

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH MAYOR MITCH LANDRIEU

SUBJECT: NEW ORLEANS: A MODEL OF URBAN RENEWAL AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

MODERATOR: JOHN HUGHES, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

LOCATION: THE NPC BALLROOM, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 12:30 P.M. EDT

DATE: TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2015

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JOHN HUGHES: (Sounds gavel.) Welcome to the National Press Club. My name is John Hughes. I'm an editor for Bloomberg First Word, that's our breaking news desk here in Washington, and I am President of the Club. Our guest today is New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, who joins us near the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

First, I want to introduce our distinguished head table, which includes club members and guests of the speaker. From the audience's right, Adam Shapiro, CEO of Adam Shapiro Public Relations; Pat McGrath, former national correspondent for WTTG-TV and a former National Press Club board member; Bill Loveless, energy columnist for *USA Today*; Dr. Karen DeSalvo, acting assistant secretary for Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and she's a former health commissioner for the City of New Orleans, and she's a guest of our speaker; Marilyn Geewax, senior business editor for National Public Radio and a National Press Club board member; Donna Brazil, a political strategist and syndicated columnist. She's a guest of the speaker. She's a New Orleans native, and she served on the Louisiana Recovery Authority; Tommy Burr, a reporter for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and vice president of the National Press Club.

Skipping over our speaker for a moment, Rod Kuckro, a reporter with EnergyWire, and he's the member of the Club's Speakers Committee who organized today's lunch. We thank you, Rod. And I also want to mention that Rod organized the National Press Club's Katrina rebuilding trip in 2008.

Betsy Fischer Martin, Washington editor of More magazine, and a New Orleans native; Peter Harkness, the founder and publisher emeritus of Governing magazine. Glenn Marcus, a freelance documentary filmmaker and a member of the Press Club's Press Freedom Committee. (Applause)

I also want to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. And you can follow today's lunch on Twitter. Use the hashtag NPCLive. That's NPCLive.

Hurricane Katrina was the costliest natural disaster in the history of the United States. It forced the evacuation of nearly 90 percent of the residents of New Orleans. Nearly 1,500 of them lost their lives. Fifteen feet of water covered many neighborhoods. Five years later, the city's recovery was steady but slow. Thousands of houses were vacant or uninhabitable. The pre-Katrina economy had yet to reappear.

That's when our speaker stepped up. He was Louisiana's lieutenant governor at that time. He said he wanted to take over the recovery effort as the city's next mayor. This was a job that his father, Moon Landrieu, had held in the 1970s. When Mitch Landrieu was elected in 2010, he became the first white mayor of a black majority city in the United States since his father held office. He enjoyed broad support across racial and demographic lines. When he was reelected in 2014, he nearly matched the 66 percent winning percentage he had posted four years earlier.

Now as we near the 10th anniversary of Katrina, data on tourism and the economy show New Orleans in many respects is as strong as it was. A recent poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation and National Public Radio found that many residents feel the city has made significant headway. At the same time, the poll exposed deep racial disparities in the recovery. It also showed concern that the rich cultural gumbo that makes the city special is changing.

So where do we go from here? Let's leave it for our speaker to tell us. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm National Press Club welcome to New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu. (Applause)

MAYOR LANDRIEU: Thank you. Thank you all, to the folks that are in the room and thank you to the head table. Thank you so much for having me. Ten years ago, Hurricane Katrina hit the gulf coast and in the blink of an eye, everything changed. American citizens, 1,800 of our brothers and sisters, were killed. One million were displaced, one million homes were damaged, 250,000 were destroyed, communities were torn apart and, in fact, scattered to the winds. In New Orleans, the federal levies broke, an infrastructure manmade failure of epic proportions that resulted in floodwaters surging over the rooftops of a great American city.

Eighty percent of our city was under water, \$150 billion in damages. In a moment, everything, everything, was gone. Homes, roads, schools, hospitals, police and fire stations, grocery stores, parks, playgrounds. Our lives, as we knew them, was gone. And as the floodwater swallowed our neighborhoods, it became a life or death struggle

for thousands who were still stuck in the cities. Those stories are seared in our souls forever.

The rushing flood pulling people under, survivors trapped for days with little or no help, hundreds on the rooftops, people trying to keep their heads above water. The blazing Louisiana sun. American citizens crowded in front of the Super Dome and huddled masses at the convention center, more stranded in the port of Saint Bernard, floating, bloated bodies on the streets of America. Our nation sat, jaw dropped, gaping at the images, considering the possibility that an entire city could be gone, and wondering how in the world this happened in our beloved country.

But in the midst of all of this death and all of this destruction, something else happened. The sun came up. And in the hours, days and weeks that followed, another flood came, this time it was a torrent of people. Louisiana State Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Agent and the U.S. Coast Guard with our friends and our neighbors pulling thousands of people out of the water. At their side, the Cajun Armada, a small navy of private vessels from all across coastal Louisiana, recreational boaters of all kinds, saving lives on the flooded streets of New Orleans.

And backing them up, a whole legion of people coming literally from everywhere. In came the National Guard, the military, along with our policemen, our fire, EMS, medics and other relief volunteers from coast to coast. Literally within days, Canadian Mounties had boots on the ground in the small city of Gretna outside of New Orleans. Israeli relief workers followed and countries from Australia to Qatar to the UAE gave millions and sent supplies.

The Red Cross, Second Harvest, Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, United Way, Habitat for Humanity, and so many others united by faith, united by civic purpose, rushed to our side and to our aid. And then together, together, we started to clean up, sweating the heat, clearing away the devastation and putting our lives back together. Together, crying over photos that somehow escaped the deluge. Together, sleeping on church floors, in tents, a mostly still dark city lit by campfires, midwest and northeastern accents blending in real nice with the southern drawl.

