



Season of Prayer

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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 ~ 08.25.06

Reports Released:

- The Center for Social Inclusion released a report that focuses on the situation in New Orleans, prior to, during and after the hurricane. The report highlights the structural challenges to equity prior to the hurricane in New Orleans, the subsequent infrastructure failure, and specific government policies in the recovery phase. The Center also gives policy proposals on how to foster sustainable development and create a healthy society in the region.
Source: "The Race to Rebuild: The Color of Opportunity and the Future of New Orleans."
<http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/PDF/racetorebuild.pdf>
- The Mississippi conference of the NAACP came out with a report this week that detailed the status of rebuilding and recovery in the state of Mississippi. The report discusses the insurance crisis facing the state, lack of rental housing to replace units that were lost, and the continuing disadvantages faced by low-income communities. Federal and state level government policies are criticized in the report for producing a disjointed relief effort and for not addressing the needs of the most vulnerable citizens.
Source: "Envisioning a Better Mississippi: Hurricane Katrina and Mississippi – One Year Later."
Mississippi Conference of the NAACP. August 23, 2006.
<http://www.naacp.com/news/press/Mississippi.pdf>
- The Rockefeller Institute of Government and the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana have put together a report that considers the status of redevelopment in the Gulf Coast region and analyzes how the response of government on various levels, business, and the non-profits community has impacted the progress being made. Some of the issues addressed include shortages in terms of housing and labor, the slow pace of recovery, the lack of a recovery plan in places like New Orleans, and the varying economic performance of communities and states impacted by the hurricane. Please visit www.la-par.org for more information.

Contact Jim Brandt, Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana at 225-926-8414 x21 office or jimbrandt@LA-PAR.org or Richard Nathan, Rockefeller Institute, at 518-443-5831.

Source: "GulfGov Reports: One Year Later." The Rockefeller Institute and the Public Affairs Research Council. August 22, 2006.

http://rockinst.org/GulfGov/media/GulfGov1stReport_FINAL.pdf

- Oxfam America released a report this week that examines the recovery effort in three communities that have a history of vulnerability and poverty. The report looks at the urban neighborhoods of East Biloxi, Mississippi as well as the rural communities of Vermilion parish and Plaquemines parish in Louisiana to highlight a pattern of sustained government neglect in the entire region. The report shows how, just as in previous relief efforts, federal assistance tends to go to the affluent. Also, it discusses the unequal access to opportunity in these communities. Most of the policy recommendations made by Oxfam focus on improving the situation for low-income housing residents and ensuring that federal aid is distributed evenly regardless of socio-economic distinctions.

Source: "Forgotten Communities, Unmet Promises: An Unfolding Tragedy on the Gulf Coast." Oxfam America. August 23, 2006.

http://www.oxfamamerica.org/newsandpublications/publications/briefing_papers/briefing_paper.2006-08-21.1978258942?unique=1993460895

- A report released this week by the Opportunity Agenda addresses the status of voting and political participation in the post-Hurricane Katrina Gulf Coast. Specifically, the report makes mention of the overall decrease in voter turnout, the decrease in levels of African-American voting, impediments put in the way of displaced residents seeking to exercise their voting rights, and overall barriers that have made it difficult to express social and community concerns. Policy prescriptions offered by Opportunity Agenda focus on making voting procedures easier and more accessible for citizens affected by the hurricanes.

Source: "Voice: Voting and Political Expression in the Gulf." Opportunity Agenda. August 23, 2006

http://www.opportunityagenda.org/site/c.mwL5KkN0LvH/b.2028087/k.BC6/Katrina_One_Year_Later_Voting_and_Voice.htm

- A USA Today/Gallup poll indicates that only 16% of hurricane victims who were polled felt that their lives were back to normal. Also, 56% of those who have children under the age of 18 said that their kids had been negatively impacted. Another noteworthy item is that 66% of those polled felt that the state and federal response had been fair or poor.

