Ecologies, Economies, and Resilience: State Restoration Imaginaries & Vietnamese/American Fishing Futures in Southeast Louisiana

A Dissertation

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DEDICATION

For the people of Southeast Louisiana
its more-than-human species
& the land, water, air, and spirits that live there.

ABSTRACT

This project lies at the intersection of Asian American studies, critical refugee studies, environmental injustice and racism, and engages community-level interventions into restoration policy and practice in Southeast Louisiana.

Over the last 15 years, coastal land loss and vulnerability to disaster has been at the center of how government officials, residents, and everyone in between talk about coastal Louisiana's future. Significantly, where residents are often told these environmental ills are 'natural' and thus difficult to apprehend, their origins are quite clear. Land subsidence (or sinking), which is typical of the marshland that forms Louisiana's coast, is spurred on by federally supported oil extraction, natural gas exploration, and shipping canals, which all cut up and hasten the dissolution of the already subsiding and porous coast. Damming, leveeing, and other infrastructure management along the Mississippi River make residents even more vulnerable to climate-change-induced flooding and storms.

All of these decision-maker-produced ills make the daily lives of folks who rely on the health of the Gulf and the coast not just difficult, but increasingly impossible. This is particularly the case for Vietnamese/Americans, who decision-makers continue to racialize as refugees well equipped at surviving upheaval. As a result of this refugee racialization, Vietnamese/Americans are at once rendered more 'resilient' to the above disasters and erased from mitigation and support efforts as *resilient refugees*, or exemplary survivors of disaster who, in addition to their particular aptitude for assimilating U.S. culture and values into their families and communities, are adept at incorporating disaster policy and coastal regulatory practices into their daily lives. In spite of this, as perpetual refugees, they may never be fully "American."

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

cfs - cubic feet per second
CPRA - Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
CRCL - Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
CWPPRA - Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act
EIA - Environmental Impact Assessment
EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
EJ - Environmental justice
FSS - Fisheries Support Services
IDJC - Isle de Jean Charles
IJFA - Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act
LDWF - Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
MMPA - Marine Mammal Protection Act
MSA - Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
NOAA - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act
NFWF - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
SOC - State of the Coast Conference
TED - Turtle Excluder Device
USACE - United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDA - United States Department of Agriculture

INTRODUCTION: DISASTER, RISK MITIGATION, & VIETNAMESE /AMERICAN LOUISIANA

When I moved to New Orleans for fieldwork in July 2015, I did so with the intention to study Vietnamese/American racialization in the city by focusing on how community members produced, distributed, and consumed Vietnamese/American food in the context of disaster. Prior to this, I had conducted a month of preliminary fieldwork in July 2014, which had given me time to connect with Vietnamese/American leaders in the food growing and provisioning industries. During preliminary fieldwork, I conducted one-on-one interviews with Vietnamese/American and other chefs in New Orleans, spent time in the New Orleans Special collection and the archives at Tulane University, and met with other leaders in the area's food community, including the director of the Southern Food and Beverage Museum and the author of a book on New Orleans Vietnamese food.

Most importantly, I used that first research month to establish relationships with the staff of two very different Vietnamese/American non-profits. The first was GROW, an urban farm in Versailles, the neighborhood where Vietnamese refugees had been resettled by Catholic Charities of New Orleans in 1975 and that had since become a major Vietnamese/American community hub. The second was Fisheries Support Services (FSS), a non-profit that supported Southeast Louisiana's commercial fisherfolk and their families in every Louisiana fishery: pelagic longline (tuna and swordfish), shrimp, oysters, crab, finfish (primarily redfish), and crawfish. I had spent two days with Sue Ha, FSS's executive director—the first in her office, where we spoke about the problems facing commercial fisherfolk in the region, and the second in the Birdfoot Delta, where I met shrimpers and shrimping dock owners.

In the year between preliminary and long-term fieldwork, I maintained connections to GROW and FSS; through the course of writing my preliminary exams, however, I decided to focus on community farming, effectively relegating commercial fishing to a small, almost anecdotal place in my dissertation imaginary. It would add an interesting story or two to help me illustrate the breadth of Vietnamese/Americans' contribution to Southeast Louisiana's food culture. Given this, and because Sue had stopped responding to my phone calls and emails in the lead-up to my moving to New Orleans, GROW was my primary research site for the first nine months of fieldwork. Two to four times a week, I woke up at 5:00 am to bus an hour from my home in Mid-City New Orleans to the farm's primary growing site in Versailles, Village de l'Est. While GROW's farmers typically got to the site around 7 am, I had to leave my house so early because of how difficult it was to get to GROW—a single bus runs from the nature reserve at the city's easternmost edge to New Orleans' center every 25 minutes, stopping almost every block as it creeps across the city. Versailles is named after Versailles Arms, the apartment complex where refugees of U.S. military engagement in Việt Nam were resettled by the Catholic Church beginning in 1975. While I will explore this in more depth in chapter one, it is important to note here that for over forty decades, Vietnamese/Americans have been kept spatially and culturally removed from New Orleans proper; although there is a great deal of transit from Versailles to New Orleans, traffic is far less likely to move in the other direction.

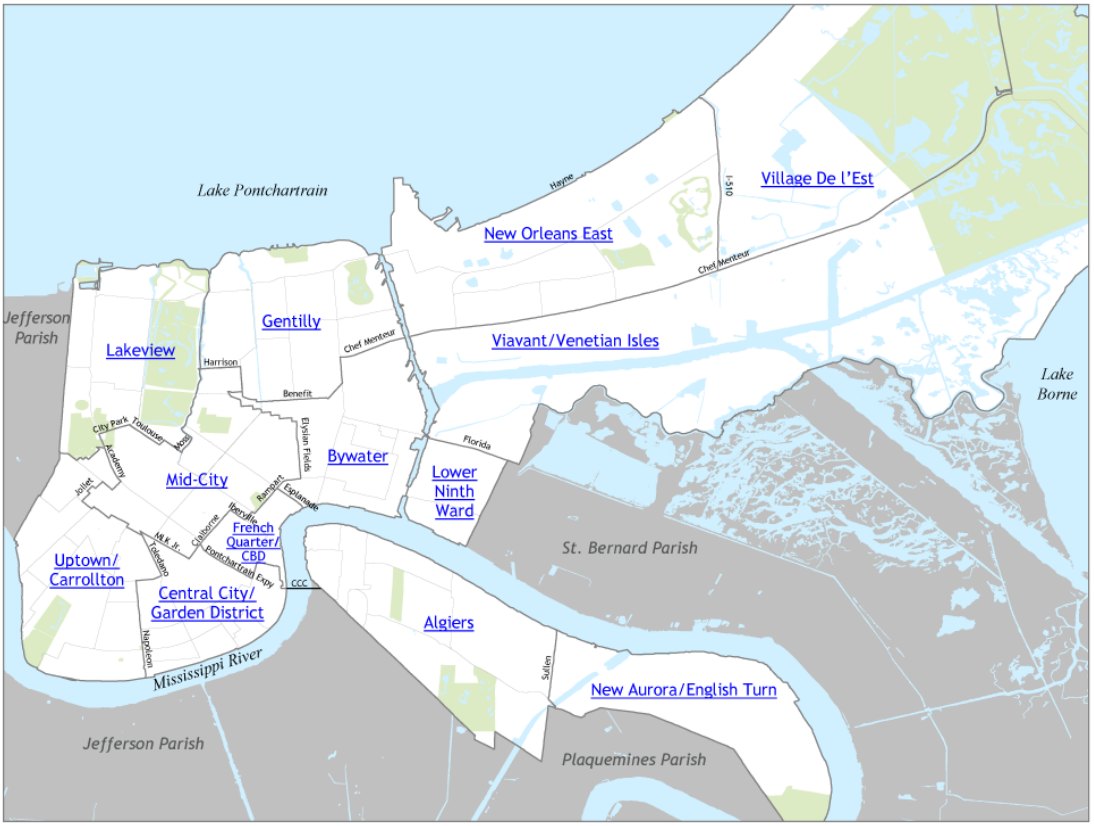

Figure 1. This map indicates the primary neighborhoods in Orleans Parish and Jefferson Parish according to The Data Center, which aggregates statistical data about and for South Louisiana. The primary New Orleans Metro area lies between Lake Pontchartrain to its north and the Mississippi River to the south; it is bifurcated from New Orleans East, Village de l'Est, Viavant/Venetian Isles, and the Lower Ninth Ward by the Industrial Canal. The neighborhood of Versailles is in Village de l'Est, which I also identify and New Orleans East, as the folks I work with call it, and lies directly south of "De" in "Village De l'est," and represents the last major neighborhood west of the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge, indicated in green (The Data Center 2019).

During my nine-month tenure at GROW, I worked alongside the neighborhood's youth and elders to cultivate okra, salad greens, Japanese eggplant, Vietnamese herbs, squash, and other restaurant and home pantry staples on the farm's primary growing plot at the center of Versailles. I also attended weekly farm meetings with staff members to understand how the farm worked, and its role in Vietnamese/American life following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (2005), Gustav and Ike (2008), and the BP oil catastrophe (2010). In addition to these primary duties, I delivered produce to restaurants in New Orleans proper, worked at GROW's booth at one of five weekly farmer's markets in the

Mid-City neighborhood, participated in projects to restore the health of the neighborhood's soil, and contributed to community outreach and organizing work, from creating illustrations for a now-defunct community cookbook and helping youth test recipes to working at the farm's annual fundraiser and Tết celebration, where donors received tours of the farm and learned about how GROW engaged the community.

Together, this work helped me understand the cadence of the neighborhood and its role in the lives of community members. This includes how ongoing poor infrastructure issues like leaky water mains, sparse social services like language-accessible healthcare, and spatial and community-based exclusion affected them. Learning how to cultivate vegetables and herbs that are both in demand by local non-Vietnamese/American restaurants and at the Vietnamese/American corner store gave me a sense of how food flowed through the community, governmental, and other place-based networks of power across the New Orleans metro area. It also helped me understand how disaster, changes in soil and groundwater health, and other basic ecosystem-level experiences the folks with whom I worked.

At the farm, decision-maker-produced environmental and ecosystem-level violences showed up in everything we did. Every day was an upward battle in terms of growing. The spring of 2016 was so uncharacteristically rainy that it raised the water table across the state, making the entire growing plot, which was in a particularly low-lying area of Versailles, a fecund swamp in which the roots of half of what we planted rotted. We were set upon by swarms of gnats and mosquitoes with each step, and struggled to move water away from our yield, as the entire neighborhood was a squelching, muddy mess, and the

algae-filled water canals that crisscrossed the neighborhood were almost overflowing. In the lead-up to the June 1st start date of hurricane season, I helped staff prepare disaster kits, replacing batteries in camping lanterns, buying fresh gallon jugs of water, and making sure there was enough shelf-stable food for everyone to eat for at least a week at the office.

With this burgeoning yet patchy ecosystem-level knowledge, I also began to see how the farm was invariably wedded to larger experiences of disaster—the co-op had been founded in the wake of the BP oil catastrophe in 2010—that in turn, kept leading me back to fishing. GROW was founded following BP to give out-of-work Vietnamese/American fisherfolk a source of income. The elders I worked alongside on the farm had either been forced out of shrimping because they went underwater on their boats while waiting for compensation for lost income, or saw BP as the last straw in a long string of state and federal ecosystem-, community-, and race-specific violences against their industry, and left. Growing lettuces and herbs, as they had their whole lives on a personal or semi-professional scale, felt more stable than commercial fishing.

As it became increasingly clear that fishing writ large—and shrimping in particular—was the center of almost every story community members told me about disaster and the community itself, I reached out to Sue again, imploring her to give me an interview about the connections between the farm and the fisherfolk with whom she worked. After several more months of silence, she called me out of the blue, saying: “I didn’t want to talk to you until I could pay you. We need a good writer and someone who can talk to the state. Be my shadow and help me with our coastal outreach and education” (Ha 2015).

Within 72 hours, I was an official part of the only organization in Southeast Louisiana devoted to the economic and communal health of Louisiana's oyster, shrimp, finfish, pelagic (tuna and swordfish), and crab fisheries. When Sue brought me on board, I committed to a second year of fieldwork and wrapped up my tenure on the farm, where I had developed a foundational understanding of the community's heterogenous histories, needs, and visions for the future in light of coastal change, restoration, and policy. With an enlivened commitment to commercial fishing, I made Sue's work—our work—my primary research with her full support. Since March 2016, I have been Fisheries Support Services' Coastal Project Coordinator.

FSS is unique as an institution; my peers Sarah, Jane, and Missy—three women of color who respectively identify as Vietnamese/American, Cambodian and Vietnamese/American, and African American—are all either part of fishing families or are partnered with commercial fishermen. These three do the real, imperative and grounded work of providing almost 3,000 boat owners, deckhands, and their families with ESL, business, and citizenship training; help fisherfolk file their taxes and get boat and equipment loans; interpret phone calls to doctors' offices and meetings with agencies like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); translate fisherfolks' public comments from Vietnamese and Khmer to English for the state; help our clients start new businesses, buy homes, and bring relatives to Louisiana from Việt Nam, and do everything else it takes to keep their clients' families and businesses stable in an increasingly tenuous fishing economy and on a dying coast.

As staff members are overwhelmingly part of the Vietnamese/American community and have direct personal relationships to commercial fishing, and given that almost every commercial shrimper in Southeast Louisiana is a client, FSS truly functions as a community-based organization. Collectively, Sue, Sarah, Jane, and Missy have cultivated a space that understands itself as a part of—even central to—the long-term work of fostering, sustaining, and creating Vietnamese/American community in Southeast Louisiana. This commitment to commercial fisherfolk writ large and the Vietnamese/American community has forced Sue to reimagine what a community-based organization looks like by situating FSS at the intersection of knowledges produced by community members, parish-level organizations, state and federal decision-makers, academics and universities, and intimates, including elders, youth, and ancestors.

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Moving my field to commercial fishing drastically changed the size and reach of what constituted my fieldwork. Whereas GROW operates in the greater New Orleans metro area and on the West Bank (in Orleans and north Jefferson parishes, respectively), which is directly south of and across the Mississippi from New Orleans, FSS's work spans six parishes: Orleans, St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, Lafourche, and Terrebonne (see Figure 2, below).

