

Emergency Alert: Hurricane Warning This Area

You are aroused by the shrill sound of sirens blaring, “Eeeooooooooo” and you frantically scan your room as the gears in your brain start to rotate, and then your body follows, springing into motion. Stumbling around the house, you reach for provisions, then desperately look for bottled water. Your life flashes before your eyes as you think of a cyclone raging through O’ahu, causing mass destruction. Then your mind plunges into an abyss of regrets beginning with: “Why was I not prepared?” A direct hit from a hurricane is rare for the Aloha State; rather, the storm would hit the Big Island, which would break it up with the aid of wind shear. Still, there are approximately 277,376 storm shelter spaces in the Hawaiian islands for a population of more than 1.4 million people which is insufficient (Blair). Clarence T.C. Ching would have endorsed the following proposals to guarantee the safety of Hawai’i’s residents; these include updating previously constructed structures, establishing periodic housing safety inspections, and mandating all future residential dwellings to have safe rooms.

In Hawai’i, there is an abundance of structures built before 1995, which were not designed to withstand a category three tropical cyclone. The government should send architects to periodically inspect the buildings and structures, such as malls, churches, and the historic palaces of the Ali’i. They can confirm its ability to be a refuge in times of crisis or at least not to fall apart, and specify a plan of action so that it can withstand the storms. We can organize citizens who would volunteer their time to repair, modify, and provide materials; the youth would especially benefit from this training.

Granted, there are those who will oppose the suggested solutions, chances are they fear the costs or do not think that they will be affected. Others will assume that in the past, initiatives

with the same concepts have already been attempted and were unsuccessful. In 1999, after Oklahoma experienced around seventy cyclones, they took action and the government supported the construction of safe shelters within homes built according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulations. Hawai'i should likewise, have a program that can give practical recommendations on how to incorporate a safe room into an existing structure after an inspection. Sheltering at home would be more plausible, and then we will be able to refocus our efforts to other competing concerns.

In the Netherlands, houses are being built in preparation for hurricanes that could strike at any point in the future. A Borren Staalenhoef home is built of wood which can be constructed within two days and can survive a category three hurricane. The house is designed with an asymmetrical roof which will deflect the wind that reaches the speed of 130 miles per hour, while the lumber and steel form a sturdy foundation (Garfield). The government in Hawai'i should add specific requirements to our current code, which would include having a safe room within the house or constructing it based on a design that will allow it to deflect the high winds. According to the "Hawaii Business Magazine," "Buildings only need to be built to resist 3-second gusts of 130 mph, which means a Category 3 hurricane." The earth is gradually becoming warmer as climate change increases, and this change in the temperature of water is one of the main components that stimulate the occurrence of hurricanes.

In the future, the island chain may not be as fortunate where the storm weakens before hitting; instead, it may experience the same devastating strength as Hurricane Maria that hit Puerto Rico, or perhaps Typhoon Haiyan which hit the Philippines. The Filipinos may be more accustomed to storms because of its frequency, and Puerto Rico has the advantage of being a

little closer to the mainland. However, Hawai'i is an isolated cluster of islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and should plan for the inevitable; in fact, we should have a plan that would improve the infrastructure of anything with the possibility to fail.

Mr. Ching "proved that a humble beginning is no barrier if one has constructive dreams," in the midst of all of the challenges. In the same light, Hawai'i should follow a similar path of using these challenges to better itself. The Clarence T.C. Ching Foundation supports citizens of all genders, ages, and races in Hawai'i through all of their endeavors as long as they show the determination and drive to "contribute to creating a better society." Mr. Ching would reinforce my solutions because they will ensure the safety of his beloved kama'aina, and it will be "a way to give back to the community" through his organization.

By the year 2068, our islands could be left in rubble after being hit by multiple hurricanes with various strengths. The three solutions that I touched upon were to alter previously constructed structures, initiate periodic housing safety inspections, and encourage all future residential dwellings to have safe rooms. Not only will these propositions protect the communities that have been thriving off of Hawai'i for many generations, but also provide safety to the ancient buildings from the days of King Kalakaua and Queen Liliuokalani for the future. The Hawaiian Islands will not be known in the news as the repeat of Puerto Rico after being hit by Hurricane Maria.

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