

# OPINION

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## Indictment a Blow to Katrina Recovery

William Jefferson's 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 accepting some \$500,000 in bribes. If found guilty, the 60-year old Jefferson could possibly spend the rest of his life in prison.



The FBI had been watching Jefferson for some time, suspecting fraudulent activities weren't local to his Louisiana district, but to dirty dealings in Ghana and Nigeria. Jefferson was so beloved in his district that, despite the scandals, he won reelection by a wide margin last November.

The people of New Orleans are now going to pay for their faith in

and other hard hit areas. These indictments give them that excuse. It would far too easy for them to deny redevelopment proposals, 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 Orleans must make sure Jefferson's indictment doesn't slow the re-

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Jefferson. The city of New Orleans, especially the poor districts Jefferson represented, deserve a politician who is committed to rebuilding the region, not fattening his pockets.

If Jefferson is guilty - and this is up to the courts to decide - he has betrayed the trust of residents of a city that have already endured too much. Even if he is innocent, the city still loses. Business leaders and politicians who want to gentrify New Orleans on a large scale are looking for any excuse to stall progress in the city's Ninth Ward

covery efforts. A letter writing campaign to the local media and lawmakers that demands Jefferson's district not suffer as a result of his pending trial is one way the city's residents - and the rest of the country - can make sure this doesn't happen. We all have an obligation to make sure the people of New Orleans aren't victimized yet again.

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



## 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 made all too clear the lack of sensitivity accorded people of color over 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 airwaves is far from realistic.

"Cable news remains an overwhelmingly white and male preserve," concludes a recent report by the Washington, D.C.-based media watchdog group Media Matters.

The group, which monitored cable news network shows in April, found that even during the week of the Imus controversy, whites - especially men - tended to dominate. They accounted for from 54 percent of the guests booked on CNN to 72 percent of the guests on Fox News Channel.

After the Imus controversy, white representation made a come-

back of sorts to a range of 74 percent 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 percent of guests were black over an 18-month period in 2004 and 2005.

Media Matters, which monitored guest appearances on news talk

shows - until after Imus.

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, appointed weekend Today Show host Lester Holt to serve as weekend anchor of NBC Nightly News, and promoted weekend Today Show executive producer Lyne Pitts to be vice president of NBC News and the division's point person on diversity issues.

I must give NBC News some

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shows in 2005 and 2006, found that whites tended to outnumber minorities by 7 to 1, and that two out of every three guests were white men.

The picture at America's daily newspapers is a little bit brighter in terms of newsroom employment of minorities but less than stellar. Nearly 7,800 minority journalists - or 13.6 percent of all full-time journalists - worked in the nation's newsrooms in 2006, down slightly from 13.8 percent in 2005, according to an annual census from the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

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. Since then, not a lot has been done

props here but it shouldn't take an unfortunate controversy such as the one surrounding Imus' insensitive remarks for news executives to understand the importance of diversity 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 chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

## 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 Control 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 sufficient funds to pursue corrupt



gun dealers and black marketers. Stiffer anti-trafficking 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 glorify 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 online at [childrensdefense.org/gunreport](http://childrensdefense.org/gunreport).

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund and a working committee member of the Black Community Crusade for Children.

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