

WE CANNOT DEPEND ON MR. BUSH

By:

Bishop Simeon B. Hall

The manner in which the United States handled the catastrophic disaster in the Gulf States brought on by Hurricane Katrina was “*disgraceful and a damn shame*”. There is just no other way to describe the late response shown to the victims of Katrina by their own government.

The fact that most of the citizens of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama happen to be “*black and poor*” is not the point I wish to give emphasis to.

However, my point is this; regardless of their race or status, they are human-beings. They are Americans. People should have more value than policies or ideologies.

If President Bush and his government turned their backs on their people for four days, what should outsiders expect?

The Bahamian economy is inextricably linked to America. All things considered, it will be that way for some time.

However, Katrina’s devastation and Mr. Bush’s slow response to it should make all Bahamians and indeed, the rest of the Caribbean quicken our stride towards greater economic diversification and independence.

It should be perfectly clear to our Political Leadership, that, it is in our long-term interest, to depend less on

President Bush and America, and diversify and mature ourselves economically and socially. ***This is a mammoth task, but we must begin.***

Our geographical proximity and our psychological dependence on America will always prove a mammoth hindrance to the high and lofty goal of true independence.

The people of the Caribbean should read Mr. Bush's sluggish response for what it is – ***"I only love you if I need you"***.

The obvious point is that the ongoing need for regional amalgamation and ties on various levels is imperative. Regional insularity is not only impossible, but unwise.

Without fear of successful contradiction it should be clear to all that America's preoccupation with terrorists has diminished its moral obligation to care for her own and her neighbors.

The Bahamas Government has made a ***"gentleman's gesture"*** of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00) to the victims. Others will do likewise in the days to come, as we all ought to. However, after our emotions subside, we must resolve to put aside our penchant to play ***petty island politics*** and redouble our individual and collective efforts to build a truly independent country and region. Achievable, yes, perhaps not in and for this generation, but perhaps the next. The goals achieved in the future are shaped by the dreams we dare envisioned today.

We can better build our Bahamas only when all Bahamians feel obliged to give their country their very best, and equally, when they are convinced that excellence is expected of each of us regardless of the temporary political tag we wear.

America's response to her people's pain is patently pathetic in this instance. Therefore all persons outside America must learn from it and learn quickly.

The world community has not been slow to point out Mr. Bush's lack of leadership in this catastrophe, particularly in contrast to his "*quick draw*" approach to the situation in Iraq.

By extrapolation, the lesson to be learnt is clear. Only as each citizen of the Bahamas, and in this region see his or her performance as indispensable for nation building and begin to act accordingly, will we free ourselves from dependence on foreign self-interest and influence.

Many Bahamians, who watched the destruction stood amazed at Mr. Bush's slow response, might miss the underlying message which speaks in glaring tones. Our dependence on outside help leaves us as pawns in their whimsical and sometimes immoral behavior.

Beyond and above our contributions, we should all do our best to engage in the building of our nation so that, if not us, then certainly our children will never have to call on Mr. Bush or those of his ilk.