

Katrina / BP *{Continued From A-1}*

lowing the wrath of Hurricane Katrina.

A portion of the report stated that there are still significant barriers to affordable and fair housing opportunities that continue to exist, requiring both transactional and litigation assistance. A number of issues identified require particularly urgent and focused attention which local civil rights and legal services attorneys emphasized presently overwhelm their current capacity to address.

"The Lawyers' Committee remains committed to fighting for racial justice and ongoing recovery efforts," the executive director reported. "In addition to addressing issues of adequate housing, ongoing efforts, as detailed in the report, include collaborative title clearing for homeowners and nonprofits, organizational capacity and nonprofit restructuring, affordable housing development, community land trusts, port expansion and much more."

There have also been reports of criminal negligence on the part of those in authority. Just after the hurricane, there were investigations of the responses from federal, state and local governments, resulting in the resignation of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) director Michael D. Brown, and of New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) Superintendent Eddie Compass. Several police officers have since been charged.

Referred to as "Katrina's Killer Kops," the *Sentinel* obtained a special report from one of the officers who have since retired but is facing trial: Sgt. Gerard Dugué, who claims that he is innocent. Though no date has been set as of this writing; indications are that the federal trial of those dubbed "Katrina's Killer Kops" will soon be underway.

Officers from the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) have confessed to committing murder upon unarmed Black residents crossing the Danziger Bridge as these attempted to flee the wrath of Hurricane Katrina some five years ago. Among indicted officers is retired NOPD police supervisor Sgt. Gerard Dugué, who was assigned to investigate the killings. Though he has been accused of participating in a cover-up, having been formally charged with "obstruction of justice," he denies all charges.

According to the *Associated Press* (AP), "The indictment charges Sgts. Robert Gisevius and Kenneth Bowen, officer Anthony Villavaso and former officer Robert Faulcon with deprivation of rights under color of law and use of a weapon during the commission of a crime." The AP further reports: "Sgt. Arthur Kaufman and retired Sgt. Gerard Dugue, who helped investigate the shootings, were charged with participating in a cover-up to make it appear the shootings were justified."

In a *Sentinel* exclusive, family members spoke with the present reporter. They claim that, not only was Dugué nowhere near the bridge at the time, but also that when he investigated the incidents some two months after the tragic events occurred, he simply wrote what the officers reported to him.

"He had to rely on these secondhand interviews," says younger brother Edward Dugué of New Orleans. "As it turned out, the information was false. The officers lied to him. That's what got me upset." Libby Dugué, the youngest of eleven Dugué children, describes her brother's work ethic: "He was an excellent officer with a stellar record of over 33 years of police service. He had an outstanding reputation for fighting against injustices. That's why they selected him to investigate in the first place. And now they've indicted him! It's incomprehensible."

