



A man moves his flood-damaged sofas in Houston Sept. 3. (CNS/Reuters/Adrees Latif)



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Like most NCR readers, I have been watching with horror and sadness the torrential rains and flooding brought to Texas by Hurricane Harvey. I've grieved for the loss of life, and I've wondered what it would be like to evacuate to a shelter in a small boat, or how I would react walking into the first floor of a house after it had been flooded with 1 or 2 feet of water. I've seen the faces of families devastated by the damage, now staring into an unknown future.

Adding to the tensions, there are reports of explosions at chemical plants nearby, and many fear that there may be more in coming days.

Sociologist [Robert Bullard](#) of [Texas Southern University](#) summed up the human costs of Harvey, saying that poor people and people of color are hit hardest. "They not only have to deal with flooding in their homes, but pollution in water that's contaminated when water floods refineries and plants."

[He called it](#) "a perfect storm of pollution, environmental racism, and health risks that are probably not going to be measured and assessed until decades later."

Add to that the fact that Houston has no zoning laws. (I have to admit, this fact blew me away — a city without zoning laws? You've got to be kidding. But it's true.) Bullard summed up the effects of that: "Laissez-faire, unrestrained capitalism and lack of zoning mean people with money can put protections up, and people without can't."

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But what I have heard little of — on TV, radio or in the paper — is talk of what probably fueled the fury of this storm, i.e., climate change. Yes, it's true, no one can say definitely if this particular storm came about, or even was worsened, because of climate change. But, according to Vanessa Schipani [in an article in Fact Check.org](#), while climate change may not be the immediate cause, "scientists have said that Harvey was likely worsened by climate change."

I notice that Pope Francis [spoke out again on Sept. 1](#) about climate change. He and Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I [issued a joint call](#) to the world: "We urgently

appeal to those in positions of social and economic, as well as political and cultural, responsibility to hear the cry of the earth and to attend to the needs of the marginalized."

Why do I think he might be hoping that his message would reach climate-change-denier Donald Trump?