



## Criminalization

Louisiana Weekly

**'Looter' label inappropriate according to respondents of a national poll**

November 7, 2005

A nationwide poll has found that a majority of people of color view Hurricane Katrina survivors accused of looting as simply trying to take care of their families and their needs.

Among other questions, the poll asked "Thinking about the people in New Orleans who entered stores and took food, furniture, clothing and TV sets in the first days after Hurricane Katrina, do you think they were looters and criminals or do you think they were people trying to take care of their families and their needs?" By nearly a 2 to 1 margin (57% to 29%) African Americans answered that they were people trying to take care of their families and their needs. Similarly, the poll found that more Asians and Hispanics agreed, but by slimmer margins...

Hundreds of people have been booked in a makeshift jail set up in a Greyhound Station, many for the 'crime' of feeding and clothing themselves during the hurricane. Under Louisiana law looting is a felony that can carry a sentence of up to 15 years in prison at hard labor... Louisiana has had the highest rate of incarceration of any state in the U.S. Blacks are grossly over-represented making up 72% of the state prison population, while only representing 35% of the total population.

The New Orleans Times-Picayune  
**Inmate lost in system resurfaces:  
After 13 months he gets day in court**

November 29, 2006

After spending 13 months in three different state prisons without speaking to a single defense attorney, prosecutor or judge, Pedro Parra-Sanchez pleaded innocent... to an assault charge levied against him six days after he moved to New Orleans to work in the battered city's recovery... At his arraignment -- a court proceeding the law requires to take place within, at most, a month after charges are filed -- [he] could speak only through a translator... [He] disappeared into the chaos of the post-Katrina collapse of the city's legal system, which after the flood booked suspects through "Camp Greyhound" at the bus station, and scattered thousands of pretrial inmates across the state with no access to legal assistance for months.

Associated Press

**Sausage lands elderly church leader in prison: Despite age, diabetes and desperate pleas, she remained in jail 16 days**

September 16, 2005

A 73-year-old church deaconess, never before in trouble with the law, spent two weeks (in jail)... her bail a stiff \$50,000. Police say the grandmother from New Orleans took \$63.50 in goods from a looted deli the day after Katrina struck. Family and eyewitnesses insisted Maten was an innocent woman who had gone to her car to get some sausage to eat only to be mistakenly arrested by tired, frustrated white officers... Even the store owner didn't want her charged.



## **Criminalization** (continued)

New York Times

***Judge Steps In for Poor Inmates Without Justice: Judge Arthur L. Hunter Jr. has suspended criminal prosecutions in most cases involving public defenders in New Orleans.***

May 23, 2006

...Nine months after the storm, more than a thousand jailed defendants have had no access to lawyers, the judge says, because the public defender system is desperately short of money and staffing, without a computer system or files or even a list of clients.

...Judge Hunter, 46, a former New Orleans police officer, is moving to let some of the defendants without lawyers out of jail...suspended prosecutions in most cases involving public defenders (a)nd...granted a petition to free a prisoner facing serious charges without counsel, and is considering others. It is, he said in an interview, his duty under the Constitution.

Ronald Dunn... was arrested...10 days before Hurricane Katrina hit, on a charge of possessing crack cocaine. Like the vast majority of the defendants in criminal court here, he cannot afford to hire a lawyer, and so would normally be represented by a public defender. Handcuffed, shackled and wearing jailhouse orange, Mr. Dunn told the court that as the water rose, he spent four frightening days without food in the House of Detention, and was then moved from prison to prison, losing touch with his family. In the nine months since the hurricane, he said, he has never even spoken to a lawyer.

Associated Press

***Katrina looters get 15 years in prison***

June 29, 2006

Three people convicted of hauling away liquor, wine and beer from a grocery store after Hurricane Katrina were sentenced to 15 years in prison.

The judge said he wanted to send a message that looting would not be tolerated when he gave the maximum sentence...A jury convicted the trio May 2 on a portion of the state's looting law that took effect two weeks before the Aug. 29 storm. The amended law set a three-year minimum sentence, and a maximum of 15 years in prison, for looting during a declared state of emergency.

They were convicted of attempting to leave the grocery with 27 bottles of liquor and wine, six cases of beer and one case of wine coolers, six days after Katrina made landfall.