

## **Dan Rather Reports**

**Episode Number:** 103

**Episode Title:** Survivors of the Storms

**Description:** Dan Rather Reports talks to a former FEMA worker who was convicted of accepting a bribe from a government contractor. And the impact of the big storms that hit the gulf coast a year ago were felt far beyond New Orleans. Rebuilding without federal help, down on the bayou.

### **Transcript:**

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT, THE HURRICANES FROM HELL. THEY LEFT BEHIND VICTIMS,

KATRINA SURVIVOR

We had no electricity, we had no water. There was nothing.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BROUGHT VILLAINS.

KATRINA SURVIVOR

You've got to remember now these crooks are sharp. That was a bad, bad decision.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

RENEWED FAITH AND REBUILDING WITHOUT WAITING FOR HELP FROM  
THE GOVERNMENT.

KATRINA SURVIVOR

Not rebuild, but rebuild better.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ALL TONIGHT ON DAN RATHER REPORTS.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

GOOD EVENING, FOR MOST OF US, WHEN WE THINK OF THE HURRICANE  
SEASON OF 2005, WE THINK OF THIS PLACE.

NEW ORLEANS' LOWER 9TH WARD - THE SPOT WHERE NATURE'S FURY MET MAN'S FAULTY LEVEES, WITH TRAGIC RESULTS. THE WORLD WATCHED IN HORROR AS ENTIRE FAMILIES WERE LEFT CLINGING TO THEIR ROOFTOPS BY A GOVERNMENT RESPONSE THAT WAS TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

OVER 1800 PEOPLE PERISHED - BODIES ARE STILL BEING FOUND -- AND MANY WHO SURVIVED ESCAPED WITH NOTHING BUT THEIR LIVES, THEY ARE STRUGGLING TO REBUILD IN PLACES WHERE THERE IS NOTHING LEFT WITH WHICH TO REBUILD.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

IT'S MORE THAN A YEAR LATER, NOW - THE FLOODWATERS HAVE LONG AGO RECEDED, AND SO HAS THE NATION'S ATTENTION.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT FOR THE PEOPLE DOWN HERE, TIME STANDS STILL. THEY ESCAPED THE WIND AND THE WATER, ONLY TO FIND THAT THE STORMS WERE INESCAPABLE AFTER ALL. MOUNDS OF DEBRIS STILL DOT THE LANDSCAPE HERE AND LONELY CONCRETE SLABS ARE OFTEN ALL THAT'S LEFT OF A ONCE PROUD FAMILY HOME.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

AND YET, AMID THIS DESTRUCTION OF ALMOST BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS, YOU CAN HEAR THE SOUNDS OF HAMMERS - THE SOUNDS OF PEOPLE DETERMINED TO GET THEIR LIVES BACK. YOU CAN SEE THE RESOLVE IN PUBLIC OFFICIALS' EYES AS THEY SEEK TO REBUILD PEOPLE'S FAITH IN THE GOVERNMENT THAT LET THEM DOWN IN THE MIDST AND AFTERMATH OF THE STORMS. YOU CAN HEAR IT THE PREACHER'S CALL OF " LET US ARISE AND REBUILD" TO MOTIVATE HIS FLOCK THAT HAS DARED TO COME BACK.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT'S SUNDAY MORNING IN PHOENIX, LOUISIANA, A PREDOMINANTLY AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY ABOUT 30 MILES SOUTHEAST OF NEW ORLEANS. AND JUST LIKE THEY'VE DONE FOR ALMOST A CENTURY HERE, PEOPLE ARE MAKING THEIR WAY TO SUNDAY SERVICE. LOOKING AROUND THIS SIMPLE, COUNTRY CHURCH HEARING THE VOICES SINGING THEIR PRAISES TO GOD, AND SEEING THE SMILES ON THE FACES, IT IS EASY TO FORGET NO ONES' LIFE HERE WAS LEFT UNSCATHED BY THE HURRICANES' RAGE.

TYRONNE EDWARDS, REVEREND

People lives have been destroyed. People still hurting as a result of not being able to be in their houses.

( During sermon) Do you believe in god?!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

REV. TYRONNE EDWARDS IS MINISTER OF THIS CHURCH JUST LIKE HIS GRANDFATHER AND UNCLE WERE DECADES BEFORE HIM. HE'S ALSO A LIFE-LONG RESIDENT OF PHOENIX.

RATHER

Have you ever in your life seen anything like what happened in the wake of Katrina and Rita?

EDWARDS

Never. It just blew my mind. Because there was no houses, anything. Houses on top of the levee was turned upside down. It was just horrible.

RATHER

Was there anything in this whole area untouched by Katrina and Rita?

EDWARDS

Nothing. Nothing was untouched.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT THE SPOTLIGHT WAS ON NEW ORLEANS WHERE THE CAMERAS WERE THERE TO CAPTURE THE CHAOS AS THE MASSES OF PEOPLE PLEADED FOR HELP THAT WAS SLOW IN COMING. SO ALTHOUGH PHOENIX WAS UNDER WATER TOO, REV. EDWARDS SAYS AFTER SEEING NEW ORLEANS ON TV, HE KNEW THAT HIS SMALL TOWN OF AROUND 400 PEOPLE WOULD HAVE TO RELY ON ITS OWN STRENGTH NOT THE GOVERNMENT TO GET IT UP AND RUNNING.

RATHER

Somewhere in the back of your mind or down in your heart, did you think, well, we have to do for ourselves, but we are going to get some help? We are going to get some federal government help, some state help?

EDWARDS

Didn't think about that. Because when I saw the convention center and New Orleans superdome, then I know I can expect, we can expect no help from our government. Because the world saw that New Orleans looked like a third world country. So I knew when we came back here that we had to fend for ourselves. Because we can't expect this government to do anything for us.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND FOR WEEKS, THE SITUATION IN PHOENIX LOOKED HOPELESS. NOT ONLY WERE ALL OF THE HOMES, CHURCHES AND STORES GONE, BUT NOT EVEN THE DEAD WERE SPARED.

RATHER

All this was underwater?

EDWARDS

All this was underwater. These tombs some of them were turned upside down. It was up in the air. Coffins was all over the place. Bodies was all over the place.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE ONLY SIGNS OF LIFE WERE THE DISPLACED CATTLE THAT ROAMED THE STREET. UNTIL ONE DAY, REV. EDWARDS HAD A REVELATION.

EDWARDS

I kept coming down here every day. And I saw the destruction. No movement. And so, the spirit told me that day, "You got to go back home and do some work."

RATHER

Did you ever think about not worth it not worth coming back, not worth rebuilding?

EDWARDS

The thought of never coming back never entered my mind. As a matter of fact, I couldn't wait to come back.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

REVEREND EDWARDS WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO WANTED TO GET BACK. OLIVER BARTHELME AND HIS WIFE EILEEN WERE TWO OF THE FIRST TO RETURN AFTER LIVING IN TEMPORARY HOUSING FOR ALMOST TWO MONTHS.

OLIVER BARTHELME, HURRICANE SURVIVOR

On the 18th of October we bought a boat, a motor, a tent and we decided to come home. And we've been here ever since.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY WERE THE LUCKY ONES, THEY STILL HAD A STRUCTURE LEFT OUT OF 160 HOUSES IN TOWN, ONLY 25 WERE EVEN SALVAGEABLE.

BARTHELME

A lot of people didn't have anything left, didn't have even have a piece of wood from their home that they could recognize. It was completely gone. So, we were very fortunate, at least felt very fortunate to have ours still standing.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT THE STORM HAD MADE THEIR HOME COMPLETELY UNINHABITABLE, SO THE COUPLE RECENTLY MARRIED, DID WHAT PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN PHOENIX DO, THEY MADE DO WITH WHAT THEY HAD.