From sea to shining sea, Americans helping Americans, citizen helping citizen, neighbors lifting up neighbors. It was the teacher in Baton Rouge showing kindness to a scared child on her first-ever day of school outside of her city of New Orleans. A nurse in Atlanta who helped an evacuee get their medication. A landlord in Shreveport who found places for families to stay.

As former Houston Mayor Bill White said, “People saw this as an opportunity for us to do something that was right for our country, as well as for our fellow Americans. It was one of our country’s darkest moment, but we found salvation, light and hope, from the angels among us.” Those angels made real for us the psalm of David that joy cometh in the morning.

So now, as we approach our 10th anniversary of Katrina, we in New Orleans want to remember all of those that we lost, and we want to, again, count our blessing and, again, say thank you to those of you that helped us survive.

Over the last ten years, New Orleans has been through hell and high water; not just Katrina, but hurricanes Rita, Ike, Gustav, the BP oil spill and the national recession, all of it. But here's the thing. We won't bow down because we don't know how. By our nature, we are resilient, we are a hopeful people. In fact, even after all we've been through, a recent poll of New Orleans residents done by the Kaiser Family Foundation with NPR found that a whopping 78 percent of residents are optimistic about New Orleans' future.

So New Orleans has gone from literally being under water to being one of the fastest growing major cities in America, with thousands of new jobs, new industries, rapidly improving schools, rising property values and a new, stronger flood protection that will reduce the risk from future hurricanes. Our city has stood back up and this comeback is one of the world's most remarkable stories of tragedy and triumph, resurrection and redemption. In one word: resilience. We are America's come back city.

In New Orleans necessity, you see, really was the mother of invention. And after Katrina, it was do or die. The storm laid down a gauntlet, and with this huge tragedy came a huge responsibility to make it right. During Katrina, many died, and for many more the storm was a near-death experience. It changed us, and those who have endured such pain will tell you that when everything is slipping away, the natural instinct is to tighten your grip on that which used to be secure, struggling to hold on to just what was.

But here's the thing; the people of New Orleans took up the challenge that fate had laid at our feet, resolving not just to rebuild the city we once were, but to create the city that we always dreamed she could be. To do it, we had to fight through the agony that comes with disaster and change. There's no doubt that our progress has been anything, anything, but a straight line. And Lord knows we have a very, very long way to go.

After all, the storm did not create all of our problems. Our issues are generations in the making and are shared by every other part of America. But after Katrina, I've often told an old Cajun Boudreaux and Thibodeaux joke that my dad used to tell me. You see, Boudreaux and Thibodeaux got a pilot to take them all the way to Canada to shoot moose. They bagged six big, ole moose. As they were loading it on the plane to return, the pilot said, "Hey man, you can't put all six of those moose on the plane. They're too heavy, we're going to crash." Thibodeaux and Boudreaux said, "Well hey pilot, of course. Last year we shot six, the pilot let us take them in that same plane that you flying right now."

So the pilot gave up, got in the plane, took off. But even on full power, the little plane couldn't handle the load and went down and crashed. Miraculously, Thibodeaux and Boudreaux survived the crash. They're lying in the pile of rubble. Boudreaux sees

Thibodeaux and he says, “Hey T, you have any idea where we are?” And Thibodeaux says, “Well, yeah, we in the same place we was last year when we crashed.” (Laughter) That's just a little home cooking from the south.

The point is obvious, and it's especially clear after Katrina. If we continue to do the same thing over and over gain, we should expect the same outcome. So after years of angst and anxiety, after years of fits and starts, we made the decision to change. And what has emerged on the other side is the premier example of urban innovation in America because we had to. Because we had to, New Orleans has taken on the toughest challenges, showing the whole nation what it takes to make progress, forever proving that where there are new solutions to all of the old problems that we have.

For example, ten years ago, New Orleans schools were considered some of the worst in the country. Two-thirds of our kids were in failing schools. Now, we've moved past what was a broken top-down system and have created a new way defined by choice, defined by equity, defined by accountability. I hope we can join together to celebrate the remarkable progress that's been made for our kids. I want to thank all of our parents, our students, our teachers, our administrators, both those from New Orleans and those who have moved in to help more recently. They've worked tirelessly on behalf of our kids.

Today, nearly every student attends a public charter school, and families who used to have only one choice for their kids can now apply to nearly every school in the city. In New Orleans, geography is no longer a kid's destiny, and we've raised the bar across the board, insisting that schools serve every child. Because in New Orleans, we know that every child can learn, and every child has the right to a great education.

In addition, we said our kids need clean, healthy, safe school buildings. So now \$1.8 billion of federal funds is being invested to rebuild, renovate and refurbish nearly every school in the city. That means outstanding new 21st century learning spaces that can help our kids thrive and realize their God-given potential. Before Katrina, the achievement gap between the kids in Orleans and the kids in the rest of the state was over 25 points. Now, that gap has nearly closed. Before Katrina, the graduation rate hovered around 50 percent, now 73 percent are graduating on time. Fewer kids dropping out, more kids enrolling in college. All told, this year's hundreds of New Orleans seniors have earned over \$75 million in scholarships at over 300 different colleges and universities.

One of these high school graduates is a kid named Jarron. Few years ago, he wasn't even going to pass the 10th grade, let alone go to college. His mom and dad sold drugs. Unfortunately, they both went to prison. As you can imagine, he struggled. But then he enrolled in one of the new schools with a special focus on college. And for him and for us, it has made all the difference. Jarron said, and I'll quote, “In life, you have two choices; to be defeated or to conquer.” And he said, “I choose to conquer,” and he did. And this fall, Jarron will be a freshman at Morehouse College and a big time shout out for this great historically black college and university who this year graduated 400 of new men of Morehouse, new leaders for the rest of America. And I say go Maroon Tigers. I'm really proud of them. (Applause) Thank you.

