

OPINION

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Rebuilding New Orleans - No Red-Lining Please

Plans reminiscent of uglier time in America

BY MARC H. MORIAL

Nearly six months after the ravage of Hurricane Katrina, a new plan has been proposed to rebuild New Orleans that could shake the foundation of the basic rights to property and freedom of choice we Americans hold dear. And it's happening as we speak.

The "Bring New Orleans Back Commission" recently unveiled a plan that was not only an affront to Katrina victims, but smacked of the exclusion, division and social engineering practices reminiscent of an earlier, uglier time in this nation's history.

The proposal identified "certain neighborhoods" for redevelopment and recommended the demolition of many of the city's most racially diverse ones. Residents from areas like the Ninth Ward, New

Orleans East, and Lakeview would not be permitted to move back for at least four months and would have to prove why their neighborhoods should not be bulldozed. These same neighborhoods represent almost two-thirds of the city and more than half its homeowners. To add insult to injury, the plan pro-



posed a building moratorium that would prohibit returnees from obtaining city permits for their contractors even if they chose to rebuild and not sell their property to the city.

The commission's plan amounts to a massive, red-lining scheme and a giant land grab for real estate developers. Moreover, it has once again called into question the ability of local leadership to demonstrate any ability to unify the community

or marshal the necessary support and resources of the federal government to rebuild the city in earnest. This lethargy has caused some to ask if America should even invest in rebuilding New Orleans? The answer must be yes.

First, we must recognize that Katrina was an equal opportunity destroyer. It devastated the lives and homes of the rich

people were left homeless. Yet, Chicago stands today as one of the nation's great centers of commerce, culture, multiculturalism and diversity.

In the 20th century, San Francisco was ravaged by a great earthquake. It killed more than 700 citizens and caused more than \$400 million in damage. However, today San Francisco is one of the nation and world's great cultural and financial centers.

In 2001, New York City, was struck by a terrorist attack which left nearly 3,000 people of all races, creeds and colors dead, and destroyed two great towers which were symbols of American strength and commerce. Yet, New York City is now experiencing a strong economic rebound. All of these cities have risen from the ashes. They've come back from great disasters.

But, will New Orleans stand alongside San Francisco, Chicago and New York as a city that experiences a great rebound? America must commit to invest its muscle, its might and its will in the rebuilding of this community.

People must have the right to return.

No rebuilding plan should write off, select out or redline any neighborhood. Returnees need a "9/11"-like victim's compensation fund and fair repayment at up to 120 percent of their home equity for property.

The federal government should support the building of a Category 5 levee and flood protection system with coastal erosion protections. We could pay for this system with some of the \$6 billion dollars earned annually from oil and gas leases located along Louisiana's coastline. Katrina survivors must retain their right to vote and have the first opportunities to work in the region. And finally, a memorial to the 1,000 victims who died must be created to honor them.

The images and reality of Katrina struck this nation. It changed our lives, and it changed the course of events in our lifetime. New Orleans and the region need to be rebuilt, but any plan must include everyone.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of National Urban League and former Mayor of New Orleans.

No rebuilding plan should write off, select out or redline any neighborhood.

Energizing our Social Justice Movement

Supporting Rainbow/Push

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

In the hours, days, weeks and months following Hurricane Katrina, countless people showed their support for the storm's victims by making financial contributions. The services the money funded were and are still very much needed.

However, more than six months after the worst natural disaster in American history, the residents of New Orleans also need a push for social justice. On April 1st, Rainbow PUSH will be in New Orleans, call-



ing for that very thing.

The "Our Right to Return and Rebuild" march and rally is designed to respond to the two tragedies that traumatized

so many people, many of them black: Hurricane Katrina itself and the government's inability to respond to the needs of those affected.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the federal government was slow to send aid to the hardest hit areas, slow to rescue survivors trapped in the heavily flooded city and slow to find suitable shelter for those lucky enough to evacuate the city before the storm hit.

Katrina has been long gone, but the government's incompetence continues to victimize thousands of people.

Unfortunately, the government's efforts haven't improved with time. Recently, the federal government cut off temporary housing to thousands of Katrina evacuees. Yet, several thousand trailer homes, caught up in government red tape and bureaucracy, are sitting unused.