BARTHELME

We had honeymoon cruise set up for the thanksgiving weekend, November. And that was washed away, you know, so, we decided to have our honeymoon in a tent.

Crawl in, comfortable as can be. Never a worry in the world.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO BY DAY THEY WORKED TO REBUILD THEIR HOME AND AT NIGHT THEY CAMPED OUT UNDER THE STARS. AND UNLIKE THEIR NEIGHBORS IN THE CITY, THEY NEVER HAD TO WORRY ABOUT WHERE THEIR NEXT MEAL WAS COMING FROM.

BARTHELME

There's food all over in these woods. You know? We don't have to be in the supermarket every day. And you don't get it as fresh as we get it here. There's no place like this. To us, this is paradise.

RATHER

REVEREND, EXPLAIN THIS. HOW IS IT DIFFERENT? WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT HERE FROM THE URBAN AREAS THAT WERE HIT BY THE STORM, THAT WE SEE SO PREDOMINANTLY DISPLAYED ON TELEVISION?

BARTHELME

I think one of the things that's different here in this little rural community, we didn't set back and wait on the government. I think what happened in the urban areas, people sitting back waiting on the government programs and so most people haven't started rebuilding, cause they're still waiting for the cavalry to come in.

RATHER

Well, has the cavalry come in, so to speak?

BARTHELME

No.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

REV. EDWARDS' REALIZATION THAT PHOENIX COULDN'T JUST WAIT FOR THE CAVALRY TO COME, SPRINGS NOT JUST FROM THE STARK IMAGES OF NEW ORLEANS IT GOES MUCH FURTHER BACK IN HISTORY. YOU SEE, THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME I'VE BEEN TO PLAQUEMINES PARISH, THE COUNTY WHERE PHOENIX IS LOCATED. BACK DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE IN THE EARLY 60'S, I CAME DOWN TO INTERVIEW THE THEN LEADER OF THIS PARISH A MAN NAMED JUDGE LEANDER PEREZ SR. WHO WAS FAMOUS IN HIS DAY FOR HIS STRONG IRONFISTED SUPPORT OF SEGREGATION.

RATHER

Isn't the tide of history running against you?

LEANDER PÉREZ

I cannot subscribe to the principle of surrender and the brainwashed technique of saying it's bound to happen, so what!

RATHER

YOU KNOW THE HISTORY OF THIS PLAQUEMINES PARISH, WITH THE ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN SEGREGATIONISTS OF THIS ERA, LEANDER PÉREZ, RULED LIKE A KING, LIKE A MAHARAJA.

BARTHELME

See, what you got to understand, white people was more in slavery in Plackman Parish than black people. Cause we didn't get any money or anything from the parish. We

always had to work for ourselves. We built our houses on our own. Everything we did was independent. We was like a separate village in itself.

RATHER

And that built a tradition of self-reliance?

BARTHELME

Correct.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WITH THAT HISTORY OF SELF- RELIANCE AND OVERCOMING STRUGGLE IN MIND, REV. EDWARDS KNEW THAT PHOENIX WOULD SURVIVE. BUT HE KNEW IT NEEDED A FOCAL POINT AND THAT FOCAL POINT BECAME THE CHURCH EVEN THOUGH THERE WERE BARELY ENOUGH PEOPLE TO FILL ONE PEW LET ALONE A WHOLE CONGREGATION.

RATHER

You're preaching only to a handful of people, maybe not even a handful of people.

EDWARDS

Three people.

RATHER

Preaching to three people.

EDWARDS

And and I'm and I'm one of the three.

RATHER

Oh, I see, it's three including you.

EDWARDS

Yes.

RATHER

Well, did you have any sense, to use the hurricane metaphor, that you were just preaching into a wind tunnel? Only two other people hearing you.

EDWARDS

Many times I, I would come to church and I would walk in and it'd just be the three of us. And the thought would come to say a prayer and leave. But god would say, "you gotta preach."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT REVEREND EDWARDS DIDN'T JUST PREACH TO HIS CONGREGATION. HE WENT FROM NEW YORK TO WASHINGTON STATE SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT PHOENIX.

BRENDA PUCKETT, MISSIONARY

He's a man of very focused determination. Wonderful sense of humor. He's an action man though.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BENNY AND BRENDA PUCKETT ARE MISSIONARIES WHO GOT REV. EDWARDS' MESSAGE.

BRENDA PUCKETT

And he's gonna bring the people together to want them and motivate them, "yeah, we can do this. You know, god is on our side, we can do this."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO WITH HELP FROM BENNY, BRENDA, AND OTHERS, REV. EDWARDS AND HIS PEOPLE FIRST TACKLED REBUILDING THE CHURCH.

BENNY PUCKETT, MISSIONARY

This one building represented, to the community, it represented a piece of their community that could bring them back to some sort of spiritual life.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT ALSO WAS A PLACE TO HOUSE THE FLOOD OF VOLUNTEERS WHO HEEDED REV. EDWARDS' CALL. COLLEGE KIDS, PEOPLE FROM NON-PROFITS LIKE COMMON GROUND AND OXFAM, AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY FOLKS FROM CHURCHES OF ALL DENOMINATIONS STARTED COMING DOWN.

BENNY PUCKETT



The religious community stepped up and, and across denominational lines, across, all, all barriers of that sort, they've come in and, and said, "This is our job. We help people who need help."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THIS HISTORICALLY SEGREGATED COMMUNITY BECAME A VERITABLE GUMBO OF RACES AS THE VOLUNTEERS STREAMED IN. MICHAEL GROOMER, FROM COVENANT WORLD RELIEF, WAS ONE OF THOSE VOLUNTEERS.

MICHAEL GROOMER, COVENANT WORLD RELIEF

I asked Tyrone, I said, "Tyrone, how are the people gonna respond to a buncha white folks comin' down here and helpin' 'em." and he says, "they don't care. They love, they love to have ya." and, and that's exactly what we found.

EDWARDS

You know one time we had a volunteer working around here. And he had to do this rope in order to cut the tree down. And he had a noose that he created. And I'm looking at this white guy, with all these white guys, you know, setting up this rope and all that. But I'm looking at a noose. And I tell, "you know man, I got some serious problems watching white men with a rope." (laughter) so, you know, the Katrina was able to bring the people to this community together. And we would say that, in spite of our government neglect, the American people have responded to us in a mighty powerful way.

GROOMER

I think the thing that is hardest is just kinda getting your arms around the project as a whole and saying, "How do we and how can we help these people and not really do it for them but partner with them?"

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHAT THEY'VE PARTNERED ON IS A PROJECT TO HELP THE COMMUNITY MOVE FROM TEMPORARY TRAILERS INTO PERMANENT HOMES ON A MONDAY NIGHT IN OCTOBER, THE CHURCH WAS FILLED TO OVERFLOWING AS THE PEOPLE OF PHOENIX GATHERED WITH VOLUNTEERS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY TO FIGURE OUT A PLAN TO START BUILDING HOUSES.

RATHER

What's the best thing that's happened to you in the last month or week?

EDWARDS

Is that we finally came with the blueprint to rebuild in the homes in this community.  
"We've been waiting on this night!

GROOMER

We've come up with two plans. One is approximately 1,200 square feet. And the other is a smaller home about 900 square feet, real simple but a good solid home.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE MATERIAL THAT MAKES UP THAT GOOD SOLID HOME WILL BE PAID FOR BY THE PEOPLE OF PHOENIX, BUT REVEREND EDWARDS HAS WORKED OUT A DEAL TO GET THE LABOR DONATED.

