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# Internal Displacement in the United States: A Result of Climate Change and U.S. Policy

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INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT  
IN THE UNITED STATES: A RESULT OF CLIMATE  
CHANGE AND U.S. POLICY

by

AHMAD TIDJANY DIOP

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2019

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Internal Displacement in the United States: A Result of Climate Change and U.S. Policy

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Ahmad Tidjany Diop

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## Abstract

Internal Displacement in the United States: A Result of Climate Change and U.S.

Policy by

Ahmad Tidjany Diop

Advisor: Karen Miller

This thesis will focus on arguments for an open border. I demonstrate that open borders are necessary because land is scarce. I focus on the United States, which is currently dealing with internal displacement due to climate change. The moral, human rights, and political claims I will make open borders are reasonable because climate change will make certain parts of the world uninhabitable.

When I say internal displacement I am referring to those displaced in the United States due to climate change as we have seen with Hurricane Katrina in which residents of New Orleans were displaced from their homes and relocated to Houston and other states due to the breaking of the levies. The climate is continuously changing for the worse, although perceptions of this shift depend on how one views climate change.

Climate change is accelerating, as we can see from recent wildfires in California and the melting of icebergs in Antarctica. The earth is warming and sea levels are rising. This thesis examines the deleterious effects that these shifts are having on human populations. As things currently stand there is a large buildup of heat in the oceans which suggest that there is a faster rate of global warming according to recent scientific studies. I argue that it is the responsibility of all nations to address this crisis and to welcome climate refugees.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis argue that in order to advocate for open borders we must make *Moral, Human Rights and Political claims*. The *Moral* claim is that sovereign states are not morally entitled to restrict immigration. This claim is based on two interrelated assumptions with the first assumption being that all human beings are of equal moral worth. The second assumption is that a moral justification is necessary when it comes to the restriction of freedom. The *Human Rights* claim is built on the notion that contemporary border policies challenge human rights principles. Human trafficking and smuggling are direct outcomes of border policies. The existence of borders is also producing a situation where migrants are dying in their efforts to cross borders. The *Political* claim makes it known that the shortcomings in the current approaches to migration is due to the restrictive policies sets forth by governments.

When life becomes unsustainable for those effected by climate change it leads to migration crises by displacing people effected by climate change. The moral claim that can be made with climate change is that since the responsibility of climate change belongs largely to rich countries, but effects poor countries at a disproportionate rate, it only makes sense for those rich countries to take in displaced people because their actions are the reason why we have displaced people in the first place. We will examine these questions by considering a resettlement program in the U.S. and then in the Pacific islands.

## CHAPTER 2: OPEN BORDERS

### Moral

States are not morally entitled to restrict immigration. That is the moral claim made by one of the advocates for open borders, Joseph Caren. Caren bases this moral claim on two interrelated assumptions. The first tells us that “in evaluating the moral status of alternative forms of political and social organization, we must start from the premise that all human beings are of equal moral worth”<sup>1</sup>. He bases this claim on Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” The second interrelated assumption asserts that the restriction of freedom of movement requires a moral justification. One thing to know about these two interrelated assumptions is that they undergird “the claim to moral legitimacy of every contemporary democratic regime.”<sup>2</sup>

Hence borders should be open because freedom of movement is crucial for equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity is a political theory that focuses on the idea that people should be able to compete on equal terms. People have to be able to move where the opportunities are in order to compete for them, making freedom of movement an essential prerequisite for equality of opportunity. It is recognized in principle within democratic states that “access to social positions should be determined by an individual’s actual talents and effort and not limited on the basis of birth-related characteristics such as class, race, or gender that are not relevant to the capacity to perform well in the position”<sup>3</sup>. This recognition of equal opportunity in principle within democratic states is

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<sup>1</sup> Carens, John H., “The Case for Open Borders,” In *The Ethics of Immigration*, 225-255. Oxford University Press, 2013

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



highly connected to the first interrelated assumption that all human beings are of equal moral worth because there is no natural hierarchies of birth that authorize people to advantageous social positions.

Some commitment to economic, social, and political equality within these democratic states causes a commitment to equal moral worth, partly as a means of realizing equal freedom and equal opportunity and partly as a desirable end in itself. With freedom of movement we can expect reductions in the existing political, social, and economic inequalities within these democratic states. “There are millions of people in poor states today who long for the freedom and economic opportunity they could find in Europe or North America.”<sup>4</sup> They take great risks in numerous numbers to cross the border by way of border smugglers which is a business nowadays. If we want to take seriously the claims of all individuals as free and equal in moral worth then it would be hard to justify the exclusion of poor people from sovereign countries.

Freedom of movement needs a justification, since state control over immigration restricts human freedom of movement. “Freedom of movement cannot be unconstrained, but restrictions on freedom of movement require some sort of moral justification, that is, some arguments as to why the restriction on freedom is in the interest of, and fair to, all those who are subject to it<sup>5</sup>.

“First, state control over immigration limits freedom of movement. The right to go where you want is an important human freedom in itself. It is precisely this freedom, and all that this freedom makes possible, that is taken away by Imprisonment. Freedom of movement is also a prerequisite to many other freedoms.”<sup>6</sup> As long as it does not interfere with the permissible claims of others, people are free to live their lives as they choose, meaning they have to be free to move where they want.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

That is why freedom of movement contributes to Individual autonomy both directly and indirectly.

This freedom would be enhanced by open borders.

## Human Rights

Regardless of whether or not states possess the ability to truly control migration, it remains that contemporary border policies come along with various challenges to human rights. The first have to do with the asylum principle which is directly affected by the procedures used to stop irregular migration. In the asylum principle all human beings are entitled to seek protection from persecution but “the lack of legal migration channels incites some economic migrants to present themselves as asylum-seekers, which, in a self-nurturing process, then casts doubts on all refugees and leads to even more restrictive measures.”<sup>7</sup> The confusion between asylum-seekers and economic migrants results in following a never ending procedure to prove that persecution existed through laws that control the flows of migration “before they reach their destinations”<sup>8</sup> which affects the ability to become an asylum seeker, hence, why it is a human right challenged that brings abuse and sufferings for genuine refugee. It is a never ending procedure to prove that persecution existed because of the tension between security and human rights which dates back to the end of the Cold War. Since then migration has been understood as a security threat due to the rise of irregular migration and the asylum crises of the 1990s which are recognized as a source of potential destabilization for states.

This is because genuine refugees seeking asylum are hindered by the attempts to control migration flows before they reach destination countries. In Europe they are discussing the possibility of persuading refugees to not consider their cases in European soil but to stay in countries near their region of origin. These tendencies have been understood as a reflection of a

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<sup>7</sup> Pecoud, Antoine., and Paul de Guchteneire. “International Migration, Border Controls and Human Rights: Assessing the Relevance of a Right to Mobility,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, Volume 21, No. 1, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

new asylum paradigm. “In other words, closed borders make the very fact of leaving one’s country to seek protection problematic.”<sup>9</sup> This makes it a human right challenge because no one would be able to cross borders so they find other means to cross the border whether it may be legal or illegal.

Trafficking and human smuggling are the second human rights challenge. They are thriving because it’s getting harder and harder to cross the border legally. It is hard to investigate this business “because of its hidden nature, even though there are uncertainties and controversies surrounding the definition of human smuggling, evidence exists that it is a business that is getting bigger”<sup>10</sup>. Normally, it is thought that tight border controls contribute to the fight against human trafficking. However, “it is well established that the harder it is to enter a country, the more it is required to rely on smugglers and the more profitable the business”<sup>11</sup>. This makes tighter border controls and human smuggling a continuous process that fuels human rights violation.

The third human rights challenge we are faced with is the number of people that die on their way to receiving countries. An estimation was done on the U.S.-Mexico border in which “one migrant dies every day due to hypothermia, dehydration, sunstroke, or drowning while in Europe, about 920 migrants lost their lives while trying to reach Europe between 1993 and 1997”<sup>12</sup>. We can assume that these figures are underestimated because no one knows how many undiscovered bodies are there.

It is difficult to address the relationship between border controls, migration policies, and human rights because of the moral problem at stake. We must ask who, for instance, is responsible

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

for the death of migrants? “Human smugglers are usually blamed for cynically and inhumanly exploiting irregular migrants’ distress, but, in a context of tight asylum policies, some smugglers actually enable people to flee persecution.”<sup>13</sup> It is possible for migrants to be criticized for risking their lives to cross borders, however we must understand that many of the migrants are misguided or rely upon migration to survive. Tight policies are responsible for leaving migrants no other option than migrating at their own risk. “Sending and transit countries could be blamed for not caring for the well-being of their citizens, for not providing accurate information, and for letting migrants leave in dangerous conditions.”<sup>14</sup> This makes it difficult to establish who is responsible for the human rights violations surrounding migration controls.

