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# Style

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# Many Happy Returns

## Dave Barry's Holiday Guide to Gifts That They'll Never EVER Forget

*By* Dave Barry
*Miami Herald*

Hark . . . do you hear that sound? It's the radio, playing "Frosty the Snowman!" For the eighth or ninth time today! And that thud in the yard? Why, that's Dad, falling off the ladder while attempting to hang fake icicles from the roof. And if you listen really, really hard, you can hear, softly in the distance, the sounds of shoppers trading punches over parking spots at the mall. No doubt about it: The holidays are here! This is not your ordinary gift guide, the kind that features gifts that somebody might actually want or use. The gifts in this guide were selected because they meet a very strict criterion, which is that when we saw the item advertised, we said to ourselves: "Are they *serious*?" The idea is, if you give one of these items to somebody on your list, that person will be much less likely to want to exchange gifts with you in the future. Every item in the Holiday Gift Guide is a real product that is actually for sale. We have purchased all of these items and subjected them to our rigorous field-testing procedure, which consists of giving them to Raul the photographer and sending him out into the field to take funny pictures of them. After that, we don't know what happens to them, and we frankly don't care.

*See* **BARRY**, *D6, Col. 1*

**Kiss Celebriducks, Poop-Freeze, the Animated Stress Turtle, a sinking Titanic model: Really, you shouldn't have!**


ILLUSTRATION BY MARTHA WRIGHT — THE WASHINGTON POST; PHOTOS BY RAUL RUBIERA — MIAMI HERALD

BY PATTERSON CLARK — THE WASHINGTON POST

# Fear Factory

## The Next National Calamity: An Attack, And It Comes Right After the Word 'Panic'

*By* Linton Weeks
*Washington Post Staff Writer*

The battle against terror has even come to little Ridgely, a quiet gameboard of a town (pop. 1,400) on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It has street names like Park, Railroad, Sunrise and Sunset. It is pretty far from everywhere.

City police recently installed three sleek white surveillance cameras, paid for by a homeland security grant. Two, mounted on the front of the three-story Victorian mansion that is the town hall, keep a cross-eyed vigil up and down Central Avenue. The third peers down over the door of the police station, which is on the back side of town hall.

"You can't ever tell," says Police Chief Merlin Evans, 59. Terrorists just might pass through Ridgely on their way to a bigger target, he says.

Terrorism. Weapons of mass destruction. Bird flu. Hurricanes. Sex offenders. New and terrible forms of cancer. Sexually transmitted diseases. Alzheimer's. Crystal meth labs. Lawsuits. Prison breaks! Female suicide bombers! Wildfires! Identity theft! Terrifying toys! Falling branches! Insurance fraud! Killer cold weather! Searing heat! Flash floods . . . exploding gas tanks . . . erupting volcanoes . . . capsizing boats . . . devastating typhoons . . . wild emergency plane landings . . . train wrecks-famines-pestilence-ice storms-global warming! Deadly parade balloons!

This is a land in lockdown. Seventy years ago, President Franklin D. Roosevelt told the country: The only thing we have to fear is fear itself. Today, we are told to fear everything *but* fear itself, which we embrace with widespread arms, outstretched hands and an open wallet. We treat fear like Caesar victorious. We allow fear into our homes, our heads, our hearts. We build whole industries around it.

Let's admit it: We are living in Fraidy Cat Nation.

If you are a girl, you'll be abducted! If you are a boy, you'll be molested! If you are a tourist, you'll be robbed!

This never-ending barrage of warnings

*See* **SCARED**, *D2, Col. 1*

# *For a Former Panther, Solidarity After the Storm*

*By* Michelle Garcia
*Washington Post Staff Writer*

NEW ORLEANS — Malik Rahim, a granddaddy with a broad face and long gray dreadlocks, leans across his wooden kitchen table and with a low Nawlins growl lets you know what he thinks local pols did for racial harmony.

"I'm *far* from being a Republican, but I got to call it the way it is," he says. "They had a shoot-to-kill order on African Americans in this city with an African American mayor."

He catches himself.

"Let me rephrase that: A *so-called* African American mayor and a *so-called* African American police chief. They sat here and allowed this governor to declare martial law on *African Americans*."

In the days after Katrina drowned the city, Rahim, 58, sat on his front porch in Algiers, a working-class district of bungalows, churches and smokestacks that lies across the Mississippi River from downtown New Orleans, and watched mostly white militias patrol the streets with rifles and pistols. Then came the National Guard, carrying their M-16s, and Gov. Kathleen Blanco's order to "shoot and kill" the "hoodlums."

