

New Orleans Funeral March a Funeral for America?

Posted by

Tuesday, 30 August 2005 12:21 - Last Updated Tuesday, 30 August 2005 12:21

New Orleans Funeral March a Funeral for America?

PEJ News - C. L. Cook - It is a total disaster. The slow death of New Orleans, though defying worst case scenarios that have furrowed the brows of experts for years, is nevertheless a fait accompli. The failure of two vital levee guardians of the sub-sea level city means one of America's cultural icons, and arguably most important commerce ports is, as Louisiana Governor, Kathleen Babineaux Blanco says, "untenable." As analogue, the demise of the Big Easy mirrors the disaster that is George W. Bush's America.

www.pej.org

New Orleans Funeral March a Funeral for America?

C. L. Cook

PEJ News

August 30. 2005

[The situation at this hour](#) , as the sun dips below the horizon in New Orleans is all those myriad Domsday video games promised. Save the rising of the dead, though coffins are expected to find their way down the thoroughfares and alleyways of the flooded city, the worst face of humanity is making itself bare in the streets of what looks to be a doomed city.

Thousands of restless, and waterless, evacuees strain against the privations of the city's SuperDome, their numbers increasing as rescuees, shown gleefully as they are plucked by over-worked helicopter crews from roofs and branches find their rescue to only result in deliverance to the already volatile and over-crowded football stadium; a place the governor has already said should be evacuated, as she believes the entire city should be.

Predictably, comparisons to the Boxing Day disaster in Aceh, Indonesia, and a bizarre

New Orleans Funeral March a Funeral for America?

Posted by

Tuesday, 30 August 2005 12:21 - Last Updated Tuesday, 30 August 2005 12:21

equation breathlessly intoned by CNN's Paula Zahn to Hiroshima after the atomic bomb America dropped there in 1945, are flying from the 24 Hours News operations. And, the sites they profile are indeed devastated, but, none of the stories I've seen have begun to explore the full impact of New Orleans' fate, let alone what it means in the broader American context.

The waters are rising in the city, and there's rain in the forecast. The second levee, holding back Lake Pontchartrain has failed. This means the navel-shaped New Orleans is filling, like a bowl. And it means those now sheltered in the SuperDome, and other city shelters, will all have to be evacuated. This presents an enormous logistical problem the scope of which rivals the urgency of the current situation. Water is short in the stadium. New arrivals are constant, but no-one leaves. Toilets and electricity compromised, there have already been deadly incidents in the home of the New Orleans Saints, apparently sparked by stress, close quarters, and diminishing supplies of food and water.

In the streets, those not sequestered in the Dome are searching for food and water too. Some seek vehicles to escape the disaster, while others are using the chaos to enrich themselves. All the while, rescue efforts continue and military reinforcement is on the way. Vast areas are without electricity, or functioning services of any kind, and the water levels continue to rise. The fetid water, dubbed already by Bayou wags as "Toxic Gumbo," has forced the evacuation of hospitals and shelters, and now threatens the entire city.

This is an unprecedented disaster in the colonial history of the continental United States. But, it is a disaster whom's ultimate cost will likely be trifling compared against the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Not to mention the many other misadventures currently occupying the American military and Intelligence communities.

George W. Bush's bumper summer worsens by the day; as do the future prospects for the greater world, the one not apparently recognized by Mr. Bush. The rampant racism and injustice inherent in modern day America is being revealed through this disaster, and while Ugly Americans are nothing new to the wider world, seeing the lairds of the planet fall upon each other as they endure a crisis commonly occurring around the globe could mean a cracking of the mirror; it could mean the demolition of the cornerstone of America's singular prestige, its alleged inherent decency.

The death of one of the cultural heartlands, a place revered by millions the world over, is almost impossible to contemplate. But, the facts today irrefutably affirm, New Orleans will never be the

New Orleans Funeral March a Funeral for America?

Posted by

Tuesday, 30 August 2005 12:21 - Last Updated Tuesday, 30 August 2005 12:21

same. It's a lesson learnt hard, but one climate scientists have warned all coastal cities will suffer should current trends continue.

Chris Cook hosts [Gorilla Radio](#) , broad/webcast from the University of Victoria, Canada. He also serves as a contributing editor to PEJ News. You can check out the [GR Blog here.](#)