Climate Disasters and the Inherent Disparity of Recovery Efforts

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KATRINA AND FLOODING

- Hurricane Katrina (2005) devastated New Orleans and its surrounding regions in Southern Louisiana. Lower-income, predominantly Black communities suffered the worst of the effects because of severely delayed federal responses.
- The flooding that occurred disproportionately impacted these marginalized communities, such as the Lower Ninth Ward, where levees failed because of underinvestment into hurricane infrastructure.
- The Lower Ninth Ward has still not fully recovered from Katrina.



Damaged levees in the Lower Ninth Ward; Self, 2025

- Economic injustices in disaster responses became increasingly evident when reports began to reveal that federal recovery funds were tied to property values.
- Katrina highlighted the fact that disaster vulnerability is not just determined by geography or climate change, but systemic inequalities, government responses, and overall neglect.





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85% of the world's population is impacted by climate change.

Many can't recover when climate disasters strike.

INTRODUCTION

• Over the past twenty years, there has been a dramatic rise in extreme weather events, deemed "climate disasters." Historically rare superstorms are now occurring several times a year

- Extensive analysis of data shows that those who are able to recover from climate disasters come from wealthier backgrounds, revealing significant inequalities in recovery efforts.
- I explored two case studies in detail, the 2025 California Wildfires, and Hurricane Katrina, to illustrate and explore these disparities.

2025 California Wildfires aftermath; CA Natl. Guard



Impacts from climate-related disasters at the sub-national level; Donatti et al. 2024



New Orleans after Katrina; NOAA AWC

CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES AND DESTRUCTION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



• The 2025 California Wildfires were started by unprecedented winds, abnormally high temperatures, and drought. These fires quickly overwhelmed the surrounding areas of Los Angeles. This event showed that climate disasters continue to this day, and are intensifying because of climate change.

 Disparities in recovery and evacuation were seen. Wealthier residents were able to move quickly to another home, or evacuated by private helicopters, avoiding exposure and disruption.

• Meanwhile, lower-income residents were forced to rely on unreliable transportation and overcrowded shelters.

Damage was widespread, but recovery was unequal. Wealthier communities have already rebuilt, while others are still displaced to this day.

• Overall, with these two case studies along with further analysis of economic and meteorological data within my research, I hope to pave the way for further research in climate disaster recovery. Policies must prioritize equity and climate justice.

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