### **Political**

The shortcomings in the current approaches to migration is due to the restrictive policies set forth by democratic governments. Restrictive policies are no longer credible because governments are no longer able to control their borders this can be seen in them “failing to offer sustainable and persuading perspective on how to deal with the challenges of migration in the long term”<sup>15</sup>. And building walls only shows the acceptance of an insufficient plan and system set forth by governments. This is acknowledged in the 2005, report of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), which notes that “the international community has failed to... meet the challenges associated with international migration” (2) and “states and other stakeholders must

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

pursue more realistic and flexible approaches to international migration.”<sup>16</sup> Human rights issues are accompanied by policy failures, which once again require us to reconsider migration policies.

A right to mobility promotes the respect for existing human rights. “Nevins convincingly argues, for example, that in a world of economic globalization and gross socioeconomic inequalities, the human right to free choice of employment (Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and to an adequate standard of living (Article 25) are hard to achieve in the absence of migration opportunities.”<sup>17</sup>

The right to cross political boundaries does not exist in International law but there should be such a right. David Miller argues that basic rights, are justified by the vital interest they protect. An example of the vital interest Miller referred to is the ability to move freely in physical space. And if this is the case freedom of movement qualifies as a basic human right. The following statement qualify as vital interest; If I cannot move about over a fairly wide area, it may be impossible for me to find a job to practice my religion or to find a suitable marriage partner. The right to mobility is an essential part of human rights, which is why we have to consider the scope of human rights at the international level. Being a human consists of having a life story that other humans can identify with, in that it includes elements such as social and political conditions as well as physical and economic ones. Importantly being a human does not only consist of having a life story, but also the power to be its author, to have a say in its content, and of course the power to create it as it goes along. Human rights can be understood as tools that allow people to live lives filled with dignity, freedom and equality among its fellow citizens, to exercise meaningful choices, and to pursue their

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

life plans. In other words, human rights constitute a framework that provides the conditions needed for people to become empowered to achieve their own humanity.

The case for open borders rests on the principal of freedom. If we must hold freedom as an important value, then we can argue that weighty reasons are required to restrict it especially in the context of international movement. This is because “border controls restrict significant freedoms: people’s liberty to escape oppression; the freedom to purchase or sell labor; and freedom of association”<sup>18</sup>. From the concept of humanity, border controls can stop people from obtaining their full humanity by keeping them in poverty. By forbidding people the right to cross border in order to improve their conditions we are saying that it is justified to deny people the opportunity to get out of poverty. “If freedom and humanity are important and weighty values, the prima facie case for open borders is a strong one, since very substantial considerations will have to be adduced to warrant ignoring or repudiating them.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Wellman, Christopher H., and Cole, Phillip. “Toward a Right to Mobility,” In *Debating The Ethics of Immigration*, edited by Christopher H. Wellman, Washington University St. Louis, 293-309. Oxford University Press, 2011

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

### CHAPTER 3: ISLES DE JEAN CHARLES

This chapter will focus on Isle de Jean Charles which is a tapered island located in the bayous of South Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana. It is considered to be a place of vast physical beauty with a great biodiversity. But most importantly it is home to the Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe which lacked political power due to President Andrew Jackson. This have led to climate insecurity for the residence of Isles de Jean Charles who are afflicted by a host of environmental problems such as coastal erosion and salt-water intrusion which was caused by oil and gas companies. The Oil and gas companies constructed canals with no mind to the residents and the environment as you will see throughout Isle de Jean Charles.

The fact that this native American group is subject to these problems is because of the legacy of the Indian Removal Act in which the tribes that make up the Isles de Jean Charles were forced to move to their current location in the bayous by President Andrew Jackson who was in favor of white settlers. President Jackson preferential treatment to white settlers was due to his need of Indian Lands to solidify his presidency according to the author of *The Long, Bitter Trail Andrew Jackson and the Indians* by Anthony F.C. Wallace.

The development and growth of the community we have come to known as the Isles de Jean Charles was due to an interracial marriage between a Frenchman and a Native American. Jean Marie Naquin a Frenchman was eventually disowned by his family for marrying a Native American Pauline Verdin. Because of this situation Jean Marie and Pauline had to move to a land where the father of Jean Marie Naquin “Jean Charles Naquin (who the Island is named after), had



travelled many times to service the pirate Jean Lafitte—the land which is now known as Isle de Jean Charles.”<sup>20</sup>

“All of Jean Marie and Pauline’s children, except their oldest daughter, married Indians, descendants of Biloxi-Chitimacha, and Choctaw Tribes who inhabited the area near the Island.”<sup>21</sup> The first people on the Island were the Naquin family, and then the Dardar and Chaisson families whom also moved on the Island as a result of intermarriage between these families. And according to the Tribe's oral history, that was in the early 1800s.

In 1876 the State of Louisiana began selling land to private individuals, up until then Isle de Jean Charles was just considered as an uninhabitable swamp land. Before 1876 it was illegal for a Native American to purchase land. When the 1880 Terrebonne Parish Census was first conducted it “listed the first land buyers as residents and included just four families, that of Jean Baptise Narcisse Naquin, Antoine Livaudais Dardar, Marcelin Duchils Naquin, and Walker Lovell.”<sup>22</sup> When the census was conducted again in 1910, the area was officially called the “Isle á Jean Charles” and had grown to sixteen families, all descendants of the first four families; a total of 77 people. The occupations of the men were fishermen, oystermen, or trappers.”<sup>23</sup>

In the Terrebonne Parish and in the surrounding area Isle de Jean Charles is the only community in the area which has had designated Chiefs from historic time of settlement. The Chief was in charge of the grocery store along with the mail system. The Chief were also responsible of arbitrating disputes. The Chiefs were appointed as representatives of the people of Isles de Jean

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<sup>20</sup> “The Island.” Isle De Jean Charles, Louisiana, [www.isledejeancharles.com/](http://www.isledejeancharles.com/).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Charles with outsiders, and gathered the natives for group work in the Island. Each Chief had the right to name his successor. The successor had to be the person the Chief thought best qualified to fulfill the duties of a Chief after him.

The first Chief of the Indians on Isle de Jean Charles was said to be Jean Baptiste Narcisse Naquin, born in 1841 and died after 1910. Although no time period was given for this appointment as Chief, an assumption was made that he was at least of middle age and that would be around the 1880's. Before his death Jean Baptiste Narcisse Naquin made his son, Jean Victor Naquin born in 1869 his successor.

Jean Victor Naquin died at the age of 86 on Isle de Jean Charles in 1956. Nonetheless Before his death, Victor made his nephew Antoine Martin Naquin born January 31, 1896 his successor. Antoine Martin Naquin was also commissioned by Sheriff Prejean to keep law and order. Antoine Martin Naquin died at the age of 82 on April 24, 1978. Before his death, Antoine Martin Naquin appointed his assistant and apprentice Deme Naquin as his successor.

Deme Naquin made history for Isle de Jean Charles when he was appointed as Representative to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the State of Louisiana by Governor Edwin Edwards. Governor Edwards is a Democrat who served as the U.S. Representative for Louisiana's 7<sup>th</sup> congressional district from 1965 to 1972. He then served four terms as the 50<sup>th</sup> governor of Louisiana starting from 1972. Upon the retirement of Deme Naquin in 1997 he appointed his brother, Albert Paul Naquin as his successor. As of 2018 Albert Paul Naquin is the present Chief of Isle de Jean Charles.

For the residents of Isle de Jean Charles, it is simply more than a place to live, it is the focal point of their Tribe and traditions. Isle de Jean Charles is the location in which there is a lot of history. "It is where our ancestors survived after being displaced by Indian Removal Act-era

policies and where we cultivated what has become a unique part of Louisiana culture.”<sup>24</sup> The land that had preserved the people of Isle de Jean Charles for generations is now disappearing before their eyes.

The environmental problems for the residents of Isle de Jean Charles have gotten worse lately. The land is sinking due to a lack of soil renewal “because of the construction of levees that separated us from the river, and rising seas.”<sup>25</sup> These environmental changes has only changed the resident’s way of life in a drastic way, since there has been an Increase in flood risks at Isles de Jean Charles. “For example, our Island needed a levee, but the small levee that protects our Island during high tide has also led our bayou to become stagnant, killing the ecosystem we once had.”<sup>26</sup>

Many of the residents of Isle de Jean Charles have been forced out to nearby areas, including along Bayou, Grand Caillou, Montegut, Pointe-aux-Chenes, Bourg, Houma and Chauvin. The reason for this removal is that those residents needed reliable access to jobs and services up the bayou. Now the time has come for the former residents of Isle de Jean Charles to return home. For over fifteen years the residents of Isle de Jean Charles had been planning a Tribal Resettlement in order to bring their people back together, rejuvenate they ways of life, and secure a future for the Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

#### **Chapter 4: THE INDIAN REMOVAL ACT OF 1814-1858**

Some populations are vulnerable to climate change disaster not to the fault of their own but to the fault of the powerful nations that produced those geographies. The case of Native Americans here is exceptionally heart-rending because it serves as an example of a population whose connection to the land they occupy has been determined by their deficiency of power in relation to people with political power such as white Americans. Hence why Indian nations have been subjected to climate insecurities as a legacy of U.S. policies of removal.