Jarron's story is an inspiring one, but it's just one example of a very real impact of our new system of schools. However, that's not to say that we are anywhere close to perfect. Anyone that comes to New Orleans can see that we have a long way to go. But we're improving faster than anywhere else in America. Besides schools, we've tackled improving healthcare delivery systems as well. Ten years ago, if a kid got an earache, that meant his mama had to take him to the emergency room at Charity Hospital, sit there for 13 hours and just to get him checked out.

Now in New Orleans, we say an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. And a network of neighborhood health clinics initially funded by a federal grant after Katrina have endured. And I'm so happy to see one of the principal architects of this new system with us today, Dr. Karen DeSalvo, who is a former health commissioner of New Orleans and now is President Obama's Acting Assistant Secretary for Health and Human Services. Karen, thank you very much. (Applause)

Because of Karen's hard work, and a lot of other folks, and the hard work of so many people, today New Orleans has the St. Thomas Health Community Health Center. Prevention is the name of the game. Soup to nuts healthcare in the neighborhood, everything from chronic disease management to pediatrics with a focus on women's health. That means thousands of mammograms done every year at St. Thomas, lives being saved through prevention. All told, neighborhood health centers like St. Thomas serve 59,000 patients across the region every year who would otherwise get much more expensive healthcare at emergency rooms.

Add this to the billions that we are investing right now in building two world class hospitals right downtown in the heart of New Orleans; one for our veterans at the new VA hospital and the other will be our new University Medical Center. For generations to come, our honored veteran warriors, and many more, will get the care they need and the care they deserve. Taken all together, ours is a real model for the rest of the country. And you know what? It works.

Ten years ago, Katrina was the last straw which broke the back of an economy that had been struggling for 40 years. Now, we're creating thousands of new jobs, inspiring promising new industries like water management, digital media and bioscience. Plus, world class companies like G. E. Capital and Game Loft are expanding in New Orleans. But here's the thing: we can't leave anybody behind. We have to create a pathway to prosperity that anyone can follow. So in New Orleans, we help entrepreneurs like Brunel Cartland, a young man with a dream to open his own business, a grocery store in the lower ninth ward. He got support from the city and now you know what? He's done it. Galvez Goodies on Caffin Street.

This is the exact spot where 12 feet of water sat for weeks following the levy breach. And at our hub for entrepreneurs called the Idea Village, new vibrant entrepreneur ecosystems have emerged where talented people can get the training to support what they do to turn big ideas into new businesses with new jobs. Plus, in New

Orleans, we're in the midst of a retail and a restaurant boom. Now, no other place in the world would lose 100,000 people and gain 600 more restaurants than we had before Katrina. But we did and only in New Orleans. These businesses are opening and thriving neighborhoods where top of the new private investment, more than \$1 billion in affordable housing, is either available or coming online; 14,430 affordable rental units for low income families are there.

New Orleans' notorious big four public housing developments, which were run down and were dangerous, they did not give people of New Orleans what they needed or what they deserved, so we converted this public housing into mixed income communities with amenities like schools, healthcare, and transit. We can see this at the old St. Bernard development now known as Columbia Park. The St. Bernard was one of the oldest public housing developments in New Orleans, first built by the Roosevelt administration during the depression. Over the years, it had fallen on hard times, and by the time Katrina hit, 25 percent of the 1,300 units were empty and the area was known for its violence.

And then the levies broke. And as the sun rose the day after the sun passed, the St. Bernard development was ten feet under water. Like everything else, we resolved to build back St. Bernard, not as it was, but like it always should have been in the way that people deserve. Now, Columbia Park is a world class example of mixed income public housing that embraces public/private partnerships and true place-based development.

The master plan for the neighborhood includes newly-built schools, an early childhood learning center, a recreation facility, library, playgrounds, retail and green space. Plus crime is now way down in Columbia Park. In fact, since Katrina, we've made tremendous progress citywide on crime reduction, and this is good.

But when I took office, our murder rate still led the nation. Now through our comprehensive murder reduction strategy called NOLA for life, we've changed our approach and we'll put a special focus on prevention paired with tough enforcement. Last year, New Orleans hit a 43-year low for murder. But we still have a very, very long way to go on this issue.

This year, unfortunately across the nation and in New Orleans, murder is ticking up. And with nearly 15,000 Americans lost every year to murder in this nation of a disproportionate number of young African American men, it is clear that this crisis goes well beyond New Orleans. It is a national disgrace and a moral outrage that so many American citizens are killed on the streets of America every day. Stopping murder should be a national priority. Black lives do matter and we should act like it in America.
(Applause)

But, of course, across the board fighting crime and preventing murder is just one part of the criminal justice system. Ten years ago when Katrina hit, there were about 6,000 inmates in New Orleans Parish prison. It was a prime example of mass incarceration at its worst. We were the most incarcerated city in the most incarcerated state in the most incarcerated world in the country. And now, we are pushing back

against mass incarceration like nowhere else in the country. We've cut our daily prison population down to about 1,800 inmates. That's a two-thirds reduction. We have sought to be tough and smart on crime at the same time. Lock up the violent bad guys who are going to threaten everybody, but make fewer unnecessary arrests; provide alternatives to incarceration, pre-trial services, improve case processing times, create wraparound services for those citizens returning home so they don't go back. There must be justice, and there must be peace. Black lives matter whether they're being lost to shootings or to years in prison.

