

OPINION

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Letter to Bush: Pretend New Orleans is Iraq

Editor's note: Michael Moore, the Flint, Mich. director and producer of "Fahrenheit 911" wrote the following open letter to President Bush five days after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans on Aug. 29.

Dear Mr. Bush:

Any idea where all our helicopters are? It's Day 5 of Hurricane Katrina and thousands remain stranded in New Orleans and need to be airlifted. Where on earth could you have misplaced all our military choppers? Do you need help finding them? I once lost my car in a Sears parking lot. Man, was that a drag.

Also, any idea where all our national guard soldiers are? We could really use them right now for the type of thing they signed up to do like helping with national disasters. How come they weren't there to begin with?

Last Thursday I was in south Florida and sat outside while the eye of Hurricane Katrina! passed over my head. It was only a Category 1 then but it was pretty nasty. Eleven people died and, as of today, there were still homes without power. That night the weatherman said this storm was on its way to New Orleans. That was Thursday! Did anybody tell you? I know you didn't want to interrupt your vacation and I know how you don't like to get bad news. Plus, you had fundraisers to go to and mothers of dead soldiers to ignore and smear. You sure showed her!

Especially like how, the day after the hurricane, instead of flying to Louisiana, you flew to San Diego to party with your business peeps. Don't let people criticize you for this — after all, the hurricane was over and what the heck could you do, put your finger in the dike?

And don't listen to those who, in the coming days, will reveal how you specifically reduced the Army Corps of Engineers' budget for New Orleans this summer for the third year in a row. You just tell them that even if you hadn't cut the money to fix those levees, there weren't going to be any Army engineers to fix them anyway because you had a much more important construction job for them — building democracy in Iraq!

On Day 3, when you finally left your vacation home, I have to say I was moved by how you had your Air Force One pilot descend from the clouds as you flew over New Orleans so you could catch a quick look of the disaster. Hey, I know you couldn't stop and grab a bullhorn and stand on some rubble and act like a commander in chief. Been there done that.

There will be those who will try to politicize this tragedy and try to use it against you. Just have your people keep pointing that out. Respond to nothing. Even those pesky scientists who predicted this would happen because the water in the Gulf of Mexico is getting hotter and hotter making a storm like this inevitable. Ignore them and all their global warming Chicken Littles. There is nothing unusual about a hurricane that was so wide it would be like having one F-4 tornado that stretched from New York to Cleveland.

No, Mr. Bush, you just stay the course. It's not your fault that 30 percent of New Orleans lives in poverty or that tens of thousands had no transportation to get out of town. C'mon, they're black! I mean, it's not like this happened to Kennebunkport. Can you imagine leaving white people on their roofs for five days? Don't make me laugh! Race has nothing — nothing — to do with this!

You hang in there, Mr. Bush. Just try to find a few of our Army helicopters and send them there. Pretend the people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast are near Tikrit.

Turn Pain from Katrina Into Power

Hurricane deemed decade's 'Bloody Sunday'

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Hurricane Katrina's victims have suffered through and endured what will surely be marked as one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history, despite being largely abandoned for several days by the federal government.

Now, as flood waters recede in New Orleans and clean up begins across the Gulf, these survivors must use the painful lessons this ordeal has imparted to empower themselves, their families and their communities. By doing so, they'll ensure that they will never again be privy to such neglect and victimization.

The people of the Gulf Coast were hit by two disasters: Hurricane Katrina and the failure of the federal government to respond to it in a timely manner. According to recently released reports, Katrina ravaged the Gulf for nearly five hours before Michael Brown, head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, requested any aid for the region. The airline industry says the government didn't request help with evacuating storm victims until three days after the storm hit. While no one had any way of predicting just how much havoc the

storm would wreak, news reports indicated Katrina would come down hard. As New Orleans and other cities evacuated, preparing for the worse, it doesn't make sense that the federal government didn't have an emergency response team at the ready. If they had, many more lives could have been saved.

