

# Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

## Aftermath of Hurricanes Expose Poverty, Racism in the US

**H**urricane Katrina, which slammed against the Gulf Coast of the United States late last August, was the costliest and one of the deadliest hurricanes in the country's history. It was the eleventh named storm, the fifth hurricane, the third major hurricane, and the second Category 5 hurricane of the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season, and was the sixth-strongest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded.

It is possible that Katrina was the largest hurricane of its strength to approach the US in recorded history; its sheer size caused devastation over 100 miles from the center. The storm surge caused catastrophic damage along the coastlines of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama—including the cities of Mobile, Alabama; Biloxi and Gulfport, Mississippi; and Slidell, Louisiana.

Levees separating Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans, Louisiana were breached by the surge, ultimately flooding roughly 80 percent of the city and many areas of neighboring parishes. Severe wind damage was reported well inland. Katrina is estimated to be responsible for \$75 billion (2005 US dollars) in damages. The storm killed at least 1,604 people.

### Hurricane Changes US Perception of Poverty

**A**nother thing the hurricane did was to strip bare the economic and social inequities in the United States. According to a report issued last November, Hurricane Katrina forged a

strong consensus among America's major racial and ethnic groups to eliminate poverty in the US. The storm and its aftermath also shook public confidence in the US government's capacity to handle catastrophes—including a terrorist attack.

The poll, conducted by New California Media in six languages among four racial groups, found that clear majorities of Asians, Hispanics, African Americans, and Caucasians believe

*According to a report issued last November, Hurricane Katrina forged a strong consensus among America's major racial and ethnic groups to eliminate poverty in the US.*

fighting poverty is now more important than fighting terrorism or establishing democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"All Americans witnessed Katrina and we wanted to know what they thought across the racial and ethnic spectrum," says Sandy Close, executive director of New California Media. "What we found was a remarkable unanimity on issues of poverty, government incompetence and climate change."

The one issue on which the ethnic and racial groups disagreed was a role of racism in the Katrina catastrophe. Most African

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# Bread for the World's 2006 Offering of Letters Addresses Millennium Goals

*This Year's Theme: One Spirit. One Will. Zero Poverty.*

WASHINGTON, DC—In his State of the Union address, President Bush described the value of reducing poverty and disease in the world. Congress must now deliver on this promise to people living in poverty around the world. Now, through Bread for the World's 2006 Offering of Letters (OL), churches across the country are pushing for an increase in poverty-focused development assistance.

Through their annual Offering of Letters, Bread for the World (BFW) builds bipartisan support in Congress for various hunger causes. This year's OL emphasizes the goal of the ONE Campaign—to offer one percent of the US budget to the reduction of poverty around the world.

The late US Senator Paul Simon, brother to BFW's founding president, once stated that anyone who wrote a letter to legislators on behalf of hungry people was almost certainly saving a life. Since its founding, BFW has sponsored dozens of letter-writing campaigns, alternating between global concerns and poverty within the US.

A BFW representative writes:

*A movement of God's Spirit is sweeping through nations of the world. In recent years—in churches, on campuses and in community groups across the United States—tens of thousands of Bread for the World members and other concerned people of faith and conscience have rallied together, raising their voices on behalf of hungry and poor people around the world. Those voices have been heard: Together we have helped win significant increases in effective development assistance to help reduce poverty globally.*

In 2000, US leadership embraced the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which aim to cut extreme hunger and poverty by half and to substantially improve health, education and livelihoods in developing countries by 2015.

At that time, countries around the world, including the United States, promised to significantly increase assistance to the poorest countries. However, as a BFW spokesperson said, it will take more than signing a set of goals to achieve this change in the world:

*It will take substantial new resources and policy changes. It will take more and better federal assistance for the most effective anti-poverty programs that can best improve the lives of those most in need. Achieving these goals will require political courage and leadership—political will—reflecting the public's desire for our government to do more to help vulnerable people in the poorest parts of the world. Our promises will not be fulfilled unless Congress is willing to approve the funding needed to fulfill them.*

This year, through BFW's 2006 Offering of Letters, people of faith and conscience will join together to urge US



**ONE SPIRIT  
ONE WILL  
ZERO  
POVERTY**

leaders to fulfill their promises to the world's impoverished people. This offering will seek significant increases in poverty-focused development assistance to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

—For more information, or for an Offering of Letters kit, contact Bread for the World; 50 F Street, NW, Suite 500; Washington, DC 20001; 202-639-9400; 800-82-BREAD; Fax 202-639-9401—or download the kit at [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org).

hun•ger, n.

1. the need or desire for food
2. a great need or desire for something
3. lack of food leading to sickness or death.