We're also making tremendous progress on combating homelessness in the city of New Orleans. In the years after the storm, New Orleans had 11,600 homeless people on the streets. Now we're down to just over 1,700. And this year, we became the first city in America to functionally end veteran homelessness. We have a long way to go, but we're making great progress.

Finally, and importantly, New Orleans has become a global leader in emergency preparedness. Ten years ago, none of us were prepared for a storm like Katrina and we suffered the terrible consequences. Now, everyone is on the same page and our preparations are both wide and they are deep. In partnership with a local not for profit called Evacuteer, we developed a city assisted evacuation plan. Now, during a mandatory evacuation, local state and federal officials, along with the faith-based community and community organizations are seamlessly coordinated. We provide transportation to residents and to tourists unable to self evacuate and have extensive special needs registries so that we can take care of the bedridden and the sick.

But since Katrina, we had a broader cultural shift and now emergency preparedness has become ingrained in our daily lives. If you drive around New Orleans, you will see 16 large public art displays scattered across the city. We call these landmarks evacu spots, which will serve as gathering sites during a mandatory evacuation. These are our physical symbols of our preparedness. And then, there are other physical manifestations of our continued renaissance; \$1.63 billion being invested to reinvigorate neighborhoods with new roads, with new parks, new playgrounds, new community centers. 320 million for public transit infrastructure and we're about to break ground on our new airport.

New Orleans is on a roll. And like 78 percent of our residents, I am optimistic about our future. But, we have big time unfinished business and just like throughout the last ten years, our ongoing future efforts will be supported by our partners. And one of these key partners is with us today, the Rockefeller Foundation. Through Rockefeller's 100 Resilient Cities initiative, next week we will unveil a long-term resilience strategy that by 2018 will insure that New Orleans is a global model for resilience in the 21st century. We are already on our way with new modern infrastructure and levies. With the BP oil spill settlement and new federal/state revenue sharing taking effect, we finally have partial payment for hardening our assets and rebuilding our so important coasts.

And most of the rest of the money should come from the oil companies. They helped break it, and they need to help fix it. And really, all Americans have a stake in the future of our coast, because contrary to popular belief, gas does not come from the pump. (Laughter) It comes from us. And every year the gulf coast via Louisiana provides America with more oil and gas than we import from Saudi Arabia. We are the tip of the spear when it comes to energy independence, and as we protect Louisiana's coast, we also protect America, our economic security and our national security.

But here's the thing. To be truly resilient, we can't just build up levies against storms, or change how we live with water to protect our wetlands as important as those are. We need to do all those things. But to be truly resilient, as a society it means combating other stresses like poverty, inequality, violence, racism. To be truly resilient, we must go deeper and create a city that can adapt and thrive, no matter what may happen with climate change, or the global economy.

That means a government with a regional mindset which can both respond to a shock like Hurricane Katrina and prepare our people for the future. That means a 21st century education system, broad-based economic growth so there's a pathway to prosperity that anyone can follow and no one is left behind. That means being inclusive of everyone in the community, breaking down the walls that divide us and coming together in unity.

Our goal is nothing less than to create a city of peace, of opportunity and responsibility for all. A city for the ages. We're not there yet, and we're far from perfect. But the people of New Orleans are committed to their city and know we are on the right path. Indeed, this is what we do as Americans. We work hard, we dream of something more, something better. We should always remember our history in its totality and remember how far we as a people have come.

In 1776, the aspirational words found in our Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal certainly ring hollow to many and must have been especially ironic to the slave. For them, neither liberty nor equality were in reach at that time. Through more than two centuries of tumultuous change, we have made progress in a million of ways. But still, this is the big message the nation should take away from what we saw ten years ago at the Super Dome, and the more recent unrest on the streets of Baltimore, Ferguson and across America. We have still fallen short. We still have not fulfilled the promise of being one nation, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. But here's the thing: we can get there.

So as we turn the corner on the 10th anniversary of Katrina and now look forward to New Orleans' 300th anniversary as a city in 2018, our challenge is to continue to move forward because we have a long way to go. But it is critical to understand where we are in the broader context. Sitting in the deepest of the deep south states, once called this nation's backwater, well that backwater has changed and now New Orleans has become a beacon of light, the capital of what some have called the new south.

So I believe that the south will rise again, but not the old south. The old south of slavery, civil war, confederate flags, monuments that revere the confederacy, separate but equal, I'll go my way, you go yours? That south is gone. The new south led by New Orleans is a place where diversity is our greatest strength, not a weakness. Where our collective wisdom and energy is combined to produce something that will benefit everyone. A place that understands the totality of our history and the importance of our culture; faith, family, friends. A place which combines old and new into something truly special that people want to be a part of. A place that understands what it means to come together in unity and wrestle with the good, the bad, and yes, everything in between.

At the mouth of the mighty Mississippi River, we in New Orleans lie at the heart of this ongoing struggle. But we've shown what's possible. That from the worst disaster, there can be rebirth. Out of despair, there can be hope. Out of darkness, there can be light. Out of destruction, beauty. Hope must spring eternal. Faith, the motivator of all that seems lost.

And with your help we have changed. So on behalf of the people of New Orleans, I say thank you. Thank you to the American taxpayer, thank you to the federal government, thank you to Presidents Obama, Presidents Bush 41 and 43, and President Clinton and President Carter for their work. Thank you all for your support and for your prayers when we needed them most. Thank you for caring for us during our time of need. Thank you for your donations, and thank you for your support. Thank you for caring about a city that care forgot.

But we are unbowed and we are unbroken. We in New Orleans will press on one step at a time. We are one team, we are one fight, we are one city, we are one United States of America. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. HUGHES: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. We invite you to come back up now for some question and answer. And, of course, you noted the progress that has been made, and you also mentioned that challenges remain. Of the things that you're still working on, of the things that haven't come back yet, what are the one or two things that bother you the most, the biggest challenges that you still face, do you think?

