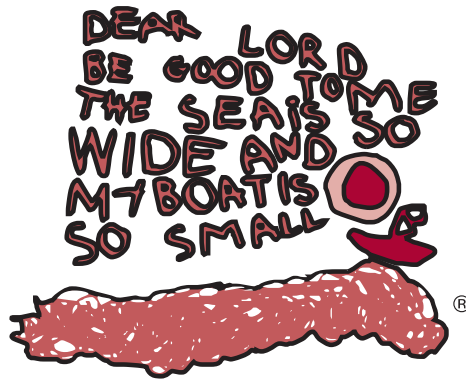


Katrina's Children

A Call to Conscience and Action



Children's Defense Fund



The Children's Defense Fund's Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start*, and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments before they get sick, into trouble, drop out of school, or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private nonprofit organization supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations. We have never taken government funds.



Pass Christian, Mississippi, 2006
There were tent cities during another American tragedy —
the Great Depression of the 1930s.



Renaissance Village trailer park, 10 miles outside of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is where 1,670 people who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina live; more than 700 of them are children. The trailer park has no playground, no library and no after-school programs.

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to all the wonderful, resilient and long suffering children of Katrina's fierce storm and to their families. We thank all the committed public servants and people who rescued Katrina survivors from devastating flood waters, who welcomed them into their communities and states, and who are still working tirelessly every day to give Katrina's children hope and the basic human supports they need: health, mental health, education, child care, housing, and jobs for their parents.

Deep gratitude goes to the staff, teachers and 350 children of New Orleans West in Houston, Texas, whose words, drawings and dreams are shared in this report. The thoughts of this KIPP Academy school's young children were captured by their kindergarten teacher. A special salute to Houston's Democratic Mayor Bill White and Republican County Judge Robert Eckels who epitomize the best in compassionate, efficient and bipartisan leadership. CDF-Texas' "2005 Children's Champions" deserve thanks for their efforts to help restore child health and mental health benefits to 180,000 children cut from the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) by the state of Texas; they worked together to open Houston's doors to nearly 300,000 Katrina survivors — the largest number received by any city. We also cheer on the hundreds of Katrina children attending CDF's Emergency After-School Freedom Schools in Jackson, Mississippi, and in three Mississippi Delta counties taught by Katrina evacuee college students working under the leadership of our Southern Regional Office and National CDF Freedom SchoolsSM staff with local partners including Tougaloo College, Jackson State University, the YMCA, three women mayors, and local school districts. Thanks, too, to our many foundation, organizational and individual donors who helped us immediately work to reunite families and to provide safe alternatives and educational enrichment for many displaced children. The Kellogg and Freddie Mac Foundations deserve special mention.

So many reached out to Katrina survivors during and in the storm's immediate aftermath. But as the children and mental health professionals make clear in this report, huge challenges remain to ensure that children and families who have lost so much — family members, homes, schools, jobs, friends, caregivers, doctors, dentists, professional careers, the records of their lives — are able to stitch these pieces back together and build a better future for their children and themselves. They need all our help now on an urgent and sustained basis. All of us have a self interest in helping them — in ensuring safe, physical levees and competent, disaster emergency procedures and systems and competent caring personnel before the next disaster, which could affect any, many or all of us, strikes. Equally important now is building the strong health, mental health, preschool, educational and economic levees to ensure that no child is left behind or adrift at sea because of poverty in the richest nation on earth.

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KATRINA'S CHILDREN: AMERICA'S MORALITY TEST

The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

German Protestant theologian who died opposing Hitler's Holocaust

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. We come from a past in which the lives of our children were assaulted and devastated in many ways, particularly by the destruction of the vital chain of institutions essential to the healthy transformation of children into well-functioning adults — the family home, the neighborhood communal structures, an effective educational environment and the wider socio-economic support system. High levels of violence, homelessness, poor nutrition, lack of facilities in the form of health services, clean water, sanitation and places to play in safety have helped to shatter many of our young people's physical, emotional, and spiritual resources so essential to human dignity. As we set about building a new South Africa, one of our highest priorities must therefore be our children — for our children are our nation's future.

President Nelson Mandela

We are guilty of many errors and many faults but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made, and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer "Tomorrow." His name is "Today."

Gabriela Mistral

Nobel Laureate

The real crisis from Katrina is coming. It is more relentless and more powerful than the floodwaters in New Orleans; more destructive than the 150 mile an hour winds of Katrina. It will destroy a part of our country that is much more valuable than all of the buildings, pipelines, casinos, bridges and roads in all of the Gulf Coast. Over our lifetime, this crisis will cost our society billions upon billions of dollars. And the echoes of the coming crisis will haunt the next generation.

This crisis is foreseeable. And, much of its destructive impact is preventable. Yet our society may not have the wisdom to see that the real crisis of Katrina is the hundreds of thousands of ravaged, displaced and traumatized children. And our society may not have the will to prevent the crisis. We understand broken buildings; we do not understand broken children.

Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D

Senior Fellow, The Child Trauma Academy, Houston, Texas

A CALL TO CONSCIENCE: “TELL THEM WE NEED HOPE”

We will spend billions of dollars rebuilding the roads, bridges, buildings, pipelines, oil rigs, casinos and houses. Will we spend billions healing these children? We will spend billions to reclaim New Orleans. Will we spend billions to reclaim the potential of these children? The future of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast does not depend on structures. Our future depends on our children. If we do not provide the safe, nurturing, predictable and enriched experiences these children need and if we do not arm our caregivers, educators and mental health providers with the tools they need to understand, engage, educate and heal traumatized children, all these new buildings will be filled with struggling children growing into adulthood expressing only a fraction of their true potential.

Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D

Senior Fellow, The Child Trauma Academy, Houston, Texas

The psychological impact of Katrina is unparalleled to any disaster we've had in America, especially for our children. What this means for Katrina's children is that, minimally, 30,000 to 50,000 children are now dealing with the emotional issues in the aftermath of the hurricane.... As challenging as the immediate needs are, they represent just a fraction of what is going to emerge in the coming months.... Up to an additional 500,000 children are struggling with the loss of not only family, but homes and neighborhoods that have been destroyed, along with the very fabric of their community. The pervasiveness and enduring nature of these losses sets the stage for emotional problems that, left unaddressed, may not fully reveal themselves for months or years.... The trauma experienced by the children of Katrina may result in increased rates of divorce, drug abuse, alcoholism and high unemployment as they become adults.

Dr. Raymond Crowel

Vice President, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services at the National Mental Health Association

At a meeting in Houston with survivor children from New Orleans at New Orleans West, a school operated by the KIPP Academy, I asked the children, whose wounds, words, drawings and dreams are shared in this report, what one or two things they wanted to tell America's people and leaders about their needs. One young boy responded quickly: “*Tell them we need hope.*” Another child asked how I felt about our visit together. I told them honored and moved and motivated and determined to do whatever I can, in every way I can, for as long as necessary, to make sure our nation — *their nation* — does not forget them, ignore them, neglect them, and continue to leave them behind, invisible and uncared for, like the debris still littering New Orleans' Ward 9 and other devastated Gulf Coast communities.

I promised to tell their stories over and over and over again until they are heard, and to bring others to hear and meet them and children like them through Katrina Child WatchSM visits and mobilizing and organizing until our nation addresses their emergency mental health, health and education crises. It is long past time for our federal and state governments to construct strong health, mental health, early childhood development, education and economic security levees denied millions of children in the Gulf Coast, before and after Katrina, and all across our nation. Katrina simply ripped off the veil of America's massive, legal child neglect and injustice, which let over 13 million children live in poverty and 9 million go uninsured, a majority in working families. Katrina's children of the storm are a cry to right these festering child wrongs.



Immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the world and nation rallied to assist those in need with emergency mental health teams and prompt governmental action within weeks, cutting through senseless bureaucratic, categorical eligibility barriers in Medicaid. To ensure immediate health and mental health coverage, in the early months after the 9/11 tragedy, hundreds of thousands were presumed eligible and were helped. Yet over seven months after Katrina, not only have our national leaders in the White House and Congress and state houses and legislatures not responded with urgency and compassion to meet the mental health and health crisis faced by tens of thousands of Katrina children and families, many threw up barrier after barrier and are still dragging their feet. It's time to stand up and demand they treat Katrina's children justly and compassionately. It is a moral scandal and practical disaster that over seven long months after children in our nation's poorest states suffered horrifying flood devastation that tens of thousands of them have been left to wrestle with their horrifying losses without adequate mental health and health support.

Seven months is a lifetime for a child. Seven months is an unending nightmare for thousands of Katrina's children denied the chance to share their bad memories and clear their psyches battered by loss of family members, friends, homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Imagine being shunted from pillar to post with stressed families struggling simply to survive. Imagine trying to process the witnessing of so much death and fear of your own death from swelling waters threatening to engulf you. Imagine walking and swimming through toxic, germ-infested water and waiting to be rescued atop bridges in grueling sun without water and food. Imagine being on constant alert in the crowded, putrid Superdome from predatory adults trying to touch you. Imagine waiting, waiting, crowding onto buses going you knew not where. Imagine waiting, waiting, waiting in new places for shelter, for food, for clothing, for lost prescriptions, for a school to attend. Imagine wanting to go home but scared to, wanting to stay in new states and schools but sometimes feeling unwelcome or picked on. Imagine wanting to hope for and see a better future but finding it hard to trust that either is possible. One Katrina survivor child in the nation's capital wrote, "I want to believe but I can't."

We need to help her and all Katrina and America's poor children believe in a better future, in themselves, and in our country's professed values and promises. Children need to believe that adults entrusted with their care will protect rather than neglect and mistreat them at home, in school, in our social services systems and in our public policy and budget choices. And we adults need to conduct personal, collective, professional and national moral audits to see if we are part of the problem our children face or the solutions they need.

This is not a time for business as usual. This is not a time for compassion fatigue. This is not a time for moving on to the next "story of the day." This is not a time for corrupt or self-serving leadership — political, corporate, educational, professional, or nonprofit — that hurts children and betrays public trust. This is not a time for citizen paralysis and apathy as our national political leaders recklessly continue to rob our national coffers of hundreds of billions of dollars to lavish more tax cuts on millionaires while cutting tens of billions of dollars from safety net supports that Katrina and the nation's children desperately need. What kind of leaders ask poor children to sacrifice already inadequate child health and mental health care, education, child care, Head Start, and after-school programs to subsidize \$1.9 trillion in tax cuts that mostly benefit the wealthiest and most powerful people and special interests? What kind of citizens and people of faith permit this travesty?

If ever there was a time of irresponsible disregard for children and the poor and for justice for all, it is now. And if ever there was a clear case study for why our rich nation should not dilly dally another moment to adopt a coherent national health and mental health system for its people — *beginning this year with children* — it is Katrina's catastrophe, with children and survivors of all ages scattered across our land, facing 50 state bureaucracies without medical records. Some states, like Texas, actually have cut back child health coverage and benefits for hundreds of thousands of children. And some states, like Mississippi, have callously budgeted millions to make it harder rather than easier for children and families eligible for

Medicaid and CHIP health benefits to get them by reimposing face to face eligibility and shorter eligibility time periods. These costly and stressful bureaucratic obstacles will cause many poor people who lack transportation or awareness of changed policies, and are living on the edge in strange places, to lose health and mental health care.

America's Crisis of Values: A Call for Transformation

Let's not just transform those in need; we can also find ways to transform those in power.

Unknown

First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.

Mahatma Gandhi

Current national political rhetoric and tax and budget choices tell us that the rich should be pampered and the poor plundered; that poor children — even neglected, abused and sick children — should lose tens of billions of dollars in order to fund tax cuts of hundreds of billions of dollars for the richest Americans; and that our children should be left a staggering future debt as a few greedily grab every dollar they can today. The \$1.9 trillion in tax cuts, when fully in effect, will give the richest one percent of all tax payers \$57 billion each year. This is enough to provide health coverage to all 9 million uninsured children or enough to end child poverty in America now. Incredibly, President Bush and many in Congress want to make these tax cuts permanent despite huge post-Katrina needs, two costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the largest national budget and trade deficits and debt in national history. Every child in America currently faces a debt burden and birth tax of \$27,661.

Current national rhetoric and priorities also tell us “our own might is our God.” President Bush’s 2007 military budget seeks \$527.4 billion a year; \$44 billion a month; \$10.1 billion a week; \$1.4 billion a day; and \$60 million an hour. Just one month’s military expenditure is more than twice as much as is needed to provide all 9 million uninsured children health coverage. The President’s military budget includes more than \$10.4 billion for Star Wars — the unproved (and not yet operational) Missile Defense System. That is enough money to lift 2.6 million children from poverty — every single poor child in four hurricane-affected states: Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and Texas.

Is it really necessary for the U.S. to spend seven times more on the military than either China or Russia, the two next largest military spenders, and more than 40 times the expenditures of Iran and North Korea, the two remaining countries President Bush has labeled the “axis of evil,” when so many children are terrorized by sickness, poverty, illiteracy, homelessness, and food insecurity at home? Dwight David Eisenhower warned repeatedly about the military industrial complex that has reached extreme new heights. He also reminded us in 1953 of the stark life tradeoffs in our national choices. He said: “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.”



Needed: A New Civil Rights Movement for Children — Our Poorest Group of Americans

It is time for a new civil rights movement to reset America's moral and social compass and to restore hope, stability and a sense of future to Katrina and all children in our lost nation. Katrina's children face specific emergency mental health, health and education needs right now, but they and all children need their families, communities and leaders to ensure them a healthy and safe foundation in the early years and a chance to reach productive self-sufficient adulthood. They need families able to work at living wages with health care. They need good schools. They need equitable, quality integrated systems of care that prepare them for the future.

It is a social catastrophe that 9 million children lack health and mental health coverage; that 80 percent of Katrina's children live in states whose schools do not teach them to read at grade level by the 4th grade and that 60 percent of White and 80 percent of Black and Latino children nationally cannot read at grade level in 4th grade. And it is downright economically and socially foolish that the only universal child policy our rich nation will guarantee every child is a jail or detention cell *after* a child gets into trouble. States spend over three times as much on average per prisoner than per public school pupil. It is time to reverse these perverse child and nation destructive priorities.

Katrina's children are America's opportunity — once again — to hear and heed God's call to protect the poor, the orphan, the widow, and the vulnerable. Children are the transforming agents in our fractured nation and world. Abraham, Moses, The Prophet Muhammad, Jesus and His Mother Mary, Confucius, Buddha, Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Cesar Chavez, Chief Joseph, Mary McLeod Bethune, Eleanor Roosevelt, Marie Curie, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Katrina survivor children all share one thing in common. They, like each of us, entered the world as a baby — God's gift of life, hope, love, immortality, and messenger to the future. Our Creator sent babies in an infinite variety of hues, sizes, shapes, places, talents and faiths — each sacred. Dare we longer mistreat, neglect, abuse, kill, and deny health care to a single one of them? Dare we value one over another or hold babies and children responsible for unwise adult choices over which children had no control? Dare the richest nation on earth — blessed to be a blessing — continue its unjust playing field for children and wantonly continue to widen the gap between the haves and the have nots?

“We All Have a Dream”

The kindergarten class of New Orleans West has a dream that can teach, lead and save us if we will let it. Their dream was Dr. King's dream, and it is God's dream for all the children of the nation and the world. Can we each make it our dream too?

