

Hurricane Katrina: The People Did Not and Do Not Have to Die

Statement by the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA – August 31, 2005

There was no way to stop Hurricane Katrina, but the chaos, suffering and death that resulted from this storm WAS preventable. Why didn't the government organize massive and systematic evacuation? Why weren't the levees maintained? Why were so many people left to fend for themselves?

This government has spent hundreds of billions for the war in Iraq – but didn't evacuate a city facing a devastating storm that *had been predicted for days*. They got all kinds of helicopters and transport planes in Iraq but in New Orleans people were trapped in the city and stuffed into the sports stadium.

People, from all walks of life, are suffering because preventive measures that could have lessened the effects of the hurricane are not profitable. People were forced into an "every-man-for-himself" situation, so millions were left to try and survive on their own. Over *100,000 people* were left in New Orleans – often because they didn't have a car, gas or cash.

This disaster revealed the unequal and oppressive relations of this system. People live in conditions where when a disaster hits, they are left in severe and needless danger of death. On TV, we've seen the many thousands of Black people trapped in New Orleans and other dangerous places. We see the

results of slavery, segregation, Jim Crow and the present-day effects of this oppressive history in sharp relief.

Before the storm even hit, Louisiana's governor Blanco gave authorities the power to suspend civil liberties. Federal Homeland Security officials have declared a national emergency. In the media, people desperately trying to survive are being demonized as "dangerous armed gangs of looters." Meanwhile, the governor is sending in troops. All this cannot be good for the people.

Louisiana's governor called for a day of prayer. And while individuals can pray if they want, the government should be meeting the needs of the people, mobilizing others to help, not telling people to pray.

The new developing dangers are caused by the way that society is *set up*, NOT by nature. New suffering must be prevented. **The disaster that looms is not inevitable IF HUMAN BEINGS ARE MOBILIZED TO PREVENT IT.** If people are NOT mobilized in this way, if the government is NOT forced to take URGENT measures right away, then hundreds and possibly thousands more will needlessly die from disease and/or not being rescued.

WE DEMAND:

- At the government's expense: People must be housed and cared for until they can safely return to their homes; hotels, convention centers, and other buildings must be provided to people in need of shelter; there must be free communication for people to contact relatives. Immediately, there must be emergency medical care and measures to prevent massive epidemics and needless dying. There must be no arrests for so-called looting. There must be emergency relief – people must be immediately provided with water, food, medicines, and other basic needs FREE OF CHARGE.
- The needs of all must be met, with first priority to those most urgently in need. There must be immediate, orderly, and safe evacuation. If necessary, events in nearby cities must be cancelled to accommodate people. People must not be evacuated into situations which are going to reproduce disease and danger.
- There must be intense search and rescue efforts in all areas. People must NOT be allowed to die. All necessary resources, including mobilizing volunteers, must be brought to bear on this. The government must not repress people who volunteer or prevent them from helping, but instead, must assist these efforts.
- There must be no profiteering and speculation off people's misery by the sharks of insurance companies, oil monopolies, real estate developers, etc.

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