Hurricane Katrina:
The Black Nation’s 9/11!

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The magnitude of the destruction and human suffering caused by Hurricane Katrina to the people and communities of the Gulf Coast Region, while not the results of an act of “terror”, is directly a result of a profit-driven system of capitalist exploitation reinforced by the national oppression of African American people in the US South, a region where the majority of Black people live and where the conditions of oppression, poverty and underdevelopment are most concentrated.

As anti-imperialists and progressives engage in work to build support for the Gulf Coast survivors, we must have an analysis and political context for properly understanding the reasons for this crisis and the contradictions surrounding its aftermath. The response to this human tragedy must be more than a humanitarian response in order to deal with the magnitude and complexity of issues, international political ramifications, the legal aspects, and the various levels of local, regional, national and international coalition and network building and mobilizing that must take place to build a powerful movement for social justice.

There is much talk about how to define the main social impact of Katrina: Whether it is mainly a major disaster for Black people or for working class and poor people in general. This attempt by the media to separate race from class when dealing with issues where those workers affected are majority African American is no accident. It seeks to divide the political character and content of the working class response.

Thus, it is important to define the race and class character of the crisis and to call on the larger working class to unite with its most oppressed section—the African American working class who is also the predominant basis of an oppressed nation and nationality historically denied real democratic rights and subjugated by US imperialism.

The government’s failure to correct this impending danger known far in advance, that led to the continuously unfolding massive human tragedy, helps all to see the racist nature of the US capitalist system and how
system of African American national oppression is violation of human rights and guilty of crimes against humanity.

The demand for self-determination is both a national democratic demand for African American people's power as well as a demand for a new social and political order. The Black working class is not just a group of people who share a common interest in their collective well-being; they are also a political force that can bring about social and economic change.

American National Oppression

The Black working class is one of the most powerful and important forces in the United States. It is made up of working-class people who are primarily African American, but also includes a significant number of people of other races and ethnicities. The Black working class is a driving force in the struggle for racial justice, and its leaders have played a key role in organizing labor strikes and political protests.

The Black working class is also a significant force in the economy. It is responsible for producing a large share of the country's goods and services, and it is also a major source of jobs and wages. The Black working class is a central part of the Black liberation struggle, and its leaders have played a key role in organizing labor strikes and political protests.

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...parts of the Gulf Coast have been "evacuated" to other cities several hundred and in some cases thousands of miles away from their homes, a process that will continue until the entire region is empty of residents. Many believe that their communities will never recover from the devastation caused by the hurricane.

They have good reason to feel this way, as some majority African-American communities have already begun to experience gentrification and displacement by white affluent and predominantly white upscale residential developments. Many Black residents have watched their homes and neighborhoods being sold and subdivided for speculative investment, raising the issue of "ethnic cleansing.

The media in some of the cities receiving the "evacuees," are describing them as "the worst of New Orleans," now notorious for its low-income, lackluster residents. This sounds like the media's attempt to distance themselves from the local residents who have been forced to leave their homes and communities.

Many reports have stated that thousands of Black residents have left the city in response to the hurricane, leading to a significant reduction in the city's population. The media and some in the city's government have been quick to blame the refugees for the city's current state, neglecting to acknowledge the role that racism and structural racism have played in creating this situation.

Some experts argue that the media's portrayal of the Black residents as a threat to the city's recovery is based on a long history of racial discrimination and disparities in wealth and power. The media's focus on the refugees as a problem to be solved highlights the continued lack of access to resources and opportunities for Black residents, even before the hurricane.

This is why the term "refugees" is often used to describe those who leave their homes in the wake of a disaster. The reality is that the refugees are the same people who were already struggling to make ends meet. The media's focus on the refugees as a threat to the city's recovery is a form of vilification that further marginalizes and exploits communities that are already struggling. The media's portrayal of the Black residents as a threat to the city's recovery is a form of vilification that further marginalizes and exploits communities that are already struggling. The media's portrayal of the Black residents as a threat to the city's recovery is a form of vilification that further marginalizes and exploits communities that are already struggling. The media's portrayal of the Black residents as a threat to the city's recovery is a form of vilification that further marginalizes and exploits communities that are already struggling.
Forging unity between African Americans, Latinos and working class ethnic groups throughout the US and especially within the Gulf Coast Region in responding to this disaster is an important part of a larger, more difficult and absolutely essential process of building US multi national working class unity and international solidarity against US imperialism.