I have a dream that all red people, black people and white people get together as one.

I have a dream that people will not fight anymore, that parents will not fight by their kids.

I have a dream that everyone from Texas and everyone from New Orleans stop shooting, that everyone could be friends.

I have a dream that everyone can be in school. I have a dream, that we can always be learning.

I Have A Dream

*I have a dream that I can go back to my home, that I can go back to New Orleans.
I have a dream, a dream filled with hopes.
I hope my daddy is safe.
I hope we can have a clean New Orleans again, that New Orleans can go back to the way it was.
I hope that all the people will be safe and protected.*

I Have A Dream

*I have a dream that my mommy can get me and my sister and brother what we want.
I have a dream that everyone would share, that no one will fight over money.
I have a dream that everyone is nice to each other.
I have a dream, I have a dream*

We All Have A Dream

In 1968, in his last Sunday sermon at Washington National Cathedral, Dr. King retold the parable of Dives and Lazarus and reminded us that “A man went to hell because he didn’t see the poor. His name was Dives. He was a rich man. And there was a man by the name of Lazarus who was a poor man, but not only was he poor, he was sick.... But he managed to get to the gate of Dives every day, wanting just to have the crumbs that would fall from his table. And Dives did nothing about it. Dives went to hell. Dives didn’t go to hell because he was rich,” Dr. King said, but because “Dives didn’t realize that his wealth was his opportunity to bridge the gulf that separated him from his brother, Lazarus.... He never really saw him. He went to hell because he allowed his brother to become invisible and sought to be a conscientious objector in the war against poverty. And this could happen to America, the richest nation in the world,” he warned. “There is nothing new about poverty. What is new is that we now have the techniques and the resources to get rid of poverty. The real question is whether we have the will!”

Dr. King’s warning and question about America’s will to see and help its poorest and most vulnerable is the defining question of our time. How will we answer? How will you answer the question that Katrina’s and America’s 13 million poor children are asking? How will you use *your* voice, vote, organizational, professional and personal time to build the transforming movement our children need to live and learn and thrive and embrace the future with hope?

Marian Wright Edelman

Marian Wright Edelman
President, Children's Defense Fund



A CALL TO ACTION FOR KATRINA'S CHILDREN

1 Provide immediate emergency mental health and health services to children and their families struggling to cope with the trauma of Katrina including: an **Emergency Children's Health and Mental Health Corps**; **School-based Health Clinics** with easy access for children; **Mobile Health Vans** with trained personnel every day of the week to help traumatized children and families; **Emergency Medicaid** with full federal funding for 24 months as the bipartisan Grassley-Baucus Bill proposed earlier; **Increasing Community Outreach and Rebuilding Community Health Centers and Hospitals** that serve the poor in areas where the health infrastructure and personnel have been decimated.

2 Ensure every child in Katrina-affected states a quality public education and after-school and summer educational supports to help them make up for lost time and overcome previous and continuing school disparities. Every child in our rich nation needs a quality, equitably funded public education system in order to escape social death in our globalizing economy and the Cradle to Prison PipelineSM crisis. Katrina children need safe, stimulating after-school and summer educational and social enrichment programs to help them make up lost time and denied opportunity. Before Katrina, New Orleans' 5,043 teachers served 50,000 children in 129 schools; 80 percent of New Orleans children were below grade level in reading and math; and 61 percent of New Orleans schools were under receivership by the state. After Katrina, as of February 2006, according to the Acting New Orleans Superintendent, Ora Lee Watson, "Only 9 public schools, 4 recovery district schools, and 4 independent charters were open with approximately 650 teachers serving approximately 8,300 students." She estimated that 2,000 school-age children were out of school in New Orleans for lack of available public school space. Education, after-school and counseling services in most trailer camps range from nonexistent to abysmally inadequate. Summer is fast approaching with too little planning to provide children positive alternatives to the streets.

3 Join CDF's campaign to ensure every Katrina evacuee child and every uninsured child in the United States — from birth to adulthood — comprehensive health and mental health coverage now with a national benefit floor with full federal funding. A child's chance to live, have health and learning problems detected and treated early when sick or suffering from mental trauma, should not depend on the lottery of birth: state, family, race, parental employment, or the compassion, callousness, fickleness or common sense of political leaders or the drift of political winds. Health and the right to survive and thrive is a basic human right of every child that a decent and sensible nation should assure. No other industrialized nation denies children this life giving and enhancing protection. Health care is essential to school achievement and to reducing crime and later dependency.

4 Join Katrina Child WatchSM visits to let these children and families know that we care and have not forgotten them, and to let our leaders know that we will not cease until they act. CDF will launch the first *Katrina Child Watch* visit in May in Louisiana with prominent mothers from Hollywood and New York.

5 Demand that our leaders at all levels and sectors pay as much attention to constructing strong health, mental health, education and family support levees for Katrina's children in school, after school and in summer months as they pay to constructing levees strong enough to withstand another Katrina-level hurricane. And demand that our leaders prepare better to prevent and respond competently to future disasters.

6 Organize Wednesdays in Washington® and Wednesdays at Home® witnesses, phone, letter writing and email campaigns and visits to your political leaders demanding mental health and health care for Katrina children now and a comprehensive health system for all children as a condition of your vote in November 2006. Also demand they stop and reverse the revenue hemorrhage from massive tax cuts for the richest 2 percent of Americans, and all budget cuts in safety net programs for children and the poor, which increase our nation's human and budget deficits.

7 Pray for Katrina children and families and for leaders of integrity who will work for justice for children and the whole community rather than for themselves and partisan political interests. Lift up the needs of children in your regular prayer meetings and prayer circles and through participation in CDF's annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths® celebrations, October 20-22, 2006, with an action witness for child health coverage. CDF's Interfaith *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* Manual to guide you will be available May 1st.

8 Demand investment in a quality integrated early childhood development system to help break the cycle of poverty, get every child ready to learn, and provide them the comprehensive support they need to avoid the Cradle to Prison Pipeline.SM Children don't come in pieces but in families and communities. In the early years they need high quality comprehensive integrated services with parental engagement that Early Head Start and Head Start can provide. Immediate steps to serve all 0-3 children who need Early Head Start (less than 3 percent of eligible children are currently served) and Head Start (only 50 percent of eligible children are served) and incentives to encourage Head Start collaboration with high quality child care and preschool providers would meet some of the immediate and longer term needs of Katrina's children and families. Coupled with other parent education and parent supports from community, faith and private and public sector networks, and jobs and housing, the fabric of family and community can be rewoven for the thousands of children who need adults with the capacity to meet their needs.

9 Vote. Vote. Vote. Organize. Organize. Organize. Hold yourself and your political leaders accountable for how they vote for children. Visit the CDF Action Council's Web site at www.cdfactioncouncil.org and check out its Nonpartisan Congressional Scorecard to see whether your Senator or Representative voted to help or hurt children.



STORIES FROM KATRINA'S CHILDREN





MYAN, 11 months

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

As a dusty haze settles over her trailer, Judy sits alone on the wooden steps outside her door. She's taking a break while her 11-month-old granddaughter, Myan, sleeps. The child has been sick with a respiratory ailment made worse by the dust that comes through the trailer's vents. It's hard for Myan to sleep as noisy children with few places to play run between trailer rows. Judy has no car and she has had to struggle to get Myan to be seen by a pediatrician and to receive her immunization shots for chickenpox and rubella.

There are few health care resources available to Myan or the other approximately 600 children in the Renaissance Village trailer park. A number of children suffer from asthma and upper respiratory ailments aggravated by dust that sweeps down the gravel-topped roads. Mobile clinics staffed by family nurse practitioners visit the park three days a week. There is not a single doctor on site to serve the nearly 1,700 residents of the trailer park. Judy has to divide her time between caring for Myan and looking after her diabetic 84-year-old mother, as well as her 14-year-old daughter, Kassmere. They all share the same FEMA trailer. Judy's four older children are a few trailers away.

