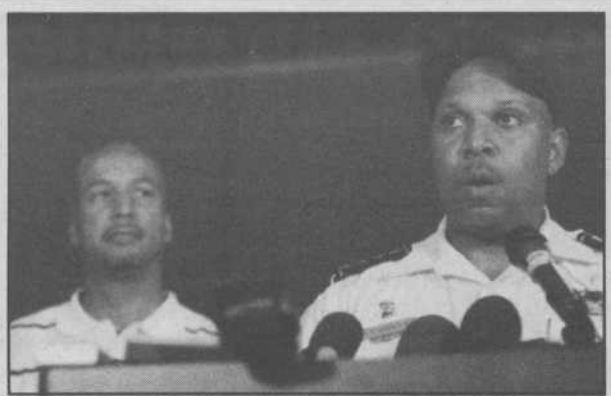


# AIDS chief pushes circumcision



New Orleans Police Superintendent Eddie Compass, right, announces his retirement as Mayor Ray Nagin looks on at a Tuesday press conference in New Orleans.

## Police Chief

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pass publicly repeated allegations that people were being beaten and babies raped at the convention center, where thousands of evacuees had taken shelter. The allegations have since proved largely unsubstantiated.

Earlier in the day Tuesday, the department confirmed that about 250 police officers — roughly 15 percent of the force — could face discipline for leaving their posts without permission during Katrina and its aftermath.

Even before Katrina hit, Compass had his hands full with an understaffed police department and a skyrocketing murder rate. Before Katrina, New Orleans had 3.14 officers per 1,000 residents — less than half the ratio in Washington, D.C.

On Tuesday, the state Health Department reported that Katrina's death toll in Louisiana stood at 885, up from 841 on Friday.

It also was the second day of the official reopening of New Orleans, which had been pushed back last week when Hurricane Rita threatened. Nagin welcomed residents back to the Algiers neighborhood on Monday but imposed a curfew and warned of limited services. Nagin also invited business owners in the central business district, the French Quarter and the Uptown section to inspect their property and clean up. But he gave no timetable for reopening those parts of the city to residents.

## T.D. Jakes

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in Dallas, said he was candid with the president, with whom he had a pre-existing relationship dating back to Bush's days as governor of Texas.

"I felt that it was incumbent upon me to be that person who went in and said to him, 'You know, these are the issues that are going on in our community. What can you do to devise a plan to fix this?'" Jakes recounts. "At this point, you can't change what has happened, but what are you going to do going forward to make this better for poor people and people of color?"

Jakes said he knew that he stepped into the picture with Bush at a time when many citizens were enraged by the slow response to people, mostly Black, left without food or water for days.

"To say that it was all about race oversimplifies the issue. I think race played a part even before Katrina hit," Jakes said. "The fact that they were living underprivileged lives with 30-something percent of the population in New Orleans living below the poverty line, the fact that

you've got a city that's disproportionately African-American and that we have not done anything historically to raise the economic level of these people so that they could have a car to get in and drive away is reprehensible."

Jakes said he made general recommendations to Bush, including the need for a housing component to restore people to their home city and fairness in economic inclusion.

"I think it's also important to ensure that a significant amount of contracts and dollars go to, not only people of color, but to the people in New Orleans who are disproportionately people of color... that we are involved in the rebuilding of the community," Jakes said.

The Bush administration has awarded no-bid construction contracts to Haliburton, a company involved in the rebuilding in Iraq with no-bid contracts.

The company was formerly headed by Vice President Dick Cheney.

Bush has also proposed suspending certain affirmative action requirements and

labor laws, including minimum wages, to start the project.

The coalescing of leaders from all walks of life will help keep pressure on the Bush administration concerning these issues, Jakes suggests.

In the days following the hurricane, Jakes says he also met or talked with former President Bill Clinton, Rainbow/PUSH's Jesse Jackson Sr., the National Urban League's Marc Morial, the NAACP's Bruce Gordon, the Congressional Black Caucus' Mel Watt, and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas), who led efforts to assist hurricane survivors in the Houston Astrodome.

Jackson said he has had a long-standing relationship with Jakes and talked with him at former President Clinton's three-day Global Initiative Conference that started Sept. 16.

