



## REFLECTIONS ON RECENT STORMS IN RURAL MISSISSIPPI: A CALL TO ACTION

Reflections and prayers have dominated the last several days. Scenes from the Delta to the Northeastern hills of Mississippi manage to be depressing and revealing at the same time. How do you describe the indescribable—a tornado ravaged trail of death and despair the likes of which Mississippi has not experienced in over 50 years?

Early this past Friday morning, an E-F 4 tornado (E-F 5 being the strongest rating) was bearing down on the flat Delta alluvial plane with 170mph winds before landing in Rolling Fork, Mississippi. Rural and economically depressed, Rolling Fork is nonetheless a tight-knit, Black majority town with a population of just over 2,100 residents. With 90% of the town now flattened and 13 recorded local fatalities, even the possibility of rebuilding is questionable. From Rolling Fork, the tornado spiraled through another handful of rural Delta towns, ending in the Northeastern hill town of Amory, MS before continuing its deadly rampage into Alabama.



From toddlers to the elderly, no generation was spared. Each of the deceased (25 in MS and 1 in AL) comes with a horrific story of how this tornado ended their life. The Munford family in Carroll County, MS, for instance, [lost both parents and one of their 14-year-old twin sons](#). They are survived by their other twin son who was severely injured. He is not alone. Many others lay in hospital beds in critical condition, not knowing whether they will live or die. Those who recover are likely to face catastrophic loss, be it human, material, or both. Their bodies and scars may heal, but the torment of the storm will change their lives forever.



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As global warming continues to wreak havoc the world over, the relationship between environmental and racial injustice intensifies. Environmental injustice has deep roots in racial discrimination, as historically marginalized communities are often located in areas with higher levels of pollution and environmental hazards. Housing stock in impoverished rural communities primarily consists of mobile and small brick homes that simply get blown away. Making matters worse, these towns also typically lack the necessary infrastructure to withstand Mother Nature's wrath. Early warning systems tend to fail—not the systems themselves, but because there are few, if any, storm shelters for those needing refuge. 20 years ago, there was only one recognized tornado alley that tracked across the region. **Today, there are THREE.**



These atmospheric changes have made the rural Deep South yet another example of the devastating impact climate change and centuries of environmental racism is having on vulnerable communities. As per usual, they remain the least equipped to recover, making this phenomenon all the more lethal. The frequency and scale of these storms has had a similar impact on Southern Partners Fund's (SPF) Justice Fund for Disaster Relief and Renewal. **SPF uses this fund to provide critical support to Southern rural communities in distress following events such as these**, without taking dollars away from the regular grant cycle, now underway. SPF needs your help to continue channeling life-saving resources to those needing it most, like the families that used to call Rolling Fork home.

In solidarity and gratitude,

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