EDWARDS

We're looking at a year from now having over 50 to 100 brand new homes rebuilt in this community not rebuilt, but rebuilt better.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ON THE DAY OF OUR INTERVIEW, MORE GOOD NEWS ARRIVED. THE PERMIT CAME TO START BUILDING THAT FIRST NEW HOUSE. OVER 14 MONTHS SINCE THAT FATEFUL DAY THE STORM CAME THROUGH.

RATHER

Do you ever get weary? You must.

EDWARDS

Not that. But I'm always saying that I would like the time when I can just take off a whole month and spend it totally with my, my, my wife and son without doing anything.

RATHER

Well, you know the words of the old hymn the old gospel hymn that says, "Gonna lay my sweet burden down by the riverside?"

EDWARDS

That's not a good one, Dan, cuz that's one about dying. So, that's not mine. Mine is this, "little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine."

RATHER

If another hurricane comes, what happens?

EDWARDS

Well, only you know people pose the question to us in a different way.

EDWARDS

They were saying, "Why are you rebuilding when you live in a hurricane area?" we say, "because hurricanes have been coming every year since we've been living here, and this year's not gonna be any different." I'm just looking at the good things that's happening right now. So, I can't think about another hurricane, cuz we're just thinking about rebuilding.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

COMING UP: A FEMA EMPLOYEE WHO WENT TO PRISON FOR FRAUD.

(BREAK)

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LIKE THE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE WHO CAME TO REBUILD THE LITTLE TOWN OF PHOENIX, LOUISIANA. . . ANDREW ROSE KNEW HE NEEDED TO GET INVOLVED. FROM HIS HOME IN COLORADO, ROSE, A RETIRED ATTORNEY AND VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER, OFFERED HIS SERVICES TO FEMA, FREE OF CHARGE. TO HIS SURPRISE, THE FEDERAL AGENCY MADE HIM A PAID EMPLOYEE, AND TWO WEEKS LATER HE WAS IN THE HEART OF THE DISASTER ZONE. IT WAS UNLIKE ANYTHING HE'D EVER EXPERIENCED.

ANDREW ROSE, FEMA WORKER

Within hours of us being there, it became readily apparent that despite assurances to the contrary, there was no food available. There was no water available. There was no communications available.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ROSE'S JOB WAS TO TURN THIS RUN- DOWN NEW ORLEANS HIGH SCHOOL INTO A BASE CAMP FOR RELIEF WORKERS. THE HOURS WERE BRUTAL 16 TO 18 A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, MONTH AFTER MONTH. OVER TIME, HE SAYS, THE LONG DAYS AND THE DESPERATE CONDITIONS BEGAN TAKING THEIR TOLL.

ROSE

When you go out in the neighborhoods, you can't help but see it and feel it. The smell of death and decay when we initially got there was all around. it, it was what you saw on

television didn't begin to compare with the 360 degree, all sensory perceptions just coming at you at one time. Over time, through lack of sleep, your mind just stops functioning the way it should, the way it normally would.

And, as a result I did something that I am certainly sorry for, and had great repercussions.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHAT HE DID TURNED HIM OVERNIGHT FROM A LAW-ABIDING CITIZEN TO A CONVICTED CRIMINAL. HE'S AN UNLIKELY SUSPECT, BUT, ACCORDING TO FEDERAL PROSECUTORS, ROSE A MAN WITH NO PREVIOUS CRIMINAL RECORD SOLICITED A BRIBE FROM A FOOD SERVICE CONTRACTOR WHO WAS WORKING AT THE BASE CAMP. IN EXCHANGE FOR REGULAR CASH PAYMENTS, ROSE AND A FELLOW FEMA EMPLOYEE, LLOYD HOLLIMAN, WOULD INFLATE THE CAMP'S MEAL COUNT, WHICH WOULD ALLOW THE CONTRACTOR TO BILL THE GOVERNMENT AND THEREFORE THE TAXPAYERS MORE MONEY. U.S. ATTORNEY JIM LETTEN HANDLED THE CASE.

U.S. ATTORNEY JIM LETTEN

Andrew rose and Loyd Holliman said to him, "You will pay us \$20,000 -- \$10,000 each, up front. You will also pay us \$2,500 each per week thereafter. And we in turn are gonna show you how to falsely inflate the number of \$35-a head meals you serve and charge to FEMA."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WITH AN ENTIRE AMERICAN CITY IN RUINS, A \$20,000 BRIBE HARDLY SEEMS LIKE A TOP PRIORITY FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT. BUT OFFICIAL CORRUPTION, LETTEN SAYS, HAD BEEN DESTROYING HIS CITY LONG BEFORE KATRINA.

LETTEN

It cheats citizens of money, services, quality of life and most importantly, the ability to trust their government. While Louisiana and while New Orleans may not have quantitatively measurably more corruption than say other large cities, similarly situated cities, I can tell you that over generations we've somehow managed to earn a reputation for being a lot more tolerant of it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THAT REPUTATION IS WELL EARNED. POLITICIANS TRADE THEIR PINSTRIPES FOR PRISON STRIPES ON A FAIRLY REGULAR BASIS DOWN HERE. SO, WITH THE FLOOD WATERS RECEDING AND A DELUGE OF RELIEF MONEY RUSHING IN, FEDERAL OFFICIALS REALIZED THAT AN

EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT WOULD BE NEEDED TO KEEP THAT MONEY SAFE. IF THE PUBLIC AND CONGRESS EVER THOUGHT THEY WERE THROWING IT INTO A SINKHOLE OF CORRUPTION, THEY MIGHT NOT BE SO GENEROUS.

U.S. ATTORNEY DAVID DUGAS

Can every hear me okay?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THIS IS THE RESULT: THE HURRICANE KATRINA FRAUD TASK FORCE. IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH JUST A BUNCH OF BUREAUCRATS SITTING AROUND A CONFERENCE ROOM BUT THAT'S EXACTLY THE POINT. DOZENS OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES HAVE BEEN FORCED TO RESPOND TO KATRINA. AGENCIES WHICH HAVEN'T WORKED VERY WELL TOGETHER IN THE PAST. BUT WITH A DISASTER OF THIS MAGNITUDE, BUSINESS AS USUAL JUST WON'T DO. DAVID DUGAS, THE U.S. ATTORNEY IN BATON ROUGE, IS ONE OF THE TASK FORCE'S LEADERS.

DUGAS

The vast majority of the American people in response to disaster, respond by asking the question: "How can I help?" but then there's a certain element whose response is: "How do I make a buck off of this? How do I profit?"

RATHER

Well I have heard this is the largest disbursement of public funds ever to meet a disaster in this country. Is that true so far you know?

DUGAS

As far as I know, it is. The department of homeland security inspector general's office, currently has calculated about \$116 billion committed to the relief and recovery efforts, and I've seen some estimates as high as \$200 billion.

RATHER

Well anytime you have a situation, first of all, where chaos, and even in this late date, near chaos in some areas and you have hundreds of billions of dollars over \$100 billion poured into it to the average citizen that says, "Whew, this is an ideal circumstance to get ripped off."

DUGAS

I can't disagree. And I think if you look at what we've done so far in terms of the investigations and prosecutions that we've done following Katrina, we've charged already

over 400 individuals with hurricane related fraud. Fraudulent charitable schemes; contractor fraud; procurement fraud; public corruption. There's nothing new in any of that. It's simply, the opportunity is unprecedented. And so, the scale is unprecedented. And it's requiring an unprecedented response.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MORE THAN 40 FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES ARE BEING COORDINATED THROUGH THE TASK FORCE'S COMMAND CENTER HERE IN BATON ROUGE.

DUGAS

This corner over here are two of our analysts. Two FBI analysts right back there.

RATHER

I see. Now these are Homeland Security people?

DUGAS

Homeland security and HUD. And then going back this way we have Health and Human Services, Department of Transportation desk, all hired since Katrina specifically to work Katrina fraud.

RATHER

Has anybody done this before?

