

OPINIONS

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Conversations about extreme weather and inequality



Photos by Brian Quijada

Writer-winners Adithleidy Lopez-Magallon, Camren Nichols, Sakara Harris, Crystal Liu, Jamie Lyles, and Lola Carr.

An introduction to the texts you will read today

These young people won prizes in a writing contest last fall and we are glad to share their work in the Beaumont Enterprise. The contest asked for poetry or prose on extreme weather and inequality. Judges were from Lamar University, Jefferson County and beyond. They had already come together with other locals to discuss the two linked issues. They

wanted to hear from the rising generation. Prize money came via Ancient to the Future, a project started by an elder born and raised in Beaumont and his daughter. One winner each from the five biggest local high schools got \$5,000. In a surprise move, two special mention winners, Adithleidy Lopez-Magallon and Sakara Harris, got \$1,000.

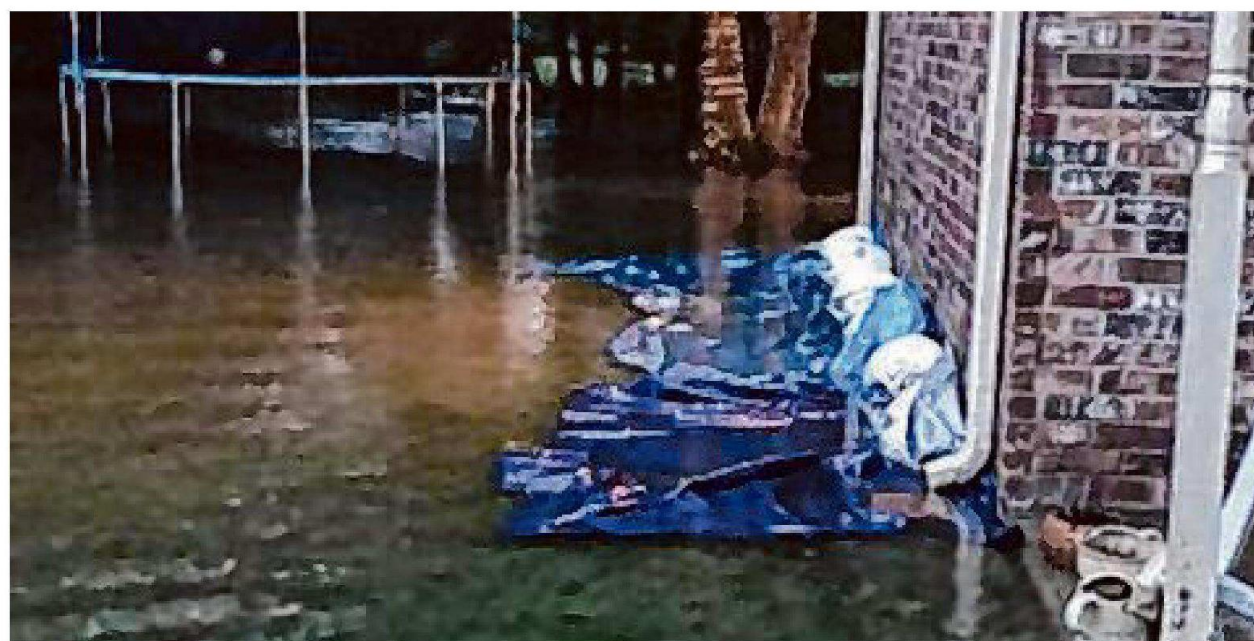
What does it take to act now for the future on these two stubborn issues? For starters, it takes telling it like it is. Please enjoy and applaud these high school students for doing just that. Before, during, and after the waters rise, words matter. When we see not just bluebonnets but blue tarps, words matter. Thank you for reading — and caring.

Extreme weather brings inequality issues to the surface

By Adithleidy Lopez-Magallon
NEDERLAND HIGH SCHOOL

When we think about extreme weather, our focus often centers on our own negative experiences. However, seldom do we pause to consider those who had few resources and find themselves with nothing in the wake of a natural disaster. Some people may face inequality during severe weather conditions due to the lack of basic resources such as water and food, and lack of access to transportation to be able to evacuate to a safe place.