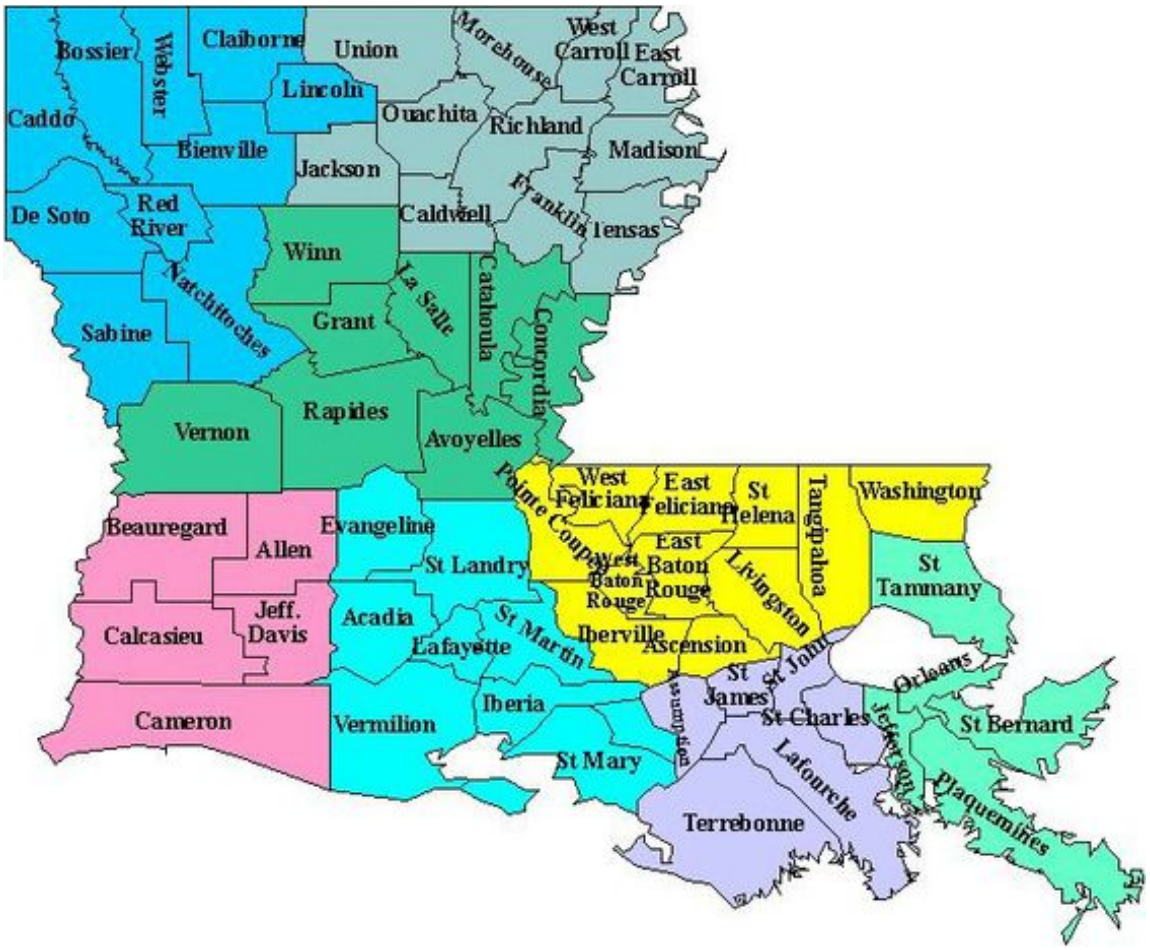

Figure 2. The parishes of Louisiana. The Southeast region of Louisiana, indicated in green and purple above, includes six parishes in FSS's service area: Terrebonne, Lafourche, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and Orleans (USDC Eastern District of Louisiana 2016).

FSS's offices are based in Gretna, a city on the West Bank in northern Jefferson Parish, making our services as centrally accessible as possible to residents from areas as wide-ranging as Versailles in New Orleans East and Dulac in southern Terrebonne Parish. During the 16 months I worked with FSS in Louisiana, the work I did expanded my fieldsite even more—many of our meetings brought me to areas of the Southeast I would have never traveled to had FSS's partners or state decision-makers not been located there. Figure 3 illustrates the scope and breadth of my fieldsites.

Figure 3. I created this map in Google Maps to indicate my primary and secondary fieldsites.

The sites highlighted in red are primary field sites—areas that I traveled to on a regular basis because FSS clients' work was situated there (this is highlighted by the myriad of locations in the greater New Orleans metro area and throughout the Birdfoot Delta) or because they were central to my engagement in client advocacy. These primary sites include Baton Rouge, Louisiana's capitol indicated by the northwestern-most pin, where Sue and I regularly attended CPRA, USACE, and other governmental meetings,met with state agency members from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF), Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and so on, and attended conferences and symposia on coastal issues. Following the Mississippi south from Baton Rouge, the next cluster of red pins represents the greater New Orleans metro area (suburbs Kenner and Metairie, Versailles to the southeast of

Lake Pontchartrain, and Gretna and Belle Chasse immediately south of New Orleans). Because of how the map was generated, Versailles, the red pin to the southeast of Lake Pontchartrain and just above Lake Borgne, it is not indicated by a place name. Given its centrality to the experiences and lives of the folks with whom I work, I wanted to be sure to point out where it is located in relation to my other field sites.

Traveling further south down the river, the remainder of the primary sites indicated on the Birdfoot Delta indicate shrimping docks, commercial fishing-dependent small towns where FSS clients live, and areas the industry depends on for its well-being. They are, from north to south: Myrtle Grove, Pointe A La Hache, Port Sulphur, Empire, Buras, Triumph, Boothville, Venice, and Pilottown. Pointe A La Hatch is just a few miles north of where CPRA is planning to build the Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion structure. The last six are major dock sites. To the immediate west of the delta and almost due north of Grand Isle is a red pin that marks Barataria Bay, many of FSS's clients' primary shrimping grounds and the sediment diversion's area of impact. The other two red pins to the west of the delta—Houma and Galiano—are major fishing hubs as well and each represents a significant number of FSS clients' residences. The areas marked in blue are secondary fieldsites, largely representing places I attended coalitional meetings or public comment sessions in my capacity as FSS's Coastal Project Coordinator.

METHODOLOGY

Where my research substantively diverges from other approaches to ethnography is that mine is not an institutional ethnography (Smith 2006), but rather one that centers and was almost entirely facilitated by my work with an institution: FSS. My institution-based ethnography, then, uplifts the knowledge I gained from working at FSS and conducting ethnographic research and participant-observation in conversation with FSS's clients, in spaces of governance like official conferences and at Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and other institutional meetings, in community-based spaces, which for me, mostly meant the community-based coalitions I helped form during my time with FSS, and in my work with GROW. Given that my work is firmly institution-based, during my research tenure, I overwhelmingly conducted research very informally; my time in our office, conversations at the dock and on the boat, attending meetings on behalf of FSS, and attending conferences allowed me to see how state decision-making, environmental management, and Vietnamese/American commercial fishing function both on their own terms and in relation.

This participant observation-centric approach showed me that while I had initially planned on looking at food as a nexus point between Vietnamese/American refugeeism, racialization, and disaster, the site where these things most clearly cohere is commercial fishing. When I came to commercial fishing, I also realized that political ecology, or the study of ecosystems as spaces that are not neutral, but full of heterogeneous decisions, erasures, and ideals that, when unpacked, are deeply political, was imperative to my analysis. In my case, this ecosystem is layered—it scales from the rather small ecosystems produced by the work of a shrimping boat on the Gulf, all of the more-than-

human species fisherfolk come into relationship with, from shrimp to tides, the larger ecosystem that encompasses the cities of Baton Rouge and New Orleans, the Birdfoot Delta, the Louisiana coastline, and state and federal waters fisherfolk depend on. Studying commercial fishing and its connection to ecosystems also taught me that my work hinges on naming and making plain the overwhelmingly opaque political and economic decisions that go into crafting, managing, and harming these ecosystems. Through the process of working with commercial fisherfolk, engaging in critical refugee scholarship and political ecology, and thinking from a feminist ethnographic standpoint I found that four key concepts were central to this work: restoration, risk, resilience, and refugeeism, all of which I gloss below and in much more depth in the chapters that follow.

As I worked through the complex and fraught ways restoration, risk, resilience, and refugeeism traveled in my fieldsite, I learned how my own subject-position situated me within and outside of structures of power and their functioning. While learning the language of the state gave me the tools to see how that language was imposed on and was used to manage the folks ethical whom I work, I also found myself reinforcing and sometimes redeploying that language in ways that were harmful to Vietnamese/American fisherfolk. Throughout, I name these moments to acknowledge the gaps in my own knowledge, my assumptions, and the ways I have failed to fully comprehend the experiences of a community I am not a part of but care deeply for. In this tracing work, which required me to conduct three formal follow-up interviews with Vietnamese/American fisherfolk in the spring of 2018, a fifth critical concept emerged:

response. These five concepts inevitably function very differently for different players in my fieldsite. This text endeavors to show not just how, but why, each is significant to developing a critical understanding of the political economy of Vietnamese/American commercial fishing, decision-making in Southeast Louisiana, and most critically, what happens in the interstices between both.

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Throughout my fieldwork, I have sought to ground my research in a feminist knowledge production and praxis that seeks to be responsible to those people and communities whose stories I rely on. In their essay Gens: A Feminist Manifesto, Laura Bear, Karen Ho, Anna Tsing, and Sylvia Yanagisako explain that: "Feminism challenges the discursive representations of the 'the economic' as a domain… Instead of taking capitalism a priori, as an already determinant structure, logic, and trajectory, we ask how its social relations are generated out of divergent life projects…we are concerned with the unstable, contingent networks of capitalism that surround us" (Bear et al. 2015). The precepts of this theoretical approach—to think analytic domains beyond fixity such that we acknowledge their cultural production, historical links, and contingency—is, to my mind, imperative to rethinking the practice and praxis of ethnography. To this end, as an ethnographer, I endeavor to foreground the needs and knowledge of the people with whom I work as much as possible by taking up the calls of critical transnational and women of color feminisms (Alexander and Mohanty 2010; McKittrick 2006; Melamed 2011; Mohanty 2003; Mohanty and Carty 2018) that center and interrogate the absence and erasure of marginalized voices in formal, often neocolonial ethnographic practices.

Methodologically, scholars in this lineage have focused on storytelling and collective approaches to knowledge production, from co-authorship to creative writing (Sangtin Writers 2006; Swarr and Nagar 2010), that refuses top-down single stories (Adichie 2009). Similarly, both in the doing and writing of ethnography, I amplify and unpack the stories of the folks with whom I work as a potent tool for resisting neoliberal power structures that foreclose Vietnamese/American presents and futures. This has meant that I seek to collaborate with coastal partners to create sites of public engagement that center their expertise and labor, and support my interlocutors in their endeavors to redistribute governmental resources. This work has been made possible given my position as FSS's Coastal Project Coordinator, which allows me to work with decision-makers and community leaders to ensure that commercial fisherfolks' needs are voiced at the local, state, and federal levels and ideally, integrated into Southeast Louisiana-specific projects, namely the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's coastal master plan, which I expand on below.

In this capacity, I keep abreast of changes to coastal regulations and policy, and work with coalitions of community-based organizations to advocate for FSS's clients and other coastal residents needs. This includes writing and delivering public comments to Louisiana agencies and the Army Corps of Engineers on fisherfolks' behalf, co-leading meetings that advocate the needs of coastal residents and small business owners to state and federal representatives, and working to foster local and national networks that help FSS share institutional and communal knowledge to change the decision-making process that impact Southeast Louisiana's coastal ecosystems, residents, and more-than-human

marine life. I am also the organization's grant-writer and work to educate funders and other philanthropic organizations about the above issues.

At the same time, in the decade I have been doing ethnographic research, it has been very clear to me that there is no ethnographic endeavor that is not exploitative. Ethnography is beneficial overwhelmingly to the researcher who publishes a monograph, accessible mostly to other academics who do not serve the communities being written about and as such, has no vested interest in engaging or shifting the experiences of those communities. My experience has shown me that while service might be a part of the work of ethnography, it is not a primary—or even tertiary—outcome of ethnographic practices or texts. While I voiced this often during my fieldwork tenure, the knowledge of ethnography and observation's extractivism does not exempt me from reproducing this problematic. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang make plain:

> Inquiry as invasion is a result of the imperative to produce settler colonial knowledge and to produce it for the academy. This invasion imperative is often disguised in universalist terms of producing "objective knowledge" for "the public." It is a thin disguise, as most research rhetoric waxes the poetics of empire: to discover, to chart new terrain, to seek new frontiers, to explore, and so on. The academy's unrelenting need to produce "original research" is what makes the inquiry an invading structure, not an event (Tuck and Yang 2014:813).

Here, I claim neither that my work is objective—I am writing from a place of deliberate and definitive allegiance with Vietnamese/American residents of Southeast Louisiana and members of the region's commercial fishing industry—nor that it is original. Rather, my goal throughout my research has been to intervene in the violences I see as fundamental

to the work of governance and coastal management in Southeast Louisiana by uplifting the knowledges of the folks with whom I work.

I am very aware, too, that while Sue authorized my research within the structure of FSS, as Tuck and Yang point out: "Human subject protocols establish that individuals must be protected, but not communities. Individuals are empowered to give away the community's stories." (Tuck and Yang 2014). This is significant, as Sue has functioned as an intermediary between myself and commercial fisherfolk both in name—when folks heard that I worked for her, they were significantly more likely to speak with me than if I had approached them as an independent researcher—and materially. Sue or my peer Jane were present at over 90% of my interviews, whether formal, semi-formal, or via casual conversation. This is, first, because although I have studied the Vietnamese language for several years, I am not even conversationally fluent and I needed translation support to fully engage many fisherfolk who either do not speak English fluently and so did not feel they could adequately communicate the intricacies and nuance of their knowledge to me in a shared language. Just as often, this happened because even if they were fluent in English, speaking to Sue or Jane, who many think of as family, in their first language allowed them much more comfort.

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While I acknowledge the myriad, layered, and impossible-to-articulate violences inherent in the observational and ethnographic work I do, it is our political imperative as ethnographers to center the experiential knowledge of the human and more-than-human communities with whom we work as much as possible. For me, the opportunity to do so

has largely emerged from my position with FSS, which has allowed me to directly understand and serve Vietnamese/American fisherfolks' needs. It is fundamentally my job to articulate, make visible, and uplift the experiences of Vietnamese/American residents of Southeast Louisiana among decision-makers.

At the same time, given my access to arenas of storytelling and knowledge production that FSS's clients were firmly excluded from—state and CPRA-level decision-making, the time to read 200-page reports and parse them with experts, and the ability to move with a different kind of legibility given my job and my scholarship—meant that it became very important to me to position myself as a conduit between our clients and the community, and decision-makers both during my fieldwork and in the two years that have followed it. Being able to see how decisions are made is both extraordinary and vexing, particularly when you know that people you love are deliberately and decisively excluded from said decisions. It also vested me with a great deal of knowledge and allowed me the opportunity to do my best to both advocate for FSS's clients and to create and give them some tools for addressing the harm I saw happening.

This work, however, made it difficult for me to not exhibit concern or frustration during these conversations; so many of the Vietnamese/American fisherfolk with whom I work spent a great deal of time trying to convince me that they were in fact not experts—had never gotten a degree and as such, couldn't claim definitive knowledge of the ecosystems and places I felt they were truly experts of. This tension was most apparent in our conversations about environmentalism and policy, which the folks I talked to felt were beyond the purview of what they were meant to know. Fisherfolks' rejection of their own

knowledge was, frankly, the most galvanizing element of my research: where I, a culturally legible expert, felt so incompetent in the face of the vast knowledges the folks who whom I work hold, they had been told they were inexpert so many times (see chapter three) that they felt as though there was no possibility of their impacting the decisions made for them. Rather than not knowing about the coast, then, Vietnamese/American residents of Southeast Louisiana felt that their knowledge was not *valuable* to decision-makers who stand so firmly in their expertise that they feel empowered to foreclose the expertise of others. This is the problematic I seek to identify and apprehend in this text.