*See* **ACTIVIST**, *D7, Col. 1*

## LIFE IS SHORT | *Autobiography as Haiku*

BY LUCIAN PERKINS — THE WASHINGTON POST

Sometimes when he gets excited, he flaps his arms uncontrollably. People may stare, but I see a boy ready to take flight. Sometimes, even when the boy with brilliant eyes of blue cannot see me, I think the soul within recognizes me. He is my nephew, Jack. He's autistic. Some do not understand the brilliance that swirls in his head — a Jackson Pollock canvas in the brain. I, however, see the maestro in all his colors. And even in a diagnosis that weighs on us, all anger and frustration can be easily removed with a single, beautiful giggle.

**Kathryn DeVito**
*McLean*

BY KATHERINE FREY — THE WASHINGTON POST

My son asks once again whether I will drive him the quarter-mile to school, though it's beautiful outside. "My backpack is so heavy!" he complains, and I have to admit, a sixth-grade backpack weighs a ton. I am about to remind him of the miles I trekked, on skis, in snow, to school each day growing up in Canada, when I think of all he's been through, these last few years: the divorce, the move, my working more.

I make him walk to school. But I forgo the history lesson.

**Kayle Simon**
*Clarksville*

*Find a way to give insight into your life in under 100 words. Authors of selected entries will be notified and paid $100. Send text (accompanied by a home phone number) via e-mail (lifeisshort@washpost.com), fax (202-334-5587) or mail (Style, Life Is Short, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071).*

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL
How to Move a Fruitcake, and a Mulligan Stew of the Past 100 Weeks | *D2*



# The Conscience of a Post-Katrina Movement

ACTIVIST, *From D1*

This is New Orleans, he says, where the fabric of history is woven with the likes of Jim Crow and the Dixiecrats. "Here's that plantation mentality," he roars. "New Orleans was a city that was ran by old money, old plantation money, so they never gave a damn about blacks."

But, a visitor across the table asks, what about the plans for rebuilding? The promises from New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin and Blanco to help folks, poor folks, reclaim their lives?

"You can't [urinate] down my back and tell me it's rain," he says, a chuckle ripping through his thick chest. "That's what they're doing and they think that people won't understand what they're doing. No, you ain't [urinating] on me."

Some people might dismiss Rahim as another angry black man in New Orleans. Or conclude he's just another aging former Black Panther with an abundance of Southern gumption. You might even acknowledge some truth in the reasoning offered up by Blanco's spokesman, Denise Bottcher, who notes that although a lot of the reports of violence turned out to be overblown, "there was lawlessness," and "at the time and place you have to respond to protect people's lives." Race, she says, played no part in the governor's actions.

The stone-cold reality for Rahim is that his spare bedrooms and the parlor are now stuffed with about a dozen portable generators and trailer-size tents cover his back yard to house a slew of idealistic, mostly white, young people.

Rahim, a Green Party candidate for City Council in 2002, is the nucleus of Common Ground Collective, a grass-roots recovery effort of volunteers parachuting into the city from points across the nation. Rahim's late mother's home, which survived the storms intact, has become the epicenter of the effort to deliver water, food, ice and medical care to the city's poorest.

Common Ground volunteers in search of a bare-knuckles approach and a movement to inspire them meet up with those who have lost patience waiting for officialdom to help them. More than 300 volunteers have cycled through the house. Before Thanksgiving, caravans with even more volunteers set out for the South to participate in a massive holiday rebuilding effort.

Doctors from New York, San Francisco and Indonesia canvass the neighborhoods, some on bicycles, offering front-porch medicine for those who can't make it to the 24-hour clinic the group runs at a mosque. Labor crews hammer blue tarps onto the roofs, the post-Katrina emblem of survival. Volunteers live and work at food distribution centers in some of the poorest sections of New Orleans.

Jonathan Arend, 32, a medical resident at Montifiore Hospital in the Bronx, rushed back to his hometown two days before Hurricane Rita doled out even more punishment. Arend recalled that locals such as Swampwater Jack, who lives across the street from the clinic, stayed away from the medical centers with National Guardsmen stationed out front and instead preferred to have his asthma checked at home, where he could show off photos of the gators he had shot down in the bayou.

"There was so many bizarre sets of circumstances and unnatural and outlandish things that were going on," says Arend. "The fact that you see a white guy riding a bicycle in a white coat and stethoscope was just part of the mix."

Sam Zellman doesn't mention race as he pours lighter fluid into his Zippo and flips it shut inches away from his blond Mohawk. A burly man, Zellman ditched his job at a restaurant in Paw Paw, Mich., to haul refrigerators and trash from damaged houses.