Source: Page, Susan, Risser William. "Katrina struggle goes on for many." USA Today. August 21, 2006. http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-08-20-katrina-year_x.htm

Events and Activities:

- The Rebuilding America's Lower Ninth Ward Policy Panels & Report is being held Monday, August 21 – Monday, August 28. The Sargent Shriver Center for Poverty Law and a coalition of other national anti-poverty groups are launching a "Rebuilding America's Lower Ninth Ward campaign" that promotes the need to address poverty nationwide. The Shriver Center is organizing three policy panels, scheduled for August 21 in Chicago (moderated by the Hannah Rosenthal of the Chicago Foundation for Women and including Peter Edelman as a featured panelist); August 28 in Oakland, CA, with Representative Barbara Lee, and a final date to be announced in New York City. On August 22, the Heartland Alliance for Human Needs in

Chicago (a partner in the America's Ninth Ward campaign) will release a report about the successes in Chicago's handling of the influx of Katrina evacuees, including positive lessons learned. On August 29, the federal government will announce new census data on poverty, and the coalition will issue a press release responding to these. Contact Jim Brandt, Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana at 225-926-8414 x21 office or jimbrandt@LA-PAR.org or Richard Nathan, Rockefeller Institute, at 518-443-5831.

- Petition for Fairness & Opportunity. The National Alliance to Restore Opportunity to the Gulf Coast and Displaced Persons initiated the [Petition for Fairness & Opportunity](#) demanding that the federal government do much more to restore hope and opportunity to our brothers and sisters inside and outside the region. Please either [sign online](#) or [download the form](#) at <http://www.linkedfate.org> and return the petition by September 20, 2006.
- African American Clergy Gulf Tour. The Alliance also sponsored the 'Black clergy bus tour of Gulf Coast,' organized by Gamaliel Foundation, one of the lead organizations of the National Alliance. ([Media release](#)) "[Black clergy tour Katrina damage.](#)" The Times Picayune, August 17, 2006.
- Katrina Commemorative Worship Services. The Alliance also supports National Katrina Commemorative Worship Services to be held on Sunday, August 27, 2006 at 10 am at the [Riverside Church in New York City](#) (sponsored by [the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference](#)). The Alliance and its partners have also disseminated worship materials to thousands of churches, synagogues and mosques across the country who may wish to use them in their own anniversary services.

Official Comments and Concerns:

- The Associated Press asked notable Americans to comment on whether the deep divide of race and poverty in the Gulf and the U.S. has narrowed over the past year. For more extensive quotes visit the web link (<http://www.katc.com/Global/story.asp?S=5301670>).
 - "People get mad at me because I don't talk about race or racism. To me, poverty is the thing. If you don't have money, you're going to have a hard time at everything, no matter what your skin color is. (...) That talk about a "Chocolate City," that was so silly. If it's a chocolate city, where is the green going to come from? Because most of us don't have a lot of that. The color this city really needs to think about is green." - *Chef Leah Chase*.
 - "The mayor says he wants a chocolate city. You know what happens with chocolate when you leave it out too long? It melts. All of us are gonna end up melting and disappearing (...) They're not doing nothing for us because we're black and we're poor." - *Stephanie Mingo*.
 - "Katrina revealed that there are people in America much poorer than it is publicly acknowledged. The nation didn't know just how segregated we are. Now they know. The nation didn't know just how bad our segregated schools are. Now they know." - *Andrei Codrescu*.
 - "As far as race in America is concerned, Katrina was just another example of the failure of the people of the United States to come to terms with a centuries-old problem ... and make a forthright effort to solve it. Thus, it ranks with the failure of our schools to serve

the needs of blacks and whites alike. ... It is a bed-mate with the disparities in housing, not only in New Orleans but across the nation.”- *John Hope Franklin*.

Source: “Reflecting on lessons storm taught about race and poverty.” *The Associated Press State & Local Wire*. August 19, 2006.

- Director of the US Hurricane Service, Max Mayfield warns that the US has not seen the worst or the end of devastating storms. He believes the country is setting itself up for disaster. The potential for a stronger storm than Katrina striking a metropolitan area larger than New Orleans looms large. The Hurricane Center makes a point to remind people from Texas to Maine that they are all at risk for storms and the subsequent surge. Mayfield was shocked by a recent poll that shows 60% of people living along these coasts have no Hurricane plan. “I don't know whether that's going to be this year or five years from now or a hundred years from now. But as long as we continue to develop the coastline like we are, we're setting up for disaster” stated the director. The question remains, is anyone listening?

