

2006

Many Still Experiencing the Terrifying Effects of Katrina

Clemon Ashley

Follow this and additional works at: <http://lawcommons.luc.edu/pilr>

 Part of the [Housing Law Commons](#), and the [Social Welfare Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Clemon Ashley, *Many Still Experiencing the Terrifying Effects of Katrina*, 12 Pub. Interest L. Rptr. 54 (2006).
Available at: <http://lawcommons.luc.edu/pilr/vol12/iss1/10>

This News is brought to you for free and open access by LAW eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Public Interest Law Reporter by an authorized administrator of LAW eCommons. For more information, please contact law-library@luc.edu.

MANY STILL EXPERIENCING THE TERRIFYING EFFECTS OF KATRINA

By CLEMON ASHLEY

It has been more than one year since Hurricane Katrina tore New Orleans to pieces.¹ Countless were left homeless; and some people were left without food or water for days.² The disarray and tragic outcomes highlighted the government's disorganization and unprepared nature, while also uncovering the stark poverty of the region.³ In the past year, local communities continue to adjust to the impact of "Katrina homeless," while local, state and federal government officials struggle to identify and implement strategies and initiatives to address the problem.

Hurricane Katrina exacerbated the effects of homelessness. “Katrina destroyed more than 200,000 homes in Louisiana- three times as many homes in Louisiana as it did in other affected states,” said Stephanie Landrieu Allen, Press Secretary for U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana.⁴

Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney (D-GA) warned that a new underclass of “Katrina Homeless” was born in the wake of the damage.⁵ “As many as 7,000 Louisiana citizens are still living in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailers and have not yet been able to rebuild,” said Henry Bass, Supervisor of the Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center.⁶ “In February of next year they will be shut off” and evicted from FEMA housing, said Bass.⁷

As a result of the hurricanes, Baton Rouge, an area estimated to have received 130,000 evacuees, is suffering from a massive housing shortage.⁸ Other effects include rent increases.⁹ “If landlords could get \$325 a month before, they now can get \$500 a month for apartments” according to Randy Nichols, Executive Director of the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless in Baton Rouge.¹⁰

Baton Rouge saw an explosion in housing inquiries and requests for rental assistance. The local call assistance line experienced a two-fold increase in call volume, from 35-50 calls to over a 100 calls a day requesting general housing assistance.¹¹

Katrina shifted the homeless population not only in-state, but also out-of-state, most notably to Illinois. Chicago absorbed more Katrina evacuees, approximately 5800, than any location outside the South, and the effort to situate each of them in stable conditions required a feat of massive coordination among the city’s social service communities.¹²

More than a dozen agencies, including the Salvation Army and the Chicago Department of Human Services, teamed together to offer services such as household start-up subsidies, transportation, food and transitional jobs.¹³ But challenges remain. One year after the Chicago relief effort began; FEMA has yet to reimburse anything for the services provided to evacuees.¹⁴ The costs to the Chicago agencies that provided services have yet to be determined.

International efforts are taking place to address the lingering effects of Katrina. Qatar, a small oil-rich country in the Persian Gulf, is assisting New Orleans with a \$2 million contribution to repair the facilities of 11 New Orleans agen-

cies that aid the homeless.¹⁵ Just last May, Qatar sent \$61 million to help in the recovery from Hurricane Katrina.¹⁶

Martha Kegel, Executive Director of a consortium called UNITY of Greater New Orleans, noted that the funds are greatly needed given the increase in the homeless population in New Orleans.¹⁷ The money will be used to repair damaged buildings that provided housing to homeless people before the storm.¹⁸ The large numbers of hurricane evacuees can now be adequately housed alongside residents who were homeless prior to Katrina.¹⁹

Local and smaller scale efforts include the reopening of the Duvernay Residence in New Orleans, part of a Coming Back Home Initiative by Volunteers of America.²⁰ Volunteers of America is an organization that focuses on providing low-income families with a decent affordable place to live.²¹ This 70-unit residence the nonprofit built marks the beginning towards a goal of creating more than 1,000 affordable housing rental units in the aftermath of Katrina.²²

Not only are local relief efforts underway, national efforts are also taking place in Washington, D.C. Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) is sponsoring legislation authorizing cost-effective modular housing.²³ The Natural Disaster Housing Reform Act of 2006, S. 2983, would designate Housing and Urban Development as the lead federal agency on housing for disasters resulting from long-term housing needs.²⁴

Although the bill provides no funding allocation or provision, it affords that the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall, in coordinating and administering housing assistance, consult with the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and such other heads of Federal agencies as may be appropriate.²⁵ The bill is currently under consideration by the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs.²⁶

Senator Landrieu considers the biggest economic issue for the future of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast to be the availability of comprehensive insurance for homeowners and businesses.²⁷ According to the Louisiana Insurance Commission, insurance premiums are increasing by more than 22 percent.²⁸

Additionally, housing advocate Bass said “we should not forget about the normal underserved population we have. There have not been any funds for them.”²⁹

NOTES

1 HEARTLAND ALLIANCE, LIFE AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA: A BRIEF ON THE CHICAGOLAND KATRINA RELIEF EFFORT at 1, Aug. 2006), *available at* <http://www.heartlandalliance.org/press-room/documents/HurricanKatrinareportfinal.pdf>.

2 *Id.*

3 *Id.*

4 Email interview with Stephanie Landrieu Allen, Press Secretary for United States Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) (Oct. 3, 2006).

5 Statement to the Select Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-GA) (Feb. 15, 2006), *available at* http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/printer_2440.shtml.

6 Telephone Interview with Henry Bass, Supervisor, Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (Oct. 2, 2006).

7 *Id.*

8 Telephone Interview with Randy Nichols, Executive Director, Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (Oct. 2, 2006).

9 *Id.*

10 *Id.*

11 Telephone Interview with Henry Bass, *supra*, note 6.

12 HEARTLAND ALLIANCE, *supra* note 1.

13 *Id.*

14 *Id.*

15 Michelle Krupa, *Qatar Adds More Treasure for N.O.; Agencies for Homeless Get \$2 Million Gift*, TIMES-PICAYUNE (Aug. 26, 2006).

16 *Id.*

17 *Id.*

18 *Id.*

19 *Id.*

20 Volunteers of America, *Volunteers of America Re-Opens the Duvernay Residence in New Orleans*, <http://www.voa.org/OurServices/Housing/Volunteers+of+America+Re-opens+the+Duvernay+Residence+in.htm>.

21 *Id.*

22 *Id.*

23 Email interview with Stephanie Landrieu Allen, *supra*, note 4.

24 *Id.*

25 S. 2983, 109th Cong. § 2 (2006).

26 *Id.*

27 Email interview with Stephanie Landrieu Allen, *supra*, note 4.

28 *Id.*

29 Telephone Interview with Henry Bass, *supra*, note 6.