This leads me to my key questions: what, I ask, are the real effects of the disjuncture between the power decision-makers hold to make decisions about the coast and the ways that Vietnamese/American fisherfolk know and live with the coast? What, further, does this mean for the people with whom I work as they live in a present already imagined through the *terra nullius* of a risk-averse and resilience-centric future?

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My work is located within critical refugee studies, Asian American studies, scholarship on governance, disaster, and environmental justice, and pays close attention to place-based knowledge production through a feminist lens. Relying on my interlocutors' ecosystem- and community-level knowledge to parse the complex problem they have outlined thus far, I offer the following interventions, which emerged in collaboration with Vietnamese/American fisherfolk and the larger community in Southeast Louisiana. First, I examine how state management frameworks and CPRA's approach to coastal

restoration rely on neoliberal understandings of resource and value. I then consider how risk-mitigation has become a prominent way to do this work, and has resulted in an institutional approach to environmentalism that evacuates coastal Louisiana of risk, which I argue also indexes fisherfolk. Third, I look at how this risk-mitigating restoration imaginary assumes and mandates Vietnamese/American resilience in the face of ongoing coastal management in service to oil capital. Finally, I interrogate how refugeeism has been formulated as a category of Vietnamese/American racialization and exclusion in this landscape.

ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING

My time with FSS showed me that the entire present and future of the coast is bound up in environmental decision-making processes that take state and private needs into account long before they consider coastal residents and small business owners whose income relies on the coast. As 'front-line' communities, the folks FSS works with are most vulnerable to the ecosystem-level harms outlined above; more than this, they are vulnerable to the state and federal decision-making meant to mitigate these effects.

Over the last 15 years, coastal land loss and vulnerability to disaster has been at the center of how government officials, residents, and everyone in between talk about Louisiana's future. Significantly, where residents are often told these environmental ills are 'natural,' their origins are quite clear. Land subsidence (or sinking), which is typical of the marshland that forms Louisiana's coast, is spurred on by federally supported oil extraction, natural gas exploration, and shipping canals, which all cut up and hasten the dissolution of the already subsiding and porous coast (Houck 2015; Maldonado 2018).

Damming, leveeing, and other infrastructure management along the Mississippi River make residents even more vulnerable to climate-change-induced flooding and storms. Big Agriculture's reliance on monocropping and herbicides in the Midwest bring nitrogen and phosphorus runoff from large farms and slaughterhouses down the river to produce an annual massive dead zone (or region of water void of oxygen) off Louisiana's coast that, in 2019, is projected to grow to 8,776 square miles (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2019). All of these decision-maker-produced ills make the daily lives of folks who rely on the health of the Gulf and the coast not just difficult, but increasingly impossible.

On top of these harms, every coastal resident and small business owner in the region face significant day-to-day barriers to supporting their families and businesses. A lack of formal education and business skills hinders commercial fisherfolk and other coastal residents from gaining access to technical and fiscal knowledge and prohibits them from filing important paperwork and procuring licenses, which keeps them at arm's length from full participation in the industry. In addition to these limitations, Vietnamese/American fisherfolk encounter significant language barriers as non-native English speakers, which limit their access to government engagement, services, and support.

Figure 4. The areas in orange indicate land lost between 1937 and 2000 (Anderson 2015).

As folks whose livelihoods are wholly reliant on the health of the coast's ecosystems, commercial fisherfolk have long pointed out the vulnerabilities they experience due to coastal change, particularly land loss, shifts in water salinity and health, sea level rise, and decision-maker-produced disaster. However, it took the international attention garnered by Hurricane Katrina's devastation in 2005 for state officials to take coastal land loss and coastal ecosystem change seriously. That this shift was precipitated by community harm or expertise but institutional pressure highlights that Louisiana, like so many codified spaces of decision-making, operates as an "official landscape," which "writes the land in a bureaucratic, externalizing, and extraction-driven manner that is often pitilessly instrumental" (Nixon 2011:17). This has been particularly clear in the way Louisiana has undertaken certain elements of its restoration work, which I unpack below.

CPRA, THE MASTER PLAN, & SEDIMENT DIVERSIONS

In 2006, Louisiana passed Act 8, which created an agency to address the long-term disaster of coastal land loss and hurricane damage: the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA). Since 2007, CPRA has been developing its 50-year plan—The Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast—a suite of coastal projects that are revised every five years. During this time, many of CPRA's approaches to building coastal land, including marsh creation and barrier island fortification, have demonstrably *benefitted* coastal peoples. Although the master plan has presented a net benefit, much of the projects are designed and executed to support the infrastructure of coastal industry, particularly private oil and gas companies who use the coast to extract, refine, transport, and export their products overseas, over human and more-than-human communities who live and work on the coast.

Upon passing the plan's third revision in 2017, CPRA moved to implement two major river sediment diversion projects that will use the Mississippi River to deliver sediment into two key fishing marshes, Barataria Bay and Breton Sound. While these projects were conceived to build land along the coast, commercial fisherfolk know that long before the marsh is restored (a portentously failed prospect in the face of increasing hurricane events and ongoing sea level rise (Smith 2018)), the diversions will inundate the Bay's saline ecosystems with fresh water, which will kill oysters and push shrimp too far into the Gulf for small boats to access. This is because the Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion (MBSD), which will be implemented as early as 2022, is currently designed to introduce fresh water into Barataria at a projected rate of 75,000 cfs, which would fill 51 Olympic

swimming pools every minute. See the area of influence for this project in Figure 5, below.

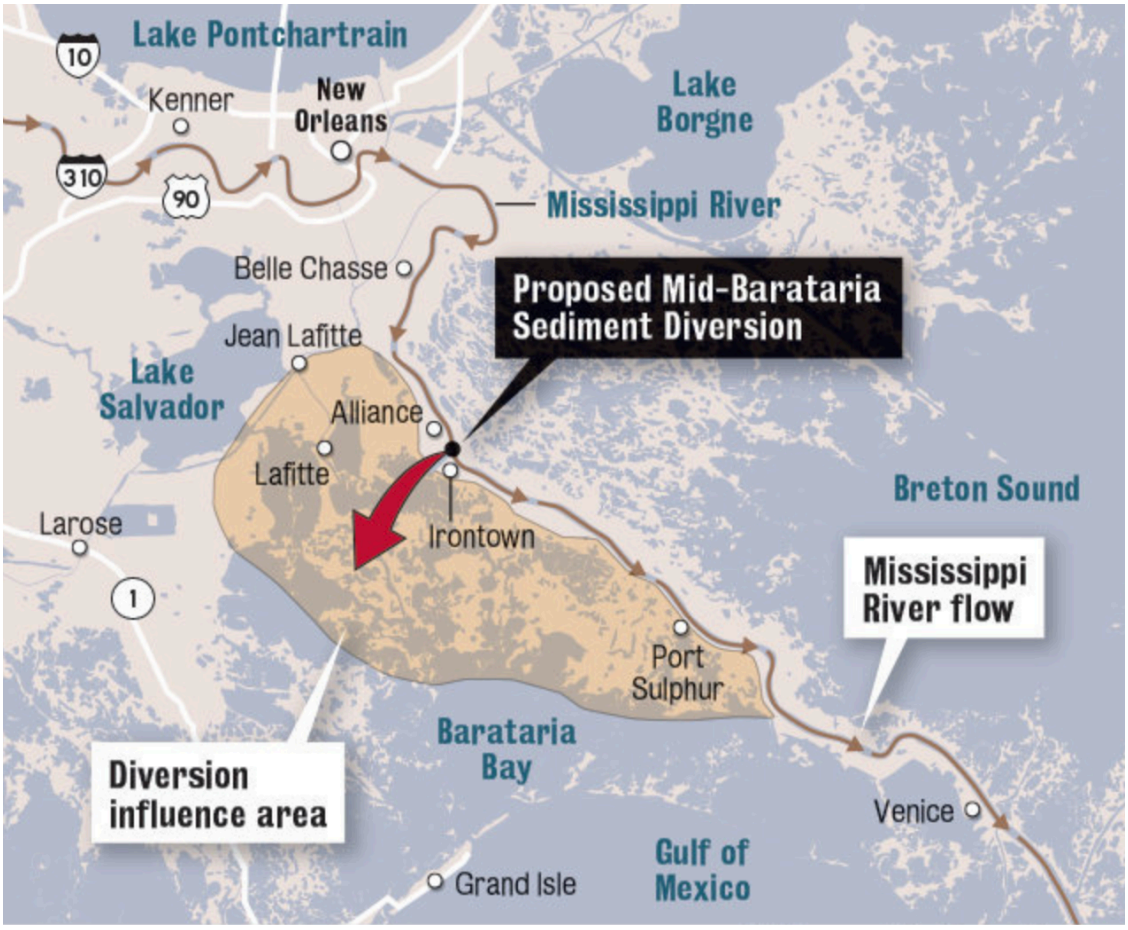

Figure 5. A map of MBSD's origin point and outfall area (Times-Picayune 2013).

The ramifications of CPRA's approach to the MBSD are enormous for Barataria-reliant folks. For Indigenous communities and other residents for whom trapping on-land mammals and recreational fishing as key elements of their practices and diets, the fresh water will make more-than-human species they rely on either scarce or nonexistent. It will also increase the possibility of flood events around the mouth of the Mississippi in the Birdfoot Delta, whose residents overwhelmingly live below the poverty line and do not have the resources to either stilt their homes (raising them up 14 feet or more to avoid

currently predicted flood levels from storm events (LA SAFE 2019)) or move further inland. Importantly, as the delta is home to many Indigenous, Black, Cajun, Latinx and Chicanx, and Southeast Asian/American communities who have lived there for generations, leaving is neither desirable nor viable.

In the realm of commercial fishing, an inundation of fresh water would harm oysters first; the state of Louisiana leases areas immediately adjacent to the coastline for oysters, which oysterfolk seed (or 'plant'), and harvest in designated areas. Oysters are saltwater species that rely on a high degree of salinity in the brackish (a mix of fresh and salt water) that comes together in Louisiana's marshes and will be immediately asphyxiated when the diversion opens. What's more, the state has not opened new areas for oyster leases since the 1980s, fixing oyster beds in place directly adjacent to the diversion site (see Figure 6 below). Given this, oyster leaseholders, 'cooners' (or the folks who harvest oysters), and oyster processing plants will immediately and definitively be out of work the minute the diversion opens. This is not speculation; the federal government and Louisiana has been using freshwater diversions, spillways, and floodways to manage the river for decades, and their negative impact on oysters is well documented (Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries 2019c; National Fishermen 2019; Roberts 2019). Other fisheries like crab and finfish will similarly be impacted, as both of these more-than-human communities keep close to the coast as well.

Figure 6. A screenshot of an up-to-date map of oyster leases, indicated in blue, in Barataria Bay (to the west of the Mississippi River and Birdfoot Delta, which takes up the bottom right portion of the map) and Breton Sound (to the west of the delta) courtesy of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (2019a).

While FSS works with commercial fisherfolk in all of Louisiana's fisheries, in this text, I specifically focus on the impacts of MBSD on the shrimp fishery. This is because I have expressly endeavored to work with the Vietnamese/American community in Southeast Louisiana, whose economic, social, and cultural foundation was built through commercial shrimping; today, over 40% of Louisiana's commercial shrimpers are Vietnamese/American (Louisiana Sea Grant 2015) and shrimping and, to a lesser extent, oystering, has operated as the community's "bank" (Ha 2018) since the late 1970s. This is for several reasons. First, shrimping was an accessible trade—it did not require refugees to learn English, and permitting and licensing was handled by boat owners, allowing deckhands to work without having to navigate complex paperwork. It also gave them access to a regular income—for folks to pick up even if they had no skills in the fisheries, which many did coming in. Second, as many more members of the second wave of Vietnamese refugees (early- to mid-80s) were shrimpers or had ancestral ties to

the industry, it was a logical fishery to build out a Vietnamese/American presence in. Importantly, over two-thirds of the Vietnamese/American fisherfolk I work with are small-scale shrimpers whose income is much more tenuous given their reliance on state versus federal waters (see below for a more detailed description of this). While there is a Vietnamese/American presence in oystering, the only job folks have access to is harvesting, or cooning. This is because, as I explained earlier, no new oyster leases have been made available for purchase by the state for almost forty years. Oystering is an historically Black industry. However, a 1980s boom in oyster leases coincided with Croatian immigration to Southeast Louisiana, and the Croatian/American community continues to hold the majority of the oyster leases in the state.

Significantly, many of these things were true for Cambodian refugees to Louisiana and are true for today's Cambodian/American community; in addition to English and Vietnamese, Khmer is the third language of commercial shrimping in the state. All of the commercial fishers in Southeast Louisiana are FSS's clients and I have been lucky to work with Cambodian/American, white, Vietnamese/American, Chicanx, and Black fisherfolk. Although there is a great deal of overlap between Cambodian/American and Vietnamese/American experiences in shrimping, so much, from life in Southeast Asia leading up to refugeeism to resettlement and access to resources in Southeast Louisiana, is critically different. Given this, my long-standing work with Vietnamese/Americans, and my intention to focus on Vietnamese/American experiences in Southeast Louisiana, I chose not to make this a study of the diversion's impact on Southeast Asian/Americans in

the industry more broadly, but to keep my focus specific to its effects on Vietnamese/American fisherfolk and their community.

The aggregate of Vietnamese/American shrimping knowledge is clear about the diversion: it will drastically change the industry, and will put the region's most vulnerable, lowest-producing small business owners and workers out of business for good. It will do this to folks who only speak Vietnamese and cannot immediately pick up another trade; to elderly couples who are five years away from having enough savings to retire; to families who rely on a single boat to support ten people in Louisiana, other parts of the U.S., and in Việt Nam. In other words, it will totally foreclose Vietnamese/American life in Southeast Louisiana. In light of all of this, Vietnamese/American reliance on commercial shrimping makes Vietnamese/Americans differently vulnerable to decision-maker-produced disasters like levee failures and oil 'spills,' the decision-maker-produced climate change that precipitates these disasters, and the decision-maker-designed restoration like the diversion that emerge in their wake.

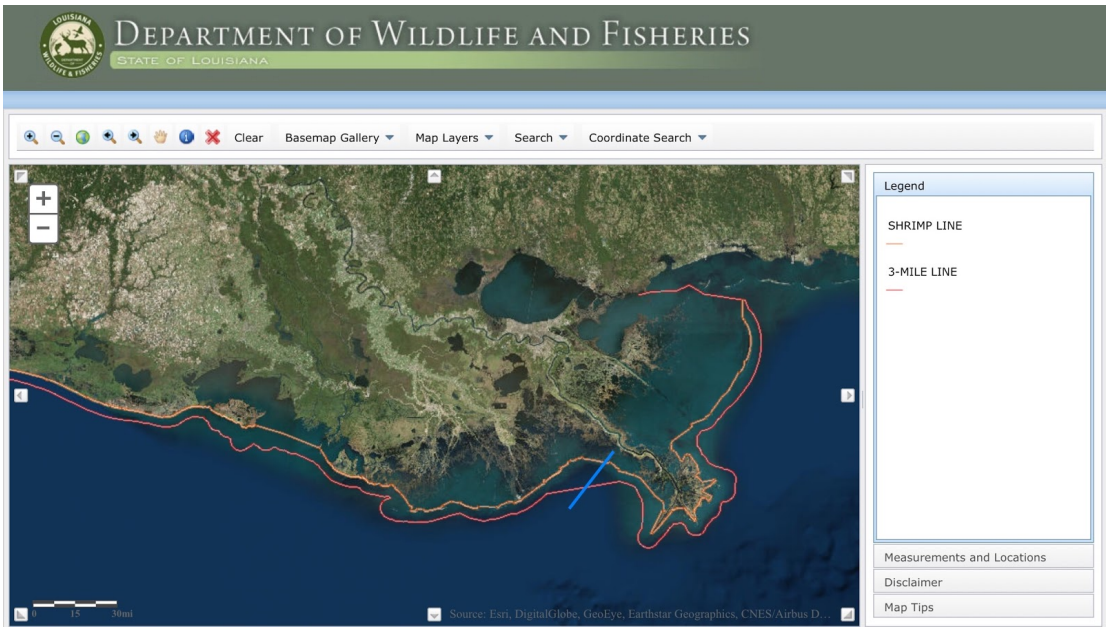

Figure 7. A screenshot of an up-to-date map of the shrimp line, which indicates how far those who shrimp state waters can go into the Gulf to catch shrimp. The 3-mile line identifies how far state mandate of waters extends into the Gulf. Image courtesy of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (2019b).

