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Mutual Aid in New Orleans; The Real Looters Go Unpunished

Kevin Carson

September 9, 2005

The mainstream press is giving a very misleading impression of what's going on in New Orleans. There are some big islands of mutual aid in that Hobbesian sea we hear so much about. For that matter, the situation down there may really be defined more by such cooperative behavior than by the reverse—all we know is what those lying bastards tell us.

First, an article by Jesse himself, at *Reason*: “Nightmare in New Orleans: Do disasters destroy social cooperation?”

And another Larry Bradshaw and Lorrie Beth Slonsky at *Counterpunch*: “Trapped in New Orleans”

And this, from the *Baltimore Sun*: “A do-it-ourselves shelter shines: a community bands together in civilized self-sufficiency, in stark contrast to the misery in official New Orleans shelters.”

By the way, do you notice the irony? The government and talking head establishment have been blaming the destitute, who had no cars, gas money, or places to go, for not evacuating New Orleans

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Retrieved on 4th September 2021 from mutualist.blogspot.com

usa.anarchistlibraries.net

on food before the hurricane hit. Now destitute people who attempt to evacuate are turned back at gunpoint by uniformed thugs at all the city's exits.

Meanwhile, the New Orleans Cockroach Caucus is making hay while the sun shines (so to speak): turning this disaster into a real estate developer's wet dream, while the po' folks are out of town. Via Progressive Review:

There are already signs that New Orleans evacuees could face a similarly brutal second storm. Jimmy Reiss, chairman of the New Orleans Business Council, told Newsweek that he has been brainstorming about how "to use this catastrophe as a once-in-an-eon opportunity to change the dynamic." The Business Council's wish list is well-known: low wages, low taxes, more luxury condos and hotels. Before the flood, this highly profitable vision was already displacing thousands of poor African-Americans: While their music and culture was for sale in an increasingly corporatized French Quarter (where only 4.3 percent of residents are black), their housing developments were being torn down. "For white tourists and businesspeople, New Orleans' reputation is 'a great place to have a vacation but don't leave the French Quarter or you'll get shot,'" Jordan Flaherty, a New Orleans-based labor organizer told me the day after he left the city by boat. "Now the developers have their big chance to disperse the obstacle to gentrification—poor people."

Maybe the filthy bastards can build a new convention center on a pyramid of human skulls!