In Southeast Texas, hurricanes are the most prevalent extreme weather event. During these natural disasters, people who lack essential resources can encounter significant challenges. When families in Southeast Texas receive notifications of an approaching hurricane, the first thing they do is to obtain vital survival items such as water and food. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory identifies



Amanda Hickman Thompson

Flooding is seen in Nederland. Adithleidy Lopez-Magallon says "individuals without basic resources such as water, food, and transportation become susceptible to inequality."

five fundamental categories that people are governed by: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-realization. According to Maslow, needs at the physiological level are considered primary; nevertheless, individuals with low incomes face inequality as they struggle to acquire these indispensable elements. It is

imperative to address these inequalities and ensure that everyone has access to the resources needed to survive and remain safe during extreme weather events. One effective approach to giving people the opportunity to meet essential needs is to establish sites where those facing financial difficulties can

obtain needed items free of charge. During Hurricane Harvey, numerous organizations set up sites to give basic resources to disadvantaged individuals. Following Maslow's hierarchy, the second category is safety, which can be compromised by a lack of transportation. The absence of trans-

portation during extreme weather events can create inequality by restricting people's abilities to safeguard themselves and reach safety during emergencies. Lack of transportation hinders the creation of a clear and accessible evacuation plan, making it challenging for some individuals to find safe shelter or

receive adequate aid during natural disasters. As a result, this poses a greater risk to the life and well-being of less privileged individuals, compared to those with access to financial resources, support, and transportation. It is important to ensure that everyone has access to the necessary resources for a safe evacuation during extreme weather events, thereby reducing inequalities in the face of emergencies. In the example of Hurricane Harvey, we saw our community come together to rescue individuals in vulnerable situations.

It is essential to acknowledge that during extreme weather events, individuals without basic resources such as water, food, and transportation become susceptible to inequality. Nevertheless, it is inspiring to witness our community coming together to address these inequalities and assist those who are most in need.

Translated into English by Dania Santana

Bridging the gap for a resilient future

By Lola Carr

BEAUMONT UNITED
HIGH SCHOOL

Extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods and heatwaves, have become increasingly frequent and severe in recent years. While these events pose a threat to all communities, regardless of socioeconomic status, it is often the marginalized and vulnerable populations who bear the brunt of their impact. This essay aims to explore the relationship between extreme weather and inequality, shedding light on the disproportionate effects on disadvantaged communities. I will explore some of the notable events in recent years and provide personal testimonials. In addition, by examining recent statistics and scholarly research, I will present the evidence with the aim of providing a deeper understanding of this pressing issue and highlight the urgency in bridging the gap to ensure a more resilient future.

Extreme weather trends

The effects of climate change have resulted in an alarming increase in extreme weather events worldwide. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global warming caused by human activities has significantly contributed to the rise in extreme weather occurrences (IPCC, 2022). These events, including hurricanes, floods and



Kim Brent/Beaumont Enterprise file

A rescue boater in the aftermath of Tropical Depression Imelda, September 2019. Lola Carr says “it is often the marginalized and vulnerable populations who bear the brunt” of extreme weather.

extreme heatwaves, have devastating consequences on both ecosystems and human communities.

In recent years, record-breaking weather events have dominated news headlines. One such event was the record-breaking Atlantic hurricane season in 2020. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), this season saw a total number of 30 named storms, surpassing the previous record of 28 in 2005, the year I was born. The impact of these hurricanes was devastating, causing loss of life, destruction of homes and infrastructure, and displacement of communities along the Gulf Coast, East Coast and Caribbean Islands. The economic toll was also immense, with estimated damage exceeding

\$40 billion. To make it personal, in 2017, Tropical Storm Harvey hit my town of Beaumont, Texas. Harvey, initially a Category 4 Hurricane, dumped nearly 60 inches of rain in my city. This resulted in catastrophic flooding in Beaumont and the Houston area. According to news reports, Harvey caused at least 68 direct fatalities and an estimated \$125 billion in damages, making it one of the costliest natural disasters in U.S. history. It also exposed the vulnerability of low-income communities and highlighted the disparities in preparedness and response efforts. Many marginalized communities, particularly those living in flood-prone areas, faced significant challenges in evacuating and assessing essential resources during and

after the storm. For example, due to lack of resources and failure to evacuate, families were being rescued from their roofs, were displaced, and separated as they went into shelters across the state to escape the storm. The unimaginable fear and terror this storm caused as it pounded through dumping flood waters was unforgettable. Two years later, in 2019, Tropical Storm Imelda came through my town and caused another catastrophic flood that many people won't see in a lifetime. My middle school was impacted by this catastrophic event.

