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- **Ten Great Ways To Help**

Whether you can offer tech skills, housing, volunteer time or hard cash, there are [many ways to help support](#) the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

- **Background**

### [News from NOLA](#)

The Times-Picayune's website provides continuous and detailed updates, along with photo galleries, weblogs and message boards.

- **Recommended Sites**

## [Survival of New Orleans](#)

Michael Barnett updates his blog, The Interdictor, throughout the day with firsthand reports of events in New Orleans.

## [Attytood](#)

A blog by Will Bunch, a staff writer for the Philadelphia Daily News, with provocative news and analysis of Katrina.

## [Team Rescue](#)

An organization set up by Native New Orleans rapper Master P and his wife Sonya Miller, to help families displaced by the disaster.

Hurricane Katrina

Coverage of Hurricane Katrina and the aftermath.

Winners and Losers: The Usual Suspects

By [Stephen Pizzo](#), [News for Real](#). Posted [September 13, 2005](#).

Look who's getting off easy in 'rebuilding' the Big Easy: the same companies that have been getting fat off rebuilding Iraq.

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We know who always loses when something goes wrong -- the poor. They're used to it. Only those with money expect the government to be Johnny-on-the-spot with help when life goes sideways on them. The poor, like those stuck in the muck in New Orleans, may be angry, but they are hardly disillusioned. Being left to drown and rot during a hurricane is just same-old, same-old for the losers among us.

And then there are those who always seem to win when something awful happens. They're used to that, too. A war breaks out someplace and it's, "Great, get the

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rebuilding contracts ready. Not to worry, they're already pre-signed." Because if there's anything the US government can do fast, it's hand out money to those who share come election time.

Earl Ofari Hutchinson

[George Bush Investigates!](#)

Molly Ivins

And so it came to pass in Iraq, and now in New Orleans. Look who's getting it easy rebuilding the Big Easy. You may recognize them because they are the same companies that have been getting fat off rebuilding Iraq.

More stories by [Stephen Pizzo](#)

The usual suspects: Bechtel, Fluor, Halliburton.

It's all in the family, really. Halliburton's Kellogg, Brown & Root and another company tapped to rebuild N.O., Shaw & Co., are both clients of former FEMA head, and Bush fundraiser, Joe Allbaugh. You might recall, Allbaugh was the guy who got the current FEMA director, Mike Brown, the job. They were roomies in college. Old School, you know. These chums are now first in line to tap the first \$100 billion in rebuilding funds.

I'm not surprised, and neither are any of the thousands of poor homeless families standing in line for the basics of life in relief centers. Now they just have to wait and watch as the nice white men are going to rebuild their city.

The big question now is, whose city will it be once they are done rebuilding it? Already the winners are working to set up vast trailer cities out far from New Orleans. The losers suspect those relocation camps will end up being their "new city," not New Orleans. (*One local leader remarked last week, "We've been trying for 25 years to get rid of those public housing projects, and it only took Katrina a hour to get the job done."*)

But hey, New Orleans is one helluva franchise -- a real potential gold mine. That is, if the winners can just clean the damn place up. All the French Quarter needs is a bit of buffing up by Disney Corp. to transform it into a "family friendly" vacation destination. But those poor areas need a total do-over. Imagine hundreds of thousands of quaint yuppie condos, walking distance to the French Quarter. Man alive, a developer could get \$300,000 a one-bedroom for one of those puppies. They can almost smell it, especially now that the former "bad elements" are hundreds of miles away cooling their brown heels in tincan houses in some Georgia pine forest.

And look who's first at the "give me" trough down in Mississippi -- the casinos. For years casino interests have fought a state law that required their gambling palaces float. Now they are about to get the right to build them on dry land. Whose dry land? Can you spell "*imminent domain*?" The Supreme Court has already cleared the legal path for local officials to decide that if a loser's house is in the way of something more lucrative, the house goes to make room for the lucrative.

So it was urban renewal. Messy, brutal but effective. A Category 4 wrecking ball of a hurricane. A gift to the winners from a loving and compassionate God. Intelligent design, in action. (*Ironically, it may have been the winners who gave us these super hurricanes too by denying that greenhouse gases cause global warming --- just as tobacco companies denied smoking was addictive and caused cancer, even though they knew it was and did -- felon see, felon do.*)

Oh, I know what some will say — *"Those companies get contracts like Iraq and New Orleans because they are the only companies big enough and with the resources and experience to do jobs like those."*

Yes, true, but how did they achieve such positions of contractual hegemony in the first place? That's the question. The answer is in the numbers:

### **Bechtel Group Inc.**

The Contributions: \$1,303,765 (59% to Republicans; 41% to Democrats)

Total to President Bush: \$6,250

### **Halliburton Co.**

The Contributions: \$708,770 (95% to Republicans)

Total to President Bush: \$17,677

### **Fluor**

The Contributions: \$25,000 Presidential Dinner

Total to President Bush: \$5,000

(From [OpenSecrets](#))

## **Add Yourself to the Blame Game**

While the lion's share of the billions of taxpayer money needed to rebuild New Orleans will go to such winner companies, the Bush administration is encouraging the rest of us to dig deeper and contribute to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the Red Cross.