DUGAS

I mean, we've had task forces, and we've had command centers. I don't think we've ever had one that had the level of participation by this number of different agencies.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THIS BIG TIME RESPONSE HAS SO FAR NETTED MOSTLY SMALL TIME CROOKS. BUT DUGAS SAYS BIGGER, MORE COMPLICATED FRAUD CASES TAKE TIME, AND THAT MORE INDICTMENTS ARE COMING. THE TASK FORCE HAS RECEIVED NEARLY 9,000 TIPS FROM THE PUBLIC OVER THE PAST YEAR INCLUDING A CALL FROM THAT FOOD SERVICE CONTRACTOR AT THE FEMA BASE CAMP, ALERTING THEM THAT FEMA OFFICIALS HOLLIMAN AND ROSE WANTED PAYOFFS. WITH SO MANY AGENCIES NOW WORKING TOGETHER, THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, WHICH OVERSEES FEMA, WAS IMMEDIATELY ABLE TO KICK THE INVESTIGATION INTO HIGH GEAR.

LETTEN

They were sitting across a desk at the task force from FBI. They then notify FBI because these individuals were contracted to work for the government. Seamlessly, the FBI and department of homeland security IG mounted, I think, one of the most efficient, swiftest and I guess one of the best undercover operations that I've seen.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

ON JANUARY 27, 2006, THE FOOD SERVICE CONTRACTOR CAME HERE TO THE FEMA BASE CAMP AND ASKED TO SEE HOLLIMAN AND ROSE. THE THREE MEN STEPPED OUTSIDE AND MADE SMALL TALK FOR A FEW MINUTES, THEN THE CONTRACTOR HANDED TO THE FEMA EMPLOYEES TWO ENVELOPES, EACH ONE STUFFED WITH \$10,000 CASH. IMMEDIATELY, AGENTS OF FBI AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY SWOOPED IN, HANDCUFFING THE TWO MEN AND TAKING THEM TO JAIL. HOLLIMAN AND ROSE HAD BEEN CAUGHT RED-HANDED.

LETTEN

We caught 'em red-handed because the system worked, because the task force concept worked, because the agencies, FBI and DHS IG worked well, worked swiftly, worked smart, worked together. Any violation of public trust by a public official or any violation of law by a citizen in the wake of Katrina is gonna come with a very dear price to pay.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AS A FORMER ATTORNEY, ANDREW ROSE KNEW THE PRICE COULD BE VERY HIGH. FACING THE PROSPECT OF UP TO 15 YEARS BEHIND BARS, HE PLEADED GUILTY, AND WAS SENTENCED TO 21 MONTHS IN PRISON, AND A \$20,000 FINE.

ROSE

I'm gonna be away from my family for 21 months. I'm gonna carry a record forever. I have four grandsons age six and under. Do I want them to think of their grandfather as a criminal? No, of course not. Did I engage in criminal activity? Yes, I did.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT WHY? HOW DID TWO MEN WHO CAME TO NEW ORLEANS AS RESCUERS WIND UP LEAVING AS CONVICTED FELONS? LOYD HOLLIMAN, WHO ALSO PLEADED GUILTY DID NOT RESPOND TO OUR REQUEST FOR AN INTERVIEW, BUT ANDREW ROSE TOLD US THAT HE NEVER INTENDED TO KEEP THE MONEY FOR HIMSELF. THE PLAN, HE SAYS, WAS TO PUT IT TOWARDS REPAIRING THE SCHOOL THAT HOUSED HIS FEMA BASE CAMP.

ROSE

This school was run down to an extent that it should have been condemned. Truly, it should've been condemned. Condemned and rebuilt. I felt a real need to make it a better place. I made a decision to accept that money. It doesn't matter why I accepted it. I made the decision to accept it. That was a bad, bad decision. And it will haunt me the rest of my life.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A FEW DAYS BEFORE THANKSGIVING, ANDREW ROSE BECAME FEDERAL PRISONER NUMBER 296-720-34. AND THOUGH HE IS THE FIRST FEMA EMPLOYEE TO GO TO JAIL FOR KATRINA-RELATED FRAUD, HE SAYS HIS FORMER EMPLOYER DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE HEARD THE NEWS.

ROSE

I've received no less than six, probably more than that letters from FEMA since I pled guilty, saying, "Oh you have to sign up for this training, because if there's another hurricane or natural disaster, we need you there." I could be employed by FEMA tomorrow without a doubt in my mind.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE HURRICANE FRAUD TASK FORCE ALSO WORKS IN CONJUNCTION WITH STATE AGENCIES. WE WENT ON THE ROUNDS ONE DAY WITH TWO INVESTIGATORS, CARL BOURQUE AND LLOYD HAYDEN FROM THE LOUISIANA STATE LICENSING BOARD FOR CONTRACTORS.

CARL BOURQUE, INVESTIGATOR

How y'all doing?

FREDDIE ROSS, HOME OWNER

Just fine and yourself?

LLOYD HAYDEN, INVESTIGATOR

If you're a homeowner, then you're in a hurry to try to get back into what you call home, you know?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THAT HURRY MAKES PEOPLE VULNERABLE, PEOPLE LIKE FREDDIE AND RAMONA ROSS WHO OWN ONE OF THE MORE THAN 200,000 HOMES IN LOUISIANA ALONE SEVERELY DAMAGED BY THE HURRICANES. THE ROSS' BELIEVE THEY HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF FRAUD, HOUSING CONTRACTOR FRAUD.



FREDDIE ROSS

Katrina has come and gone, but there is a storm that we continue to fight every day in the process of rebuilding.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TODAY THE ROSS' ARE PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT A CONTRACTOR THEY HIRED TO REDO THEIR ENTIRE HOUSE AFTER THE STORM. THE ROSS' SAY AFTER THEY GAVE HIM THE FIRST CHECK IN APRIL, HE DIDN'T DO A THING.

ROMONA ROSS

I came to this house every day, nothing. He brought nothing, nothing was done. I mean, it was just it was a robbery.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AFTER A COUPLE OF WEEKS OF CALLING, WHEN THE CONTRACTOR FINALLY SHOWED UP, FREDDIE SAYS THINGS GOT EVEN WORSE.

FREDDIE ROSS

So he knocked down the wall, but he didn't, he didn't brace the ceiling, so the whole ceiling dropped. I mean in the process of him fixing the house, he was causing more damage to the house than repairs.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CARL AND LLOYD SAY IT'S NOT UNCOMMON TO FIND WORKERS WHO DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.

HAYDEN

We went to a house one day and had a bunch of guys on the roof. We got to talking to 'em, come to find out one of 'em came from McDonald's. One of 'em was a chauffeur.

BOURQUE

Yeah, they never been on a roof before.

HAYDEN

They said, "we've never been on a roof before in our lives."

BOURQUE

They were roofers.

HAYDEN

Yeah, they were roofers.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

INSURANCE MONEY HAS FUNDED MUCH OF THE REBUILDING GOING ON TODAY. BUT AS MORE OF THE \$8 BILLION OF FEDERAL MONEY DESIGNATED SOLELY FOR RESIDENTIAL HOUSING STARTS TRICKLING IN, THE INVESTIGATORS BELIEVE THE PROBLEMS WILL ONLY WORSEN. AND WITH AN ENTIRE REGION TRYING TO REBUILD AT ONCE, WORKERS ARE COMING IN FROM ALL OVER. THE STATE ESTIMATES THAT OVER THREE QUARTERS OF THEM DON'T HAVE THE PROPER LICENSE TO WORK.

HAYDEN

Anywhere here along the gulf coast you will find that these people are going back and forth, just following the storm.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT JUST SO HAPPENED, ON THE DAY WE FOLLOWED THE INVESTIGATORS AROUND, THAT TWO CONTRACTORS STOPPED US TO FIND OUT HOW THEY COULD GET THEIR LICENSES IN ORDER TO START WORKING.