Another impactful storm along the Gulf Coast was Hurricane Laura. Although Laura did not directly affect my town of Beaumont, it did make landfall in neighboring towns in South-

western Louisiana and around Southeast Texas. Laura brought destructive winds, heavy rainfall, and a dangerous storm surge in 2020 as a Category 4 hurricane. This catastrophic event resulted in multiple fatalities and extensive damage to homes, infrastructure, and agriculture. The impacts of Hurricane Laura were particularly devastating to Lake Charles, Louisiana. For example, in Lake Charles, Louisiana, the storm left behind a trail of destruction with buildings reduced to rubble, widespread power outages lasting for weeks, and disrupted water and sewage systems. The storm's impacts were compounded by the lack of recovery from a prior storm less than a year before and the ongoing Covid-19

pandemic, which strained local resources and made recovery efforts even more challenging. A friend of the family, whom I will call John for the sake of this essay, shared his distressing account of the aftermath of Hurricane Laura with my parents and me. He spoke of the devastation to his crops and infrastructure, which left him and his family struggling to recover both financially and emotionally. John emphasized the need for greater investment in climate-resilient farming practices and infrastructure to protect against future extreme weather events. As can be seen through personal testimonials, these storms caused extensive damage and displaced thousands of families. Similarly, unprecedented heatwaves have swept across various regions, leading to increased mortality rates, particularly among vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and low-income communities.

Impact of extreme weather on inequality

Now that I have highlighted just a few of the extreme weather trends, I want to present to you some evidence on its impact on impoverished communities. While weather itself does not discriminate, its effects are disproportionately felt by marginalized communities exacerbating existing inequalities. Socioeconomic factors such as income, education, and access to re-

Carr continues on D4

Enduring Mother Nature's wrath

By Camren Nichols

NEDERLAND HIGH SCHOOL

The TV plays loudly in the background as my parents move quickly throughout the house grabbing clothes, and lifting furniture, and my dad places sandbags outside our doors. My little sister and I sit on the ground and play Go Fish to pass the time, but I can't help but listen to the TV occasionally. The weatherman is talking about some hurricane coming in from the gulf that is about to hit. I honestly don't even know why my parents are so worried, our house has never flooded before, even during Ike.

“Do you have any sevens?” My sister asks to which I nod slowly before handing over my seven hearts. I'm somehow losing to a seven-year-old whose favorite card to ask for is sevens. I should know by now what she wants yet I'm too distracted by the chaos that is sweeping through my house.

I lean back from where I sit to see my mom and dad whispering to each other in the kitchen. Dad runs his hands through his hair as he attempts to comfort my mom as she aggressively whispers about damage to our home.

I move back to my original position and ask, “Do you have any . . . sevens?” My sister frowns before handing me a card, so I celebrate loudly just to rub it in her face. She knocks the cards out of my hand before sticking her tongue at me leaving me no other option but to nudge her face out of



Amanda Hickman Thompson

Flooding is seen in Nederland. Carmen Nichols recounts her experience at home during Hurricane Harvey.

mine.

“Hey! Stop fighting and pick those cards up.” My dad nags as he passes through the living room to head back outside. Dark, almost black clouds form in the distance, which look vastly different from the occasional rain we've been getting on and off today.

My sister and I slowly pick up the cards, but not without the occasional insults thrown at each other with smiles on our faces. “It'll come in from the gulf then hit in places like Corpus Christi before continuing to move up,” the tiny man from Channel 6 says as he drags his hand up from the Gulf of Mexico and brings it up towards Texas.

I look out the window and see water rushing down the street as it begins to storm. “Do you think our house will flood?” My sister says absentmindedly as she

closes the card box. “No. No, the house will be fine,” I say sitting closer to her and putting an arm around her, “Dad said the house has never flooded, even during Ike.” She nods and then stands to put up the cards. I look outside once more and see a branch fall off a tree from across the street.

That night my sister and I share my bed because according to my mom, we should stick together for now. My sister snoozes away blissfully beside me while I stay up listening to the crack of thunder every few minutes. I can tell my mom and dad are still up because of the light that slips through the sliver under my door. Plus their voices carry through the wood every once in a while before quieting back down.

“John, we need to leave at some point. There's no

waiting this one out.” My mom says exasperated. They quiet down again, but I get out of bed, hoping to hear what's said. I don't want to leave our home. What if something bad happens to it?

“We'll leave if necessary, but you know we don't have the money to just leave on a whim,” I hear Dad agree before the scrape of the chairs signifies the end of the conversation.