The future of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast in terms of the reconstruction of the historical communities, but at a higher quality of social conditions and standard of living will be decided by the US corporate class, the white power structure, who control an organized and combined African American and working class struggle led by the African American working class majority in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. Such a struggle must take the popular form of a combined struggle for African American self-determination and workers power, and must have an international component. Emphasizing the majority African American working class character of the Katrina-US imperialist disaster is important to exposing its unmistakably racist character.

Katrina Disaster Exposes Impact of Unjust US War and Occupation against Iraq

The Katrina disaster exposes how US imperialist war in Iraq and throughout the Middle East, including billions in support for Israel’s occupation of Palestine is directly connected to the human tragedy in the Gulf Coast Region.

Vital resources that had been allocated by the Bush administration to fix the standard levees in New Orleans and the erosion of marshlands along the coast that caused the Region to experience such enormous flooding and massive loss of lives were cut and shifted to the war budget.

Both Republican and Democratic administrations have consciously refused to adequately maintain or strengthen the levees that protect New Orleans. Hurricane and flood control has received the steepest federal funding cuts in New Orleans history—down 44.2% since 2001. The emergency management chief for Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, told The Times-Picayune in June 2004: “It appears that the money has been moved in the President’s budget to handle homeland security and the war in Iraq, and I suppose that is the price we pay.” Request for an additional $250 million for Army Corps of Engineers levee work in the delta went unmet.

There are close to 15,000 National Guard from the Gulf Coast Region in Afghanistan and Iraq fighting unjust wars. Their equipment, including generators, water purification systems and other needed life support and disaster preparedness supplies were overseas as well. Precious hours and days were lost as the bureaucratic machinery slowly moved equipment from other parts of the country that could have helped save lives of thousands who are expected to die.

As was the case during every war engaged in by this country, African Americans and working people were sent to fight, kill and die to bring about so-called “freedom” while they and their communities are denied freedom from hunger, imminent dangers, racial violence, gender oppression and state repression.

As was also the case during the Vietnam and Korean wars, the US tried to conceal the racist treatment of African Americans on the home front. In both of these wars, the racist treatment of African Americans in the US led to rebellions in the military and drew many former veterans into the civil rights and African American liberation movement when they returned home.

Now the US military has the audacity to start recruiting at the Gulf Coast Survivors evacuation shelters in various parts of the country. This is outrageous, as it was the US war in Iraq that was responsible for diverting of funds away from repairing the levees in New Orleans.

It is important that this connection be raised and exposed to help African Americans better understand the more immediate relationship to the wars abroad and the national and working class oppression of African Americans in the US. This will not only serve to strengthen the current US anti-war movement, it will strengthen the US and international anti-imperialist movement.

Lessons from North Carolina’s Hurricane Floyd

The coalitions and movement that develop to aid the survivors of this disaster must understand the magnitude and how it differs from other disasters throughout the US history. When one analyzes the conditions and responses to Hurricane Floyd—labeled the “Flood of the Century”—and how it impacted 30 counties in Eastern North Carolina in September 1999, we see at least one major difference that defines how people’s aid must be organized.

With Floyd, the evacuation of thousands of survivors to far away dis-
The Survivors' organization and support coalitions in the area organized reconstruction brigades of people who came from other cities and were trained to do specific tasks. They worked on rebuilding and restoring the damaged areas. The organization was faced with many challenges, including legal issues, financial constraints, and the need for resources.

The postal workers' union local led by a member of Black Workers For Justice was part of the Survivors' support organization. Members of the union were involved in the formation of the Survivors' organization and provided guidance and support.

It is very important to draw the trade unions into this movement, the postal workers union local told the Survivors' organization. They showed the Survivors' organization how to organize groups and build a social justice movement. This is a small reason why it is very important to build a broad network of together activists groups with links.

