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Queries

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*Hurricane Katrina: The Black  
Nation's 9/11!  
A Strategic Perspective for  
Self-Determination*

*Saladin Muhammad*

The magnitude of the destruction and human suffering triggered by Hurricane Katrina is a direct result of a profit-driven system of capitalist exploitation reinforced by the national oppression of African Americans in the US South – a region where the majority of Black people live and where conditions of oppression, exploitation, poverty and underdevelopment are most heavily concentrated.

The struggle against African American oppression is a fundamental and vital component of a revolutionary strategy against US imperialism. It does not seek democracy in order to repair the capitalist system or to make national oppression more tolerable and less painful for the masses. Its aim is to mobilize the African American masses to transform the system and bring about national liberation, democracy, equality and social progress for all of society.

**Reconstruction and reparations**

The African American liberation movement has been on the defensive but was trying to regroup in the form of a Reparations Movement that was developing throughout the global South as part of the struggle against imperialist globalization.<sup>1</sup> The World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa in 2001, served as an important venue for this process. It created a framework that brought the demands of the African American liberation movement into the

1. Reparations was a major demand for the African American liberation movement sought by W. E. B. Du Bois, Malcolm X, Green Mother More, and William L. Patterson, even though they did not hold the same views on the movement's ultimate goal.

international political arena. It also created a level of optimism among Black liberation forces not seen since the 1970s during the period of the African Liberation Support Movement. However, the momentum was set back by the events of September 11, 2001.

45 But 9/11 was not the only problem. Part of the weakness of the reparations demand as a basis for regrouping the African American liberation movement is that it implies that reparations is the main goal of the movement rather than part of a larger vision of self-determination. Reparations are thus mistakenly viewed by many as a  
50 precondition for independent African American nation-building. Generally speaking, this is a middle-class and reformist view of reparations. It tends to shift attention away from the struggle for power and to put the major emphasis of the movement on lawsuits, government apologies, and legislative proposals. It also reflects a serious  
55 weakness in the Black working-class character and leadership of the African American liberation movement and the national Black united front.

Within the united front, the different class forces strive to mobilize their constituencies around common demands. This involves a variety  
60 of tactics, reflecting the multi-class make-up of the united front. The needs and perspective of the Black working class – including an awareness of super-exploitation from the time of the African slave trade to the present – are not adequately reflected within the reparations movement. Part of this movement’s goal must be ideological: to expose US  
65 imperialism’s unwillingness to use its tremendous wealth to compensate for the damage it has inflicted on the lives, communities, and future of Black people. Such exposure can help African Americans to better understand capitalism and imperialism and what their continued dominance implies for the future of humanity.

70 The struggle for Reconstruction in the Gulf Coast must be seen as part of the struggle for African American self-determination. Reparations must become a major demand for Reconstruction: charging the US government with crimes against humanity for placing African Americans and the working-class majority of New Orleans and the  
75 Gulf Coast in imminent danger by its lack of hurricane planning (including its failure to repair the substandard levees) and by its inadequate rescue, relief and rebuilding efforts. This will help persuade the African American masses to link the demand for reparations with a demand for power, as opposed to reforming the capitalist system. It  
80 will also make clear to the global anti-imperialist movement that African American liberation cannot and does not desire coexistence with imperialism. This is a working-class view of reparations.

Progressive forces working to build support for Gulf Coast Survivors and communities must unite around a program and strategy to build a mass movement for Reconstruction. The Survivors, as the main base and leadership of this movement, need a clear understanding of the US and global context of the struggle. This must include an assessment of the political and social forces on both sides of the issue of a people-driven Reconstruction. Since the masses are not moved to action by distant promises but by their own experiences and concrete needs, a revolutionary strategy must be developed within the context of such a movement.

The response to the Katrina tragedy must therefore be more than just humanitarian if it is to deal with the magnitude and complexity of issues, international political ramifications, legal aspects, and the various levels of local, regional, national and international coalition and network building that must take place. Reconstruction must become the post-Katrina demand for African American self-determination, not only in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, but throughout the US South and the country. Similar to the civil rights stage and period, the Gulf Coast can help set the tone and direction of the African American liberation and wider anti-imperialist movement.