I hurriedly rush back to the safety of my bed to not get caught still being up just as they open the door to check on us. I keep my eyes sealed shut, hoping to trick them into thinking I'm asleep. They kiss our heads before leaving the room, likely to go to bed themselves. I stare up at the ceiling as the roar of the storm continues and begin counting sheep in an attempt to fall asleep.

“Syd, wake up. Come

on, let's get up,” I hear a voice say as I'm slowly woken up from my sleepy daze. I pry my eyes open to see mom holding my little sister who has tears streaking down her face. I look over in time to see my dad frantically pass my door as he runs to the front of the house. “Come on sweetie. Grab some shoes, we're about to leave,” My mom rubs my arms trying to wake me up some more. I look down at the floor and see our carpet is beginning to be soaked with water.

“Mom, what's going on?” I throw my blankets off and tiptoe on the ground to my closet. I shove my feet into tennis shoes as my mom says, “The water rose a lot quicker than we thought, we're getting water in the house.” She places down my sister whose tears have dried up and stands silently in the middle of the room. She grabs an

overnight bag from the top of my closet before tossing in pairs of shirts and pants. “Where are we gonna go?” I ask, tears beginning to fill my eyes. My mom stops what she's doing to cradle my face in her hands, kissing the tip of my nose, and says, “Don't worry sweetheart. Your dad and I have something planned out.” She gives me a smile before continuing what she was doing.

“Y'all almost ready to go? We need to hurry.” My dad pokes his head into my room with two bags thrown over his shoulder. My mom quickly picks up my bag then makes me grab my little sister's hand. We walk to our front door where two guys in yellow rain jackets are grabbing our bags and yelling something to another guy in a boat where our street was just a few hours ago. My mouth falls open as I see how far the water has gone up our yard.

“I need y'all to be my brave little girls, okay?” My dad says, crouching in front of me and my sister and rubbing the tops of our heads. We both slowly nod before one of the yellow jacket guys carries off my sister into the growing depth of water in our front yard and then the other lifts me off my feet.

As we trudge through the water I can't help but look back at our home and just hope we can be back soon. Once we're all loaded up, I can no longer tell if the wetness on my face is from the rain that seeps through my jacket and into my clothes or tears as I leave my home to face the wrath of Mother Nature.

A story of hurricanes, trailer parks and hope

By **Jamie Lyles**

PORT NECHES-GROVES
HIGH SCHOOL

“Trailer park trash.” In the world of preconceived judgments, this term resonates as a stark reminder of stereotypes and societal biases. This derogatory phrase once hurled my way after my family’s relocation to an R.V. park, speaks volumes about the unspoken challenges we faced. Unwanted but unyielding, we found ourselves in this situation due to economic turmoil. In the midst of inflation’s relentless surge and plummeting economy, my mother lost her job, and we faced the grim reality of losing our home. This ultimately led us to find a new home located within the confines of a trailer park. As the words of my fellow students stung, I gathered my inner strength and masked the hurt with a brave face. Life, though far from ideal, was still manageable. However, this equilibrium was shattered by the unrelenting force of Hurricane Rita, the first extreme weather disaster we would have to endure.

I knew it was going to be bad when the mandatory evacuation was called. My mother loaded us up with a few snacks and drinks, and we hit the road thinking we could make it to Lufkin in a few hours. Instead, we were met with almost stand-still traffic, and our gas indicator arrow slowly headed toward empty. After seven hours, the car died, and we were



File photo

Traffic inches along during the evacuation ahead of Hurricane Rita in 2005. Jamie Lyles says “I have come to realize the disproportionate impact these disasters have on lower-income and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities.”

officially out of gas. Some fellow travelers helped push the car to the side of the road, and that is where we stayed for the next ten hours. We were miserable. It was hot, we had very little food and water, and there was no gas station in sight. Eventually, a policeman brought us five gallons of gas, and we were back on the road for another six hours of driving until finally reaching our destination. A hotel room was home for the next seven days. The next week, as we slowly headed back to our town, the anticipation and nerves of what we would find hit us hard. As we approached the row of large brick homes in the center of town, we saw a group of people sitting in lawn chairs having a cookout amongst the loud hum of

generators. There were some branches on the ground but the houses seemed to have minimal damage. I got my hopes up thinking maybe it was not as bad as I thought, but instead, the reality aligned with our anxious apprehension. If you have ever watched the news after an extreme weather event, you would know trailer parks do not fare well. Our trailer was knocked off the cinder block foundation and our roof ripped off. We had nothing but a few clothes and kitchen items that were soaked with musty rain and sewer water. The entire park was devastated with bits and pieces of our neighbors’ homes dotting the land. For a child, one of the worst things to see is your mother breaking down in tears because

she was at a complete loss of what to do next. After a couple months of staying with different people, as we could no longer wait on government disaster assistance, we found a rent-to-own home that was affordable. It was nice having a house. I was happy.

