

Disaster Brings Outpouring of Activism

Images also fan personal injustices

(AP)—To African-Americans, Hurricane Katrina has become a generation-defining catastrophe — a disaster with a predominantly black toll, tinged with racism. They've rallied to the cause with an outpouring of activism and generosity.

The people touched by the disaster are not only donating money but gathering supplies, taking in friends and relatives, even heading south to help shoulder the burden of their people.

"You'd have to go back to slavery, or the burning of black towns, to find a comparable event that has affected black people this way," said Darnell M. Hunt, a sociologist and head of the African American studies department at UCLA.

If the rescue effort had not been so mishandled, and if those who suffered so needlessly had not been so black and so poor, perhaps Hurricane Katrina would have been just another destructive storm, alongside the likes of Charley and Andrew and Hugo. (There is no Keisha or Kwame.)

But Katrina's searing images — linking nature's wrath and the nation's wrongs — have fanned the smoldering resentments of the civil rights, Reaganomics and hip-hop eras all at once.

"Something about this is making people remember their own personal injustices," said author damali ayo, whose book "How to Rent a Negro" takes a satirical look at race relations.

"You don't look at Rodney King and say, 'I remember when I got beat up.' But people remember be-



Three days after the hurricane hit, Milvertha Hendricks, 84, waited in the rain outside the convention center in New Orleans for help to arrive.

ing neglected, unimportant, overlooked, thought of as 'less than.' That's a very common experience for black people."

Some 71 percent of blacks say the response to the disaster shows that racial inequality remains a major problem in America, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Sept. 6-7 among 1,000 Americans; 56 percent of whites feel this was not a particularly important lesson.

And while 66 percent of blacks think the government's response would have been faster if most of the victims had been white, 77 percent of whites disagreed.

Many events have transfixed African-Americans: the Rodney King and O.J. Simpson cases, the killings of icons from Martin Luther King Jr. to Tupac Shakur, the crack cocaine epidemic, the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings.

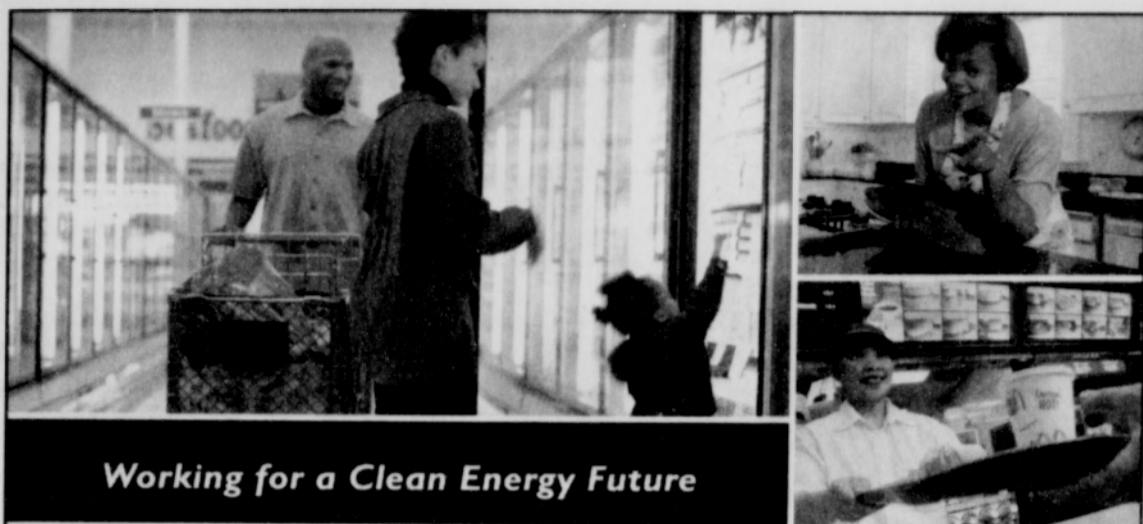
But Katrina is different. It has opened people's eyes — "The face, the cover has been pulled off the invisible poor," said Rev. Ronald E.

Braxton of Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington — and it has created a rare opportunity for people of all backgrounds to make a tangible, immediate difference.

Braxton spoke as his congregation loaded a 50-foot tractor-trailer with antacid, diapers, food, water and other supplies destined for AME churches in Jackson, Miss. and Baton Rouge, La.

Katrina has spurred other black Americans to take crucial roles in relief efforts.

Billionaire Mississippi native Oprah Winfrey is bringing her top-rated show to the Katrina zone, famed defense attorney Willie Gary is planning to transport victims in his 737 jet. Tavis Smiley has devoted much of his television talk show to Katrina.



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Showing off some of the fresh fruits and vegetables from the Interstate Farmers Market to promote some of the ingredients to good health are Bill Beamer of the African American Health Coalition (from left), Alex Lowenthal, manager of the Kaiser Permanente Interstate campus and Matthew Lashua of Multnomah County Commissioner Maria Rojo de Steffey's office.

Fruits, Vegetables for Good Health

Local community leaders and healthcare providers have joined forces to promote good health by encouraging people to eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Bill Beamer of the African American Health Coalition, Alex Lowenthal, manager of the Kaiser Permanente Interstate Avenue campus and Matthew Lashua of Multnomah County Commissioner

Maria Rojo de Steffey's office, headed over to the Interstate Farmers Market in north Portland last Wednesday to kickoff a statewide Five-A-Day campaign.

The start of the autumn harvest was the perfect backdrop for the promotion which encourages people eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily for optimal health.

Health Care Gap Tackled Race, poverty issues addressed

Hurricane Katrina has brought issues of race and poverty to the fore as Americans struggle to comprehend and respond to the devastation in Louisiana and other southern states.

Local leaders and healthcare professionals will discuss the disparities in medical outcomes based on race during the first annual "Bridging the Gap" healthcare fair sponsored by Oregon Health Sciences University.

The all day session will be held Saturday, Sept. 17, at the Lloyd Center Doubletree Hotel, 1000 N.E. Multnomah St.

Attendees will explore the causes for the well-documented differences in treatment and outcomes relative to ethnicity. The conference is open to everyone.

Morning lectures are geared to health care providers and policy advocates and require a \$60 registration fee. Afternoon sessions are free and include free screening, educational and wellness events, referrals and gender and race-specific information on risks and outcomes for arthritis, heart disease, cancer, erectile dysfunction, stroke, dementia, depression and other conditions.

The information is expected to help underserved people advocate for their own health care. Free child care is available in the afternoon along with a Kid's Program, free school supplies and information on childhood obesity, nutrition and fitness.

For more information or to register, go to: www.ohsu.edu/btg.

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