National oppression is part of the Imperialist War at Home. It is important to state from the beginning that the Black majority working-class character of the most impacted communities in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast dictated both the pace and method of the federal government's rescue, evacuation and relief efforts. In fact, the conditions before Katrina show that the African American majority was placed in imminent danger – a feature of national oppression reflecting the refusal of capitalism to provide for the social and environmental needs of those it exploits, especially the super-exploited. Vital resources that had been allocated to fix the substandard levees in New Orleans and the erosion of marshlands along the coast were cut by the Bush administration and shifted to the war budget. Both Republican and Democratic administrations refused to adequately maintain or strengthen the levees. 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 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.”

The main defense force against domestic disasters, the National Guard, was sent to fight imperialist wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; 15,000 were sent from the Gulf Coast region. Their equipment,

including generators, water purification systems and other needed life-support and disaster-preparedness supplies, was overseas as well. Precious hours and days were lost as the bureaucratic machinery slowly moved life-saving equipment from other parts of the country.

125 It is important that this connection be made between the Gulf Coast disaster and the war in Iraq, so that African Americans and others can better understand why the struggle for Reconstruction must be part of the anti-war and anti-imperialist movement. The recent 150-mile anti-war veterans' march in the Gulf Coast helps to make this connection.

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### **White supremacy divides the US working class**

The US corporate media, in covering Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in particular, tried to isolate, criminalize and scapegoat African Americans as social pariahs, making the rescue more difficult. The projection of Black people as "looters" and "criminals" and Whites as "finders" is one clear example. The characterization of the Black working class in this way is part of the continuous ideological shaping of White supremacy that gives White workers a sense of being part of another working class, different from the Black working class. This leads many White workers to act against their class interests, discouraging them from uniting with Black workers to seek common, equal and socially transformative resolutions to their class issues.

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The media coverage of relief efforts reinforced such attitudes by focusing mainly on support from White churches, White volunteers and the Red Cross. This reflects the racist nature of the government and corporate response to the disaster – and also of the preconditions that caused it. The effect is to discourage Whites from challenging the racist system. The agenda is to promote a paternalistic humanitarianism in place of struggle for a just Reconstruction. White progressives must recognize that the struggle over Reconstruction is part of the struggle for African American self-determination and that it will be led by African Americans. They must see it as part of the anti-imperialist struggle that should be supported by all radical forces that seek to build an anti-racist and pro self-determination current in the White working class.

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The African American liberation and anti-imperialist movements are fragmented, as is the wider left, which lacks a real base in the trade unions and the working class. The Katrina disaster shed a glaring light on these weaknesses. During the week following the Hurricane, when people were left to starve and die, no strikes were called by the trade unions and no demonstrations were called by the

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anti-war movement or the Millions More Movement, even though the latter two were gathering massive support for their national demonstrations in September and October. This obviously sent a message to the ruling class that the working class, at least its most organized component, was not willing to take action in support of its most oppressed and exploited section – the Black working class. It suggested a disconnect between the US anti-war movement’s opposition to war abroad and any recognition of the racist and oppressive war at home against African American and working-class communities. It suggested that the African American liberation movement lacked either the will or a program to advance democratic rights and self-determination.

This lack of immediate response and lack of strategic focus by the African American liberation and wider US anti-imperialist movement cannot inspire confidence on the part of the African American people in the capacity of our movement to lead a struggle for a just Reconstruction. Activists must not further compound this difficulty by trying to organize without a program or a conscious strategy and relying mainly on the spontaneity of the Survivors.

### **A counteroffensive**

Rebuilding and realigning the African American liberation and other social movements around the Gulf Coast struggle must be viewed as part of a counteroffensive strategy to unite, empower and advance the US anti-imperialist movement. A national Black united front with a strong Black working-class base and leadership are needed. It must avoid the sectarianism and the ultra-left and premature ideological struggle which destroyed the African Liberation Support Movement of the 1970s. This is not to suggest that there should not be struggle within the united front. However, tactical questions should not be treated as issues of principle if they don’t go against the program and basic political line of the united front.

To prepare for a counteroffensive, the united front must first identify and select conditions and struggles favorable to the masses and unfavorable to the system, so as to bring about a change in the balance of forces. The counteroffensive – getting off the defensive – is a long and fascinating process. The problem of starting a counteroffensive is the problem of identifying the initial battle. The Gulf Coast disaster, with its 9/11-scale impact, has created the necessary conditions. The struggle for Reconstruction can be a catalyst for bringing together the various US social movements. These movements must rebuild, grow and address key problems as they unite with the

Reconstruction movement as a leading flank. Bringing younger and majority working-class forces into leadership is a major requirement.

