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Knowledge Production for Disaster Recovery

PAMELA WALDRON-MOORE

The African diaspora constitutes the world's collection of communities with people descended from Africans and residing all over the globe but, perhaps, predominantly in the Americas and Caribbean, following the mass dispersion from Africa during the transatlantic slave trade of the 1500s–1800s. Most of the African diaspora, also referred to as the Black diaspora, were dispersed from West and Central Africa but maintained their cultural traditions throughout the period of and well after their enslavement. Interaction with the indigenous and other communities and the rest of the world has contributed to cultural legacies influenced by Europeanization, geography, psychological battery, learned resilience, a strong sense of community, etc., and passed on through the generations. In the post-emancipation period, some of the lessons learned in the past about survival and resilience have also given way to migration, dependency, and experiences of inequity, marginalization, and poverty.

Knowledge production in Africa, and passed down through its diaspora, stems from unique ways of knowing that are grounded in indigenous African cultural knowledge systems (Mpofu, Ntinda, and Oakland 2012). Yet, despite the diversities in language and culture, there are enduring commonalities that remain rooted in indigenous African traditions, ecology, and history (Ngara 2007). Colonial rule, especially in the former British colonies, where assimilation was not forced upon Africans as was the case under French colonial systems, allowed Africans to embrace both their indigenous cultural heritage and adopt Anglo-Western knowledge systems (Ngara 2007). Thus, regardless of where Africans were dispersed, it seemed evident that the two knowledge systems enriched *knowing* across the diaspora and may have also contributed to the perception of scholars that Africans across the diaspora experience unity in diversity (Goduka

1999). This volume hopes to build on the commonalities and sense of unity in diversity understood by African-descended people as a resilience that defines who they are as a people and how their worldview is shaped.

Indigenous ways of knowing, described by some scholars as the African paradigm (Ngara 2007), have been ridiculed, misunderstood, misinterpreted, and rejected by colonizers over the centuries. Both the continent of Africa and its people have been treated as uncivilized and without a cultural mind. These flawed observations were seen as justification for subjugation and encouragement to tame the savage within them, to denigrate their knowledge systems, and strip them of all indigenous systems of survival. Cultural hegemony, once launched on Africans, served to rid them of their self-esteem and political efficacy and throw them into a dependence syndrome that is today, mostly responsible for the fact that Africans at home and in the diaspora still rely too much on the colonizing forces of the past and the economic structures they set in place with African labor and culture at their base (Goduka 1999).

In recent decades, climate change, with its impact on development, has brought the concerns of Africans in the diaspora to the fore, with many seeking to change the narrative of a proud but disadvantaged people, to reflect the challenges and opportunities facing the diaspora and the resilience with which so many have overcome the obstacles before them. Especially in disaster-prone spaces, the necessity to overcome the obstacles of climate change and the economic deprivation experienced over centuries must rely on alternative approaches to survival and sustainability. Thus, we are recommending, for the diaspora, a shift from sole reliance on European benevolence and foreign-born technology to knowledge sharing of intellectual capital, cultural wisdom, and homegrown solutions, focused on nature-based rather than on man-made solutions. Emphasis is placed on seeking a just transition to food and economic security, limitations on coastal erosion and soil degradation, and a purposeful pursuit of environmental justice in housing.

We call for neighborhood locations to be replaced by green infrastructure and sustainable development via easy access to education and technological expertise. Such education must emanate from a return to indigenous ways of knowing with which new material is integrated to advance communication in a blend of cultural knowledge and value systems. As Sol Obotetukudo (2001) argues, development in Africa and its diaspora cannot be realized without an African philosophy of development derived from what Africans think of themselves as informed by their indigenous cultural knowledge. Such cultural knowledge is typically passed down through generations in African proverbs, songs, and music. Indeed, true development will only take place and become sustainable when African

culture and value systems are shared among them, in diasporic spaces, and globally. This volume seeks to add to the paucity of literature on this subject to shed light on how multilayered systems of knowing and the production of new knowledge may contribute to meaningful learning (see Ausubel 1963) that may inspire post-disaster communities to realize progress and development in a model of knowledge production.