# *Bipartisan Amendment for AIDS Passes in Senate*

WASHINGTON, DC—The US Senate recently passed an amendment, sponsored by Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Rick Santorum (R-PA), to increase the US contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria to \$866 million in fiscal year 2007.

“The Global Fund must increase in the face of an expanding global epidemic. This is not a partisan or political issue; it is a moral issue. Millions of lives are hanging in the balance,” Senator Durbin said. “This US contribution sends a clear signal to other nations that they must step up.”

“It is essential that the US contribution to the Global Fund be increased so that we can continue to provide life-saving and life-sustaining assistance to people infected with HIV/AIDS and other diseases in the poorest areas of the world,” Santorum said.

The Global Fund works in 130 countries to address TB and malaria, in addition to HIV/AIDS. The requirement that each US dollar be matched by two dollars from other donors is a critical mechanism to leverage contributions from other nations.

The Global Fund estimates that it will need \$1.6 billion to renew current proven grants and an additional \$1 billion to fund a new round of grants to meet the growing need.

Tom Hart, Deputy Executive Director of DATA\*, said: “We congratulate and thank Senator Santorum and Senator Durbin for winning this amendment. While they lead opposing political parties, they are leaders together in the fight against global HIV/AIDS and other diseases in the poorest parts of the world.

“We and the thousands of Americans who supported them through the ONE

campaign are looking for the same courageous effort in the House of Representatives. Support for the Global Fund translates into lives saved. This amendment would allow that to continue and grow.”

Jack Valenti, President of Friends of the Global Fight against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, said: “This is a splendid triumph for a lot of sick people who are going to be kept alive as a result of the passage of this amendment.”

On average, every \$100 million contribution to the Global Fund will generate the following results:

- *The Fund can provide 630,000 bed nets to fight malaria, and*
- *It can deliver 150,000 treatments for malaria, and,*
- *It can provide 80,000 highly-effective DOTS treatments for TB, and*
- *It can supply 370,000 people with HIV tests, and*
- *It can provide 11,000 people with life-saving AIDS treatment.*

Roughly 34 million people have died from HIV/AIDS since the start of the epidemic, and an estimated 70 million have been infected. Every 60 seconds, there are 5 more deaths from AIDS and 9 more infections. Over the next decade, an estimated 50 million more people will contract HIV.

—from the ONE Campaign, [www.onecampaign.org](http://www.onecampaign.org)

\* DATA was founded in 2002 by Bono, the lead singer of U2, along with Bobby Shriver and activists from the Jubilee 2000 Drop the Debt campaign, to “raise awareness about, and spark response to the crises swamping Africa: unpayable Debts, uncontrolled spread of AIDS, and unfair Trade rules which keep Africans poor.”



## **Volunteer Delivers 160,000 Letters to House Budget Chair**

DUBUQUE, IOWA—In March, a ONE Campaign volunteer, the Rev. Joan Fumetti delivered over 160,000 letters to Iowa Congressman Nussle, Chair of the Budget Committee of the US House of Representatives, asking him to lead the effort to fully fund the fight against global AIDS and extreme poverty.

“I tasked Congressman Nussle to help America do more to create hope and opportunity for people in the world’s poorest countries,” said Rev. Fumetti. “People across Iowa know that helping other people is a good investment in a better, safer world, and it’s just the right thing to do.”

ONE Campaign leaders say the US currently gives far less than one percent of its federal budget to help fight AIDS and extreme poverty, and Congressman Nussle has the opportunity to help the US save many lives around the world.

The letters delivered by Fumetti come from Iowa and across the country. Shortly before the delivery of the letters, Des Moines was declared a “City of ONE,” joining more than 40 other cities (and 16,000 supporters of the ONE Campaign) across Iowa.

“Whether you’re a Congressman or pastor, all Iowans can be part of giving people the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty,” said Rev. Fumetti. “People in small and big towns can all join the fight against poverty and AIDS. The opportunity to help save lives is just as real here in Dubuque as it is in Africa.”

At press time, the House was still deliberating on the Budget.

—from the ONE Campaign ([www.one.org](http://www.one.org))

# *Fall Drought Brings Food Emergency in East Africa*

NAIROBI, KENYA—Development workers say that failure of rains last fall in northern and eastern Kenya has set in motion a series of crises, which have in turn triggered a food emergency.

Development workers say that clashes among nomadic tribes is exacerbating the situation.

An estimated 2.5 million people are in need of emergency food aid, almost 10 percent of Kenya's population.

Assistance agencies are working to address immediate food and water needs in the most affected communities with food distribution, water tankering for domestic and livestock use, and borehole drilling and/ or repair in key specific areas of Mandera, Kajiado, Narok, Makueni, Kitui, Taita Taveta, Tana River and Turkana Districts.