205 With the exception of the post-Reconstruction period of the late 19th century, the Katrina disaster represents the clearest expression of the US federal government's outright complicity with acts of mass murder and genocide against Black people. For many young people, especially Black, who have not experienced legal segregation and racist terror especially in the US South, the Katrina experience provides a major opportunity for radicalization. This is also why it is so important that that crime against humanity – that glaring expression of the racist/capitalist system of national oppression – become politicized as such.

215 **Reconstruction: advancing a strategic revolutionary vision**

The Gulf Coast disaster raises crucial questions about the nature of the struggle for African American liberation, the role of self-determination in advancing this struggle, and the need for socialist principles in helping to shape a vision of Reconstruction as part of a movement for a new society and that is people-driven, democratic, equitable, internationalist and humane.

220 While no one should expect the Reconstruction process to immediately create a revolutionary situation, the African American liberation and other US social movements nonetheless need a strategic vision to help guide the mass struggle along a revolutionary path. A Reconstruction movement beginning in the Gulf Coast can help create a movement potentially larger than the combined strength and scope of the civil rights and student movements of the 1960s and can contribute key factors to setting in motion a revolutionary process.

230 This is especially true because of the international situation facing the US imperialist state. Wars, corporate tax breaks, and government bailouts have caused a major debt crisis. Massive cuts in social programs, the growing privatization of government services, and gentrification that disperses and politically disenfranchises Black and poor communities have become the keynotes of the Bush administration, representing the most repressive and fascist section of the US ruling class. Its domestic and global policies continue to overextend the resources and power of the US government and thereby to undermine bourgeois democracy as a medium for social partnership between workers and the capitalist class. This has sharpened contradictions within the ruling class.

The actions of the US government around the Gulf Coast disaster displayed the fascist and genocidal direction of US imperialism and prompted more members of Congress to call for an end to the war in Iraq. A Reconstruction movement must help to widen and deepen these contradictions. It is therefore tactically important to promote the struggle for Reconstruction as a movement to defend and expand democratic. However, this does not mean forming a political alliance with any section of the capitalist ruling class. Those sections of the capitalist class that oppose the fascist direction of US imperialism must be forced to find ways of supporting a Reconstruction that helps to empower the African American liberation and mass democratic social movements.

Reconstruction must not be viewed as a mainly economic struggle to physically rebuild Gulf Coast cities and communities and the capitalist infrastructure. It must be a political struggle to define and influence the terms and conditions for rebuilding. It must be guided by a vision of a new society, one that seeks a reconfiguration in the power relations of the masses to institutions impacting their lives.

### 260 **Building international ties**

The offers of aid by Cuba and Venezuela during and since the hurricane provide an opportunity to educate Katrina Survivors and the African American masses about socialist principles in the struggle for Reconstruction and to build relations between our movement and those countries embracing a socialist path. The Reconstruction movement must point to the good will and support of Cuba and Venezuela as examples of how socialism, broadly defined, commits major resources to aid crises and disasters that are created or neglected by capitalism. The Reconstruction movement must call on African Americans masses to reciprocate by demanding the release of the Cuban 5, an end to the US embargo against Cuba, and an end to US efforts to undermine revolutionary gains in Venezuela and throughout Latin America.

The Reconstruction movement should build direct relationships with these countries, setting up exchanges that enable it to benefit from the experiences of socialism, especially in organizing the people as the main force driving revolutionary growth, development and transformation. The Reconstruction movement must also help educate the African American masses about the importance of an African American and Latino alliance as the core of an alliance of oppressed people of color. The recent national demonstration in

California of over one million Latinos and supporters against HR 4437 to build a Wall of Death 700 miles long to try and stop Latinos from crossing the borders to look for work shows how conditions are ripening for this alliance. This is why the US ruling class is doing everything possible to cause divisions between the African American and Latino communities.

### 290 **Black political power: key demand of Reconstruction**

Politically, a Reconstruction movement in the Gulf Coast raises the question: what forms of political power (and political independence) can the 20 million Black people in the US South exercise if they are trapped within White majority states that deprive them of self-determination?

