

Title: Response & Resilience in the Wake of a Flood

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Speakers/Presenters:

- Verónica González
- Eric Dobson
- Brennan Griffin
- Harriet Festing

Presentations:

Verónica González

- Puerto Rico, 2017
- 250000 are in flood zones – they have lost 14% of the population
- The recession never ended
- Ricardo Nevares: former governor says that
- If you live in a coastal area, you live in a flood zone; flatlands near the coast were sugar plantations; where most Africans live
- If you live in a flood zone, you are not eligible to rebuild your home; you are only eligible for relocation assistance – to leave your community and go somewhere else.
- No money has gone to folks on the island
- They are trying to get the Puerto Rican government to change the rules...they have to figure out a way to preserve the communities...
- It looks like now it will be a demographic of people living on the island

Rev. Dobson, Fair Share Housing

- Dr. Mindy Thomason Fuller, did a workshop on the eco-footprint of segregation
- Started looking at the 1619 project..
- America's whole motive at the time was pure genocide – genocide of Indigenous, African Americans
- Slavery was the catalyze for the banking, insurance, etc.
- You can only grow cotton so much on certain and... so they started going west to grow cotton... they started seeing more flooding
- “Stand from the Beginning” – Stan Ebrah – every person in America has been socialized
- The white race was created to dehumanize people, and create capataism – we still live in this slavery economy...banking, religion, education, etc. all traced black to slavery and destroying our earths
- In 1868 – the country tried to define being an American...
- Fair share – enforcing the state law around affordable housing...
- Building work around the “Black Agenda” – many black orgs coming together to work on multiple issues

Brennan Griffin, Texas Appleseed

- They work with HOME Coalition and CEER Coalition
- Harris County, TX
- Historical patterns of how all these federal agencies have treated flood mitigation projects – they decide on what projects to take up. They use a cost benefit analysis, largely based on property values. This causes a real problem for low-income neighborhood. It will be hard to make their value pencil out compared to a shopping mall.
- Been a historical disinvestment
- Local example to leverage change:
 - They pushed hard on leaders in Harris County – decided to put local money into flood mitigation; \$2.5 billion dollar bond – raised taxes, went to vote
 - Commissioners said it had to be spent equitably. They develop da big public campaign around several flood control projects.
 - They asked them to use some measure of equity to prioritize the list.
 - They suggested the social vulnerability index. The areas with the most social vulnerability should be valued/prioritized for project deployment.
 - We need to use this as a model to push for at the federal level – value ppl's lives over their property.
 - Great disparities between towns in what they receive in terms of money for flood mitigation and buyout funding;
 - FEMA baseline – get 75% the value of the house; if you live in a low income neighborhood, and our hoese is worth \$60,000, you might have a down payment on something IF you can qualify for a mortgage; these voluntary buyouts don't work;
 - HOME Coalition pushed for several premium incentives for more equitable buyouts

Harriet Festing, Anthropocene Alliance

- Her job is to match ppl with resources
- Hilton Kelly, Port Arthur
- Terry Jean, lost her home in Hurricane Matthew, and still living in various hotels since Florence
- Wanted to help them build resilience post-disaster; they were facing various barriers to make the communities less resilient;
- Not many tools to help communities that need help: she focuses on 'free' tools, available everywhere in the US, and responsive to community
- Thriving Earth Exchange, American Geophysical Union – match pro-bono scientists with communities – helping with buyout programs, etc.
- Silver Jackets Program, program of the Army Corps of engineer; will provide free technical assistance to communities – will do GI plans, etc. in communities; they make a contract with the city, matching funding is needed (in-kind support)
- Good way of stating it is a problem

- Citizens Committee for Flood Relief – DeSoto, MO – success example
- Trust Law – matched pro bono legal experts; they usually do lawsuits but will do specific projects – they have a legal team working on this;
- Kathryn Eglund – went to the closest university and got a lawyer
- Social media – so powerful...
- ISeeChange – really good way to document flooding
- US Climate Action Network – network of potential partners

Discussion:

What tools and resources are missing from Harriet's list ?

- How to navigate the bureaucracy of flood grants eg Enterprise Community Partners, CDBG-R funding
- FEMA upcoming data release, at neighborhood scale for all natural disasters in the US (what will or will not be included in disaster declarations?)
- Texas Floodplain Managers Association - offers a "silverjacket" type support (association of state floodplain managers leadership)
- Community Foundations - TFN program, P.R.E.P. , Philanthropic Disaster, Center for Disaster Philanthropy, When Waters Rise (organized by New Orleans Foundation)

How to keep people involved over time after a disaster?

- Find the "hook": look at city council agenda and/or other things going on in the community = multiple re-entry points
- Messaging -
 - or e.g. the urgency and need for input, like CDBG-R dollars
 - Things happening all of the time and the importance of the "long-term" game is influenced by "consistent input"
- Developing plans to respond to multiple threats (i.e. ICE, etc.) getting prepared to "immediate response" understanding what a social justice organization is, "staying ready"
- Sustaining CBOs post-disaster with resources
- Create intersectionality among "non environmental" groups - nontraditional groups
- Culture of care in the workplace
- Coalitions sharing the burden and overlapping interests