

Epilogue

Post-disaster Solutions for Development

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When Audre Lorde (2018) entreated the Black community to wise up to the reality that the master's tools cannot be employed to dismantle the master's house, scholars of the Black diaspora took note. That statement resonated deeply with each and every student of diaspora studies then and now. But while the statement prompted many to action, thoughts about what tools would effectively tear down the walls of racism in an era where white supremacy is/was running rampant, were hard to envisage. The real concern, though, was how to dismantle an institutionalized system that is so entrenched that the odds for success are quite low. Along with Audre Lorde's (2018) challenge came the psychological clarity, grounded in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943), in which it is implied that until humans satisfy basic needs for survival, it is improbable that they would construct effective action for dismantling the systems of oppression that render them powerless to act strategically.

Climate change has risen to the apex of the developmental landscape. The industrialized world has made it nearly impossible for regions of the African diaspora to survive in a world free from cultural, economic, environmental, political, and social disaster. As the world watches the rise in sea levels and the impact of escalating temperatures, generating wildfires in some regions and devastating storms in others, there is no question that developing nations, particularly those of the African diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean, are losing hope of finding affordable solutions to problems they have arguably not created for themselves. Recognizing that their reliance on industrialized partners over the decades of their political independence has embroiled them in partnerships that have been extractive and exploitative, the time has now come for them to take urgent action to mitigate the harm to development that climate change threatens.

Regenerative strategies have the capacity to shift attitudes away from the extractive behaviors of the past. Debates surrounding how climate change should be addressed, while being general to the international community, have less diffuse and more specific meaning for the diaspora, which can ill afford to address the abstract arguments of how much fossil fuel should be curtailed in managing climate change rather than how to narrow the gap in development between perpetrators of carbon spread and victims of that spread. It is in this context that our manuscript has attempted to offer a framework for mitigating climate effects and assuring sustainable development. As Figure 1.1 shows in this book, knowledge capital when identified in diasporic and other developing communities, may be produced at the community level to forge local and regional development and lead to the achievement of sustainable goals. The connection between the erosions from continued disaster and the attainment of sustainable development is not lost on the diaspora. For too long the complexity of inequalities separating wealthy from poor economies and the capacity of those able to address solutions versus those who are disproportionately victimized by inequities have led to staggering inefficiency, crises in leadership, and loss of resilience in seeking innovative strategies for sustainability, across the diaspora.

As observed in chapters 2 through 5, collaborative energies at the grass-roots level, building on traditional, homebased practices and supported by communities empowered by their can-do spirit can generate new ways to thrive. Knowledge economies have always had the potential to mitigate loss. Indeed, many Western economists, including those leery of the concept of *knowledge* as an economic term, join scholars of philosophy, management, politics, and more in recognizing that knowledge economies may be the next stage in global economic development, succeeding the agricultural age, with its focus on land, followed by the industrial age with a focus on capital and labor (Weber 2011). Although critics of the term *knowledge economy* dismiss it as rhetoric in conversations related to globalization, there seems to be adequate recognition that regions that cannot engage technology in an advanced and meaningful way to maximize profits and claim development should not be afraid to find other, unique solutions to development.

Our work acknowledges that given the innate tendency to resiliency among people of the African diaspora, choosing a conceptual framework for identifying and producing the knowledge capital reposing in Afro-diasporic communities, can lead to innovative ways to sustain community development. In this context, our work began with an evaluation of the literature on equity and democracy, where expectations arising from this form of political leadership are exposed. Democracy assumes fair access

to rights and freedoms, fair distribution of economic resources, and human well-being. Where promises of democracy fail, distrust in the system creeps in and populations may seek recourse in authoritarian promises for a better life. Such a life requires citizen responsiveness and policy implementation of the goals demanded by the populace. Disaster-prone communities prefer leadership before a catastrophe occurs or recurs. In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, they advocate for increased opportunities to raise their voice and propose action, in the pre-disaster stage, for how they might best mitigate the threats of impending disaster as climate vulnerabilities loom large.