"Sitting at work making food for yuppies and listening to it on NPR — after a couple of days of this I'm like, I gotta come down," says Zellman, who spent a month at the collective after he gave up on being deployed by the Red Cross. "Some of us want a better world, and this is kinda pushing on the rock together. If it's us, or anarchists or the church folks, we have common goals, common short-term goals."

Inside the kitchen, Rahim traces this mobilization to an era of resistance and rebellion.

"I was trained for this," says Rahim, his eyes intent. "I'm not doing nothing but what we were doing in the party," he says. "The mold abatement I had done with the pest control program. Our feeding program. It was part of our breakfast program."

When Rahim was in his early twenties and still went by the name Donald Guyton, he returned from Vietnam and joined the Black Panthers, a national militant liberation movement dedicated to battling racism and not averse to using violence. The FBI deemed the Panthers a threat to domestic security and put the group under surveillance.

BY NAM Y. HUH — ASSOCIATED PRESS

COMMON GROUND COLLECTIVE

**Malik Rahim, right, has inspired a recovery effort in New Orleans that includes volunteers such as EMT Garth Kahl, above, checking Anita Keith's blood pressure at a mobile clinic.**

In New Orleans in 1970, the Panthers set up operations in a house next to the bleak, sprawling public housing complex named Desire. Throughout the Lower Ninth Ward, pocked with poverty, neglect and thugs, the young men and women in their berets earned the admiration of many by chasing away the drug dealers. They offered social services — free breakfasts and tutoring programs.

"They really started doing what the establishment was not," says Bob Tucker, then a young aide to Mayor Moon Landrieu who now owns an engineering firm. "When you look at what the Ninth Ward was, you have urban renewal, which was really urban removal, and Hurricane Betsy," a Category 4 storm that had ravaged the area five years before.

But there were tensions and suspicions. Local police eyed the militants warily.

On Sept. 14, 1970, the Panthers unmasked two undercover cops. The police claimed they were beaten. The next day, when police descended on the Panthers' headquarters, a 30-minute gun battle broke out. One bystander, shot by police, died.

Police arrested Rahim, then the chapter's defense minister, and 13 other Panthers. Most were charged with attempted murder.

As Rahim and other Panthers sat in jail on $1.5 million bond, their comrades squared off with police in what became known as the Showdown in Desire. A bloody denouement loomed — until hundreds of public housing residents filed out of their homes and stood between the police and the Panthers, forming a human shield. A court later acquitted Rahim and the Panthers.

With the Panther Party dissolving in New Orleans, he bolted to San Francisco, served five years in prison for armed robbery and devoted three decades to prisoner and poverty rights causes, converting to Islam in 1989. Just a few years ago, he returned to the South to care for his mother before she passed away.

Within some circles Rahim is revered as a voice of consciousness, if not some good old rabble-rousing, says Tucker, who became chairman of the city's transit system. Beneath the provocative rhetoric, Rahim is a man driven by "a heart the size of New Orleans," says Tucker, who organized an anti-violence effort with him a few years ago.

"He talks about race because race is alive and well in the city and the country; he doesn't talk about it from the standpoint of a victim," Tucker says.

After New Orleans rumbled with unrest in the chaotic days after Katrina, Rahim unleashed his outrage in an essay in the San Francisco Bay View, an African American online weekly. "This is criminal," he began, and concluded with "You don't want to see black people live." The editors circulated his fiery words among community radio programs and activist groups. Within days volunteers began appearing at Rahim's door.

And this time, says Rahim, the solidarity that defused rising racial tensions was white. "If it wasn't for the work the courageous young men and women are doing here in New Orleans, we would be in it," he says, scanning the volunteers lounging in his back yard. "Because that's what stopped it, when they start seeing young whites sitting on my porch protecting me."

Rahim strolls across the front porch on a sultry evening looking for a meeting of his lieutenants, laughing and joking. Instead he runs into a newlywed couple from the neighborhood who dropped by to say goodbye before a young soldier ships off to Iraq. There are bear hugs for everyone. A long-haired young man follows Rahim while blowing a Pan-like wooden pipe.

Rahim has decided to run for mayor. There are too many poor people, too many African Americans too easily forgotten, he says; his long-shot campaign is about them.

Rahim then considers his battalion of mostly white volunteers and his racial critique. Might this be a paradox? To which, he cues up another rap.

"Right now America is drunk on prosperity. What we're showing is these conditions do exist. The demonization of young African Americans is unjust and we can make a change," he says, then pauses, considers his words and adds: "Not one that is based upon overthrowing anything."