

# Nagin sorry for 'chocolate' quip

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
NEW ORLEANS - The mayor of New Orleans apologized Tuesday for saying the hurricane-ravaged city would be rebuilt as a "chocolate" city and for blaming the storm on the wrath of God over U.S. involvement in Iraq.

The "chocolate" remark, which Mayor Ray Nagin made in a speech Monday, struck a nerve, as racial tensions and concerns loom over proposed plans to rebuild New Orleans from Hurricane Katrina.

Several of the hardest-hit neighborhoods were mostly Black, and many residents have expressed fears that those areas will not be rebuilt

while those with more White residents may be. Before the August 29 storm, New Orleans was about 70 percent Black.

"If I offended anyone, I sincerely apologize," the mayor, who is Black, said Tuesday. "I need to be more sensitive and more aware of what I'm saying."

"I want everybody to be welcome in New Orleans — Black, White, Hispanic, Asian — because that's the kind of city that we deserve going forward," he said. "I was trying to, and didn't do it very well, to deal with this whole notion, the undercurrent what's being talked about, and what's being talked about is who is going

to come back to New Orleans at the end of the day."

In his speech Monday, marking the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, Nagin said: "This city will be a majority African-American city. It's the way God wants it to be. .... This city will be chocolate at the end of the day."

Other Black leaders in New Orleans said they were taken aback by Nagin's remarks.

"Everybody's jaws are dropping right now," City Councilman Oliver Thomas told *The Times-Picayune* newspaper. "Even if you believe some of that crazy stuff, that is not the type of image we need to present to the na-

tion."

In his speech, Nagin also said a wrathful God sent the hurricanes.

"Surely God is mad at America," he said. "Surely he's not approving of us being in Iraq under false pretense. But surely he's upset at Black America also. We're not taking care of ourselves."

In his apology, Nagin said: "I said some things that were totally inappropriate. I shouldn't have made any references to God as it relates to this city. In the moment I got caught up, and it shouldn't have happened."

Nagin also said he has made the "chocolate" reference several times before, including before Congress.

# Media link Barry's ailment to drugs

*By Valencia Mohammed*  
*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The front of world-renowned Howard University Hospital in Washington, D.C., was a spectacle for some patients on January 11, as a crowd of reporters gathered for an interview with D.C. mayor-for-life, Marion S. Barry. According to his physician, Dr. Robert H. Williams, lead physician at Howard, Barry was hospitalized for hypertension. He entered the hospital on Jan. 9 and was being discharged that same day.

While patients at the hospital stood around waiting for a quick glimpse of the mayor, Councilman Marion Barry, D-Ward 8, walked casually out of the hospital with his physician to address questions about his health.

As Barry walked closer to reporters the media frenzy began. "Are you in the hospital for treatment of your cocaine addiction? What is your response to what was in the paper today? Will you have to go back you jail?" asked several reporters.

In a calm demeanor Barry simply said, "My lawyer has instructed me not to com-

ment on anything that was written in the paper today. I am here along with my doctor to address questions about my hospital stay."

Barry was alluding to a recent story that appeared in a daily newspaper this week alleging in November last year he tested positive for cocaine and faces up to seven years in jail time for violation of his parole. According to the article, a magistrate in federal court ordered drug testing as a preliminary matter when Barry appeared for failing to file taxes for several years. Not filing taxes is a practice quite common in the District by its residents in protest of "no taxation without representation."

However, the issue for many legal experts is violation of the privacy act. According to a representative of the courts, the executive branch of the court is forbidden from making public information about the results of drug testing. Barry's attorney could not be reached.

Although the local television anchors, especially Tom Sherwood, author of a book about the life of Marion Barry, kept pounding the

former mayor of D.C. for answers to the allegations, he shrugged them off politely.

"Why can't I just live a normal life? I take good care of myself. Look at me. I eat right. I exercise. I do what I am supposed to do to stay healthy. I am not God," said Barry.

"Yeah, but what about the dirty urine?" another reporter asked. Barry shook his head in disbelief.

According to a court services representative there is no record of the "dirty urine" matter in District court. Nor was the federal court able to support the allegation. "We cannot confirm that there is any court action taken or pending in the case of Mr. Marion Barry," said Dick Carelli, spokesman for the administrative office of the U.S. District courts.