"The need is serious," said Donna Derr of Church World Service (CWS), "although the government of Kenya and aid agencies working there seem to have a comprehensive plan for responding in the immediate term, and alleviating the most serious of the needs.

The challenge, Derr said, will be finding ways between drought cycles to develop mitigation strategies in the affected areas that will give communities adequate local coping mechanisms should drought re-occur.

Preventing future disaster is what's so vital about sustainable development. "Otherwise, we just repeat the cycles of misery and helplessness," she said.

Sam Mutua, emergency response officer for Church World Service Kenya, said the drought was continuing through the spring and the situation is getting worse.

"For the last couple of years," he said, "some pockets of Kenya have been receiving poor rain. Some rains have been scanty; some areas have received



art by Kate Thomason

none. People have been able to cope in the past, but these coping mechanisms have been eroded."

Aid workers say the worst came in December after the long rains did not come in the fall. Farmers had already missed the short rains in April 2005. Mutua said the Kenyan people are not optimistic.

"Even if it rains, it will take three months for farmers to see their crops mature. Also, it takes almost a year for livestock to rejuvenate. The farmers will take a long time to recuperate, to get back to normal life. So there is a long-term impact."

CWS and partners in local initiatives, including one at Kakuma refugee camp, are working together to provide water and other resources to the drought areas.

"We don't wish to see this happening in the same communities again. Our response will also consider the question of seeing which interventions worked better—to give people resilience when drought comes through," Mutua said.

The British Red Cross reports similar needs in Somalia and Ethiopia.

Paul Anticoni, head of international aid at the British Red Cross, said: "The current rainy season will come to an end very soon and recent rainfall remains too low to ensure a successful harvest in July. Our aim now is to ensure people have enough water to survive until the next rainy season in September."

The United Nations issued a report in early April, saying that the region's long-running drought is killing thousands of people due to related illnesses and malnutrition.

Jan Egeland, the UN Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs, said that people are not dying in large numbers because of hunger itself, but they are dying because of associated disease and malnutrition. "Malnourished children die now in very high numbers, it's certainly in the thousands, probably in tens of thousands across the Horn of Africa," Egeland added, responding to a question about how many lives had been lost due to the drought.

This March, Louis Michel, a representative of the European Commission (EC), met with IGAD\* heads of state in Nairobi, announcing that an additional R40 million will be forthcoming in emergency aid for the region. The EC estimates that six million people are affected by the drought in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya.

—from Church World Service ([www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)), British Red Cross, Reuters, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)

\*IGAD, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, is a coalition of the heads of state from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda. The group focuses on food security.

# *Special Section:*

## What's in the 2007 US Budget and How Will It Affect the Poor?

compiled by Adam Henderson

### **Bush Administration's 2007 Budget Slashes Social Assistance Programs**

It would seem that US President Bush's recent 2007 budget proposal marks its intentions quite clearly—take from the poor, give to the war.

At a time of national instability and civil unrest, it would be difficult not to

*Over half of the almost \$40 billion being cut from the budget has been taken out of funding for Medicare and Medicaid, which are the primary programs that provide coverage for the elderly, poor and disabled.*

question many of the decisions and proposed resolutions for the (somewhat self-inflicted) financial burdens of the current administration.

Bush's newest plan, currently waiting for approval from Congress, calls for almost \$40 billion to be cut from 141 programs ranging from healthcare benefits to NASA projects.

While fiscal changes clearly need to be made, some of the cuts are leaving people pondering just exactly how these alterations make sense for the greater good of the millions of Americans they will be affecting.

Religious leaders are among the loudest protesters. In January, 115 religious leaders were arrested while praying on the steps of the Cannon Office

House Building to protest "the immoral budget and tax agenda which slashes spending on the poor to finance tax breaks for the rich."

On the evening of the State of the Union address in Washington, religious groups across the country gathered to watch the address and discuss the ways the President addressed the needs of impoverished people.

The event, called "The State of Our Values," was part of a national campaign led by Sojourners, a Washington-based organization that has been outspoken against the way this administration has responded to the poor.

However, the next day, when the budget vote came up, Congress went about its business as if the protests never happened.

### **Medicare Will Be Biggest Loser**

The biggest loser in the new deal will undoubtedly be Medicare, which is poised to be cut by \$36 billion over the next five years. Over half of the almost \$40 billion being cut from the budget next year alone has been taken out of funding for Medicare and Medicaid, which are the primary programs that provide coverage for the elderly, poor and disabled.

Over the next ten years, the changes will also increase

costs of Medicaid for around 20 million low-income recipients and force at least 65,000 out of the program completely, according to the latest CBO report. Children will account for 60 percent of those affected.