The folks with whom I work are terrified about the MBSD; the majority of Vietnamese/American commercial shrimpers own or work on small boats that can only shrimp in state waters, which extend a mere 3 miles off of the coast of Louisiana (see Figure 7, above). There are two primary shrimp species in Louisiana: brown and white shrimp. Brown shrimp rely on the state's brackish marsh to gestate and spend the majority of their lifecycle closer inland than white shrimp, who are better suited to life in dense saltwater. Both species of shrimp rely on Barataria Bay to reach the subadult stage of their lifecycle, as Figure 8 (below) shows.

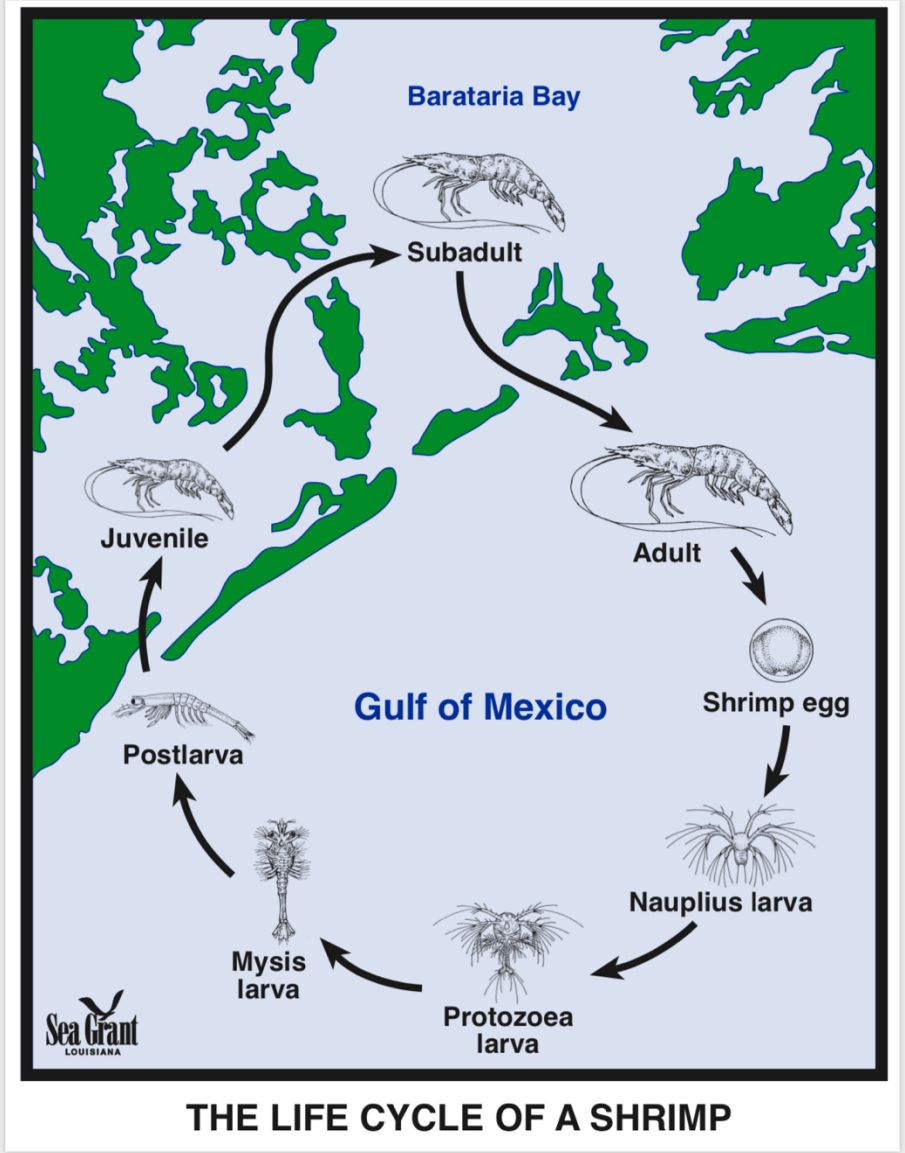

Figure 8. Illustration of the lifecycle of Gulf shrimp in Barataria Bay by Ken Varden, Published in Louisiana Sea Grant College Program's Shrimping in Louisiana (Louisiana Sea Grant 1999:2).

Shrimpers have told me that when the diversion comes, the brown shrimp might die out entirely, foreclosing 50% of their income. While white shrimp will likely weather an MBSD opening much better, they will be forced to travel further and further out into the Gulf, where small boats cannot go. In the landscape of my work, then, MBSD promises to be a catastrophe unlike anything Louisiana's fisherfolk have ever experienced. This is particularly devastating, as many of them acutely suffered after Hurricanes Katrina and

Rita (2005), hurricanes Ike and Gustav (2008), and many considered leaving or did leave the business entirely following the BP oil catastrophe of 2010. As Sue Ha, executive director of FSS told me the first day we met: "The diversions are gonna be a bigger disaster [for commercial fishing] than [the BP oil catastrophe]. And that kept us off the water for a whole year" (Ha 2015). Here, the most important result of Vietnamese/American fisherfolks' reliance on state waters is that as the MBSD introduces fresh water into Barataria Bay, they will be left without an income source.

Together, I argue that these modes and means of extraction—not just of the land, water, crude oil, or gas, but of Vietnamese/American and other communities' lives and livelihoods—are a slow violence, or "attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence by all" (Nixon 2011:4) that is "enacted slowly over time" (Nixon 2011). Nixon positions slow violence in opposition to those things we deem spectacular—the flood, the fire, the attack—and as such, travel as our primary cultural understanding of violence. Where the spectacular is often consumed as an explicit event—for New Orleans, Louisiana, and federal agencies, for example, the official narrative of Hurricane Katrina has explicit beginning and end dates—I use this text to trace first, how disaster is, in fact, an ongoing prospect that shifts from spectacular to slow violence, and second, that for Vietnamese/American commercial fisherfolk and community members, disasters like Katrina and the BP oil catastrophe are just two of a myriad of slow violences. As violences like the ongoingness of disaster, refugeeism as a multi-generational Vietnamese/American racialization, resilience, and environmental racism come together in the place-contingent community life of Vietnamese/American residents of Southeast

Louisiana, slow violence shifts from a set of ongoing external harms to part and parcel of folks' everyday experiences of doing life in the delta.

Rather than identifying them as contributing factors to the slow violence Vietnamese/Americans experience in Southeast Louisiana, I believe each of these things, disaster, racialization, resilience, and environmental racism is its own slow violence. By parsing and reading the heterogeneous and varied harms that thread their way through and between these officially mandated violences, I am able to untangle the often opaque official landscape of each in Southeast Louisiana.

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Significantly, the harms I articulate above emerge at the level of the state—where official narratives prevail—but the heterogenous, richly textured knowledges of how this harm will affect coastal ecosystems and lives emerge from an entirely different site of knowledge production: coastal communities. Rob Nixon juxtaposes the official landscape, which I defined above, with what he calls vernacular landscapes, which are "shaped by the affective, historically textured maps that communities have devised over generations, maps replete with names and routes, maps alive to significant ecological and surface geological features" (Nixon 2011). This highlights the density and breadth of knowledges the folks with whom I work possess; understanding the threats to their livelihoods at not just the level of the day-to-day, but as this knowledge extends back over generations, across space and time, and in conversation with so many other sites of knowing ecosystems and place, I assert that Vietnamese/American fisherfolk are the true experts of the coast.

Three years prior to Nixon's meditation on official versus vernacular landscapes, Dianne E. Rocheleau positioned her work with heads of NGOs and state agencies focused on agriculture, forestry and rural development in Nairobi as "local knowledge," which includes "the experience and memories of colonial occupation that inform[s] a critical political perspective" (Rocheleau 2008). Here, I take Nixon's apprehension of official landscapes seriously, but read them through Rocheleau's "local knowledge," which in this case, is knowledge that emerges at the level of Vietnamese/American community-making through commercial shrimping, to situate my interrogation of the official at the level of the local. In the 'local' of Southeast Louisiana, the political undercurrents of official knowledges can both be unpacked and understood as heterogeneous in their adherence to (post)colonial logics of resource extraction and governance. To this end, I follow the folks with whom I work in using "community-based" and "place-based" knowledges to more clearly articulate the collectivity from which their affective, historically textured experiences have geologically and ecologically contest institutional landscapes.

STATE OF THE COAST 2018 & LOUISIANA'S OFFICIAL LANDSCAPE

Every two years since 2010, CPRA, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (CRCL), a 'big green' environmental organization nestled under the umbrella of Louisiana's branch of the Sierra Club, and the Water Institute of the Gulf come together to host the State of the Coast (SOC) Conference. At SOC, government officials, coastal scientists, policymakers, NGOs, and private industry representatives, specifically oil and gas, come together and address coastal vulnerability to storms, land loss, and state restoration

projects. The conference is held in New Orleans' Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, a venue that takes up five city blocks alongside the bend in the Mississippi that bifurcates the Central Business District. In the SOC section of the convention center, large screens alternately showed the day's agenda and the conference's logo: a lifelike brown pelican stood sentinel in front of Louisiana's boot which was a dense, marshy blue. She looked toward the Birdfoot Delta at the southeastern-most edge of the state where grey and white marsh grasses grew, likely because of a restoration project. To the right of the image, the words 'State of the Coast' were in alternating black and pumpkin orange, and across the bottom of the image, black text read: 'preparing for a changing future.'

Figure 9. The State of the Coast logo (CRCL 2018).

Adjacent to an escalator that led a floor up to the meeting rooms where panels were held was a large open space full of graduate and institutional poster presentations. This led to two banquet halls. While the first was set aside for lunch and official speeches, the second looked like its own coastal infrastructure convention; tables and displays were packed into an area the size of a basketball court. The organizations present were bifurcated between organizations sharing coastal knowledge—those like Healthy Gulf, which acts as an ecosystem-level (humans and more-than-human communities included)

watchdog, and co-sponsor the Water Institute of the Gulf, whose focus is Gulf-wide water health—and private businesses. These businesses overwhelming made concrete, sandbag alternatives, and other infrastructure subcontracted by CPRA for coastal restoration. This space felt more like an industry showcase than a scientific or organization-based engagement with restoration, a feeling that, for me, extended into every panel and roundtable I attended.

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Coming on the heels of the state legislature's passage of CPRA's third master plan in 2017, the 2018 SOC overwhelmingly focused on the MBSD. I have attended two SOCs (2016 and 2018) in my capacity as FSS's Coastal Project Coordinator. During the most recent conference in 2018, I felt very much like the odd one in the room; not attached to the work of governance and policy, I was one of a handful of folks who represented the interests of coastal residents. This was ironic, given the 2017 master plan's insistence that "While coastal Louisiana provides the state, region, and nation with important natural resources, here the greatest assets are not oil and gas, fisheries, or sugar cane, but the people" (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority 2017). Whereas SOC hosted hundreds of state and private decision-makers and scientists, not one shrimper, Southeast Louisiana community leader, Native elder, or other community-based service providers present at the conference's regular sessions, which organizers felt were too technical for community members. This was underwritten by the cost of attending SOC; for non-students, it cost $495 to attend all three days. My attendance fee had thankfully been covered by one of FSS's funders, but both in 2016 and 2018, I heard many of FSS's community-based partners lament that they could not afford the registration fees.

The conference did offer a half day of programming, 'Restoration on the Half Shell', on the last day of the conference to make coastal restoration discursively and financially (the cost to attend was $25) accessible to residents. However, institutional perception of residents' and community-based organizations' inexpertise—effectively, their distance from the realm of 'the technical' (Bullard 2001)—kept them out of rooms where the dense work of crafting the future of the coast was being done. And yet, coast-reliant people will inevitably be impacted first, more comprehensively, and for longer by coastal restoration plans. That these people, who I believe are the primary stakeholders in coastal decision-making, were not sitting next to me—only an oblique 'expert' myself, given my proximity to community needs—in the 'technical' primary space of the conference made it abundantly clear to me that while presenters constantly invoked community needs as the center of their decision-making process, the preponderance of oil representatives, restoration-centric business owners, and policymakers in the room told another story entirely: that of the official landscape. As I show below, the official landscape has become the primary environmentalism shaping the present and future of Louisiana's coastline.

SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA'S OFFICIAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

On the second day of SOC 2018, Jonathan, a scholar who has been engaging in conversations about coastal restoration for over three decades told me that throughout the 1970s and 80s, there was a robust grassroots movement for coastal restoration led by coastal residents, scholars like himself, and experts in coastal science. This movement uplifted the effects of coastal land loss on coastal residents, more-than-human coastal

communities like shrimp and marsh grass, and the coast's future writ large. While the movement gained traction with some local support organizations, governmental decision-makers did not take coastal residents' call for restoration—specifically a plan to restore the coast over time—seriously. As Katrina came and restoration became the legal obligation of CPRA, Jonathan told me "the scientists who advocated for the master plan and put in the work to make the case for the need for restoration are totally left out of the master plan now" (Smith 2018b). He suggested that this is in large part because the concerns of activists and scholars who forced the issue of restoration were highly critical of the effects of oil and gas extraction, shipping and other industries, and environmental racism and sacrifice on the coast's ecologies. For Louisiana, a restoration that took these critiques seriously would stand in the way of some of the state's primary sources of state capital: oil and gas, shipping, and tourism revenue.

This is because, under CPRA, restoration has become the purview of the state, private industry, and 'big green' NGOs like CRCL. Significantly, each of these stakeholders come to restoration from heterogeneous and sometimes contested subject positions. For CRCL, whose work is as diverse as creating an oyster shell recycling program that collects discarded oyster shells from Louisiana restaurants to build storm buffers for coastal communities to publishing white papers that underwrite how imperative the MBSD is to the state's future, restoration means building land such that it protects the culture and communities of the state. In their view, restoration is trying to understand what has been lost and thinking about what kind of ecosystem support will produce the best-case scenario for the future. However, their programming still emerges from an

official and institutional environmentalism that bifurcates people and more-than-human species, often in ways that focus on the former without making explicit connections to how the loss of marine fish or flora communities is inextricably linked to the loss of human communities along the coast. Macarena Gómez-Barris reflects on this approach to restoration, which she calls conservation, arguing that it "has deeper roots in a liberal imaginary about land and biodiversity that sees nonhuman life as its principal site of advocacy" (Gómez-Barris 2017). This is clear in CRCL's unmitigated support for MBSD as it is designed (rather than support that, for example, carries caveats that the design considers fisherfolks' and other coastal residents' knowledges and concerns).