According to the Britannica Encyclopedia of The Indian Removal Act this act was the first important legislative bill from the U.S. Policy that officially respected the legal and political rights of the American Indians in a sense. I say in a sense because this bill favored white settlers in every sense of the word. Because It allowed then President Andrew Jackson the power to give the desirable lands that belonged to the Five American Indian tribes to the white settlers he highly favored over the American Indians whom he viewed as children in need of guidance which made no sense because he made no attempts to guide them towards the right path which we must do with children. This eventually left the American Indian tribes with no choice but to settle in the undesirable land that the white settlers did not want to settle in in the end because they were children being guided towards the wrong path by then President Andrew Jackson. This shows the disproportionate of power between the white settlers and the American Indians who had no political power compared to the white settlers.

This lack of political power for the American Indians can be seen through Congress who devised a plan to disintegrate the Five American Indian Tribes culture in order to make the individual members of the Five American Indian Tribes suitable “for a life in accordance with

individual development along the lines of life of the white man.”<sup>27</sup> In other words Congress felt that it needed to change the structure of the Five American Indian Tribes land ownership from common ownership to individual ownership. And it was not until March 3, 1893 that Congress started making the preparation of distributing the lands of the Five American Indian tribes through an Act that allowed President Jackson to appoint a Commission only with the advice and consent of the Senate. This commission was named after its chairmen Dawes and it consisted of three men which later on became five men. These five men eventually entered into negotiations with the Five American Indian tribes. The aim in this negotiation was for the Five American Indian Tribes to obliterate their “national and tribal title of the lands of these tribes, and for the allotment and division of the same in severalty.”<sup>28</sup>

It was early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the United States was rapidly-growing so they decided to expand into the lower South. Moving to the lower south was an obstacle for the white settlers because this region was home to the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Seminole nations. In the eyes of the white settlers and other white Americans these Indian nations were preventing them from moving to the lower south. So, the white settlers pressured the federal government to acquire Indian territory so they can move to the lower south and raise cotton.

One of the powerful proponent of the Indian removal act was Andrew Jackson from Tennessee. Andrew Jackson commanded the U.S. military forces that defeated a branch of the Creek nation. This defeat led to the loss of 22 million acres of land in southern Georgia and central Alabama by the Creeks. More land was acquired by the U.S. when Jackson’s troops invaded

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<sup>27</sup> Bennett, John Edward. *The Law of Titles to Indian Lands*. Harlow Publishing Company, 1917.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Spanish Florida in 1818. The invasion of Spanish Florida by Jackson's troops was motivated by the need to punish the Seminoles for their practice of harboring fugitive slaves.

Jackson was influential in negotiating nine successful treaties out of eleven treaties from 1814 to 1824. These nine successful treaties managed to deprive the southern tribes of their eastern lands in exchange for lands in the west. The tribes agreed to the treaties because they wanted to make peace with the government in the hopes of that they can keep possession of some of their land. Another reason was to protect themselves from white harassment. The United States benefitted from the treaties because they gained controlled off three-quarters of "Alabama and Florida, as well as parts of Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Kentucky and North Carolina."<sup>29</sup> This occurred during the period of voluntary Indian migration in which a small number of Creeks, Cherokee and Choctaws actually moved to the new lands.

A decision was made by the Supreme Court in 1823 which stated that the Indians had the right to live anywhere in the United States but they cannot hold the deeds to those lands they happen to live in. This was because their "right of occupancy" was subordinate to the United States' "right of discovery."<sup>30</sup> In order to protect what remained of their land before it was too late, the Creeks, Cherokee, and Chickasaw instituted policies of restricting land sales to the government.

Earlier attempts at non-violent resistance by the five Indian nations was unsuccessful. Instead they adopted "Anglo-American practices such as large-scale farming, Western education, and slave-holding."<sup>31</sup> This resulted in the nations earning the designation of the "Five Civilized Tribes." This policy of assimilation was adopted in an attempt to coexist with white settlers and to

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<sup>29</sup> Pbs.org. (2018). Indian removal. [online] Available at: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2959.html> [Accessed 28 Jul. 2018].

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

prevent resentment. But this only made the white settlers jealous and resentful of the “Five Civilized Tribes.”

Another attempt involved relinquishing portions of their land to the U.S. This was based on their view that they would retain control over at least part of their territory and or of the new territory they received in exchange. It was noted that some Indian nations clearly refused to leave their land which can be seen in the Creeks and the Seminoles waging war to protect their territory. The First Seminole War began on 1817 and ended in 1818. The Seminoles had help in their war against the white settlers from the fugitive slaves they harbored. These fugitive slaves found protection and a place they can call home by way of the Seminoles, so it was only right they showed their loyalty to the Seminoles in their time of need; because it is also their home in jeopardy. The participation of the refugee slaves only infuriated the white settlers which increased their desire to triumph over the Seminoles in the time of war.

In order to protect their rights, the Cherokee used legal means. Protection was sought from the land-hungry white settlers, “who continually harassed them by stealing their livestock, burning their towns, and squatting on their land.”<sup>32</sup> That is why the Cherokee adopted a written constitution that declared themselves to be a sovereign nation in 1827. This was based on the policies of the United States. In this former treaty Indian nations were declared as sovereign, so that they would legally be able to relinquish their lands. The Cherokee hoped to use this status to their advantage but their hopes were crushed by the State of Georgia. The State of Georgia did not recognize the Cherokees sovereign status. It instead recognized them as inhabitants of state land. The Cherokee eventually took their case to the Supreme Court, but they were easily ruled against.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

It was in 1831 that the Cherokee went to the Supreme Court again for an appeal. Their appeal was this time based on an 1830 Georgia law that had banned white settlers from occupying Indian territory without a license from the state after March 31, 1831. This law was written by the state legislature in order to vindicate removing white missionaries that were helping the Indians resist removal. It was during this second appeal that the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Cherokee. The Supreme Court made it known that the Cherokee had the right towards autonomy, so they declared that the state of Georgia's addition of state law over the Cherokee to be unconstitutional. The Supreme Court's decision did not matter to the state of Georgia who refused to obey the Supreme Court's decision. It did not stop there because even President Jackson rebuffed the idea of enforcing the law that would have allowed the Cherokee to be a sovereign state in the United States.

In 1830 Andrew Jackson became the seventh President of the United States. And a year after taking office a new legislation was pushed by him through both houses of Congress. This legislation was called the Indian Removal Act. This act gave Jackson the authority to negotiate removal treaties with Indian tribes living in the east of the Mississippi. These treaties had the Indian tribes giving up their lands located in the east of the Mississippi in exchange for lands to the west. And those Indians who wanted to remain in the east would be considered as citizens of their home state. The Indian Removal Act impacted the southeastern nations and those located further north. For the tribes that agreed to the Indian Removal Act their removal was voluntary and peaceful. But resistance came from the southeastern nations, so Jackson forced them to leave.

President Andrew Jackson held a condescending and paternalistic attitude towards the Native Americans. Hence why he described them as children that was in need of guidance, so he believed that the removal policy was beneficial to the Indian nations. Many white Americans held the notion that the United States would never expand beyond the Mississippi. The purpose of the



Indian Removal Act was to save the Indian nations from the plunders of whites while resettling them in a location where they would be able to govern themselves in peace. But that was not the case because some white Americans saw this as a reason to justify their cruel and inhumane course of action against the Indian nations, so they protested strongly against the removal of the Indian nations.

This protest was strong but not strong enough to save the southeastern nations from removal, nonetheless. This can be seen as an imbalance in power because it produced vulnerabilities of power for the Indian nations who were viewed as children who were in need of guidance by President Andrew Jackson. These vulnerabilities have led to climate insecurity. The first removal treaty was signed in September of 1830 by the Choctaws. Some of the Choctaws chose to stay in Mississippi under the terms of the Removal Act. Yet, despite the fact that some attempts were made to protect those who stayed by the “War Department, it was no match for the land-hungry whites who squatted on Choctaw territory or cheated them out of their holdings.”<sup>33</sup> Most of the remaining Choctaws became tired of the mistreatment they received from the whites, so they sold their land and moved west.