As one would expect, not everyone is okay with this.

Chip Kahn, president of the Federation of American Hospitals, says, "With all the pressures on hospitals, with the fact that most hospitals are losing money on their Medicare patients today,

cartoon by Norma Young



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this is the wrong policy at the wrong time.”

According to policy analysts, low-income people will basically lose health care altogether, while middle-income elderly people will find it increasingly difficult to get long-term care.

***The Department of Education has already intimated that over 400,000 eligible students do not enroll in college every year because of financial burdens.***

The 2007 budget is also set to cut the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), as well as the National Institute of Child

Health and Human Development (NICHD). These two programs have not suffered funding cuts in over 30 years.

But these aren't the only beneficial health care programs being strapped—others include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, as well as aid for children's hospitals.

## **Cuts to Veterans Deemed 'Unconscionable'**

Unfortunately, health programs are just the beginning.

Ed Rendell, the governor of Pennsylvania, feels that the federal government should be doing more to help America's veterans. He criticized the proposed budget cuts affecting them.

“During this time of war, it is absolutely the wrong time for our federal government to step back from any of its

commitments to our veterans. To do so would be penny-wise but pound-foolish,” Rendell said.

“In today's parlance, the cost of health care for these vets may be half a billion dollars but their sacrifice for our nation, priceless.

“While we the governors do all we can for our vets and our returning soldiers, our federal government still has the primary responsibility for meeting the needs of our veterans. And that's why I find the president's budget cuts for critical veteran services to be unconscionable.”

Among the budget cuts is a “\$350 million reduction in veterans home funding, which wipes out at least 5,000 veterans' nursing home beds.”

When enacted, President Bush's budget cuts will force almost 60 percent of the 1,600 veterans to lose their daily remuneration, which allows them to stay in state nursing homes.

## **US Now Falling Behind in Education**

Others are speaking out as well.

Cuts in educational funding from 2006 have led the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) to conclude that America is now at a competitive disadvantage to countries like India, whose collection of highly educated individuals is currently exceeding that of the US.

Congress has already agreed to reduce educational funding this year for the first time in ten years by over \$650 million. The CEF says that long-term effects of cuts such as this will severely affect the continued growth of the American economy, as well as the success of future generations.

President Bush says he believes that state and local governments and national businesses will assist with problems arising from reductions in educational funding. The fact remains that many areas have already been experiencing cuts. Necessity from such things as hurricane

## **Opponents Claim 2006 Budget Act Is Legally Defective**

**T**his spring, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi demanded an ethics investigation into the passage of the FY Budget Reconciliation Bill that President Bush recently signed. She said the legislation was defective because it had cleared the House and Senate in two different forms.

A Senate clerk had changed the proposed 13-month restricted Medicare reimbursement for rented medical equipment to 36 months, a \$2 billion alteration, before it was passed in the House.

After the vote, a clerk changed the bill to match the other version before the bill was sent to the President. An elder care lawyer in Mobile, Ala., has filed the first lawsuit challenging the bill's constitutionality.

A second law suit has been filed by Public Citizen, a legislative watchdog group. Some constitutional scholars say they could not think of any precedent for the journey the budget bill took to becoming a law and sympathize with the suits.

The law in question would cut nearly \$40 billion in Medicaid over five years, raise work requirements for welfare, and trim the student loan program, among other reductions.

—compiled by Traci La Brie. Sources: “House Democratic Leader Wants Budget Probe,” Houston Chronicle ([www.chron.com](http://www.chron.com)); “Spending Measure Not a Law, Suit Says,” Washington Post ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)); Food Research and Action Center News Digest

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relief has taken \$1 billion already from Bush's "No Child Left Behind" program.

Changes to the budget have also forced many parents and college students to face significantly higher loan costs. \$12 billion have now been cut from student loan programs, raising interest rates. These will take effect starting this July 1.

The Department of Education has already intimated that over 400,000 eligible students do not enroll in college every year because of financial burdens. Accordingly, college graduates have experienced a 50 percent increase in debt in the last ten years, according to the Project on Student Debt.

## NASA Says Cuts Will Affect Weather Satellites

Not even government-funded organizations such as NASA are safe from major cuts in the 2007 budget plan. "The 2007 budget is tilted to an unhealthy extent to large missions," said Joseph Taylor, who helped lead a 10-year survey for astrophysics.

Bush's 2007 budget gives NASA an overall increase of 3.2 percent to \$16.8 billion, but most of that will go toward completing construction on the international space station and to getting a successor to the shuttle aloft.

Likewise, many of America's environmental satellites—essential for forecasting hurricanes and global warming, as well as defending our water supplies—may very well be at risk.

