

Katrina and the Poor

American middle and high school students everywhere should be required to watch video tape of the poor people stranded by Hurricane Katrina. Teachers should point out that many U.S. citizens without the financial means to get out of New Orleans wound up floating face down in the water or, at the very least, were subject to gross indignities and suffering of all kinds.

The teachers should then tell the students that the local, state and federal government bureaucracies failed to protect those poor people, even though everybody knew the storm was coming days in advance. The lesson should then segue into how the most powerful nation in the world was powerless to stop 9/11, and scores of other natural and man made disasters throughout our history.

After presenting those undeniable facts, the teachers should then present two questions to the students: Do you want to be poor? And do you believe the U.S. government can protect you if you are poor?

For far too long, charlatan ideologues and dishonest politicians have sold the concept that government can and will make your life better. Well, if a cot in the Astrodome is the standard, maybe the promises are true. But if you expect the government to provide you comfort and protect you... P.T. Barnum had your number when he said "there's a sucker born every minute."

The affluent of New Orleans had options. Most of them got out ahead of the storm simply by turning their ignition key. But a professor friend of mine stayed. However, when things got rough and the levees breached, he was able to drive right out of town in his SUV.

But if you couldn't afford a vehicle, you might have wound up

in the Superdome where there were few supplies and little security. With 20 thousand folks in the building, bathrooms quickly broke down, and so did civility. I covered the story almost non-stop for days. I didn't see one affluent person in the Superdome. Not one.

The Bible says "the poor, they will always be with us." But it doesn't have to be that way here in America. Here we have compulsory, free public schools, scholarships and aid galore for higher education. We also have affirmative action, job training, GED opportunities, military training, and options all over the place.

It is no accident that millions of poor people from all over the world sneak into America because they can make money here if they work hard. There are opportunities for people who can't even speak English.

Yet the racial hustlers and far-left demagogues continue to sell victimization to Americans living in the poor precincts. The poverty pimps can't blame the establishment fast enough for ghettos and deprivation and even hurricanes. But you rarely hear the words 'personal responsibility' when it comes to attacking the poverty problem.

Here's the end zone on this: the government can force your parents to send you to school but can't force you to learn. If you do not educate yourself or develop a marketable skill, the chances are you will be poor and powerless. If you react to that situation by committing crimes or becoming addicted, you will sink further into the swamp of hopelessness and your life will be largely meaningless.

Let the kids see the poor in New Orleans and the suffering they endured. Then prod the children to connect the dots and wise up. Educate yourself, work hard, and be honest. Then when disaster occurs you will have a fighting chance to beat it.

If you don't do those things, the odds are that you will be

desperately standing on a symbolic rooftop someday yourself.
And trust me, help will not be quick in coming.