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**HEADLINE:** Obama Warns of '**Quiet Riot**' Among Blacks

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**BODY:**

Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama said Tuesday that the Bush administration has done nothing to defuse a "**quiet riot**" among blacks that threatens to erupt just as **riots** in Los Angeles did 15 years ago.

The first-term Illinois senator said that with black people from New Orleans and the Gulf Coast still displaced 20 months after Hurricane Katrina, frustration and resentments are building explosively as they did before the 1992 **riots**.

"This administration was colorblind in its incompetence," Obama said at a conference of black clergy, "but the poverty and the hopelessness was there long before the hurricane.

"All the hurricane did was to pull the curtain back for all the world to see," he said.

Obama's criticism of Bush prompted ovation after ovation from the nearly 8,000 people gathered in Hampton University's Convocation Center, particularly when he denounced the Iraq war and noted that he had opposed it from the outset.

Repeatedly, he referred to the **riots** that erupted in Los Angeles after a jury acquitted four police officers of assault charges in the 1991 beating of Rodney King, a black motorist, after a high speed chase. Fifty-five people died and 2,000 were injured in several days of **riots** in the city's black neighborhoods.

"Those '**quiet riots**' that take place every day are born from the same place as the fires and the destruction and the police decked out in **riot** gear and the deaths," Obama said. "They happen when a sense of disconnect settles in and hope dissipates. Despair takes hold and young people all across this country look at the way the world is and believe that things are never going to get any better."

He argued that once a hurricane hits or a jury renders a not guilty verdict, "the frustration is there for all to see."

Obama, who is bidding to become the first black president, took the stage after a succession of ministers repeatedly brought the crowd to its feet, singing, praying and swaying to music.

Repeatedly, with evangelical zeal, he raised issues that roused the crowd: increasing the minimum wage and teacher pay, funding for public schools and college financial aid for the poor, ending predatory lending and expediting the reconstruction of New Orleans and the Mississippi coast.

He introduced his own pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright of Chicago's Trinity United as "Unashamedly Black and Unapologetically Christian." He credited Wright with introducing him to Christ, and peppered his speech with Scriptural references, at one point invoking the opening lines of the Lord's Prayer.

Obama noted that during the **riots**, a bullet pierced the abdomen of a pregnant woman and lodged in the elbow of her fetus. The baby was delivered by caesarian section, the bullet was removed and the child, Jessica Glennis Evers-Jones, has only a small scar on her arm to show for it.

Using the incident as a metaphor, Obama said society's problems are worsening because "in too many places across the country, we have not even bothered to take the bullet out."

"When we have more black men in prison than in college, then it's time to take the bullet out," he said.

Obama doesn't regularly focus on racial themes in his standard campaign speeches. He did speak out on black issues in Selma, Ala., in March, when he told a largely black audience that he was a product of the civil rights movement and lectured blacks for failing to vote in large numbers.

Several ministers at the conference said Obama's message and style plays well among black voters and with their spiritual leaders.

The Rev. Robert Abbott, pastor of the Holy Trinity Baptist Church in Amityville, N.Y., said Obama connects with black audiences because of the preacher's style he uses when addressing them.

"The way he sounds, it's like he can reach out and encourage people," Abbott said.

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