The United States government had trouble forcing the relocation of the southeastern nations for 28 years. But in 1833 a small group of Seminoles were pressured into signing a removal treaty. However, most of the tribe proclaimed the treaty illegitimate and refused to leave. This resulted in the second Seminole war which lasted from 1835 to 1842. Just like in the first war, fugitive slaves fought alongside the Seminoles who had taken them in. The war resulted in a thousand of lives being lost. This managed to cost the Jackson administration ten times the number it had dedicated for the Indian removal act about 40 to 60 million dollars. In the end of the second war, many of the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Seminoles moved to the new territory. However, the few of the Seminoles who remained had to protect themselves from the U.S. military who attempted to drive them out of the land. This led to the third Seminole war that lasted three years from 1855 to 1858. Eventually, the United States paid the Seminoles that were left after the third war to move west.

The Creeks too refused to relocate but they eventually signed a treaty in March, 1832. This treaty opened a large part of their Alabama territory to white settlement, “but guaranteed them protected ownership of the remaining portion, which was divided among the leading families.”<sup>34</sup> But speculators quickly tricked the Creeks out of their lands. This was a result of the United States government not protecting the Creeks from the speculators. That is why by 1835 the poverty-stricken Creeks started stealing crops and livestock from the white settlers. In the end some Creeks committed murder and arson in response to the brutal treatment they received from white settlers. Eventually, as a military necessity the Creeks were removed in 1836 by the order of the Secretary of War. “By 1837, approximately 15,000 Creeks had migrated west. They had never signed a removal treaty.”<sup>35</sup>

The Chickasaws did not resist the Indian Removal Act because it was certain to happen, eventually, a treaty was signed in 1832. In this treaty the Chickasaws would receive protection from the federal government alongside suitable western land. The war department eventually backed down on its promise because the onslaught of white settlers by the Chickasaws confirmed too much for them so, they relocated them to the west in the winter of 1837-38. The Chickasaws were forced to pay the Choctaws for the right to live on part of their western allotment.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

On the other hand, the Cherokee were deceived by an illegitimate treaty in 1833. The treaty known as the Treaty of New Echota was signed by a small group of the Cherokees. “The leaders of this group were not the recognized leaders of the Cherokee nation, and over 15,000 Cherokees -- led by Chief John Ross -- signed a petition in protest.”<sup>36</sup> Not only was this petition ignored the treaty was ratified by the Supreme Court in 1836. This gave the Cherokees two years to relocate at their own will and after these two years they would be forcibly removed. “By 1838 only 2,000 had migrated; 16,000 remained on their land.”<sup>37</sup> 7,000 troops were sent in by the U.S. government in order to force the Cherokees into stockades at bayonet point Florida. The Cherokees were not given enough time to gather their belongings so, as they left their homes were being burglarize by the whites. Then began what was known as the march of the Trail of Tears, in which 4,000 Cherokee people died of cold, hunger, and disease on their way to the west.

Yet in 1837, the Jackson administration removed 46,000 more Native American people from their land east of the Mississippi. The administration also obtained treaties that led to the removal of a moderately larger number. This led to the opening of 25 million acres of land to white settlement and to slavery. This was because many members of the five southeastern nations had been relocated west by the Jackson administrations Indian Removal Act.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTER 5: INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE OF ISLES DE JEAN CHARLES**

Isle de Jean Charles was originally brought to existence through a government-mandated relocation plan that had nothing to do with climate change. This occurred during the presidency of Andrew Jackson who signed into law the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This law permitted the president to grant unsettled lands located in the west of Mississippi in exchange for settled Indian lands located within existing state borders.

The Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw band of Native Americans who reside in Isles de Jeans Charles, has lost 98 percent of its land since 1955. As of today, Isles de Jean Charles have only 99 residents hence why they are considered America's first climate change internally displaced people.

When it comes to climate change resettlement in the United States there is only one government funded climate relocation in the country and that is the Louisiana's Isle de Jean Charles Resettlement Project. Louisiana's Isle de Jean Charles is connected to the rest of the continental United States through Island road. Island Road is a thin, "four-mile stretch of pavement that lies inches above sea level and immediately drops off into open water on either side."<sup>38</sup>

Up until the Island Road was built in 1953, the only sure way of transportation to and from the Island was by boat. Before that the way to go to Point Farm and Bayou Terrebonne was through a wagon path that went along a narrow ridge. But it was unpassable at times due to the high tide, that came in when the wind blew from the south or southeast.

In 1953, a road was built through the marshland. This road connected Isle de Jean Charles to Pointe-aux-Chene. "For several decades, the marshland has eroded and turned into the open water,

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<sup>38</sup> Stein, M. (2018). When Climate Change Comes for Your Town, Where Do You Go?. [online] CityLab. Available at: <https://www.citylab.com/environment/2018/01/how-to-save-a-town-from-rising-waters/547646/> [Accessed 8 Jul. 2018].

leaving the road vulnerable to erosion and flooding.”<sup>39</sup> Tribal elders today believe that the location of the road was an unwise decision because the construction has added to the erosion of the Island. After years of endorsing that the Island road be repaired and built higher, the parish eventually completed a \$6.24 million restoration and elevation of the road in June 2011.

“However, we were informed at this time that it would be the last time they fix the road, and now just six years after this victory, the road floods regularly during tropical storm systems.”<sup>40</sup> It also floods during high tides, and even on days with a strong southern wind. When the road is flooded and an ambulance is unable to pass, the residents of Isle de Jean Charles worry that their elders would not be able to get the medical services they need right then and there. Even though a Gulf Flood Protection System called the Morganza Spillway is being built to protect communities along Louisiana, it will pass north of the Isle de Jean Charles. This is because the Army Corps of Engineers determined in 1998 that it was not cost-effective to include Isle de Jean Charles. This has left Isle de Jean Charles more vulnerable to the encroaching Gulf waters.

In 2018 we can see the exposure to salt water clearly even during a day in which the ocean is calm. Through this calmness the salt water still managed to laps over the boundaries of the road while splashing the concrete. In 1956 the residents of Isle de Jean Charles were able to hunt and trap by just walking through the thick swamp that surrounded Island road because it was unexposed to salt water. In 2018 hunting and trapping is no longer an option for the residents of Isles de Jean Charles because of the exposure to salt water which transformed the landscape in a drastic way.

According to [Islesdejeancharles.com](http://Islesdejeancharles.com), the main reason Isles de Jean Charles has witnessed a drastic landscape change from 1956 to 2018 is the frequent sea water flooding that disconnected it

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

from the mainland. This flooding led to the use of levees. The purpose of the levees was to stop the natural flow of fresh water and residues that increased the fragile swampland. The levees no longer served a purpose when “Oil and gas companies dredged through the mud to lay pipelines and build canals, carving paths for saltwater to intrude and kill the freshwater vegetation that held the land together.”<sup>41</sup> On top of that the rise of sea-level caused by uncontrollable glacial forces has only made things worse for the landscape of Isles de Jean Charles. In 1956 Isles de Jean Charles was surrounded by a massive region of ample swamp and marshland but in 2018 almost nothing remains of the swamp and marshland in Isles de Jean Charles.

According to one of the 99 remaining resident of Isle de Jean, Charles Rita Falgout, the island used to have a lot of trees and little salt water but now there’s just a little strip of the island left. Many of the houses on Isle de Jean Charles are raised on 15-foot stilts. The stilts are there for the evasion of the increasingly widespread floodwaters. Eventually the island will be isolated because there are so much the 15-foot stilts can do against the floodwater. “Strong winds alone can flood the road, cutting the island off from vital resources like hospitals.”<sup>42</sup> Eventually making the road impassable all year-round hence why the only long-term solution is to leave Isles de Jean Charles.

“The residents of Isle de Jean Charles won’t be alone in their exodus. There will be up to 13 million climate refugees in the United States by the end of this century.”<sup>43</sup> A study was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that showed that, at least 414 towns, villages, and cities across the country would face relocation due to climate change. As it stands

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

about 17 Native American communities are already undertaking climate-related relocations without the help of the U.S. government.

The Isle de Jean Charles Resettlement project is funded and managed by the government making it a “test run of sorts, a first-of-its-kind program that aims to create guiding principles for future resettlements.”<sup>44</sup> The goal of the project is to resettle the whole community together by building a new town for the community. In this new town the culture of Isles de Jeans will live on because it will be filled with displaced occupants from the Island. Making the Isles de Jean Charles resettlement plan unique and definitely different from previous resettlement plans.

Previous resettlement projects “have largely followed a model of individual buyouts—offering lump-sum payments to residents and leaving them to their own devices to restart their lives.”<sup>45</sup> We have seen this with Diamond, Louisiana, in the early 2000s. Diamond, Louisiana, was a historically black community located in Cancer Alley, Louisiana, which is situated in an area along the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The Diamond community suffered through chemical leaks and explosions for decades due to Shell petrochemical plants. A buyout deal was finally achieved after years of grassroots campaigning. One by one, the residents of Diamond, Louisiana, took the money and left causing the community to shrink. In this shrinkage we witnessed the folding of churches, scattered residents causing people to fell out of touch. This shows the distinction between saving a community and saving its individual members.