Many experts estimate it will take nearly \$200 billion to rebuild the lives and communities that

must lobby for funds that can be used to create job training centers; with gainful employment comes economic empowerment, economic power breeds independence.

On Sunday, March 7, 1965, civil rights marchers, attempting to bring attention to voting rights violations, peacefully walked east out of Selma, Ala. They only made it six blocks, to the Edmund Pettus Bridge. There, law enforcement officials attacked the demonstrators with tear gas and billy clubs; several marchers were injured. The assault was captured by news media and televised for the entire nation to see. Americans saw firsthand the brutality and victimization black citizens endured. Support for the civil rights movement swelled after "Bloody Sunday."

Hurricane Katrina will be this decade's "Bloody Sunday." The country — and the world — has witnessed the way this government grossly undervalues the lives of the poor and the lives of people of color. Americans, black Americans in particular, have a duty to rally around underserved and marginalized populations in the wake of this disaster. Our brothers and sisters in the Gulf must lead the way.

Judge Greg Mathis is chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



Katrina's victims cannot let those who abandoned them dictate how they reestablish themselves.

were torn apart by Hurricane Katrina. How this money is spent will directly affect the futures of those affected. It's ironic that the federal government — the same government that was slow to respond when these tax paying citizens needed them the most — is now discussing how the funds should be allocated.

Gulf Coast residents must organize and become active participants in the rebuilding process — Katrina's victims cannot let those who abandoned them dictate how they reestablish themselves. Citizens in this overwhelmingly African-American and impoverished region

Women Losing Rights in Iraq

New constitution is huge step backward

BY JENNIFER LAVERDURE

Radical Women, an international feminist group with local headquarters at 819 N. Killingsworth St., is circulating petitions demanding civil rights for women in Iraq and calling for an end to the occupation of Iraq.

Iraqi women are 60 percent of Iraqi society; 93 percent of them support maintaining equal rights secured in the constitution that has been in place since 1959. The timing of the petition campaign is designed to raise attention to the discriminatory articles in the new draft Iraqi constitution and the negative effects the U.S. government's war.

Radical Women supports Iraqi women's widespread resistance to the threatened imposition of Sharia law, which condones marriage of female children, polygamy and other abuses of women, such as beating, stoning, flogging, and forced veiling.

In addition, equal rights in divorce, education, ownership of property and employment are in jeopardy.

The United States, as an occupier, has invented a need to create a new constitution. With fundamentalist clerics in control of the process, as a result of the rushed election process also imposed by the United States, the new constitution is a huge step backwards for women. The U.S. is in essence supporting fundamentalists and feeding sectional rivalries. Iraqis see their country as unified and secular.

Our struggles are closely linked: U.S. feminists are fighting many of the same encroachments on the separation of church and state here at home.

The petition seeks to build awareness and to pressure the Bush government and Congress to end the U.S. presence in Iraq, which

has promoted a climate of violence and led to kidnappings, rapes, prison torture, and murder of female activists. While the press has covered the combat in Iraq and reports daily on injury to U.S. personnel, reports gloss over the severe effects of the conflict on civilians, especially women.

Women in Iraq must cope with the destruction of a basic infrastructure — water, sewer, power, schools and hospitals — an unpredictable food supply, and disease carried by contaminated water; they also face escalating violence in the breakdown of civil order and from U.S. military personnel.

Now they must also anticipate the opportunistic destruction of their civil rights as the most reactionary clerics grab for control of their government and call it democracy.

Jennifer Laverdure is a member of Radical Women in Portland.

YOU'RE INVITED!

OCTOBER 1st 11:00 am– 4:00 pm
Our Environment, Our Health
A N/NE Portland Neighborhood Gathering

Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center (IFCC) and Patton Park
5340 North Interstate Avenue
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You can learn more about making your home and neighborhood safer places to live. Learn about asthma, mold/mildew, air pollution, lead safety, recycling, and more!

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OUR ENVIRONMENT

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11:00am-4:00pm

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