BOURQUE

Already got an envelope for you.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND WHILE THE VAST MAJORITY OF CONTRACTORS ARE HONEST, CARL AND LLOYD'S CASELOAD HAS MORE THAN QUADRUPLED WITH REPORTS OF BUILDERS WHO JUST WANT TO MAKE A QUICK BUCK.

HAYDEN

You gotta remember now these crooks are sharp. You know, they're we're not talking about your regular run-of-the-mill dummy, you know? Right. These guys are smooth talkers.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LLOYD AND CARL SAY THE BAD GUYS WILL SAY JUST ABOUT ANYTHING TO GET THAT INITIAL JOB.

HAYDEN

It's just unbelievable the acting job they put on to get the job.

BOURQUE

I had a lady the other day said he showed up with two bibles in his hand. That's the kinda stuff these people gotta put up with that live here.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FREDDIE AND RAMONA'S HOME IS STILL NOT COMPLETE, AND THEY SAY THEY ARE OUT AROUND \$8000 ALTHOUGH THEIR CONTRACTOR DENIES ANY WRONGDOING. BUT INVESTIGATORS LLOYD AND CARL SAY THE ROSS' DISPUTE IS SMALL COMPARED TO SOME THEY'VE SEEN. CASE IN POINT: THIS HOUSE ON STILTS, OWNED BY A WOMAN WHO CAN'T EVEN MOVE IN BECAUSE THE WORK WAS DONE SO SHODDILY.

BOURQUE

The contract she said was for 178,000. And she's given him 81,000.

HAYDEN

And he done left the country and done part of a job. So now there she is with no with a house that's raised up in the air, no money left to fix it. So, you know, I don't know what the lady's gonna do.

Since he's been here, you've been pretty busy getting it done. I think it looks good.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN THE ROSS' CASE, THEY GOT SOME HELP FROM A CHURCH GROUP AND DID A LOT OF THE WORK THEMSELVES. THEY'LL LIKELY NEVER GET THE MONEY BACK THAT THEY PAID THE CONTRACTOR, ALTHOUGH THEY'D LIKE TO SEE CRIMINAL CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST HIM. AS FOR CARL AND LLOYD, THEY CONTINUE TO INVESTIGATE CASES OF POSSIBLE FRAUD, AND WORK LONG HOURS TRYING MAKE SURE THE BUILDERS THEY RUN INTO ARE LICENSED AND QUALIFIED TO DO THE JOB.

HAYDEN

We need good, qualified, outside licensed contractors to come in and help us. The state needs help. But we need honest help. We don't need crooks.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

COMING UP NEXT: REBUILDING LOUISIANA'S SHATTERED SHRIMPING INDUSTRY.

(BREAK)

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A FISHERMAN'S LIFE CAN BE A SOLITARY ONE. UP BEFORE DAWN, OUT ON THE WATER FOR DAYS, STRUGGLING CONSTANTLY AGAINST THE FORCES OF NATURE. IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT RESILIENT SOULS LIKE RAY BRANDHURST HAVE BEEN AMONG THE FIRST TO REBUILD AFTER THE HURRICANES. BUT WHEN YOU'RE ONE OF THE FIRST ONES BACK AFTER THE STORM, LIFE CAN INDEED BE LONELY.

RAY BRANDHURST, FISHERMAN

I've been in the shrimping business since I was 15-years old. So it's 33 years. Fishermen have been traced in my family back to the 17th century, all the way through up until the present day.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

RAY BRANDHURST IS ONE OF THE MORE THAN 7,000 FISHERMEN WHO EARNED THEIR LIVING HAULING SHRIMP FROM LOUISIANA'S WATERS BEFORE KATRINA HIT. IT'S A GRUELING WAY OF LIFE, EVEN IN THE BEST OF TIMES.

RAY BRANDHURST

Hard work, very hard work. Face the elements on a daily basis whether it's the winds blowing, rough conditions, storms, you know. A lot of physical, physical work involved.

KAY BRANDHURST, RAY'S WIFE

Yes ma'am absolutely, the big ones, right?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

KAY BRANDHURST HAS BEEN RAY'S WIFE AND BUSINESS PARTNER FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES NOW. DOWN HERE, SHRIMPING IS A FAMILY OPERATION AND EVERYBODY HAS A JOB TO DO.

KAY BRANDHURST

My role is to try to get rid of it, and get rid of it at a decent price so that we're able to make a living. For 22 years in St. Bernard Parish, we had a retail-wholesale seafood outlet where I did move a lot of Ray's catch through there. It wasn't an easy life, but it was a good life.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THAT GOOD LIFE CAME CRASHING DOWN ON AUGUST 28, 2005.

(RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT)

Hurricane Katrina is barreling down on New Orleans. Top wind gusts measured at 155 miles per hour. Weather experts fear the storm surge from Katrina could swamp the city, which is below sea level.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HURRICANES ARE A FACT OF LIFE ON THE LOUISIANA COAST, BUT AS THE BRANDHURSTS' AND THEIR FOUR CHILDREN RACED OUT OF TOWN AHEAD OF KATRINA, RAY, WHO'D SPENT A LIFETIME ON THE WATER HERE, KNEW THAT THIS STORM WAS GOING TO BE DIFFERENT.

RAY BRANDHURST

I said, "Kay, look to the right." The marshes and all were already completely underwater. Already this was like 2:30 in the day on Sunday. I said, "Kay, we're in trouble." I said, "This storm's pushing way too much water ahead of it." I said, "We in trouble, babe."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT WASN'T JUST THE BRANDHURSTS THAT WERE IN TROUBLE, THE STORM WAS ROARING TOWARDS THE VERY HEART OF LOUISIANA'S SHRIMPING INDUSTRY AN INDUSTRY VITALLY IMPORTANT TO THE REGION'S ECONOMY.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

IN LOUISIANA, SHRIMP HAD BEEN A BILLION-DOLLAR A YEAR BUSINESS, ALTHOUGH PEOPLE HERE WERE ALREADY FEELING THE PRESSURE OF CHEAP FOREIGN IMPORTS. MORE THAN THREE-QUARTERS OF THE SHRIMP AMERICANS CONSUME NOW COMES FROM OVERSEAS. BUT KATRINA WAS A BLOW NO ONE EVER IMAGINED. THE VERY SAME WATERS THAT HAD PROVIDED A DECENT LIVING FOR GENERATIONS NOW SUDDENLY TOOK IT ALL AWAY IN A MATTER OF HOURS. SHRIMPERS RETURNED TO FIND NOT JUST THEIR HOMES OR, EVEN WORSE, THEIR BOATS DESTROYED, BUT THEIR ENTIRE INDUSTRY HAD BEEN SWEEPED OUT FROM UNDER THEM.

RAY BRANDHURST

We were instantly thrust into like almost a third world environment. We had no electricity. We had no water. You had no store to even get the simplest of things. There was nothing.

KAY BRANDHURST

We had absolutely nothing. But we had to somehow try to get our lives back together. I mean we have four children.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THOUGH THEY EVENTUALLY FOUND A PLACE TO LIVE, RAY KNEW THAT THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS WAS TO HAVE A BOAT UNDER HIS FEET.

RAY BRANDHURST

I told myself, I said, "If the boat was still there and okay, that I can begin immediately working, you know."

KAY BRANDHURST

To try to rebuild our lives.

RAY BRANDHURST

To rebuild our lives. And, unfortunately, when I got here it was too late. It wasn't. It was sunk. So I - -

KAY BRANDHURST

We went to plan B.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THAT MEANT TRYING TO REPAIR THEIR SHATTERED BOAT EVEN THOUGH THE MOST BASIC EQUIPMENT WAS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND.