Building an entirely new town for the remaining 99 residents of Isle de Jean Charles comes with a costly price tag of over \$48 million. Making it unclear whether this can serve as a replicable model because of its high price tag. And on top of that the pace of resettlement has been unable to

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

match the urgency of the dilemma the community of Isle de Jean Charles faces. Nothing's been built after nearly two years since the project began because there is no blueprint for the new town. The only thing happening now is the narrowing down of possible locations and the entering of contract negotiations between the project's administrators and the engineering and architectural firm, CSRS, they hope will design it.

Resettling communities is not something the U.S. government is good at historically. Hence why one of the things policy makers are trying to figure out is whether this inadequacy is a result of inexperience or the nature of bureaucracy. Will government-backed community resettlements be achievable for the hundreds of communities that are coming towards similar conclusions remains the central question.

It was about 15 years ago that the Isle de Jean Charles residents began contemplating about relocation, but it was unclear where to start due to the lack of government guidance. The lack of government guidance changed in 2014 under the Obama administration which announced the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC). The ambitious purpose of the NDRC was "to shift the way the U.S. manages natural disasters, from simply responding to and recovering from them, to planning and preparing for their inevitability."<sup>46</sup> The NDRC would award \$1 billion in funding to resilience projects across the nation.

Isle de Jean Charles community leaders, NGOs, and development companies worked with the Louisiana Office of Community Development, Disaster Recovery Unit (OCD-DRU) to draft an application for the Isle de Jean Charles Resettlement Project. This application focused on cultural and environmental resiliency. The Isles de Jean Charles resettlement program was exactly what the NRDC competition was looking for hence why it was awarded the full \$48.3 million it requested.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



Even though this was more than two years ago, there's not much to show for it in terms of land acquisition and buildings making them admittedly behind schedule. However, the OCD-DRU has been far from idle. While homes haven't been constructed, trust has been built. Trust is something that will determine the success of the entire process. This has meant overcoming decades of suspicion between the island's indigenous residents and the government. Because their previous experience with the government have led them to be cautious when dealing with them.

In order to avoid colonial persecution, the Native people were forced to flee into an uninhabitable swampland located deep into the southern marshes of Louisiana. "Now they are being asked to ignore decades of learned apprehension and trust the U.S. government to move them once again."<sup>47</sup> Those at the OCD-DRU do not see the fact that confidence-building has taken years to accumulate as a failure, but rather as an important lesson for future relocations of indigenous communities. When it comes to building trust, it's going to take time and patience because there are no shortcuts. It all depends on the OCD-DRU ability to articulate progress.

It is unfortunate that this lesson will be applicable for many future relocations because a surprising proportion of communities attempting relocation are Native American according to a study by the Center for Progressive Reform. This is no coincidence because Native people have seldomly been able to choose the place in which they're currently living. What continues to play a role in the resettlement process is mistrust between the 99 remaining residents of Isles de Jean Charles and the government even after two years of communication.

As of now what is crucially important among the residents of Isles de Jean Charles is that they retain ownership of the island once they have relocated. Even having unrestricted access to the island is fine with them. Many of the residents remain suspicious of what will happen to them if

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

they voluntarily leave. But as it stands project leaders at the OCD-DRU have vowed to future access to the island. In order to formalize that promise the OCD-DRU are working on a contract. Even with this contract being formalized decades of sensible skepticism remain because the residents learned a long time ago not to trust the government when they come with paper and pen.

The most complicated and financially demanding aspect of this resettlement project is picking a location. This decision has caused disagreements between residents because some want to get as far away from the water as possible by going to the north. While others want to stay in the south which is near their old homes, schools, jobs, and families. This make the choice a balancing act between providing continuity of lifestyle and ensuring the new town is far away from the water as possible. Many residents of Isle de Jean Charles prefer moving to the area around “Schriever, which is about 40 miles away and much safer from climate effects. Some would prefer to move to Bourg, which is closer to their current home, but more vulnerable.”<sup>48</sup>

The location of the soon-to-be town is also largely a question of economics. The OCD-DRU project planners want to keep residents as close as possible to their former lives. But they also have to avoid spending \$48 million to save Isles de Jean Charles from climate change only to have it fold because of economic ones. Hence why they are asking significant questions before they relocate the town. Questions such as Are there enough jobs near the site of the new town? Do those jobs match the skills and career experience of Isle de Jean Charles residents? Are there hospitals and grocery store close enough to service the community?

What limits how far away from the water they can move is the fact that many Isle de Jean Charles residents make a living fishing. If they move too far north there will be an unemployment crisis. Hence why the new location has to be one that can attract new people over time. As it stands

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

the population of Isle de Jean Charles is aging and dwindling and could eventually shrivel away unless new people are attracted to the community. But then, another problem persists: “if too many people move in, the town’s makeup could become unrecognizable within a generation, defeating the project’s original purpose.”<sup>49</sup>

Terrebonne Parish also known as the Evergreen property, a sugar farm in the north is the most likely site for the new town. This location was picked out of 16 potential sites and checks off the central wishes of the residents: It’s far away from the water, it’s rural yet closer to a city than the old town, and it conserves what the residents of Isle de Jean Charles value the most about their home—peace and quiet. “At 600 acres and \$19.1 million, the Evergreen property is not cheap, and buying it will eat up much of the total \$48 million available for the project.”<sup>50</sup>

America’s cities were not built with climate resilience in mind hence the Isles de Jean Charles resettlement project due to climate change. Much of the U.S. infrastructure is a contradiction to climate change transformations and adaptations. If and when the architects of OCD-DRU follow through with their plans, we can expect them to build one of the most climate-resilient cities in the country.

But many of the proposals diverges from traditional city planning in coastal areas which is a good thing. Because water will be treated as a resource rather than a problem in order to reduce the damages from flooding. Hence the creation of Rain gardens, strategic tree planting, and depressed community parks which will provide public value. In order to preserve the region’s biodiversity and protect vulnerable fisheries, wetlands will be created to protect the community from storm surges. The expected community will serve as an example of environmentally forward thinking due

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

to natural energy sources and cleaner water management. We can expect solar power and a local grid system to keep the lights on even if the entire region loses power. Walking will be encouraged over driving in the city's design.

Since Isle de Jean Charles is the only community to receive funding and institutional support from the government, we can consider them relatively fortunate among American towns facing relocation. Because residents could be moving to one of the most resilient towns in Louisiana.

Not only does the government need to be ready to help communities forced to relocate, it also need to proactively help communities avoid that fate. The government do not spend enough time flood-proofing communities instead it focuses on relocation plans. If the government put the money up front and plan well it can avoid mass destruction due to climate change. But there will still be towns for whom it's too late if actions are not taken soon enough. Hence why a proper government system is needed to deal with this. And those involved in the Isle de Jean Charles relocation such as the OCD-DRU "believe that the lessons they learn will be invaluable for a future administration that takes the threat of climate displacement seriously."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 6: THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

The Pacific Islands is spread across millions of square miles throughout the Pacific Ocean. “The Hawaiian archipelago and the US-Affiliated Pacific Islands include more than 2,000 islands with about 1.9 million inhabitants, representing numerous languages and cultures.”<sup>52</sup> The Pacific Islands attract millions of tourists every year. This is because there are diverse terrestrial and marine ecosystems located in these regions deep under the ocean. Tourists are able to go deep under the ocean in these regions to find abyssal environments to mountainous alpine environments. The islands and surrounding ocean possess tremendous biodiversity and are home to some of the most immaculate habitat in the world.

In the small island nations spread across the Pacific Ocean climate change is already occurring. The threat of climate change which can be seen in the grueling storms, warming temperatures, persistent droughts and rising tides in the Pacific Island is just powerful enough to swallow the land and lives of many who call the Pacific Islands home. Even though the Pacific Islands’ and other small developing island states contribution to greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is insignificant, they still suffer excessively for the effects of global warming. From Fiji to the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu to Papua New Guinea. Mainly, these serious weather patterns “impede economic development, hamper residents’ ability to access clean water and contaminate or erode the soil nations rely on for agriculture and fundamental food security.”<sup>53</sup>

Climate change is a reality as told by the 2012 Pacific Islands Regional Climate Assessment (PIRCA) which identified several important indicators of climate change in the region. One

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<sup>52</sup> Cakex.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <https://www.cakex.org/sites/default/files/documents/Exec-Summary-PIRCA-FINAL2.pdf> [Accessed 7 Aug. 2018].

