

# **State Terror and White Supremacy Triumph ‘Temporarily’ in New Orleans**

by Leon A. Waters

**Much of my analysis is the result of my own direct experience and eye witness account during the 10 days following hurricane Katrina and the months after I returned to New Orleans five weeks later. My ailing father and I were forced out of my home at gunpoint by 10 – 12 law enforcement officials who appeared to be members of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) based on the black uniforms they wore.**

As a result of contradictions inherent in the U.S.A. political-economic system, specifically from the two fraternal twin parties - the Democrats and the Republicans – the New Orleans metropolitan area became a charred casualty on August 29, 2005. The U.S. government had gambled on their 476 mile levee system (created after Hurricane Betsy of 1965) by transferring and reducing funds from levee flood protection to fund imperialist war worldwide. This inane action included wars against revolutionary struggles – national liberation and proletarian - as well as economic and political interventions worldwide.

New Orleans is a seaport city where super rich commodities that include oil, gas, chemicals, steel, and numerous sundry goods are exported and imported by the Mississippi River. Over 8 million tons of cargo travel through the Port of New Orleans annually. 42% of all U.S. trade travels the Mississippi River. At the same time, the river serves as a tourist spot for hoteliers, restaurateurs, and other related business concerns. A substantial part of its economy is owned and controlled by the bosses of Wall Street; especially its financial centers – the banks. None of these banks are completely owned and controlled by New Orleanians but are in joint collaborative agreements. The majority of these financial centers are owned by Anglo-Americans.

The failure of the state’s levee system, the discriminatory and inadequate evacuation plan, the overall failure of preparations at the local, state and federal levels further exposed the depth of the oppressed African American nation residing in New Orleans and parts of Louisiana. Much of this was revealed by the Black social classes in the city: the African American working and middle classes, as well as the fragile comprador (completely bought off) African American bourgeois class. The flood destruction crippled the capitalist infrastructure (electricity, water, schools, roads, hospitals/clinics, businesses, etc.) which affected all social classes.

**What became the number one political concern of the ruling bourgeois class and its state?** There must not be an insurrection (nor a spontaneous revolt) of the oppressed classes of the African American nation. Quick, decisive and repressive force must be ordered to prevent a revolt from rising. The international exposure of the crisis had revealed and damaged the image of the U.S.A. state. An uprising, especially planned, would further damage the prestige of the U.S.A.

When one studies the urban rebellions of the 70’s, 60’s, the 40’s (like the Detroit rebellion) and many more before, there are many examples of these rebellions being ignited by police terror, police beating, white supremacist or klan-like action., etc. New Orleans was not the candidate for such specific inflammatory outbreaks. But the depth of the economic exploitation and the hatred (national oppression) of African Americans here certainly became an essential part of the calculation of the Anglo-American bourgeois class that such a possibility could occur. So, what appeared as a long time to get food and water to the people as if it were a matter of bureaucracy and inefficiencies, was really a matter of debate and deliberation among the state officials on how best to suppress a potential civic explosion.

I believe if we examine what the ruling powers did through their control of the state apparatus and both their capitalist parties (Democrat and Republican), we will see the facts clearly.

The political objective of the ruling billionaires and millionaires was: Crush any insurrectionary or spontaneous revolt quickly. To accomplish this goal, the strategy of the oppressor's state was to remove the African American citizenry and occupy the city. Hence the state would carry forth the following tactics to achieve its strategy:

1. Implement a policy of *'shoot to kill'* under the signboard of looting. Many Black people were murdered; some by police authorities and others by mercenaries. The state continues to deceive and hide these facts, the numbers and the identities.
2. Using federal agencies, i.e. the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.), rescue the remaining members of the Anglo-American bourgeois class from the University and Garden districts areas of New Orleans. Return these people when conditions dictated that the areas were safe and secured.
3. Block African Americans from leaving the metro area on their own by the barrel of the gun:
  - a. Block the crossing of the Crescent City Connection Bridge over the Mississippi River. Welcome whites who evacuated by crossing the bridge and ordering African Americans to return to the other side of the bridge or face arrest.
  - b. Deny African Americans access to barges in St. Bernard parish to evacuate by the Mississippi River, but afford this opportunity to whites.
  - c. Block the west side of the city with police, state police and soldiers along the Monticello Street from 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal to S. Claiborne Avenue to deny entrance to the city.
  - d. Block access to St. Bernard and Orleans parish in the lower ninth ward by double stacking railroad cars across St. Claude Avenue near the Jackson Barracks and stacking flooded automobiles three – four cars high across N. Claiborne Avenue.
  - e. Deploy several thousand soldiers to the eastbank of the Mississippi River. These soldiers guarded the docks along Tchoupitoulas Street from Audubon Park to Nashville Avenue, to Napoleon Avenue, to Louisiana Avenue, to Felicity Street. Among the valuable commodities held by the docks were military weapons and equipment. Transform the University of New Orleans campus, Lake Front airport spaces and Audubon Park grounds into military command posts for operations.
4. Remove African Americans from hundreds of rooftops, attics, etc. This was **Not** rescue. This was a **Remove** policy. When people are rescued, they are returned; such as, the white bourgeoisie from uptown University and Garden district along St. Charles Avenue area.
5. Transport African Americans and others from roofs, attics, boats, etc. to the Ernest Morial Convention Center. Remove all Blacks from the city by bus and airplane to towns and cities across the United States. This included those who were temporarily held at the perceived concentration camp called Causeway Concentration Camp. Whites were channeled to board buses and planes (at the Louis Armstrong International Airport and other airports) first, while African Americans were allowed to board after whites.
6. Transform Amtrak Train station into a temporary jail. Non-criminal and criminal suspects were detained at this site.