MAYOR LANDRIEU: Well, there are more than one or two. I would just say that one of the things that we've spent a lot of time on the last five years is structurally changing and institutionally changing the way New Orleans addresses long-term chronic problems. There was a great article written about Detroit that said Detroit didn't go bankrupt over night, it took 40 or 50 years. So one of the things we really concentrated a lot of time on when I became mayor is changing the institutions in government, changing our relationship with the public/private sector, digging down deep and tearing out the foundations that created bad results.

And as a consequence, we are now much better at being able to resolve the issues that were with us before the storm. And we share the same issues with every other major city in America. In the city of New Orleans, crime continues to be a problem. We have

too much of it. We need to get better at it. Blight reduction continues to be a tremendous challenge, even though we've taken down more blight than any city in America. I think only Detroit had more than we do. We've taken down about 15,000 properties in three years. We now have a system that's moving in the right direction. And because of the new system that we've set up, we now have people complying by primarily our private citizens that did not come back to take care of their property that left it for everybody else. We have challenges in that issue as well.

The economy, although it continues to do better, you have to continually be vigilant. And finally, within that framework that I mentioned, and the NPR poll showed this, that notwithstanding the fact that 78 percent of the people are optimistic about the future of New Orleans, that doesn't mean that everybody's happy about the situation that they're in today. And there continues to be in New Orleans, like there is all over America, and this is now being discussed in the presidential campaign under the guise of income inequality, opportunity inequality, different people talk about it a different way, but I think it's clear that some Americans are doing better than others. And my best guess is that the numbers you see in New Orleans would almost be identically reflected in some of the other major cities in America and across our country.

So we have to continue as we have redesigned the city of New Orleans to be prepared for the same kind of difficulties that we're seeing all across America. And I would put them generally in the same category. Our education system, although we have made tremendous progress and are moving in the right direction, is not perfect. There's some holes in it. We have to continue to work on that, and we will do so in the same way and with the same amount of intensity and aggressive leaning forward that we've done in the past couple of years. Thank you.

MR. HUGHES: Is it your sense that the NPR Kaiser poll that you just referenced was accurate in finding the large disparities between whites and African-Americans in their view of the recovery? And another questioner says, "I noticed on a recent visit to New Orleans, I noticed extensive gentrification of many formerly black neighborhoods. Is this good for the city in the long run?"

MAYOR LANDRIEU: Well, you know, polls have a lot of good information in them. I think it was a well done poll, and I think the poll is an accurate reflection of the way people in New Orleans feel. It is very good to get a poll that says 78 percent of the public thinks you're heading in the right direction, or 73 percent feel good about the recovery. That is a very positive thing. But that poll, again, revealed difficulties that we not only have in New Orleans but all across the country about the way-- the difference between poor people and wealthy people, African-Americans who don't have and African-Americans that do have.

My sister, Donna, will tell you a lot and remind you maybe the best quote of the entire Katrina series was from Russel Honoré, General Honoré, who said when it gets hot, the poor get hotter. And when it gets cold, the poor get colder. That is universally true and it's certainly true in the city of New Orleans.

Although the damage was \$150 billion, the amount of reimbursement after the levies work was less than that and so there's a gap. And consequently what we've found in rebuilding the city is those who had got back faster than those who had not. That does cut across racial lines in some way, but it really has as much to do with class. And so we have 73 neighborhoods in the city of New Orleans and you will see that a good many of them, black and white, have come back and done well, but some of them have not; most particularly the lower ninth ward, which although we've invested \$500 million with new schools, new community centers, new fire stations, continues really to struggle. And that is going to be an issue that I think we mayors across the country really have to think about in terms of rebuilding our relationship with the federal and state governments because we believe we're partners in that. And that partnership has frayed over the last 15 to 20 years.

So as Congress continues to fight about the things that they fight about and hopefully pass an infrastructure bill really quickly, because we need it, we have to get to the next big issue about how we're going to integrate cities into the lifeblood of the relationship between the federal, state and local governments. Eighty-five percent of the people in America now are living in cities. Actually, the demographic trends have completely reversed and people are moving back into cities.

And so we're going to have the same kind of challenges as the rest of the nation is going to have. I just think that we're in a much better position now to deal with those things if, again, you got to earn this every day. Because if you let it go or you stop being vigilant or you stop showing up, you know what? It can go back and it's not going to be as good, so we just got to keep at it.

MR. HUGHES: How prepared is New Orleans to respond to another storm like Katrina, if there is one? Is the hurricane protection infrastructure strong enough?

MAYOR LANDRIEU: Okay, I'm going to put my parochial hat on. The levies broke. This was not a manmade-- this was not a natural disaster. This was a manmade disaster. If a category five rolling in at 12 miles per hour of speed that has winds over 150 miles an hour hits any city in America, you should hope that you will have gone by then. I think Hurricane Sandy demonstrated to us that we have many, many, many vulnerable cities. And guess what? On the scale, New Orleans isn't even on the top. I think Miami's number one, I think Charleston is up there, New York is up there.

And so I have said many, many times in defense of our great city that has had ridiculous things said about it, by the way, by seemingly educated people, that that storm did not hit us because we were bad people. It just didn't. I know there's this modern myth about that, because you can get a to go cup on Bourbon Street for 24 hours, somehow the hurricane came and wanted to smack you. That's really not what happened.

And, we have lots of hurricanes that come in and out of the southern part of the country, that come in and they go out, they're a wind event. I don't want to out anybody,

but sometimes people have wine parties on their porch. (Laughter) And the wind comes in and it goes out. Catastrophe did not occur in this instance until the federal levies that were owned, operated and designed by the federal government broke. New Orleans is a canary in the coal mine for this country. For those of you that are too young to understand that analogy, please ask your parents.

