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OPINION

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Indictment a Blow to Katrina Recovery

fall from grace

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

U.S. Rep. William Jefferson, who represents areas of New Orleans hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina, has been indicted on 16 counts, including fraud, money-laundering and ac-

found guilty, the 60-year old Jefferson could possibly spend the rest of his life in prison.

While Jefferson, literally, fights for his life, the district he was trusted to represent must deal with the fall out from his very public fall from grace.

Jefferson's indictment will surely hinder the city's already slow-moving rebuilding efforts. Politicians already reluctant to finance the redevelopment in the city's poorest areas will use Jefferson's indictment as yet another excuse to withhold much needed funds.

Jefferson's indictment is really no surprise. In August 2005, FBI agents raided his home and found \$90,000, separated into \$10,000 stacks, wrapped in foil and stored in containers, hiding in his freezer. city still loses. Business leaders

Federal prosecutors say this

ing fraudulent activities weren't local to but to dirty dealings in Ghana and Nigeria. Jefferson was so beloved in his district

dals, he won reeleccepting some \$500,000 in bribes. If tion by a wide margin last November

that, despite the scan-

William Jefferson's The FBI had been watching and other hard it areas. These in-Jefferson for some time, suspect- dictments give them that excuse. It would far too easy for them to deny redevelopment proposals, his Louisiana district, citing 'unstable' or 'corrupt' leadership as a reason not to rebuild.

> August marks the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Some parts of the city look exactly as they did the day the flood waters receded. The city of New Orleans and its people have been through so much. The people of New Or-The people of New Orleans are leans must make sure Jefferson's

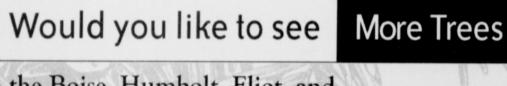
now going to pay for their faith in indictment doesn't slow the re-If Jefferson is guilty...he has betrayed the trust of residents of a city that have already endured too much.

Jefferson. The city of New Orleans, covery efforts. A letter writing especially the poor districts campaign to the local media and Jefferson represented, deserve a lawmakers that demands politician who is committed to re- Jefferson's district not suffer as a building the region, not fattening his pockets.

If Jefferson is guilty - and this is rest of the country - can make sure up to the courts to decide - he has betrayed the trust of residents of a an obligation to make sure the city that have already endured too much. Even if he is innocent, the and politicians who want to gentrify vice president of Rainbow PUSH money was part of the \$100,000 in New Orleans on a large scale are cash an FBI informant had given looking for any excuse to stall Jefferson just a few days earlier. progress in the city's Ninth Ward ship Conference.

result of his pending trial is one way the city's residents- and the this doesn't happen. We all have people of New Orleans aren't victimized yet again.

Judge Greg Mathis is national and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leader-



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Greater Diversity Needed in Media

TV newsrooms far from realistic

BY MARC H. MORIAL The controversy over racially and sexually insensitive remarks made by radio shock jock Don Imus toward Rutgers University's women's

basketball squad tivity accorded people of color over 2005. the nation's airwaves and the lack of diversity among the broadcast media's ranks.

In a nation, where 33 percent of the population is of color, where the civil rights movement opened doors for minorities in corporate America, government and the halls of academia, the picture reflected on the public airwayes is far from realistic.

serve," concludes a recent report norities by 7 to 1, and that two out by the Washington, D.C.-based of every three guests were white media watchdog group Media men. Matters. cable news network shows in April, terms of newsroom employment of found that even during the week of minorities but less than stellar. the Imus controversy, whites - es- Nearly 7,800 minority journalists pecially men - tended to dominate. or 13.6 percent of all full-time jour-They accounted for from 54 per- nalists - worked in the nation's cent of the guests booked on CNN newsrooms in 2006, down slightly to 72 percent of the guests on Fox from 13.8 percent in 2005, accord-News Channel.

back of sorts to a range of 74 per- - until after Imus. cent on CNN to 82 percent on MSNBC.

It's not any better on the Sunday morning talk shows, Media Matters found in its "If It's Sunday, It's Still Conservative" report. The study followed up on the National Urban League's 2005 Sunday Morning Apartheid report, which found that only 8 per-

guest appearances on news talk

We're not just advocating media diversity for the sake of diversity but for the substantial benefits it delivers to the public at large.

whelmingly white and male pre- whites tended to outnumber mi- unfortunate controversy such as

"Cable news remains an over- shows in 2005 and 2006, found that props here but it shouldn't take an

NBC News, which carried Imus

on MSNBC, took three bold steps

toward diversifying its ranks in the

weeks following the controversy.

The news organization hired former

Newsweek editor Mark Whitaker

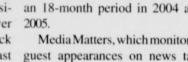
to be second in command, ap-

pointed weekend Today Show host

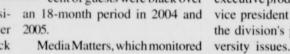
Lester Holt to serve as weekend

anchor of NBC Nightly News, and

I must give NBC News some



promoted weekend Today Show cent of guests were black over executive producer Lyne Pitts to be made all too clear the lack of sensi- an 18-month period in 2004 and vice president of NBC News and the division's point person on di-



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EASONS

MARKET

white representation made a come- Editors.

The picture at America's daily The group, which monitored newspapers is a little bit brighter in ing to an annual census from the After the Imus controversy, American Society of Newspaper

> When the National Urban League released our Sunday Morning Apartheid report, we encouraged cable and network outlets to take positive and productive steps to provide their viewers a broader perspective of public policy issues. chief executive officer of the Na-Since then, not a lot has been done tional Urban League.

the one surrounding Imus' insensitive remarks for news executives to understand the importance of di- · versity to the journalism process for the constituents it serves.

At the National Urban League, we're not just advocating media diversity for the sake of diversity but for the substantial benefits it delivers to the public at large.

Broadening the pool of guests and anchors and reporters improves the tenor and quality of the debate, offers a richer and more varied array of information to viewers and helps fulfill the responsibility of news outlets to educate the American public to make them better equipped to make informed political and policy choices.

Marc H. Morial is president and

We Must Stem Gun Violence

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

We must face the hard truth that firearms are so easy to acquire that lethal mass shootings are mathematically inevitable.

The most recent figures from the Centers for Disease Con-

trol and Prevention reveal that 2,825 children and teens died from gunshots in 2004. Every four days, another 32 children die. About as many children and teens died by firearms in America in 2004 as the total number of American service men and women who died in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan since those wars began.

Fifty-eight preschoolers were shot that year, as compared to 57 law enforcement officers. Shooting deaths occur all around us, day in and day out. But we don't act to control gun proliferation.

Our nation's leaders must enact and enforce common sense gun safety laws that check the flow of firearms into our communities. We need legislation that requires thorough background checks for every gun sale. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms must receive of the Black Community Crusade sufficient funds to pursue corrupt for Children.

gun dealers and black marketers. Stiffer antitrafficking laws must be adopted nationwide. And the Assault Weapons Ban must be immediately reinstated.

Parents and community leaders have a responsibility as well. They should remove guns from their homes; organize nonviolent conflict resolution support groups in their congregations and communities; and refuse to buy video games and other products for their children and teens that glamorize or make violence acceptable or fun.

We have the power to act now to reduce gun proliferation and violence. It's the responsibility of all of us.

For more information on the cost of gun violence in America today. the Children's Defense Fund's "Protect Children, Not Guns," is available on line at childrensdefense.org/ gunreport.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund and a working committee member





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