<sup>53</sup> Cop23. (2018). The Pacific Islands - Cop23. [online] Available at: <https://cop23.com.fj/fiji-and-the-pacific-islands/> [Accessed 10 Jul. 2018].

indicator is that the average surface air temperatures are rising, with the largest increases found at high altitudes in Hawaii. Rainfalls has decreased across much of the region over the past 100 years. However, there has been a slight increase in rainfall in the westernmost Micronesian islands. “In Hawaii, groundwater discharge too streams has significantly decreased over the past 100 years. This trend indicates a decrease in groundwater storage.”<sup>54</sup> While on the other hand we can see that sea levels are rising, particularly in the Western Pacific.

The frequency and intensity of climatic extremes are changing across the region. There have been fewer tropical cyclones in the regions but drought has been prolonged yet more frequent. The distribution of the Pacific Island habitats and species have changed. For example, the upward migration of mosquito-borne diseases that cause mortality in Hawaiian native forest birds have been facilitated by the increasing temperatures in the Islands. Ocean chemistry is changing and that is due to the fact that the ocean heat content is rising.

There are multiple concerns for human and natural communities in the Pacific Islands region as the indicators of climate change suggests. The destruction of coastal artifacts and structures are some of the threats to the traditional lifestyles of indigenous communities. Some other threats include the maintenance of the fishing ground that has also led to the reduction of traditional food sources available to the residents of the Pacific Islands. Most importantly the loss of the land base that supports Pacific Island cultures. “These losses will make it difficult for Pacific Island communities to sustain their connection with a defined place and their unique set of customs, beliefs, and languages.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Cakex.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <https://www.cakex.org/sites/default/files/documents/Exec-Summary-PIRCA-FINAL2.pdf> [Accessed 7 Aug. 2018].

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

There would be potential for increased catches in some areas and decreased catches in others due to the alteration of the distribution patterns of coastal and ocean fisheries. While taking everything into account open-ocean fisheries will decline in the long term. Not only that but freshwater supplies will decrease on some Pacific Islands due to warmer and drier conditions. The Islands that are mainly vulnerable to freshwater shortages are the Atolls and low-lying islands due to their small size and limited resources. Coastal flooding and erosion will increase due to the rising sea levels that is worsened by the storms. This would damage the coastal ecosystems and infrastructure which would then affect agriculture, tourism, military bases, and other industries. And as the threats to food and water security, infrastructure, and public health and safety increase there will be human migration from low islands to high islands and continental sites.

Adaptation to climate change has become essential for the people of the Pacific Islands. The Pacific Islands and their communities can no longer evade the various projected impacts of climate change on its Islands. This only make some degree of adaptation necessary for the Pacific Islands and their communities. But the capacity to be adaptive differs within the region due to the availability of socioeconomic and institutional resources within that region. That is why in order to improve resilience to the challenges climate change present, it is essential that informed and timely responses are made particularly on low-lying islands and atolls.

In order to enhance the Pacific Islanders' ability to address the climate change challenges they are faced with additional research is needed. This additional research begins with a continued monitoring off the climate which includes a sustained assessment process. Along with engaging the public in the sharing of useful information in the development of climate change; which will bring further awareness to the communities about what is currently going on in their region. That is why data collection, analysis, and access to information are being facilitated by the efforts of several regional coordination officers. The work of these regional coordination officers only contributes to

the significant progress in the development of adaptation plans and policies. A strong foundation for ongoing efforts to build resilience in the face of challenges from a changing climate is provided through regional communication and collaboration.

When it comes to adapting to climate change many things have changed in the Pacific Island nations during the past hundred years or so. Most nations have come forth from being colonies to becoming independent democracies. In this transition most nations have become increasingly urbanized with an increased population. What have increased sharply in importance in the Pacific Island is these following industries commercial agriculture and fisheries and forestry. Because of the unprecedented demands that have been made on the islands' natural resources there have been climate change. Climate change is a result of land degradation, water and air pollution in the Islands. This stems from the most important industries in the Pacific Island using up all the natural resources.

With some facing total destruction due to the effects of climate change, the Pacific Islands as a group may be the planet's most vulnerable nations. The Pacific Island leaders gathered together on the 4 of September 2015 at the Pacific Islands Development Forum summit and issued the Suva Declaration, a summon to the world to take a firmer action on climate change. Precisely, the leaders made it known that the standard of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius which would eventually be adopted in Paris later that year was no longer safe for the "survival of our Pacific Small Island Developing States," and called for global commitments aimed at "limiting warming to well below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Cop23. (2018). The Pacific Islands - Cop23. [online] Available at: <https://cop23.com.fj/fiji-and-the-pacific/pacific-islands/> [Accessed 10 Jul. 2018].



It is known that the cause of global warming is mainly carbon dioxide also known as CO<sub>2</sub>. CO<sub>2</sub> is known to make up most of the greenhouse gases that catches the heat in the atmosphere which eventually warms the earth and ocean. Carbon dioxide can be seen as the by product of the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas also known as fossil fuels. These fossil fuels are thrown into the atmosphere as they are burned. But the main thing to know is that carbon dioxide does not up and disappear in the atmosphere, in fact it just remains in the atmosphere. To the point that traces of carbon dioxide can be seen from up to 1,000 years according to Judith Blau the writer of *The Paris Agreement Climate Change, Solidarity, and Human Rights*.

As of now the Pacific Island states are moving forward with plans directed at adapting and creating significant resilience to climate change because the human, social, environmental and economic costs of nonintervention or inadequate action are intolerable. The Pacific Island states are implementing national action plans by pushing for global reductions in carbon emissions. This allow the Pacific Islands to strengthen themselves against a changing climate, all while taking the command to raise the issue on the international stage. That is why they have joined the Climate Vulnerable Forum. Which allowed them to “ratified international climate change accords, like the Paris Climate Change Agreement; and widely advocate to limit temperature rise from global warming to 1.5° Celsius.”<sup>57</sup>

### **Climate-Forced Migration and Re-settlement in the Pacific Islands**

Because of climate change a large number of people from the Pacific Islands will need to move from the high sea level rise vulnerable locations they currently occupy to others that are less vulnerable. And in a world where land is communally owned and often hard to acquire resettlement

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<sup>57</sup> Cop23. (2018). The Pacific Islands - Cop23. [online] Available at: <https://cop23.com.fj/fiji-and-the-pacific-islands/> [Accessed 10 Jul. 2018].

in the Pacific Islands would involve a lot of expenses and negotiations. Most of the expenses and the inconveniences it brings can be reduced only if relocation is carried out in advance.

As it stands the Pacific atoll islands have at least 40 years before they become completely uninhabitable. But it is likely that they will become completely uninhabitable before that time, because of the increased groundwater salinization and shrinkage of the freshwater lens that most atoll islanders depend upon. Hence why a recent climate change forecast suggests that as many as two million people might be displaced from their present locations in the Pacific Islands region during the 21st century. This will only happen if there is no effective protection plan put in place for a 2-meter sea-level rise to protect some of the islands from sinking.

In April 2009, the Moana Declaration was introduced by Pacific church leaders which stated that relocation in the Pacific Islands is a direct consequence of climate change. This was the first statement by any Pacific leaders to focus on relocation and its corresponding functionality. Among the elements of the Moana Declaration were the following key words Undertake and Carry out which will be discussed further in the following paragraphs. These two key words managed to capture the main nonreligious issues around relocation in the Pacific Islands region.

In the first element the Moana Declaration calls for the undertaking of prompt measures in order to identify available land and other suitable resources “for the purposes of relocating and resettling all forced climate migrants, both those displaced internally as well as those likely to seek resettlement in other countries.”<sup>58</sup> The call for individual countries to identify land and resources for climate migrants to be resettled in would involve governments at all levels.

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<sup>58</sup> Unclearn.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <https://www.unclearn.org/sites/default/files/inventory/undp303.pdf> [Accessed 11 Aug. 2018].

These government officials would be working with landowners to, first, identify vulnerable communities and, second, to identify places to which they might be relocated within their own country. “That this process might also involve other countries is quite possible; resettlement of people between countries in the Pacific Islands region has many precedents.”<sup>59</sup> It is also seen that the experiences of these migrants might be sought in order to understand how to best manage the process in future. It also implies that some migrants may have to be resettled outside their Pacific Islands region. And this will require negotiations between the appropriate countries involved.

In the second element of the Moana Declaration it is noted that the Pacific church leaders will carry out an in-depth public consultation with the Pacific Islands communities affected and that will be affected by the rising sea levels or other consequences of climate change. With that in mind the Pacific church leaders believe that they would come out this consultation with a view on how to develop attainable practical plans. These plans would protect the rights of forced climate migrants, in specific their housing, land and property and other rights related to it.

As acknowledged by the Pacific church leaders this is because the people who will be forced to “relocate are the victims of a process beyond their control and that, in consequence, their property and their human rights must be protected.”<sup>60</sup> Even though the rights and expectations of migrants would be developed by governments and regional agencies what cannot be overlooked is the use of public consultation. Public consultation is critical when it comes to removing much of the anxiety that currently exists around climate-change forced migration. But what is absolutely necessary is that these public consultations are carried out in culturally-appropriate ways. This

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

include using regional languages so that the affected people are encouraged to better understand what is going on rather than view it as a foreign obsession that is being overstated.