RAY BRANDHURST

Everything had to be flushed out, pumped out, changing numerous parts on the motors- -

KAY BRANDHURST

And as we got started with that, Rita came along and reflooded us.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

After six weeks of backbreaking work, ray's boat was sea-worthy enough to go back on the water. And the hurricanes even brought an unexpected benefit as if trying to make up for all the trouble they'd caused. Rather than hurting the shrimp beds, the storms had

actually bathed them in nutrients. The gulf coast teemed with record numbers of shrimp now, and there were only a handful of shrimpers to compete for them. Ray was bringing literally tons of shrimp back to the dock, ready to be sold. But there was one more thing the storm had taken from them, customers.

RAY BRANDHURST

Before the storm, we were able to market our product because we had over the years had built up a customer base.

KAY BRANDHURST

A local customer base.

RAY BRANDHURST

A local customer base, we had we had local customers here in St. Bernard parish, and we also drew off New Orleans east, and the 9th ward, which all of those areas, also were equally as devastated as St. Bernard parish. So all of those customer bases are gone. We we have no more.

KAY BRANDHURST

So it's like being 44-years old and you're reinventing yourself.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

RICHARD MCCARTHY IS HELPING THEM DO JUST THAT. A LOYOLA UNIVERSITY ECONOMIST AND FOUNDER OF NEW ORLEANS' CRESCENT CITY FARMERS MARKET, MCCARTHY HAS BEEN WORKING HAND IN HAND WITH PEOPLE LIKE THE BRANDHURSTS TO TRY TO REINVENT THE INDUSTRY. IN THE LONG RUN, HE BELIEVES, HURRICANE KATRINA MIGHT ACTUALLY TURN OUT TO BE A BLESSING IN DISGUISE FOR LOUISIANA'S SHRIMPERS.

ECONOMIST, RICHARD MCCARTHY

Before the storm, the seafood industry was suffering. But, it was just melting away very slowly. The drama of the storm violently pulled away the veneer, demonstrated what was happening. How do we rebuild? Or, do we rebuild? And, the question we've been asking together with the fishermen is, maybe it's not rebuild, but retool. Is there an opportunity to create something of a boutique fishing industry?

RAY BRANDHURST

We have a unique set of conditions here in Louisiana where we have an influx of fresh water into the salt water, makes it a certain condition where the shrimp have a very flavorful taste, you know. We call it sweet water here, you know.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SEAFOOD SO DELECTABLE AND SO PERISHABLE SELDOM MAKES IT VERY FAR FROM THE DOCK. BUT WITH LOCAL CONSUMERS SCATTERED FAR AND WIDE BY THE STORM, MCCARTHY BELIEVED HE COULD SOLVE THE BRANDHURST'S PROBLEM BY LETTING THE REST OF THE COUNTRY IN ON THE SECRET BY MAKING THE HUMBLE GULF SHRIMP AN OBJECT OF DESIRE FOR GOURMETS EVERYWHERE.

MCCARTHY

We all recognized that we needed to open up new markets for this product. So a group of chefs in New York said, "Come on up. Let's learn what you have to offer. Let's see if, together, we can add value to menus and direct consumers attention to how people in the gulf coast are heroically trying to rebuild their lives."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO, ARMED WITH A VIDEO CAMERA MCCARTHY, THE BRANDHURSTS, AND A HANDFUL OF OTHERS APPOINTED THEMSELVES AMBASSADORS FROM THE BAYOU. CALLING THEMSELVES THE WHITE BOOT BRIGADE, AFTER THE SHRIMPERS' TRADEMARK FOOTWEAR THEY PILED INTO A LIMOUSINE PAID FOR BY A NON-PROFIT GROUP, FILLED IT UP WITH FRESHLY HARVESTED SHRIMP, AND HEADED FOR BROADWAY.

MCCARTHY

This was, you know, the shrimpers take Manhattan. We had contacted the Carlton Hotel to see if we could stay there. And we didn't have a lot of money but we had a lot of shrimp. Did you eat here tonight? We did. Did you have any shrimp? We did, it was delicious. They caught it. It was great. You caught the shrimp? Thank you. I'd say that we were all amazed at the reception that we got. The fact that people were interested in our lives.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT THE SHRIMPERS HADN'T COME ALL THIS WAY TO MEET ORDINARY NEW YORKERS. HAVING LOST MOST OF THEIR LOYAL CUSTOMERS BACK HOME, THEY'D COME HERE TO MEET WITH SOME OF THE CITY'S TOP CHEFS AND SEE IF LOUISIANA SHRIMP COULD SATISFY SOME OF THE MOST DEMANDING CUSTOMERS IN THE WORLD.

CESARE CASELLA, CHEF

I try to have the best ingredients. When you see the good shrimp, they are different.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)



CESARE CASELLA IS A TUSCAN-BORN, MICHELIN STAR-WINNING CHEF WHO TEACHES AT THE PRESTIGIOUS FRENCH CULINARY INSTITUTE. HIS POPULAR RESTAURANT, MAREMMA, WAS ONE OF THE MANY VISITED BY THE WHITE BOOT BRIGADE.

CASELLA

You want all fish, but shrimp especially, you wanna to see, the, the smile. Because, you see the color the shrimp. You see the bright color. They are so nice.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

RICHARD MCCARTHY HOPED THAT CHEF CASELLA WOULD BE IMPRESSED BY THE QUALITY OF LOUISIANA SHRIMP. HE WAS NOT DISAPPOINTED.

MCCARTHY

The chef just, I mean he, he sort of threw himself on to the shrimp. He said, "I know shrimp like this. I've had this back in Sicily."

CASELLA

They tasted very similar, their shrimp, they have in Italy. They are tender and they are so soft, but they are sweet.

KAY BRANDHURST

Well, he just starts throwing salt, and sea salt and olive oil, and He just starts gobbling 'em up raw, because he just never had tasted such fresh shrimp. He reminded me of my little boy.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK NOW THE BRANDHURSTS' SEND MORE THAN 20 POUNDS OF SHRIMP ON A THOUSAND MILE JOURNEY TO CHEF CASELLA'S KITCHEN. BUT IT NEEDS TO ARRIVE AS FRESH AS IF IT HAD JUST COME OFF THE BOAT. A DIFFICULT TRICK, AND SOMETHING NONE OF THE SHRIMPERS HAVE MUCH EXPERIENCE WITH. THERE HAVE BEEN PROBLEMS WITH THE PACKAGING, AND WHILE THE PRODUCT IS CHEAP, SHIPPING IS EXPENSIVE IT ATE UP AS MUCH AS 80 PERCENT OF THE PRICE BEFORE FEDEX GAVE THEM A DISCOUNT. THE CHEFS IN NEW YORK ARE SYMPATHETIC, BUT THEY'RE ALSO BUSINESSMEN, SO SHRIMPERS LIKE THE BRANDHURSTS ARE UNDER A LOT OF PRESSURE TO GET IT RIGHT.

MCCARTHY

The chefs, you know, provided a great deal of tough love to our shrimpers. And we did several trial runs of shipping the product directly to the chefs. And the first few runs didn't go that well. But the chefs, I think because of what they had gone through in 9/11, recognized that, you know, there's no one else here to help.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THAT INCLUDES THE AMERICAN TAXPAYERS. DESPITE PROMISES FROM WASHINGTON, REBUILDING MONEY HAS BEEN SLOW IN COMING AND FOR SHRIMPERS LIKE THE BRANDHURSTS, AT LEAST WHAT THEY NEED MAY NEVER ARRIVE. AFTER ASSESSING THE DAMAGE FROM THE STORM, THE LOUISIANA FISHING INDUSTRY ASKED FOR MORE THAN A BILLION DOLLARS IN FEDERAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE. WHAT THEY GOT WAS LESS THAN FIVE PERCENT OF THAT.

