



Dear Colleague,

Nearly a year ago, the Gulf Coast was struck by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Not only were New Orleans and other communities physically devastated and their populations displaced, the racial and economic inequalities of our society were exposed for all to see. Many people consider New Orleans to be an extreme case. However, disparities based upon race and class, the deterioration of infrastructure, and the failure of government to be prepared for predictable emergencies are today characteristic of all urban centers in the United States.

Katrina and its aftermath exposed the reality that shared values of fairness, equal opportunity, and our societal responsibility for persons in need are threatened, even as individuals, congregations, and communities outside the Gulf region responded with compassion and generosity. The ability to escape the flooding was affected by one's location in the racial and economic hierarchy of U.S. society. One year after Katrina, we call for prayer and action in support of equal opportunity for those affected by Katrina and the failures that followed the storm.

The depth of this tragedy owed largely to the failure to fund adequately essential government functions, such as health care, education, affordable housing, infrastructure, and emergency services. FEMA had been degraded and the maintenance and improvement of New Orleans's levees had long been under-funded. To rebuild a region and one of America's great cities will require resources on a scale that only the federal government can mobilize. One year after Katrina, we call for prayer and action in support of federal action to rebuild and for greater accountability to the people whose communities need rebuilding.

Nearly a year after the disaster the media are growing weary. Some people have the impression that enough aid has gone to the region and it is now time for the Katrina's victims to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. However, the work has just begun and we are looking at a decade or more of physical rebuilding and many years of rebuilding social capital. The National Alliance to Restore Opportunity to the Gulf Coast and Displaced Persons calls for a Season of Prayer and Call to Action to keep these concerns in the forefront of public consciousness for as long as we must.

You as an individual and your organization – secular or religious – can play a part in this work. Join us as an organization or as an individual supporter. Recruit your congregation or community members to participate in prayer, remembrance and action during the 1-year anniversary weekend of August 25-27, 2006. Bring these concerns to your worshipping community. Organize an interfaith gathering. Bring your community organization, professional association, union, or block association into the effort. The Alliance is planning or will join in interfaith gatherings in numerous cities around the country and providing resources to individual congregations and other communities that want to join the effort.

In September, we will be going to Washington, DC, to lay out a Platform of Opportunity for the Gulf Coast and Displaced Persons and calling upon the Congress and Administration to respond to that platform. And we will go back when the new Congress is seated in January to check on how they are doing.

Throughout the Season of Prayer we will provide research, talking points, resources, and worship materials to all who would join us. In addition to Alliance-wide efforts, member groups will be organizing events to build the momentum, and we will support and publicize these events.

Throughout this Season of Prayer, we will remind all people that our fates are joined as human beings and that, as

a people, we have a moral obligation to those who continue to suffer from this tragedy. This obligation is based in the civic values of the Republic and in the teachings of our many faiths. Congregations and other organizations have begun the re-building on their own and what they have done is amazing. Many persons are still displaced and need assistance whether they eventually return to the Gulf or make new lives elsewhere. Communities outside the region have welcomed displaced persons and continue to strain their infrastructure and resources to do so. Those who return must find safety in the rebuilt infrastructure and not the re-creation of the racial and economic inequities that existed before the storm. Only the federal government can mobilize the resources to rebuild a region and it must not divert funds from other real needs to do so. One year after Katrina, we call for a Season of Prayer and Action to restore opportunity to the Gulf Coast and to displaced persons.

To join our effort, please click on the Join Us button at www.linkedfate.org. We are compiling events planned by congregations and other organizations across the country as they respond to the anniversary of Katrina between now and the end of 2006. You can add your events to our database by clicking on the Register Events button on our website. Come back and watch the list of supporters and events grow.

To learn more about the National Alliance to Restore Opportunity to the Gulf Coast and Displaced Persons and how you can get involved in the Alliance, please go to www.linkedfate.org or email info@linkedfate.org. You may also contact Rev. Tony Johnson at 212-248-2785 or tonyjohnson2@verizon.net.

In solidarity, The National Alliance to Restore Opportunity to the Gulf Coast and Displaced Persons

The Alliance's primary organizers include:

Center for Social Inclusion

Earth House Center

Equal Justice Society

Gamaliel Foundation

Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

MOSES, Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength

Opportunity Agenda

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