The certainty of a large-scale migration from affected areas is not yet widely accepted in the Pacific Islands region. Yet when given the degree of skepticism and even outright denial that pervades the communities of the region, what is absolutely certain is that it will take a major incident and or a series of them to bring the need for relocation of vulnerable communities to the front of the public mind and government agendas.

With an increased in regionalism as the current trend in the Pacific Islands, now is the time “for regional agencies to be invested with a greater power of self-determination, allowing them to develop proactive agendas, particularly around climate change.”<sup>61</sup> What would allow them to assume a stewardship role for the environments of the Pacific island nations is the external funding of their core budgets. This would also allow them to some extent to become independent from a focus on short-term goals. As long as these regional agencies remain “subordinate to member governments, they will continue to be largely reactive and ineffectual in developing and implementing long-term and sustainable adaptive strategies.”<sup>62</sup>

Regional agencies should be encouraged to think beyond political boundaries more than they do now for the purposes of environmental management in the face of climate change. When it comes to transcending political boundaries there are many shared features among island types and environments within the Pacific Islands region. That is why regional agencies should also be at the forefront of new approaches to planting effective and sustainable adaptation to climate change.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Hence why, national governments must think about their roles in climate-change adaptation for their constituents. We must encourage these governments to think long-term and their citizens must be effectively engaged in consultations so that they understand why governments may have to pursue policies that appear anti-development.

The governments of Pacific Island countries should be prepared to renounce some of their hopes about mainstreaming effective and sustainable climate change adaptation throughout their countries. They should instead support the efforts of their international partners to reach out directly to communities because in such countries, national governments still have important roles in helping their citizens understand and buy-in to adaptation.

## **CHAPTER 7: Internally Displaced People under the Trump administration**

When it comes to the regional and global climate change there is strong evidence that urban environments reshape local microclimates. A variety of climate attributes are influenced by our urban systems. Ranging from the intensity and frequency of rainfall to snowfall and flooding and not to mention the temperature. This information was brought to our attention by new observational capabilities. One of them is a dual polarimetric radar made by NASA. This radar is an advanced remote sensing satellite. One of the satellite is called the Global Precipitation Measurement Mission for short it is called GPM. Another observational capability would be the modeling systems for urban systems called regionalized, coupled land surface atmospheric modeling system. Which is used to assess the aspects of the rise and fall of daytime and nighttime temperature. Along with urban precipitations and not to forget the contribution of green house gases and carbon dioxide. Most importantly how the impacts of seasonal precipitation whether it be rain or snow is seen through the urban built environment “as well as the amount and distribution of precipitation; and the significance of the extent of urban metropolitan areas.”<sup>63</sup>

Since current president Donald Trump (Trump) came into office in January 20, 2017 he has managed to replace the milestone rule set forth by former president Barack Obama’s in which carbon emissions also known as greenhouse gases are reduced from power plants by revoking a number of executive actions aimed at regulating climate change or mitigating its effects.

One of those executive actions he has revoked through the National Security Strategy as of December 18, 2017 is the declaration that climate change is not a threat to national security. The National Security Strategy is a formal document released every four years by each U.S. president since Ronald Reagan. This document is used to transform the messages used during the presidential

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<sup>63</sup> U.S. Global Change Research Program, author, et al. Climate Science Special Report: Fourth National Climate Assessment. 2017. <https://permanent.access.gpo.gov/gpo86261/gpo86261/science2017.globalchange.gov/index.htm>

campaign into a reasonable governing document. Trump's National Security Strategy "emphasized the importance of balancing energy security with economic development and environmental protection"

"Climate policies will continue to shape the global energy system," a draft of the National Security Strategy released on Monday December 18, 2017 said. "U.S. leadership is indispensable to countering an anti-growth, energy agenda that is detrimental to U.S. economic and energy security interests. Given future global energy demand, much of the developing world will require fossil fuels, as well as other forms of energy, to power their economies and lift their people out of poverty."

This does not mean that the United States will no longer be a global leader when it comes to climate change as seen during Barack Obama's presidency which ended January 20, 2017. Under President Trump the United States still plan on remaining "remain a global leader in reducing traditional pollution, as well as greenhouse gases, while growing its economy. This achievement, which can serve as model to other countries, flows from innovation, technology breakthroughs, and energy efficiency gains –not from onerous regulation."

With the goal of creating jobs by boosting U.S. fossil fuel production Trump plans on aligning the policies of the federal agencies with his goal of achieving energy independence. Not only will this executive order create jobs but it will increase the wealth of America. "The Trump administration has indeed sought to open up more federal lands to coal, oil, and natural gas exploration and production, but most of the domestic energy boom took place under the Obama administration. Oil output under Obama grew by more than 4 million barrels a day and natural gas output in states like Pennsylvania, Texas and Oklahoma rose rapidly."

This executive order signals the end of the climate change policies set forth by Obama during his presidency. President Trump "has been clear he's not going to pursue climate or

environmental policies that put the U.S. economy at risk.” Hence why the Trump administration through established administrative actions plan on replacing the Clean Power Plan which can take about a year. The Clean Power Plan is “a set of federal guidelines that gives states a framework for reducing carbon dioxide emissions from fossil-fuel-fired electricity plants, particularly those that burn coal.”

President Trump is preparing the country for the impacts of climate change as well as leading the response to global warming in the International community by overturning the Climate Action Plan, which is the strategy that was used by Obama during his presidency to cut carbon emissions. This will be done through the process of reviewing the “formula that government agencies use to determine the benefits of regulations that reduce carbon emissions.

Tinkering with this could influence policymaking by reducing the projected benefit of rules aimed at mitigating climate change.” The identification of all regulations and policies that hinders domestic energy production within the confines of the executive branch is the current blueprint that will be used by the Trump administration in setting energy policy.

President Trump’s declaration that climate change is not a national security threat does not line up with the views of the Pentagon, “Which has continued to highlight national security threats from a changing climate, including refugee flows as a result of droughts and intensifying storms and the repercussions of rising sea waters.”

One thing president Trump overlooked when he decided to overturn the clean power plan is that this plan “is designed to reduce emissions from the power sector 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. According to the Energy Information Administration’s (EIA) most recent Annual Energy Outlook, this will reduce emissions of climate pollution by 350 million metric tons per year in 2030, the equivalent of taking 74 million cars off the road. Analysis by Synapse shows that the program can deliver these reductions while saving customers an average of \$17 per month



nationwide, so long as states leverage the opportunity the rule provides to tailor their compliance programs”.

“Rolling back the Clean Power Plan will also take a toll on human health as Americans suffer from dirtier air. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finds that the rule would provide health benefits of \$14-\$34 billion per year by 2030, outweighing costs by a factor of 4 to 1.

However, it is important to go beyond those top-level statistics to understand what really is at stake here. According to analysis EPA released with the rule, each year the Clean Power Plan would avoid up to 3,600 premature deaths; 90,000 asthma attacks in children; Up to 1,700 heart attacks; 1,700 hospital admissions; and 300,000 missed school and work days.

An update was made on the Sustainable and Climate Resilient Health Care Facilities Toolkit Under President Trump on November 7, 2017 by the Department of Health and Human Services. This toolkit is now a website (<https://toolkit.climate.gov/tool/sustainable-and-climate-resilient-health-care-facilities-toolkit>) that ensures the progression of quality health and human care before, during, and after extreme weather events caused by climate change under President Trump. Healthcare Facilities have full access to this website.

This toolkit consists of a five-element framework that encompass a vulnerability assessment for medical facilities, along with suggestions for building resilience and a checklist. This will provide facilities with additional resources that stimulate practical steps needed to build resilience. It will also walk facilities through something called the five elements. The five elements are climate risks and community vulnerability assessment, land use building design and regulatory context, infrastructure protection and resilience planning, essential clinical care service delivery planning, and environmental protection and ecosystem adaptations.

In 2016 we saw a tremendous commitment towards resettling refugees through a record number of 37 resettlement countries which is an increase from 14 resettlement countries in 2005.

This took place at the Leaders' summit on the Global Refugee Crisis in which a class of developed countries which included the United States- "agreed to double their number of resettlement spots and increase financing for refugee hosting developing countries by 30 percent."<sup>64</sup> These developing countries also agreed to increase refugees' access to work and education.