RAY BRANDHURST

I think we've been forgotten a long time ago, even before the storm and even more so now, because it's been really devastating.

KAY BRANDHURST

The future's a little uncertain, but I truly, truly believe that this is gonna that somehow we're gonna get this business back off the ground. It's gonna be a little different, but it's gonna work.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

COMING UP NEXT: LIFE IN A FEMA TRAILER

(BREAK)

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LOOKING AROUND THE GULF COAST REGION, THE IMAGE THAT DOMINATES THE LANDSCAPE IS THIS: THE FEMA TRAILER. YOU SEE THEM NESTLED IN FANCY NEIGHBORHOODS, ALONE BACKED UP AGAINST RUINED HOUSES AND SOMETIMES IN HASTILY ARRANGED CLUSTERS. AND DESPITE THE LABEL "THE WEEKENDER" THIS HAS BEEN HOME FOR MONTHS TO OVER A HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE HURRICANES.

RAQUEL HINES, HURRICANE SURVIVOR

I have three children, myself and my husband, and we live in a one bedroom camper trailer.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

For Raquel Hines' family of five life in a trailer is challenging especially in the mornings.

HINES

Oh the morning's are nothing nice. Normally my husband gets up first, and by 6:00 he's out the door. Then about 6:30 my girls get up. They take turns. They share the bathroom. They have breakfast together. And now during this time, my baby and I are still in the bed. When the girls leave out the door they'll say, "Okay, we're finished." and they leave. When they leave we get up. And me and him run around for about a hour, till time to go to school. It's hard because you have to really do everything in shifts.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DESPITE THE MORNING CHAOS, THOUGH, RAQUEL FEELS BLESSED TO LIVE AMONGST HER COWORKERS IN A SITE PROVIDED BY HER EMPLOYER THE SCHOOL SYSTEM WHERE SHE IS A SECRETARY.

HINES

Everybody's kinda together and we work together as a team. We're like a big family at work. We do what we need to do to help the next person.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LIVING NEAR CO-WORKERS AND SEEING YOUR TRAILER OUT YOUR OFFICE WINDOW ISN'T AN OPTION FOR EVERYONE ABOUT AN HOUR AWAY FROM NEW ORLEANS IS THIS A FEMA- RUN SITE CALLED "DIAMOND. " IT'S ONE OF THE 134 FEMA-RUN TRAILER PARKS AROUND THE REGION. 450 TRAILERS ARE ON THIS SITE ALONE, AND ITS RESIDENTS COME FROM ALL OF THE LITTLE TOWNS THAT MAKE UP THE COUNTY CREATING A SORT OF INSTANT COMMUNITY OF STRANGERS. I SPENT AN AUTUMN DAY HERE RECENTLY TO GET A SENSE OF JUST WHAT LIFE IS LIKE. ANITRA MILNE HAS LIVED HERE WITH HER HUSBAND, THOMAS AND THEIR FOUR KIDS FOR THE PAST 9 MONTHS AFTER THEIR HOME WAS UTTERLY DESTROYED BY KATRINA.

RATHER

You have four kids?

ANITRA MILNE, DIAMOND RESIDENT

Yes, sir.

RATHER

Not all of you live in this trailer?

MILNE

Yes, sir. We all stay in here. We have two. FEMA did give us two trailers. The thing of it is, three of us was supposed to stay here and three of us is supposed to stay in the one behind us. But we're a family. We don't wanna do that. We all stay together.

RATHER

Well, I could understand that. Is it possible to run what we might call at home a dog run between the two trailers and hook 'em up?

MILNE

No, I don't think so. I wish there was.

RATHER

Well, you know, I mean this in no disrespectful way. But that's what I'd call a close family.

MILNE

Yeah, it's pretty close. It's pretty close.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ANITRA INVITED ME INSIDE TO SHOW ME WHAT IT'S LIKE FOR A FAMILY OF 6 TO LIVE IN A 288 SQ FT TRAILER.

MILNE

And I tell you, these these walls, it seems like they get littler and littler every day, or smaller, closer in, just yeah. It's a mess.

RATHER

Well, you know, when you talk about what it's like inside the trailer, it's pretty hard to imagine what it's actually like for a family of six as you are.

MILNE

Right. There there's no family eating dinner anymore. I mean, we used to sit around our table at home and have a family dinner. But it's not like that anymore.

RATHER

Have you, or the children, run across any stigma from other people on the outside because you're here in this special group environment of trailers?

MILNE

Not really. I mean, everybody is in the same shoes right now. Everybody's in the same predicament. Everybody you talk to "Oh, I'm in a FEMA trailer right now"

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND ALTHOUGH THOSE WHO LIVE HERE DON'T PAY FOR THE PRIVILEGE, LIFE IS CERTAINLY NO EASY STREET.

DR. LYNN LAWRY

Every other person in these trailer parks made criteria for depression.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DR. LYNN LAWRY SURVEYED LIFE IN TRAILER PARKS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS, A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION THAT RESPONDS TO DISASTERS AROUND THE WORLD. AND SHE SAYS DEPRESSION LEVELS HERE ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN WHAT YOU FIND AFTER ANY CRISIS THAT FORCES PEOPLE TO FLEE THEIR HOMES EQUAL TO ANY THIRD-WORLD CATASTROPHE.

LAWRY

The depression rates that we found were similar to the depression rates that we found in Afghanistan similar to the rates that we found in Darfur similar to the rates that we found in Iraq, and similar to many of the other countries that have been studied. But it's not country to country, it's the fact that they are in temporary housing. These are travel trailers. These are not livable trailers. They can comfortably hold one, maybe two people, but not for the long term.

RATHER

Well, what's the best thing about it? Or is there any "best" about it?

MILNE

We got a roof over our head. That's the best thing.

RATHER

And what's the worst of it?

MILNE

It's- not home, it's not home.

RATHER

It's all right. Yeah put this in your hand here. One never knows exactly what to say in this kinda situation. But I really regret you have to go through this and be in this situation. But I also respect the fact that somehow, some way, you've been able to make it.

MILNE

That's right. I mean, we're all together. And that's what counts. I mean family is number one.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND HER FAMILY'S SAFETY IS A DAILY WORRY FOR THIS MOTHER OF 4 YOUNG CHILDREN. FOR GOOD REASON.

MILNE

We had a shooting right here on this this lane about about a month ago.

RATHER

You had a shooting here?

MILNE

Yes, sir. I mean, there's things going on you see at night. But you'll see cars. They'll come park at somebody's trailer. Two minutes, they're leaving. Couple minutes later, another one's coming up. I mean, you pretty much know what's going on.

RATHER

What's going on?

MILNE

It's drug deals.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WALI ARMSTEAD, A FEMA SPOKESPERSON, DIDN'T DISPUTE THERE ARE SECURITY PROBLEMS AT PLACES LIKE "DIAMOND."

RATHER

There are a lot of children in here.

WALI ARMSTEAD, FEMA SPOKESPERSON,

Right.

RATHER

People living this close together with this many people you know, fenced in environment, granted. But how safe are they?

ARMSTEAD

Well that's that's one reason why we have security at the gate, and actually roaming security also.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THAT SECURITY FORCE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING ORDER AT THE SITE WATCHING WHO COMES AND GOES, PATROLLING BETWEEN TRAILERS, BUT THE GUARDS HAVE NO POWER TO ARREST AND MUST RELY ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR HELP.

RATHER

I'm a reporter. And you didn't just waddle off the turnip truck, or something yourself. I mean, we're not naive. You take this many people, including children, you're bound to have some crimes.

