

Letters on Hurricane Katrina

3 September 2005

The following is a selection of letters to the World Socialist Web Site on Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath.

On “Hurricane Katrina’s aftermath from natural disaster to national humiliation”

There is no doubt that, no matter the best efforts of anyone, there would have been disastrous consequences in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. However, the human consequences of this tragedy are out of all proportion to what should be the case in any possible world.

Telling people to get out if they can, to look into Greyhound or Amtrak, or calling on religious organizations to organize the evacuation of a city of 1.8 million was not a reasonably rational plan of action, as can be seen from the pictures of refugees flooding our televisions. The fact that this was the course of action taken by the elected representatives in Louisiana and at the federal level points to the utter bankruptcy of the ruling elite in this country. The logistical, technological, and financial means existed to avoid the human consequences of this tragedy, yet nothing was done. Nothing was attempted. The appeal was for people to fend for themselves—whether they could or not was beside the point. Where were the helicopters, the trucks, the buses before the hurricane struck? Why were they only made available after the fact? And why not in sufficient numbers? Why are these people not being fed? Is it possible that this bourgeois government is so inept that it cannot, with the resources at its disposal, organize a serious relief effort for the people who are starving in what has essentially become a deathtrap? This is completely unacceptable by any standard.

There are many possible answers to the questions I have posed, but the most telling are the most obvious. One, there was no profit to be found in evacuating the city in a socially organized way. Two, the National Guard and FEMA are—as arms of the ruling class—set up to control the population, and not, as we are so often told, to help the population in emergency situations. Three, the level of corruption and ineptitude of the bourgeoisie and the general crisis of the capitalist system does not allow for anything socially progressive to come from this layer of society. They are unable to respond in a rational way to any of the problems facing society as a whole or in part.

This incredible tragedy that hundreds of thousands are going through is utterly disgusting and sickening simply for the fact that it is and was not necessary. There was ample time to get people out. The government had the resources, they had the manpower, they had the logistical capabilities, and they had foreknowledge.

Every time one of these babbling heads comes on the news to give another speech in which they say nothing but make excuses pisses me off even more than the last. The sad thing is that things

will continue to get worse in ever greater proportions, and will only get better once we have swept aside the useless debris of history that is the bourgeoisie in this country and every other throughout the world.

HR

Las Vegas, Nevada

2 September 2005

World think tanks have been propagating privatization as a measure to reduce poverty. However, the New Orleans disaster and inadequate preparedness due of lack of political will of the government in Washington have established that equality and justice is the only tool to alleviate poverty and terrorism for the world. This universe is not short of resources. The only task is to distribute them equally with justice. Then I think there will be no incidents of terrorism and looting. Resources will be available to tackle the natural calamities.

ZH

Islamabad, Pakistan

2 September 2005

On “Bush rules out significant federal aid to hurricane victims”

We learn now that 50 percent of the New Orleans police force has walked off the job, and there is still no *help*, other than a few National Guardsmen. People needing medical care, ICU patients, one man had a broken neck who was upright in a wheelchair with a head brace two weeks after surgery. Some women only wearing hospital gowns and no one seemed to be in charge. A few people wearing dark clothes helping but even they seemed dazed and/or done in by exhaustion. There was some helicopter activity at the airport but only, it seemed, one in the air at a time. No fleet. And still there are no answers. No one knows anything, including the media. Patients were brought down nine flights and put in a boat earlier this evening to be evacuated, and when they finally reached the place where the buses should have been there were none. The patients were taken back to the hospital and had to climb the stairs while the dead were being carried out. Aaron Brown said to his television audience at the beginning of his show: We shall now see how Homeland Security has dealt with our first American crisis since 9/11.