However, happiness is often short-lived. It’s the ebb and flow of the universe, and I was caught in the washout. Another storm was coming. The storm was called Tropical Storm Harvey, and devastating flood waters were relentlessly dumped onto our area. Over fifty inches of rain fell and overwhelmed the city’s drainage system. Water crept ever so closely to our home and eventually started pouring in our back door until the entire house had one foot of

water in it. My only thought was, “Why us? Why is this happening again? What are we going to do now?” This go-around, my mother did not cry. She told me that everything would be fine, and we would get the mess cleaned up once the water receded. Together we did just that. We ripped out carpet, cut out sheetrock, and mopped and mopped again. We lived in the house with no repairs for another year. There was no extra money for remodeling, and I honestly did not mind as long as we got to stay.

In subsequent years, we have weathered Hurricane Delta, Laura, and an ice storm that caused the electrical grid in Texas to completely fail. It was safeguarded for extreme heat but not an

ice storm. Many lower income people were displaced once again. They turned to federal aid, but FEMA could not get to everyone as quickly as they needed help. In my opinion, after living through this very issue, a critical area in need of reform is FEMA assistance. Despite its vital role in disaster recovery, the agency faces persistent issues. Delays in approving FEMA trailers and obstacles related to utility permits and hook-ups have left many victims waiting for months, stranded in dire conditions. Additionally, there was another issue of placing FEMA trailers in flood zoned areas, which was soon followed by the need to relocate them. These challenges underscore the urgency of enhancing FEMA assistance to ensure more efficient and timely aid to people who are in dire need after catastrophic weather.

Having weathered many extreme weather events in my lifetime, I have come to realize the disproportionate impact these disasters have on lower-income and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. We did not have insurance because it was not an affordable option, and the government programs did not cover much of our loss. A few ideas I have thought of to help in these situations are first, have a supply of water on hand, ready-to-eat meals, and an immediate place for residents

Lyles continues on D4

Surviving Hurricane Harvey: A 10-year-old’s perspective

By **Leydi Mariel Mascareno**

PORT ARTHUR MEMORIAL
HIGH SCHOOL

In the summer of 2017, a life-altering tragedy descended upon my family. I was just a ten-year-old fifth-grader, eagerly anticipating the return to my elementary school, where the past two years had been filled with friendships, laughter. The school was a place where my friends, cousins, and siblings all learned side by side, creating a close-knit community I cherished. The promise of another school year shone brightly on the horizon. Little did I know, fate had a different path in mind.

I grew up in a low-income household, and my family had only been in the USA for two years. I hadn’t encountered a hurricane until Hurricane Harvey came along. At the age of ten, I couldn’t fully grasp the gravity of the situation, and neither could my mom, who had experienced milder hurricanes in the past but never in the USA. While I was born in the United States, I was raised in my mother’s home country of Honduras, and the English was still a bit difficult to me; we didn’t grasp the seriousness of the Hurricane.

When Hurricane Harvey hit Port Arthur, it was nighttime, and we were sound asleep, blissfully unaware. We thought it wouldn’t be a severe hurricane and that Houston would bear the brunt of it. However, that night, my mother was jolted awake by loud noises and people outside



Kim Brent/Beaumont Enterprise file

Heavy rains from Hurricane Harvey flooded roadways in 2017. Leydi Mariel Mascareno says her personal experience is “a stark reminder that not everyone has the resources or support they need to recover from such disasters.”

urgently shouting for everyone to evacuate. She rushed to wake me and my little brother. As I groggily opened my eyes, I could see the fear in her face, and it dawned on me what was happening. It was only 4 a.m., and my mind was still foggy, but a survival instinct kicked in. We had just a few minutes to gather some essentials: a change of clothes and a pair of shoes. I remember wading through water, feeling cold and wet, my small stature barely above the rising flood. I was terrified, imagining snakes or other creatures lurking in the water. My mom, carrying my three-year-old brother on her shoulder, was our guiding light through the chaos.