7. Transfer inmates, predominantly Black, of surrounding river parish jails outside of New Orleans to New Orleans while everyone else was evacuating from New Orleans. The state later abandoned the legal wards (inmates) of the state. Over 7,000 were in jail and 69% of those were in jail on minor offenses. Many were subjected to flooding of first floor-neck deep water.
8. Place remains of deceased in unmarked graves. Keep their identities hidden.
9. Remove the remaining mostly African Americans from the city by armed force. In the lower section of Carrollton bounded by Leake Avenue, Carrollton Avenue, Oak Street and Monticello Street, hundreds of African Americans were forced out of the neighborhoods and removed by buses. Buses were driven to various places such as Lafayette, Louisiana, where Blacks were placed on airplanes and flown to different cities and towns across the United States.

When this was finally accomplished several days later, the city of New Orleans was now fully occupied by the state's military and numerous law enforcement agencies. It now became evident that the state had made the decision to declare anyone who refused to leave as an **“Enemy of the State”**. Armed force would be exercised to expel Black citizens out of the city. With its central command located downtown and operating in mobile fashion (from various abandoned corporate buildings and cruise ships, the state publicly acted as *an organ of organized terror unrestricted by any law*. Police units along Tchoupitoulas Street, especially at Winn Dixie Supermarket, Rouse Supermarket, Walmart, were seen looting businesses. At Walmart, for instance, New Orleans police officers stood outside the store bragging that *“f.....g looting is going on so yall- (speaking to Black people) come on in”*. At the Everything Shoppe at 444 Canal Street, police would stop so-called looters leaving the store with their machine guns. The police would then place their guns against the store's walls on the sidewalk and proceed to *‘cherry pick’* items from the liberated goods. After robbing the so-called looters, police would then pick up their guns and holler to the so-called looters **“Get the f... out of here”**.

10. Employ the use of mercenary forces and the white supremacist para-military forces:
  - a. The rich millionaires hired many mercenary companies to guard their downtown skyscrapers and properties. These were beyond the James Bond/Jason Bourne types like Blackwater, etc. These were paid killers who earned \$1500 to \$2000 per 12-hour shift. A 24-hour shift was double pay. Their weapons were nothing like the average citizen sees on the local police force. Special weapons were carried in cases double the size of guitar cases; some carried sophisticated not popularly known devices under their clothing; some had goggles that allowed you to see through various types of walls. These guys bragged about their accomplishments in Rwanda, Afghanistan, including Asia, Africa and South America. These were fascists who enjoyed the art of stalking, torturing and killing.

The few downtown hotels that were opened post-Katrina had five clients: Mercenary companies, disaster insurance company agents, disaster companies, relief groups and hotel workers and their families.

- b. In addition, were the white-supremacist para-military forces patrolling the neighborhood areas along the Mississippi River that were not damaged by flooding: the Faubourg-Marigny neighborhood, the French Quarter, along Tchoupitoulas Street to Audubon Zoo, and the nose area of the Algiers. These fascist style forces in collusion with other police forces murdered a number of Black people. Several bodies of men were found with gunshot wounds to the head.
11. The state's treatment of Anglo-American working and middle class neighborhoods was respectable and dignified. With the vast destruction of neighboring St. Bernard parish, a predominantly white working and middle class area, the state insured the privileged position of whites; while the state's treatment of Blacks was generally weapons in your face. African Americans faced 9 mm guns, shotguns and machine guns almost everywhere they sought for relief.
  12. Wrongfully fired about 7,000 New Orleans school employees, mostly Black, crippling the teachers' union. In predominant white parishes, this action was not done to other school employees.
  13. Refuse to repair, open public housing and improve affordable housing locking out tens of thousands. The state later rebuilt public housing and affordable housing but reduced the number of units and changed the eligibility criteria to a three (3) tier system that further worsened the already housing crisis.

It is my contention that the rich and their state's overall strategy and tactics were designed to create a *new* New Orleans that would become a realignment of old and new capitalist owners and bosses with a new labor class. They are tactically carrying this out now – 10 years later after hurricane Katrina.

These reactionary forces will triumph for a while. But the masses, especially the African American masses will regroup and rise again. When the masses reach a proper level of “class consciousness” and create the proper forms of organization led by proper leadership, they will then be on the right road to bring an end to the tyranny of the rich and fulfill the aspirations of the majority for complete emancipation. That day is coming!

**By Leon A. Waters**  
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