First, the need to determine areas of vulnerability may necessarily vary from one diasporic locale to the next. While the need for ethnic equity and environmental justice or resource management may be strong in some communities within the three regions under study, energy concern and trauma recovery may be predominant in other regions. Understanding that an evaluation of the past can help shape strategies for the future by creative development of solutions, it is in communities' best interest to scrutinize those lessons of the past as they specifically apply to the vulnerable area to ensure that the challenge likely to be posed by the next catastrophe is met with successful planning and implementation of innovative solutions.

Each of the case studies of the three regions under scrutiny in this volume illustrates how post-disaster communities have learned from the past and how they have differentially developed innovative strategies to overcome the negative impacts of sociopolitical and environmental disaster in order to mitigate the crippling effects of climate change and its resultant stagnation of development. Any progress in disaster planning and successful strategizing made in these three regions may be emulated to scale by other members of the developing world, especially those of the African diaspora, whose territories have the potential to adapt meaningful practices to their present needs and empower communities to engage in knowledge sharing for the benefit of their regions.

Fundamentals of Climate Justice

The assumption that the tools for dismantling injustice and attaining self-determination are more specific than abstract, requires some conversation on what a restoration of climate justice, economic security, and gender equality would contribute to the dismantling of the master's house. Such a conversation would entail in diasporic societies a listing of what is included in a consideration of this theme. Climate justice requires:

1. An identification of community knowledge on what communities experienced before the climate warmed, what made that experience acceptable, and what needs to be done to restore to communities the sense of well-being residents felt when the air was clean and breathable, the water free from lead and other toxins, the soil not contaminated by poor sanitation (rendering roots and legumes wholesome and healthy), the rivers, lakes and streams unpolluted (creating no danger to marine life), and the seafood edible with no chance of mercury ingestion.
2. An understanding of what allows residents to thrive and feel economically secure.
3. An appreciation of community and the resilience with which communities collaborated to achieve a good life.
4. A recognition of the fact that without a holistic approach, incorporating the knowledge capital of all stakeholders—women, men, technocrats, business partners, cultural leaders, and others—tackling the issues of disaster preparation and mitigation cannot be successfully accomplished.

These parameters provide the foundations for communities to take steps to ensure residents enjoy the quality of life and food sources they once had. Some of the strategies engaged in Louisiana's communities or in Haiti's or Rwanda's may serve as a template. Restorative action may require new ways of participating in the life of the community, be it through alliance with nonprofits, agronomists, economists, fisher folk, food producers, political action committees, or others. Working with partners and allies in the struggle to claim one's best life is what diasporic communities have done through the ages. And, as elders have stressed in small communities, "experience teacheth fools." Learning from elders and sharing their experiences is a practical and successful way of retrieving cultural data that diasporic communities may have lost with gentrification and eagerness to keep up with other more modernized communities.

Economic Security

Economic development is perhaps the most difficult challenge diasporic communities have experienced. It is in itself a disaster from which few vulnerable communities recover. How do communities figure out what sustainable development even means in the absence of environmental security? There is, also, no easy way to grasp the concept of development without understanding that successful economic development efforts re-

quire innovative planning and a strong solutions-based approach to ensuring that the community is a comfortable, engaged, thriving place in which to live. Only then can a knowledge economy grow from the ground up to harness the knowledge capital resident in the community and be ready for production of holistic planning that includes short- and long-term insight in sync with community needs. Knowing the financial state of the community, the intellectual resources within it, and the strategic vision that will help to realize incentives for growth is an undeniable basis for development. Who is involved in the planning, the intellectual capital they bring to bear on strategic planning and incentivization, the project structures with potential for growth, and the related services and resources needed to implement the plans agreed—all are integral to the success of the initiatives to be undertaken for sustainable development (Akoh et al. 2011).

Communities in the Black diaspora are conscious of the trade-offs that must be made to ensure the benefits foreseen. Financial planning, bargaining capacity, fiscal allies, technological expertise, and the resilience of stakeholders can together create change and experience regional economic recovery and growth. While this is true for most communities, the exclusion of diasporic communities from planning centers, financial institutions, economic literacy, and a history of non-collaboration born of distrust (colonial powers ensured that would be the case), requires the diaspora to reflect on the obstacles to equity of the past and forge ahead with agency and voice, ensuring that their story is heard and their needs understood. As is recognized, doing nothing to change one's situation does not yield growth. Or, as reported, Albert Einstein wittily claimed, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results" (Wilczek 2015).