Jackson said that although Jakes helped to care for many survivors and may have imparted some wisdom to the president, it was initially the embarrassment of Bush by the media that caused Bush to reach out to Jakes and oth-

ers.

"Once that issue of race got out there, he started reaching out for Blacks he knew to stand with him to offset that criticism basically coming from the media itself," said Jackson in an interview.

"I believe that Bishop Jakes is pressing him. But Bush should be willing to also meet now with the Congressional Black Caucus. Those are the federal officials who are elected to be his legislative peers. Those are people who deal with legislation every day."

Jackson said that he, too, called the White House to request a meeting with the president, but was told that Bush was too busy. Jackson said, "He meets with who he wants to meet with."

Jakes and Jackson agree that there must be an investigation into the federal, state and local government's role in the Katrina tragedy.

"Whatever the reason the response was slow, it's yet to be determined," Jakes said. "Americans in general need to be concerned after 9/11 that it took us five days to respond to a crisis that we

1994 to 40 million in 2004, this still only amounted to 35 condoms per sexually active male per year.

He said that 73 percent of young people without the virus believed that they were not at risk of catching HIV/AIDS, and 62 percent of young people with the virus also believed there was no risk.

Achmat criticized the government's record on treatment. Of the 500,000 people who need AIDS therapy, only 76,000 are currently receiving it through the public health sector. The World Health Organization has singled out slow progress in South Africa as one of the main reasons it will likely miss its target of putting 3 million people worldwide on therapy by the end of this year.

"We are dying. We are still dying," he said.

Achmat has, for years, attacked the government for doing too little too late against the AIDS epidemic. In a sign of the mutual antagonism, health ministry officials refused invitations to attend the congress.

"President Thabo Mbeki tragically still shows symptoms of AIDS denialism," said Achmat. Mbeki reputedly doubts the link between

HIV and AIDS. Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang has repeatedly voiced doubts about the safety and efficacy of antiretrovirals, instead stressing the benefits of a diet heavy in garlic, lemon and olive oil.

The Soweto study, was conducted by French researchers between 2002 and 2005 with more than 3,000 healthy, sexually active males between 18 and 24. About half the volunteers were circumcised by medical professionals, and the rest remained uncircumcised.

All the men received counseling on AIDS prevention. But after 21 months, 51 members of the uncircumcised group had contracted HIV, the AIDS virus, while only 18 members of the circumcised group had gotten the disease.

The World Health Organization and UNAIDS welcomed the results of the study, released at a conference in Brazil in July, but says that more trials should be conducted before circumcision can be recommended as a preventive method.

A study conducted by the U.S. National Health Institute involving 5,000 individuals is now under way in Uganda.

saw coming. It's horrific to think what would happen if that had been a terrorist attack that we didn't see coming."

Former New Orleans Mayor Marc Morial said that in addition to an investigation and inclusion in construction contracts, there must also be a victims' compensation fund, a victims' bill of rights and solidarity among Black leaders to force these proposals until they happen.

"For me, I have no political ego in this thing with respect to any other leader and what they might feel is appropriate or necessary in what they're going to try to do," said Morial, now president and CEO of the National Urban League. "We need everybody on the front lines."

Jackson said the best course of action now is to apply pressure on the White House through protest. "You've got to have public discourse, legislation and public actions, those three," he says.

Jakes, who was criticized by some civil rights leaders for not participating in the Aug. 6 march commemorat-

ing the 40th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act in Atlanta, said he is not sure what he would do if the Bush administration appears insensitive to Black people as New Orleans is redeveloped in coming months. But, he hasn't ruled out protesting.

"I am not implying that the president's going to do everything that I say or what anybody says, but I am saying that my perspective can't be considered if I stay at home," said Jakes, who did not march in August because of a time conflict with his pre-scheduled Megafest, also in Atlanta.

"I am never unwilling to march. I just think that a march is one way of many ways to get things done... And I think that protesting is not the only way. I think the very fact that we go into the president's office, or write to our Congress people, or write to our senators is another way that it needs to be done. There's a lot of ways to put pressure on. And I'm not waiting to decide whether I'm going to put pressure. I've already applied pressure. I've already expressed myself."