Judy's family has been through a lot. When Katrina hit, they lived in the rural part of Plaquemines Parish, a narrow peninsula that extends into the Gulf of Mexico. Their home was washed away, and they had to move from shelter to shelter four times before they arrived at Renaissance Village. Now Myan, who just started walking, has little room to grow. There's no playground or Tot Lot and you can't push a stroller on gravel. "Back home, the children had parks to go to. I knew they were safe among our neighbors. We didn't lock our doors," said Judy. "There are drug dealers and bad influences here. I just want to get Myan and my children away."

"There are drug dealers and bad influences here. I just want to get Myan and my children away."

—Judy, Myan's grandmother

We was very low on cash and I thought people will be happy but no one was and I was thinking it was all about the money but it was it was like you can take New Orleans from us but you can't get it out of us and now I know the meaning of life and ever COMPASSION OF THE PEOPLE FROM New Orleans so I want



RAYNELL, 4

Houston, Texas

You have to steal glances at Raynell's large, luminous, brown eyes. He won't look at you, preferring to fix his gaze on something in the yonder, and his brow is so furrowed you have to wonder what in the world has a four-year-old boy so worried.

"I love J.B.," he abruptly announces. The last time Raynell had seen J.B. Jones, his maternal grandfather, was in September in the New Orleans Superdome where both had sought refuge from Hurricane Katrina and the torrential flooding that ensued.

With his mother and older brother and sister, Raynell spent several harrowing days and nights in the Superdome, saved from Katrina only to face hunger, heat, poor sanitation, darkness and danger inside the facility.

"They turned the lights off and it was dark," recalls Emyne, Raynell's 9-year-old sister. "They were shooting people. It was scary in there."

Meanwhile, J.B. was being cared for by his ex-wife in a special section of the Superdome reserved for the disabled. Eventually, he was transferred to Tulane University Hospital while Raynell and his family were bused to a shelter in Dallas and later to Houston. The family lost track of J.B.

Months of desperate searches on the Internet, by telephone and by word of mouth, finally paid off in early February when, at last, the family learned that J.B. had settled in a Louisiana rehabilitation center an hour away. Raynell rejoiced at the good news. But on the same day the boy learned his grandfather's whereabouts, J.B., only 51, died.

"I wish I was back home," says Raynell, sullenly.

The way the man in the
When I left
I felt so happy. When we
coming to Houston Tx. I learned
that you should not take hurricane's
lightly. We left on Thursday
September 1, 2005. It was the
happiest day of my life.





HAKEEM, 6

“Renaissance Village,” Louisiana

At only six years old, Hakeem has learned to hide his fears and sadness behind a brave smile. He is a bright, active child who plays video games and conducts imaginary battles between an array of superhero action figures. Sitting close to his grandmother, Valerie, in a cramped unit of the Renaissance Village trailer park, he proudly says his ABCs and then counts to 110. But he displays his fears with frequent nosebleeds and bedwetting.

Hakeem and Valerie share the small trailer with his grandfather, Julius, aunt, Angela, and her two-year-old son, Hassan. Hakeem’s mother, Angel, is not there. Valerie had to tell him that he would not see his mother again. When Hurricane Katrina hit, Angel was unable to handle the impact of the tragedy. She severed relations with her family and abandoned Hakeem. When the family contacted her by telephone, she changed her number to an unlisted one. Hakeem knows other children in foster care and he’s always watching for signs his grandmother might give him away. Valerie is constantly reassuring the child that she won’t do that. “We always have to watch our body language,” she said.

Valerie, who has suffered from seizures brought on by stress, must look after her own mental health while holding the rest of her family together. Her husband, Julius, had a stroke and is delusional. The family depends on the free food provided by the Renaissance Village cafeteria because they make too much money to get food stamps. The family’s income is \$1,200 a month from Julius’s retirement, of which \$700 goes to pay the mortgage on their home in New Orleans that was a total loss. They are in a Catch-22. If they default on their mortgage, they lose their claim to a recent flood insurance settlement. Valerie doesn’t expect a payout for five to seven months. Until then, the family can’t move into a stable home. Valerie’s car has broken down and she feels stuck.

Hakeem’s emotional health depends on Valerie who is struggling to cope herself. Speaking of what she and her family have been through, Valerie said, “I wouldn’t wish this on my worst enemy, and I have none. I’m all cried out.”

Hakeem knows other children in foster care and he’s always watching for signs his grandmother might give him away.





SHANIAH, 10

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Shaniah Twohearts, 10, is a quick and intelligent girl with exceptional artistic ability. Her family moved to New Orleans from Minnesota less than a year before Katrina hit. They lost everything in the flood. Now, the five of them crowd into a small trailer in Renaissance Village.

Shaniah should be in a strong academic environment where her talents and abilities can be developed. She would be the student with her hand up in the front of the class and always have the right answers. But school for her takes place in the back of a trailer that is also used as the Renaissance Village library and computer center. The half trailer school accommodates about 12 to 15 children in grades K-5. Because her family was impoverished by Hurricane Katrina, Shaniah is saddled with the responsibility of helping to parent her younger brother Michael, 4. She also helps her 11-year-old brother Torion who has a learning disability and is behind her academically. Shaniah is a natural leader and she works with other students at the small school. She dreams of being a fashion designer and dressed her classmates in her own creations put together with bits of cloth and scotch tape.

The makeshift learning center that Shaniah and her brothers go to each day is not a place where Shaniah's light can shine. The center was opened for children of Renaissance Village who are not attending public school. Classes are conducted by a staff that consists of a volunteer instructor and a Louisiana State University student who has taken a leave for a year. The focus of this one-room school is to provide specialized tutoring, remediation and motivation. The goal is to get students up to grade level so they can be mainstreamed in the public school system. Shaniah's parents, Dawn and Michael, feel that the trailer school is the best they can do for their children at this time. They both work at the trailer park. Dawn is a cook at the cafeteria and Michael delivers meals to sick and shut-in residents on a golf cart. There are no child care facilities available and, without the school, Shaniah and her brothers would be unsupervised for several hours each day.

Shaniah dreams of being a fashion designer and dressed her classmates in her own creations put together with bits of cloth and scotch tape.

wasn't happy
going to the hot sun
was in the wrong place
on the bridge for like two days
The police didn't want us
to get food out the store. People
when to Texas had to sleep in
hotel for like 2 months and
people was in the
than 2 months





DOUGLASS, 11

Jackson, Mississippi

Douglass lost his mother to illness when he was only five years old. He lost his home and neighborhood six years later.

As Hurricane Katrina bore down on the Gulf coast, Douglass left Kenner, Louisiana, with his memories, a few belongings and an extremely devoted father, headed for Jackson, Mississippi, where Douglass Chambers, Sr. grew up. While they were away, Katrina destroyed the townhome they shared and the father's thriving auto detailing business.

Douglass' dad was relieved to reach his parents' home, where the two have lived since September, but Douglass Chambers, Sr. is proud and independent. He wants to set an example for the boy he is trying to mold into a resilient, productive, earnest man. "This is wonderful and we're very comfortable here, of course," the father said. "But, I'm a man, you know, and I need to take care of my son and myself on my own. Right now, I'm just working on a place of employment."

His 11-year-old namesake, neatly dressed in his new school uniform, does not say much. He wants to go back to the New Orleans area "to see my friends, go back to my school" and brightens every time his father talks about the prospect. He misses the active life he used to have. Although reticent and reserved in the company of grown-ups, the boy reportedly can be a bit of a ham. He took acting classes in New Orleans and impressed his father as a hard-working, talented, quick study.