Knowledge Production for Disaster Recovery

Disaster research has been studied from a variety of angles, often taking a historical approach or contemporaneous reporting as new crises occur. Seldom has there been targeted examination of the implications of disaster for vulnerable societies. Most developing societies are vulnerable to the vicissitudes of climate change but none more so than communities across the Black diaspora. Unlike emerging societies in Asia, which may also face the challenges of climate change and negative impacts to their development, Africa and diasporic communities have not developed a model for economic growth that does not depend on fossil fuels and energy-based industrialization for environmental sustainability. As we may recall, the East Asian model for development is built on manufacture and export-oriented industry, crafted under the cultural belief that command economics is a viable approach (Park 2002). For the relatively short period of political independence, the diaspora has maintained strong ties to the colonial powers who continued to extract from them their abundant natural resources. In the wake of disaster, created by natural hazards or cultural or political events, which continue to exploit natural resources to the disadvantage of development, there is need for leaders of diasporic states to scrutinize the social, political, economic, and cultural structures that have inhibited development and stagnated the advancement of self-determination in small, developing, post-disaster societies.

This volume interrogates the challenges for disaster-prone territories of the African diaspora to determine supplemental strategies that may be embraced to effect policy changes that might contribute to sustainable communities. Acknowledging the link between low economic development and climate change to be one of codependence and nonviability, we must come to terms with the fact that despite public and private capital flows into diasporic and other developing communities, the latter are unable to locate enough financial resources to support green energy projects, as recommended by the United Nations (Edwards 2019; UN 2020) and its advisory body, the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC). The damage to diasporic communities experiencing negative impacts

from climate change constitutes a catastrophe of enormous proportions (Gallagher 2022).

The prospect of mitigating the risks of enhanced disaster to these vulnerable communities warrants a model of economic growth that balances innovative energy with community resilience. As global warming persists and northern climates become wetter while southern climates become dryer, there is no time to lose and certainly no time to continue dependence on the advanced, industrialized societies, either to right the wrong of impoverishing developing societies with extractive techniques, which have resulted in damage to the atmosphere, or in providing the kind of financial and technological assistance they would need to jumpstart flagging economies. In proposing the creation of knowledge economies by identifying ignored pockets of intellectual capacities resting in home-grown expertise, communities of the diaspora must recognize innate abilities to help themselves via identification of knowledge capital, innovative production of said capital, and advocating for growth in communities while empowering local leaders to engage in regenerative enterprises for sustainability.

The knowledge economy is an economic system in which the production of goods and services is based primarily on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to growth in technological and scientific innovation. Knowledge economies, as captured in the word cloud below, recognize growth to be dependent upon the quality and quantity of information available to communities and permitting access to sources of information. Locating available information is more critical than the means of producing information at the grassroots level. Yet the production of knowledge acknowledges the importance of locating tangible and intangible values stemming from the identification of local data about processes, products, customs, and other intellectual capacities that allow for efficient ways to coordinate intellectual capital and creative capacity. Not only must knowledge production be recorded for easy access when necessary, therefore, it must also be shared for replication and in self-help activities. As claimed by Justin Rosenstein (2012): “In a knowledge economy, natural selection favors organizations that can most effectively harness and coordinate collective intellectual energy and creative capacity.”

Knowledge sharing in the past has been a beacon for the present. In the age of Neanderthals, for example, lessons were shared via cave drawings. Tool-making, animal hunting, and other endeavors were documented in hunting expeditions, illustrating best practices for survival skills. Through such methods, a knowledge base of day-to-day activities was created. However, the intellectual capital and capacities of Africans in the diaspora have over the ages been co-opted and silenced, rendering access to via-



Figure 1.1. Knowledge Economy Word Cloud. © Pamela Waldron-Moore.

ble knowledge bases relatively difficult to locate. As demonstrated in the appendices to this volume, communities working together can build on the few knowledge bases recording the innovative spirit of Africans in the diaspora by managing the knowledge capacities resident in their locales to explore what actions, taken in the past, may be re-designed to address post-disaster needs of the present for the future. In today's environment, analysis shows that interaction among working groups identifies knowledge sharing as 28 percent in the area of reading and answering email messages; 19 percent in searching and gathering information; 14 percent in internal communication and collaboration; and 39 percent in role specific tasks (International Data Corp 2022). This representation is relative to developed areas of the Global North but reflects very little of what takes place in post-disaster societies where there is a gap in information dissemination to regions of the Global South.

