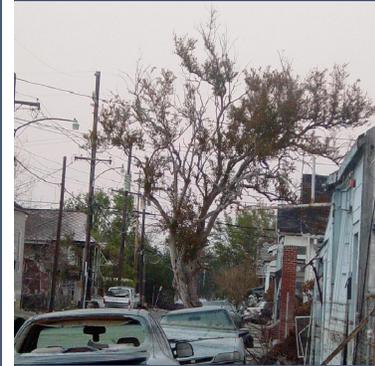




## A Call to Action in Wake of Hurricane Ida



Dear Friends and Allies,

Our hearts ache for all those suffering as a result of Hurricane Ida. Ida struck at a time when hospitals were already at or near capacity due to the surge in COVID-19 hospitalizations throughout the South, with Louisiana being among the hardest hit. Four hospitals in Louisiana were evacuated and many others in the state are still wrestling with how to continue providing care for patients with so much infrastructure offline. Over 900,000 households are still without electricity, with some facing weeks before its restored. This could prove life-threatening as an intense heat advisory continues to be in effect for more than two million people.

We are just starting to get a clearer picture of the wreckage. Folks in Louisiana are dealing with limited access to clean water, unpassable roads, and widespread cell service outages, severely disconnecting them from essential goods and services amidst this punishing heat wave. History repeatedly demonstrates that those worst affected by the climate crisis, especially in the South, are typically low-income communities of color where environmental justice and racial justice have become deeply interwoven. Ida's landfall also marked the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, which acted as the impetus behind **SPF's Justice Fund for Disaster Relief and Renewal (JFDRR), which was formed to provide easy, rapid funding to communities of color that needed support during and after a natural disaster.**

Over the years, JFDRR grantees, small rural community organizations, have compiled crucial community profile data such as names and ages of each household member, their doctors, medical conditions, medications, nearest of kin, and transit needs among others. JFDRR grants enable our grantees to build trusted coordinated response teams that in many cases, act as a community's first responder. Further, our grantee partners are better able to help their local governing bodies work with FEMA in securing the provision of emergency resources and services in their towns and counties. Since the start of the pandemic alone, **we are proud to say that 173 grants totaling \$2.139 million have already been distributed to grassroots organizations throughout the rural South.**

More and more grassroots organizations are turning to JFDRR for emergency resources as the frequency of these natural disasters increases. SPF's steadfast commitment to doing everything in its power to keep rural, underserved communities in the South afloat means that we are proactively sending out JFDRR RFPs to our network of grassroots organizations at this time. **SPF is also committed to maintaining this support after a natural disaster to ensure a renewal process that promotes environmental, economic, and racial justice** so that events such as these don't leave our communities in ruins.

With JFDRR concurrently receiving and approving COVID-19 grant requests amidst the large resurgence of cases, our greatest fear is not being able to meet the desperate

demand for resources that we anticipate only growing in the coming days and weeks. With JFDRR's aggressive disaster grantmaking outlined, it should come as no surprise that we are **respectfully but urgently imploring our funding partners and the philanthropic community at large to support these critical efforts**. Your wisdom, advice, and willingness to connect SPF to other potential donors who are looking to provide disaster relief to the rural South is equally appreciated. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me personally.

With the deepest of gratitude,

Fernando Cuevas, Jr.

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