

Nagin: God mad at America and blacks

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW ORLEANS—Mayor Ray Nagin suggested that recent destruction from hurricanes Katrina, Rita and other natural disasters is a sign that "God is mad at America," and also mad at black communities for tearing themselves apart with violence and divisive politics.

"Surely God is mad at America. He sent us hurricane after hurricane after hurricane, and it's destroyed and put stress on this country," Nagin said as he and other city leaders commemorated Martin Luther King Day. "Surely he doesn't approve of us being in Iraq under false pretenses. But surely he is upset at black America also. We're not taking care of ourselves."

Joking that he may appear to have "post-Katrina stress disorder," Nagin, who is black, talked of an imaginary conversation with the late civil rights leader. They

Nagin

"talked," he said, while he was thinking Monday about what to say at the ceremony outside City Hall to kick off a walking parade in King's honor.

"I said, 'What is it going to take for us to move on and live your dream and make it a reality?' He said, 'I don't think that we need to pay attention any more as much about other folks and racists

on the other side.' He said, 'The thing we need to focus on as a community—black folks I'm talking about—is ourselves.'"

Nagin told the crowd that he also asked, "Why is black-on-black crime such an issue? Why do our young men hate each other so much that they look their brother in the face and they will take a gun and kill him in cold blood?"

The reply, he said, was, "We as a people need to fix ourselves first."

A day earlier, gunfire had erupted at a traditional second-line walking parade to commemorate King's birthday. Three people were wounded in the shooting in broad daylight amid a throng of mostly black spectators,

but police at the scene said there were no immediate suspects or even witnesses.

Nagin said King would not have worried less about those committing crimes than about the good people who knew what was right but lacked the courage to do it.

"It's time for all of us good folk to stand up and say we're tired of the violence. We're tired of black folks killing each other," Nagin said.

Nagin also recounted his disappointment with state and federal officials in the days after Katrina, wondering what King would have thought at the sight of so many people stranded at the Louisiana Superdome and the city's convention center for days after the storm,

stuck in sweltering heat and lacking adequate food, water and bathrooms.

And, he said, King would have been disappointed at police in suburban and predominantly white Gretna, who turned back people who tried to walk across the Mississippi River bridge in the days after Katrina. Nagin once again accused Gretna officers of using attack dogs and machine gun fire in the

air to turn people back, although Gretna officials have disputed that.

But Nagin also said King would have been dismayed with black leaders who are "most of the time tearing each other down publicly for the delight of many."

"Dr. King, if he was here today, he would be talking to us about this problem. The problem we have among our-

Woman dressed as Aunt Jemimah banned

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — An activist who was arrested after disrupting a City Council meeting in an Aunt Jemima costume has been banned by the council president from attending meetings until the end of March.

Jackie Brown was escorted out of a Nov. 22 City Council

meeting after loudly criticizing the council for the city's small business incentive law.

Brown, president of the Jacksonville Coalition of Black Contractors, said the law treats blacks like "slaves" because it does not provide enough opportunities for minority contractors.

She returned during a later

public comment period and scuffled with a police officer after refusing to leave when ordered.

Brown was arrested and charged with causing a disturbance at a lawful assembly and resisting a police officer.

A letter this week from Council President Kevin

Hyde informing Brown she cannot attend council meetings until March 31 cites a rule that allows the council to remove disruptive citizens from meetings.

Bill Sheppard, Brown's attorney, did not immediately return a message early Friday.

Whiteness class prompts colorful debate

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOULDER, Colo. — People stare when University of Colorado student Maren Gauldin wears her "Black is Beautiful" T-shirt.

That's because she's white.

The shirt, Gauldin says, is like a tag that forces her to engage in conversations about race, forces her to feel a tiny bit like black and Latino students on an overwhelmingly white campus.

"Every time I put it on, I feel uncomfortable," Gauldin told students at a white-privilege symposium last month that filled an auditorium and spilled into a hallway. "It helps me think about the kind of activist I want to be."