Diaspora Considered

Three diasporic sites that enhance investigation of our theme, and are explored in this volume, are Louisiana, Haiti, and Rwanda, where lessons learned from disaster may be shared and their resident opportunities uncovered. Louisiana, located in the developed world but with the second largest (33 percent) population being of African descent, and Haiti, with 95 percent of its population being of Black origin, have both experienced the vulnerabilities of physical disaster, coupled with limiting inequities, that have hindered, in critical ways, progress toward sustainable development. Rwanda, located in Central Africa, has experienced political and cultural disaster and is moving slowly, but resolutely, toward recovery by harnessing the knowledge capital in communities whose native courage and resiliency have been recounted in anthropological studies and traditional practices. We believe that knowledge sharing within and across the diaspora could serve as a template for recovery and empower sister-communities to pursue new approaches to economic development. Innovative engagement of homegrown practices, long neglected in the face of contemporary global opportunities, may hold promise for achieving environmental sustainability in the foreseeable future.

Analysis in this study engages directly with the wisdoms of indigenous practices in Africa and the diaspora to craft new pathways for development in the wake of national disasters that have stagnated growth in their societies. These indigenous practices will be discussed in detail relative to the themes under consideration. The areas of development primarily targeted in this volume are those that have been recognized globally as risk factors. For example, water management, poverty, and public health concerns are high on the UN's goals for sustainable development. Although, as Kelly Gallagher (2022) reported in a recent *Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has estimated it would take over \$4 trillion in annual investments in clean energy to decarbonize the global energy system, negotiators have come nowhere close to realizing such a bold sum. And, even if they were to raise such funds, what would be shared with the developing world would be next to nothing, considering that those who could advance the funds for global expenditure will spend the lion's share on their own domestic climate needs.

So, what is to become of diasporic locations whose populations need to find ways to recover from disasters caused by climate change and are much more urgent than the climate challenges facing industrialized societies? Through the lens of equity, development indicators, especially those measured by gender inequality, climate injustice, and economic insecurity,

which are all included in the seventeen bullets highlighted in the UN Goals for Sustainable Development (UN 2020), we will observe, qualitatively, the potential impact of knowledge production for achieving developmental sustainability in disadvantaged and disaster-prone spaces of the African diaspora, with a view to sharing the successes achieved and innovative strategies applied for achieving them, with other diasporic locales.

Historical Reflection

Omitted from general discourse on development has been the role individuals can and do play in policy-making for development. The integration of national economies through the process of globalization has advanced the notion that growth can only be achieved and sustained through the application of high tech and manufacturing expertise. Global North countries have exemplified the adequacy of this theory by extracting natural resources from Global South states to convert them, with technology, into manufactured goods. This has created a lag in wealth and development between the North and South. Through this prism of global development, advancement is singularly economic and almost entirely tech-based. The reality is that national development is not unidimensional. Emerging nations, and especially those experiencing post-disaster trauma, need to foreground other integral aspects of growth as seen at the intersections of their social, cultural, political, and economic histories. Such reflection may be more likely to support a creation of knowledge economies as a model for growth.

Our volume argues that when the above factors are taken into consideration, there is stronger motivation to push beyond the well-known prescriptions for development to achieve the kind of growth affected communities want to experience. Post-disaster societies may benefit from developmental options relative to their own cultural and scalable spheres of reference. Supplementing the tech-based prescriptions of advanced economies with novel areas of production can jumpstart a return to cultural wisdom with the development of innovative ideas rooted in untapped indigenous knowledge capital. The Black diaspora has lost so much by way of knowledge. Much of the accomplishments of Black people have been buried with those who knew what was accomplished but were often too modest or too low in self-esteem to share their *knowing* or lacking in access to vehicles for knowledge sharing. In 1905, W. E. B. Dubois made what is today remembered as the Niagara Movement Speech. In his presentation, he argued that “either the United States

will destroy ignorance or ignorance will destroy the United States” (Du-Bois 1905). It is hard not to see why that sentiment still resonates in our educational systems, where students of the diaspora continue to be discouraged from learning about their ancestors and the resilience among them that has paved the way for new empowering scholarship in contemporary movements such as Black Lives Matter and in the writings of Black anthropologists who are still too few in number to investigate culture across the diaspora. For, although Black inventors are uncommon in developed locations, some of their work can be identified and correctly attributed to them (Dass 2020).