Thus, at the heart of this volume is the recognition that development cannot take place without incremental economic security, which ultimately leads to sustainability. Yet, this is not a philosophy that resonates easily with diasporic communities where residents have suffered poverty and the ravages of the climate in silence waiting for the prosperity that remains untapped and hoping that by being resilient, tolerating their condition, a breakthrough might someday arise, given their intellectual capacity to thrive. Guyana was just beginning to recognize that their geological discoveries meant a turn in their fortunes when they were made brutally aware of the conflict between production of fossil fuels in an era of climate change and the potential harm it could hold for the country's economic advancement. How does a developing country in the diaspora respond to the knowledge that, like the rest of the world, it must limit a reliance on fossil fuels to mitigate the risks of climate change just when it is within reach of the very product that promises its escape from economic insecurity?

Gender Equality

There is no gainsaying the requirement for gender equity in the management of disaster. The knowledge production model proposed in the conceptual framework underpinning this study highlights the importance of empowering communities to capitalize on knowledge resources. This simply means ensuring that legitimate and full access to information, education, and planning be available to the whole community and that the latter be empowered if knowledge is to be effectively and successfully produced. Data have shown that a breakdown of the barriers to education and training for women has increased the potential of growth in the marketplace of ideas and planning. The gender equity index (GEI), as disclosed in the European Institute for Gender Equality (2022), supports the focus on women's empowerment and companies' commitment to gender equality in the workplace. Societies recognize that human life cannot be improved if only a fraction of humans are included in a culture of development. Diversity, inclusion, and excellence are the slogans that successful enterprises are using to proclaim their commitment to attracting and retaining the top talent in industry. Advocacy for women's voices to be heard and women's talents to be included in development plans strongly resonate within the international community and across international organizations, where resolutions embedded in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) form the only human rights treaty that addresses the rights of women (UN OHCHR 1981).

Although a majority of countries in the diaspora and most of the developed world have signed and ratified the Convention, the United States Senate has shied away from ratification, causing global concern for women's rights in the United States but more importantly for the lack of support of women globally in their fight against discrimination. From their perspective, US policymakers see ratification as having the capacity to potentially undermine US sovereignty and impact the private conduct of US citizens. Ratification of the CEDAW Convention remains a contentious issue in the chambers of Congress but is fully supported at the grassroots level where the Me Too movement continues to advocate strongly for the rights of women to self-determination and its resistance to organizations that seek to oppress women's right to personal freedoms, including a claim to reproductive justice. Black and other women of color are all too familiar with the role they play in advancing society, and recognize that, against all odds, they must be included in strategic planning for the environmental health of their communities.

Summary of Lessons Learned

Louisiana

A summary of the findings in chapter 2 reveals that Louisiana communities have benefited much from the collaborative energies they have gained by working with key elements of the Gulf Coast regions where concern for development and the urgency of overcoming obstacles posed to development by climate change and the existential crisis that attends it is paramount. For the most part, activism in Louisiana communities has been spearheaded by the Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy (GCCLP). The strength of this organization has been seen in its outreach to neighboring frontline states along the Gulf Coast with strong thematic focus on democracy (equity, policy leadership); capacity management (knowledge and natural resources); advocacy (building community resilience, finding home-relevant solutions); and transitions (training for workforce shift into a new economy). In addition, Louisiana's internal outreach rested in its collaborative energies. The figure below illustrating the pillars on which Louisiana's energies are reposed may be a useful template for diasporic communities still unsure of how to build a strategic plan for mitigating climate risk, of which infrastructural change is a high priority. In this context, the work of grassroots community coalitions within the GCCLP, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA), The Water Collaborative of Louisiana (TWC), the RISE movement in St. James Parish, the Concerned Citizens movement in St. John Parish, policymakers at City Hall and on the City Council of New Orleans, the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ), the Walls Project (Baton Rouge), and other community organizations within and across Louisiana have all played a key role in dismantling forces of environmental oppression and enlightening communities on pathways to resist and disrupt the status quo. Although the chapter on Louisiana has done much to share examples of how local knowledge capital has been produced and converted into creative and innovative patterns of development, much of the supportive work done within rural and remote areas of the state has not been explored. This is one of the reasons why this volume may be helpful in understanding catastrophes from different contextual perspectives. Knowledge sharing is critical to the expansion of new intellectual horizons from which an engaged diaspora may build on the successes of other diasporic communities in the developed and developing world. Such knowledge sharing assumes a broad range of practices, including Town Hall meetings, creative arts exposés, and a myriad of community activities planned by groups whose heritage is retold in the story of Mardi Gras Indians, the Baby Dolls, food, music, and much more.



