

Shooter Threatened To Make ‘Headlines’

ROANOKE, Va. (AP) — On the day he was fired from a Virginia TV station, Vester Flanagan pressed a wooden cross into his boss' hand as two police officers walked him to the door. "You'll need this," he said.

More than two years later, Flanagan — fulfilling a threat to put his conflict with co-workers into "the headlines" — gunned down two station employees during a live morning broadcast, one of them a cameraman who had filmed his firing.

But as station employees struggled Thursday to explain the events that framed Flanagan's anger, others who had run across the gunman in the time since he lost his job at WDBJ-TV described a man whose hair-triggered temper was increasingly set off by slights that were more often imagined than real.

A former co-worker at a call center where he worked until late 2014 recalled how her off-hand comment that the often boisterous Flanagan was acting quiet led him to try to grab her by the shoulder, and tell her never to talk to him again.

At a bar in Roanoke, the manager recalled Flanagan was so incensed when no one thanked him as he left that he sent a nearly 20-page letter, lambasting employees' behavior.

Trump Risks Deepening Republican Rift

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump has exposed anew the deep rift inside the Republican Party on immigration, a break between its past and the country's future the party itself has said it must bridge if the GOP ever hopes to win back the White House.

As they headed into the 2016 election, Republicans thought they had a strategy for moving past their immigration woes. Outlined in a so-called "autopsy" of 2012 nominee Mitt Romney's loss to President Barack Obama, it called for passing "comprehensive immigration reform" — shorthand for resolving the status of the estimated 11 million people living in the country illegally.

Those plans ran aground in the GOP-controlled House, falling victim to the passionate opposition among conservatives to anything they deem "amnesty" for such immigrants.

Some Republicans then hoped candidates with more moderate positions on immigration — such as Jeb Bush, the Spanish-speaking former Florida governor, or Sen. Marco Rubio, a Miami native and son of Cuban parents — would rise during the 2016 campaign and boost the party's appeal to Hispanic voters.

Instead, it's Trump — with his call to deport everyone living in the U.S. illegally and eliminate birthright citizenship — who has surged to the top of the summertime polls, reinforcing the lasting power of white, conservative voters who the GOP has courted for decades and continue to dominate the party's presidential primaries.

Group Of Migrants Found Dead

VIENNA (AP) — As regional leaders met Thursday to tackle Europe's refugee crisis, a gruesome discovery unfolded a short drive from the Austrian capital: An abandoned truck was found with at least 20 — and possibly up to 50 — decomposing bodies of migrants piled inside.

It was the latest tragedy in a year that has seen tens of thousands of people risking all to seek a better life or refuge in wealthy European countries. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said at the Vienna conference she was "shaken by the awful news," and summit participants held a minute of silence.

"This reminds us that we in Europe need to tackle the problem quickly and find solutions in the spirit of solidarity," Merkel said.

Migrants fearful of death at sea in overcrowded and flimsy boats as they flee turmoil and war in the Middle East have increasingly turned to using a land route to Europe through the Western Balkans. But the discovery of the bodies in the truck on the main highway connecting Vienna to the Hungarian capital of Budapest showed there is no truly safe path.

Thousands cross from Greece daily with the help of smugglers, aiming to reach European Union countries like Germany, Austria or Sweden and apply for asylum. The human traffickers may charge thousands of dollars per person, only to stuff them into trucks and vans so tightly that they often cannot move — or breathe.

Clinton Likens GOP's Views To Terrorists

CLEVELAND (AP) — Hillary Rodham Clinton on Thursday drew parallels between terrorist organizations and the field of Republican candidates for president when it comes to their views on women, telling an Ohio audience her potential GOP rivals were pushing "out-of-date" policies.

"Now extreme views about women? We expect that from some of the terrorist groups. We expect that from people who don't want to live in the modern world," Clinton said.

"But it's a little hard to take coming from Republicans who want to be the president of the United States, yet they espouse out-of-date and out-of-touch policies," she added at a rally with 2,800 people in Cleveland's Case Western Reserve University. "They are dead wrong for 21st century America."

In her remarks, she did not mention any specific terrorist or militant groups, such as the Islamic State, which has held women as sex slaves in Iraq and Syria. Republicans swiftly accused the Democratic presidential front-runner of directly comparing the Republican presidential field to terrorists.

"For Hillary Clinton to equate her political opponents to terrorists is a new low for her flailing campaign," said Republican National Committee spokeswoman Allison Moore. "She should apologize immediately for her inflammatory rhetoric."

Teacher Recounts Efforts To Calm Teen

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Thirty-year veteran teacher Twila Smith had scarcely started a new school year when a 14-year-old freshman entered her world studies class and drew a gun Tuesday.

"I knew if I lost my composure, this is going to end badly," Smith told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday. "He told me I was going to die today and I believed that."

That the hostage crisis ended with no one killed or even hurt at Philip Barbour High School is largely due to Smith, whose superintendent called her actions "miraculous."

The hostage-taking drama rocked the school on the ninth day of the school year in the small Appalachian town of Philippi, home to about 3,000 people some 115 miles south of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Authorities have not released the name of the boy, who is being held in a detention center and faces multiple charges.



AP PHOTO/ANDREW HARNIK

President Barack Obama, accompanied by New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, holds a child as he greets residents in the Tremé neighborhood in New Orleans, Thursday, Aug. 27 for the 10th anniversary since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Tremé is one of the oldest black neighborhoods in America, which borders the French Quarter just north of Downtown.