We left our flooded apartment, we ventured outside and witnessed our neighbors frantically

knocking on doors, trying to rouse others as the water levels surged. We climbed the stairs to my uncle’s apartment, who lived in the building next to ours. We banged on his door, tears streaming down my face, shivering from the cold and fear. As the hurricane’s fury raged outside, my mother was in the grip of sheer terror. I had never witnessed her so vulnerable, so overcome with fear. In that moment, I saw a side of her I had never seen before. Her tears flowed, and her entire being trembled. I couldn’t help but feel a profound sense of vulnerability, knowing that my mother, our protector, was herself terrified.

It was her strength, her unwavering resolve to protect us, that gave us the glimmer of hope we clung to that night. I

often think about what might have become of us if she hadn’t been as resolute and determined as she was. She shielded us from the full force of the impending disaster, and I will be forever grateful for her unyielding courage. Even now, when hurricane season approaches, the memories of that night come rushing back, uninvited and unwelcome. I’ve never truly been able to overcome the deep-seated fear and anxiety it left in its wake. The emotions I experienced that night, the fear, the desperation, will forever be etched into my memory, just as it is in my mother’s.

We were fortunate that my uncle lived in such close proximity to us, for without his nearness, I can’t fathom how we would have found a safe haven that night. Al-

though sleep eluded us, we felt safer in his apartment, away from the relentless fury of the storm. I can still picture families wading through waist-deep water outside, searching for higher ground. The hurricane’s duration was unexpected; it lingered for hours, the rain relentless and unceasing. Even though we were on the second floor, the fear of flooding was an ever-present companion. That night was a harrowing journey through the depths of fear and despair, but it also revealed the strength and resilience that exists within us. It taught me the importance of community, the bonds of family, and the significance of coming together during times of adversity like the extreme weather all us of were experiencing. The scars of that

night may never fully fade, but they serve as a constant reminder of the power of human endurance and the indomitable spirit that can arise even in the face of the most formidable challenges.

In the days following the flood, we returned to our apartment, only to find everything ruined. Unfortunately, we didn’t have insurance to cover the damages, and my mom, a single mother to two children and an immigrant, was left to pick up the pieces on her own. Her job, which was in the food industry, couldn’t reopen until the renovations were complete, and she couldn’t afford to remain unemployed. So, we had to make a difficult decision and leave behind everything we knew, moving to Virginia to start anew. This personal experience has made me acutely aware of the inequalities in society when it comes to dealing with extreme weather events. It’s a stark reminder that not everyone has the resources or support they need to recover from such disasters. It’s a topic that needs more attention and action. Since that fateful day, I’ve become acutely aware of the power and impact of weather on our lives. It’s a phenomenon that should never be underestimated. The intricate interplay of various components that can dramatically change outcomes is nothing short of magical. While we lost much in the process, it has also ignited my passion for understanding and addressing the impacts of extreme weather and inequality that comes with in our world.

Our journey toward resolving extreme weather inequalities

By Crystal Liu

WEST BROOK HIGH SCHOOL

In the homely city of Beaumont, Texas, a city known for its resiliency and strong sense of community, the story of extreme weather and inequality plays out against the backdrop of the Piney Woods and the Gulf of Mexico. It's a story that touches the very heart of our community: the profound impact of extreme weather and the stark inequalities it reveals.

Extreme weather events, from devastating hurricanes to deadly heat waves, have shown us the harsh face of inequality. When the most destructive hurricanes or deadly heat waves hit, it is our most vulnerable who bear the brunt of the damage.

It's the families living paycheck to paycheck, struggling to afford flood insurance, who must endure the heart-wrenching experience of watching their homes and livelihoods wash away. It is the children living in areas of lower socioeconomic status, whose school is closed due to extreme flooding, facing uncertainty about school displacement and their future education. It is the elderly, our beloved seniors, immobilized and trapped by the debris of their homes after the storm. It is the highway worker, making ends meet for his family, who must withstand the scorching



Enterprise file photo

A submerged car during Hurricane Harvey. Crystal Liu says, "When the most destructive hurricanes or deadly heat waves hit, it is our most vulnerable who bear the brunt of the damage."

beams of sun on his back as temperatures steadily rise. It is the marginalized communities, often relegated to areas plagued by pollution and industrial waste, who are thrust into the heart of environmental injustice when disaster strikes. In our community, these disparities are glaringly evident, and it's a reality that we must no longer ignore.