Figure 7.1 Louisiana. Pillars of Collaborative Intellectual Energy. The Water Collaborative (TWC). Developed by Jessica Dandridge.

The Walls Project, administered in Louisiana’s capital city, Baton Rouge, is, for example, one of the creative educational solutions that highlight the innovative and indigenous, artistic spirit that communities in the capital city are now proud to share.

Haiti

Recent reports on Haiti’s disaster experience have identified colonial exploitation as among the most egregious causes of its underdevelopment. A *New York Times* (NYT) investigation (Gamio et al. 2022) revealed that Haitian payments to France following that country’s independence in 1804 has cost it \$21 billion dollars and crippled its ability to achieve sustainable development. NYT calculated that Haiti’s economy would have gained at least \$21 billion over time had France not extracted \$560 million payable to French banks and former “enslavers” after the country ended slavery and seized independence more than two centuries ago. Not only was Haiti initially denied the right to self-determination, but it was forced to pay for claiming that right. Persecution of Haitian leadership by colonial perpetra-

tors and distrust of leadership by Haitian citizens over the years have deprived Haiti of the community it needs to enjoy a sustainable environment in which to grow. Climate change and its damage to Haitian territory, its economic security, and its national cohesion have exacerbated the crises Haiti now faces.

Haiti's catastrophic experiences may provide new insight into an understanding of knowledge capital identification and sharing, and its impact within the diaspora. So often we assume that people learn only from examples of what to do and how to develop. Haiti holds many examples of what not to do while still demonstrating also how resistance, though often problematic and accompanied by new hardships, may advocate for and empower those in the diaspora who are identifying creative and innovative ways toward recovery and development. Professor Wesley Alcenat, a Haitian American historian, has pointed out both in his public and academic scholarship that although Haitians are often seen as unknowing of and underdeveloped by the West, they are indeed better aware of the source of their exploitation than the French and the American public appears to be (Democracy Now! 2022). Similarly, the NYT and Haitian scholars call attention to the maltreatment Haitians have received by US authorities when fleeing post-disaster conditions in the region following the 2010 earthquake and later. As Alcenat argued, Haiti serves as a metaphor for understanding the colonial legacy of racism in the United States and France and their preference for other groups. Haiti's fate is connected with the engineering of the world toward imperialism (see Democracy Now! 2022; Horne 2015, 2020).

Certainly, in the area of how media can connect and inspire communities as well as how matters of governance may be curated and redesigned to yield the kind of national unity that Haiti lacks, there is much to learn and share. When disasters and other catastrophes add to the daily cares of small diasporic communities and even the past does not yield lessons for restorative healing and community empowerment, struggling economies such as Haiti's do not envision hope for recovery and sustainable development at the hands of Western governments but may certainly enlighten other Afro-diasporic communities on the realities of their struggle while learning from them of mechanisms states like Louisiana, equally maltreated by the French, have set in place to restore an infrastructure better poised to manage the risks of climate change.

The Haitian chapter evaluates the potential input of social networks to enliven communication and connectivity among Haitians while empowering Haitians at home and abroad to revive a homeland that has been buried under crisis for too long and needs to reclaim a heritage of resilience that may impatiently be seeking an opportunity to resurface and blossom

into the economic, political, and sociocultural turnaround Haiti desperately needs. During Black History Month, a book produced by Dr. Sujan Kumar Dass (2020) proclaimed in its title that “Black People Invented Everything.” The book’s subtitle offered to share the deep history of indigenous creativity. Although a study in similar vein, “When the World Was Black,” was published seven years earlier (Bailey 2013), very few readers in Africa and its diaspora are aware of the existence of such texts, perhaps because, unlike the spread of stories of diasporic peoples in the United States for whom ethnicity and skin color are such political weapons, historical narratives on Blackness and resilience have to be recounted whenever possible. A recognition of Black History during Black History Month helps engage the educational curriculum on diaspora studies in the United States but is rarely extended to the vast African diaspora.