Neglecting these projects puts everyone in jeopardy. When the next series of tornadoes ravage Kansas or another enormous hurricane strikes the coast of Louisiana, no one will have enough information or warning to take any preventative measures.

The 2007 budget offers \$2.2 billion for these satellites, compared to the \$4 billion allotted for missions to the moon and Mars.

## Budget Cuts Taxes for the Wealthy, Leaves Out the Most Vulnerable

These budget cuts are an obvious concern for many. Even some legislators from the president's party are voicing concerns. Most Republicans, however, welcome the cuts. For them it represents a hope for curbing the federal deficit.

Concerns across the nation come from the fact that the bill mostly affects the most vulnerable populations.

Funding for annual appropriations in this budget is \$9 billion short of the cost just to keep up the current level of services next year in 2007—for education, food assistance programs, housing, Meals on Wheels, and many other services.

It calls for \$4 billion in cuts over 5 years from a category of funding that includes basic entitlements such as unemployment insurance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and income support for low-income elderly people and people with disabilities. It includes deep cuts and what many call harmful program changes in child support, child care for families trying to get off welfare, and foster care. In 2011, 650,000 fewer children will

receive subsidized child care than in 2000.

Food aid under this budget will be eliminated for 420,000 seniors and 50,000 young children and mothers. The Com-

*The President also established his intentions in his State of the Union address, saying, "Every year of my presidency, we've reduced the growth of non-security discretionary spending.... This year, my budget will cut it again."*

modity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) will be eliminated altogether [see the sidebar on page 7.]

"The sad truth is all of this is to pay for tax cuts for the wealthiest people in our country," House minority leader Nancy Pelosi said, speaking of the \$70 billion in tax cuts proposed by the congressional majority.

The cuts, which amount to approximately \$8 billion a year, account for around two percent of the budget

## Senator Santorum Defends Commodity Food Program

Although Senator Rick Santorum, Chairman of the Republican Conference in the US Senate, usually supports President Bush and his administration, last week he teamed up with local food banks in Philadelphia to fight the food program cut proposed in the President's FY 2007 budget.

Santorum opposes the elimination of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program that feeds more than 400,000 senior citizens, women and children. Pennsylvania is one of 32 states that participates in the program, and would greatly feel the impact of such a cut. Hunger cuts across political lines, and "our programs really do draw support from both sides of the aisle," said Joyce Rothermel of the Greater Pittsburgh Community food Bank.

—compiled by Traci La Brie. Sources: "Santorum Fights to Save Food Program," *KDKA News Radio, Pittsburgh, (kdka.com)*, *Food Research and Action Center News Digest*

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deficit, which is on pace to be more than \$400 billion this year alone.

The discretionary budget—that which is determined year to year—is the prime target of the 2007 budget. The Pentagon and the Homeland Security program will not take a hit, however. In fact, each of those programs is set to receive a five-percent increase in spending.

The President also established his intentions in his State of the Union

*“The sad truth is all of this is to pay for tax cuts for the wealthiest people in our country,” House minority leader Nancy Pelosi said, speaking of the \$70 billion in tax cuts proposed by the congressional majority.*

address, saying, “Every year of my presidency, we’ve reduced the growth of non-security discretionary spending.... This year, my budget will cut it again.”

## **Less Money for Social Programs, More Money for Defense**

Even if one assumes good intentions throughout all of this, the fact remains that the slashing of health care and education programs is happening at the same time the administration is setting aside huge amounts of money for the war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This, coupled with large tax cuts affecting the wealthiest segment of the population, makes the budget look downright draconian.

In fact, at the same time that people across the country were learning about the cuts to social programs, the administration went to Congress and asked for a sizeable chunk of money for the war in Iraq.

To date, Congress has allocated more than \$420 billion for the war. The Bush administration is expected to ask for even more later this year, likely bringing the cost of the war to over half a trillion dollars—more than ten times the amount approximated before the invasion of Baghdad.

## **US Deficit Still Expected to Increase**

Dubbed the “Deficit Reduction Act,” the new House bill will do little, if anything, to reduce the deficit, which is projected to increase by \$360 billion this year. The budget cuts will subtract less than three percent of the \$14.3 trillion in federal spending anticipated over the next five years.

It would seem, then, that restraint is being stipulated only from those at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy, who will only be paying for even larger amounts of wealth for those at the top.

The bill was expected to pass, even with all of the controversy, early in April. However, problems came up between conservative and moderate Republicans, and the measure stalled. At press time, the bill was set to come to the floor again in late April.