The Survivors' organization was not a support or emergency "redline" organization in the strict sense. It was a platform for political and social forces and supporters. The organization's main goal was to help the survivors in their fight for justice and restoration.

The state of NC had established a relief fund that had several hundred million dollars of federal money to provide assistance. The Survivors' organization worked on highlighting the need for fair distribution of the funds. There was a demand that the relief fund be used to help all survivors, not just those who had the resources to rebuild.

An advisory committee was appointed by the governor that included representatives of the Survivors' organization. The committee was tasked with making recommendations for the distribution of the funds. However, the Survivors' organization believed that the committee was biased and did not represent the needs of all survivors. There was no national or international pressure around the demand that the relief fund be used to help all survivors.
Hurricane Katrina: The Black Man's Burden

1. There must be efforts to unite the many relief and reconstruction efforts if the Gulf Coast Survivors Justice and Reconstruction Movement is to achieve its goals. A national and international capacity to coordinate relief efforts must be established.

2. Gulf Coast Survivors Justice and Reconstruction Council should work with the community in cities throughout the United States to establish a national relief network. The council should coordinate relief activities where possible, aspiring to establish a unified, organized environment. The network's goal should be to mobilize resources and distribute them to those in need.

3. The network must be able to coordinate relief efforts with the United States government. The network should work with national political representatives to ensure that resources are distributed effectively and efficiently. The council lacks the funds, personnel, and resources to carry out the necessary reconstruction efforts. The network should work with the council to mobilize resources and distribute them to those in need.

4. The Gulf Coast Survivors Justice and Reconstruction Movement needs to develop a political strategy to ensure that the needs of the survivors are met. The council should work with political representatives to ensure that the needs of the survivors are met. The council should also work with the United States government to ensure that the needs of the survivors are met. The council should also work with the United States government to ensure that the needs of the survivors are met.

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This will begin political intervention among Survivors throughout the
country. This could also help in the process or organizing Survivor
Councils. Press conferences and rallies could be organized.

A Right of Return Committee should be organized and headed by a
prominent African American activist figure to begin promoting a cam-
aign for the right of a speedy return of the Gulf Coast Survivors to
their communities. This committee could have regional coordinators
and should be formed and publicly announced immediately.

A UN Petition and Right of Return Committee and campaign would give
the Gulf Coast Survivors movement an immediate focus and sense of
movement beyond emergency relief.

Some of the demands that must be included in this movement include:

- The right to return of the people of the Gulf Coast Region,
- Open up area military bases for no cost temporary housing to
  begin moving survivors back into the region,
- Extended unemployment and emergency financial relief based on
  a living wage for all Katrina Survivors until they are returned to their
  homes and jobs,
- A People’s referendum on all decisions affecting the political and
  residential issues of the Gulf Coast survivors,
- Gulf Coast Survivors should continue to have full voting rights in
  their home state, counties and local governments
- Establish a public workers program funded by the federal gov-
  ernment and the big corporations to rebuild New Orleans and the
  affected Gulf Coast Region,
- Employ the survivors at a living wage as required by the David
  Bacon Act* to work on clean up and reconstruction of New Orleans
  and the Gulf Coast, with the right to organize unions,
- That major contracts for clean up and reconstruction of New Or-
  leans Black and working class communities be allocated to Black
  contractors,
- That the US immediately allow other countries to provide aid to
  the survivors,
- Full assistance and rights for all undocumented immigrants dislo-
  cated by Katrina,
- That the United Nations conduct an investigation into the circum-
  stances surround the Katrina disaster to determine if the US is guilty
  of human rights violations,
- That everyone suffering property damaged and destruction, dis-
  located, death and illness, including emotional and psychological, re-
  ceive reparations from the US government as victims of a racist act of
  placing Black majority cities and communities in imminent danger,
- Issue a massive bankruptcy executive order for Gulf Coast survi-
  vors forgiving all debt of property lost or destroyed by the disaster,
- That the US government take immediate steps to protect people
  from price-gouging at the gas pumps and profiteering by the big oil
  companies, including the release of additional oil from the US Strate-
  gic Oil Reserve,
- Amnesty for all Survivors charged with “crimes of survival” such
  as “looting”, taking vehicles, etc. and acts of self defense against vigi-
  lantes and police brutality,
- End wars and occupations in the Middle East, bring the troops
  home now,
- Cut the US military budget and reallocate funds to deal with
  state and local programs to address environmental needs that threat-
  en the lives, safety, health and communities of African American and
  other working class ethnic populations,
- The immediate impeachment of George Bush for his role in the US
  government in placing people's lives in imminent danger and there-
  by committing crimes against humanity.

