

A City of Despair and Lawlessness

The Refugees

Displacement Of Historic Proportions

By DAVID VON DREHLE
and JACQUELINE SALMON
Washington Post Staff Writers

The largest displacement of Americans since the Civil War reverberated across the country from its starting point in New Orleans yesterday, as more than half a million people uprooted by Hurricane Katrina sought shelter, sustenance and the semblance of new lives.

Storm refugees overwhelmed the state of Louisiana and poured into cities from coast to coast, crowding sports arenas, convention centers, schools, churches and the homes of friends, relatives and even strangers. Red Cross officials reported that every shelter in a seven-state region was already full — 76,000 people in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana. Hundreds of miles from New Orleans, hotels were jammed or quickly filling.

Rich and poor alike, they found themselves starting over. The former began buying new houses and leasing new office space. The latter waited in lines for a bar of soap or a peanut butter sandwich.

Katrina has scattered more than twice as many people as the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, and unmoored more people in a few days than fled the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. Estimating from census data, about 150,000 of the displaced lived below the poverty line even before they lost everything. Far more than 50,000 of them are past retirement age.

Cities and hamlets, charities and individuals stepped up to help. In Washington, District officials made plans to open a shelter in the D.C. Armory, and 415 retired veterans were moved from the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport, Miss., to a similar facility

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HURRICANE KATRINA: THE AFTERMATH

At Ground Zero In Mississippi

In Waveland, Miss., which officials call Katrina's "Ground Zero," all the buildings are gone. All across Mississippi, frustration and fatigue begin to replace shock. **A9**

How to Help Storm Victims

Less than a week after Katrina hit, American donations to help storm victims are nearing the \$100 million mark. A list of groups collecting aid. **A12**

An Overview Of New Orleans

Satellite photographs reveal the extent of the flooding and damage to levees, highways and neighborhoods in New Orleans. **A20**

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■ **IN METRO:** Efforts to help storm refugees coming to the region. **B1**

■ **IN BUSINESS:** Moving a barge, lost records, sprawling economic effects. **D1**

■ **IN STYLE:** Stubbornness and steadfastness amid the catastrophe. **C1**



A military helicopter makes a food and water drop to survivors of Hurricane Katrina near the convention center in New Orleans.

BY ERIC GAY — ASSOCIATED PRESS

On the Streets

For Those Remaining, 'This Is Total Chaos'

By PETER SLEVIN
Washington Post Staff Writer

NEW ORLEANS, Sept. 1 — Desperate to help his ailing sister-in-law, who had gone five days without kidney dialysis, Samuel Sorapuru tried to flag down National Guard vehicles. He begged ambulance drivers to stop. He appealed to anyone he encountered in uniform. In the end, he stood for an hour on a highway overpass crowded with stranded refugees — and tried to wave in a helicopter. No luck.

"This," he said, "is total chaos."

Thousands of New Orleans residents remained stranded in a crippled city Thursday as badly overmatched authorities did what little they could and prayed for reinforcements to arrive soon.

Refugees ran short of energy, patience and hope even as fleets of buses hauled thousands out of town on the only passable exit road. Hundreds more in need of medical help were evacuated by helicopter, only to be marooned on stretchers on the crowded floors of the New Orleans International Airport.

Authorities there set up a morgue, and began

using it.

Downtown, communication was minimal, leadership distant. There was no central organizing point, no evident headquarters to which a resident could appeal for help or news. Police officers and National Guard members, along with law officers imported from around the state, rarely knew more than what they could see with their own eyes.

Asked how much information she had, Natchitoches, La., probation officer Melissa Murray

See NEW ORLEANS, A23, Col. 4

The Racial Dimension

'To Me, It Just Seems Like Black People Are Marked'

By WIL HAYGOOD
Washington Post Staff Writer

BATON ROUGE, La., Sept. 1 — It seemed a desperate echo of a bygone era, a mass of desperate-looking black folk on the run in the Deep South. Some without shoes.

It was high noon Thursday at a rest stop on the edge of Baton Rouge when several buses pulled in, fresh from the calamity of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

Hundreds piled out, dragging themselves as if floating through some kind of thick liquid. They were exhausted, some crying.

"It was like going to hell and back," said Bernadette Washington, 38, a black homemaker from Orleans Parish who had slept under a bridge the night before with her five children and her

husband. She sighed the familiar refrain, stinging as an old-time blues note: "All I have is the clothes on my back. And I been sleeping in them for three days."

While hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina, the images that have filled the television screens have been mainly of black Americans — grieving, suffering, in some cases looting and desperately trying to leave New Orleans. Along with the intimate tales of family drama and survival being played out Thursday, there was no escaping that race had become a subtext to the unfolding drama of the hurricane's aftermath.

