

In wake of disaster, many questions loom

By Terry B. Jones

New Orleans is now a victim of a tragic disaster. Our economic and emotional worth is now at an all time low. We are in a state of demise. As you look at CNN and the other national broadcasts you feel a sense of Kuwait, Viet Nam, and then you realize that this is America. Even though we can't stop national disasters like Katrina, the human response is something that we should have control over.

Which leaves to question a country as great and powerful as America, why was the response not quicker and stronger to save its own? Most certainly, we get a somewhat skewed version of truth by watching the national news, which is perpetuating the human tragedy

in New Orleans by reporting looting, killing and natural death. We have to look at it from another perspective and that's the perspective of survival. Surely when you're in that position and there's no one in control of life or death, you take control yourself by any means necessary. Am I saying this right, no. I'm saying but it is a natural human response. Fight or Flight. I will wait for the whole story before I judge anyone's actions.

What is the definition of looting? Only yesterday I read an article describing a White child finding food in the store. It's strange that the day before on CNN, Blacks finding food in the stores were called thieves. We could ask the question if there is a different perception

of behavior between White and Black but we know that there is. It's just sad that under this extremely disastrous condition, we cannot find a common human equation. Regretfully, since that can not be accomplished, it is our duty as African-Americans to keep our eyes firmly on the sparrow. This means the money that is being given so charitably throughout the country and throughout the world should be applied directly to the people who need and not the people who want.

The President made a comment recently that everything would be fine in Mississippi and New Orleans. He specifically mentioned rebuilding Trent Lott's mansion in Mississippi and in New Orleans the beautiful French Quarter. Great! But

the problem is that there are three major housing projects in New Orleans all of which were in poor condition prior to being under water for over 30 days and will probably have to be demolished. This means thousands of the residents will be homeless. They should be the first concern when the money donated gets distributed. There are Black organizations that we can be more assured of the money being put in the proper hands.

Recent reports from friends and colleges in New Orleans and Baton Rouge state that there is still massive degradation throughout the city with polluted water, the stench of dead bodies, homes that are still not accessible and people without food or water. You may ask why some New Orleanians do not

want to leave, but just imagine if this is all that you have and will ever have, how can you possibly trust people to take care of those things? Especially when the people who are telling you to leave are the same people who put you in the position you are in. Trust will have to be rebuilt not only in New Orleans but in America after this tragedy. Not the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina but the tragedy resulting from lack of leadership, wisdom, and compassion from our government both locally and nationally.

America now seems to be preoccupied with the blame game. Even though blame will be very important, to prevent this from ever happening again at this point speaking as a true New

Orleanian who's lost practically everything, I don't give a damn. It's not who did it but who's going to fix it that is most important to us.

I know of quite a few Black leaders and public officials who are caucusing in Houston and Baton Rouge to organize a plan to make sure that the disenfranchised will not remain disenfranchised after this is all over. As we acquire more information we will present these facts to you from the Black perspective through this publication. On behalf of the New Orleans *Data News Weekly*, a 39-year-old African-American Newspaper in the City of New Orleans, we thank you for your support and God bless.

Terry B. Jones is the Publisher of the *New Orleans Data News Weekly*.

Iraq be damned, anti-war movement alive, well

By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

At a moment when President Bush's public approval ratings are lower than Richard Nixon's at the time of his resignation in 1974 — and that was before he was pilloried for mishandling rescue efforts associated with Hurricane Katrina — it is ironic to hear supporters of the Bush administration dismiss the anti-war movement.

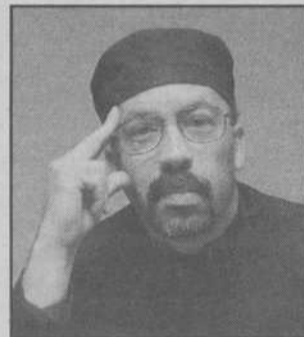
As you know, these dismissals all increased in tempo as greater attention was paid to the quest of Cindy Sheehan, mother of a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq, to meet with President Bush himself. Bush refused to meet with her, continued his vacation, ran off to Idaho to get away from protesters, and then allowed his supporters to, specifically, condemn Sheehan and to challenge other opponents of the Iraq war as being alleged extremists or something close to traitors.

Allowed, you ask? Sure. All President Bush had to do was publicly and loudly condemn such rhetoric as inflammatory and demagogic — just as he should have done after Pat Robertson's outrageous call for the

assassination of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Yet, in neither the attacks on Sheehan, the attacks on other opponents of the Iraq war/occupation, nor in response to Robertson did the President of the United States of America feel that it was necessary to set the right moral [there is that word again...] tone.