For the state, restoration is truly good business—as former governor Bobby Jindal (2008-2016) explained, oil is imperative to the future economic health of Louisiana. His campaign to fortify the state's relationship with oil and gas companies relied on a narrative that it was a job-creation mechanism for Louisiana's blue-collar workers. This storytelling has been folded into the fabric of present Louisiana governance under Governor John Bel Edwards, and congruently, under the Obama and 45th president's administrations, creating ongoing pathways for private oil and gas companies to continue their presence in the Gulf. Concurrently, to avoid costly litigation, private industry, which includes shipping and oil and gas, have become even more invested in Louisiana in a symbiotic, if sometimes difficult, extraction-contingent relationship. Gómez-Barris calls this state/private oil capital-contingent relationship "Extractive capitalism [which] violently reorganizes territories as well as continually perpetuates dramatic social and economic inequalities" (Gómez-Barris 2017). This mode of extraction, she argues,

operates “within the logics of colonial seeking that depict land and territory as an extractive zone: as if it is there for the taking, to be owned” (Gómez-Barris 2017). This framework of extraction, which I frame as a governance-centric epistemology of extractive capitalism, is helpful in formulating a clear understanding of CPRA’s approach to restoration: rather than seeing from the perspective of the people who inculcated the movement for coastal restoration, CPRA’s environmentalism “sees like the state” (Scott 1998) and uses restoration to clear a path for more oil extraction without developing a parallel plan to preserve Louisiana’s coastal people and the more-than-human species they rely on.

OFFICIAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

Rob Nixon suggests that “Many politicians—and indeed many voters—routinely treat environmental action as critical yet not urgent. And so generation after generation of two- or four-year cycle politicians add to the pileup of deferrable actions deferred. With rare exceptions, in the domain of slow violence ‘yes, not now, not yet’ becomes the modus operandi” (Nixon 2011:9). The master plan, as a long-term project that purports to identify and tackle coastal environmental ills, is one such exception. However, it still, follows the same logics of capital-centric slow violence, which, “occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction, that is dispersed across time and space;” in this way, it is “an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (Nixon 2011:2). In a different conversation, Jonathan emphasized to me that: “the oil and gas industries are the biggest boosters of NGOs and the state for coastal restoration. It is much easier to drop half a million than give billions to rebuild the coast [in the wake of

oil-produced disaster]. BP was the biggest godsend for coastal restoration" (Smith 2018a) because it meant that oil revenue would be tied into the project of restoring the coast. In this way, Louisiana's approach to restoration lies firmly in an oil extraction future, where land is built to maintain oil presence. In this same future, oil makes the ecosystems being restored even more sick, a problem private oil companies fix by throwing money at it, reaffirming their ongoing financial and spatial stronghold along the coast. Whereas Nixon argues that the arena of the political often puts off 'doing' environment as a mode of doing business as usual, I have observed that for Louisiana, engaging in coastal land loss by making it the purview of the state is the best way for decision-makers to secure the state's investments in oil and gas. Jonathan affirmed this, saying: "The genius of Louisiana is getting someone else to pay for its problem" (Smith 2018a). Rather than understanding oil and gas as major contributors to coastal crisis, then, CPRA and other actors like current governor John Bel Edwards reposition what environmentalism is meant to be in service to: capital accumulation on a landscape itself underwritten by oil companies.

THE TEMPORALITY OF RESTORATION

The temporality of restoration is imperative to my larger intervention into CPRA's approach to managing the coast as a space for producing capital rather than as a lived ecosystem fisherfolk, residents, and more-than-human communities rely on to survive and ideally, thrive. Michelle Garvey glosses the impetus and temporality of what she calls "conventional restoration," which "is the intentional, sustained attempt by humans to compensate for damaging influences (usually pollution, development, and...invasive

species) on an ecosystem, and manage it for desired qualities" (Garvey 2014:64). This is traditionally a backward-looking project, where restorationists seek to return an ecosystem to some 'pristine' idealized former state in the near or distant past that is more often imagined than real. CPRA in many ways follows this approach to coastal restoration; in protecting the coast from storms and coastal land loss, a good portion of the master plan sets in motion again, returning to an imagined prior state when the coast was healthy and ecosystems hosted oil extraction well. How, they ask, can we remake the coast to a time when it functioned best for oil and gas infrastructure? How, more, can we use the edict of restoration to shape a future that allows for more oil and gas extraction? Significantly, as Garvey highlights, "so long as a single interpretation of "former condition" is avoided, and so long as 'former condition' implies 'state of function' rather than a replica of a single moment in a site's constantly evolving ecological history, then restoration can avoid hearkening to a mythological original nature, and invite a plurality of interpretations of what an environment could embody" (Garvey 2014:76). To my mind, this is the most important element of Garvey's 'conventional' restoration: the imaginary, pristine past allows CPRA, who as we know, are now the primary arbiters of Louisiana environmentalism, to imagine a pristine future without being criticized for creating a teleology of restoration.

Rather, since their restoration approaches are overwhelmingly traditional, particularly in terms of the MBSD, CPRA scientists and representatives can produce their own interpretation of restoration based on their own science and to their own ends. While this is the restoration of the official landscape, I do want to highlight that Garvey offers an

alternative, saying that "while 'restore' commonly implies a return to an original, the term is said to bely the essence of this field, which does not aim to arrest change or recreate a replica of its historic past, as if an original ecology ever existed" (Garvey 2014:64). As people who have historically been harmed by European and ongoing settler colonialism, U.S. imperialism, and the violences of environmental and social management practices, Vietnamese/American commercial fisherfolk, Indigenous elders, and all coast-dependent communities understand that since the beginning of ecosystems management (see chapter three were I date this to the beginning of outsider, European settlement in the Americas), no prior perfect state exists.

For them, there is no 'good' 'ecostate' to return to; there are, however, good practices, ancestral knowledges, and ways to be in right relationship to the ecosystem on which they depend and of which they are apart. As Garvey says, because "ecologies are always in flux, [more just] restorative processes aim to redirect an ecological system using the past as a guide—in order to set it in motion again—so that it acts as it did before the novel introduction(s) (Jordan, Sunflower, 21-22), that is, when a multitude of place-specific actors depended upon one another to flourish in an intricate, dynamic and diverse system" (Garvey 2014:64). This better restoration does not produce a past-predicated future so much as a somewhat opaque by still idealized future that hopes from a present where ecosystems are deeply harmed and need care. In the realm of CPRA's official environmentalism, this care is not within the purview of MBSD's conventional past-looking future-making approach to restoration. As I will show in the next section, the myriad ways CPRA manages the future into existence refuse the needs and knowledges

of those folks who they claim to be restoring the coast for in favor of making a 'better' future for the state.

BEST PRACTICES

In our conversation at State of the Coast, Jonathan explained that when CPRA says it is using the best science to produce and execute the master plan, "they're relying on certain relationships versus ensuring only the best science is used" (Smith 2018b). This implies that rather than making sure the plans they are pushing through are based on heterogeneous social, marine biological, soil, and political science, which is implied by "good science," CPRA seek out science that confirms the plans they decided to carry out prior to scientific vetting because this science serves state extractive capital (Gómez-Barris 2017) interests. Jonathan closed our conversation, saying: "[CPRA's] anti-academic stance makes it so the 'right' narrative gets out there" (Smith 2018b). By subsuming environmentalism under the banner of the state, Louisiana uses CPRA to reinvent what environmentalism and restoration are now and can be in the future.

Bringing these scholars into conversation, I apprehend and highlight these entanglements and the incongruencies between the stories power tells and the lives knowledges of the folks with whom I work, putting "silenced narratives, erased peoples, and disavowed violences into conversation" (Hu Pegues 2013:21) such that subsequent chapters are firmly rooted in a community-produced landscape.

ENVIRONMENTALISM AND THE ANTHROPOCENE

In Southeast Louisiana, the official landscape subsumes the community-based one in its instrumental drive to extract—to make singular the multiplicity of lives, needs, and knowledges of the human and more-than-human communities who rely on the space and place governed by official narratives. My work takes as a given that there is no such thing as a 'natural' disaster, and that the events that precipitate, produce, and fuel disaster lie at the intersection of decision-making about resources, the climate, nationalism, global relations, and the value of some lives and not others. This emerges from a long lineage of work both uplifting and grappling with biopower (Foucault 1990) as it is mapped onto vulnerable communities (Agamben 1998; Arendt 1970; Povinelli 2016; Puar 2007, 2017), and how those communities are put and come into relation with ecosystems who are also being managed and harmed (Brulle and Pellow 2006; Byrd 2011; Choy 2011; Dhillon and Estes 2016; D. Haraway 2006; Tsing 2017; Park and Pellow 2011; David Naguib Pellow 2002, 2007). This relationship is overwhelmingly amplified in current scholarship on the Anthropocene, our current environmental epoch (although many others have forwarded different names and conceptualizations of this period and what is to coming (Haraway 2016; Lassila 2015; Moore 2017)). Most environmental scholars date the anthropocene to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the late 1700s, at which point European colonial enterprises had been firmly established as the dominant mode for producing capital through resource extraction. This in turn required local and Indigenous enslavement, exploitation, and erasure on their own land. These logics carried through many generations of power mobilizing extractive processes to find coal, oil, and other 'resources' in a Western European settler expansion that colonized and displaced

thousands of Indigenous communities, residents of color, and more-than-human species from spaces deemed valuable for extraction.

In the Anthropocene, decision-makers have irrevocably altered Earth's hydrologic, atmospheric, geologic, biospheric, and other processes to extract and produce as much capital as possible, and these changes overwhelmingly harm the most underserved, over-exploited, and ostracized communities globally. In *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh argues that "The Anthropocene has reversed the temporal order of modernity; those at the margins are now the first to experience the future that awaits us all; it is they who confront most directly what Thoreau called 'vast, titanic, inhumane nature" (Ghosh 2017). This follows Donna Haraway's musings that "Perhaps the outrage meriting a name like Anthropocene is about the destruction of places and times of refuge for people and other critters" (Haraway 2015:160). Rather than seeing a space like Southeast Louisiana as a complex ecosystem whose co-participants range from human First Nations communities to mangrove trees and healthy plankton, Louisiana, and I argue, CPRA, understand the coast as a space that is valuable overwhelmingly within, as I have argued above, an epistemology of extractive capitalism.

This is executed, as Farrier cites, by abstracting humanity in favor of capital accumulation: "Andreas Malm and Alf Hornberg suggest that 'the Anthropocene' treats humanity as an abstraction, concealing the fact that carbon economies are constructed upon uneven social relations and distribution of resources (Malm and Hornborg 2014)" (Farrier 2016:3). In his two-part essay The Capitalocene, Jason W. Moore points to the fact that the extraction of fossil fuels requires thinking nature as a resource rather than in

relation to human and more-than-human communities, reducing "the mosaic of human activity in the web of life…[to] an abstract humanity as homogenous acting unit" (Moore 2017:23). The extraction of oil for capital is the hallmark industrial act underwriting what we call the Anthropocene; oil and gas have always been resources that help governing bodies obscure the fact of other life in its constant, unrelenting oil frontierism.

The persistence of these (neo)colonial and extractive logics in Southeast Louisiana's environmentalism was made particularly clear to me on the first day of State of the Coast, when a rather high-up CPRA official suggest that to ensure the MBSD is built the way they intend, CPRA will fight to amend, modify, or entirely circumvent three federal environmental laws that specifically apply to sea life. These are the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) of 1976, and Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (IJFA) of 1986. Together, these acts represent the most comprehensive federal laws determining the state's relationship with more-than-human species in U.S. oceans; the Marine Mammal Protection Act is intended "to provide an ecosystem approach to wildlife management to prevent marine mammal populations from falling below sustainable levels and to take measure to replenish those species that have fallen below their optimum sustainable populations" (National Marine Sanctuary Foundation 2018). MSA is "the primary law governing marine fisheries management in U.S. federal waters" (NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region 2018). Finally, projects executed under the IJFA "are carried out to gather information and conduct activities that support management of U.S. multi-jurisdictional fisheries" (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2012). Effectively, IJFA

regulates how much catch a boat can have on board and monitors the impacts of commercial fishing on marine species.

That CPRA would rather modify or reject federal laws than ensure fish species can maintain health, habitat, and migration patterns shows that while the state is aware of the very real effects of the diversion on marine life, these effects will not prevent CPRA from carrying out its plan.This, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten explain, is the very function of policy: "Policy is the form that opportunism takes…as the embrace of the radically extra-economic, political character of command today. It is a demonstration of the will to contingency...to make contingent all around you...Policy is correction, forcing itself with mechanical violence upon the incorrect, the uncorrected, the ones who do not know to seek their own correction" (Harney and Moten 2013:77-78). Raquel Pinderhughes highlights that this is a problem of racialization, where Indigenous and other folks of color's environmental concerns are often conceptualized as "community, labor, economic, health, and civil rights issues rather than as 'environmental' issues" (Pinderhughes 1996:239). This is clear in CPRA's elision of coastal communities' needs under the banner of environmentalism: to solve the climate-change-induced problems of disaster and coastal erosion in the Anthropocene present, MBSD reinforces the very processes that produced these environmental ills in the first place: extractivism in service to capital accumulation. With this framing of policy in mind, it becomes clear that the master plan has subsumed the environmentalism of Southeast Louisiana's residents who are the true experts of the coast's landscape, dividing people from place through, as I address in the next section, risk and resilience models that make ecosystems the purview

of the state, and coastal people neoliberal subjects who exist in the liminal no-place and no-ecosystem of resilience.

RISK

I attended three or four panels each day of the three-day-long 2018 SOC. While I have heard risk and resilience invoked at every level of Louisiana decision-making for years, at this conference, they were used with higher frequency than in the past and in my observation, had become inextricably linked to the coast as a space of restoration. In scientific presentation after CPRA roundtable, ‘risk mitigation’ was invoked as the purpose of the master plan and every one of its projects, specifically the MBSD.

