

An analysis of secondary sources from hurricane katrina essay sample



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As one of the most destructive natural disasters in United States' history, Hurricane Katrina took hundreds of lives and amounted to billions of dollars in damage. As victims see their fallen homes and shattered lives, they wonder how this catastrophe could have happened. Some argue that hurricanes are unpredictable phenomena that cannot be controlled, and that our government responded to the best of its ability. Others, however, realize that controlling a storm is completely different than preparing for one. While President Bush may not have control over the weather, he had experts predicting a catastrophe like Katrina years before it developed. The Gulf Coast region was completely exposed and unprepared for major hurricanes, but President Bush did not have the foresight to improve the situation.

Although many victims lost their lives from Hurricane Katrina because of the government's inefficient response, President Bush's mistakes immediately after the Hurricane did not increase property damage in the Gulf Coast region. A flood levee cannot be rebuilt in one hour or even one day; once the hurricane struck, President Bush could not have prevented the extensive flooding with any response to control the hurricane's damage. Although some historians have used this information to support President Bush, preventative measures could have been taken to decrease the hurricane's destruction.

The former director of FEMA, Michael Brown, "conceded that his agency's resources had been stretched," which may have led to FEMA's inefficient relief effort. ¹ Previous to the Hurricane, President Bush "downgraded the organization and merged it into the Department of Homeland Security," which had been primarily focused on combating terrorism since September

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11th and the Iraq War, and clearly explains FEMA's insufficient resources after the hurricane. 2 These facts illustrate another mistake made by the President: Bush reacted to Hurricane Katrina instead of taking preventative action. As soon as Hurricane Katrina hit land, most of the government's ability to save lives and control damage was useless: a lack of preparation was a major fault in President Bush's combat with Katrina.

Some Bush supporters claim that Hurricanes are erratic, and that the President could have never equipped for such a catastrophe. Weather experts, however, did realize the potential for such a natural disaster, and President Bush had this information at his fingertips. The article Big Blow in the Big Easy was written before Hurricane Katrina had evolved, and it discusses several smaller hurricanes in New Orleans' history, and how the city has narrowly escaped several major disasters. After the tropical storm Cindy blew past New Orleans without even becoming a category one hurricane, the author asks if it is "time to breathe easy" in the Gulf Coast region.

By the same weeks' end, however, Hurricane Dennis was "barreling toward the Gulf of Mexico." 3 These obvious patterns of harsh hurricanes and tropical storms in the Gulf Coast region raised an alarm to Ivor van Heerden, director of Louisiana State University's Center for the Study of Public Health impacts of Hurricanes. Even before Hurricane Katrina was "on the map," Heerden realized that "if a hurricane comes next month, New Orleans could no longer exist." 4 By ignoring these predictions, President Bush risked the lives of thousand of citizens, and cost the United States billions of

unnecessary dollars that could have been saved by preparing for Katrina.
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Big Blow in the Big Easy was not the only article warning the President - National Geographic published a similar article that was hauntingly similar to the actual events of Hurricane Katrina. In the article *Gone with the Water*, Joel K. Bourne creates a scenario of a natural disaster identical to what happened in Hurricane Katrina. The only catch, however, is that he wrote this article two years before Hurricane Katrina struck. This article summarizes the weaknesses and potential for catastrophe in the Gulf Coast region and New Orleans when facing a fierce hurricane. It goes on to detail exactly what areas of infrastructure in New Orleans would fail, and lists various ways to improve New Orleans's ability to withstand major hurricanes. It included strengthening the levee system and implementing new technology to serve as a backup if the levees were to break. 5 With such detailed information at hand, President Bush should have been more than aware of the eminent danger of Hurricane Katrina. But Bush decided to ignore these warnings, and the Gulf Coast region was not nearly prepared for the horrific catastrophe that would tear it apart.

Before Hurricane Katrina, the Gulf Coast region was completely unprepared for a major hurricane, and President Bush sat contently without changing a thing. Now, after the hurricane, some blame the unpredictability of natural disasters for the lives lost and costly damage instead of Bush's failure to prepare. The evidence and clear potential for this disaster was published before Hurricane Katrina, leaving only one real question: why Bush left the Gulf Coast region fatally exposed. President Bush ignored the potential of Hurricane Katrina and deserves full responsibility for the preventable damage and lives that were lost.

Notes

1. " House Report: Gov't Could Have Prevented Katrina Deaths," (15 February 2006). Available from: Fox News. com (accessed 14 February 2006).
2. Ted Gottfried, *Homeland Security versus Constitutional Rights* (Brookfield: Twenty-First Century Books, 2003), 16-18.
3. Dan Gilgoff, " Big Blow in the Big Easy" (18 July 2005). Available from: US News. com (accessed 2 April 2006).
4. Ibid.
5. Joel Bourne, " Gone with the Water," *National Geographic*, (October 2004): 88-105.

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- Bourne, Joel. " Gone with the Water." *National Geographic*. October 2004: 88-105.
- Gilgoff, Dan. *Big Blow in the Big Easy*. 18 July 2005. Available from: US News. com (accessed 2 April 2006).
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