—Adam Henderson, a Dallas native, is a professional writing student at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Sources: “Budget Cuts for Veterans’ Services,” CNN ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)); “Scientists Blast NASA Budget Cuts,” Associated Press; cuts in educational funding, Epoch Times, Washington, DC staff; “Concerns Mount Over Higher Rates on Student Loans,” Zachary Coile; “US Budget Slashes Social Spending to Fund War and Tax Cuts for the Rich,” Bill Van Auken; “2007 Budget Favors Defense,” Washington Post; “Bush Proposes Medicare Cuts in Latest Budget,” Morning Edition; cuts in poverty programs, Food Research and Action Center News Digest

## **Anti-Poverty Coalition to Convene June Meeting of Religious Leaders Group Will Launch**

### **‘Covenant for a New America’ Effort**

At press time, the anti-poverty coalition Call to Renewal was preparing for Pentecost 2006, a three-day conference emphasizing how to overcome poverty in the US and globally. Organizers say that hundreds of church leaders, lay leaders, social service providers, and activists of all ages will convene at the National City Christian Church in Washington, DC on June 26-28. The program includes workshops, speeches, opportunity for networking, policy briefings, and a special emphasis on training for young people.

The conference will also launch a new initiative, the “Covenant for a New America,” a solutions-based agenda for overcoming poverty that transcends ideology. The covenant is based on common-sense ways to end poverty, such as promoting a living family income for all who work, rebuilding neighborhoods and communities, strengthening families and renewing culture, and supporting the Millennium Development Goals to end global poverty.

—from Call to Renewal ([www.calltorenewal.org](http://www.calltorenewal.org))

# ***Pulitzer Goes to Columnist Who Drew Attention to Darfur***

NEW YORK, NY—Nicholas Kristof, the New York Times columnist who won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary partly because of his columns about Darfur, hopes the award will put a brighter spotlight on the genocide in that Sudanese region.

“I don’t think the Pulitzer board was necessarily sending a message, but the prize may have the effect of bringing a little more attention to Darfur,” Kristof told the *Editor & Publisher (E&P)*.

More attention from governments is welcome, of course, but Kristof would also like to see the media focus more on Darfur.

“Nick has done just amazing, path-breaking stuff,” Times Editorial Page Editor Gail Collins told E&P, citing his columns about the developing world. “His work is both dangerous to himself and of enormous service to the people he writes about.”

Kristof, 46, has made a widely publicized challenge for Fox News host Bill O’Reilly to visit Darfur. After winning the Pulitzer, he said, “my offer to him still stands.”

“When I picked on him, there was an element of goading him,” Kristof said of O’Reilly, who also writes a column for Creators Syndicate. “But I was serious, too.” He said that visiting Darfur would draw media attention to the genocide and perhaps move the White House to take the crisis more seriously.

At press time, Kristof was also holding a contest to find a college student to accompany him on a reporting trip.

—from *Editor & Publisher*  
([editorandpublisher.com](http://editorandpublisher.com))

## **Feeding a Hungry World: A Vision for Food Aid in the 21st Century**

A new Bread for the World Institute position paper, “Feeding a Hungry World: A Vision for Food Aid in the 21st Century” highlights the relationship between food aid and other development assistance and offers four proposals for making it more effective and efficient.

The writers reflect on how food is used to alleviate hunger and improve food security but say that the goal is sometimes undercut by other objectives.

They also underscore the fact that food is only one of many components necessary for long-term food security. They grapple with questions of in-kind food aid versus purchasing locally-produced food, and how food aid affects local markets.

The paper is available online at [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org).

—from *Bread for the World Institute*

### **Darfur: Sources for Information and Action**

Human Rights Watch  
([www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org))

Students Taking Action Now  
([www.standnow.org](http://www.standnow.org))

Sudan: The Passion of the Present  
([www.passionofthepresent.org](http://www.passionofthepresent.org))

Africa Action  
([www.africaaction.org](http://www.africaaction.org))

A Million Voices for Darfur  
([www.millionvoicesfordarfur.org](http://www.millionvoicesfordarfur.org))

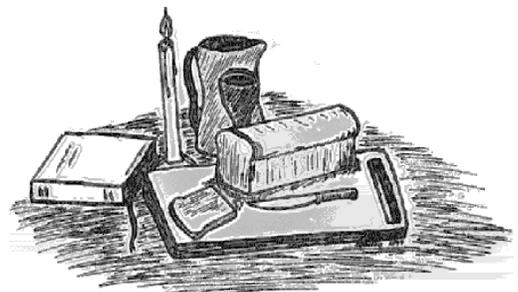


For churches who have never held a hunger emphasis.

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## **DEVELOPING A HEART FOR THE HUNGRY**



art by Sharon Rollins

## **A HUNGER EMPHASIS PRIMER FOR CHURCHES**

From the Seeds web site: [www.seedspublishers.org](http://www.seedspublishers.org)

### **Idaho Lawmakers Refuse to Raise \$5.15 Minimum Wage for State Workers**

BOISE, ID—A House committee rejected a bill raising Idaho's minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.15 and indexing the minimum wage for inflation.