"Give generously," President Bush pled last week because, with so much taxpayer money going to the winners, someone has to feed and house the losers.

We're a nation of mega-suckers. Just when I think they can't get away with squeezing anything more out of us, they do, and with our help no less. They want to give the winners a few hundred billions in tax breaks, and we agree -- and for what? For a lousy \$600 check. That's my definition of chumps.

They start a war on false pretenses, crap up an entire nation half way around the world, and then ask us to cough up a quarter trillion bucks to clean up the mess they made. We agree and they give much of that money to the usual suspects -- at least those who have agreed to return a portion of it to their benefactors during the next election cycle. The term "sucker" is too weak to describe us. We are

beyond suckers. We are sheep, pushing and shoving one another aside to be first in line at the packing house.

They send our kids to fight and die in an insurgency *they created*, while their own kids finish college, start jobs and families, and we let them. Why? Because they assure us that "it's worth it" -- worth the lives of our children, but not theirs.

Meanwhile, their Commander-in-Chief won't even drag himself to a single funeral -- not one of any of the 2000 GI's who died for him -- and once again, we let him get away with it. We don't even seem to think it's wrong. We are flag-waving, slogan-repeating accomplices to murder and infanticide. Yes, we are.

This whole mess was created -- and is maintained -- by two political parties, both as addicted to corporate money as addicts to heroin or crack. They can no longer imagine political life without the stuff. All Americans are created equal -- as long as their contributions are equal. Just ask the hundreds of thousands of poor losers whose new mailing addresses now reads, "formerly of New Orleans." You won't their names on contribution lists of candidates from either party.

But don't blame just Bush & Co. and clueless, spineless Democrats. We know what they are. Nevertheless, we have handed them our nation, our constitution, our Bill of Rights, our money, and now our children. So, as we play "the blame game," add your name to the list. We are a nation of suckers, and enablers.

We are beneath contempt, and will remain so as long as we let same-old, same-old be the norm.

*Stephen Pizzo is the author of numerous books, including "Inside Job: The Looting of America's Savings and Loans," which was nominated for a Pulitzer.*

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## **We are a nation of suckers, and enablers**

Posted by: greekTowner on Sep 13, 2005 3:38 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

Yes sir...I am not giving one dime to any charities.

What a scam.

They have no shame with the bombardment of donation requests.

It is same-old marketing below the guilt trip.

Where do you think those first \$60 billion come from?

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» [RE: We are a nation of suckers, and enablers](#) Posted by: eggnog2464

» [RE: We are a nation of suckers, and enablers](#) Posted by: dvann66

» [RE: We are a nation of suckers, and enablers](#) Posted by: badkitty

## **Split among thieves**

Posted by: pkrf\_A on Sep 13, 2005 4:01 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

I totally agree with your article !!!! Both parties are the same chronies of the big corporate well fare. The best recarnation of all this is Delay !!!! Need I say more?

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## **ECLECTICIST- S JIM RODRIGUEZ**

Posted by: SJR505 on Sep 13, 2005 4:13 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

" DOE ANYBODY KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS...???" DOES ANYBODY CARE...???"

We all have to remember that we live and are a " Capitalist " nation and for media purposes a "Democratic " nation... Further, one can visualize the money hungry Americans under the banners of "less government, conservatives, god-fearing, church-going, elitists, etc , shouting from the rooftops as they stuff all their pockets with dollars.."LET THEM EAT CAKE..."

Yes, I do agree about the enabling part, but as a "Christian" I refuse to let any of my family - neighbors, friends, colleagues, associates starve to death or die without my taking the time to support them during their most immediate needs...My boss is the son of a carpenter, and his judgment is who I value the most...



» [RE: Plutocracy](#) Posted by: [eggnog2464](#)

» [RE: Plutocracy](#) Posted by: [cyclone](#)

» [RE: Plutocracy](#) Posted by: [dean](#)

### **A novel idea**

Posted by: Erin on Sep 13, 2005 5:36 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

Halliburton, Bechtel. Fluor? How about putting all the local construction companies and local construction workers to work rebuilding their own cities? All the displaced citizens who now have no jobs and no homes are the ones who need the work and would take pride in having a hand in getting the area on its feet again. You might say, 'Well, if they have no homes left where would they stay while they work?' The same places that Halliburton, et al will house their employees, that's where.

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### **O'Reilly-Katrina & The Poor-use your own damn bootstraps-you can survive**

Posted by: fedupamerican on Sep 13, 2005 5:52 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

I don't normally watch FOX, except lastnite they had a couple of stories I wanted to hang around for...of course they told those last so I was captured for a whole hour! Hannity and O'Reilly are two of the most bullying, opinionated people I've ever heard, but I endured and was rewarded at the end with **O'Reilly's Sermon on Surviving Catastrophes**, so to speak.

