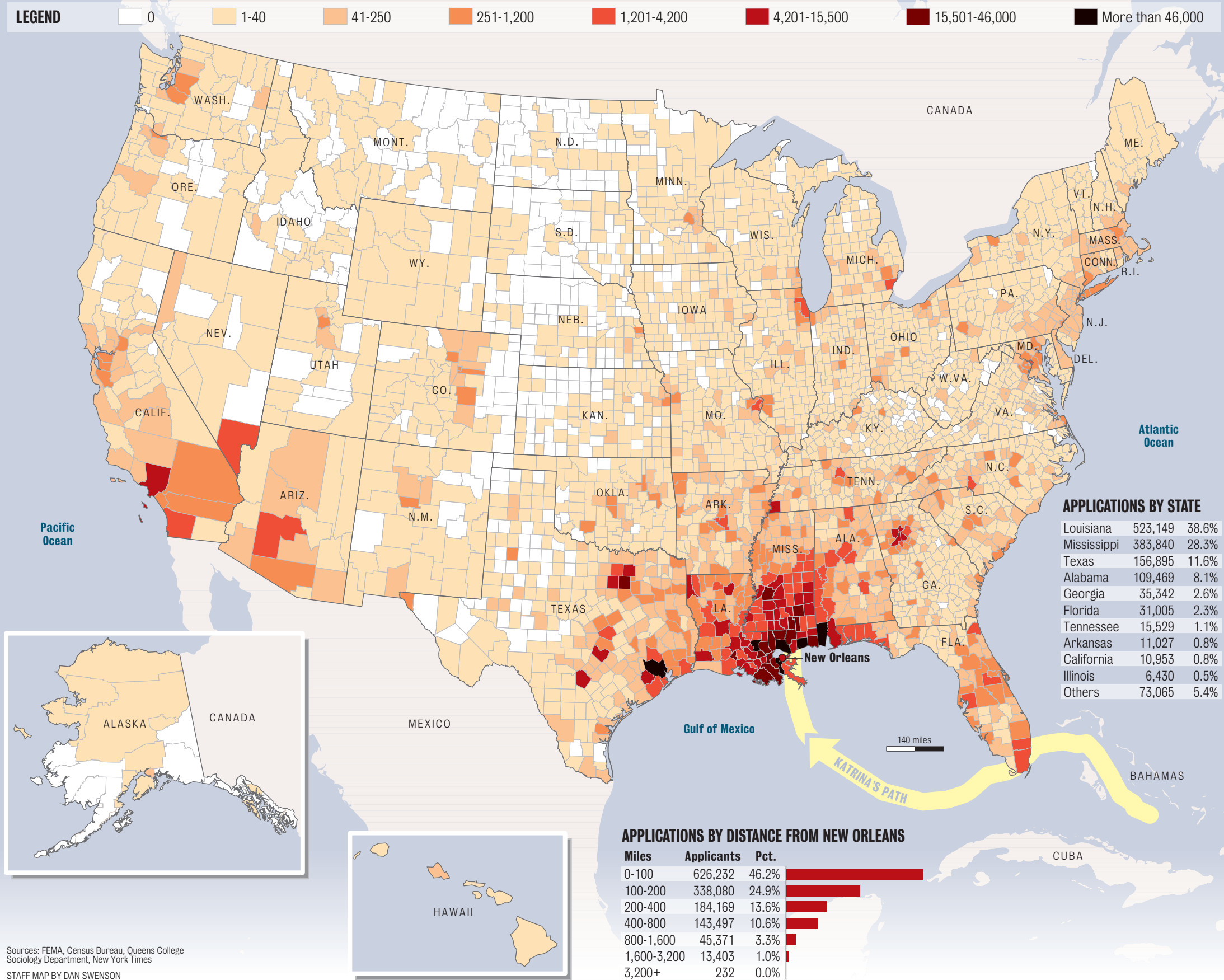




KATRINA'S EXODUS

The displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina have filed for disaster assistance with FEMA in nearly every county in every state. A look at the distribution of 1.36 million individual applicants who registered with FEMA:



'I haven't had a bad meal here yet'

EVACUEES, from A-1

ing out a tire and then blowing out the spare on our way out. Then up to New York, through Massachusetts and on to my sister's summer house in Kennebunkport for a while until we ended up here, in Bar Harbor, Maine, which is where I grew

up."

In the wake of the storm, residents of the New Orleans area remain scattered across all 50 states, with high concentrations of residents across the South and in major metropolitan areas, according to a map showing where hundreds of thousands of Katrina evacuees have applied for federal assistance.

From Oahu, Hawaii, to the deepest regions of New England, most selected their evacuation locations based on where they had family or close friends. Some now say they're desperate to return, while others have turned their evacuation into a vacation, or "evacu-cation." Still others don't think they'll ever return and are now signing mortgage papers in their new communities.

"We ended up in Hawaii, because we have friends there," Uptowner Kristin Isenberg said. "And they gave us a call after the storm, and they said, 'Why don't you come stay with us? You can enroll the kids in school and stay as long as you need.' We were originally thinking about going to stay with my husband's family, but Hawaii just sounded a little more pleasant than Albany, New York. And I said, 'This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Let's go stay in Hawaii for a couple months and make lemons into lemonade.' And it's been wonderful."

Loyola University philosophy professor and temporary Albany resident Terence Hoyt said he has no complaints.

"I like it," he said from his

parents' house in the upstate New York town. "I think it's one of the nicest places in the country to live in, particularly in the fall."

Though O'Connor, Isenberg and Hoyt all said they're planning to make their way back to the city in the weeks or months ahead, others won't be so quick to return.

Setting down roots

Joe Doucette, an Uptowner before the storm, just got approval for a mortgage on a house in Charlotte, N.C., and said he won't even be thinking about coming back for at least a year.

"We have a 2-year-old, and we have to take that into major consideration," he said. "If we didn't have her, I think we'd be

stuck in down there or at least more likely to go back."

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin previously asked parents to think carefully about returning to the city with children.

If he feels the city's ready, Doucette, a contractor, said he can always turn around the Charlotte house he's planning to fix up for a profit in a year. If not, he said, that's OK too.

"Charlotte's a nice place," he said. "I haven't had a bad meal here yet."

His friend Ted Sheppard, who was planning to team up with Doucette for some contracting work before Katrina, said he's comfortable with his family in Savannah, Ga., and unlikely to return.

"I don't think it's going to be a place for my children, and,

even when it is, I think it's going to take a really long time for that to happen. And when it does happen, we'll probably be pretty well settled here," he said.

That said, Sheppard said he's planning to fix up his Broadmoor home, which took 6 feet of water, and either base his business from there or rent it out.

"I want to be part of the effort to rebuild New Orleans," he said.

Sense of place

Sociologists say residents' decisions to return are based on a variety of factors, not the least of which is their attachment to the city.

"If you lived in Chicago or

See **EVACUEES**, A-22

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