Twenty-nine percent of Idaho's young adults live in poverty (the worst rank in the nation), 42 percent of Idaho's children live in low-income working families, and the number of people filing for bankruptcy rose from 7,119 (in 2000) to 9,660 (in 2003.)

In 2000, the Idaho Legislature ordered the governor to minimize and, if legally possible, eliminate efforts to connect eligible poor people with public benefits like food stamps and children's health insurance.

A local newspaper wrote that "the legislature seems determined to keep Idaho's poor as they are: uneducated, under-employed and struggling to make ends meet."

—from "Legislature Kicks Poor While They're Down," *University of Idaho Argonaut* ([www.argonaut.uidaho.edu](http://www.argonaut.uidaho.edu)); *Food Research and Action Center News Digest*

### **Kentucky's Largest Food Bank Responds to Unprecedented Demand**

LEXINGTON, KY—The demand for food in Kentucky's Fayette County has increased by 25 percent since last summer, and as a result, God's Pantry Food bank recently opened a sixth food pantry.

"This new pantry will allow us to meet the growing demand for service in the evening, as many clients work during the day or depend on rides to the pantry from family members or friends who are unavailable in the afternoon," said Marian Blanchard, executive director of God's Pantry.

The pantry also would need to support over 5,000 senior citizens in its 49-county service area if the Commodity

Supplemental Food Program for low-income seniors and women and children were eliminated in the new US budget.

—from "More Seek Out Food Banks," *Lexington Herald-Leader* ([www.kentucky.com](http://www.kentucky.com)); *Food Research and Action Center News Digest*

### **North Carolina Jobs Do Not Pay Enough to Lift Families Out of Poverty**

GREENSBORO, NC—Nearly 313,600 families in North Carolina earn less than \$37,620 a year for a family of four. Between 2000 and 2003, the number of low-income working families grew by nearly nine percent.

Thirty-seven percent of the state's children live in low-income working families.



"Given the wages and benefits associated with such [low-wage] jobs, it is unlikely that [23 percent of North Carolina's] employees will be able to lift themselves and their families into the middle class simply on the basis of hard work," the North Carolina Justice Center wrote in a recent report.

—from "Report Details Struggles of Poor in NC," *Greensboro News-Record* ([news-record.com](http://news-record.com)); *Food Research and Action Center News Digest*. For the full report, North Carolina's Unfinished Transformation: Connecting Working

Families to the State's Newfound Prosperity, go to [www.ncjustice.org](http://www.ncjustice.org).

### **Rising Electric Bills Hurt Low-Income People in Baltimore**

BALTIMORE, MD—Residents of Baltimore, Maryland, expressed "a mixture of fury, frustration and bewilderment" about a 72 percent increase in their electricity bills, which will amount to \$743 a year for the average Baltimore Gas and Electric residential customer starting in July, as legislated rate caps expire.

"There are a lot of people in our society who have to choose between having electricity or food or getting their prescriptions filled—what we consider the basics in life," said Peggy Vick of the Salvation Army in Baltimore, "and those people are going to be in crisis."

Velma Moseley, 63, who lives in West Baltimore with her sister and four great-grandchildren on a fixed income, is among the desperate. "There's no way we can make it on what we get. By the time we pay the rent, there's not much left to pay for food," she said.

Moseley uses a wheelchair and relies on electricity to charge it. Higher electricity costs will affect even her ability to move around.

—from "Rising Electric Bills Elicit Fury, Desperation," by Rona Marech, *Baltimore Sun* ([baltimoresun.com](http://baltimoresun.com)), *Food Research and Action Center News Digest*

### **Clinton Foundation Starts Healthy School Program to Fight Childhood Obesity**

NEW YORK, NY—Former President Bill Clinton recently announced that the William J. Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association have received an \$8 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for a four-year program to combat childhood obesity.

The foundation plans to place  
*continued on page 11*

## Aftermath of Hurricanes, *continued from page 1*

Americans blamed racial discrimination, but a majority of whites said it was not a factor. Hispanics and Asians were evenly divided. [For more information about the poll, go to [media.ncmonline.com](http://media.ncmonline.com).]

### NCC Creates Commission for Rebuilding

Last November, the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches USA (NCC) endorsed the creation of a special commission to promote justice and fairness in the rebuilding of the areas hit by Hurricane Katrina in September. The group, called the Special Commission for the Just Rebuilding of the Gulf Coast, includes representatives from a broad range of NCC member denominations.