That is not paralleled in Africa, the Caribbean, or Latin America, where many are credited for their cultural contributions in art, sculpting, and so on but few are acclaimed for technological innovations on par with the creation of traffic signals or refrigerated vehicles or automatic elevator doors, all of which have been contributions made by African Americans (see Appendix I and II). Connecting the Black diaspora through knowledge sharing can be empowering when knowledge economy is embraced as a viable model for economic growth and development. The irony of this is that people of Africa and its diaspora are content to believe in their former and current colonizers. As one of their most vocal sons, Professor P. L. O. Lumumba (2022) has claimed in one of his many educational speeches, Africa is politically and economically weak, socially disorganized, and culturally confused. What was even more disturbing, but encouraging at the same time, was the assertion that in Africa, inter-African trade makes up only about 15 percent of trade, there is no export in agricultural products, no production of African technology in areas, such as mobile phone production, even though the technology for said production is located in the Congo, and no development of pharmaceutical products, a finding recently exposed during the COVID crisis when all of Africa was relying on China, Britain, and the United States for vaccine production.¹ Now if ever there were a need to step up in a disaster, the COVID-19 pandemic magnified it. It is time for Africa and its diaspora to recognize that ignorance leads to distrust and distrust leads to disunity, and all the ills that impair upward mobility, development, and sustainability. Despite the critique, there is hope in the fact that there is potential for greater production in technology and pharmaceutical development. Where there is knowledge capacity, there is hope for sustainable development. Rethinking the integration of indigenous knowledge and meaningful learning in the academy (see Dei 2000) would go a long way to encouraging the efficacy required by marginalized communities toward the creation of a sustainable philosophy of development.

Contemporary Economic Considerations

The COVID pandemic has taught us that catastrophe comes in all shapes and sizes, as does its individual impact on countries of all shapes and sizes. How societies manage disaster has much to do with whose experience it is, where that experience is located, and what resources are available to process it successfully. The case studies in this volume underscore what approaches to sustainable post-crisis recovery hold viable potential for truly equitable development.

Equity remains at the heart of this study. Over the last two decades, many emerging economies have witnessed a movement of change from authoritarian to democratic rule. Yet, the world has not equally experienced the performance of democratic theory as espoused by the most developed nations of the world. Thus, when democratic governance fails to achieve the democratic goals set by the West, crises that are exogenous to leadership in the diaspora lay bare the inadequacies of modernization theories (Gwynne 2009) and the potentially harmful consequences of relying, for example, on Keynesian interventionist perspectives (Sarwat, Mahmud, and Papageorgiou 2014) considered to be a related strategy in the philosophy of economic liberalism. Keynes's attempt to understand how spending affected output, employment, and inflation ventured a solution that governments should step in to increase demand by lowering taxes. While this could enhance economic performance, it had the potential to slow development in vulnerable communities. Resorting to Keynesian advocacy of interventionist management by governments caused many developing societies to reject governance strategies where unemployment and increased recession put leaders at risk of being seen as undemocratic and unresponsive to public economic demands. The perception of economic dissatisfaction not only led to the rejection of democratic values and political unrest but also to coups d'état at the domestic level and categorization by critics of struggling societies as failed states. As challengers to Keynesian theory acknowledge (see Friedman 2002; Lucas 2003), while there may have been a kernel of evidence supportive of Keynes's economic theory, the reality is that economic collapse in most states discredits the idea of a self-adjusting economy and fails to respect the Keynesian approach. Thus, developing economies, attempting to follow such conditions for growth find it difficult to achieve economic development as Keynesian philosophy purports.

This volume therefore challenges the assertion that faithfully following prescriptions of the West is a meaningful pathway to sustainable development in emerging democracies and offers, as a plausible alternative, the

production of knowledge capital for solutions of recovery and resilience in beleaguered communities. In the wake of physical, cultural, and sociopolitical disasters across and within the diaspora, observers have recognized the need for solutions to struggle in nations like Rwanda, currently in pursuit of recovery and sustainability following the genocide there in 1994 (Ngirente 2020). As Prime Minister Ngirente shared in his keynote remarks on the vulnerabilities of the country, Rwanda's recovery agenda, following its most recent disaster, COVID-19, will rest on three pillars: "Resilience, Partnership, and Innovation."

