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The Skanner Newspaper, established in October 1975, is a weekly publication, published every Wednesday by IMM Publications Inc.

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The Skanner is a member of the National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association.

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Opinion

Rebuilding the Gulf Coast, Preparing for the Next Harvey

It has been nothing short of horrifying to watch the pictures of Hurricane Harvey's impact on Texas and Louisiana. We can only imagine what it has been like for those, who have been the direct victims of this storm.

There is much that can and needs to be said about Harvey and its aftermath. The first is, of course, that extreme weather will become an increasing pattern in our lives unless something drastic isn't done quickly to address climate change.

The second point is that the natural disaster that has hit the Texas/Louisiana area is compounded by the politics and economics of the region. Specifically, the toxic combination of neo-Confederate politics and ideology along with neo-liberal economics has resulted in a situation where "development at all costs" was the law of the land. This meant that simple things like zoning ordinances were treated as hindrances to development. It also helps us to explain the complete disdain that Texas Republicans have had towards the federal government, at least until they need government assistance.

There will be a fight over the reconstruction of Texas. There will be those who will



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The Global African



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argue that Texas should rebuild according to old standards or, worse, go into a deeper rabbit hole of fewer regulations and protections for the public, all in the supposed interest of economic gain. We believe that such a course will lead, at best, to

ernment.

Yet more is needed. Any rebuilding plan needs to consider the existing environment and consider the possibility of future environmental disasters. How can a metropolitan area constructed on the least permeable clay-based

“Any rebuilding plan needs to consider the existing environment and consider the possibility of future environmental disasters

the cleansing of the region of working class people and a set up for the next so-called natural disaster.

Texas needs a 2.0 strategy: a reset, for lack of a better term. This means addressing the immediate crisis, something that should be a "national" priority. There should be no embarrassment about the federal government playing the leading role. That is one of the central purposes of gov-

soil ignore the need for efficient rainwater removal systems? How can multiple oil, gas and chemical plants be constructed with so few safeguards? How can so little consideration of public transportation systems be given to the fourth largest city and metropolitan area in the U.S.? What does this mean for the population in the immediate area? What about the impact on the land? These are all questions

that must be factored into the rebuilding of the eastern part of the state.

Texas is also suffering from tremendous wealth polarization. The pictures that we are all seeing are mainly those of poor and other working people trying to recover what they can and reconstitute their lives. But this means that full recovery involves moving Texan working people away from instability and towards jobs with living wages.

Finally, there needs to be serious consideration of and attention to very basic infrastructure. How is it possible that the fourth largest city in the United States has such limited physical infrastructure? The answer lies, at least in large part, in thought processes that suggest that government and the public sector are the problem, i.e., that their existence and the safeguards they might establish could inhibit growth and wealth.

The results of such thinking seem to be draining into the Gulf of Mexico.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a talk show host, writer and activist. Follow him on Twitter @BillFletcherJr, Facebook and at www.billfletcherjr.com. Candice Cason is a psychologist and specialist in substance abuse treatment.

We Must Have A Poor People's Campaign and Moral Revival

Channeling the incisive analysis of our best historians, TaNehisi Coates cut through the talking points of political pundits last week to name Donald Trump America's "First White president." Writing for The Atlantic, the National Book Award recipient made clear how there could be no Donald Trump without President Obama. The chaos from which the whole world now suffers is a direct result of the backlash against racial progress in America.

To see this is to know that Trump is not our problem. He is only a symptom. During this time of intensifying political, economic, and moral crisis, with the lives of the most vulnerable and the spirits of all under vicious attack, people in growing numbers around the country are fighting back for their lives, communities and deepest values. As we respond to invitations from communities across America, we hear a resounding call for a Poor People's Campaign and Moral Revival in America today.

Fifty years ago, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and others called for a "revolution of values" in America, inviting people who had been divided to stand together against the "triplets of evil" – militarism, racism, and economic injustice – to insist that people



Bishop William J. Barber, II
President, Repairers of the Breach

need not die from poverty in the richest nation to ever exist. He joined with people across the country like Myles Horton of the Highlander Center, Loretta Two Crow of

“We need a Movement rooted in the moral forces that have demonstrated a capacity to change America

National Welfare Rights, Cesar Chavez of United Farm Workers, Al McSurely of the Appalachian Volunteers, Phillip Bernstein of the Council of Jewish Federation and Welfare, Tillie Walker of the United Indian Scholarship Fund, and John Lewis of the Southern Regional Council. Theirs was a coalition as diverse as America.

We draw on the history, vision and unfinished work of the 1968 Poor People's Campaign as we embrace the task of reigniting that campaign to unite the poor, disenfranchised, and marginalized

across difference to take action together. In the aftermath of 2016's rejection election, we are building a Movement from the states up, to unleash what Dr. King called "a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life."

This Campaign has emerged from more than a decade of work by grassroots community and religious leaders, organizations and movements fighting to end systemic racism, poverty, militarism, environmental destruction & related injustices and to build a just, sustainable and participatory society. We would need to do this work even if Trump had not been elected. But the blatant extremism of this administration only serves to amplify the need.

The twin forces of White supremacy and unchecked corporate greed continue to gain more power and influence, both in statehouses across this nation and at the highest levels of our federal government. Today, one in every two Americans are poor or low-income, while millions of children and adults continue to live without access to healthcare, housing, clean water, or good jobs.

At the same time, the issues of poverty and racism have been forced to the margins of our moral narrative and claims that a limited focus on personal morality should overshadow and supplant a commitment to public morality rooted in a critique of greed, racism, and injustice.

Our campaign aims to build a broad and deep national moral movement—rooted in the leadership of poor people and reflecting the great moral teachings – to unite our country from the bottom up.

For years, we have seen a kind of attention violence towards issues of systemic racism, poverty, and militarism. There was a time when our nation was fighting a war against poverty; now, it seems, we are waging a war on the poor. Our social fabric is stretched thin by widening income inequality, while politicians criminalize the poor, fan the flames of racism and xenophobia to divide the poor, and steal from the poor to give tax breaks to our richest neighbors and budget increases to a bloated military.

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival will strategically connect and grow different struggles and deepen the leadership of those affected.

Read the rest of this commentary at TheSkanner.com