

Many Puerto Ricans may flood U.S. in wake of Hurricane Maria

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A line wraps around Banco Popular in San Juan, Puerto Rico, as people were desperate to get cash on September 25, 2017. Nearly one week after Hurricane Maria devastated the island, residents were still trying to get the basics of food, water and gas. Much of the damage done was to electrical wires, while vegetation got flattened, in addition to wooden roofs being torn off homes. Photo by: Carolyn Cole/Los Angeles Times/TNS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico two weeks ago. It was a terrible storm. It destroyed houses and washed away roads.

Many Puerto Ricans may now be forced to leave the island. Maria knocked down their homes. They no longer have nowhere to live or where to work.

Puerto Ricans Are Like Other Americans

Puerto Rico is part of the United States. Puerto Ricans are like all other Americans. They have the right to move anywhere in the U.S.

Many Puerto Ricans may now move to the U.S. mainland. That could cause problems for cities in the mainland. They may not be ready to handle so many new people.

Major storms like Hurricane Maria are happening more often. Scientists say global warming is the reason.

The Serious Threat Of Global Warming

Global warming is caused by people. It is caused by our use of fossil fuels. Fuels like coal and oil. When these fuels are burned they give off gases. The gases remain in the air and trap heat. Over time, that trapped heat makes it hotter all over the world.

Global warming is pushing more people out of their homes. They are forced to migrate or move in search of a new home. The places they move to then face new problems. It is hard to take in so many new people.

Now Maria has brought that problem to the U.S. Large numbers of Puerto Ricans may soon move to the U.S. mainland.

Fleeing Puerto Ricans May Move To New York City

Many worry the U.S. is not ready. There may not be enough housing for so many new people.

Jesse Keenan studies climate change. He is worried about the problems Maria may bring.

Look at New York City, Keenan said. New York has the greatest number of Puerto Ricans outside of the island. Many Puerto Ricans would probably choose to move there.

Unfortunately, New York has very few empty apartments.

The city "needs to set up a plan to house these people," Keenan said.

It Could Be Hard To Find New Jobs In U.S.

Petia Topalova also studies climate change. Maria may force people to leave without a chance to plan or prepare, she said. That will make it harder for them to find new jobs.

Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan is a New York City lawyer. Last Tuesday, she got a call from a friend in Puerto Rico. Her friend asked if she could help him find a job in the city. He is somebody "I never imagined asking that," she said.