Similar challenges to development have also been observed in Haiti, whose large population of African-descended people are still seeking recovery from the trauma of the 2010 earthquake that ravaged its territorial landscape. And, again in 2021, when disrupted by both another earthquake and ongoing negative climate effects, Haitians are still without a formula for the recovery Haiti desperately needs. These challenges are further exacerbated by the threat of global climate change. In addition, a catastrophe of leadership and failed attempts to shepherd the country out of the political and economic morass it finds itself in, Haitians cry out for new innovative approaches to recovery, seeking to generate solutions from within the country and across its own diaspora, rather than rely on the long-absent support of Western governments.

The case of Louisiana, where 33 percent of the state's population are of African descent and 58 percent may be found in its most well-known city, New Orleans (The Data Center 2022), flails in its frantic search to regain what was lost from the ravages of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and, more recently, Hurricane Ida in 2021. New Orleans's experience with disaster is also instructive of adaptations necessary for mitigating climate change and for modeling knowledge production. The latter state still envisions restorative strategies for warding off the continued onslaught of disaster, accelerated by the incidence of climate change, while identifying new strategies for keeping pending collapse at bay.

Residents of these three diasporic locations recognize that depending on the goodwill of sympathetic benefactors to provide solutions to their developmental issues provides no glimmer of hope within the anarchical world we live. For, although theories of justice, liberalism, and realism have been generous in their promises of solution and the achievements of globalization have offered a specter of hope for recovery by way of self-help and participation in the global marketplace of ideas, development has not only tried crawling into being, but in some areas, it has collapsed under the effort of attempting to keep up with the pace of development across the globe.

Temporal Shift

The time has thus come to review and reinterpret what it means to recover and find new pathways toward development. We examine the growth of these three societies by engaging a framework for development and offering suggestions for how indigenous, cultural knowledge may be produced to yield the kind of development that does not emanate from efforts to catch up with the rest of the world that has already far-outpaced them with technological expertise. Rather, we imagine an equitable world where environmental sustainability is not wholly the purview of the wealthy in the developed North. We highlight growth in challenged, disaster-prone, diasporic communities and encourage reliance on cultural wisdoms that resonate better with traditional logic and practice and empower communities to create their own blueprints for success. In other words, we recognize that if each society examines its cultural roots, it is more likely to find embedded therein potential solutions for recovery. The key lies in the states' location of unique knowledge capital and the innovative ways in which said knowledge capital may be produced and applied sustainably.

In this volume, interdisciplinary scholars, with focus on political, psychological, anthropological, economic, and communication skills, review the impact of disaster on development and explore innovative avenues for redesigning a trajectory of growth for the sustainability of communities within the African diaspora. The editor of this volume and its contributors have extensively researched and collected data on the theme of knowledge economics. We note that developing nations, vulnerable to climate change and its environmental impacts, have had difficulty appreciating, let alone making, demands about a healthy environment because their governments have been unable to address higher-order needs of society in the face of basic survival needs. Systems theory (Easton 1965), offered as a model for advancement, has not contributed in the developing nations to the system successes achieved in the industrialized world. It is therefore helpful for a book such as this to highlight how systems of oppression across the African diaspora have been able to stagnate growth. Thus, in rediscovering the utility of collaborative, community-based efforts to produce knowledge resources aimed at recovering what was lost after encounters with underdevelopment and devastating natural and man-made disasters, innovative contributions to development can be addressed. The impact of political, economic, social, cultural, and their intersectional relationships reinforce the need for alternative solutions to issues of recovery and a quest for sustainable development, primarily after catastrophic fissures in diasporic societies.

In laying out a theoretical, conceptual framework for diasporic economies to substitute their imported, tech-based, struggling economic, politically weak, socially disorganized, and culturally confused structures with a community-based collaborative model of growth that could revitalize their societies with an innovative knowledge-sharing approach to development and environmental sustainability, we hope to identify, through a case study approach, viable strategies that may be emulated by those who are ready to look to the diaspora for guidance rather than continue to seek solutions where there are none.