Bishop Melvin G. Talbert, a retired United Methodist bishop and former NCC president, chairs the group. The NCC has also assigned two staff members to work with them.

The task of the commission is to “strive for the greatest degree of coherence and comprehensive efforts in our rebuilding the Gulf Coast communities and in addressing the human inequities which exacerbated a natural disaster into wholesale calamity.” NCC delegates also asked the task force to address seriously the complexity of issues like race, class, and gender that were brought to the forefront in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

That same month, the commission met in New Orleans, toured the impacted areas, met with religious and community leaders, and developed a plan of action.

### NCC Issues Plea on Earth Day for Coast Clean-up

More recently, in conjunction with Earth Day 2006, the NCC began a campaign to urge the US Environmental Protection Agency to clean up the toxic materials that are left along the Gulf Coast. Some people are not aware that Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were more than an

economic and social disaster; they were also an ecological disaster.

The storms left behind a glut of toxic materials and solid waste along the coast. Vast areas of the city of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast are awash with unsafe levels of lead, arsenic, and other cancer-causing contaminants.

Even with all of these contaminants, displaced residents are being encouraged to return to their homes. The NCC’s Eco-Justice programs continue to encourage people of faith to urge the EPA to take immediate action. [To find out how to do this, go to [www.nccusa.org](http://www.nccusa.org).]

### Inspector General Report Slams Government’s Response

US Inspector General Richard Skinner released a report in April that sharply criticizes the US government’s handling of the Hurricane Katrina disaster last September. The report charges that the administration’s focus on terrorism left the US Department of Homeland Security unable to deal with the aftermath of the hurricane.

The list of problems includes poor communication, a lack of coordination among government agencies, and a failure to get emergency supplies where and when they were needed most. The report reinforces many of the findings of earlier investigations by a House select committee and by the White House.

Skinner makes 38 recommendations for improving disaster response missions. Homeland Security officials say they’ve already begun making many of the proposed changes to get ready for the upcoming hurricane season.

Just before press time, Agricultural Missions, Inc. sponsored a Study Session dealing with all of these issues, in which participants toured affected areas in Mississippi and Louisiana. June Kim, of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), said that the trip enabled her to see, firsthand, impacts of globalization and racism which were blatantly exposed by the almost non-existent hurricane relief and recovery efforts in the poor neighborhoods and to peoples of color.

“Here was America at its worst,” she said. She added that this experience was more emotionally draining than trips she has made to poverty-stricken areas in Africa.

The Study Session was titled “Racial Justice in a Post-Katrina World.” [for more information, go to [www.ag-missions.org](http://www.ag-missions.org), or contact the executive director, Winston G. Carroo, at [wcarroo@ag-missions.org](mailto:wcarroo@ag-missions.org).

—from *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio; *the National Council of Churches, USA*; *Food Journal*; *New California Media*; *Agricultural Missions, Inc.*; *United Methodist Committee on Relief*

## Clinton Foundation, *continued from page 10*

healthier options in school vending machines, to build wellness centers in schools that currently do not have one, and to set up websites and telephone centers dedicated to educating students about nutrition.

The initiative will be implemented in 285 schools in 13 states; one of the selection criteria, the socioeconomic status of school neighborhoods, was based on the number of students participating in free or reduced-price school lunches compared to the state’s average for each school.

The new Healthy Schools Program is “looking to halt the growth of childhood obesity by 2010.”

—from “Clinton Steps Into Fray Over Fat,” *New York Sun* ([www.nysun.com](http://www.nysun.com)); *Food Research and Action Center News Digest*

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### **Statement of Purpose**

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable, and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

### **Editorial Address**

Seeds of Hope Publishers are housed by the community of faith at Seventh and James Baptist Church. The mailing address is 602 James, Waco, Texas 76706; Phone: 254/755-7745; Fax:

## *quotes, poems, & pithy sayings*

No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of another.

—Charles Dickens

Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. The third is to be kind.

—Henry James

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.

—His Holiness the Dalai Lama

We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results.

—Herman Melville

Anticipate charity by preventing poverty; assist the reduced fellow man, either by a considerable gift or a sum of money or by teaching him a trade or by putting him in the way of business so that he may earn an honest livelihood and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding out his hand for charity. This is the highest step and summit of charity's golden ladder.

—Rabbi Maimonides

Service is the rent we pay to be living. It is the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time.

—Marion Wright Edelman

Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Today

Somebody is suffering...

Somebody is in the street...

Somebody is hungry...

Do not wait for tomorrow.

Tomorrow we will not have them  
if we don't feed them today.

—Mother Teresa



art by Sharon Rollins

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Seeds of Hope Publishers also produce quarterly packets of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an economic justice attitude.

These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art, and drama.

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