

Texas State NAACP Disaster Committee  
Carol Moore  
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House Committee on Homeland Security  
Hearing

Houston Strong: Hurricane Harvey Lessons Learned and the Path Forward

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Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the Committee, I am Carol Moore, chair of the Texas State NAACP Disaster Committee.

Hurricane Harvey was devastating and with the storm, we, like so many organizations faced the daunting task of helping those in need.

The Texas State NAACP has Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the Red Cross and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Working in tandem with these two organizations has allowed us to continue our mission of advocacy. There were many conference calls, emails, and meetings which allowed us to be part of the disaster response and recovery process.

We knew that Hurricane Harvey was historic and to capture our work, we created a documentary. The documentary is called NAACP Harvey and is publicly available for those who wish to view it. I would be honored if Members of the Committee would view the documentary as it would give you a sense of the challenges we faced on the ground.

After Hurricane Harvey made landfall, we quickly learned that rescue for our community meant that helping each other was the only way we were going to get through this catastrophe. Fear and panic seemed to rule as whole communities were surrounded by high water. Confusion as to where help was coming from added to the state of panic.

Members of the community did not wait for Federal assistance before we took action. Local first responders worked for days to save lives. Business owners opened their doors to help provide goods and services. Churches provided refuge for storm survivors. There were countless individuals who stepped up and helped others in the face of the storm aftermath and for that we are grateful and take great pride.

From the lessons learned from Hurricane Harvey, the Houston NAACP Branch Disaster Recovery Center was created. Our Disaster Recovery Center provided many residents with assistance, including mucking supplies, finding housing, filing FEMA applications and appeals, locating Red Cross assistance, conducting outreach to the elderly and families.

One of the lessons Hurricane Harvey taught and/or reminded the community is that preparation is key. Preparation in policy is nothing if the people in the community are not prepared. People need to know that in a crisis you are your own first responder. You must have plans for your families in case of an emergency. Community leaders must be prepared for the storms and know how to provide instructions to those who need them.

Looking forward, the NAACP Branch Disaster Recovery Center is looking to establish a block by block campaign in conjunction with churches and create a statewide certified emergency response team. We believe that this emergency response team will use existing relationships between communities and residents to create a robust network for those in need after a disaster.

Many times we forget that many people live every day in a disaster, therefore the rescue and recovery process after Hurricane Harvey continues. The Texas State NAACP stands ready to work with those here today and those listening from afar to increase community preparedness and speed the recovery for Hurricane Harvey survivors.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to any questions you may have.