

Mayor regrets 'God's will' remark: Nagin apologizes

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Faced with howls of protest, Mayor Ray Nagin apologized January 17 for claiming that a vengeful God smote New Orleans with Hurricane Katrina because of heavenly disapproval of America's involvement in Iraq and of rampant violence within urban black communities.

Nagin also offered a less sweeping apology for his remarks about the city's future demographics in the aftermath of the storm and subsequent catastrophic flood. His comments came in a speech, delivered on Martin Luther King Day with City Hall as a backdrop, in which the mayor said God intended New Orleans to rise again as a "chocolate city," which he defined as a "black-majority city."

Nagin said he was in error in his claim that Katrina's devastation was a result of God's will. "I sincerely apologize for that, and if there was anything I could take back, that would be it," Nagin said. "I think it was inappropriate."

The mayor acknowledged consulting with religious leaders since Katrina, and in his myriad public appearances he has commented frequently on the important role faith must play if New Orleans is to endure. *-Religion News Service*