The symposium was one part of an introspective look by white CU scholars and students at the privileges they say are automatically afforded the white race. Awareness of the relatively new field, called whiteness

studies, is building at CU as the university examines its diversity and racial strife.

The field of study—by some accounts born 10 years ago at a conference at the University of California at Berkeley and now taught at hundreds of universities—has its critics, who call it white-bashing rhetoric that shows how far academia has strayed from mainstream society.

"Whiteness studies is not about white-bashing, and it's not about white supremacy," said Duncan Rinehart, who will teach CU's fourth whiteness-studies course this semester.

"As long as whiteness is invisible, it's contributing to inequality and injustice. There is a fair amount of just flat-out denial, not malicious, but denial nonetheless."

Feminist scholar Peggy McIntosh, whose essay on white privilege often is

required reading for students in whiteness studies, defines it as an "invisible weightless knapsack."

"I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious," she says.

The growing discussion of white privilege at CU has attracted some negative response, and the attacks have spilled into the university's examination of its lack of diversity.

The European/American Issues Forum, an organization that says it is not white supremacist but stands up for white rights, has e-mailed a couple dozen student leaders and filed three open-records requests with CU interim president Hank Brown asking for university expenses on ethnic clubs. One e-mail included statistics of crimes against whites by blacks.

Its president, Louis Calabro, also has demanded a representative of European American rights on CU's 44-member blue-ribbon diversity panel.

Calabro, a 73-year-old retired San Francisco police lieutenant, found out about the white-privilege symposium on the Internet and was incensed. He said CU has created a culture of white guilt by teaching that "everybody else are the victims and we're the perps."

"The University of Colorado has a campus that's hostile to European American white people," he said.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project, which tracks hate groups, has had Calabro on its radar for years, said deputy director Heidi Beirich. But the European/American Issues Forum has not crossed the line from representing the rights of whites to hating other races, Beirich said.

Photo exhibit features midwives of South

SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE

The woman rests her hand on the mother's belly, glancing at the clock on the fireplace mantel as she times the contractions.

In another photograph, she's clothed in a flowing white gown and soothes a mother in the throes of giving birth. A photograph also shows her the next day, gently washing the newborn.

The caregiver is Mary Francis Hill Coley, known as Miss Mary, a black midwife in Albany, Ga., who helped deliver more than 3,000 babies from the 1930s to the 1960s.

The photographs, which offer rare glimpses of the nurturing that black midwives once provided to their communities, are part of "Reclaiming Midwives," an exhibition at the Smithsonian's Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture.

Focusing on midwifery in the South dating from the 17th century on, the exhibition runs until April 2006.

Robert Galbraith took the photographs in 1952, while working as an assistant cameraman on a documentary about midwifery. For 12 weeks, the filmmakers shadowed Miss Mary as she made her rounds in the segregated town of about 31,000 people.

She was wearing her birth robe, "draped in heavenly clothes" like an angel, Galbraith recalls. "She had a presence that was extraordi-

nary."

He went on to become a freelance photographer, publishing work in Life magazine and elsewhere, but his portrait series of Miss Mary sat in a box for four decades in the basement of his home in Long Island, N.Y. Then, in 1995, Linda Janet Holmes, a health researcher in New Jersey and co-author of a book on black midwives, learned of the photographs from George Stoney, the documentary's director.

Medical literature in the

past often reflected midwives as ignorant and backward, "but these photos defied that," Holmes, guest curator of the Anacostia Museum show, tells Smithsonian magazine.

African-American midwives, sometimes called "granny midwives," flourished in the South from slavery times to the 1970s because many black women were denied access to health care. As Holmes points out, townspeople held midwives in high esteem for their skills

and wisdom.

For her part, Miss Mary served many other roles in her community, including spiritual advisor. "She was a voice of hope and support," says her grandson, R. Bernard Coley, 54, a consultant in Palo Alto, Calif.

Miss Mary died in 1966 at age 66, but her story lives on in the photographs and the documentary "All My Babies," which the Library of Congress added to its National Film Registry in 2005.



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