ARMSTEAD

Oh, you you're gonna have challenges. You're gonna have challenges, because unfortunately our society is made up of a mix of people, and not all of them are honorable.

RATHER

Well have you had thievery in here?

ARMSTEAD

Well there there's always been minor reports of incidences of, of, of arguments or folks not getting along. The actual reports on theft, I don't have that. Drug dealing? I don't have that report with me either.

JEFF HINGLE, LOCAL SHERIFF

We were able last night to make a narcotics arrest in here.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE LOCAL SHERIFF, JIFF HINGLE, ALSO KNOWS SECURITY IS AN ISSUE ESPECIALLY DRUG CRIMES. AT A COMMUNITY MEETING, HELD IN A HURRICANE-DAMAGED SHELL OF A BUILDING, HE ADDRESSED THE CHALLENGES HIS OFFICERS FACE DEALING WITH THIS NEWLY-CREATED TOWN.

HINGLE

we were being challenged just to get into the park. They were letting other people in, but they were stopping the police and holding us up which I really believe in my heart was them covering for what was going on in the community.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN FACT, JUST DAYS BEFORE WE FILMED, THE SECURITY AT " DIAMOND" WAS CHANGED AND A NEW STAFF OF PEOPLE WAS BROUGHT IN AFTER ALMOST 9 MONTHS OF PROBLEMS AND COMPLAINTS. NOW, THE SHERIFF HAS AN EASIER TIME GETTING ON AND OFF THE SITE. THE DAY WE WERE THERE HIS OFFICE WAS HOLDING A HALLOWEEN PARTY FOR THE CHILDREN OF " DIAMOND." BUT TOO OFTEN, KIDS HAVE FALLEN THRU THE CRACKS.

BARBARA AMMIRATI, SAVE THE CHILDREN

Children were hit twice by Katrina. Once by the storm, and then by a response system that really didn't work for them.

Hi, I'm Barbara, with save the children.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BARBARA AMMIRATI REPRESENTS SAVE THE CHILDREN, A GROUP THAT PROVIDES EMERGENCY SERVICES TO KIDS AFTER DISASTERS WORLDWIDE. THIS IS ITS LARGEST EMERGENCY RESPONSE EVER IN THE UNITED STATES.

AMMIRATI

Save the children typically responds internationally. That has been our way our organization has worked. When Katrina hit, it was an unprecedented disaster with unprecedented chaos, and there was no way that we felt that we could stand back.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)



BUT SAVE THE CHILDREN'S JOB HAS BEEN AN UPHILL STRUGGLE.

AMMIRATI

Unfortunately, in a year later in the temporary housing sites, there are not a lot of services for kids. There are some parks that have gotten more attention than others. But this park has a population of at least three or 400 school-age children. And there were no structured activities (noise) for children.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THAT'S CHANGING NOW AT " DIAMOND" A FORMER HARLEM GLOBETROTTER IS STARTING A BASKETBALL PROGRAM, OTHER GROUPS ARE COMING IN ON WEEKENDS TO PLAY ORGANIZED GAMES WITH THE KIDS, AND THERE IS EVEN MOVIE NIGHT BUT IT TOOK MONTHS FOR THIS TO HAPPEN.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

THERE ARE PROFESSIONAL GROUPS, NON-PROFITS, THAT SPECIALIZE INTO COMING INTO THESE SITUATIONS AND HELPING CHILDREN. IT'S MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE MAIN GROUP WAS SLOW TO GET IN HERE. WHY WAS THAT?

ARMSTEAD

Well, there's a processes of making sure that they understand the privacy information. The, the, the privacy act. And also understand that what we can do and what we can't do under the guidance of the Stafford Act.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE STAFFORD ACT GOVERNS HOW FEMA RESPONDS IN DISASTER SITUATIONS. AFTER ANY DISASTER, FEMA MUST FOLLOW CERTAIN PROTOCOL BEFORE EVEN THE MOST CHARITABLE GROUP CAN BE LET IN. AND SO WHAT LOOKED LIKE BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE TO PEOPLE WAITING FOR SERVICE WAS EXACTLY THAT RED TAPE.

ARMSTEAD

FEMA can't go beyond that. Unless somebody unless congress or, or, or someone mandates and enforces a change within that Stafford Act or amendment to that Stafford Act. So we operate within the form of that legislation.

RATHER

But eventually they did get in.

ARTMSTEAD

Right. We did.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THAT EXPLANATION STILL DOESN'T DAMPEN THE FRUSTRATION FELT BY PEOPLE WITHIN THE PARK ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO THE PROSPECT OF GETTING OUT OF " DIAMOND." AROUND THE GULF, PEOPLE ARE OUTRAGED TO LEARN THAT THE US GOVERNMENT PAYS ON AVERAGE \$40,000 PER TRAILER AT SITES LIKE THIS TO HOUSE A FAMILY "TEMPORARILY."

MILNE

Why not give people 30, \$40,000 a piece, say, "go go buy your piece of land and a trailer, and live on your own?"

ARMSTEAD

We're mandated only to set up the temporary housing. So we can't take that money, and say well we'll just give this directly to the individual.

RATHER

So let me make sure I understand. Correct me if I'm wrong. Sure. Your counterpoint is that, well it's not that simple.

ARMSTEAD

Well no. And especially depending on the disaster.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WITH THE HOUSING INVENTORY ALL BUT WIPED OFF THE MAP IN THE LITTLE TOWNS WHERE THE RESIDENTS OF THIS TRAILER PARK ONCE LIVED, IT MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE FOLKS WILL EVEN BE ABLE TO THINK ABOUT LEAVING HERE FAR BEYOND THE ORIGINAL FEB. 2007 DEADLINE.

AMMIRATI

The understanding was that these parks would be in existence for 18 months. Certainly, these parks are not gonna shut the doors and lock down in 18 months. That's not going to happen.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO FOR NOW, PEOPLE LIKE ANITRA AND HER FAMILY MAY HAVE TO SPEND ANOTHER HOLIDAY HERE, BUT THEY HOPE TO BE IN A NEW MOBILE HOME SOON AND MOVE AWAY FROM THIS GRAVEL COVERED COMMUNITY OF STRANGERS.

RATHER

Well, how are you gonna get in this mobile home?

MILNE

Outta our pocket. We're using everything that we have saved up to get the mobile home.

RATHER

Financially, are you able to make ends meet?

MILNE

Yeah. As of right now. We're not gonna have any furniture. But we're gonna have a roof over our head, a bigger roof.

RATHER

Well, you seem to have a good spirit about it.

MILNE

Oh, yes, sir. You gotta have.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

DOWN HERE, THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE LIKE THE ONES WE'VE INTRODUCED YOU TO TONIGHT. EVERYONE'S STORY IS DIFFERENT, EACH IS UNIQUE, AND THEY'LL CONTINUE TO BE WRITTEN LONG AFTER THE CAMERAS HAVE MOVED ON. SOME WILL END IN FAILURE, OTHERS WILL FIND SUCCESS, BUT EVERY ONE OF THEM WILL HAVE AN EFFECT ON THIS REGION, AND OUR COUNTRY, FOR YEARS TO COME. WHY DO THEY STAY HERE, TRYING TO REBUILD AGAINST SUCH LONG ODDS? BECAUSE, THEY SAY, THIS IS HOME. AND BECAUSE DISASTER CAN STRIKE JUST ABOUT ANYWHERE. THAT'S PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THE SURVIVORS OF KATRINA AND RITA WOULD LIKE YOU TO KNOW: THAT IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU. THEIR STORY COULD JUST AS EASILY BE YOURS SOMEDAY, SO YOU MAY WANT TO PAY ATTENTION TO HOW THIS ONE ENDS. DAN RATHER REPORTING. TONIGHT, FROM LOUISIANA. GOOD NIGHT.

(END)