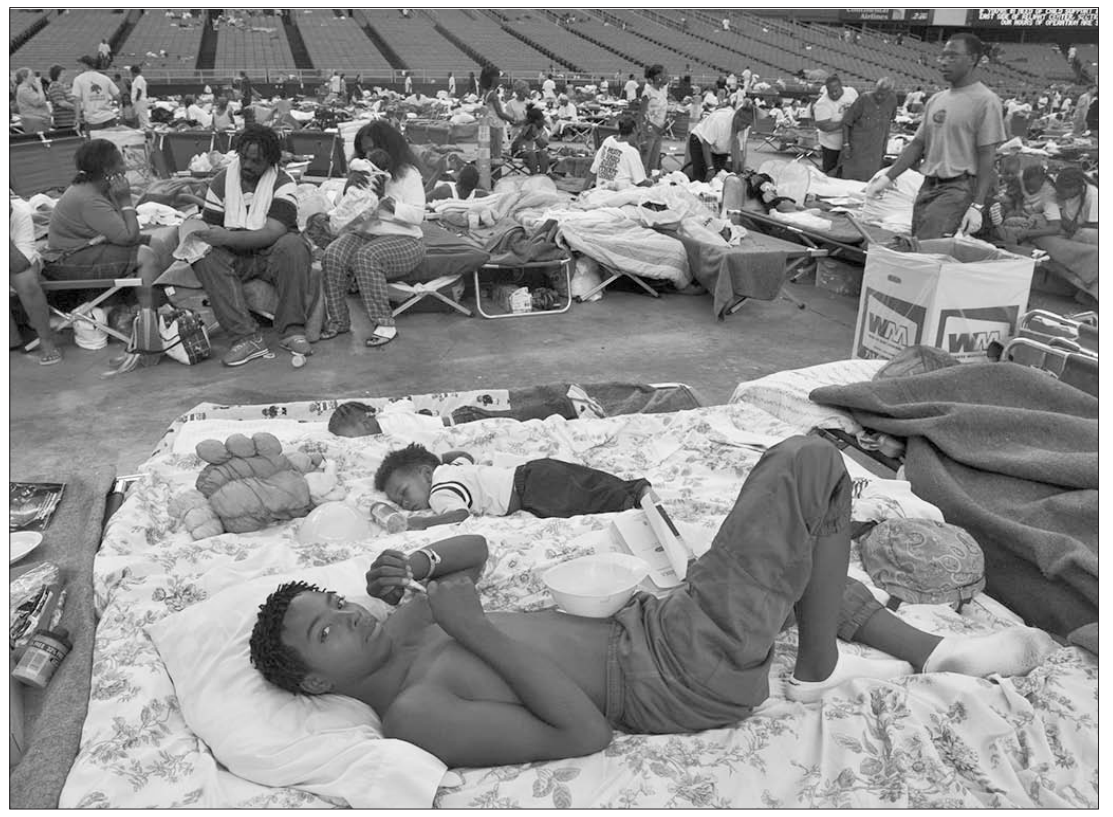
Wayne Dugué, another younger brother states that he was "pissed" when he heard of the indictment. "How in the hell can he cover up something that he knew nothing about? He got the news like everybody else and simply documented the stories he was given. It's a sad situation. It makes you wonder what the hell the government is thinking." As the case is litigated and related stories develop, the *Sentinel* will keep its readers informed.

The city is affectionately known by several names: 'The Big Easy', the Boot, and the Who Dat Nation; they are all endearing terms to New Orleans, a city of pride, rich heritage, resilience and all that jazz. The city has had to represent those characteristics through slavery, civil rights fast-forwarding to Hurricane Katrina and most recently through the very challenging BP Oil Spill; the latter two both history making catastrophes.

