

The Texas flood disaster: Trump's Hurricane Katrina

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Texas Governor Greg Abbott said Tuesday that more than 170 people remain "missing" in the Hill Country flooding, while the official death toll stands at 119. With no survivors found since last Friday, the final toll is expected to approach 300, making it the deadliest disaster in the continental United States since Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Katrina devastated New Orleans and parts of the Gulf Coast, killing as many as 1,833 people and causing some \$125 billion in damage. It exposed the lack of preparation and response by the George W. Bush administration and all levels of government and the degradation of the social infrastructure.

Despite efforts by government officials to deflect blame, the catastrophe along the Guadalupe River was not a "natural" disaster but the product of decades of social decay and political reaction. The needless deaths of nearly 300 people—many of them young girls—are the direct result. Those who uphold this system, like President Trump and Governor Abbott, have blood on their hands.

Trump plans to visit the flood zone Friday, making a phony display of concern—eight years after his first administration rejected Kerr County's application for a federal grant to build a flood warning system. At the White House, Trump dismissed any link between the disaster and the major cuts to the National Weather Service (NWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) implemented since he took office in January, despite reports that two NWS offices in central Texas were severely understaffed.

Trump has shut down any federal programs addressing climate change and effectively banned research into global warming. Yet there is ample evidence that climate change played a major role in the Texas floods. A warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, releasing it in record amounts—such as the 18 to 20 inches of rain that fell in parts of the Hill Country. In Kerr County, more water fell

in four hours than flows over Niagara Falls in a full day, overwhelming the Guadalupe River and sweeping away dozens of summer camps, RVs and homes.

Texas embodies the degradation of American capitalism, where staggering inequality is combined with political reaction and brutality. Despite—or rather because of—the immense wealth accumulated by billionaires in oil, gas, tech, weapons, ranching and healthcare, the social conditions facing the majority of Texans are among the worst in the country.

According to the annual ranking conducted by CNBC, Texas was the worst of the 50 states in terms of quality of life in 2024, after having ranked 49th in the three previous years. The state ranks 49th in terms of the proportion of adults who are high school graduates, 48th in terms of child health, and 50th in the proportion of the population covered by health insurance. Unemployment benefits are so low that Texas workers recoup only 10 percent of average living costs if they are laid off, according to Oxfam.

Nearly 43 percent of Texas households struggle to afford basic necessities such as housing, child care and healthcare, and 14.2 percent of Texans live below the abysmally inadequate federal poverty line. The state ranks 45th in state expenditures per capita, and little of that spending goes into public social services. Particularly in rural and inner-city areas, there is a high level of social vulnerability, due to factors like poverty, unemployment, poor education, and discrimination against minority black and Hispanic populations (who actually make up the majority of the state's people).

Healthcare is a particularly critical deficit. According to the United Health Foundation, Texas is near the bottom, with only 182 primary care providers per 100,000 residents. One-fifth of all Texas adults with a credit score have medical debt that has gone to collection. Abortion has been illegal in Texas since the Supreme Court

decision in 2022, and the state pays a bounty for information leading to the arrest of healthcare workers and others who assist them in providing abortion services.

While social services are starved, state funds are lavished on the forces of repression—the state police, the Texas Rangers, the Texas State Guard and the National Guard, much of it deployed as part of Abbott’s “Operation Lone Star,” an \$11 billion anti-immigrant rampage in which state forces have joined with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to round up and imprison migrant workers.

Texas maintains a vast prison system, the largest in the United States. The state has 8 percent of the US population, but accounts for 33 percent of all US executions, by far the most of any state. The law-and-order frenzy is bipartisan: In the major cities of Houston, Dallas, San Antonio and Austin, all run by Democratic mayors, the police departments take up the lion’s share of funding, frequently more than all social services combined.

In terms of physical infrastructure, the state’s performance is perhaps even worse than on social benefits, if that is possible. Only a few months ago, the Texas state Senate blocked legislation to establish a statewide emergency response plan, at a cost of \$500 million. This would have been directed at protecting the population from not only flash flooding, but from wildfires, tornadoes and hurricanes, all of which are common in the state.

A survey conducted by the state government last year identified more than \$50 billion in flood control needs, but the state government has provided only \$1.4 billion, less than 3 percent of what is required. Infrastructure spending represents less than 0.5 percent of the \$322 billion state budget. This particularly affects rural areas like the flood zone along the Guadalupe River.

Texas has 84 billionaires, with a combined net worth of \$722 billion, but no personal income tax, no corporate income tax, no estate tax and no inheritance tax. This has made it a haven for enormous private wealth, side by side with dire poverty and abysmal living conditions. The world’s richest man, Elon Musk (\$342 billion), lives in Texas, as well as Michael Dell (\$101 billion), founder of the computer manufacturer, Alice Walton (\$101 billion), one of the heirs to the Wal-Mart fortune, and a lengthy list of oil barons, financiers and property developers.

The entirely preventable Texas catastrophe embodies the social policies of the Trump administration. It is the

outcome of government by and for the financial oligarchy: the combination of anti-scientific bigotry with brutal austerity. Many of the people who fell victim to this disaster likely voted for Trump, but they are now confronting, through bitter experience, the consequences of the policies he champions.

But Trump is not an individual aberration. He is the expression of a class. His administration arises out of decades of political degeneration, presided over by both Republicans and Democrats, in which trillions were funneled into the hands of the super-rich while the country’s infrastructure collapsed.

Through their vast wealth, the oligarchs control the economy, making it impossible to develop or implement a rational, scientific response to climate change and environmental disaster. They control the political system, buying and selling congressmen and senators, governors and presidents, and using the courts to uphold their property “rights.”

The Socialist Equality Party fights to arm the working class with a revolutionary program to take political power and reorganize society on a socialist foundation. This requires a complete break with the corporate-controlled Democratic and Republican parties, and the building of new organizations of struggle—rank-and-file workplace committees, neighborhood action groups, and a mass political movement to unify workers across all industries and regions.

The central lesson of the Texas flood is that the most basic requirements of a modern society are incompatible with a system that subordinates everything to the enrichment of a financial oligarchy. The immense resources hoarded by the super-rich must be expropriated and used to meet urgent social needs, including safe housing and infrastructure, universal healthcare and education, climate adaptation and disaster preparedness.

This must be the new point of departure for the struggles of American workers: the fight to reorganize economic life according to a socialist program, based not on profit, but on social need and democratic control.



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