to the administrative body of each school; 18 schools are being run by the state because of low achievement levels pre-Katrina while other schools are administered by the local school board and still others run by individual charters resulting in confusion and frustration for families struggling to reenroll students.

Source: AP Wire, "Confusion, hope as more students register for New Orleans schools." *10KLFY*.
Accessed July 11, 2006. <http://www.klfy.com/Global/story.asp?S=5135268>