Most afternoons these days, Douglass, Jr. plays with his pet hamster, Red Bug, and does his homework. For the first time, he's having difficulty — mostly with math. "I went to the school and met with the teachers, the principals, the counselors," his father explained. "They tell me he's doing just fine, he's doing well. I tell them, 'If there's anything I can do, let me know. If there's anything he needs, let me know.'"

Dear Mom,

I wish I was at home.
I miss being at home.
I miss Brittany and Mommy
I wish I was in my
own bed.

Your son,
Robert

2/20/06

Then, when the first report card came home, Douglass, Jr. had a failing grade in math. “Why did they tell me he was doing fine when this was the case?” the father asked. “All of this could have been avoided if they had let me know earlier he was having trouble.”

Tutoring has been tough to come by, but Dad says his son is beginning to show improvement in math. He still worries, however, about the boy’s social development.

“Coming in with nothing to do makes it hard on anybody,” Douglass, Sr. said. He’s now on the lookout for after-school activities that might keep his son engaged and lift his spirits. And he’s trying to be patient with the federal government, which took his applications for a small business grant and small business loan three months ago and counting.

“I’ve got an idea for a transportation service,” he says. “I know I can make a success of that business. I know how to run a business, how to make a business work; I just need some help getting started and I’ll take it from there. I’ll rebuild and take care of my son on my own.”

Douglass lost his mother to illness when he was only five years old. He lost his home and neighborhood six years later.





JAMAL, 11

“Renaissance Village,” Louisiana

Jamal is a thick-set 11-year-old who lives with his parents, Joseph and Sherry, and brother Jermaine, 8, in what residents of Renaissance Village call the “back end” of the poorly lighted trailer park. Jamal is a well-behaved child who misses his life in New Orleans. When asked how he feels about living in Renaissance Village, he says “It’s better than the shelter. But there aren’t many kids to play with here.” Most of all, Jamal misses Sassy, his German Shepherd. The Village administration doesn’t allow pets in the trailer park.

The safety of their children is uppermost among Joseph and Sherry’s concerns. They are leery of some of the people who live around them. “You don’t know who your neighbors are,” Joseph says. He and Sherry keep the boys close. They don’t want them to get mixed up with older boys who are dealing marijuana. Jamal and Jermaine play with the children from a nearby trailer.

There are no playgrounds and few structured activities for children in the trailer park. Joseph has escorted several unsupervised children home who were out too late at night. Children ride their bikes on rough gravel. There are no traffic lights or crossing signs and Joseph had to fight to get a “SLOW” sign put up near his trailer where his children play.

Joseph is a proud man who got a job working at a paper products distributing company in Baton Rouge. He’s saving so the family can get a place of their own. The family owned a duplex and a rental property in New Orleans. Both were lost in the flood. After Katrina hit, they had to wade for blocks through four feet of water to get to safety. For several days, they lived on the street, and Joseph had to forage for food to feed his family. Fighting to hold on to his dignity, Joseph doesn’t permit his children to take the free food offered to residents of the trailer park. “I don’t want my boys to have to wait for the cafeteria to open to get something to eat,” he says.

“It’s better than the shelter. But there aren’t many kids to play with here.”

—Jamal



MONTRELLE, 14

Houston, Texas

A three-by-four-inch picture postcard and a small trophy are all that remain of Montrelle's large collection of dance and academic awards. Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters broke or twisted or scattered everything else.

"In a way I want to go home, but it's not really much to go back to right now," says Montrelle, a pleasant, well-spoken 14-year-old who had just started classes at her dream school when the hurricane struck. An excellent student, Montrelle had won an academic scholarship to St. Mary's, an all-girls Catholic school in New Orleans.

"Ever since I was a little girl, I had wanted to go to St. Mary's," she recalled. "I was so happy when I got there. I had just made the dance team. The week the storm came, we were going to start practice."

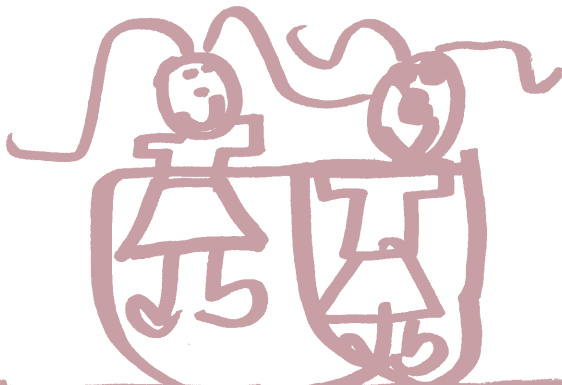
But two days before Katrina turned on New Orleans, Montrelle, her mother, Cheryl, and little sister, Maliyah, loaded the family car and drove west. Cheryl's sister worked at a New Orleans hotel and her boss found a hotel room for the young family in Houston. Not long afterward, FEMA placed the family in a tidy, modern apartment in southwest Houston, one of the city's highest crime areas.

"It's all right living here," Montrelle said. "What I worry about is the school system and the courses. They can't tell me whether my credits will transfer when I go back. I'm wondering if I take the TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) test, will that count the same as the LEAP (Louisiana Educational Assessment Program)? No one can answer that for me."

Montrelle misses performing as a New Orleans Hornets' basketball "Stinger," an elite troupe that entertains fans at halftime. And she misses her friends. "Usually in New Orleans, your friends live five to 10 minutes away from you. Now, they're all in different states."

While Cheryl frets with her older daughter over the academic implications of moving from New Orleans to Houston and — they hope — back again, she expresses confidence that Montrelle, always a go-getter, will prevail. Little Maliyah raises a more nagging concern.

we are happy bc
we got saved by
a boat



Says Cheryl, “I’ve noticed that since we’ve been here, she’s changed. She’s super affectionate now. She’s afraid of the dark. She’s always looking at the moon and the stars. And she’s kind of hyper now. She was always active, you know, but hyper? This is just since we’ve been here. It’s her atmosphere. She changed with her atmosphere.” Cheryl believes Maliyah’s world changed so suddenly and drastically that her mood and behavior were bound to be affected.

Cheryl, a test administrator for 14 years with the New Orleans Job Corps, likes Houston but wants to return to her old city and old life as soon as possible. Friends and relatives in New Orleans are looking for affordable housing — a hard find in The Big Easy these days.

“I want to go back to New Orleans to see my toys,” Maliyah sing-songs. “We got flooding and lost my toys.”

“Usually in New Orleans, your friends live 5-10 minutes away from you. Now, they’re all in different states.”

—Montrelle





CHRISTOPHER, 16

Houston, Texas

They count on it like clockwork. Thursday is fight day. Four days into the school week and, at Kashmere High School in Houston, the local and New Orleans kids collide. The weekly bouts have led to suspension or expulsion for several of the two dozen students who fled The Big Easy and landed at Kashmere.

Christopher, 16, worries that he could be next.

“I want to get out of Kashmere,” he says, solemnly. “They always fighting at Kashmere.”