One of the major weaknesses of the African American liberation movement is that it has not defined what kind of society national liberation would bring about. This is also why many African American liberation organizations fail to develop a real mass character and base. The demand for Black political power must unite and mobilize all who are willing to support democratic Black majority rule in New Orleans and throughout the Gulf Coast. It must be viewed as a strategic and transitional demand and phase, as a form of dual power.

We must understand the limitations of this dual power, but also its possibilities. We must guard against prematurely trying to declare areas of Black political power as formal governmental components of the African American nation. This would send a wrong message about the political stage of development of the African American liberation struggle. Better to refer to them as strategic zones of power. These zones can become launching points for building up trade unions in the South, for organizing small farmer and worker cooperatives, and for establishing sister-city ties with cities throughout the US and in progressive countries. Such ties would facilitate projects like medical training in Cuba for community health workers and could also provide a network of safe cities for immigrant workers. As Mao wrote:<sup>2</sup>

Whether it is possible for the people's political power in small areas to last depends on whether the nation-wide revolutionary situation continues to develop. If it does, then the small Red areas will undoubtedly last for a long time, and will, moreover, inevitably become one of the many forces for winning nation-wide political power. If the nation-wide revolutionary

2. *Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: 1967), 215.

situation does not continue to develop but stagnates for a fairly long time, then it will be impossible for Red areas to last long.

325 Globalization has made the international struggles against US imperialism an additional factor that could reinforce the strategic zones of power of African American self-determination in the US South. This is why it is so important that the African American liberation movement have an internationalist and not a narrow nationalist revolutionary perspective.

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### **Approaches to relief and Reconstruction**

335 Immediately following Katrina, organizations sprang up spontaneously to respond to the Gulf Coast disaster. Emergency relief rather than Reconstruction was their primary orientation. Most of the non-faith-based efforts to form relief organizations depended on foundations which directed their funding to humanitarian, technical, and legal relief organizations and activities.

340 This was the worst disaster in US history. The major immediate needs of the Survivors overwhelmed all the mass organizations and institutions within the African American communities. Many of the resources used in local struggles around the country were applied to relief efforts. This tremendous response of the national Black community was largely ignored by the media.

345 The Survivors movement and the relief movement have been slow to evolve into a movement for Reconstruction. This reflects in part the liberal politics of the progressive foundations. Other difficulties include internal differences around organizing the mass of Survivors and allies, as well as different views of what is meant by Reconstruction.

350 There are some who see the main work of the Reconstruction movement as building and running people's survival institutions like community clinics, schools, anti-eviction committees, housing clean-up and construction brigades, food pantries, information centers and other emergency institutions. These institutions have been very important in maintaining a Survivors movement base area within New Orleans during the hurricane, the flood, and the police and National Guard occupation. They were the main sources of information about conditions in New Orleans during the period when people were restricted from entering the city.

360 Despite the importance of these institutions, however, they cannot substitute for a movement that organizes the Survivors to challenge state power and to establish state accountability for a people-driven

Reconstruction. Without such a movement, the service institutions will be smashed by the state or will lose most of their capacity to carry on their functions. For example, some of the nurses and doctors who were volunteering in New Orleans were told that they could no longer practice in the state because the temporary waivers on their out-of-state licenses had expired. An earlier example was the North Carolina experience after Hurricane Floyd (1999), when the state and counties used their power to deny building permits, to require plumbers and electricians to have skilled trades licenses, etc.

There is also a view that the work of conscious political activists in helping to organize and develop the leadership of Survivors into a Reconstruction movement somehow threatens the democracy and leadership of the Survivors as the driving force of the movement. This view expresses itself as “shoot from the hip organizing” which discourages serious preparation for meetings, promoting instead loose and revolving organizational processes and structures, no centralized leadership, no coordination, no voting and no clear organizing or political strategy. It expects people to spontaneously develop and carry out a movement against powerful forces. Even when Survivors call for more organizational discipline and accountability to help them to more effectively participate and grow in the movement, their calls and proposals are discouraged and beaten back by this view. Somehow, these forces don’t see or want to admit that their interventions have a negative impact on the so-called “pure” democratic process they charge others with disrupting.