Source: Loney, Jim. “Worst is yet to come, hurricane chief says.” Reuters. August 22, 2006.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20060822/ts_nm/weather_hurricanes_nightmare_dc

- Tidwell predicts that Katrina-like hurricanes will make their way to D.C. and other coastal cities as a result of global warming. This will export the Big Easy “bowl” effect. In order to tackle rising sea levels, cities will need to either commit to the New Orleans model of levees and floodwalls or explore alternatives. According to Tidwell, this is not a time for inaction on the part of policymakers in D.C., considering that future hurricane devastation will hit so close to home. He quotes his 2003 book *Bayou Farewell* which chronicled the erosion of coastal Louisiana, leaving the area vulnerable to the devastation of a hurricane that would flatten its cities “like a liquid bulldozer”. In order to avoid “Katrina on the Potomac” leaders will need to finally take action and do something.

Source: Tidwell, Mike. “We’re All New Orleanians Now.” *The Washington Post*. August 20, 2006.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/18/AR2006081800984.html>

Displaced persons:

- The continued displacement and barriers to return home of New Orleans residents is fast becoming mainstream news as media outlets in the US focus on the hundreds of thousands of individuals still living as evacuees in host cities from coast to coast. The AP wire released an article detailing experiences of households from Wisconsin and Utah to Nebraska and Colorado. The stories are unique to each family, but common threads of perseverance and struggle unite them all.

Source: Ed White, et. al. “Katrina Refugees Scattered Across U.S.” *The Associated Press*. August 20, 2006.

- Stories that make the news are all selected through processes which are affected by initial images of a situation. Images that dominated media outlets as Hurricane Katrina plowed through the Gulf Coast’s communities were those of violence and criminality. Lori Peek, a sociologist at Colorado State University, says people have formed an image of Katrina evacuees based on these images. Many Denver evacuees she interviews say, “I can’t get a job because I’m from New Orleans.” She believes this is because potential Denver employers assume evacuees from New Orleans must be poor and violent. “It doesn’t matter that those stories about violence were proven untrue,” says Peek. The most defiant aspect of these myths is that there are elements of

truth in them. It is true that New Orleans had and has problems with its schools, its political leaders and the murder rate is high. The question being asked by a scant few, "What is the line between ignoring the problems and creating a stigma?" This question, like so many others surrounding rebuilding in New Orleans, awaits answer(s).

Source: Reckdahl, Katy. "Do You Know What It Means to Myth New Orleans?" *The Independent*. Accessed August 23, 2006. <http://www.theind.com/news2.asp?CID=-207642953>

- Displaced peoples remain scattered across the United States waiting for a way to return home to New Orleans. For some this relocation will become permanent. Evacuee host cities are still in need of federal dollars to reimburse them for continued service extension to displaced populations. Many cities, including Houston, TX, took in evacuees under the understanding that such monetary compensation would be forthcoming from the federal government. However, it is the minority on Capital Hill who are advocating for money to follow displaced people in the rebuilding efforts for New Orleans and not only be allocated to infrastructure development within LA parishes. Houston contracted a survey to be released at the end of September in hopes of quantifying the necessity for increased capacity to support evacuees still living in the city. The unofficial summary report suggests 220,000 evacuees are still living in the city. Fifty-nine percent of these displaced peoples are without employment and 41% of the households survive on less than \$500 per month. As one city employee commented, "what the federal government doesn't seem to understand is that this isn't just a six-month or one-year crisis, it's a marathon."
Source: Axtman, Kris. "With the Bulk of Katrina Evacuees, Texans begin to feel burden." *The Christian Science Monitor*. August 22, 2006. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0822/p04s01-usc.html>

- According to a Texas Health and Human Services Commission survey, one year after Katrina of the 251,000 evacuees still in Texas, 60% are jobless, 54% are receiving federal subsidies and 41% are living on less than \$500 a month. These displaced were once among the poorest residents of New Orleans and are now among the poorest Texans. Communities are concerned of the burden this places on them once relief funds run out. While Texas received \$428 million in federal Housing and Urban Development hurricane-relief funding for housing service, more is needed. The state estimates that the cost of social programs going to helping Katrina evacuees reached \$800 million. Goodwill has been eroding. Officials and residents have expressed frustration over the high number of unemployed evacuees.
Source: Horner, Kim. "Struggling to get on their feet: With aid disappearing, nearly 60 percent of evacuees in Texas remain jobless." *The Dallas Morning News*. August 23, 2006. <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/082306dnmetkatoneyear.32d2075.html>

Federal response:

- A year after Hurricane Katrina, the federal government has failed to meet a number of promises made. In terms of emergency assistance, the Government Accountability Office found that FEMA wasted between \$600 million and \$1.4 billion. As for cleanup, while \$3.6 billion have been spent, more debris removal is needed. In terms of housing, while people were rapidly moved out of shelters, the Gulf is still faced with a monumental housing problem. As for rebuilding, the close partnership with the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, the city of New Orleans and other Gulf Coast cities did not result in a speedy process of getting federal aid to residents. In terms of levees, no promises were broken as none were made. Prior to deciding whether to enhance the flood protection system in southern Louisiana, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awaits a study

due in December 2007. To bring the system up to level 5 protection would cost \$30 billion. As for addressing poverty, Bush offered three proposals and only the Gulf Opportunity zone came to pass.

Source: Crenson, Matt. "A year after Katrina, Bush administration fulfills few promises to Gulf Coast." *The Associated Press State & Local Wire*. August 19, 2006.

- Congress has spent \$122 billion for Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, including \$87 billion in emergency spending. Some representatives and senators are asking if any more should be allocated. President Bush reminds that much of the funds have been appropriated, but not spent. How does this amount compare to other disasters? The following figures have been adjusted for inflation (in billions): Katrina, Rita, Wilma, 2005: \$87; Terrorist attacks, 2001: \$30; Four Florida hurricanes, 2004: \$14; Northridge earthquake, 1994: \$12; and Hurricane Andrew, 1992: \$9.
Source: Wolf, Richard. "Katrina costs continue to swell." *The USA Today – Online*. Congressional Research Service. August 22, 2006. http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-08-21-katrina-costs_x.htm
- As of August 2006, 1,446,900 people have registered for FEMA assistance and more than \$5.1 billion has been allocated to emergency expenses, temporary housing, housing repair and replacement, unemployment income, crisis counseling and other needs. FEMA approved \$725 million in Community Disaster Loans to help keep essential services functioning in communities ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. Prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, 385,000 Louisiana homes and businesses had flood insurance policies through FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), with average coverage of \$140,000. To date more than \$13.2 billion has been paid out and another 43,000 NFIP policies have been written.
Source: "FEMA Delivers to Louisiana Citizens" *FEMA*. August 21, 2006. <http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=29070>
- Eleven-months after Katrina, the Environmental Protection Agency gave most of New Orleans and surrounding communities a clean bill of health after concerns of soil and water contamination. The EPA pledged to watch over a handful of toxic hotspots and the Murphy Oil spill in St. Bernard Parish. Federal and state officials indicated that the contamination found in New Orleans was typical of many cities. According to tests for lead in the soil, an EPA toxicologist was quoted saying that widespread lead in the soil was a pre-storm problem and that the hurricane did not increase the problem. To some the inaction on the part of officials in addressing the urban issue of lead is seen as a missed opportunity as the current state of the region would enable action to be taken with minimal disruption to residents. Lead contamination found by the EPA in 14 neighborhoods was referred to the New Orleans Health Department. There are no plans to remove the soil or cap it. Hundreds of test turned up dangerous and cancer-causing chemicals however given that the contamination was isolated these instances were not rendered a long-term public health threat.
The EPA's final report "Summary Results of Sediment Sampling Conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita." Can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/katrina/testresults/sediments/summary.html>. August 17, 2006.
Source: Brown, M. "Final EPA report deems N.O. safe; Pockets of contamination to be monitored; activist disappointed." *Times-Picayune*. August 19, 2006. <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/frontpage/index.ssf?base/news-6/1155971580163240.xml&coll=1>

- Representative Charles Boustany of Louisiana has put pressure on the federal government to explain why they decided to stop paying for hurricane debris removal in its entirety. Recently, FEMA decided that nine parishes, hit mainly by Hurricane Rita, had the capacity to pick up some of the costs. Boustany argued that some southwestern Louisiana parishes hit by Rita are damaged to the point that they would be unable to pick up any of the debris removal costs. When he tried to find out why FEMA made this decision, however, he was told that the information was still sensitive and may not be made available at all. Boustany has been joined by several other Congressional Republicans in his effort to make the federal government transparent on the issue.

Source: Walsh, Bill. "A right to know? Not if you ask FEMA." Times-Picayune. August 18, 2006.

http://www.nola.com/newslogs/topnews/index.ssf?/mtlogs/nola_topnews/archives/2006_08_18.html