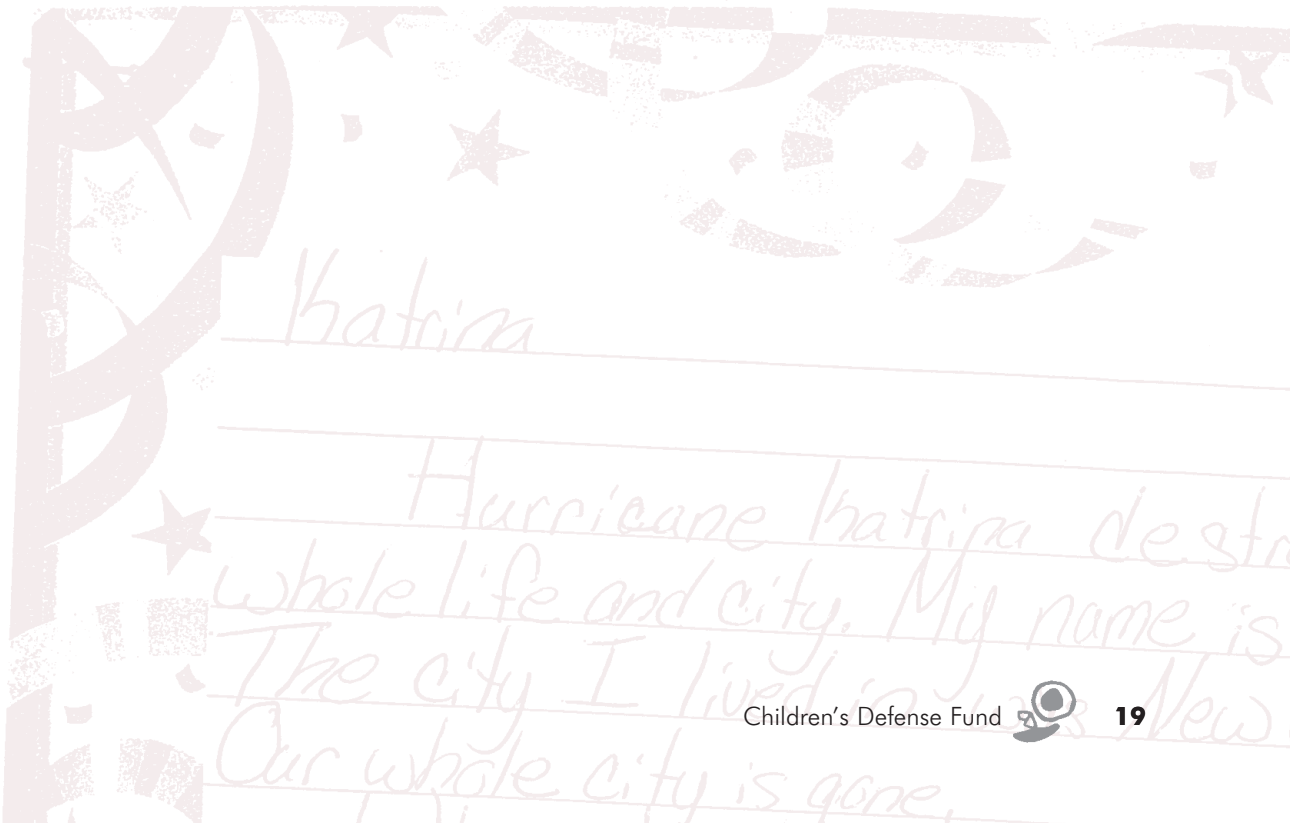
Each side blames the other for the tension and violence. Christopher says the Houston kids “don’t like the way we talk” and taunt the New Orleans evacuee students about their clothes, many of them hand-me-downs since most families fled the disaster with nothing. So far, Christopher says, he has managed to avoid coming to blows, but admits it’s getting harder, not easier, and adds pointedly, “I ain’t scared.”

From the looks of it, he’s not happy either. Attempts to coax a smile from Christopher were futile. He is transparently aggrieved, wishing aloud that he could transfer to another school; shrugging off questions about how he’s doing and conceding only that he misses his house in New Orleans and his old friends.

Christopher is uncertain about things getting better with time. People in position to make a difference have let him down, he says, claiming the newcomers no longer feel welcome but resented.

His younger sister, Elona, 14, has not experienced the fighting and violence that makes Christopher a reluctant student. An 8th grader at a Houston middle school, Elona says, “I’m all right where I’m at.” But she can’t say that she’s hopeful.

In Carolyn Chambliss’ household, real happiness appears to be the province of her grandchildren. Two-year-old Ayana and one-year-old Javian are playful and giggly, leaping from Carolyn to Elona to Javonda, their 19-year-old mother.



Back in September, when the floodwaters consumed the lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Ayana was with Christopher and Elona at a relative's house. Eventually, they were plucked from a roof by helicopter. Perhaps unaware of the danger involved in the maneuver, Ayana recalls one thing about the rescue: "Don't look down!" she exclaims.

At the same time, Carolyn was at her mother's retirement home with Javonda and Javian. They were eventually rescued by Coast Guard.

"We had to sleep on a bridge for three days," Carolyn said. "We saw so many bodies. Every which way you turned, there was a body." The two groups were separated for days, during which time Javonda fell sick. The family took turns sleeping so someone could keep watch against the occasional assailant or thief.

"Some of these kids still dream about that," Carolyn, a former hotel worker, says. "Some of them still have that in their head."

While her children seem wistful and despondent, Carolyn sounds upbeat. She is prepared to make a permanent home in Houston, she says, mainly because there's nothing to return to in New Orleans. She is confident she will find work and that life for the family will improve.

But she hopes things settle down quickly for Christopher. He used to be a decent student and never had trouble in school, she said. Now, he's beginning to falter. "Every week — every Thursday — I have to go up to the school. Why? Houston kids want to fight the New Orleans kids," Carolyn said.

Then a broad smile erupts. "Today was a blessed day," she says, "because, guess what? It's Thursday and we didn't have to go to school."

They count on it like clockwork. Thursday is fight day. Four days into the school week and, at Kashmere High School in Houston, the local and New Orleans kids collide.





MARTISE, 17

Jackson, Mississippi

There are six of them in two rooms — four boys, one girl, one mother. It's been that way since November, two months after Hurricane Katrina rendered their Biloxi, Mississippi, apartment unlivable and sent them running for cover.

Marissa Jones had been a cook at a hotel and casino in Gulfport, right next door. But Katrina wrecked that place too and Marissa lost her job. So it's been from shelter to church to here — a motel suite in Jackson with a TV, microwave, hot plate, toaster, dormitory-sized refrigerator, two beds and a pullout. And five children: Martise, 17; Merkle, 11; Montreal, 7; Martez, 9; and Claudzetta, 4.

The oldest boy says he has to help take care of the family and “be a man.” He's dead serious when he says it. “I'm trying to get a job to help my mom,” Martise explains. “I've got an interview today.” A young man who also lives in the motel has put in a good word for Martise at a nearby fast food restaurant and both are hopeful. He'll take anything — fry cook, cleanup crew, cash register, drive-up window duty, anything. “I want to work so my mama doesn't have to work anymore,” he says.

What Martise really wants to do is go to culinary arts school and become an executive chef. Travel. See the world. Cook for the pickiest palates on the planet. But that can wait. Right now, he'd give anything for “a home-cooked meal and my own room.”

“Being here, it took me back in time like how my grandmother used to live,” Martise says. “But I can't really be upset because I've got to be a man to my mom.” The four younger children say they're trying to help their mother too, doing their part to keep the cramped rooms clean and tidy. They wash dishes. They take out the trash. They rub their mother's aching back.

I had a bad storm and
I lost everything. My
clothes got wet and
I lost a lot of stuff.
I want to stay in
Texas.

"If it wasn't for them, I'd given up a long time ago," Marissa said. There are days when only their sweet obedience and innocence get her through. It's getting tougher for her to keep her wits as another day passes without keys to the trailer that FEMA has been promising since November.

She's watched other families take off. Only recently, one of Marissa's best friends in the motel got a house from Habitat for Humanity for herself, her young son and the twin girls she expects to deliver in July. Marissa was happy for her friend. Now she'd like some good news for herself.

"There's no place for the kids to play around here," she notes. "There's a swimming pool, but you can't go swimming when it's cold and they can't go unless I take them there." And Martez, frisky and fun-loving, says the place is too noisy. It would be hard to get any sleep, he says, even if you weren't sharing a bed with your brother.