Barry has undergone treatment for high blood pressure for over 20 years. Dr. Robinson has been his physician of record for the last 12 years according to Barry. Upon his discharge his blood pressure was 123 over 62. "He can go back to work tomorrow, if he likes," said Dr. Williams. "I feel great.

God blessed me to have a good brain. I suffer from some of the same ailments that many African-Americans do. But every time I try to take care of myself as we ask other people to do, the press tries to make a spectacle out of it," said Barry.

Barry has had a series of ailments that he has been able to maintain, such as diabetes. Several weeks ago, he underwent surgery for cataracts. His right eye was still red from healing. He is also a survivor of prostate cancer after his successful surgery about 10 years ago.

"What about the baseball stadium? Do you still have the votes?" another reporter asked. Barry mumbled, "I am not answering those questions today. I just got out of the hospital."

While reporters kept asking questions that Barry refused to answer, passersby let Barry know he was still their idol. "We love you. We need you. Don't let them take you down. We don't want the stadium. It's all about the stadium. Save D.C., Marion," the crowd cheered.

*Valencia Mohammed writes for Afro Newspapers.*

# Obama sides with Clinton GOP swipe

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Sen. Barack Obama and other Black Democrats are defending Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's description of the House of Representatives as a "plantation." First lady Laura Bush says Clinton's remark was "ridiculous."

Clinton, D-N.Y., a potential presidential candidate for 2008, did not retreat from the "plantation" remark, telling reporters the term accurately describes the "top-down" way the GOP runs Congress.

Obama said Wednesday he felt her choice of words referred to a "consolidation of power" in Washington that squeezes out the voters.

The Illinois senator told CNN's "American Morning" he believed that Clinton was merely expressing concern that special interests play such a large role in writing legislation that "the ordinary voter and even members of Congress who aren't in the majority party don't have much input."

"There's been a consolidation of power by the Republican Congress and this White House in which, if you are the ordinary voter, you don't have access," Obama said. "That should be a source of concern for all of us."

New York Rep. Gregory Meek also defended Clinton. "There was no race card played here. If any card was played here it was a joker, because that's who seems to be running the House right now if you look at the leadership," said Meeks, a Black Democrat.

First lady Laura Bush, en route home from a visit to West Africa, criticized Clinton.

"It think it's ridiculous — it's a ridiculous comment," Mrs. Bush told reporters when asked about the senator's remark.

Obama, D-Ill., told ABC's "Good Morning America" that under GOP control in Washington, "what one has seen is the further concentration of power around a very narrow agenda that advantages the most powerful."

Obama also said New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin was correct to apologize for suggesting that the hurricane-ravaged city would be majority Black again because "it's the way God wants it to be. If I'm the mayor of New Orleans, I want everybody to come back," said Obama, the Senate's only Black member.

Clinton, who is seeking re-election this year, said during a Martin Luther King Day event in Harlem this week that the House "has been run like a plantation," in that "nobody with a contrary view has had a chance to present legislation, to make an argument, to be heard."

Clinton appeared briefly in Washington Wednesday at a Democratic event, but quickly slipped out a back door far from reporters. On Tuesday night, she adamantly stood by the comments, saying "top-down" decision-making by GOP congressional leaders was bad for the country.

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## Hillary

(Continued from Page 3)

Martin Luther King Day and in many ways said what a lot of us have been saying a long time about the Bush administration," Sharpton said.

Clinton was joined at the event by a host of elected officials and some others looking to be elected officials.

Other speakers included Democratic gubernatorial candidate Eliot Spitzer and the man considering a run against him in the primary, Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi.

Republican state attorney general candidate Jeanine Pirro attended, as did Democratic New York Sen. Charles Schumer, Republican Mayor

Michael Bloomberg and a number of City Council members. Actor and activist Harry Belafonte made a late, but extremely well-received, entrance.

Bloomberg, who spoke and left before Clinton's remarks, noted that this year marks the 20th anniversary of the King holiday and said it was vital that King's mes-

sage remain alive.

"We must not let the real man or his message recede into history," Bloomberg said. "Sadly, that's something that often happens, and our heroes and the fathers of our nation have to be people that we constantly tell our children about so they understand the sacrifices that were made."