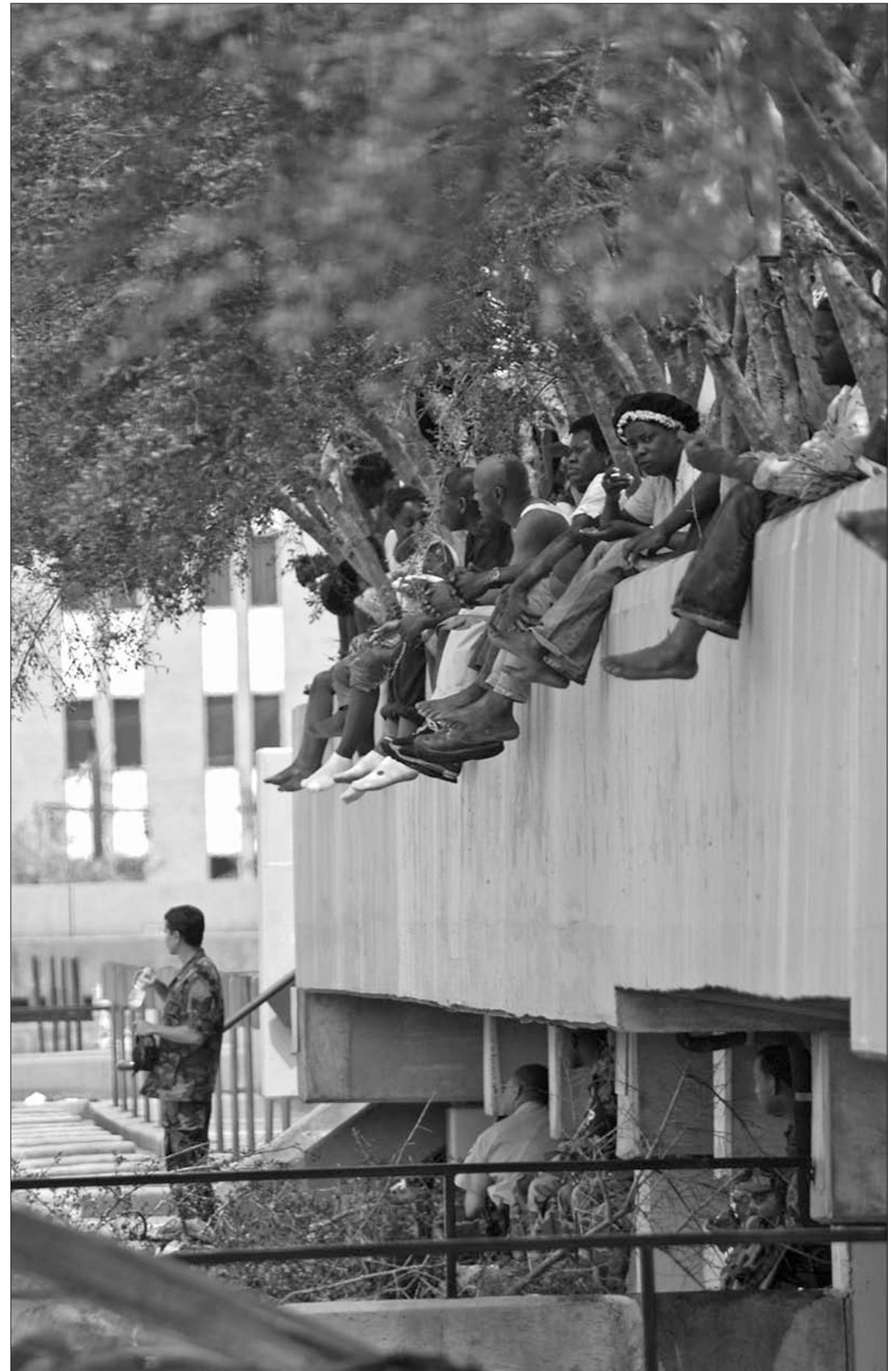
The 5-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, one of the five deadliest hurricanes, in the history of the United States is August 29. Hurricane Katrina formed over the Bahamas on August 23, 2005. When the Hurricane reached New Orleans as a Category 5, although the Hurricane was well in land, the ultimate destruction was caused by one word, "levees".

Throughout the area, levees and flood walls failed or were breached in more than 50 locations flooding 80% of the city with waters reaching as high as 10ft, for days. Total property damage was estimated at \$81 billion. Thousands of lives were lost physically, mentally and financially.

Coverage on television of Hurricane Katrina will be massive from now until August 29. You will see different angles and spins recounting the Hurricane, FEMA's blunders, recovery and the heart of New Orleans, the people. But there won't be any New Orleans or Katrina fatigue.



Living in the Superdome



Still Waiting



"Car Pools"

Crisis

{Continued From A-1}

render meaningful solution(s). Many laws have been passed—some well-meaning and some cosmetic—but without the human will to tackle the education crisis facing Black children, no amount of law can undo centuries of mis-education.

But there may be hope. The fact that the president of 1.5 million-member American Federation of Teachers (AFT) was willing to meet with a group of Black educators to discuss the problem is a good start. However, this cannot be just one feel-good session; it has to be continuous, honest and totally open-minded. When Weingarten came to meet with the panel, there were no parameters, pre-conditions or sacred cows.