Without deliberative knowledge sharing for the purpose of enlightening the Black diaspora and engineering opportunities for rebuilding infrastructure, economic growth, and development, many in the Americas and the Caribbean will fail to receive the empowerment and advocacy offered in knowledge economic narratives that aim to inspire and restore, through knowledge of the past, successes in the present, and potential for the future. Haiti’s recovery can be as restorative as Rwanda’s. Through educational and cultural portals, Haiti too can reclaim its sense of self and restore its people to the dignity and integrity it once enjoyed within and beyond the Black diaspora. Coalitions of Haitians both within the disaster-prone state as well as across its own scattered diaspora, via its creative arts initiatives and advocacy of local initiatives for development, need to empower each other with the resilience of their ancestors, and work assiduously toward achieving environmental and developmental sustainability. Despite those who suggest that Haiti is doomed by its “progress resistant genes” (Brooks 2010), finding new ways to connect with its past for the betterment of its future is viable within a knowledge economic model of development.

Rwanda

Our work on Rwanda has richly clarified the practicality of returning to the past to change the future. Although there is literature arguing against colonial interference as the cause of the genocide in 1994, recent scholarship (see Heldring 2020) asserts that the cause of the genocide reflects a colonial legacy of division, which was mitigated by pre-colonial institutions and arrangements. There is merit to this assertion, given the many ways European colonial leadership sought to exacerbate long-standing hostility between ethnic groups for their own exploitative benefit. It is also

remarkable, when one observes that a return to pre-colonial institutions and arrangements to settle the injustices perpetrated during the genocide, now contributes to Rwanda's post-genocide recovery. We know that a preference for traditional courts, known as Gacaca, and sentencing in the restoration of justice to Rwanda since 1994 has been responsible, in large part, for the recovery now hailed by global onlookers as transformative for Rwanda. If indeed there were institutional arrangements in pre-colonial days that were used to help Rwanda recover in the twentieth century and onward, then there is clear justification for a call to return to and learn from historical roots rather than simply adopting the premise of the Western world that diasporic countries should follow the path and preconditions for development laid down by the West.

Knowledge must be shared for development to be sustained. Rwanda's experience may not be Jamaica's or Barbados's but there are elements of it to be seen in Guyana and some areas of Trinidad and Tobago where ethnic rivalries retain the potential for ethnic clashes between the early trans-shipment of African slaves and the later importation of indentured Indian labor to meet the economic needs of the European colonial offices. The same may be said for clashes among diasporic members of Latin American communities where indigenous populations, Afro-Latine, and Garifuna communities have engaged in tussles for economic survival. Until fragmented groups accept the old proverb that "if you want to go quickly, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together," the realization of collective nation-building may remain dormant. Speed and distance are morally neutral objectives. People must understand what it is they wish to achieve and how that might best be achieved. Pondering these old African proverbs can be empowering for diasporic communities. This particular proverb is easily applied to a number of issues facing communities; issues of engaging women and men in collaborative development for national growth despite the ancient practice of designing roles for women that are different for men, or dismissing the knowledge capital that comes from one group or another as deficient, thus failing to maximize the benefits of holistic planning and achievable development. Sustainable communities of the African diaspora stand to gain much from reflecting on the wisdoms of the past and engaging them in such ways as to realize development for posterity.

Other Areas of the Black Diaspora

In the Caribbean, climate change policy, representing the will of the Caribbean people and their representative leaders, has had a noticeable impact. In a project report submitted to the Commonwealth Secretariat, it

is noted that Jamaica established a Ministry of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change (2012) and launched, under its umbrella, a Climate Change advisory Committee (CCaC) with a membership of academia, the private sector, government agencies, civil society, and environmental nongovernmental organizations in 2013. CCaC has been charged with the responsibility of giving strategic direction to the ministry, the Cabinet, and the country as a whole. The committee will address all matters related to climate change, the development of a Climate Change Policy, a Climate Change Department, and guidance for the implementation of public awareness and public education programs (Pickersgill 2013).

The Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies in Jamaica has taken the lead in building the research effort in the Caribbean region to make Caribbean Communities climate-change resilient. The immediate aim is to engage all fifteen members of the community and its five associate members so that they become more aware of and educated on matters related to climate change, to influence their actions. In like manner, other communities in the diaspora must engage in activities with national and international partners to build resilience collectively in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

In Guyana, something of a paradox exists. While communities there recognize that reliance on fossil fuels must be speedily reduced in the face of climate effects such as desertification, soil erosion, deforestation, and the extinction of unique species, they are also aware, based on IMF data projecting huge growth in GDP (IMF 2019), that they cannot ignore the fact that the projected windfall is from extractive sources. The dilemma for local planners, then, is how to increase economic development while decreasing reliance on fossil fuel extraction, when the latter provides their only opportunity for closing the economic gap of the past fifty-seven years since gaining independence from Britain. In addition, though learning from the past usually provides helpful road signs on what to do or not do in the present, Guyana's history with natural resource extraction and her tendency, in volatile political situations, to abandon one development plan for another without implementing any or documenting lessons learned, is both a scary and an exciting prospect (David 2021). Thus, recommending a knowledge economic model for Guyana is not without its dangers. Communities and individuals outside of the government arena have little motivation to explore their knowledge capacities and even less for embarking on innovative and creative designs for development.

It is precisely why the Guyanese team of young Webby Award winners caught the attention of so many well-wishers (Callender 2022). To creatively pitch a design that would be useful to communities in their effort to mitigate the risks of climate change creates an opportunity not only

for conservation-minded Guyanese but also for the remaining diaspora, some included among the other 150 countries keen enough to save the planet, as to participate in the 5G for Change Hackathon, held in New York in 2022. Innovation within the developing world and, primarily, the diaspora can become contagious and, with knowledge sharing, effective designs for combating risk may facilitate development and aid in disaster preparedness.

Conclusion

Our manuscript set out to tackle a number of interrelated questions pertinent to the lives of African-descended people, many of whom were initially trans-shipped to the “new world” and have now settled in many regions of the world. It is believed that the largest concentration of people of African descent is estimated at approximately 150 million and reside in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition to their displacement from Africa during slavery, many have migrated to Europe, Asia, and also within Africa, seeking a better life away from continual marginalization and the discrimination they suffer as the historic legacy of the slave trade. The search for development for descendants of Africans has been marked by centuries of crisis, ranging from environmental to political to cultural to social but most markedly to economic catastrophe. Thus, the task for this book was to craft an intersectional and interdisciplinary study of how the Black diaspora might reclaim its innate talents to find alternative ways to reboot their energies and forge a trajectory of growth that may change the flattened or downward spiral that has characterized progress toward an upward linear curve that symbolizes hope for the future.

The conceptual framework envisioned for this study allowed authors to look at the margins of development to address impacts of the social, political, economic, and cultural structures that have inhibited the development of people throughout the African diaspora and stagnated the advancement of their self-determination in societies, traumatized by barriers to, and inequality in, their access to basic human rights in areas such as quality education, affordable housing, climate justice, and viable health-care. Lacking these basic human necessities for survival and living in geographical spaces that further exacerbate the hazards confronting African descendants, a new model for development seemed necessary in the era of climate change and the existential threats to the humanity of diasporic peoples. This is not to say that we do not recognize the suffering of those in developing countries all over the world. Instead, we intentionally focus on the Black diaspora because this group of humans is consistently found

at the bottom of all measures of growth the world over. Without inclusion of all those whose vulnerabilities never get addressed, change will never be experienced by those at risk of being left behind, forgotten, broken, and without hope of ever achieving the good life other humans are promised and enjoy.

