

Kanye West rips Bush at hurricane aid show

NEW YORK (AP) - It began, fittingly enough, with jazz from New Orleans natives Harry Connick Jr. and Wynton Marsalis. But "A Concert for Hurricane Relief," a heartfelt and dignified benefit aired on NBC and other networks Friday night, took an unexpected turn thanks to the outspoken rapper Kanye West.

Appearing two-thirds

through the program, he claimed "George Bush doesn't care about Black people" and said America is set up "to help the poor, the Black people, the less well-off as slow as possible."

The show, simulcast from New York on NBC, MSNBC, CNBC and Pax, was aired live to the East Coast, enabling the Grammy-winning rapper's

outburst to go out uncensored.

There was a several-second tape delay, but the person in charge "was instructed to listen for a curse word, and didn't realize (West) had gone off-script," said NBC spokeswoman Rebecca Marks. West's comment about the president was cut from NBC's West Coast airing, which showed three

hours later on tape.

The host was NBC News' Matt Lauer, who invited viewers to contribute to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund by phone or on the Web.

Some 18 presenters performed musical numbers or gave information on the tragedy's huge scope.

New Orleans son Aaron Neville performed Randy

Newman's soulful "Louisiana 1927" with the memorable chorus, "they're trying to wash us away, they're trying to wash us away."

Comedian Mike Myers was paired with West for a 90-second segment that began with Myers speaking of Katrina's devastation. Then, to Myers' evident surprise, West began a rant by saying, "I hate the way they portray us in the media. If you see a Black family, it says they're looting. See a White family, it says they're looking for food."

While allowing that "the Red Cross is doing everything they can," West — who delivered an emotional outburst at the American Music Awards after he was snubbed for an award — declared that government authorities are intentionally dragging their feet on aid to the Gulf Coast. Without getting specific, he added, "They've given them permission to go down and shoot us."

After he stated, "George Bush doesn't care about Black people," the camera cut away to comedian Chris Tucker.

Concluding the hour a few minutes later, Lauer noted that "emotions in this country right now are running very high. Sometimes that emotion is translated into inspiration, sometimes into criticism. We've heard some of that tonight. But it's still part of the American way of life."

In a statement, NBC said, "Kanye West departed from the scripted comments that were prepared for him, and his opinions in no way represent the views of the networks."

"It would be most unfortunate," the statement continued, "if the efforts of the artists who participated tonight and the generosity of millions of Americans who are helping those in need are overshadowed by one person's opinion."

Friday's program was the first of several TV benefits planned through next weekend.

NBC and the five other major commercial broadcast networks, along with PBS, plan to unite next Friday for a special. The same night, BET will air a benefit.

New Orleans cops chief on defensive

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) - Fed up with the criticism, New Orleans Police Superintendent Eddie Compass said Monday that his officers held their ground without food, water and even ammunition in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

"In the annals of history, no police department in the history of the world was asked to do what we (were) asked," Compass said with a mix of anger and pride.

Two police officers killed themselves. Another was shot in the head. Compass said 150 had to be rescued from eight feet of water and others had gotten infections from walking through the murky soup of chemicals and pollutants in flooded areas of the city.

Compass denied that police officers deserted in droves. Some officers had abandoned their jobs, he said, but he did not know how many. He said the department was doing a roll call.

At a news conference earlier Monday in New Orleans, Deputy Police Superintendent Warren Riley said between 400 and 500 officers on the 1,600-member police force are unaccounted for.

Some lost their homes, and some are looking for their families. "Some simply left because they said they could not deal with the catastrophe," Riley said.

The officers still on the beat in the flooded city are being cycled off duty and given five-day vacations in Las Vegas and Atlanta, where they will be offered counseling, officials said.

Compass, visiting the emergency operations center in Baton Rouge on his first trip outside New Orleans since the storm hit, said New Orleans had police officers "who made the ultimate sacrifice for this city."

"We had no food. We had no water. We ran out of ammunition. We had no vehicles. We were fighting in



A New Orleans resident reaches out to thank New Orleans Police Capt. Marlon DeFillo, center, as Superintendent Eddie Compass, right, announces to the storm victims that food and water is on the way to the ravaged area on Friday.

waist deep water that was infected and polluted," he said.

Compass said the looting and criminal activity involved a small group of people preying on the weak after being thrust into evacuation areas with regular, citi-

zens.

As for reports that police stood by while women were raped and people were beaten, the chief responded: "Are you crazy? We did everything that was humanly possible to protect human life."

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