Case Study Approach

Water management is perhaps one of the most immediate challenges facing countries in the Caribbean and the Americas. However, because there is little flow of information between the wealthier and poorer states of the globe, few consider the potential impact of locating problems similar to theirs and learning from those experiences. What Louisiana has learned from the resiliency of its people in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and other parishes where indigenous communities reside, is that development can be attained through collaboration with communities across the Gulf and the knowledge of how it has been attained can then be shared with locales in the Global South where communities do not have opportunities for *knowing* to the same extent as their diasporic brethren living and growing in the developed North. Activists working on the frontline of disaster recovery have made amazing progress in building on the resilient spirits of their community elders and non-profits in the region. The challenges they have overcome, albeit located in the developed world, can easily resonate with attentive organizers in the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin communities and start a much-needed movement toward greening and recovery of post-disaster communities. Post-disaster recovery in Puerto Rico, Haiti, Honduras, St. Maarten, and other diasporic spaces in the Caribbean can benefit from Louisiana's innovative leadership in relation to development and environmental sustainability.

The benefit of a case study that examines collaborative energies and post-disaster solutions for development in Louisiana, often seen as the northernmost area of the Caribbean, given similarities in its cultural make-up, should be shared with a country like Haiti, whose spatial, cultural, and social distance is not insurmountable by any imagination.

In just over a decade since disaster struck Haiti, researchers have emphasized the ways the media might contribute to connecting Haiti with new strategies for survival in the aftermath of the earthquake. The media serves as a public sphere and a civic institution that generates, dissem-

inates, and curates a local knowledge economy in search of equitable post-disaster recovery that can benefit all Haitians. Further, it offers perspectives on the ways knowledge economies can be developed through public enterprise to include all citizens, not just those in power or the social and economic elites. Haiti and Louisiana are linked by history, food, and culture. In recent years, they are also linked by climate and the changes attending it. Louisiana has learned from Haiti in its early years of independence from France. It would do well for Haiti, given the mosaic of its past century, to learn from the progress Louisiana has made and the resilience it has demonstrated in managing and adapting to the vagaries of the ecosystem. In addition, connecting with its own large diaspora through media and creative art can help Haitians reimagine a future where they are empowered and their knowledge base advocates for the intellectual capacity lying dormant within their local communities. Through knowledge sharing, Haiti stands a chance of navigating safely through the murky economic issues, social upheaval, political illegitimacy, and the myriad other ills that plague the Global South.

Wrestling knowledge capital from the past and utilizing transdisciplinary perspectives and intersectional analysis, Rwanda's recovery plan has included ideas of justice as manifested in homegrown practices such as Gacaca, which is the hearing of local trials of persons violating community and cultural norms. These are brought before a communal committee, as in historical Rwandan tradition, to face accusers and manage conflict in a way that the community finds just. Such methodologies have been aided by education and training in academic and social institutions to repair the damage of identity wars preceding the catastrophe of 1994. Recent generations specializing in anthropology, psychology, public health, social work, and related behavioral scholarship encourage policy decisions centering women, for example, and their issues in a sociocultural environment where inequities are addressed, and solutions found, internally. As anthropologists interpret traditional practices, psychologists identify innovative formulas for relieving stress and reducing trauma, activities such as laughter yoga, dance, and handcraft have been designed to work at the community level to engage necessary conversations and behaviors that augur well for peaceful communication and Ubuntu (radical hospitality) within neighborhoods. The case study approach engaged here illustrates the impact of these methodologies and confirms the argument that knowledge capital when appropriately produced can and will contribute to sustainable development in post-disaster societies. As states within the diaspora engage in knowledge sharing and learn from each other, we envisage what in diasporic parlance is explained as "hand wash hand makes hands clean."

Development of the most pertinent goals of the UN's seventeen recommendations for sustainable development can be built on the wisdoms of the past to restore a diaspora struggling under the weight of injustice to achieve viable development. The impact of climate change is felt across the globe, varying among regions, generations, age, class, income groups, and gender. Based on the adaptations recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), it is clear that people who are already very vulnerable and most marginalized are disproportionately impacted and need innovative strategies to prevail. The poor, primarily in developing societies, and further burdened by catastrophic weather, are more likely to be in the greatest need of new practices to adapt to climate variability and change. Communities in the diaspora, whether located in the Global North or South, many struggling with coastal erosion and infrastructural failure, experience the injustices of disaster management and recognize the physical, social, cultural, and political vulnerabilities that attend them.