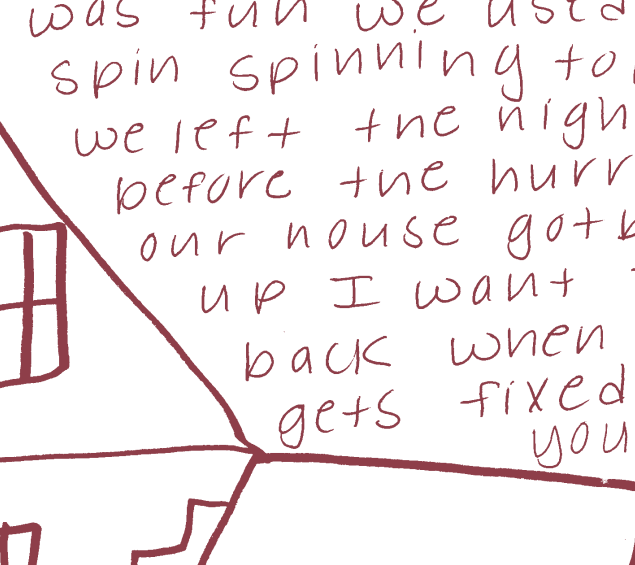
But more than the conditions themselves, it's the uncertainty that gets to Marissa. Will they get better housing — real housing — before the federal voucher for the hotel runs out? If and when the family finally moves, will her children be able to stay in the same school or will they have to adapt to a new school a second time? What does seeing your home destroyed, moving to a new city, living in a cramped space with few amenities, going to a new school, losing old friends, and watching your mother's heart break do to a child in the long run?

Despite her concerns, Marissa maintains an uncanny serenity. A hint of a smile rests on her face throughout even the dreariest conversation. It's her children, she says. They inspire her. She stares at Martise, slowly shaking her head as if in wonder and awe.

"I got to take care of my mom," he says, unsentimentally. "That's my first job."

"But I can't really be upset because I've got to be a man to my mom."

—Martise



THIS IS A PICTURE OF MY
HOUSE I MISS NEW
ORLEANS NEW ORLEANS
WAS FUN WE USED TO
SPIN SPINNING TOPS
WE LEFT THE NIGHT
BEFORE THE HURRICANE
OUR HOUSE GOT BLOWN
UP I WANT TO GO
BACK WHEN IT
GETS FIXED. THANK
YOU FOR
THE
CLOTHES.

STATUS OF CHILDREN: LOUISIANA

Children in Louisiana Before Katrina: 2nd Poorest State in the U.S.

49th in percent of poor children; 49th in percent of babies born at low birthweight; 48th in infant mortality; 42nd in per pupil expenditures; 34th in percent of uninsured children; 26th in percent of babies born to mothers who received early prenatal care.

Number of children in Louisiana: 1,164,961

Number of poor children (2004): 343,256 (30.0%)

Poor children by race (1999):

White – 82,339 (12.2%), 1 in 8 is poor

Black – 224,551 (47.3%), 1 in 2 is poor

American Indian – 2,165 (26.6%), 1 in 4 is poor

Asian – 3,519 (23.5%), 2 in 9 are poor

Latino (any race) – 7,276 (24.3%), 1 in 4 is poor

New Orleans children (1999): 51,707 were poor (42% of all children); 48,740 of those poor children were Black; 47% of all Black children (almost 1 in 2) were poor

One Day in the Life of a Child in Louisiana

A child in Louisiana is born into poverty every 29 minutes; is abused or neglected every 48 minutes; dies before his or her first birthday every 14 hours; a child or teen is killed by gunfire every 3 days.

Child Health in Louisiana

Number of children without health insurance: 148,000 (12%)

Percent of two-year-olds not fully immunized: 29.9%

Child Welfare in Louisiana

Number of children who were victims of abuse and neglect: 11,432

Number of children in foster care: 4,541

Number of children adopted from foster care: 497

Number of grandparents raising their grandchildren: 50,230

Child Hunger in Louisiana

Number of children who receive food stamps: 318,987

Number of children in School Lunch Program: 632,806

Youth at Risk in Louisiana

Percent of 16- to 19-year-olds not enrolled in school or high school graduates: 11.7%

High school completion rate: 82.6%

Percent of 16- to 19-year-olds who are unemployed: 21.2%

Number of juveniles arrested: 35,055

Number of children and teens in juvenile or adult correctional facilities: 3,028

Number of children and teens killed by firearms: 88 (57 homicides; 22 suicides; 8 accidents; and 1 undetermined)

Education in Louisiana

Amount spent per public school pupil: \$6,037

Amount spent per prisoner: \$12,951 (2.1 times more per prisoner than per public school pupil)

Percent of 4th graders reading below grade level: 80%

Percent of 4th graders below grade level in math: 76%

Early Childhood Development in Louisiana

Percent of children under age six with all parents in the labor force: 62.4%

Number of children served by Head Start: 21,982

STATUS OF CHILDREN: MISSISSIPPI

Children in Mississippi Before Katrina: Poorest State in the U.S.

50th in percent of poor children; 50th in percent of babies born at low birthweight; 50th in per pupil expenditures; 48th in infant mortality; 40th in percent of uninsured children; 21st in percent of babies born to mothers who received early prenatal care.

Number of children in Mississippi: 749,569

Number of poor children (2004): 227,656 (31%)

Poor children by race (1999):

White – 49,749 (12.4%), 1 in 8 is poor

Black – 151,217 (44.1%), 4 in 9 are poor

American Indian – 1,330 (34.5%), 1 in 3 is poor

Asian – 927 (20.8%), 1 in 5 is poor

Latino (any race) – 3,348 (29.6%), 3 in 10 are poor

One Day in the Life of a Child in Mississippi

A child in Mississippi is born into poverty every 46 minutes; is abused or neglected every 2 hours; dies before his or her first birthday every 20 hours; a child or teen is killed by gunfire every 6 days.

Child Health in Mississippi

Number of children without health insurance:
100,000 (12.6%)

Percent of two-year-olds who are not fully immunized: 19.6%

Child Welfare in Mississippi

Number of children who were victims of abuse and neglect: 5,940

Number of children in foster care: 2,812

Number of children adopted from foster care: 182

Number of grandparents raising their grandchildren:
49,977

Child Hunger in Mississippi

Number of children who receive food stamps:
176,279

Number of children in School Lunch Program:
401,044

Youth at Risk in Mississippi

Percent of 16- to 19-year-olds not enrolled in school or high school graduates: 12.4%

High school completion rate: 84.3%

Percent of 16- to 19-year-olds who are unemployed:
20.7%

Number of juveniles arrested: 12,514

Number of children and teens in juvenile or adult correctional facilities: 1,800

Number of children and teens killed by firearms: 38
(23 homicides; 8 suicides; and 7 accidents)

Education in Mississippi

Amount spent per pupil in public school: \$5,175

Amount spent per prisoner: \$12,795 (2.5 times more per prisoner than per public school pupil)

Percent of 4th graders reading below grade level:
82%

Percent of 4th graders below grade level in math:
81%

Early Childhood Development in Mississippi

Percent of children under age six with all parents in the labor force: 67%

Number of children served by Head Start: 26,754



STATUS OF CHILDREN: ALABAMA

Children in Alabama Before Katrina: 7th Poorest State in the U.S.

47th in percent of babies born at low birthweight; 44th in percent of poor children; 44th in infant mortality; 44th in per pupil expenditures; 28th in percent of babies born to mothers who received early prenatal care; 20th in percent of uninsured children.

Number of children in Alabama: 1,094,533

Number of poor children (2004): 249,443
(23.3%)

Poor children by race (1999):

White – 85,685 (12%), 1 in 8 is poor

Black – 142,772 (40.5%), 2 in 5 are poor

American Indian – 1,332 (21%), 1 in 5 is poor

Asian – 973 (14%), 1 in 7 is poor;

Latino (any race) – 6,910 (29.1%), 2 in 7 are poor

One Day in the Life of a Child in Alabama

A child in Alabama is born into poverty every 38 minutes; is abused or neglected every 53 minutes; dies before his or her first birthday every 15 hours; a child or teen is killed by gunfire every 5 days.