But today, as we acknowledge these stark realities, we must also recognize the power within our community, starting with our youth. In our city, our group of passionate individuals in West Brook's Green Club is committed to promoting environmental sustainability through actions at the school and community level as well as recognizing those inequalities and acting when disaster strikes next. We intend to fulfill our mission which

is our motto: service to the earth, and service to a sustainable future. Our humble club is taking on a mission that is monumental, yet we believe in the power of one step at a time.

A large part of our mission is our monthly campus cleanups. Armed with trash bags and determination, we scour every nook and cranny of our school grounds. We pick up litter and restore the natural beauty that has been tarnished. It is a simple act, but it sends a clear message: we are the change-makers, and we care deeply about our environment.

In the spring, school gardening became our next endeavor. Together, we sowed into the neglected patches of grass a vibrant fig tree. As the tree grows larger and sturdier, our sense of pride and accomplishment grow

with it.

Another major part of our mission is our school's recycling program. We believe that every bottle and every can has the potential to make a difference, and we recognize that many of our city's residents have a lack of access to the sustainable option of recycling. Currently, we educate our peers on the importance of recycling and the inaccessibility to it some residents face, set up bins in strategic locations, and diligently sort materials with Lamar University's Green Squad and ExxonMobil's Environmental Awareness Sustainability Team every first Saturday of the month at Lamar University. Over the years, our school's recycling program has witnessed significant growth, with an increasing number of high school students actively participating and engaging in

our school's and community's recycling initiatives.

Finally, at the very core of our mission lies our desire to educate our peers. This year, Green Club officers are making efforts to research environmental topics to present to the club. Being aware and educated is the first step of constructing any action plan, and in order to create a generation that fights for today and tomorrow's earth, we must do our duty of sowing in the seeds of knowledge that grow into meaningful action.

Though we have no direct experience with mitigating the damage of extreme weather, our current actions to promote sustainability and educate others are building a foundation of an environmentally conscious character and resiliency to address the inequalities from extreme weather in

the future. We are creating changes in both our characters and community, a step at a time. Our cleanups, gardening, recycling initiatives, and educational campaigns are like drops in an ocean, but together, they are forming ripples of transformation today and for the future to come. The small steps we take now are building a sustainable legacy for our school and community as well as inspiring others to join our cause now and hopefully in the future.

So, whether it's a regular, weekly cleanup; the joy of watching our tree grow; the simple act of recycling; or an informational seminar, our Green Club is proof that positive changes are possible through tiny steps. When we are in the face of extreme weather and inequality in the future, let us be the beacon of hope for our neighbors, the voice for those who are unheard, and the hand that reaches out to lift others up. With our current foundation being built, it is within our power to close the gap, to stand up for environmental justice, and to ensure that no one is left behind when the next storm comes. With passion, dedication, and a shared vision, we are shaping a greener, more equal future for all. And we're doing it one small, meaningful action at a time.

Another Way

By Sakara Harris

WEST BROOK HIGH SCHOOL

There has to be another way

Here comes the flood . . . Another city's washed away

No parks here are safe to play

Another school's gone another overdraft on the way

There has to be another way

It's so hot the children can't go out to play but this is Poverty-ville nothing you can say

The water's polluted nothing to drink today

There has to be another way

There's so much I can say but nothing I can do

Even those upstate have so much they've gone

through Starting with tornados and then the earth

beneath starts to shake I believe that's called an earthquake

And everything has a cause but they're not looking for them the Black Robes up top just create

new laws And then raise the amount of money spent so

the poor can't even afford to pay their rent

There has to be another way

er way

The gangs in the streets don't make this struggle

no better They're so worried about who's getting clout or

moving more "paypa" Or if they see a "opp" they gotta pull up

Another young mind influenced by yet another viral screw-up

There has to be another way

They've even made laws to legislate the way we

choose to procreate Killing our kin we can not win

It's time to find a solution

tion to the condition we've

been put in There has to be another way

I don't wanna march when all they'll do is send

another platoon Taking our young brothers and sisters way too

soon Another mother mourning the lost of a child

And all of the fake love she'll receive is wild Why do we care so much about carrying guns

When people choose to use a park or school as a

shooting range for fun it's strange

There has to be another way

No time to be on the internet trying to find the next trend

When my fist goes up all knees will bend and heads are bowed

Not much marriage cause not many can honor a

vow

There has to be another way

Is there a way to finally stop this pain

To finally stop pointing fingers and really look into who's to blame

No reason to have others hanging their head

in shame

When we are all just pawns in someone else's game

There has to be another way

Be better than those who've come before us for we are

greater than our predecessors

Author's notes

* Opp — (Opp)osition or someone you have conflict with

Pronunciation: (aw-p)

* Paypa — money or cash

Pronunciation: (Pay-Puh)

LYLES

From page D3

if they are unable to evacuate. Having these plans in place could help people during the first day while waiting on further supplies, especially if roads in and out of the

community are flooded. I also believe before an evacuation is called, fuel trucks should be dispatched to certain locations along the evacuation routes.