Finally, there is the view that stresses building solid organization among the Survivors to draw them into becoming collective fighters and leaders of a mass movement for Reconstruction. This view seeks assistance from political activists and organizations that have developed resources, networks and skills in organizing in dispersed and crisis situations. These activists and organizations must be viewed as part of the people’s movement’s technology and not as “outsiders,” unless their actions are sectarian and unprincipled. They should be seen as essential to the process of political radicalization that must take place among the masses in order to help advance the mass struggles in a revolutionary direction. To expect survivors, refugees, or new arriving undocumented immigrants to build movements by themselves without the assistance of progressive and revolutionary forces familiar with conditions in the local areas is unrealistic and dangerous.

African American people have a history of struggle which has produced lessons, theoretical ideas, forms of organization, and activists who have committed their lives to help build the revolutionary

capacities of all oppressed peoples. To dismiss this history is to disregard the historical continuity and genius of the African American people; it is a liquidation of the African American national question, whose essence is its history of organized resistance to national oppression. Amilcar Cabral when talking about revolutionary democracy makes clear that this is a conscious process of developing the culture, institutional frameworks and confidence of the masses to lead their own struggle:<sup>3</sup>

In the framework of revolutionary democracy, our task is to prepare our hoe, our plough, our hammer, with which we are going to construct the future of our people in freedom, progress and happiness. We must constantly go forward to put power into the hands of our people, to make a profound change in the life of our people, even to put all of the means for defense into the hands of our people, so that it is our people who defend our revolution.

Denying this history and what it means for the right of African Americans to lead our own struggle, and to decide its relationship to other struggles, continues to be part of the problem of racism within the predominantly White left that has held back the development of a genuine multinational anti-imperialist revolutionary movement in the US.

### **Toward a mass movement for Reconstruction**

The National Survivors Assembly in Jackson, Mississippi on December 8–9, 2005, which brought together more than 300 Katrina and Rita Survivors and supporters from many states and cities within and outside of the Gulf Coast, was an initial step toward grounding this movement and its highest decision-making body among the Survivors. The Assembly was convened by the Mississippi Disaster Relief Fund and the Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund (PHRF), as a framework for Survivors to develop a Reconstruction program and movement. It put forward a basic program of action entitled “The People’s Declaration: Survivors Assembly Demands”:

We demand that local, state and federal government make conditions possible for our immediate return. This includes the following:

1. The Nagin Administration must make temporary housing such as apartments, hotel rooms, trailers and public housing developments available for us while we rebuild our homes.

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3. *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings of Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979).

2. The government must put an end to price gouging, stop all evictions and make rents affordable.
3. Local residents must take the lead in rebuilding our communities and must be hired to do the rebuilding work.
- 445 4. There must be immediate debt relief for debt associated with this disaster.
5. Quality public education and childcare must be provided for our children.
- 450 6. Quality affordable healthcare and access to free prescriptions must be provided.
7. The government must immediately clean up air, water and soil to make it safe and healthy for people to return home.

- 455 ● We demand that the government provide funds for all families to be reunited and that the databases of FEMA, Red Cross and any organizations tracking our people be made public.
- We demand accountability for and oversight of the over \$50 billion of FEMA funds and the money raised by other organizations, foundations and funds in our name.
- 460 ● We demand representation on all boards that are making decisions about relief and reconstruction. We also demand that those most affected by Hurricane Katrina be part of every stage of the planning process.
- We demand that no commercial Mardi Gras take place until the suffering of the people is lifted.
- 465 ● We are calling on Survivors and supporters to participate in organizing efforts to make these demands heard!<sup>4</sup>

470 The Assembly called for the creation of Survivor Councils throughout the Gulf Coast and among evacuees nationwide. The Councils are seen as vehicles to unite the dispersed Survivors into a national organization to shape the movement for Reconstruction. The Assembly also called on allies to form solidarity committees to help locate Survivors and assist them in building Survivor Councils and broader coalitions

475 for immediate and long-term struggles. Part of the task of the Survivor Councils is to elect leadership to the National Survivors Assembly. The PHRF has applied this principle to its own organization by calling on Survivor Councils to elect representatives to its Interim Coordinating

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480 4. Some adjustments have been made to this program, such as not building a campaign to oppose Mardi Gras – because the Mardi Gras Indian movement is a cultural component of the historical resistance in which Native Americans welcomed runaway slaves into their communities and nations.

Committee. This is an important factor distinguishing the PHRF perspective on Reconstruction from other initiatives. The National Survivors Assembly and the Survivor Councils are crucial to defending the rights and maintaining the political connection of the Survivors to their Gulf Coast communities – an essential factor in building a movement for the right of return as part of a just Reconstruction.