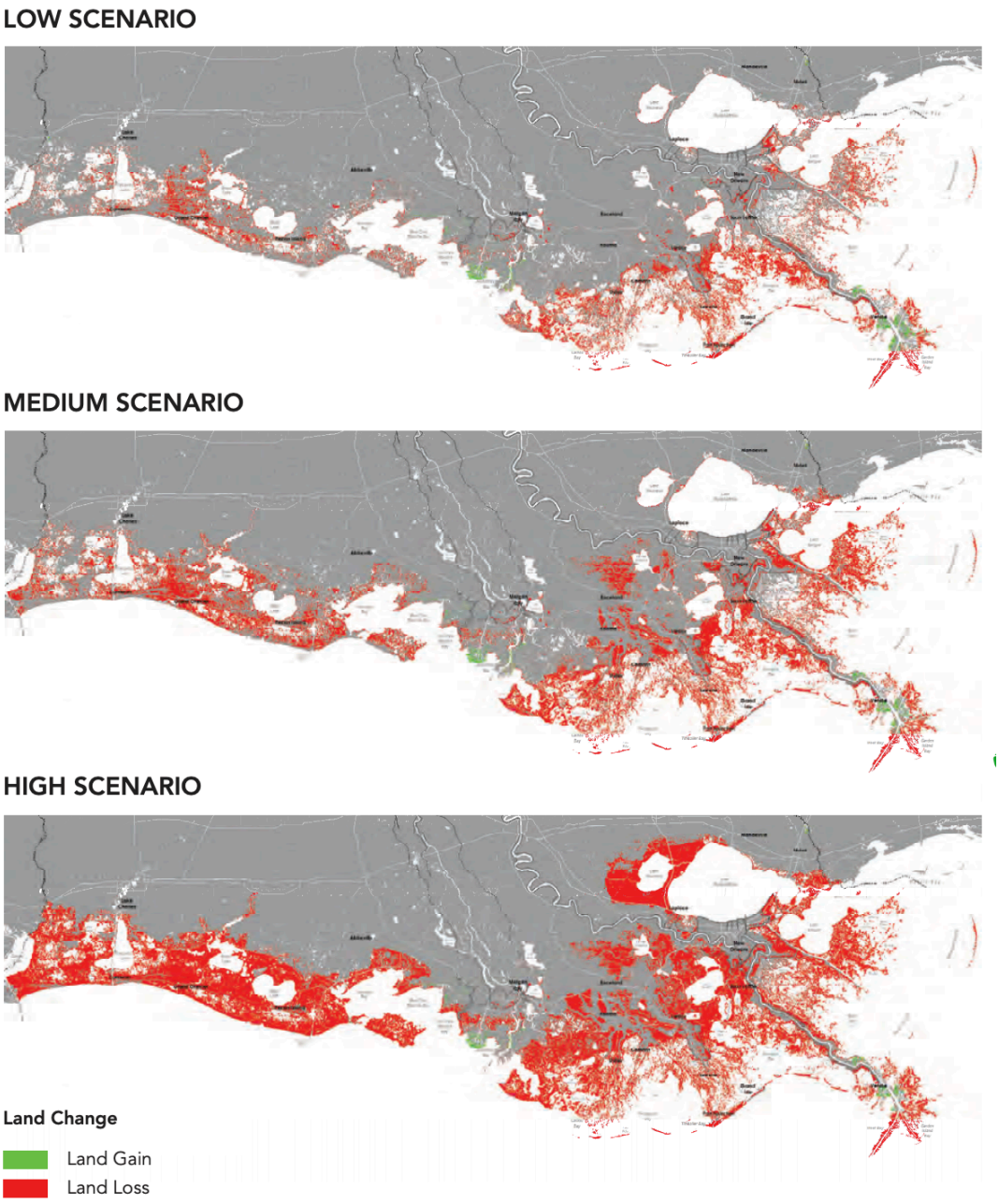

Figure 10. This map, used in the 2017 Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast, represents predicted land loss in various future scenarios. The caption reads: "Shown here is land change 50 years from now under the Low, Medium, and High Environmental Scenarios if we take no additional action. Red indicates areas predicted to be lost, and green indicates areas where land would be created" (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority 2017:75).

Aimee Bahng explains that risk mitigation is central to the institutional management of the future. In the economic realm Bahng discusses in her text, for decision-makers, "The future exists as absolute uncertainty, which capitalism attempts to contain through the

calculation of risk...markets work 'to colonize the future' wherein the future becomes *terra nullius*, emptied of its true uncertainty filled with securitized risk, and sanctified by a positivist accounting of projection" (Bahng 2018:12, emphasis original). Nuancing Bahng, I suggest that the *terra nullius* CPRA endeavors to create is not just void of risk—it is evacuated of people and more-than-human species who are perceived to present a risk: those communities who are made other through racist, classed, able-centric, homo- trans- and queer-phobic, xenophobic, and anti-refugee and anti-immigrant official landscapes on and through with governance operates. It is also void of those more-than-human communities these institutionally othered and subjugated communities rely on, like oysters and shrimp. In other words, those communities who do not 'fit' into the grand narrative of a 'good' future crafted under the auspices of and in parallel to a risk-free one.

I find the notion of a *terra nullius* particularly useful, as so often fisherfolk have told me they feel like they either do not matter to state and federal decision-makers or like decision-makers do not even know they exist. Gómez-Barris offers another way of understanding this concept, arguing that conservation projects are conceived by those in power such that "whiteness reduces land to a representation of *terra nullius*…[it] symbolically appropriates land as patterns of racialization that reproduces material inequities" (Gómez-Barris 2017:85). Reading her terra nullius alongside Bahng's, it becomes evident that by mitigating risk through restoration, CPRA seeks to actively produce a different kind of future for itself, one that does not include Indigenous folks or communities of color. If the future does not include Vietnamese/American fisherfolk,

then destroying their industry through state-designed environmentalism and restoration is not a problem; it is a calculus: *some* must be sacrificed in service to the greater good of many, and that *some* are coastal residents, coast-reliant communities, and fisheries-dependent people, groups among whom Vietnamese/American fisherfolk occupy the nexus. This is a form of environmental sacrifice, which David Pellow defines as "the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color [which is] a form of violent control over bodies, space, and knowledge systems" and as such "state violence" (Pellow 2016:13). In this text, I argue that the most opaque
and efficient state approach of managing Vietnamese/American futures is resilience.

RESILIENCE

At State of the Coast, resilience always followed closely behind risk: to mitigate risk, the place and people of Southeast Louisiana must 'build' resilience, a term that has gained significant purchase in the economic, political, and social sciences over the last several decades (Brand and Jax 2007; Colten, Hay, and Giancarlo 2012; Evans 2011; VanLandingham 2017). In their critique of how resilience has been applied to place and people, Danny MacKinnon and Kate Derickson identify that "the concept of 'resilience' has migrated from the natural and physical sciences into the social sciences and public policy as the indentification of global threats such as economic crisis, climate change and international terrorism has focused attention on the responsive capacities of places and social systems" (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013:253). Further, "the concept
of resilience has become 'a pervasive idiom of global governance'…[The importation of naturalistic concepts and metaphors to the social sciences] requires recognition of the

ecological dominance of capitalism in terms of its capacity to imprint its developmental logic on associated social relations, institutions and spaces" (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013:254). As the work of systems—biological, political, and otherwise—Resilience indexes how systems maintain and reproduce themselves in light of shifting material, political, economic, and social conditions under the violence of management. It does this by identifying and assessing risk, which in this case travels in two ways: as communities are *at risk* and as they *represent* risk for institutional knowledges. Where the majority of community resilience discourses uplift the former, I use this text to unpack how CPRA and other decision-makers discursively mobilize the former while materially focusing in the later as they push the MBSD through at any cost.

This is critical to an understanding of the work of resilience in Southeast Louisiana; while the expectation for human communities to build resilience emerges from the natural sciences, in being applied to underserved communities, resilience actually bifurcates communities from the ecosystems and places they rely on. By crafting an official and institutional environmentalism that rhetorically includes but materially excludes them, CPRA tells vulnerable coastal residents that they are less vulnerable than the land they live and rely on. Following the notion of governmental subsumption in the face of risk, Lauren Berlant explains:

> at some crisis times like this one, politics is defined by a collectively held sense that a glitch has appeared in the reproduction of life. A glitch is an interruption within a transmission, a troubled transmission. A glitch is also the revelation of an infrastructural failure. The repair or replacement of broken infrastructure is...necessary for the form of any sociality to extend itself (Berlant 2016:393).

Rather than repair emerging from a space of altruism or a logic of collectivism, I argue that for the state, it appears in the biopolitical management of communities who stand in the way of risk reduction. For CPRA and other decision-makers, this management is accomplished through resilience. Alongside Berlant, I find Nixon's "attritional catastrophes" a useful framework for thinking the slow, compounding violence of Vietnamese/American resilience in ongoing decision-maker-produced environmental disaster. Attritional catastrophes "are marked above all by displacements—temporal, geographical, rhetorical, and technological displacements that simplify violence and underestimate, in advance and retrospect, the human and environmental costs. Such displacements smooth the way for amnesia, as places are rendered irretrievable to those who once inhabited them, places that ordinarily pass unmourned in corporate media" (Nixon 2011:7). As Ghosh describes above, the way vulnerable communities have also become front-lines communities not passive, but one knowingly produced by decision-makers. Pushing vulnerable people into spaces of toxicity, where oceans subsume land, where water is tainted and all species are ill, is a longstanding colonial and later, neoliberal practice. Doing so by reaffirming their ability to survive said toxicity, subsumption, and illness under the auspice of resilience is, to follow David Pellow and others, an act of environmental sacrifice. This sacrifice—a central tenet of environmental racism and as we remember, state violence—is key to CPRA's collusion in securing Louisiana's long-term oil revenue.

While Bahng shows how risk mitigation regimes work to evacuate the future of risk—including coast-dependent people—she tells us that no matter how much structures of

power seeks to contain uncertainty through the calculation of risk, risk can never be entirely foreclosed (Bahng 2018:12). And this is the utility of resilience: if addressing risk is the way the marketplace—and in this case, the state—manages the present through a future-looking gaze, then resilience becomes not simply an attribute of those people who stand in the way of institutional goals (state fiscal security built on oil capital), but a requirement for them to survive as 'others' in official landscapes that have already nullified their attachment to place and their lives in the impossible to achieve *terra nullius* of a risk-free future.

ISLE DE JEAN CHARLES, DISPLACEMENT, & ERASURE FROM PLACE

This is particularly clear for the tribe of Isle de Jean Charles (IDJC), an island off of coastal central South Louisiana. After Andrew Jackson forced First Nations peoples across the Southeastern U.S. to join the Trail of Tears under 1830 Indian Removal Act, members of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw, Chata, Atakapaw, Chickasaw, and United Houma Nations fled to the coast, making a place in exile on Isle de Jean Charles. Since 1955, they have lost 98% of their land. Policy-induced disaster and other effects of resource and space management exacerbate residents' vulnerability; a regular rain easily floods the highway, cutting IdJC off from both the mainland and imperative resources; a hurricane compounds this isolation five-fold, then both eats away at the island's meager landmass and forces a complete rebuilding. After the state of Louisiana left the island out of its levee system in a 2015 fortification project, tribal elders applied to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) National Disaster Resilience Competition, asking for support. In 2016, HUD awarded the tribe $52 million to resettle on the

mainland. This funding was a part of the state's broader effort to address coastal change, the Louisiana Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments Program (LA SAFE) program, which helps coastal communities identify both their vulnerabilities and potential solutions to them.

While lauded by many as the silver bullet to the problem of "America's First Climate Refugees" (Davenport and Robertson 2016), HUD's recognition of Isle de Jean Charles' situation shifted its residents' lived experience from one of making due and surviving state-sanctioned vulnerability to being 'mediated' through federally mandated resettlement. Rather than choosing their own site of resettlement and its design, as was mandated in the funding agreement, the state of Louisiana has taken over all elements of the process. This includes changing the site, the proposed layout of the community, and most damning of all, telling the tribe that it is illegal for them to plan a community exclusively for Native people. This last was a weaponization of laws designed to make red-lining and property-based racial covenants illegal. The bitter irony of Louisiana using racism and the politics of land ownership against the region's First Nations tribe members pushed Isle de Jean Charles' chief, Albert Naquin, to effectively tell the state that he and his community would not go along with their plan.

This reinvestment in the dispossession of Indigenous people in coastal restoration and risk mitigation—*you can occupy place, but it cannot ever be* your *place*—is telling in the broader conversation about how Louisiana governance and CPRA's paradigms of environmentalism and restoration conceive of about the people who occupy the regions they claim to be fixing. Given their particular histories of violence and erasure from

Louisiana as Indigenous people, the experience of Isle de Jean Charles' residents sets a dangerous precedent for all coastal communities who are currently or will be in the immediate path of decision-maker-produced disaster and approaches to disaster mitigation.

As Gómez-Barris argues, "conservation initiatives usually perceive Native peoples as an obstacle to, rather an imperative for, preservation...the system of forest management and conservation...functions within a colonial paradigm that privileges outsiders, erases Native peoples, and imagines saving the planet...[by privileging] a colonial viewpoint that contributes to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples" (Gómez-Barris 2017:85). In this case, even though the conservation was discursively meant to preserve the tribe's relationship to the place of coastal Louisiana, it in fact represents yet another displacement in the 300 year arc of dispossessions they have experienced on their sovereign land. And this brings me to the third critical piece of coastal communities' *terra nullius* future: refugeeism.

One of the utilities of the New York Times, HUD, and other spaces of record calling Isle de Jean Charles' tribal members "climate refugees" is that it is a particularly temporal narrative of displacement. As 'climate' has only been a part of broader popular discussions about the Wests future for forty years, the original harms of settler colonialism, dispossession, environmental racism, and structural sacrifice (leaving them out of the levees) are evacuated from the storytelling about how the tribe has been made 'refugees' on their sovereign land. Here, it is useful to briefly trace the way 'refugee' has

traveled as a socio-legal category to move forward in understanding the problematic of 'climate refugee.'

REFUGEE

The category "refugee" is a 20th century European invention. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), founded in 1950 to confront the diasporas created throughout WWII, was instrumental in establishing refugeeism as *the* legal category through which those undergoing forced displacement were to be understood. At the 1951 United Nations Convention Relation to the Status of Refugees, the UNHCR confirmed that a refugee is: "a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country". Importantly, in defining refugeeism, the convention turned "refugee" into an internationally legible, socio-legal category based on a post-WWII, European diaspora. Although the UNHCR has updated its definition to more inclusively address what "persecution" means, the 1951 language is *the* socio-legal definition used across international forums to identify who is allowed, expected, or forced to claim refugeeism today.

As 'refugees,' then, members of the Isle de Jean Charles tribe have become unmoored from place and time. As people trying to survive in a place that has been made impossible for them to nurture back to health by transparent, explicit decision-making about infrastructure, ecosystem, and value—of people, of more-than-human communities and of course, of resources like oil and gas—Isle de Jean Charles' tribal members have been

discursively and materially evacuated from the place(s) they have more right to claim than anyone. In the risk-mitigating *terra nullius* future of the state, those who 'become' (or rather, are made into) refugees by proxy of deliberate governmental attempts to reduce its own version or risk, are in effect rendered resilient: *you can survive anything so we don't have to worry about you. You can survive anything, so I doesn't matter where you think you belong to, only where we think you belong. And because you can survive anything, we do not have to worry about you anymore.*

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Below, I shift to an examination of Asian/American racialization and refugeeism to understand how the concepts I have discussed above, from official environmentalism to risk mitigation and resilience, specifically impact Vietnamese/American commercial fisherfolk in Southeast Louisiana.

VIETNAMESE/AMERICAN REFUGEEISM, ASIAN/AMERICAN RACIALIZATION, & PLACE

"The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story...that is how you create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become."

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, The Danger of a Single Story (2009)

As Adichie shows above, the way single stories are crafted for a community strips them of complexity, possibility and, by extension, humanity. These stories do not appear from nowhere, nor are they a given; rather, they are produced by folks in power—decision-makers and the people who benefit by aligning with them, from corporations to

residents—for 'others' to either contemporaneously or retroactively reinforce decision-makers' regionalized, racial, ethnic, and all other identity-based dominances.

