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# Bells Toll One Year after Katrina

## Gulf Coast survivors pause for memorials

(AP) -- Bells tolled in the shattered city of New Orleans Tuesday morning, marking the moment one year earlier when New Orleans' levees buckled and unleashed a torrent of water that ripped homes from their foundations and sent tens of thousands of residents into an uncertain exile.



Members of the One New Orleans Mass Choir sing during the City-Wide Remembrance, Renewal, Rebirth Service commemorating the first anniversary of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans Tuesday. (AP photo)

As the bells pealed, survivors of the storm gathered outside City Hall, commemorating the moment at 9:38 a.m. when New Orleans began its spiral into a watery hell.

Mayor Ray Nagin told the city at a midday interfaith service it was time to take responsibility for rebuilding.

"If government can't get you your check on time, it says you need to do something," Nagin said. "It says your neighbors need to come together and all you need to do is cook a pot of red beans and they'll bring over the hammers and the nails."

Hurricane Katrina made landfall 65 miles south of the city in the tiny fishing village of Buras. Within hours, New Orleans' protective levees collapsed, causing one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history that killed more than 1,800 people.

One year later, the Gulf Coast commemorated the storm that brought the region to its breaking point.

In pockmarked neighborhoods choked with weeds, in church pews and in gutted community centers, residents held public and private vigils. At each of the city's broken levees, they tossed wreaths of flowers, sending them bobbing into the calm, black water, marking the geography of the crescendoing flood.

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At a somber prayer service in the 285-year-old St. Louis Cathedral, President Bush made an impassioned plea for displaced residents to return to New Orleans.

"I know you love New Orleans, and New Orleans needs you," Bush said. "She needs people coming home. She needs people - she needs those saints to come marching back."

Later, at the city's convention center, where thousands of haggard refugees had waited in the sweltering sun for rescue after the storm, the mayor joined residents in dedicating a memorial to Katrina's dead. One by one, they laid a white carnation at the monument, saying the name of a loved one.

Under a calm, gray sky in Gulfport, Miss., the community remembered 14 residents lost to the storm.

In St. Bernard Parish, where just about every building was flooded after the levees buckled, 400 people gathered for mass at Our Lady of Prompt Succor, a church named for the saint to whom Catholics in Louisiana traditionally pray for protection from hurricanes.

The working class community lost 129 people to the flooding.

The one-year mark is also a reminder of how far each survivor has come, Gulfport Mayor Brent Warr noted as he spoke near calm waters of the Mississippi sound.

"We're not well. We're not finished, but I will say this: We've made it," Warr said. "Let's move on, let's move forward, and let's do that together."



Floodwaters from Hurricane Katrina fill the streets near downtown New Orleans on Aug. 30, 2005. One year later, the city still awaits billions of dollars in aid promised by the federal government. (AP photo)

## Black Caucus Could Gain Power

The Congressional Black Caucus is positioned to dramatically increase its clout next Congress if Democrats win control of the House in the November General Election. A recent article in "The Hill" said the 43-member group, already one of the most powerful blocs among House Democrats, would control as many as five committee gavels in

a Democratic House, including two exclusive panels, Ways and Means and Judiciary.

Congressional Black Caucus members would also lead 15 subcommittees, six of them on exclusive panels. The newspaper said Caucus Chairman Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., would be a contender for majority whip.

## Correction: Credit Where Due

Karanja Crews and students from his local cable television show NEXT: Generation of Leaders are partners in an effort to get young people of color involved in the political process and voting in the November General Election. The drive is part of the Community Fellow Program, organized by local activists Johnell Bell, Charles McGee and Cyreena Boston and the Oregon Bus Project. The Portland Observer failed to give proper credit to the fellow program in last week's issue.

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