Twitter Thread by houston policy scrap fighter



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Since a lot of my fellow Texans are going to apply for aid through @FEMA let's talk about the agency and some of the barriers disaster survivors encounter and persisting program flaws.

First things first, @FEMA is part of the Department of Homeland Security. Here's a blog I wrote about its history and shortcomings in how the agency is funded: https://t.co/l3MSztwbcz

Many people will be applying for Individual Assistance (IA), but past disasters have shown us that help isn't evenly distributed and frequently struggles to reach those in deepest need. This unpacks some of the class bias in accepted/rejected apps:
https://t.co/qwtgexRGXm

Of course, there are racial dimensions to this as well:
https://t.co/vzALMlPApm

Documentation is seen as helping reduce fraud, but after a disaster many docs are destroyed. People who are denied assistance and appeal are often told to make small changes to the documents they provide or provide updated documentation b/c of how long the aid process takes.

Documentation requirements don't take into account the various ways people, especially non-white folks who were denied access to traditional financial services, come into property. Proof of ownership for an heirship home that technically belongs to several people is complicated

A high documentation burden is, imo, part of our government's disdain for the poorest among us - making folks jump through needless hoops to ensure that fraud isn't being committed.

@FEMA is responsible for program design that is implemented by states. The programs they create, however, are better in theory than practice. A recent example of this is the STEPS program, a newish model for disaster recovery thought up by FEMA.
https://t.co/3WhR0NUuzN

In Texas, STEPS went by the name PREPS - its lack of oversight hurt laborers (wage theft) and survivors (some homes were riskier to live in than before). It was overseen by the @txglo (statewide land/recovery office led by @georgepbush).

Here's how PREPS went in Houston
https://t.co/Qjf9zO3hMq

More on its Houston shortcomings:
https://t.co/QQyc0CyZoO

There are policy fixes to @FEMA and its programs to make it more effective and ensure a more #justrecovery for the increasing number of climate disaster survivors in the US state and territories.

For those changes to take place this country would need to respect science and honor the humanity of poor people and non-white people the way #mutualaid groups on the ground in Houston have shown.

The state has a role that simply cannot continue to be abdicated or half-assed in these climate crises.