Child Health in Alabama

Number of children without health insurance:
107,000 (9.2%)

Percent of two-year-olds who are not fully immunized: 19.9%

Child Welfare in Alabama

Number of children who were victims of abuse and neglect: 9,290

Number of children in foster care: 6,079

Number of children adopted from foster care: 329

Number of grandparents raising their grandchildren:
58,215

Child Hunger in Alabama

Number of children who receive food stamps:
225,258

Number of children in School Lunch Program:
557,539

Youth at Risk in Alabama

Percent of 16- to 19-year-olds not enrolled in school or high school graduates: 12%

High school completion rate: 2%

Percent of 16- to 19-year-olds who are unemployed:
15.7%

Number of juveniles arrested: 13,596

Number of children and teens in juvenile or adult correctional facilities: 1,967

Number of children and teens killed by firearms: 59
(34 homicides; 17 suicides; 7 accidents; and 1 undetermined)

Education in Alabama

Amount spent per pupil in public school: \$5,885

Amount spent per prisoner: \$8,128 (1.4 times more per prisoner than per public school pupil)

Percent of 4th graders reading below grade level:
78%

Percent of 4th graders below grade level in math:
79%

Early Childhood Development in Alabama

Percent of children under age six with all parents in the labor force: 64.2%

Number of children served by Head Start: 16,374

STATUS OF CHILDREN: TEXAS

Children in Texas Before Katrina: 8th Poorest State in the U.S.

50th in percent of uninsured children; 43rd in percent of poor children; 38th in percent of babies born to mothers who received early prenatal care; 35th in per pupil expenditures; 22nd in percent of babies born at low birthweight; 18th in infant mortality.

Number of children in Texas: 6,266,779

Number of poor children (2004): 1,411,655 (22.9%)

Poor children by race (1999):

White – 631,209 (16.6%), 1 in 6 is poor

Black – 218,071 (30%), 3 in 10 are poor

American Indian – 7,863 (24.6%), 1 in 4 is poor

Asian – 16,497 (11.9%), 1 in 8 is poor

Latino (any race) – 734,288 (31.2%), 3 in 10 are poor

One Day in the Life of a Child in Texas

A child in Texas is born into poverty every 7 minutes; is abused or neglected every 11 minutes; dies before his or her first birthday every 4 hours; a child or teen is killed by gunfire every day.

Child Health in Texas

Number of children without health insurance: 1,431,000 (21.7%)

Percent of two-year-olds who are not fully immunized: 32.1%

Child Welfare in Texas

Number of children who were victims of abuse and neglect: 50,522

Number of children in foster care: 22,191

Number of children adopted from foster care: 2,504

Number of grandparents raising their grandchildren: 256,204

Child Hunger in Texas

Number of children who receive food stamps: 1,123,744

Number of children in School Lunch Program: 2,770,515

Youth at Risk in Texas

Percent of 16- to 19-year-olds not enrolled in school or high school graduates: 12.6%

High school completion rate: 79.9%

Percent of 16- to 19-year-olds who are unemployed: 18.5%

Number of juveniles arrested: 194,033

Number of children and teens in juvenile or adult correctional facilities: 11,231

Number of children and teens killed by firearms: 244 (146 homicides; 85 suicides; 10 accidents; and 3 undetermined)

Education in Texas

Amount spent per pupil in public school: \$6,539

Amount spent per prisoner: \$13,808 (2.1 times more per prisoner than per public school pupil)

Percent of 4th graders reading below grade level: 71%

Percent of 4th graders below grade level in math: 60%

Early Childhood Development in Texas

Percent of children under age six with all parents in the labor force: 56.4%

Number of children served by Head Start: 67,785



STATUS OF CHILDREN: UNITED STATES

Children in the United States *Before Katrina*

Among industrialized countries, the U.S. ranks: 1st in millionaires and billionaires; 1st in military technology and exports; 1st in health technology; 1st in defense expenditures; 1st in Gross Domestic Product; but last in protecting our children from gun violence; 25th in infant mortality; 18th in percent of children in poverty; 13th in the gap between rich and poor children; and 12th in living standards among our poorest 1/5 of children — and child poverty has increased for the fourth year in a row.

Number of children in the U.S.: 73,277,998
Number of poor children (2004): 13,245,202 (18.4%)

Poor children by race (1999):

White – 5,469,560 (11.2%), 1 in 9 is poor
Black – 3,467,900 (33.1%), 1 in 3 is poor
American Indian – 249,561 (31.6%), 3 in 10 are poor
Asian – 343,725 (14.3%), 1 in 7 is poor
Latino (any race) – 3,339,170 (27.8%), 2 in 7 are poor

One Day in the Life of a Child in the United States

A child is abused or neglected every 35 seconds; is born into poverty every 35 seconds; dies before his or her first birthday every 19 minutes; a child or teen is killed by gunfire about every 3 hours.

Child Health in the United States

Number of children without health insurance: 9 million (11.6%)
Percent of two-year-olds who are not fully immunized: 24%

Child Welfare in the United States

Number of children who were victims of abuse and neglect: 906,000
Number of children in foster care: 515,477
Number of children adopted from foster care: 49,919
Number of grandparents raising their grandchildren: 2,374,694

Child Hunger in the United States

Number of children who receive food stamps: 10,605,518
Number of children in School Lunch Program: 28,418,977

Youth at Risk in the United States

Percent of 16- to 19-year-olds not enrolled in school or high school graduates: 9.9%
High school completion rate: 86.3%
Percent of 16- to 19-year-olds who are unemployed: 17%
Number of juveniles arrested: 1,598,247
Number of children and teens in juvenile or adult correctional facilities: 133,609
Number of children and teens killed by firearms: 2,827 (1,822 homicides; 810 suicides; 151 accidents; and 44 undetermined)

Education in the United States

Amount spent per public school pupil: \$7,376
Amount spent per prisoner: \$22,650 (3.1 times more per prisoner than per public school pupil)
Percent of 4th graders reading below grade level: 70%
Percent of 4th graders below grade level in math: 65%

Early Childhood Development in the United States

Percent of children under age six with all parents in the labor force: 59.5%
Number of children served by Head Start: 844,958



CDF Freedom Schools site at the I.S. Sanders Branch of the YMCA, Jackson, Mississippi

EMERGENCY CDF FREEDOM SCHOOLS

Thanks to private funders and partnerships with two Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the YMCA and several mayors, CDF operates Emergency Freedom Schools in Mississippi for 500 evacuee children with evacuee college-age teacher-mentors providing homework help, reading enrichment, art and music, and coordinated tax and benefits help to their families.

Our New Orleans office is opening emergency CDF Freedom Schools to respond to desperate calls from working parents who cannot find a public school or child care or safe space for their children during the day or after school. We are a mere drop in the bucket of need. Long overdue system reforms, investment in infrastructure, educators and child-serving professionals committed to children, and not just to their job, are required to ensure children stable learning environments, ongoing tutorials and safe alternatives to the streets.

In addition to these emergency after-school programs, there will be CDF Freedom School sites in 49 cities and in 25 states for approximately 7,000 children. Eight hundred college and adult teacher-mentors will be trained to give literacy, conflict resolution, service and citizenship skills.



Who would want to live in a "Village" like this?

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU HELP KATRINA'S CHILDREN

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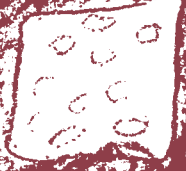
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For the latest update on CDF activities to help Katrina families, visit our Web site at www.childrensdefense.org or call us at 1- 800-233-1200.





My Family hiding on the
2nd floor during the
Hurricane





Children's Defense Fund

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