**The Politics of Disaster: A Dangerous Game of Blame**

By Darryl Young and Peter Plastrik

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As Los Angeles smolders and Western North Carolina dries out, a troubling pattern emerges in our political discourse. While communities grapple with unprecedented destruction, the conversation devolves into finger-pointing and partisan posturing. This politicization isn't about uncovering truth or crafting solutions; it's about inflicting damage on the "other side." Facts become casualties, and the urgent work of saving lives and building resilience takes a backseat to scoring political points.

**The Los Angeles Wildfires: A Case Study**

The Los Angeles wildfires illustrate this phenomenon starkly. One side points to climate change as the culprit, while the other focuses on blaming officials like the governor or mayor. For instance, consider the water shortage facing LA's firefighters. One narrative claims that environmental overreach left crews without resources, conveniently ignoring that no system was built to handle a catastrophe of this magnitude.

**The Emerging Politics of Resilience**

This shift from addressing root causes to assigning blame represents the emerging politics of resilience. It cleverly co-opts the language of preparedness while sidestepping inconvenient discussions about underlying issues like climate change and land use. Ironically, this narrative finds support from climate advocates who have long called for increased preparedness. The notion that someone should be held accountable for unchecked climate disasters aligns with their warnings, even as those now pointing fingers have historically denied the problem.

**A Dangerous New Playbook**

This emerging political playbook for resilience acknowledges disasters while manipulating narratives around causes and solutions, leaving us woefully unprepared. It represents a shift from outright climate denial to a more insidious form of obstruction. All politicians share responsibility for these disasters; when government studies outline risks and officials fail to act, they betray public trust across party lines.

**The Cost of Inaction**

Political maneuvering has tangible consequences. Public trust in government disaster management has plummeted; only 23% of Americans believe we're prepared for the next major disaster. This lack of confidence fosters panic rather than preparedness.

Take Vermont's floods in 2023 or Hurricane Ida's impact on New York City, where stormwater overwhelmed infrastructure. These weren't acts of God; they were failures of governance years in the making. We knew the risks yet failed to act.

A government earns legitimacy by meeting basic needs. Repeatedly failing to protect citizens from known threats erodes public trust and destabilizes democracy itself.

**Breaking the Cycle: A New Disaster Playbook**

To move beyond this destructive pattern, we need a new approach:

1. **Depoliticize disaster response**: Establish non-partisan preparedness committees staffed by experts and citizens.
2. **Invest in forward-thinking infrastructure**: Build for future threats rather than past norms.
3. **Empower the public**: Provide accessible information on climate, land use, and disaster risk.
4. **Demand transparency in disaster funding**: Ensure accountability in resource allocation.
5. **Elevate resilience to a national security priority**: Recognize climate-driven disasters as significant threats to economic stability and social cohesion.

**The Path Forward**

The smoke over Los Angeles will eventually clear, and floodwaters in North Carolina will recede. However, dispelling the haze of partisan politics is our responsibility. Communities deserve better than political theater amid tragedy; they deserve leaders who prioritize protection over point-scoring and a government that earns legitimacy through action.

We must demand a new standard of leadership in disaster preparedness and response:

* Hold elected officials accountable for implementing long-term resilience strategies.
* Support policies prioritizing disaster mitigation and adaptation, even when they require short-term sacrifices.
* Reject simplistic narratives that blame rather than solve problems.
* Invest in community-level preparedness and foster a culture of resilience.

The climate crisis is here and won't wait for our political system to catch up. Our disaster response must mature to meet it because if we don't act now, future disasters will threaten not just our forests or valleys but also our democracy.

As we face an uncertain future, one thing is clear: our ability to prevent, withstand, and recover from disasters will define our nation's strength. It's time to move beyond blame politics and embrace action-oriented solutions.

Our lives, communities, and democracy depend on it.