

Never forget Katrina - Black lives matter!

written by Sharon Black

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New Orleans residents on the roof of a house surrounded by water, Sept. 1, 2005.

Struggle-La Lucha salutes the people of New Orleans and the Katrina diaspora!

It has been 15 years since Hurricane Katrina struck Louisiana, beginning on Aug. 29, 2005. Over 1,800 mostly Black and poor people lost their lives when the storm struck and the levees broke. The unfolding disaster created a permanent diaspora. It destroyed whole communities and the people who lived in them. Much of the suffering, death and destruction was preventable.

In the immediate aftermath, bridges were blocked and hundreds of people were turned back from leaving the city. At the Gretna Bridge, witnesses reported that police fired over the heads of desperate, fleeing people.

On Sept. 4, New Orleans police shot and killed two unarmed victims and badly wounded four others on the Danziger Bridge.

Prisoners were abandoned by prison officers who evacuated themselves. Close to 1,000 prisoners at the Orleans Parish Prison, a third of whom were awaiting trial and not convicted of any crime, were left to fend for themselves. When generators failed, they waited in total darkness in chest-high water with no food or water for four days. Some 517 were never found.

Katrina will remain in history as an indictment of capitalism and the white supremacy inherent in the system.

It's important to point out that during this crisis, when people were literally drowning from what can only be called genocide, U.S. imperialism was also conducting a genocidal war against the Iraqi people. The war directly diverted resources that could have been used to help hurricane victims.

When the 256th Infantry Brigade of the Louisiana National Guard returned from Iraq on Sept. 8, 2005, 80 percent had lost their homes, and many, their families.

Cuba, under the direction of President Fidel Castro, offered the assistance of 1,000 doctors and medical personnel, while Venezuela offered oil shipments. It was the founding of the Henry Reeves International Medical Brigade, which has provided such vital assistance to the world during this year's COVID-19 pandemic.

U.S. President George W. Bush, who was deeply engaged in the war against Iraq, turned down this assistance.

This is a salute to the working-class people of New Orleans and the entire region, whose enduring spirit is reflected in the uprising that is sweeping the country today under the banner of "Black Lives Matter." May we never forget!