What makes this entire situation nothing short of amazing is that public disenchantment with the war continues to grow, despite the pro-Bush attacks on the anti-war movement. It has also been made amazing how the media wishes to dismiss popular criticisms and growing frustration about the war.

This is what raises the importance of the anti-war demonstrations, scheduled for September 24 in Washington, D.C. Convened by United For Peace & Justice and the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition, it is projected that the march and rally will tap into this growing anguish and anger over the convoluted



BILL FLETCHER, JR.

policies of this administration that show no end in sight to a war and occupation that the U.S. media refuses to acknowledge as being and continuing to be, illegal.

I think it is worth emphasizing this point so we do not fall prey to the right-wing slander that claims that those of us who oppose the war and occupation are not supporting

the troops. It is now firmly established that the people of the U.S. were lied to about the situation in Iraq. There were no weapons of mass destruction, and the intelligence about Iraq was manipulated in order to manipulate us. There was no threat from Iraq, and the only terrorist presence in Iraq was in a region controlled by the Kurds, that is, by allies of the U.S.

Since there was no justification for this war, and as such, it was a clear violation of international law, there can, therefore, be no question of "...staying the course..." Think about it for a second. Let's just suppose that the police broke into your house and destroyed your property based on a "tip" that

you were trafficking in narcotics. Let's further suppose that it turns out that the tip was orchestrated by someone who simply did not like you. Can the police stay in your house and take over your affairs? Can they start to change your bank account, put your children into different schools, or rebuild your house to conform to their idea of how you should live?

The answer is obvious: No! Instead, you would be owed compensation for the destruction of your property and the chaos into which your life had been thrown. So, too, it is with Iraq. There is no "...staying the course..." because the course was charted by people whose intentions were not to protect us from terror, but instead, to remake the Middle East in a manner that served their interests rather than the interests of the people of the Middle East.

The anti-war movement is far from dead. In fact, it grows each day as one individual after another asks himself/herself the same question that Cindy Sheehan has asked: "Why did anyone have to die for a lie?"

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Black people, with impunity I might add, all while we just look on and wonder when things will change. The bad news is they won't change just because they ought to. The good news is, they can be changed if are willing to resort to tactics, such as those by the groups I mentioned.

Nonviolent but radical action must be taken by Black people in this country in order to effect change. That means we must put ourselves back on the front lines for justice. We must physically stop construction projects if we are not included in the planning and their resulting benefits. We must use our collective economic strength against companies that do not have our best interests in mind by withholding our dollars from them. When we put someone out of business or at least cause a severe slump in the profits they earn from our dollars, we will signal a new era in our determination to gain fair treatment. More importantly, we will demonstrate to ourselves

where our real power lies — in our economics.

Taking action, appropriate action, when it comes to our complaints, is the logical and rational thing to do. We can't just rail against everyone else and never assume the responsibility of doing for our people what must be done in order to make change. And please, don't fall for the notion that we must wait for the next election to make change. Can't you see by now that most elected officials are not concerned with our progress and are working against it on a daily basis? Those politicians who do work on our behalf are too few and cannot do it by themselves. They need our help, and that help must come in the form of action-oriented solutions, some of which include civil disobedience, disruption and refusal to go along with the status quo.

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tion on what kind of help is needed.

Muhammad was arrested on suspicion of resisting arrest and obstructing an officer.

"I believe the transmissions speak for themselves," said LAPD Deputy Chief Earl Pysinger during the news conference.

Muhammad was released from custody two weeks ago after posting \$20,000 bail. Two of his bodyguards who may face possible charges of resisting or obstructing an officer, Marcus Mohammed and Steve Mohammed, were also arrested.

After he was released, Muhammad, with visible bruises on his head and his lip swollen, held a news conference in the Crenshaw District. His supporters said he was beaten without provocation.

"We might as well stand up today, rise up and start a whole new movement now," Muhammad said, adding: "I will not bow down to the oppressor."

Later that day, an afternoon news conference was held downtown by Villaraigosa, Los Angeles Police Commission President John Mack and Police Commission Inspector Gen-

eral Andre Birotte in which Villaraigosa asked Birotte to launch his own investigation into the arrest.

Calling himself the "eyes and ears of the Police Commission and the community," Birotte said he will have "unfettered access" to all information and will launch a "thorough and comprehensive" investigation.

"We will let the chips fall where they may," said Mack, former president of the Los Angeles Urban League. "If any people need to be held accountable, they will be held accountable."

Gene Johnson Jr. writes for WAVE Newspapers.