The political movement must be organized nationally. The progressive
organizations of every political tendency and humanitarian expression
should be able to support this movement. However, it is very important
and political necessary to give it its proper anti-imperialist character,
that it be led by a national Black united front, in terms of shaping and buttressing its main political demands and representing it at the national and international levels.

We must be careful while insuring the presence, politics and leadership of the African American working class and liberation movement forces not to narrow the scope and content of the struggle to try and fit a particular ideological perspective. The African American liberation movement forces must help to build a mass movement and work inside of it to try and influence it in a more conscious anti-imperialist direction.

There will be multiple responses from progressive forces representing various classes, ideological, political and religious tendencies and social movements. Many will be small groups seeking foundation grants to help in their efforts. They must be careful not to allow competition for funding to create tensions among them. Differences among the progressive forces should be struggled around in a non-antagonistic manner.

Instead of abstract and sectarian polemics and arguments at mass meetings, there must be an effort to out organize opportunist elements who use the disaster to win favor and prop their class in conflict with the democratic and Republican parties or with sections of the corporate class by promoting their image as big contributors to the Katrina Survivors.

We must also discourage efforts to create sole dependence on cult of the personality "saviors" political or religious or liberal and paternalistic dominated groups however well meaning, to solve the problems for the Survivors or to speak on their behalf. This is why it's so important to have Black worker leadership play a major role in helping to organize and promote this struggle in the broad anti-war and African American liberation coalitions.

We must make this tragedy and the struggle for Gulf Coast Justice a major projection and demand of the anti-war movement and demonstrations, not only in the US but internationally. Survivors should speak at anti-war activities throughout the US and internationally.

Likewise, the major African American mobilizations like the Millions More Movement must project this struggle as a major demand of the African American liberation movement. The US Congressional Black Caucus must help make this struggle a centerpiece of the Congress.

This human tragedy must be used to organize and mobilize millions of people to challenge the US system of racist national, working class and women's oppression and to build international solidarity against the forces of US and world imperialism who profit from this oppression.

Salsadin Muhammad
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The Davis-Bacon and Related Acts (DBRA) requires all contractors and subcontractors performing work on Federal or District of Columbia construction contracts or federally assisted contracts in excess of $2,000 to pay their laborers and mechanics not less than the prevailing wage rates and fringe benefits for corresponding classes of laborers and mechanics employed on similar projects in the area. The prevailing wage rates and fringe benefits are determined by the Secretary of Labor for inclusion in covered contracts.

In addition to the Davis-Bacon Act itself, Congress added Davis-Bacon prevailing wage provisions to approximately 60 laws—"related Acts"—under which federal agencies spent construction projects through grants, loans, loan guarantees, and insurance. Examples of the related Acts are the Federal Aid Highway Act, the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, and the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. Generally, the application of prevailing wage requirements to projects receiving federal assistance under any particular "related" Act depends on the provisions of that law.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has oversight responsibilities to assure coordination of administration and consistency of enforcement of the labor standards provisions of the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts. Under this authority, DOL has issued regulations establishing standards and procedures for the administration and enforcement of the Davis-Bacon labor standards provisions. Federal contracting agencies have day-to-day responsibility for administration and enforcement of the Davis-Bacon labor standards provisions in covered contracts for which they are responsible or to which they provide federal assistance under laws they administer.

Within DOL, the Employment Standards Administration’s Wage and Hour Division (WHD) is responsible for administration and enforcement of the DBRA.

http://www.dol.gov/whd/compliance/daw/dcmp-dbra.htm