For Vietnamese/American folks with whom I work, refugeeism from Việt Nam to Southeast Louisiana is the persistent imaginary through which their daily lives, livelihoods, presents, and futures are framed by decision-makers. By this I do not mean that Vietnamese/Americans are called "refugees" in popular discourse; rather, my contention is that the frameworks used to regulate Vietnamese/American life in Southeast Louisiana persistently cling to the trauma and attendant 'abilities' Vietnamese refugees were storied to have gained in passage and resettlement. This is usefully illustrated by Tulane professor Mark VanLandingham, who has won awards for his public health scholarship on Vietnamese refugee trauma, health metrics, and adaptation in New Orleans. In a New York Times opinion piece emerging from his most recent study of how Vietnamese/Americans rebuilt so quickly after Hurricane Katrina (2005), VanLandingham tells us that:

> A sense of collective perseverance, forged in the experiences of fleeing North Vietnam in 1954 and South Vietnam in 1975; an insular outlook of self-sufficiency, rooted in experience with an untrustworthy government; and a comfort with hierarchy, drawn from Confucian ideals (as well as from the Roman Catholic Church, to which many Vietnamese in New Orleans belong) — all these things contributed to the community's ability to rebuild with grit, self-reliance and efficiency (VanLandingham 2015).

Instead of a compelling story about community success, I read VanLandingham's claims here as a succinct and damning summary of the refugeeism-predicated single story Vietnamese/Americans live under in Southeast Louisiana, where disaster, environmental harm, and an ever-changing sociopolitical landscape make their grit not just a thing of the

past, but an ongoing boon to decision-makers who do not have to take those they have rendered collectively resilient into account.

Significantly, many of the folks I work with welcome being called perseverant and self-sufficient. For them, this language indexes their survival through externally designed and executed war, refugeeism, and resettlement—is a survival they are proud of. Inversely, VanLandingham crafts a teleology of Vietnamese/American grit, self-reliance, and efficiency—or resilience—reinforcing that these are innate attributes of Vietnamese refugees and Vietnamese/Americans rather than 'skills' they were forced to develop out of extreme violence and vulnerability. The narrative and material gap between VanLandingham's single story and Vietnamese/Americans' experience of refugeeism and rebuilding following Katrina—a relationship I will explore in much more depth in chapter two—in many ways follows the distinction between Nixon's official and my community-based landscapes. VanLandingham's externalizing and instrumental story of refugee grit is undeniably official in its reliance on racializing tropes that ensure Asian/Americans—and particularly refugees—remain alien and other to full citizenship. As Colleen Lye explains, Asian/Americans are "racial, racialized, but lacking the certainty of a racial formation" (Lye 2008:1733). Iyko Day highlights this complexity, explaining that "the racialization of Asian Americans and Asian Canadians has unfolded as a parallel evolution of yellow peril to model minority—from immigrant restriction and segregation, the wartime internment of Japanese civilians, to the 1960s-era liberalization of immigration policy" (Day 2016:23). Building on Jodi Byrd's understanding of settler, arrivant (originally forwarded by Caribbean poet Edward Brathwait) and enslaved and

Lorenzo Veracini's alien migrant, Day offers a critical reformulation of Asian racialization in North America:

> ...highly differentiated populations of African slaves and Asian migrants historically represented *alien* rather than settler migrations. This shared status in no way implies an equivalence in the heterogenous racial experiences of African slaves and Asian migrants. Instead, it clarifies their historical relationship to North American land, which was as exclusive and excludable alien labor forces. Their unsovereign alien status was a *precondition* of their exploitation and intersects with the multiple economic logics that require and reproduce alien-ness in settler colonies. *While African slaves represented a system of forced migration, unfree alien labor, and property—a form of biopolitical life that was 'market alienable'—the later recruitment of indentured and 'free' Chinese labor incorporated provisionality, excludability, and deportability into the notion of alien-ness* (Day 2016:24, emphasis mine).

I follow Day's complexification of the relation between Black and Asian/American communities as they continue to be racialized, excluded, and othered in the U.S. I am particularly interested in how Day brings this into direct conversation with the operation of settler colonialism and the ongoing seizure of Native land as a foundational logic of North America, arguing that "The heterogeneously racialized alien is a unique innovation of settler colonialism. Race is this an organizing principle of settler colonialism in North America" (Day 2016:24). Day further elucidates that "The governing logic of white supremacy embedded in a settler colonial mode of production relies on and reproduces the exploitability, disposability, and symbolic extraterritoriality of a surplus alien labor force...land and labor are constitutive features of heterogeneous processes of settler colonial racialization (Day 2016:24-5). This is clear in the experiences of IDJC's residents, and in the fears fisherfolk have articulated in relation to the MBSD. This call to both recognize and read racialization, land, and labor together is imperative to seeing

Vietnamese refugeeism and Vietnamese/American racialization in Southeast Louisiana both as part of Asian and Asian/American racialization in the U.S. and as distinct to the places, decision-making, and institutional and communal histories through which it emerges.

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Following the end of the Cold War and the advent of Southeast Asian American studies, scholars of Southeast Asian/America began considering how refugeeism became and has remained a part of Southeast Asian/American identity across the last four decades (Kaplan and Grewal 2002; Lieu 2011; Manalansan IV 2003; Ngô, Nguyen, and Lam 2012; Palumbo-Liu 1999; Schlund-Vials 2011; Schlund-Vials 2012; Um 2012). The debates in Southeast Asian/American critical diaspora studies trouble the American war in Việt Nam through the contested sites of subject formation, the state, and transnationalism. Yến Lê Espiritu suggests that one of the most important attributes of the Vietnamese refugee to U.S. Cold War politics is that in their flight, refugees reinforce and underwrite the U.S.'s anti-communist narrative (Espiritu 2005).

The other side of this anti-communist formulation is clear in Feminist Southeast Asian/Americanist Mimi Thi Nguyen's critique of U.S. logics of incorporation and exclusion post-resettlement. In thinking about how American empire has created a particular kind of "freedom" for Vietnamese/Americans, Nguyen forwards the notion that Vietnamese resettlement was viewed as the nation giving refugees "*the gift of freedom*, a world-shaping concept describing struggles aimed at freeing peoples from unenlightened forms of social organization through fields of power and violence" (Nguyen 2012:3,

italics original). Nguyen explains that in its interaction with Vietnamese refugees—who are, on the one hand, the direct result of American engagement in Việt Nam and on the other hand, a corporal and cultural reminder of U.S. military failure—the U.S. government has narrativized them as recipients of America's magnanimous access to and subsequent gift of freedom, first through asylum and ultimately, as lucky heritors of citizenship. Because of this, Vietnamese refugees and Vietnamese Americans, have been told that they owe an unrepayable debt to the U.S. government for the greatest gift a nation can bestow upon its own citizens, let alone former citizens of other nations: their lives.

As Tang and Patel explain:

> Refugees have historically been enlisted by U.S. policymakers to corroborate an American identity most needed at the moment — savior, defender of the free market and, today, permanent victim of global terrorism and enemy of Islam. Proof lies in this fact: once refugees outlive their narrative usefulness they become disposable. The one million migrants from Southeast Asia — who constituted the single largest wave of refugees in U.S. history — were quickly cast aside after resettlement (Tang and Patel 2016).

The rather transparent networks of power at play here actively situate Vietnamese/American citizenship as tenuous and above all, contingent upon being debtors under an unrepayable gift. According to Nguyen, Vietnamese/American citizenship is arguably an already failed contract. If birthright citizenship is contingent on the space and militarized borders of the U.S., then Vietnamese/American citizenship is contingent on transnational refugeeism, failed Vietnamese citizenship, American military intervention, fantastic storytelling about individuals' worthiness and worth, and ultimately, U.S imperial failure. Here, we see that U.S. empire has shaped Vietnamese

refugeeism and subsequent citizenship both as an historic event and as a persistent, multi-generational piece of Vietnamese/American subjecthood.

For Nguyen, this 'gift of freedom' "emerges as a site at which modern governmentality and its politics of life (and death) unfolds as a universal history of the human, and the figuration of debt surfaces as those imperial remains that preclude the subject of freedom from being able to escape a colonial order of things" (Nguyen 2012:5). Yến Lê Espiritu reminds us that these 'gift bearing' refugees did not simply run toward the "door the United States allegedly opened," but "moved very slowly, with much confusion, ambivalence, and even misgivings, uncertain about what they were walking toward or what they were walking from" (Espiritu 2014:10). Instead, "The messiness, contingency, and precarious nature of refugee life means that refugees, like all people, are beset by contradiction: neither damaged victims nor model minorities, they—their stories, actions, and inactions—simultaneously trouble and affirm regimes of power" (Espiritu 2014:10-11).

Because they were the first large group of Asian refugees to enter the U.S. following the Immigration Act of 1965, which lifted the ban on Asian immigration instantiated under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first wave (1975 - 78) of Vietnamese refugees to be resettled in the U.S. became objects of study for public health scholars, who used them to produce protocols based on about what refugees did, did not, and could not understand about their own experiences of flight, living in camps, coming to the U.S., and "acculturation" (Bankston III and Zhou 1997; Beiser 1988; Pham and Harris 2001; Zhou and Bankston 1998). These narratives became so foundational to the ways immigration

policy was drafted and social services were allocated that they became the basis by which members of the second wave (1979 - 83) experienced flight, the liminality of international and U.S. refugee camps, and as they were resettled in Louisiana.

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It took four attempts for Chú Le, a Louisiana shrimper now in his 60s, to leave Việt Nam. After trying and failing to leave once a year from 1978 on, he tells me in 1980 "My daddy [got a fishing boat for me] and told me to go to South Việt Nam. He said don't go [anywhere else]...I go to Nha Trang" and worked as a fisher for a few trips. After several weeks, he and a friend made attempt number four: "we [put] 14 people on [a 20 foot] boat. Six children on that boat—one girl less than one year old. And we left...We go six nights and five days and we see the Philippine islands" (Le 2018). They were fed and brought to a refugee camp on a small island by a local Filipinx fisherman whose job it was to transport fish between islands on his boat. They stayed in the camp for 30 days, after which they were brought to a larger island and a larger camp. Le suggests that this was a central site for processing refugees; the name he gave of the place was phonetic: ba-la-wan, which I could find no record of. The place he described most clearly aligns with the Philippine Refugee Processing Center (PRPC), which was opened in 1980 near Morong, Bataan. It was a site where refugees were given health screenings, administered shots, and taught about 'American culture.' This last included education on basic English phrases, cultural mores (of this, Le reflected: "you [learned to] say good morning and good evening; [things] like that") and U.S. expectations of proper hygiene. For six months, Le and his companions were among the 3,000 Southeast Asian refugees in the camp. While there, "we

learn English, we learn for American life—how the Americans live," which he was told was necessary prior to him being processed and allowed to seek refuge in the U.S.

Le's story highlights how, at the beginning of the second wave of Vietnamese refugeeism (1980-85), acculturation into not just linguistic, but class-based models of Americanness was imperative to refugees being deemed 'worthy' of the gift of freedom. This emerged directly out of public health scholarship, which was trauma-centered but never trauma-informed. Interested in how refugeeism produced mental health conditions in their 'new home,' public health scholars enumerated the experiences of refugees, arriving at a single story of the always abject Vietnamese refugee (who was often compared to "never migrated Vietnamese nationals" who in turn represented a control population (Fu and VanLandingham 2012:414)).

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In Southeast Louisiana, resilience is imagined in one way, and lived in another. First, for decision-makers with the privilege to define resilience, resilience looks like performing perfect neoliberal citizenship (Ong 2003; Adams 2013; Grewal 2017) wherein, when faced with hardship, individuals pull themselves up by their bootstraps and carry on. In this case, resilience is autonomous—an active choice. This is resilience in the abstract; resilience as it is perfectly crafted in service to management regimes like CPRA's coastal restoration. In the second lived experience, resilience is not chosen, but *borne*; for folks who are vested with resilience without their acquiescence and, as I will show, often without their knowledge, resilience looks like surviving in spite of constant decision-maker-produced disaster deliberately and unevenly harming them. As a friend recently

suggested to me: *being able to be [the kind of] flexible [that is] is borne out of a trauma response; things were horrifying and people kept moving* because they had no choice but to. *Terrible shit has happened to you but you can't stop and react as every terrible new thing that has happened keeps piling up. To be characterized as resilient in that situation is insulting*.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

As I showed in my analysis of VanLandingham above, the official narrative of Vietnamese refugeeism is one of grit. In Southeast Louisiana, where decision-maker-produced disaster, environmental change, and coastal land loss directly shape the lives and livelihoods of Vietnamese/Americans, grit is most often operationalized as resilience, the term I will be using as a primary analytic throughout. By erasing Vietnamese/Americans' individual and communal experiences of surviving state-crafted violence (war, refugeeism, disaster, shrimping regulations, flooding), the official narrative fills the vacuum it produces with a story that suits those in power. As the official landscape underwriting the single story of Vietnamese refugeeism, resilience subsumes folks' rich and personal experiences and their survival-in-spite-of external violence. It bifurcates them from space, subsumes their stories, then calls them 'inexpert,' a tactic of statecraft that Harney and Moten showed, is the basic function of policy.

This text endeavors to erupt and apprehend the ways state- and CPRA-produced environmentalism, restoration, and racialization binarizes worthy and unworthy communities, places, and industries in ways that seek to mitigate risk at the expense of Southeast Louisiana's most vulnerable people, including Vietnamese/American fisherfolk

and community members. Throughout, I work to acknowledge, unpack, and, idealistically, undo the institutionalized narratives about Vietnamese/American folks in Southeast Louisiana that have relegated them to an ongoing refugeeism-as-racialization, ceded them to a state-produced resilience where they are meant to not just survive anything that they are made to endure, but do so well and as models of resilience, and actively erased from the ecosystems and landscapes on which they rely. Finally, I lean on other modes of knowledge production—the story, visionary and speculative fiction, and by deploying what Anna Tsing calls a "patchy ethnography" wherein stories are compiled to make a pastiche to acknowledge both the gaps inherent in and congruences that emerge from community-centered storytelling (Tsing 2004)—to differently apprehend and make plain the experiences of the folks with whom I work. In spite of this intervention, I know that it is just one small step toward acknowledging how limited ethnographic work is as a tool of apprehending violence.

To this end, chapter one, *Vietnamese Refugeeism & Resettlement in Southeast Louisiana*, traces a recent history (from 1954-on in Việt Nam, and 1975-on in the U.S.) of Vietnamese refugeeism to the U.S. and how they were, in the very way Catholic Charities of New Orleans undertook resettlement, immediately excluded from spatial and social inclusion in New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana. By reading official narratives against refugees' lives experiences, I establish how the gift of freedom and attendant refugee debt (Nguyen 2012) has allowed New Orleans and Louisiana to both produce and maintain Vietnamese refugee exclusion and difference from New Orleans to the Birdfoot Delta. Significantly, as commercial fishing writ large and shrimping in particular became the

center of the community's economic and social health, it also became a primary space where official and community-based landscapes collided. In this chapter, I situate commercial fishing as a fundamental space for producing knowledge otherwise, where the places of the boat, the dock, the family home, and the larger Vietnamese/American community. This knowledge emerges from the tensions between the official and the community-based, where othering and a lack of resources at once forced the community to live in spite of the state and, in their erasure, developed skill sets and ideas that were not just about how to navigate racial, economic, and cultural exclusion, but establishing expertise in spite of these exclusions. In the course of my fieldwork, I realized that while the official landscape coheres across heterogenous and contested understandings about space, its adherence to a single story about Vietnamese refugees— if having been refugee means one can both survive and flourish in all circumstances, then the U.S., state, or local governments are not responsible for their survival; the refugees themselves are—was and remains the original slow violence experienced by Vietnamese/Americans that has facilitated a myriad of overlapping and diverging slow violences that carry into the present.

