



## “The Great American Climate Migration”

### Grassroots, environmental leaders issue first ever proclamation of principles

**“Hurricane Ida and future climate change disasters,” says Anthropocene Alliance Director Harriet Festing. “will force a resettlement larger than any seen before in the U.S.”**

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Even as they rushed to support Gulf Coast residents impacted by Hurricane Ida, an alliance of national grassroots leaders today issued a set of protocols to guide [“The Great American Climate Migration”](#): The likely resettlement of some [30 million](#) or more Americans over the next half century due to the impacts of climate change. Reeling from an avalanche of catastrophes — hurricanes, floods, excessive heat, drought and wildfire — the leaders are calling for greater state and federal consultation, coordination and commitment to disaster relief and mitigation.

Most of all, the authors of the statement are calling for justice. Black, Latinx and Indigenous communities in the U.S. [are more likely](#) than white ones to experience disasters, but less likely to receive [government support](#) for recovery. The approaching “Great American Climate Migration,” will dwarf in size both the Great Northward Migration of African Americans (1916-1970) and the Dust Bowl exodus of farmers and farm workers (1934-1940) from the Plains states. The coming migration however, cannot become another “Grapes of Wrath”, with migrants hurried, harried and repulsed; it must be guided by principles of equity and welcome.

Convened by [Anthropocene Alliance](#) and the [Climigration Network](#), the leaders met six times between February and August 2021 to discuss the climate threat and draft ten

proposals. The first and perhaps most important is *respect*: “Governments and foundations are busy making decisions about how to tackle climate displacement,” said Frances Acuña of Austin, Texas, “but nobody is talking to us and drawing upon our experience and knowledge. That’s got to change.”

Additional proposals concerned reckless development, the slow speed of home buyouts, gentrification, and systemic racism. Kristin Marcell of the convening Climigration Network summarized the inequities experienced by low income and marginalized communities: “[Infrastructure](#) in these neighborhoods is often poor, impacting home values. Bank loans are hard to obtain. Add to that redlining and unfair home appraisals, and you have generational racial discrimination in both housing and disaster relief.” For successful migration to occur, these injustices need to be remedied.

Finally, the grassroots leaders addressed the necessity of state and federal coordination. Successful migration will require cooperation between departing and receiving communities; the latter will need assistance almost as much as the former. They are asking Congress and the President to establish a Climate Migration Agency within a new **Department of Climate Change** to help plan, facilitate and support U.S. migration and community revitalization. Hilton Kelley, a nationally recognized climate justice leader from Port Arthur Texas, put it this way: “As Ida and other recent hurricanes show, there is no greater threat to health, justice, and family safety than climate change, and we need a federal response equal to the scale of the crisis. We are here -- ready to meet, talk, pull up our sleeves and get to work.”

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[Anthropocene Alliance](#) is the nation’s largest coalition of frontline leaders fighting for climate and environmental justice. The [Climigration Network](#) is an initiative of the Consensus Building Institute, a nonprofit that helps stakeholders collaborate to generate breakthrough results on tough social, environmental, and economic issues.

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