



Climate-Forced Displacement in the United States

Rosina Philippe, Grand Bayou Village, Atakapa-Ishak-Chawasha

- Communities in Grand Bayou Village in Louisiana are noticing unpredictable changes that have marked an imbalance in our lives.
- Today, we find that the challenges of the climate crisis are problematic to our continued way of life. We're losing habitat, species, plants and other life forms that have made our lives possible in this region. How do we address these impacts?
- We are the communities that are paying the cost, to the benefit of so many others.
- We are not easily relocated and to be expected to continue our way of life if we are.
- We as indigenous people, we are not able to live our life in that generic manner. We need to be in our home territories. As waters continue to inundate, we are finding ways to live with the incoming tide. Without resources, these will remain as ideas.
- We advocate for a seat at the table.
- We need action now. We can no longer sit around and wait for studies and planning to happen.
- We need people to recognize that the climate crisis is about life and death. It's about self-determination.
- That cry for justice needs to be heard and acted upon.

Stanley Tom, Newtok Village, Alaska:

- Newtok is threatened by the advance of the Niglick River. High rate of 3,300 ft recorded in 1954 and 2003.
- Today, Newtok's erosion rate is 50-100 ft/year.
- Back in the 1970's, Newtok Traditional Council (NTC) was noticing the erosion. In 1994, NTC started the relocation process to stop the erosion problem.
- We need to move because the water quality is bad here in Newtok.
- We need more resources to rebuild our home.

Hilton Kelley, Port Arthur, Texas:

- Port Arthur has been experiencing a disproportionate number of hurricanes starting in 2005 with Hurricane Rita that plagued our communities. It is home to many plants of refineries and chemical plants that dump tonnes of carbon monoxide, benzene and other toxins that lead to our ground level ozone.
- We've had chronic flooding. People are displaced. We are losing our whole way of life.
- Many people that live in underserved communities like Port Arthur, TX - many do not want to leave, but are forced to leave because of poor air quality, poor housing, disinvestment and redlining.
- I remember a time where we could go to the beach, we'd take I-82. We can't take I-82 any longer because sea level rise has taken it over. When I was a kid in 1968, we had 40 yards of beach. Now the beach has gone. We are seeing it here in Port Arthur, TX, and along the coast to Florida.
- If we don't address these issues now, we'll find ourselves fighting for small pieces of land, fighting for water because of the drought, and fighting for resources that are scarce.
- What kind of nation will we be? It is incumbent on the President to push for climate change and equity for our disadvantaged communities.



- Look at ways to get resources to people on the ground. Many people choose to stay in their homes, keeping their culture intact. Instead of feeling defeated and running from the coast, we need to help those who want to stay, to stay, to build sustainably
- The Gulf coast is losing a football field/day of land that is pushing people off the coast, which creates other systemic problems if we don't do something today.

Aranzazu Lascurain: Rising Voices Relocation & Site Expansion Working Group

- Policy Recommendations to the US to Address CFD in the United States:
<https://www.uusc.org/addressing-climate-forced-displacement-in-the-united-states-a-just-and-equitable-response/>
 1. Increase frontline resources for frontline communities
 2. Grant federal funds directly to communities
 3. Make federal disaster response equitable
 4. Establish governance framework for adaptation in place and relocation that centers community leadership

Robin Bronen, Alaska Institute for Justice

- AIJ along with 5 Tribes and UUSC submitted a complaint to the UNSR on the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and a few other UNSR's in 2019. (see complaint here: <https://www.uusc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Complaint.pdf>)
- We allege a number of Human Rights violations and the UNSR 's have decided to take up our complaint. They have issued a letter to the US administration in Sep 2020 - the fed gov had up to Nov 2020 to respond. The administration did not respond. (see communication from the UNSR's here: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=25381>)
- We are asking/demanding that the Biden administration responds to this complaint by inviting the UNSR's to come to the US to do an investigation and documentation of these human rights violations so that the US government can act and have a roadmap of how human rights are being violated not only by the climate crisis and also by the failure of the US government's failure to act.