But on infrastructure investments, on income inequality, on housing, on all of that stuff, the rest of the country can learn from the things that New Orleans suffered through, and then learn, hopefully, from the ways that we have learned to fix them as we have paid the debt back to you over time.

The third thing is this: the city is much safer than it was in terms of hurricane protection before. Because we have spent \$14.6 billion federal dollars on fortifying the levies to what they call category three standards. And if another event came in just like this one, at the same speed and at the same time, we have really good reason to believe that we would be fine.

Now, having said that, that is not an invitation. When the mayor calls for a mandatory evacuation in New Orleans or in New York, or in South Carolina, to just think that we're going to beat Mother Nature, you're not. So our hurricane evacuation plans are better, our building plans are better. But this is where the coast comes in, too. The coast that you hear us talk so much about that protects the oil and gas infrastructure, that protects the nation's national security and energy security, also protects the physical space of New Orleans because as the storms come in, if that coast retreats and the storm surge is higher, and that storm is not only the protector of the cultures and the people that live there but it's also the buffer for New Orleans.

So the coast is important, the levies are important, rebuilding is important. Having a plan is important, all of those things. And that's why the Corps of Engineers calls it a risk reduction strategy. You can't ever guarantee that you're not going to get hurt. But today, New Orleans is much better prepared and we're much stronger.

MR. HUGHES: Do you believe that the BP oil spill is still having a negative effect on the bayous and coastal environment of Louisiana? And if so, what's being done to counter any long-term effects of this spill?

MAYOR LANDRIEU: Well, again, as I started the speech, I tried to remind everybody that the city of New Orleans, because at the time we were a massive tourism destination, had suffered dramatically after the attacks of 9/11, that the whole tourism economy went to nothing. And we were in a weak state, but we had just gotten back up after three years of devastation. Then Katrina hit us. Then three weeks later, Rita hit us. Then Ike, then Gustav, then the national recession, then the BP oil spill. Lot of lives lost in the BP oil spill, an untold amount of more physical damage that was done. And I would say that our relationship with BP has been somewhat strained since then.

I think that there is residual damage from that storm. I do think that recently, BP and the state of Louisiana and most of the litigants have now resolved their differences. I think that we are on a path to cleaning up and making sure that not only does that never happen again, but that the money that is coming down through the amount of money that BP has to pay in fines, through the restore act that Senator Landrieu passed, or the Fair Share Act, that we are now accumulating a portion of money that is necessary to fund the master plan for restoring the coast and for cleaning up the coast. We have a very long way to go on both of these things. And there's not enough money in it to actually make it happen.

Louisiana has been in an historic fight. It was led by my sister, Senator Landrieu, on the shoulders of John Breaux, on the shoulders of Bennett Johnston. I mean, gone back forever to make sure that in Louisiana, if we offer ourselves to the rest of the country as a place that is going to provide oil and gas, that we have to get revenues back to restore that which we bust up. This is really common sense that we've kind of lost. You can drill, but you got to restore. That's called being a good steward of a natural resource. We're not in the debate of drill/don't drill. We have found a way to do that and trying to find a way for the fisheries and authentic cultures and the oil and gas to live.

But everybody's got to be doing it for the purpose of helping the people of Louisiana and helping the people of the country. If it's just only to benefit other folks and shareholders and you don't put money back into it to fix it, then you are going to basically give away the possibility of future energy independence for the country. We don't want to do that, and I don't believe that yet we have had a complete communion between the private sector and the public sector; Washington, the state and New Orleans about how to come up with the complete solution. I think that we're well on our way. I believe that our relationship with BP has gotten much better. I think now folks are starting to come to the table, but I don't think we're there yet. And I do think at the end of the day what it has to be about is preserving the livelihoods of the people that live in Louisiana, that work in the industry, protect the land so that the nation can be energy secure and economically secure.

MR. HUGHES: You have something called the NOLA patrol. This is a group of civilian officers who handle quality of life issues and crimes and it was created in 2014. It was touted by you and others as a way to help make the streets safer for residents and tourists alike. The first patrols have been on the streets for some months now. Have they had any real effect on crime, do you think?

MAYOR LANDRIEU: Well, first of all, they are not police officers, and they were never meant to supplant police officers. What they were meant to do was to take away from police offices the need to do mundane things that enforcement folks could do so that the police officers could actually fight crime. And yes, I think they've made a great difference. One of the things that was a challenge for us, and continues to be a challenge in the French Quarter, which as you now is a residential neighborhood, it's a business neighborhood and it also receives a lot of tourists, is to make sure that laws get

enforced so there can be safety on the streets and civility on the streets and then traffic can keep moving.

Many of you have seen this in New York. You may not notice a difference in the colors of the uniforms, but some of the officers are in police uniforms and they actually have a traffic division just like the one that we have just created. That's designed to make sure that the quality of life issues are taken care of, the traffic keeps moving so the police officers themselves can work on violent crime. We've made great success in the French Quarter. We continue to do that, but we continue to have challenges in the city of New Orleans relating to crime, just like we do all over America.

But in this instance, protecting the French Quarter is critically important. But guess what? So is protecting every neighborhood in the city. And we have 73 of them. And I want to protect all the tourists who come in town, and I want to protect every resident there. We're making great progress. As everybody knows, we've been under federal consent decree now for five years. The city has been forced by the Justice Department to pay most of that by ourselves. We continue to work with the judge and with our federal monitors to retrain, supervise and hire more police officers, and we will continue to do that.