In her opening statement, Weingarten started off by acknowledging that it will be a tough conversation, and she was right—tough, heated and passionate. She said, "I went to public schools and I always saw public schools as a great opportunity agent and I saw the labor movement as a great opportunity agent for kids." She said that after law school, she taught for awhile went to work for the union and then worked her way up to become the president. Everybody talk about how important education is but when it comes to the dollars and



TINA FLOURNOY, Office of the President and RANDI WEINGARTEN, president of AFT

cents, to help kids particularly poor kids and kids of color, talk and action are totally and completely different. So that's the lens with which I started to work in the labor movement." Then she mentioned that from her vantage point, her efforts at promoting quality education for all children, that as the tide rises, it will lift all boats equally.

At that point, several things she expressed were off base as it pertains to Black children. And members of the panel were eager to jump into the fray to correct her way of thinking as it related to the education of Black children. First and foremost, as Butler stated, "We need a Black agenda to promote and pursue the education of

Black children." That was non-negotiable; referring to "kids of color" was a non-starter. Any solution had to be for Black children.

As the president of a major union, Weingarten was asked how does she reckon with the traditional notion that unions exist for the benefit of their members, and they (the members) come first before the children, who seem to play second fiddle in the scheme of union operations, and most times and not even part of the discussion—54th on the list of priorities.

"Most of the times," she replied, "the union is supposed to fight for the tools and conditions that teachers need to do a good

job for the kids. And most times those two things are parallel and compatible with each other."

Knox then chimed in, "Teachers have the ability to move about—to make choices of where they teach. And those choices led to the schools in South Los Angeles having the newest teachers because the teachers come first." He was speaking from firsthand knowledge and practical experience. "But since they have this mobility, they move out," he continued, "and the only teachers they send there are the newest and the youngest who haven't yet achieved enough experience. So the parents know—they don't have a feeling—they know that we have inferior teachers."

In response to those accusations about teachers in South Los Angeles, Weingarten referred to New York since she claimed that's the district she knows best. However, in trying to explain that she did not know the L.A. school system like Knox did, was a specious claim since the overall proposition of the panel was that Black children all over the country are the victims of inferior public education system—and that included New York. Knox reinforced that notion saying, "New York City has the same problems with African American education that we have. The statistics show that in New York City, Black children learn least well of any ethnic group."

Flournoy then came in, "First

of all I do not have intimate knowledge of the UTLA (United Teachers of Los Angeles) contract, but the problem you've just identified, is a big problem; not just in Los Angeles, but throughout the country. One of the problems we often have is the newest, youngest, least experienced teachers in the schools where it (experience) is needed most.

"With all due respect, the issue is really that nobody wants to acknowledge the fact that we do have to have an African American agenda," Butler started off. "That's a fact. I come from forty years plus in education. It has nothing to do with the color of the teacher; it has nothing to do with the curriculum; it has nothing to do with the facilities and all these other things. We do not have an agenda for African American children." That got to the core of the discussion.

In referring to a recent meeting, Flournoy said, "Some civil rights groups but together an agenda for Black children in public schools—a legislative agenda, a community agenda—and it was the Schott Foundation, Urban League, PUSH, NAN and NAACP, and it came out at the beginning of the Urban League's convention. It was a brilliant piece ... well done ... and it talks about all the things you're talking about. They were brutally and immediately attacked by the administration, by the Department of Education saying this just isn't true."

Aubry was the most passionate member of the panel. He spoke with a conviction that showed years of frustration of having to re-hash some of the same issues on behalf of Black children. "Until we make the African American child's education an agenda item, we will still have these splintered organizations and cosmetic approach." Referring to the Secretary of Education, Aubry went on, "Here is a man who is the titular head of education in this country and all he can talk about is more Black teachers in front of my children—that does not answer the primary issues that a child faces on a day-to-day basis, as he walks from that house in Nickerson Gardens to Markham Junior High School or to Jordan High School.

Then it was La Motte's turn; she said, "We just got things from the federal government and African American children are not listed. We have written to that effect. I just sent a letter to (Secretary) Duncan about the four statistically low-achieving groups—we have four, and I represent them all: African Americans, Mexican Americans, Hawaiian Americans and Native Americans. Statistically, we have shown that these are the kids who bring our schools down and nobody listens. It's as if they don't exist."

"At the end of the day, what seems to work for children, all

{See CRISIS A-18}