Climate-Forced Displacement Abroad

Richard Grokun, Tuvalu:

- The Pacific are the frontlines and low-lying island atolls are the most vulnerable and most impacted. We are faced with sea level rise, cyclones, flooding, droughts, ocean acidification.
- Some people have taken the step to migrate because of sea level rise and other problems we are facing.
- The intensity and frequency of the cyclones in the Pacific is now more frequent, sometimes reaching up to category 5 that is causing more damage and losses to our Pacific.
- Choosing to be climate induced migration is not an option for us. Most of us and our elders are not taking this option because it means losing their identities and sovereignties because of the impacts we are facing.
- Our plea as frontline and vulnerable to climate change is for the US to move the transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy



- Provide technical and financial support, to help us rebuild climate proof infrastructures -- not all Tuvaluans want to migrate and lose their identities and live elsewhere -- we seek more financial and technical support to remain in our homes
- We need a better and safe evacuation center for times of natural disasters
- We need fertilizers to allow us to grow crops for sustainable and consistent food supply.
- We need access to clean and quality water and reliable salination

Alicia Wallace, The Bahamas:

- In the Bahamas and in the Caribbean as a whole, climate change is affecting all our islands.
- We experienced a super storm in 2019. The Bahamas are accustomed to hurricanes. But now when we hear hurricanes, we are afraid, it brings a sense of terror.
- What Hurricane Dorian did to two of our islands - the storm was unlike any other. It was category 5 and it was slow moving in the Bahamas.
- Women and LGBTQ people are two disproportionately affected groups by disasters. Women are also working on the frontlines.
- We need to build regional solidarity to show up for each other.
- Focus on feminist policy making. Making sure we're centering and starting with the most vulnerable people. See https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SJAhjfm_-kgBZCotNryVUp_iDQwE2ocmUpyJALCr0oY/e/dit)
- Think long-term and think sustainability - ensure that responses that are meeting those needs don't cause further harm to people and contribute to the climate crisis
- Funders to increase responsiveness and flexibility because these events happen so quickly and the needs on the ground change so quickly
- More resourcing is needed that prioritizes local and national NGOs.
- We need to continue to build solidarity and build relationships within our region
- We also need to prioritize care for women who are doing this work

Marcos Ramirez, Maya, Guatemala:

- We can all conceptualize what climate change is because we are already experiencing its effects. In the Mesoamerican Region, we see it in desertification and droughts, forest fires, hurricanes, and storms. In other parts of the world, people are experiencing rising sea levels.
- As a result of the consequences of climate change, many people, families and communities are forced to move and migrate from one country to another in search of opportunities to work so that they can recover what they have lost.
- In Guatemala, the exploitation of Mother Earth by humanity is aggravated by monoculture plantations such as sugar cane and oil palm, extractive industries and open-pit mining, large hydroelectric plants and other mega-projects.
- Some of our proposals to reduce the impacts of Climate Change from the perspective of the Mayan Cosmvision are:
 - Do political advocacy through networks of community organizations in defense of territories, resources such as water, forest and mountains that allow life.
 - States must create laws and comply with international agreements that limit the activities of companies and industries that emit greenhouse gases and oblige them to recycle as much as possible.



- Build a sustainable organic agriculture to ensure food security and sovereignty.
- Recover our ancestral knowledge, with our principles, values and practices that allow our coexistence and familiar interrelation with plants, animals and the diversity of humanity so that we feel unified and become unified, together with the Universe.

Adriana Laurent, Honduras & Loss & Damage Youth Coalition:

- We are not in a border crisis, we are in a displacement crisis.
- Honduras has been facing a lot of crises including slow onset like droughts and rapid disasters that is perpetuated by a US backed military coup in 2009. Extreme high rates in violence and poverty, food insecurity - factors forcing many out of their communities for many years.
- In Nov 2020, Hurricanes Eta and Iota - categories 4 and 5 respectively struck Honduras, 2 weeks apart. They displaced so many people, on top of a global pandemic.
- The impact were disproportionately felt by farmers, indigenous and afro-indigenous communities, women, marginalized genders (trans),
- Combining the existing factors on inequality, state violence, climate change and pandemic - makes Honduras unlivable - remaining in place is not an option. It's forced displacement
- Mitigate the climate crisis caused by fossil fuel extraction. We need a just transition away from fossil fuels now.
- Hold fossil fuels accountable. We need accountability from countries like the US and Canada who have been investing in mining in Central America.
- Demilitarize borders. There has been increased militarization in the area - only adds to the violence. These issues are interconnecting and mutually reinforcing.
- LDYC is advocating for financial support for L&D and we need resources and access to funding for these issues. This money should go directly to communities and people impacted
- Recognize the power of mutual aid in response to crisis.
- Crisis is multifaceted, we need to address the root causes of the crisis.
- Put justice and people first

Kayly Ober, Refugees International:

- Tribal leaders and frontline communities put the face and humanity of the issues
- We are in a climate crisis - it's not a future scenario
- People are being displaced and are on the move now and policies need to address this.
- Refugees International focuses on four pieces of work:
 - Multilateral engagement
 - Averting the crisis - giving communities the tools to adapt
 - Reckoning that the US has a heavy hand in the causes of
 - Leadership around regional solutions
- Refugees International's issue brief can be found here:
<https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2021/2/10/at-a-climate-change-crossroads-how-a-biden-harris-administration-can-support-and-protect-communities-displaced-by-climate-change>