But that's like fixing the plane while it's flying in midair. It's not an easy proposition. I feel pretty good about the progress that we've made, but like anything else, I would say it's a work in progress and we have a ways to go.

MR. HUGHES: What are you doing to improve police/community relations, particularly in the African American community?

MAYOR LANDRIEU: First of all, that is a great question. And in New Orleans, we have always spent a lot of time on this. You see this manifesting itself all across the country when there is an event that takes place between a police officer and a citizen. There is a fraying that is just evident all over America. In New Orleans, we spend a lot of time with community leaders. We have in each police district something called CoCo offices, quality of life coordinating offices. We have liaisons with the community. We have advisory boards in every police district that we have. We have regular meetings with the faith-based community to make sure that they know who the captain of that district is, who the commander is that oversees the captain.

Our police chief himself is an elder in his church who spends a huge amount of time across the community and staying in touch makes a big difference. You know, the people of New Orleans have demonstrated time and time again that they are amazingly resilient and thoughtful and reasonable. We have had a couple of police-involved shootings. One of them resulted in the arrest of a police officer and he's serving time because he did a bad thing. One of them did not, because the circumstances indicated that there were guns that were drawn, the police officer was trying to defend himself. But in both instances, after the shootings, the justice system worked. The independent police

monitor showed up, the federal police monitor showed up. There was an open, transparent, analysis of what happened. There was due process and then justice was done.

And in those circumstances, when you have that, everybody is fair-minded about it. Now, I'm not saying that in all instances the family's always happy or the police are always happy. But the system of making sure that there is equality and fair justice-- and a fair look and the justice was done is something that I think that we've gotten right in New Orleans in the last five years.

Now, everybody knows about the events that took place during Katrina, which were awful. Those matters have been winding through the court system, and in some instances because of reversals and other things, those things are still pending. But there is dramatic difference now in this new police department and the work that we're doing.

Again, this issue is not just about police in the community. It lays on top of economics, it lays on top of geography. It lays on top of housing, historical inequities, blight. So when we start talking about crime in America, this is not just about the police showing up after the fact and whether or not they arrest appropriately or secure appropriately, although that's important. There is a much deeper dive that the United States has to do as it relates to how we're going to make sure that everybody in America has an opportunity to do well.

And I don't think that we've really scratched the surface on this. And quite frankly, I don't think that we talk about it easily in this country. Race is really something that scares us. Race is really something that's hard. And so the way we like to say this in New Orleans is you can't go over it, you can't go under it, you can't go around it. You really got to go through this, and you have to be very sober about it and you have to be very thoughtful and you have to give each other a lot of room if we're going to get there. But I think it's really, really clear that in this country, as much as we have aspired to be in a post-racial world, I think it's pretty clear that we're not there yet.

I think we can get there, and I think that there's demonstrable evidence given what's gone on in South Carolina, what's going on across the south, that people really are ready, although it's really hard and it hurts and there are histrionics on both sides, to have was discussion.

And finally, I would say this. This is not an either/or between the community and the police. We've got to get back to where the community and the police are one, whether they're on the same time. I think a lot of police officers feel under assault in this country. In many instances, there are some bad police officers that have done bad things. By and large, most of them do the right thing for the right reason. The same thing is true of the community and I think a really sober discussion that has been taking place through the U.S. Conference of Mayors, that have been taking place all across this country are things that we have to move to, not away from because it's a problem that we know we can solve because it hasn't always been this way.

MR. HUGHES: Do you have any authority to pardon or commute sentences of non-violent drug offenders? And if not, would you support any such legislation or approach for a mayor?

MAYOR LANDRIEU: I don't have any authority to do that. Most of all of the criminal-- well, a lot of things are settled in Baton Rouge at the statehouse rather than on the local level, we're circumscribed pretty significant. But I will say this. When I was a lieutenant governor, I led something called the Juvenile Justice Reform Commission. It was designed to look at the juvenile justice system and determine whether or not we were arresting the wrong people and not arresting the right people, whether we were spending our money the right way, spending too much or too less.

We actually looked at the state of Missouri and found that in Missouri, they really started thinking about it, right? And what they found was that we were arresting the wrong kids for the wrong reasons and putting them in the wrong place and not arresting the right kids. And as a consequence, we were spending way too much money. We weren't getting a good result and the recidivism rate was higher.

It turns out that that exact thing is happening in the adult prison system in America as well. And as a consequence, I'm really heartened by the work that I'm seeing on the federal level. This is one area where actually the Feds are outpacing the states. And you got a bipartisan coalition funded by the Koch Brothers, of all folks, and some other folks that have come together and have decided that we kind of have it upside down.

And a lot of this has nothing to do with violent criminals that are committing violent crimes. This has to do with people that are committing non-violent crimes that for a whole bunch of reasons did not get appropriate mental health or appropriate substance abuse treatment. The consequence is fairly dramatic. I told you we're under consent decree for the police department. We are for our sheriff's office, too. And I have a federal judge basically ordering the people of the city to now become the mental-- the hospital for mental care for prisoners.

Now, we're about to spend more money, by a lot, on a few people that are incarcerated. And doctors, I'll tell you this, if we spent one-half of it on the outside of the jailhouse door, the circumstance would be a thousand percent better. And so as a consequence of those kinds of policies that are not really lining up with each other, you find a huge number of people that are in prison. A huge number of people that cost just on a cost per day for taxpayers a lot of money. And if there's a better, smarter way to do it that's cheaper that makes them get healthy, that makes the streets safer and then reduces the recidivism rate, why in the world wouldn't you want to have a serious discussion about that?

This is one thing that I think we are ready to talk about in this country. And I'm very hopeful that the state of Louisiana on the state level will participate and not just let the Feds talk about just the 20 percent of folks that are in the country that are in jail,

because most of them are in state prisons. And I'm very encouraged by it. Would like to participate.