Some of these areas are rural and do not have gas stations on every corner. Furthermore,

there needs to be a way to repair homes for people who do not have the financial means after the storm. Cutting out the sheetrock that was already molding was not easy, and it took us a very long time. After talking with other storm survivors, costly repairs were

a big reason that lower-income families had to relocate or seek shelter in different towns. It is less of a financial burden to leave and start over somewhere new.

As climate change exacerbates the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, the

need for prompt and effective FEMA assistance has become increasingly critical. My experiences have taught me that the struggle is real, and the struggle is even harder without financial stability. I am profoundly grateful for a determined mother who

navigated these storms and ensured I had the privilege of a safe and secure environment after each storm. I hope in the future, officials would be able to implement disaster relief that helps the low-income community in a quick and more efficient fashion.

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sources play a significant role in determining vulnerability and resilience to extreme weather events.

Furthermore, low-income communities often face higher exposure and limited adaptive capacity to extreme weather due to several interrelated factors. First, these neighborhoods tend to be in areas vulnerable to flooding. Insurance premiums are generally higher in flood zone areas. In return, many low-income families cannot afford to properly insure their homes. In addition, limited financial resources make it difficult for residents to invest in resilient infrastructure or relocate to safer areas during times of evacuations from storms. As a result, they are more

susceptible to property damage that they can't repair, displacement from families due to shelter availability, and the loss of livelihoods.

Additionally, disadvantaged communities may lack essential resources and support that can aid in recovery from damage and displacement. Although there are government assistance programs, such as FEMA, it is often not enough help during a major crisis that causes major damage. A study conducted in 2021 found that low-income individuals face greater difficulties in accessing post-disaster assistance and recovery programs, leading to prolonged periods of distress and limited opportunities for rebuilding their lives. This disparity further widens the gap between the affluent and the less privileged, perpetuating systemic inequalities.

Addressing the gap: Policy and community initiatives

To address the issue, a comprehensive approach that combines policy measures and community-based initiatives is essential. Governments must prioritize climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and ensure an equitable distribution of resources and support. For example, more tax dollars can be invested in climate resilient infrastructure to protect vulnerable communities. This includes improved flood control mechanisms, such as better drainage in the cities, earlier warning systems that are equal throughout the at-risk areas, and enhanced building codes to withstand the higher-grade storms. It is also equally important to consider the specific needs of disadvantaged communities during the

planning and implementation process to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities. Moreover, policy interventions should aim to reduce social and economic disparities that leave marginalized populations more vulnerable to extreme weather impacts. This involves addressing affordable housing, accessing adequate healthcare, and getting a proper education, as these factors contribute significantly to community resilience.

Community-led initiatives also play a vital role in bridging the gap between extreme weather conditions and inequality. Grassroots organizations within our local community can partner together to empower families through education and skill-building programs that develop resiliency and adaptive capacity. For example, organizations like Some

Other Place and The Salvation Army can engage with marginalized communities within our community and involve them in decision-making processes that can foster a sense of ownership and ensure that their unique needs are considered in the planning process. Proactivity is the key to creating an effective bridge.

In conclusion, extreme weather events pose a significant threat to all communities. However, it is noteworthy that my region of the Gulf Coast alone has experienced its share of record-breaking weather events in recent years.

From hurricanes to floods to extreme heat waves, these events serve as a wake-up call to the urgent need of planning. Events such as these have had profound impacts on human communities and communities of low socioeconomic

status, causing widespread devastation, displacement, and exposing existing social and economic inequalities and disparities. Real-life examples and testimonials from those affected emphasize the urgent need to address climate change, build resilience, and ensure equitable resources to protect vulnerable populations. This direct correlation between extreme weather and inequality demands urgent attention from policymakers, communities, and individuals alike. By bridging the gap through targeted policies, equitable resource allocation, and community engagement, we can create a more resilient future where the impacts of extreme weather are equitable. It is crucial that we act now to ensure a just and sustainable world for future generations to come. Let's bridge the gap!