

**The  
BLACK  
C O M M E N T A T O R**  
Commentary, analysis and investigations  
on issues affecting African Americans  
www.blackcommentator.com

**September 4, 2008 - Issue 289**

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)  
Click Here

**bc** Still Needs Your Financial Support  
**BC's doing more  
and we hope you can  
too. Thank you!**  
Click here to become a BC paid Subscriber  
or  
Make a contribution of any amount you choose.

[Home](#)

**Living in the Car After Gustav  
Justice Watch  
By Bill Quigley  
BlackCommentator.com Columnist**

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

[Car Insurance Company](#)  
Spend Less on Car Ins. Get a Free Quote &  
Customize Your Policy.

[GEICO Car Insurance](#)  
How Much Could You Save? Get a Free Car  
Insurance Quote!

Ads by Google

New Orleans, September 2, 2008

The good news is that nearly two million people evacuated and were spared the direct hit of Gustav. Our sisters and brothers in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, who were not able to leave the point of the storm, lost over 100 lives. The people of the U.S. were fortunate to be able to leave.

The bad news is that most people have not been allowed to return.

Since the storm, New Orleans and numerous other coastal communities have continued 24 hour curfews and prohibited people from returning by posting law enforcement at all entrances. Officials argue that neighborhoods are without electricity and return would be challenging due to the presence of downed trees and power lines.

Locking people out is quite a hardship and also very challenging for the hundreds of

thousands of displaced working families. As one local resident put it, "I understand that most public officials are saying for us to stay away as a safety aspect, but they do not realize that some of us cannot afford to stay away that long."

Garland Robinette, a respected radio voice of WWL radio, was also pleading with elected officials on air this afternoon, "What are you going to do about the poor people who can't afford another hotel room?"

When the average weekly wage for workers in the hotel and restaurant business is less than \$400 a week, the least expensive hotel, plus gas and meals for a family since last Saturday or Sunday, can eat up a week's wages in no time. Additionally, tens of thousands of people have also lost a week of work because most workers are not paid for the time during evacuation. That puts families two weeks of wages behind.

That it why there are widespread reports of families now parked on the side of the highway or in parking lots waiting for permission to come home.

Over 60,000 people are in 300 shelters across the South. Those who came by publicly paid buses will not be allowed to return until perhaps the weekend.

People who cannot come home are now being told to contact the Red Cross and local churches to see if they will provide bed space.

Despite our continuing problems, we are all thankful for the good fortune we have had. We are also grateful for the help of our neighbors, families and friends who have put us up, given us money for gas, and allowed us to shower and use their phones.

Nearly two million people cooperated in the evacuation. New Orleans and other coastal communities reported only a handful of arrests. This has worked really well so far. But unless officials are sensitive to the serious financial crunch that working and poor families are in, the risk is that next time large numbers of people will be less likely to evacuate.

[Click here to comment on this article](#)  
[or see what others are saying in the](#)  
**The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog**

*(Note: BC recommends Bill Quigley's column about the 3rd anniversary of Katrina: [Katrina Pain Index](#).)*

**BlackCommentator.com** Columnist, Bill Quigley, is a human rights lawyer and law professor at [Loyola University, New Orleans](#). He has been an active public interest lawyer since 1977 and has served as counsel with a wide range of public interest organizations on issues including Katrina social justice issues, public housing, voting rights, death penalty, living wage, civil liberties, educational reform, constitutional rights and civil disobedience. He has litigated numerous cases with the [NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.](#), the [Advancement Project](#), and with the [ACLU of Louisiana](#), for which he served as General Counsel for over 15 years. Bill is one of the lawyers for displaced residents. Additionally, Bill is the author of the forthcoming book, *Storms Still Raging: Katrina, New Orleans and Social Justice*. Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Quigley.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

**Click Here**

[Home](#)



Any BlackCommentator.com article may be re-printed so long as it is re-printed in its entirety and full credit given to the author and [www.BlackCommentator.com](http://www.BlackCommentator.com). If the re-print is on the Internet we additionally request a link back to the original piece on our Website.

Your comments are always welcome.

### **eMail re-print notice**

If you send us an eMail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by



Copyright © 2002 - 2008  
[www.BlackCommentator.com](http://www.BlackCommentator.com)  
All Rights Reserved