Just some of his ideology - "educating" kids

"... teachers should then tell the students that the local, state and federal government bureaucracies failed to protect those poor people... Let the kids see the poor in New Orleans and the suffering they endured. Then prod the children to connect the dots and wise up. Educate yourself, work hard, and be honest. Then when disaster occurs you will have a fighting chance to beat it."

-- Umm, let me think here... so everyone that attends school, gets an "Adequate" education (the minimum required here in MS) can live in a nice home in a nice neighborhood--perhaps a 'gated' one--and drive an SUV out of said area whenever a hurricane or other disaster is upon them.... hmmm, must be more well-paying jobs and living wage jobs out there than I thought!!

"It is no accident that millions of poor people from all over the world sneak into America because they can make money here if they work hard."

-- Sooo, IF they WORK HARD- ugh, let's see, how many hours would they have to work at 5.15 an hour to pay a slumlord to have a roof over their head--around 600.00 a mo. is pretty cheap these days....do the math...

What planet is O from?????? Doesn't Halliburton, etc. etc. get Government "AID?" And don't

Politicians get "AID?" What's the damn difference except in the AMOUNTS of aid to Corporations/ Politicians vs. The Poor!!

<http://www.billoreilly.com/site/product?printerFriendly=true&pid=19095&said=null&satype=null>

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» [RE: O'Reilly-Katrina & The Poor-use your own damn bootstraps-you can survive](#) Posted by: cyclone

### **Bush is no aberration - he's über American!**

Posted by: philame on Sep 13, 2005 6:00 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

Thank you Pizzo for confirming something I have been thinking through the whole blame-game in the aftermath of Katrina. Bush does have a role to play, but he didn't create the demise of our country he only hastened it! We've been heading down the toilet for quite sometime and it's nobody's fault but our own. Bush is bad not because is an aberration, but becuase he represents everything that is wrong with us rolled up in one person. Glad to hear I am not the only person seeing this.

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### **We can beat it.**

Posted by: Lincoln fan on Sep 13, 2005 6:16 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

Mr. Pizzo has stated the problem clearly.

[Join the revolution](#)

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### **Can you spell "imminent domain?"**

Posted by: bornxeyed on Sep 13, 2005 7:08 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

I can, but obviously you can't and neither can your editors. It's Eminent Domain.

Or was this a joke? If it was, I don't get it.

Nice article though, it's the very reason I think rescue and containment efforts were delayed. Can't make billions rebuilding a city that wasn't destroyed.

Welcome to Amerika - a Disney(c) Corporation

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## **mykie**

Posted by: sam401 on Sep 13, 2005 7:16 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

Grover Norquist wrote to the labor Secretary on September 2 asking that Davis-Bacon be suspended for workers rebuilding the hurricane damaged areas. So, "to save the taxpayers money" prevailing wages now will not have to be paid. In Louisiana prevailing hourly wage is about \$22.00 for an electrician and \$11.00 for a painter. Workers trying to rebuild their homes and lives sure could use the money they're all willing to work hard for. The president acted quickly to accommodate Mr. Norquist and the taxpayers will be paying for generations to come for the billions that go to the usual suspects without much accountability.

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## **Incompetence Pays**

Posted by: plunger on Sep 13, 2005 7:45 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

### Disaster Capitalism in New Orleans

The cost of cleaning up the results of Bush's negligence in failing to deal with global warming and spending money needed for New Orleans levees on his war in Iraq may be as much as the \$300 billion spent in four years to fight the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Of course, what most people would regard as a cost, the entrepreneurial politicians in the Bush White House see as yet another opportunity to transfer money from taxpayers to their personal friends. The scheme is blatantly obvious:

1. Bush has started to issue Iraq-style no-bid contracts, with cost-plus provisions that guarantee contractors a certain profit regardless of how much they spend.
2. Old buddies like Halliburton, Bechtel, and Fluor are first in line. Joe Allbaugh, the former director of FEMA, is lobbying for Halliburton, and another winner of the Katrina windfall, Shaw Group Inc.
3. In order to increase profitability at the expense of the working people most affected by the hurricane and thus most in need of money, Bush has removed (or here) federal minimum-wage provisions from the reconstruction contracts.

"Last summer, in the lull of the August media doze, the Bush Administration's doctrine of preventive war took a major leap forward. On August 5, 2004, the White House created the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, headed by former US Ambassador to Ukraine Carlos Pascual. Its mandate is to draw up elaborate 'post-conflict' plans for up to twenty-five countries that are not, as of yet, in conflict. According to Pascual, it will also be able to coordinate three full-scale reconstruction operations in different countries 'at the same time,' each lasting 'five to seven years.'

"But if the reconstruction industry is stunningly inept at rebuilding, that may be because rebuilding is not its primary purpose. According to Guttal, 'It's not reconstruction at all - it's about reshaping

everything.' If anything, the stories of corruption and incompetence serve to mask this deeper scandal: the rise of a predatory form of disaster capitalism that uses the desperation and fear created by catastrophe to engage in radical social and economic engineering.

Competence just leads to fewer chances to make money.

<http://xymphora.blogspot.com/>

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