

The class issues exposed by Hurricane Matthew

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Hurricane Matthew continues to move from the Caribbean up the southeastern seaboard of the United States, bringing flooding and high winds that have wreaked havoc over a stretch of more than a thousand miles from Haiti, Cuba and the Bahamas up to the South Carolina Sea Islands.

The full devastation wrought by the hurricane on the impoverished country of Haiti is only beginning to be revealed. The official death toll soared to more than 800 people on Friday and will increase far higher as aid workers gain access to isolated areas in the mountains and other parts of the country that had been cut off by flooding and fallen trees.

At least four people have been killed in the United States, while millions have had their power cut off or their homes devastated by flooding and high winds.

As is typical in all natural disasters, the devastation has exposed the immense social inequality that defines the capitalist system.

The brunt of the devastation is borne by the most vulnerable—the poor who cannot afford to evacuate and have no choice but to try to survive in trailers or shacks that are unable to withstand high winds, flooding and falling trees. The fundamental cause of death and devastation is not the hurricane, but poverty, compounded by the actions of governments that promote the interests of the rich.

The US media has currently dedicated nonstop coverage to the impact of the storm in the US, but there will be no review of the aftermath, how people's lives are permanently affected or the social conditions that give rise to the devastation they report on. The situation in Haiti, which has experienced the worst devastation so far, has been largely ignored.

Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world. At least 842 people were confirmed killed when the

hurricane hit there Monday night.

More than a century of domination by US imperialism has left Haiti without the ability to provide even the most basic services. No significant measures have been taken to protect the masses on an island that is repeatedly struck by hurricanes and flooding.

In recent years, Haiti has been subject to repeated natural and manmade disasters that have resulted in mass death and destruction. Four hurricanes hit in 2008, resulting in the deaths of more than 800 people.

Despite the “aid” provided by the Clinton Foundation and the United Nations, the country has yet to recover from the 2010 earthquake that killed some 90,000 people and a subsequent cholera epidemic started by UN peacekeepers that has so far claimed more than 10,000 lives.

In the United States, a woman was killed in northeastern Florida Friday afternoon when a tree came crashing down on the camper trailer she and her husband were using to ride out the storm. At least two elderly people died of medical complications because emergency workers were unable to reach them.

Even though millions of people in the affected areas in the Southeastern US have been ordered to evacuate, they have been given minimal support to do so. Many are unable to afford the cost of a hotel room or the gasoline required to drive out. A significant portion of those who do evacuate lack the resources or adequate flood or hurricane insurance that will allow them to return to their homes if they are damaged in the storm.

As endless resources are poured into the American military, basic infrastructure is starved of funding with the ruling class claiming that there is “no money.” This is a sick farce. The \$5 trillion that has been squandered on war over the last 15 years would more than cover the money needed for all schools, water systems,

bridges, transit and other critical infrastructure in the US by 2020 and still have money to spare. And this does not include the enormous sums of money monopolized by the corporate and financial elite.

Neither Trump nor Clinton has any answer to the social disaster revealed by Hurricane Matthew. Both are committed to expanding US war abroad and intensifying the assault on the working class within the United States and internationally. These two candidates of the two big-business parties represent different factions of a ruling class presiding over a bankrupt social and economic system.

Tragedies such as Hurricane Matthew are a horrible reminder of the human cost of capitalism and the predations of American imperialism. Socialism will not put an end to hurricanes, but a massive investment in social infrastructure, the rational and organized planning of world economy, and the elimination of poverty will prevent their most devastating consequences.



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