In a recent announcement of a creative project on tech innovation, the innovation of an artificial intelligence sound monitoring device program to tackle the issue of illegal logging in Guyana (The Webby Awards 2022) was awarded to four Guyanese students, alumni of the University of Guyana. This team of innovators pitched an argument described as innovative and practical to win the prestigious inaugural award of the 5G for Change Hackathon. Their design, to tackle deforestation, was hailed by judges to be the best submission from teams in over 150 countries at the 26th Annual Webby Awards, held in New York on 17 May. As an innovation with impact for climate change, this award has relevance not only for the diaspora but for other countries facing issues of development that need to adapt to novel homegrown methodologies to address climate risks such as deforestation, coastal erosion, and economic insecurities that contribute to further damage of the ecosystem. The award winners explained (see Callender 2022) that since over 80 percent of Guyana's land mass is forested, illegal logging negatively impacts the country's forestry and is responsible for 30 percent of carbon emissions that come from clearing the area. The device they created will use sound monitoring and drones to mitigate illegal logging and the ease with which violators "bypass government regulations through bribery" (The Webby Awards 2022). Creative innovations such as these validate a belief that innovative information communication technology created at the grassroots level and shared with Black diasporic communities can play an integral role in empowering emerging societies not only to learn more about climate change issues such as deforestation, propagation of fossil fuels, carbon spread, and its devastation but also to advocate for greater knowledge sharing and feedback toward the generation of new productive knowledge capital.

Because this volume aims to engage work on disasters in order to influence policy formation and implementation where necessary, it seemed appropriate to take a broad look at catastrophe as inclusive of environmental, human, and political trauma of the past, present, and threatening to the future. Identifying localities, in both the developed and developing world, experiencing environmental hazard and injustice, economic insecurity and unequal access to labor markets, and barriers to nation-building in the form of the devaluation and exclusion of women's capacities to contribute holistically to policy-making for societal development, this study has made a valiant effort to connect the dots intertwining development,

in the hope that readers may gain new insights into another, more self-reliant model, for sustainable growth.

Although we are aware that the diaspora is unique in its whole, we recognize that it is quite diverse in its needs and must tailor development to a scale of societal need. To serve as exemplars of diverse need, three states were selected—one from the African continent (Rwanda), one from the developing Caribbean world (Haiti), and one from the developed North (Louisiana)—whose experiences with disaster and innovative approaches to managing environmental injustice, economic insecurity, poverty, and social capital inclusive of gender constraints, may serve either as a blueprint for others in the diaspora or as a tool of empowerment for and advocacy of knowledge production to domestic scale. At the heart of our study is the belief that justice averted or postponed is justice denied. The diaspora has struggled under the weight of racism and discrimination for so long that many have abandoned pursuit of a better life with self-determination and wait to achieve their just desserts in an afterlife that their faiths have led them to aspire to with unquestioning devotion. Those of us who believe in personal freedom and full self-determination understand that, adapted from the words of Stephen Grellet (1773–1855), “I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow-creature, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again” (Ratcliffe 2016).

In the beginning of this study, we emphasized that our focus would be unlike other authors’ foci on disaster-related sustainable development, who have primarily centered their writing on top-down solutions. Both the academic and professional exercise of managing disaster crises have only looked to governmental and nongovernmental models for disaster recovery. This volume has opted to provide an alternative prescription that centers “bottom-up” models that foreground the knowledge and innovations that are native to the places where the catastrophe strikes. We have therefore presented a theoretical framework of knowledge economies in post-disaster societies that has been laid out through a trans-diasporic analysis of crises in select states and localities that are part of the Black diaspora. Our work has been guided by Black feminist scholarship, such as Audre Lorde’s, who has argued that we cannot use the “master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house.” We have thus interrogated meaningful ways to progress, identifying the failure of exclusively foreign-based, tech-based solutions prescribed by the Global North to have continuously dismissed the Global South and Black localities in the Global North, and proposed new pathways via knowledge production as a supplemental method for exploring community-based, post-disaster sustainability.

Through a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary review of the production of sustainable knowledge economies from the ground up, including scholarship in a cross section of fields, the editor and contributors to this volume have hopefully re-centered and re-framed how we approach, design, and execute sustainable development in post-disaster societies. We hope to share the knowledge found within post-disaster societies to provide a blueprint for a viable and equitable recovery in vulnerable, diasporic spaces that have experienced both natural and man-made crises. Hopefully, we have met our goal to advocate for racial, restorative justice through sustainable development as societies across the diaspora continue to disproportionately recover from crises. Hopefully, too, we have been clear in our belief that the cultural wisdoms of the past will lead the Black diaspora to reclaim the resilience of its ancestors and rebuild, with communal strength, the sustainable future to which African-descended peoples are entitled.

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