The resettlement of Internally Displaced People has decreased to record lows in the United States under the Trump administration. This is something to worry about seeing that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has just reported that there is a 2.9 million increase in those forcibly displaced from their homes in 2017-bringing the total to 40 million internally displaced people. US policy towards refugee admissions has changed under the Trump administration. Illustrating the number of refugee admissions to the United States annually and the total numbers of refugees worldwide shows that, based on the first eight months of the 2018 "fiscal year, refugee admissions are projected to fall sharply, from a recent high of 84,994 in FY 2016 to a projected 21,292 for FY 2018-the lowest level since 1977."<sup>65</sup>

Besides that, the current limitation for refugee admissions of 45,000, is the lowest for the history of the current US resettlement program. This comes at a time when the global numbers of displaced people are at a record high. Hence why the correlation of refugees admitted to the United

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<sup>64</sup> Rescue.org. (2018). [online] Available at: <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/1961/globalcompactearlylessonsandrecsseptember2017final.pdf> [Accessed 2 Jul. 2018].

<sup>65</sup> ReliefWeb. (2018). Reflecting on World Refugee Day: The Trends and Consequences of US Refugee Policy. [online] Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/united-states-america/reflecting-world-refugee-day-trends-and-consequences-us-refugee-policy> [Accessed 2 Jul. 2018].

States and the number of refugees worldwide has never been lower. “For the first time, the trend in US admissions is moving decisively against the trend of the total number of refugees worldwide.”<sup>66</sup>

The actions by the Trump administration will close doors to refugees. On top of it all federal law now requires that refugees undergo rigorous screening process. Hence why “refugees undergo more rigorous screening than anyone else allowed into the united states.”<sup>67</sup> We can consider this to be a major problem for its direct effects on internally displaced persons because the move denies refugees the chance to start new lives in the United States.

On the not so bright side, the U.S. Department of State Diplomacy in Action supports the work of UNHCR and ICRC when these organizations respond to the needs of internally displaced persons. The U.S. Agency for International Development(USAID) happens to fund “the work of these other international organizations as well as non-governmental organizations to respond to IDP needs as well.”<sup>68</sup>

When it was announced that the United States would be withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement by President Donald Trump it caused a stir among local governments whose response was to reaffirm their policy commitment to addressing climate change (Mayors National Climate Action Agenda 2017). The US urban population are progressively at risk from climatic changes. This is due to the fact that “the US urban population has increased steadily over the last several centuries, with a significant majority of Americans living in cities and more than 80%

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Whitehouse.gov. (2018). *Infographic: The Screening Process for Refugee Entry into the United States*. [online] Available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2015/11/20/infographic-screening-process-refugee-entry-united-states> [Accessed 2 Jul. 2018].

<sup>68</sup> State.gov. (2018). About PRM. [online] Available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/about/> [Accessed 3 Jul. 2018].

living in census classified urban areas.”<sup>69</sup> 82 cities make up the US urban population. “Many cities discuss weather-related concerns in conjunction with broad collaborative efforts to address global warming, while city-based policy discussions focus more on energy and transportation efforts.”<sup>70</sup> Hence why It is generally agreed upon that local level adaptation and mitigation policies are necessary when it comes to preventing the worst of the climate impacts.

One thing that must be known is all eco-responsible cities must make sure that their cities have access to clean, secure, yet affordable energy. There can only be beneficial effects when there is an investment in energy efficiency and sustainably managed renewable energy resources. I say this because renewable energy is the main pillar of the energy transition. It was in 2015, that renewable energy “globally surpassed coal to represent the largest source of installed power capacity: they then continuously broke records. Still, this is not sufficient to cap temperature increase to 43 degree, less than 2 degree Celsius.”<sup>71</sup> Some are hopeful that offshore wind energy generation, which includes tidal and wave energy, can expand sustainable energy production significantly.

The rise and fall of empires and civilizations have been linked to cities and energy since the beginning of times. “Nurtured with Promethean visions, they always offered the foundations for new worlds and eras. At the dawn of civilization of sustainability, they are on the forefront of

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<sup>69</sup> Boussalis, C., Coan, T.G. & Holman, M.R. *Climatic Change* (2018) 149: 173. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/10.1007/s10584-018-2223-1>

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Mega V.P. (2019) *The Paths to Decarbonisation Through Cities and Seas*. In: *Eco-Responsible Cities and the Global Ocean*. Springer, Cham

visions and actions.”<sup>72</sup> This is because they have crucial links with the development of a healthy environment, social cohesion and environmental development.

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<sup>72</sup> Mega, Voula P. Sustainable development, energy and the city: A civilisation of concepts and actions. Springer Science & Business Media, 2005.

## **CHAPTER 8: THE UNITED NATIONS GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT.**

The United Nation published the second edition of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in September of 2004. The foreword to this edition was written by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mr. Jan Egeland. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were developed under the guidance of Dr. Francis Deng to assist all humanitarian practitioners. This publication was written in an advocacy and monitoring framework that focused on the key challenges of the humanitarian community today the assistance and protection of Internally displaced people. Climate change is a key challenge of the humanitarian community because it drove out “over twenty-five million people, in some fifty countries around the world”<sup>73</sup>.

The second edition of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement would have not been possible without the first edition in which the foreword was written by the late Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Sergio Viera de Mello whom was committed to enhancing the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to situations of Internal Displacement. As we and the humanitarian community know Internal displacement effects over 20 million people worldwide. Even though the responsibility of the protections of Internal Displacement people (IDPs) rests on the national governments and local authorities, “it is important for the international community to see how best it can contribute to enhancing the protection of IDPs in conflict and crisis situations.”<sup>74</sup> Humanitarian assistance must be designed in a way that promote the protection of IDPs.

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<sup>73</sup> United Nations. “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.” *UNHCR*, [www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

That is why in the foreword of the first edition by the late Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Sergio Viera de Mello makes it known that “within the United Nations system, significant steps have been taken to enhance an effective and timely response to the needs of IDPs.”<sup>75</sup> That is why the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has entrusted him with the authority to act as Focal Point within the UN system for issues relating to the internally displaced. Sergio was committed to enhancing the capacity of the United Nations as a whole in order to respond to the situations of internal displacement.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement is based upon existing international humanitarian law and human rights law. Its purpose is to serve as an international standard to guide governments as well as international humanitarian and development agencies in providing assistance and protection to IDPs. That is why we can expect it to play a significant role towards increasing awareness of the needs of IDPs by mobilizing support in the humanitarian community and to assist with the needs of the internally displaced. Most importantly the Principles will also help governments in providing for the security and well-being of their displaced populations.

The second edition of the Guiding Principles was introduced by the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons Mr. Francis M. Deng whom makes it known once again that the international community is faced with the tremendous task of making sure protection is ensured for those people forced to be uprooted from their homes due to climate change. He also makes it known that “the Principles identify the rights and guarantees relevant to protection of the internally displaced in all phases of displacement.”<sup>76</sup> These principles happen to provide protection

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

against arbitrary displacement by offering a basis for protection and assistance during displacement. It also set forth guarantees for safe return, resettlement and reintegration.

Mr. Francis M. Deng developed the Principles over several years under the mandate given to him in 1992 by the Commission on Human Rights. This mandate was reinforced by subsequent resolutions of the Commission and the General Assembly. In which he was asked to study the causes and consequences of internal displacement and the status of those internally displaced in international law. Along with the “extent to which their needs are being addressed under current institutional arrangement, and ways to improve protection and assistance for them.”<sup>77</sup>

The main activities of Mr. Francis M. Deng mandate were to develop a needed legal and institutional framework for those internally displaced; by engaging Governments and others in a dialogue on their behalf by undertaking the countries missions. This was done in collaboration with a team of international legal experts whom examined the extent to which internally displaced persons received coverage; that is sufficient under International law by producing a compilation and analysis of legal norms. This study found that while existing law provides considerable coverage for the internally displaced, there are significant areas in which it fails to provide a sufficient basis for their protection and assistance. “This led to the drafting of the Guiding Principles which both restate existing norms and seek to clarify grey areas and fill in the gaps.”<sup>78</sup>

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement addresses the needs more specific to internally displaced persons worldwide by identifying rights and guarantying the protection of persons who were forcibly displaced making them internally displaced people and to their protection and assistance during displacement as well as during return or resettlement and

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.



reintegration. For the purpose of this Principles, internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons “who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of natural or human-made disasters.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

I have attempted to show here that arguments for open borders can be successfully made by making *moral*, *human rights* and *political* claims. These kinds of claims demonstrate that states are morally entitled not to restrict immigration and that contemporary border policies challenge basic human rights principles. Furthermore, the central shortcoming in current approaches to immigration is due to restrictive policies set forth by governments.

I have examined internal displacement in the United States and demonstrated that life has become unsustainable for those affected by climate change. This has led to a migration crises. Ultimately, the responsibility for climate change belongs largely to rich countries, but the effects of climate change fall disproportionately on poor countries. Rich countries, this thesis has shown, are morally obliged to take in displaced people because their actions are the reason why we have displaced people in the first place.

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