"To me," said Bernadette Washington, "it just seems like black people are marked. We have so many troubles and

See RACE, A14, Col. 1

The Toll at the Pump

Gas Supplies Tight; Bush Asks Drivers to Conserve

By SARA KEHAULANI GOO and JUSTIN BLUM
Washington Post Staff Writers

Motorists gearing up to hit the road for the Labor Day weekend are already confronting gasoline shortages, closed stations and prices rising daily across the nation, and relief is expected to come slowly.

After meeting with Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, President Bush said Hurricane Katrina had severely disrupted U.S. energy sup-

plies and asked consumers to conserve fuel in the coming days. "Americans should be prudent in their use of energy during the course of the next few weeks," he said. "Don't buy gas if you don't need it."

Some oil companies, including Chevron Corp., have begun rationing the amount of gas they sell to suppliers.

Several stations in the Washington area ran dry yesterday, and shortages hit even harder elsewhere. Some local customers said rising prices

prompted them to top off their tanks, contributing to the area's diminishing gas supplies.

In West Virginia, stations ran out of gas overnight, only to be saved by a new supply of fuel arriving by truck before the morning rush hour. Customers in the mountains of North Carolina could buy only premium gasoline because regular had sold out. Confused drivers in Georgia saw prices that had climbed as high as \$5 a gallon suddenly

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Bernadette Washington holds her 3-month-old daughter Nadirah.

BY CAROL GUZY — THE WASHINGTON POST

Thousands Stranded in New Orleans; Troops Pour In

By SAM COATES and DAN EGGEN
Washington Post Staff Writers

NEW ORLEANS, Sept. 1 — Federal and local authorities struggled Thursday to regain control of this ruined and lawless city, where tens of thousands of desperate refugees remained stranded with little hope of rescue and rapidly diminishing supplies of food and drinking water.

The chaos that has gripped New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina showed signs Thursday of spreading to Baton Rouge and along the storm-ravaged Gulf Coast, as weary refugees continued their slow and confused exodus to higher ground. Fresh waves of National Guard troops began pouring into the region in an attempt to quell the unrest, but large swaths of New Orleans and other sodden areas remained essentially ungoverned.

By the end of the day, the American Red Cross announced that its hurricane shelters were full, with an estimated 76,000 refugees at facilities in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Texas and Arkansas. The official death toll in Mississippi climbed above 100, and Louisiana officials repeated warnings that thousands could be dead in New Orleans. The Energy Department said about 1.8 million customers remained without power due to Katrina.

Those left behind in the Crescent City, including many with diabetes and other worsening health conditions, clung to rooftops, gathered on overpasses and bridges, and huddled on islands of dry ground, waiting for help that never came. Parents carried small children, and grown children carried their elderly parents through the flotsam. Corpses floated in fetid waters and lay amid the crowds of

See KATRINA, A22, Col. 1

Government's Role

Planning, Response Are Faulted

By JOSH WHITE
and PETER WHORISKEY
Washington Post Staff Writers

Tens of thousands of people remain stranded on the streets of New Orleans in desperate conditions because officials failed to plan for a serious levee breach and the federal response to Hurricane Katrina was slow, according to disaster experts and Louisiana government officials.

Though experts had long predicted that the city — which sits mostly below sea level and is surrounded by water — would face unprecedented devastation after an immense hurricane, they said problems were worsened by a late evacuation order and insufficient emergency shelter for as many as 100,000 people.

Terry Ebbert, head of New Orleans's emergency operations, said the response from the Federal Emergency Management Agency was inadequate and that Louisiana officials have been overwhelmed.

"This is a national disgrace. FEMA has been here three days, yet there is no command and control," Ebbert told the Associated Press as he watched refugees evacuate the Superdome yesterday. "We can send massive amounts of aid to tsunami

See RESPONSE, A18, Col. 1

INSIDE

New Movie Features in Weekend

Today we introduce a new format for Weekend's movie section featuring industry interviews, an expanded DVD page, and compact reviews of all movies opening this week. We will continue to offer other popular features, including the Family Filmgoer and mini reviews of all films now showing in our area, and the Movie Directory with movie times. More in-depth reviews of select films are in Style. **WEEKEND & STYLE**



Redskins Lose In Overtime, 26-20

Mark Brunell watches in frustration as a replay is contested in the final preseason game, against the Ravens. **SPORTS, E1**

Calif. Senate Votes For Gay Marriage

California's Senate votes to legalize same-sex marriage — the first such move without a court order. **NATION, A2**

Montgomery Planner's Exit

A county official says he will retire amid a controversy over a Clarksburg project. **METRO, B3**

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