Government officials have to yet to reveal a long-term plan that pro-

vides stable housing for evacuees, many of them elderly or ill, and they've yet to ensure adequate funding for the rebuilding process. Katrina has been long gone, but the government's incompetence continues to victimize thousands of people.

The Katrina tragedy has shown the country - and the world - the way this government discounts the lives of the poor and the lives of

people of color. Americans, African-Americans in particular, cannot allow this blatant disregard for human life to persist.

The Katrina tragedy has been compared to "Bloody Sunday." On Sunday, March 7, 1965, civil rights marchers, looking to bring attention to voting rights violations, began a peaceful march out of Selma, Ala. They only made it six blocks, to the Edmund Pettus Bridge. There, police officers attacked them with tear gas and billy clubs; several marchers were injured. The assault was filmed by a news crew and televised for the entire nation to see. Americans saw firsthand the type of brutality and victimization black citizens endured.

Support for the civil rights movement grew after "Bloody Sunday." Hurricane Katrina is this generation's "Bloody Sunday." We must now begin to put our voices and our money behind the energized social justice movement.

As National Vice President of Rainbow PUSH, I urge you to support our efforts, beginning with the New Orleans march.

To learn about other ways you can help advance the movement, call PUSH at 866-559-4004 or visit [www. http://www.return-and-rebuild.org/index.htm](http://www.return-and-rebuild.org/index.htm).

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Youth Services Model For All Missouri breaks juvenile lockup trap

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

The criminalization of our children has reached a dangerous increase.

Researchers and practitioners prefer mentoring, tutoring, gang prevention, substance abuse programs, dropout reduction, community service, nurse visitation initiatives, and quality after-school and summer programs, as well as jobs. These are among the right preventive investments in our nation's youth.

Since 2001, however, the Bush administration has proposed a reduction in funds of nearly 66 percent for federal youth prevention and intervention programs. Actual funding has

dropped more than 40 percent, with additional cuts being considered for next year - a reckless budgetary decimation of the programs and services that help keep children out of trouble and on the right path. If we know what works, how can we allow the government to ignore the immediate needs of children, particularly poor and minority children?

Eliminating youth services condemns us to much more pain in the long run in terms of our criminal justice system, incarceration and other public costs. Conservative estimates place the total savings of diverting one child from a lifetime of crime at about \$1.5 million. Most importantly,

that child has the opportunity to succeed in life - an opportunity that is each person's God-given right.

There are models for how we can help more of our nation's



'If we know what works, how can we allow the government to ignore the immediate needs of children.'

children. The state of Missouri's approach is one. Experts praise Missouri's Division of Youth Services as a "guiding light." They credit Mark Steward, the

division's recently retired director, with building and sustaining the country's finest state juvenile corrections system. Dubbed the "Missouri model" by reformers in other states, it emphasizes re-

habilitating young offenders in homey, small-group settings that incorporate constant therapy and positive peer pressure under the direct guidance of well-trained

counselors.

When a young person commits a crime, judges generally reserve commitment to a Division of Youth Services residential facility for only the toughest of cases - about 1,300 each year. For most youths, "aftercare" consists of a prolonged relationship with a case manager. Many youths are also assigned a "tracker" - often college students, or sometimes residents of the youth's home community - who monitor their progress. Missouri also operates 11 non-residential "day treatment" centers year-round during school

hours, and these facilities offer a way station for teens after leaving a residential facility.

How do we know Missouri's approach is working? A long-term recidivism study showed that only 8 percent of youths released in 1999 were incarcerated in youth or adult corrections three years later. Another 19 percent were sentenced to adult probation. This means that nearly three-fourths of these youths avoided prison or probation for at least three years. Comparatively, Missouri's results are remarkable.

Marian Wright Edelman is president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund.

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Letter to the Editor

Insist on Exit Plan

While attempting to improve his ever-diminishing poll ratings and distract the American public into thinking we still need to be in Iraq, the president is found once again relying on the doctrine of staging pre-emptive attacks.

Instead of using such Orwellian inspired tactics (e.g., never-ending war) for his public rela-

tions campaign, the president needs to come up with an exit strategy with a timeline to bring our troops home. Congress, on both sides of the aisle, has an important responsibility to stand up to the president and insist on an exit strategy, which will stop the Iraqi insurgency that is fueled by the presence of our troops.

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