The more that Bush, book-ended by his father and Clinton, talked about gas for the American people, the more evident it became that he is afraid that after this most recent debacle and the obvious ripple effect soon to follow, foreign money will begin to pull out. Some of the emails coming into CNN, according to Jack Cafferty: “This is not my America, I am so ashamed”; “We can invade a country on the other side of the world and yet we cannot drop bottled water from a helicopter onto a New Orleans Street?”; “Bush brought back congress to insert a feeding tube into a dead

woman and yet it has been four days and no help for these people.” And, by the way, no help either for tourists currently at a local hotel, who as UK subjects have sent an SOS to the British Government for aid.

KL

Malden Bridge, New York

1 September 2005

Couldn't they airlift food and water and drop it by parachute or helicopter to some dry areas? They could do the Berlin airlift when they wanted to. They could have sent ships on the Mississippi River such as from St. Louis or wherever to within a couple of blocks from the Superdome. In the 48 hours since the levees broke, a ship could have made it from Norfolk, Virginia navy base to New Orleans. They could have gotten school buses from other parts of Louisiana to get close. This all looks like it is deliberate

JD

1 September 2005

You guys never cease to amaze me. You are consistently the only news source I can trust to get things right. Every time I read an account of the horror that is New Orleans, I hope that a government official will sound more urgent, but instead I encounter the same detached tone, the same empty phrases. And every day I hope that our president will address the simple fact that hundreds are dying simply because they cannot eat, and that he will pledge whatever amount it takes to get the city and its people up and running once more. But every day I am disappointed. It is even more disheartening when most of the victims that I see are black. I can't help but think that this mass displacement of the nation's poor is a physical embodiment of the way they have been continually and systematically ignored by this country for decades.

CJ

Sarasota, Florida

1 September 2005

On "Crackdown on looting: New Orleans police ordered to stop saving lives and start saving property"

Isn't this just typical of capitalism? The more wealthy residents were able to get out of the area, leaving behind the working class and poor to try to survive the storm, many having done so by "stealing" food and water, with a handful taking more than that. We must not forget how the ruling elite "loot" average people every day through tax cuts to the rich and social cuts to the rest, and worse, life-cuts to the very poor. Looting is not a pretty sight. We just don't see in the media CEOs rushing out into the streets carrying unethically gained monies. That sort of thing is kept relatively discreet, with only a handful of "looters" discovered, disclosed and sent packing with fat pensions.

Capitalism's interest is right in its name—capital—as it is with socialism—social. We cannot expect more from a society immersed in the "law and order" of the elite. What we can and should expect are leaders with principled consciences, and they can only be found in a society that encourages equality, justice, empathy, rational morality and social conscience—men and women concerned more about the lives of the many than the properties of the few.

SN

Powell River, Canada

1 September 2005

Brilliant article. I wasn't surprised to see the mainstream media, as the propaganda organ of the state, vilifying poor people, mainly African Americans, for attempting to survive. It's clear that the media is also attempting to use these incidents of "looting" as an excuse to institute the police state. The right-wing fascists on FOX can hardly contain their glee. What's even more despicable are the meager amounts that multi-billion dollar corporations are donating to the "relief cause." Good job, MC

Sacramento, California

1 September 2005

I could not agree more with Patrick Martin's recent article on the sensationalism of looting. What I noticed most was that there were no whites shown in any of the video clips that have run nonstop on the white-owned news channels. This sort of propaganda serves only one purpose, and that is to distract the public from the real criminals and to refocus their energies on useless racism. The host on CNN the other night had to ask a reporter three times whether there were any National Guard members in the city and she successfully skirted the issue twice and focused on the looters. Only on the third time did she finally relent and admit that there were no National Guard troops present. Obviously, she is an embedded media correspondent.

PK 1 September 2005

On "Hurricane Katrina hits southern US"

You are doing yourself proud by your coverage of events in USA. I am watching coverage of the hurricane on American TV. The US networks with much larger resources are not doing the job as well as you do. Since you published one of my comments I feel I have as much access to the media as R. Murdoch, et al.

LL

Whitehall, Pennsylvania

29 August 2005



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