At the end of the day, the streets have to be safe, but we have to be smart, too, and we have to make sure that when folks come out of jail, we don't put them in jail so they can just go right back because that doesn't seem to be very fiscally prudent and it's not good for the streets, either. Thank you.

MR. HUGHES: This questioner, Mr. Mayor, says residents and visitors alike regularly lose hubcaps or their front end alignments driving over New Orleans notoriously crumbling streets. Is there any plan to systematically tackle this problem?

MAYOR LANDRIEU: (Laughter) I'm tempted to tell you a story. On the night before I was sworn in, I went to my father, who had been the mayor, Secretary of HUD, smart guy. Been around a long time. I was looking for some fatherly advice. Maybe I was looking for a hug. I was looking for "I love you," something. I said, "Tomorrow I'm taking the oath of office. You got anything you want to tell me?" He says, "Yeah, tomorrow at 12:00 you will own every pothole in the city." (Laughter)

Never was a more prescient thing said by one mayor to another. We have literally repaved more streets in New Orleans in the last three years than most mayors have in the history of the city. The city was wiped out. If you go down any major street in the city-- and by the way, it costs \$7 million a mile to repave the city, and we got a lot of miles and it would equal \$9 billion if we were going to fix all of them-- because we had limited resources and because the reimbursement didn't match the damage, that's what we focused on. And almost every major street in the city has been done.

But this is like the issue of blight. I could tell you that we've taken down more blight than anywhere else in America, and that's true. And I hope maybe we'll get an award for that, or something. But it doesn't really matter. It might matter to somebody, a *Governing* magazine, that we did that. But it doesn't matter to the person who's still next door to the house, one house that's blighted.

Same thing is true about potholes. And the city of New Orleans, as you know, was built on a swamp. And we have terrible what we call interior streets. And the truth of the matter is as we have been rebuilding all of the stuff in the city, from schools to airports to all of the things we need, we've got a major problem with our interior streets. Which, by the way, are sitting on top of a sewer system that was destroyed by Katrina that's bleeding 40 percent of its water. And I am still in a fight with the federal government about making sure that they reimburse us adequately so that we can actually put that plan together that you asked me about that will allow us to impart, begin to put the interior streets back together. That negotiation is not yet done. FEMA has been a really good partner, but they don't give you anything, you got to wrestle and you got to make your case because the American public has a right to make sure that we don't get reimbursed for anything that we're not entitled to. And they have a right to make sure that we do get reimbursed for everything that we are entitled to.

And when that is done, we will put together a long-term plan because that is the next big major infrastructure piece. But it goes-- and finally, to something that the U.S. Conference of Mayors has talked a lot to Congress about, every mayor in America says this, and every congressman says it, but nobody will vote for it. Infrastructure in this country, and lack of investment, is making us non-competitive with other major countries that are going to eat our lunch. And that's true about airports, ports, roads, bridges, interior streets, exterior streets. We are way, way, way behind.

And this is something that we really have got to work on in this country that's going to require a national conversation and a federal partnership. They're not necessarily the same thing, but they both have to matter. And this has been a clarion call in the U.S. Conference of Mayors across ideology; Republican mayors, Democratic mayors, big mayors, small mayors who are on the ground living this reality, are actually yelling out to Congress the one thing we all agree on, is massive infrastructure investments so that we can compete on a global level.

MR. HUGHES: Before I ask the final question, I have some housekeeping. The National Press Club is the world's leading professional organization for journalists. To learn more about the club, visit our website, press.org. And to donate to our nonprofit Journalism Institute, visit press.org/institute. I'd also like to remind you about some upcoming speakers. This Thursday, August 20th, Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum will discuss his immigration plan.

On September 2nd, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, will address a luncheon. And the topic, Mr. Mayor, is the new south. And on September 5th, the Press Club will hold its annual 5k to raise money for journalism scholarships, training and press freedom. I'd now like to present our guest with the traditional National Press Club mug. (Applause) I think there are many suitable beverages in New Orleans you could enjoy in that mug. And we won't even list them all because it would take too long.

Louisiana is well known for its colorful politicians. In your opinion, how does Donald Trump compare with Governor Huey Long and former Governor Edwin Edwards?

MAYOR LANDRIEU: First of all, let me say this. I'm really looking forward to Nikki Haley's speech. I thought she did something really courageous in South Carolina and I hope that elected officials across-- (Applause)-- I think elected officials across the south, Republican and Democrat, put that behind us and look forward and do it in a way that makes the south really strong. The south has a lot to offer the United States of America. And we actually think that, without getting into competition with our folks from the northeast or the west, that we could actually lead the nation. But we've got to put down this issue of race. We've got to make sure that everybody in this country feels included. And I'm really just thankful to her for leading that effort and look forward to partnering with her and all of our friends, our brothers and sisters across the south, to talk about what the new south looks like for the rest of the country.

Donald Trump would fit in real good with Huey Long and with Edwin Edwards. I mean, you know, one of the things that we have done in Louisiana is kind of add some color to the word colorful. And no matter what you think about The Donald, you got to say he's spicing it up. He'd fit real good on the McIlhenny farm where they make Tabasco sauce, go right with that right hat [?]. So tell him to come on down to Louisiana, we'd love to see him.

MR. HUGHES: How about a round of applause for our speaker? (Applause) Mr. Mayor, I hope you come back and see us some time soon. I'd also like to thank the National Press Club staff including its Journalism Institute and Broadcast Center for organizing today's event. If you would like a copy of today's program, or to learn more about the Club, go to that website. That's press.org. Thank you, we are adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

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