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HURRICANE HERALD: HOW NEW ORLEANS' HOUSING POLICIES BEFORE AND AFTER KATRINA CAN INFORM HARVEY RECOVERY EFFORTS

Monica J. Lim

Mentor: Carol Camp Yeakey

Natural disasters are often seen as the 'hand of God,' natural forces that no man can control. However, social and natural scientists assert that social factors create disasters. Racialized housing and social policies in New Orleans created a poor, black population vulnerable to the torrents produced by Hurricane Katrina. Following the disaster, demolition of viable public housing projects prevented the return of this population. Housing policies before and after disaster allow for disproportionate burdens on some populations more than others. In August 2017, Category 4 Hurricane Harvey made landfall in the United States, breaking a record 12-year-period of no major hurricanes making landfall in the country. The media did not harp on the racialized causes of disaster as it did during Katrina. However, does this mean that race did not and will not play a factor in Harvey? Housing policies in Houston reveal that this image of a diverse, less problematic city is false. This study is designed to address the following questions: Do differences in city demographics affect responses to disaster? How did city development policies create disaster? Was the burden of disaster proportionate among various populations? What effect did federal and local disaster relief policy changes have on governmental and community response? Finally, is the narrative of climate change relevant to the discussion? Research on city development strategies and displacement of people will inform action surrounding natural disasters, like hurricanes. This study will focus on the 12-year-period between Hurricane Katrina and Harvey and contextualize the disaster with city, state, and federal policies regarding disaster relief and housing.