The impact of post-disaster experiences on Black lives complicates the struggle for development. With the evolution of social movements and the realization that the Black experience is one of underdevelopment, subpar growth, and a record of low performance across the spaces inhabited by Black residents, there is no more pertinent time than now to comprehend the implications of injustice and the barriers to development as a global disaster rooted in the cultural history of the diaspora and requiring a *Sankofa* model for change. Tackling seventeen goals for sustainable development laid out by the United Nations will help us imagine an ecosystem and a humanity that is equitably shared by those who inhabit the earth. By paying specific attention to ending poverty in all its forms and addressing economic security, which includes justice in the distribution and security of food, water, and income enough to overtop the poverty line, regions in the diaspora can begin to reclaim what was violently taken from them through slavery and the displacement of their lives across the globe. In addition, consideration must be given to the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, so that they may reclaim their humanity from the wanton abuse and violence young women experience via human trafficking and the slate of ills accompanying it. Theories of knowledge propose that access to education when widely available prepares publics for self-discovery, leadership, and most importantly, self-fulfillment. What locations in the diaspora have done successfully, for example, Rwanda, in allocating space for women to thrive as parliamentarians and create policy avenues for other women to chart their own development, is precisely what the diaspora can share in order for each area to design a pathway through innovative exploration to its sustainable development.

Similarly, our research establishes the view that availability and the sustainable management of water and sanitation for all ensures humanity thrives and regenerates, building on shared experiences for the sustainability of life. Addressing human vulnerabilities across communities will not only allow humans to adapt their behavior to protect the environment from a changing climate but will allow them to apply creative wisdoms for sustainability. Sharing knowledge and expertise in traditional settings helps societies in the diaspora to meet the public health standards identified by the United Nations to claim citizenship in the global commons. And, it is also important that members of the Black diaspora understand the urgency of taking action to combat climate change and its impacts. Those impacts have been severely felt in the pre-disaster diaspora. Louisiana has seen its coastline erode and its interior degrade, affecting its livelihood from marine cultivation and its tourist appeal. Its disaster experience has been expanded by the latest catastrophe to impact its way of life. The COVID-19 pandemic has limited its social activities, crippled its nightlife and the hospitality services that attended it, and severely impacted the pocket books of all those relying on the culture of the state for new expression. The harm to its built environment has laid bare the poverty that exists behind the hustle and bustle of everyday life. A loss of life, employment, and income in periods of weather disaster only expands the devastation that Louisiana communities experience. New perceived threat for the annual hurricane season, where the damage to already vulnerable communities is magnified, is perceived to increase displacement as communities repair and recover. So, where would resilience come from, if not from learned, cultural wisdoms of the past? And why should such resilience, when achieved, not be shared with other diasporic communities to empower their engagement of innovative methodologies of adaptation while advocating for new knowledge-producing mentalities.

The experiences of Haiti and Rwanda (the latter may not have a hurricane season to cause national stress but understand the trauma of other stressors) must continue to address the crises of political leadership, challenges to legitimate governance, and the juggling of management criteria to ensure nations do not regress into complacency in the face of disasters that threaten employment, income, wellness, and community, all of which are integral to recovery.

Academic institutions, especially historically black colleges and universities (HBCU), have long suffered from lack of access to strategic knowledge on which new ideas may be built. Knowledge capital, as an essential path to knowledge production, can be located in stories of the past and remedies long dismissed as old-fashioned, non-scientific and, often considered useless household practices that are behind the times. Yet, in the face of

failed attempts to keep up with the pace of change and engage world-class technologies that have mired diasporic societies in debt and poverty, it is important to reclaim wisdoms of the past that are still instructive for both students and faculty. The application of knowledge capital and the production of said capital can arouse interest in innovative projects that may be shared widely within, and even beyond, the diaspora, in pursuit of sustainable and developed communities to empower and advocate for them in the management of sustainable post-disaster societies. Publication of innovative work conducted by faculty and students in response to the discussion in this text will further advance our attempt to awaken a spirit of solidarity among diasporic peoples and a will to build an edifice of knowledge in which access to collaborative knowledge sharing may be forthcoming. In the spirit of Wangari Maathai (2003), a Kenyan social, environmental, and political activist and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize (2004), the diaspora must mobilize as a unified indigenous diasporic grassroots organization that empowers its communities to address imperatives for post-disaster sustainability and resilience. And in tribute to Jewel L. Prestage, the first African American woman to receive a doctorate in political science in the United States, I echo the belief that education and knowledge sharing are the keys to development and sustainability of the African diaspora.

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Note

1. https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/cm-stories/africa-pharma-manufacturing-hubs-en.

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