The Reconstruction movement is still young, having growing pains and transitioning from a relief network into a mass political movement. The struggles and differences within this movement, while problematic, should not be viewed as or made into antagonistic contradictions. A united front is needed, and where decisions cannot be arrived at by consensus, the will of the majority should be respected. A united front must seek to build a critical mass movement. The various political, organizational, ideological and religious tendencies should be encouraged to find ways to identify and support the will of the majority even if they have reservations about doing so. Over time, the merits of the various positions and their ability to coexist will be clarified through struggle. The Reconstruction movement must develop a culture of political education and comradely struggle as one of its democratic pillars.

### **Black workers take the lead**

The Black working class has a leading role to play in organizing the social and political power of the working class in support of Reconstruction. The trade unions must be drawn into the Reconstruction movement. Black workers must form rank-and-file caucuses to push the unions forward in support of this struggle. The labor movement, with its competing federations and their business union perspectives that deny rank-and-file democracy, cannot be expected act as a positive force without an internal rank-and-file movement oriented toward social unionism and internationalist fightback.

The Million Worker March Movement that emerged in 2004 was a very important first step toward such a rank-and-file movement. Although still mainly a national network, it has contributed to building the Reconstruction movement. Some of its leaders and activists have helped create a solidarity network of support committees, mass organizations, union caucuses and individual activists that in turn are helping to form Survivor Councils and are mounting protests against evictions and other injustices. A key part of the struggle must be to organize trade unions throughout the South (including rebuilding trade unions that once existed in the Gulf Coast industries) and

among the new workforce emerging around the clean-up and rebuilding, many of whom will be contract workers, including undocumented and temporary workers. Worker Centers can be formed to play a major role in this organizing.

525 Public sector workers are another key constituency. Their demand for union recognition could become a major part of a South-wide campaign to win collective bargaining rights, which at present are denied to the majority of public workers in every Southern state. It could also be a connecting point with public workers in the Southwest region, who are  
530 largely Latino and who likewise are denied bargaining rights in many locations.

Finally, the issues impacting working-class women must be given conscious attention to ensure that their demands gain a hearing and to promote the struggle against patriarchy as an integral part of the  
535 Reconstruction movement.

### **A Reconstruction Party**

The African American masses must become independent of the Democratic and Republican Parties as a precondition for their self-determination. During the 1960s, the formation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the Lowndes County Freedom Party and others throughout the South was a necessary development in the transition from the civil rights movement to the struggle for Black power. Today,  
540 the Democratic Party is clearly trying to co-opt the Gulf Coast struggle. The disenfranchisement of Black people in Florida, leading to the stolen presidential election of 2000, showed Black people that the Democratic Party had no interest in protecting their democratic rights, as confirmed by the fact that none of the Democratic Party Senators endorsed the  
545 Congressional Black Caucus's call to challenge the election.

Black Democrats in the US Congress and their spokespersons in the communities, many whom are playing important roles in pushing for support for the Gulf Coast Survivors and communities and should be considered objectively as part of the national Black united front, will  
550 push for the Reconstruction movement to align with the Democratic Party. But a Reconstruction movement must not be subordinate to the corporate-controlled Democratic and Republican Parties or even to more progressive organizations like the Green Party. An independent Reconstruction Party is needed as the political arm of the Reconstruction movement.  
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A Reconstruction Party is an important component of the right of return. It would help link the dispersed Survivors to a political

organization that enables them to vote in Gulf Coast elections. It would enable them to have input into decisions made by local, state and federal governments about their future. The refusal of the federal government to provide for onsite voting for Survivors in the various cities throughout the country requires a major struggle throughout the US, including expressions of international support. The voter registration efforts could also be used to sign up Survivors in the Gulf Coast and throughout the country to begin forming a mass base and discussing elements of a party program.

A Reconstruction Party with an organized membership throughout the US would have local branches in the major cities where large concentrations of African Americans and other oppressed nationalities live and work. It also could have a powerful influence on the development of an independent mass workers' party as a coalition party of the working class and oppressed nationalities.

This perspective on strategy is far from complete. It needs the further discussion, debate and thinking of all who are committed to ending oppression and building a better world, as others before us have organized, fought and died trying to do.