Obama To People Of New Orleans: You Inspire Me, And America

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE
AND NANCY BENAC

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Visiting residents on tidy porch stoops and sampling the fried chicken at a corner restaurant, President Barack Obama held out the people of New Orleans on Thursday as an extraordinary example of renewal and resilience 10 years after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

"There's something in you guys that is just irrepressible," Obama told hundreds of residents assembled at a bustling new community center in an area of the Lower 9th Ward that was once under 17 feet of water. "The people of New Orleans didn't just inspire me, you inspired all of America."

He held out the city's comeback as a metaphor for what's happening all across a nation that has moved from economic crisis to higher ground.

"Look at what's happened here," he declared, speaking of a transformed American city that was once "dark and underwater."

Still, Obama acknowledged that much remains to be done. And after walking door to door in the historic Tremé section of a city reborn from tragedy, he cautioned that "just because the housing is nice doesn't mean our job is done."

Areas of the city still suffer from high poverty, he said, and young people still take the wrong path.

There is more to be done to confront "structural inequities that existed long before the storm happened," he added.

In his remarks at the community center, Obama blended the same themes of resilience and renewal that he drew from encounters with the sturdy residents he met along Magic Street and at other locations.

Leah Chase, the 92-year-old proprietor of Dooky Chase's Restaurant, was one of those to chat with Obama. She pronounced herself a fan of the man, saying he'd handled "a rough road."

Chase — who's known as the "Queen of Creole Cuisine" — said, "That's all you have to do: handle what's handed to you," voicing what could be a credo for the city.

Obama was clearly energized by his visits, at one point breaking into a song from "The Jeffersons" sitcom after meeting a young woman who calls herself "Ouisie." He stopped for fried chicken at Willie Mae's Scotch House, and pronounced the resulting grease stain on his suit a good indication that he'd enjoyed his stay in the city.

He held out the community center as "an example of what is possible when, in the face

of tragedy and in the face of hardship, good people come together to lend a hand and, brick by brick, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood, you build a better future."

"And that more than any other reason is why I've come back here today," he said.

Obama was a new U.S. senator when Katrina's powerful winds and driving rain bore down on Louisiana on Aug. 29, 2005. The storm caused major damage to the Gulf Coast from Texas to central Florida while powering a storm surge that breached the system of levees meant to protect New Orleans from flooding.

Nearly 2,000 people died, most in New Orleans. Video of residents seeking refuge on rooftops, inside the Superdome and at the convention center dominated news coverage as Katrina came to symbolize government failure at every level.

In his speech, Obama said Katrina helped expose inequalities that long plagued New Orleans and left too many people, especially minorities, without good jobs, affordable health care or decent housing and too many kids growing up in the midst of violent crime and attending inefficient schools.

The setting of his address at the community center spoke to the stark contrasts

that remain. It sits near nicely renovated homes but also next to a boarded-up wooden house. The area is filled with vacant lots where houses used to stand, so overgrown that local residents sometimes refer to it as the wilderness and worry about snakes hiding in the grass.

Colette Pichon Battle, executive director of Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy, cautioned against slapping too happy a face on New Orleans, saying "rebuilding since the storm favors privileged private enterprise and this illusion of recovery is not progress."

City residents, too, spoke of uneven recovery.

"I think we have a long way to go," said Lisa Ross, 52, an appraiser. She said areas frequented by tourists have recovered tremendously but many neighborhoods have struggled.

Harold Washington, 54, a military retiree studying at Tulane, said the city is "better than it was." But he was sad that children are now bused all over town rather than attending neighborhood schools.

Obama spoke hopefully of coming back to New Orleans after his presidency — when he can go to Mardi Gras and sample other delights.

"Right now," he said, "I just go to meetings."

TS Erika Kills 4 In Dominica; Takes Aim At Puerto Rico

BY CARLISLE JNO BAPTIST
AND DANICA COTO

Associated Press

ROSEAU, Dominica — Rescue crews fanned across Dominica late Thursday to search for missing and injured people after Tropical Storm Erika pummeled the eastern Caribbean island, unleashing landslides and killing at least four people.

The storm, which forecasters said could reach Florida as a hurricane on Monday, dumped 15 inches (38 centimeters) of rain on the small island as it spun west toward Puerto Rico.

An elderly blind man and two children were killed when a mudslide crashed into their home in the southeast of the island, said Police Chief Daniel Carbon. Another man was found dead near his home in the capital of Roseau after a mudslide, but the cause of death could not be immediately determined, Carbon told The Associated Press.

Police said another 20 people have been reported missing.

"Erika has really, really visited us with a vengeance," Assistance Police Superintendent Claude Weekes said in a phone interview. "There are many fallen rocks and trees, and water. It's really chaotic."

He said crews are trying to reach isolated communities via the ocean because many roads and bridges are impassable. "We're going to work throughout the night to see if we can get to the areas," he said. "There are people missing in different parts of the island."

Erika was centered about 145 miles (235 kilometers) southeast of San Juan, Puerto Rico, and was moving west at 12 mph (19 kph) with maximum sustained winds of to 45 mph (75 kph), according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Erika was expected to move near Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands on Thursday and be near or just north of the Dominican Republic on Friday as it heads

toward Florida early next week, possibly as a hurricane.

Chris Landsea, a meteorologist at the hurricane center, said the storm could dissipate if it passed over Hispaniola or Puerto Rico or it could strengthen and pose a potential threat to Florida next week. "The uncertainties are very high," he said.

As the storm entered the Caribbean, it did the heaviest damage to Dominica, an island of about 72,000 people of lush forests and steep terrain. Authorities were still conducting a full damage assessment after rivers surged over their banks and walls of mud surged into homes.

About 80 percent of the island was without electricity, and water supply was cut off, authorities said. Trees and light poles were strewn across streets as water rushed over parked cars and ripped the scaffolding off some buildings. The main airport was closed due to flooding, with water rushing over at least one small plane.

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