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## **NAME Statement on recovery efforts in Puerto Rico post Hurricane Maria**

The National Association for Multicultural Education is distressed that politics continue to delay the humanitarian aid, cleanup and vast reconstruction needed for the 3.5 million people in Puerto Rico, all American citizens, after Hurricane Maria decimated the island last month. President Donald Trump's much anticipated visit to the U.S. territory on Oct. 3 was disappointingly marred by his inappropriate and dismissive comments. He praised himself and U.S. efforts, though neither was merited. Trump was also quick to criticize Puerto Rican officials and the population in general. On Twitter he lashed out San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz, accusing her of "poor leadership," implying that the island was not doing enough to improve conditions for itself. "They want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort," Trump wrote.

Puerto Rican officials appropriately criticized the Trump administration for its slow and inadequate response to the disaster that has left much of the island without electricity, clean water, fuel, food and safe housing. The mayor of the capital city of Puerto Rico said earlier that the Trump administration was "killing us with inefficiency and bureaucracy" after Hurricane Maria slammed Puerto Rico on Sept. 20 right behind Hurricane Irma on Sept. 6, which passed to the north doing significant damage to the island. She labeled Trump's visit a public relations stunt and called him the "[miscommunicator in chief](#)." She continued, "This terrible and abominable view of him throwing paper towels and throwing provisions at people, it does not embody the spirit of the American nation," Cruz said after Trump's visit. "That is not the land of 'the free and the home of the brave,' that beacon of democracy that people have learned to look up to across the world."

Cruz's initial comments before Trump landed on the island followed those of Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, commander of the U.S. Army North. Buchanan, who is leading the U.S. response to the hurricane devastation in Puerto Rico, said he did not have enough troops and equipment to tackle the massive project.

It was highly inappropriate for Trump to compare the death toll from Hurricane Maria with Hurricane Katrina's. The catastrophe in Puerto Rico must not be minimized. Clean water, food, fuel, power and safe housing are still desperately needed for millions of Puerto Ricans.

Cruz rightfully points to the No. 1 goal that everyone should be "saving lives." Neither Cruz nor the people of Puerto Rico need Trump to call them "politically motivated ingrates." What they need instead is leadership from the White House and the same kindness, concern and all-out assistance that the country is giving to Florida, Texas and other hurricane devastated areas.

The NAME membership is disappointed with the inaction and total disregard from the Trump administration and is quite frankly embarrassed by the President's behavior during his visit to Puerto Rico. We extend our condolences to those affected by the destruction and urge a speedy, appropriate response from the U.S. government.

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