In light of, on the one hand, Vietnamese/American fisherfolks' deep knowledge of the place and industry and, on the other hand, their experience of being dependent on both, I shift to an examination of how resilience has been deployed against the community over time in chapter two, *Katrina, BP, & Refugee Resilience*. This chapter asks how resilience is mapped onto refugeeism and used to further political goals that exclude Vietnamese/Americans. Here, I pay particular attention to narratives crafted about and by

Vietnamese/American fisherfolk in the Gulf over the last four decades. In this tracing, disaster, specifically Hurricane Katrina (2005) and the BP oil catastrophe (2010), emerges as a key site for parsing the ways risk-mitigation and resilience come together to concretize Vietnamese/Americans' racialization and underwrite restoration policy that disenfranchises them. In a preliminary interview in Triumph, LA, Happy, a processing dock owner, explained that he had to rebuild his entire dock four times in less than five years. After asking his wife if they should give up and open a convenience store, she shook her head, replying "This is what we do. This is all we know" (Vuong 2014). While this is fundamentally true for Happy, it is also the direct result of official decision-making that has kept Vietnamese/Americans in an industry folks both love and feel trapped in given a lack of other pathways to economic security.

If Vietnamese/Americans are solely responsible for the ways they weather hurricanes, rebuild their lives, and maintain their families' financially security, then their failure is personal, not say, the direct result of refugee racialization or, most damningly, a burgeoning state-crafted environmentalism that is predicated on crafting a risk-mitigating *terra nullius* that renders coast-dependent people resilient. This chapter establishes the necessity of rethinking how resilience has been deployed by decision-makers to not uphold or support coast-dependent communities in the vulnerability their resilience is predicated on, but instead allows them to be evacuated from the spaces they depend on in service to extending oil and other capital gains for the state.

Following this analysis, chapter three, *Restoration & Sacrifice at the Mouth of the*

Mississippi, takes up the problematic of risk-mitigation that has produced and reinforced Vietnamese/American refugee resilience and the ongoing colonial management strategies that underwrite restoration. To do this, I bring together textual analyses and ethnographic data gathered at agency meetings, public forums, conferences, and other pertinent sites that allow me to unspool the nuanced and tangled policies and processes that have gone into developing the master plan and MBSD and with them, the end of Louisiana's commercial fishing industry. Significantly, this link between resource designation and restoration adds to and extends the other slow violences Vietnamese/American fisherfolk have experience in Southeast Louisiana, and extends them into a risk-mitigated future built on the environmental sacrifice of the community and the more-than-human species they rely on and build ecosystems with.

My final chapter, *Visionary Response & Imagining Otherwise in Vietnamese/American,* uses first-hand ethnographic data and the archives of coastal organizations to trace how fisherfolk and community members respond to the edict of a *terra nullius*-predicated resilience. These responses include creating ongoing support networks between boats and families, building coalitions that help coastal residents understand the experiences and struggles of residents in other communities, and acting as stewards of the ecosystem they rely on in spite of the state's insistence that they are not a part of the coast. As a method, Vietnamese/American visionary response has the ability to see gross power imbalances, the ways top-down logics foreclose Vietnamese/American life and evacuate the landscape of their livelihoods, and, following Aimee Bahng and adrienne maree brown, imagine an otherwise. Response does this from a grounded viewpoint that fundamentally

understands the impossibility of Vietnamese/Americans surviving by seeking inclusion in official, risk-mitigating state processes that exclude them as a given. Because of this, Vietnamese/American response sounds, looks, and *knows* in Vietnamese/American.

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In July 2017, at the end of my fieldwork, I attended a workshopping session in Buras where fisherfolk were asked what was most difficult for them to navigate as coastal business owners and residents. Almost everyone brought up the looming diversion and how concerned they were about finding work outside of the fisheries, which would inevitably require them to relocate. One man turned to me and said: "Vietnamese people are the value down here. If they wipe out the fisheries...what's the point of building land when we can't live here?" In one sentence, this shrimper defined my field, my questions, and my goal: to support Vietnamese/American fisherfolk in finding answers and ideally, make the question moot over time. The chapters that follow endeavor to do this, given my above tracing of critical elements of my fieldsite and theoretical approach.

CHAPTER ONE: VIETNAMESE REFUGEEISM & RESETTLEMENT IN SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA

Sue's family evacuated South Việt Nam in 1979 when she was a toddler. The Has and several family friends fled in the middle of a downpour. After careful planning, they had no choice but to chance the wind and waves that the storm was kicking up—the coast was heavily surveilled at the time, and they knew there would not be another opportunity to leave.

As the group ran across the beach toward her father's boat, a family friend tasked with carrying Sue dropped her; she says her very first memory is of sitting in the wet and cold, crying as she watched them all grow smaller. Once on the boat, Sue's mother immediately knew one of her most precious things was missing; refusing to leave without their daughter, Sue's father sent the man who had left her behind to retrieve her, putting the whole boat at risk. In spite of this mistake, they were able to leave that night.

After successfully entering international waters unharmed, Mr. Ha navigated the boat to the Malaysian Peninsula. By the time they saw land, they had run out of both food and fuel; thankful to see Malaysian Coast Guard officials, Sue's father explained that they were fleeing Việt Nam and sought asylum. Saying that they were not accepting refugees at that time, Coast Guard officials refused them entry, telling the refugees they must return to Việt Nam. With no food or fuel and refusing to go back, Sue's father purposefully sank the boat just offshore, in clear sight of the Coast Guard and, most importantly, in Malaysian federal waters. Under maritime law, he knew that the Malaysian government had to rescue everyone aboard a capsized boat, no matter their nationality or refugee status. This

ingenuity immediately put him in an extremely vulnerable position once on land, however; beaten and tortured, he bore the scars of saving his family his entire life.

In Malaysia, their group sought safe passage to the U.S. and after months in a camp, eventually arrived in Louisiana. After being resettled in New Orleans East's Versailles Arms apartments, her father quickly bought another boat by cobbling together small loans from new friends already working in the industry, a reflection of what it meant for people to support one another as refugees, whether they knew each other prior to resettlement or not. Her mother worked two and three shifts six days a week at the local seafood processing plant, and was paid based on the number of oyster sacks she filled. At home, Sue and her brothers learned English out of necessity, helping their mother at the grocery store and other places she struggled to make due in Vietnamese. Sue remembers that at the time, refugees with English proficiency would charge those who were not fluent to interpret for them in the same capacity; noting how unfair this was, she did the same for free, and learned the ins and outs of the local economy, basic healthcare, and other services her elders needed, but struggled to gain access to as Vietnamese speakers.

Mr. Ha spent the rest of his life shrimping, eventually earning enough to support the whole family comfortably. Over the decades, he grew to be a leader in the community, both in terms of economically supporting burgeoning businesses and in counseling new boat owners and arrivals in the industry's intricacies. Over the years, he taught Sue how to shrimp. This knowledge helped her keep the family books, learn about fishing regulations, taxes, and immigration law, which in turn eventually allowed her to offer the same services to her father's friends. Sue went on to get a degree in business from a local university so

she could formally help her community. Upon his retirement, Mr. Ha left his boat to Sue's husband, John. Until his death in January 2018, Mr. Ha was a prominent supporter of the East's small business owners. Her father is a central impetus for Sue's lifelong engagement in the industry.

The Has' experience of fleeing Việt Nam at the tail end of what scholars call the first wave of Vietnamese refugeeism (1975-79) illustrates several important attributes of what became Southeast Louisiana's Vietnamese/American community. First, the Has' story exemplifies the necessity of building and leaning on community networks for survival in Louisiana. While this is often understood simply as a group mentality by sociologists, political scientists, and scholars of public health, as VanLandingham showed, in the case of Southeast Louisiana, it was a necessity borne of the very specific ways they were resettled in the state, as well as decision-makers' orientation toward, on the one hand, their status as refugees of the U.S.'s failed war and as such, recipients of a national gift of freedom (Nguyen 2012), and on the other hand, the particular socio-political and environmental climate into which they were settled.

Second, as I have suggested, while refugee flight from Việt Nam took a myriad of paths, it was never simple, safe, or guaranteed. Many families lost loved ones, almost all of them lost what material wealth they had in passage, and, in later, more tenuous voyages, boats heavy with families floated in the open ocean for days and weeks, forcing people to make difficult decisions to survive. A great deal of these boats were overtaken by pirates, and into the 1980s, capsizing was a regular occurrence. While it might be obvious that there is no simple refugee story, it is important to name and give weight to the severe

hardship folks undertook to leave a home that was no longer politically, economically, or corporeally safe. While Vietnamese refugees had heterogeneous experiences of resettlement, it was no happenstance that Southeast Louisiana became a site of resettlement; rather, deliberate networks of power and place-making were at work to create what became Versailles, the West Bank, and other communities throughout the Birdfoot Delta. At the same time, by nuancing how we think about official, community-based, and historical narratives that have produced the place and space of Vietnamese/American commercial shrimping in 40 plus years of community presence in Louisiana, I hope to make it clear that trauma and its incessantly invoked partner 'grit' is not the *only* story of Vietnamese refugeeism, but should also not be understood solely through strictural definitions of trauma and grit.

Finally, the Has' post-arrival entry into commercial fishing typified others'; as a new family arrived, most 'able-bodied' men ended up on shrimping boats, working for community members as deckhands until they had the capital to purchase their own boats. Others worked as deckhands with family members, and still others took jobs outside of the industry. Mrs. Ha, like many refugee women, worked in fish processing, which included cleaning shrimp, shucking oysters, and preparing other fish species for sale. This industry has remained the purview of refugee and immigrant women during resettlement—according to Sue, the seafood processing labor force is overwhelmingly Honduran/American and Mexican/American today—as it is work that does not require English fluency and, as workers are paid by the pound of seafood they prepare, ensures a paycheck at the end of a shift rather than every two weeks or monthly. This diversity and

density of Vietnamese refugee engagement in commercial fishing highlights that from early in Vietnamese resettlement to Southeast Louisiana, commercial fishing was the industry that anchored the community's economic, and by extension, social, stability. The Ha's story also explicitly highlights how commercial fishing has been a part of Vietnamese/Americans' lives long before Southeast Louisiana: were it not for his success as a shrimper, Sue's father would not have a boat both large enough to evacuate his and others' families and navigate dangerous open ocean, nor would he have had the knowledge needed to gain safety once his family was turned away as asylum seekers. He also, most importantly, would not have arrived in the state with the knowledge to start a business, which convinced established boat owners to lend him the money necessary to do so.

THE GIFT OF FREEDOM IN LOUISIANA

From 1975 on, Vietnamese/American residents of Louisiana have experienced a refugeeism of debt to the state and the nation for 'saving' stateless people from the effects of American military engagement in Việt Nam (Nguyen 2012). I use this chapter to ask how Vietnamese/Americanness in Southeast Louisiana is both mediated by an institutional refugee framing and how community-based knowledges like Sue's story above exceed and grapple with them. I contend that a discourse racializing Vietnamese/Americans as refugee persists into the present because, on the one hand, its utility to local, state, federal, and private decision-makers (specifically as they maintain refugeeism as a central part of Vietnamese/American racialization and socio-legal (il)legibility over the last four decades), and, on the other hand, as it is reaffirmed through enduring displacement across

generations, shifts in resettlement, through disaster, and in the management of the spaces, neighborhoods, and coastal ecologies the community with whom I work rely on. This chapter allows me to establish the specific modes and means through which this happened.

Situating myself in genealogies of Southeast Asian American critical refugee scholarship, I follow one of Yến Lê Espiritu's central questions, "how and why the term 'refugee'—not as a legal classification but as an idea—continues to circumscribe American understanding of the Vietnamese" (Espiritu 2006a) across chapters one and two. To consider how refugeeism is not only a result of the American war in Việt Nam, but re-emerges through regimes of neoliberalization and place-making in the present, I follow Espiritu's call to critical refugee studies scholars that we "need to do more than critique; we need to be attentive to refugees as 'intentionalized beings' who possess and enact their own politics as they emerge out of the ruins of war and its aftermath" (Espiritu 2014:14). As such, I argue that refugeeism is one of several slow violences (Nixon 2011) that shape the experiences of Vietnamese/American life and sacrifice in Southeast Louisiana. To do this, I use this chapter to examine the refugeeism-specific roots that underwrite the state's current disaster- and environmentalism-predicated official landscape (which I engage in chapter two), and to consider how Louisiana's understanding of Vietnamese refugee racialization has differently shaped the community's relationship with commercial fishing, particularly shrimping, as a central element of Vietnamese/American community and economic stability. This chapter also lays the foundation of my ongoing interest in the relationship between risk-mitigation and

the imperative for Vietnamese/American resilience following disaster, questions I take up in the chapters that follow.

POLITICS OF RESETTLEMENT

In April of 1975, New Orleans decision-makers and the public were embroiled in a debate over whether or not to admit Vietnamese refugees after the fall of Sài Gòn. The possibility of hosting refugees divided the city's residents between those who felt it was imperative for the U.S. to provide asylum and others who felt that New Orleans—then in an economic recession—could not take in more people who required social support. This concern was particularly held by many Black residents of New Orleans who, in addition to experiencing long-standing structural racism and generational poverty emerging from enslavement and Jim Crow logics of surveillance and management, were overwhelmingly enlisted and sent to the front lines of America's wars in Korea and Việt Nam (Marable 1984; Moskos Jr 1973; Tang 2011). Veterans of the U.S. war in Việt Nam historically received fewer and less comprehensive benefits than those legally designated them by the G.I. Bill (Mattila 1978), which "was deliberately designed to accommodate Jim Crow" (Kotz 2005). This methodically racist federal approach to "repaying" its soldiers was most insidious in economically depressed, historically Black New Orleans, and made residents' unwillingness to accept refugees of the U.S. war in Việt Nam feel like a matter of survival.

It also was underwritten by and reinforced ongoing xenophobia in the region, which was and is obscured by a multiculturalist narrative whereby all people are welcome in, and—more importantly—swiftly integrated into, New Orleans and the region (Marler 2013;

Stanonis 2006; Thompson 2009). This storytelling of New Orleans as a melting pot was mobilized by liberal narratives about U.S. welcome, which both reified a fictive Southern racial binary—Black:white—to the exclusion of other communities of color in Louisiana, and at the same time, reinforced the injury of racial and immigration-contingent exclusion that had kept Indigenous, Black, Central and South American, and Caribbean Louisianian cycles of poverty and dispossession for generations. These overlapping and imbricated notions of rights, belonging, and access have and continue to shape the ways immigration, race, and class are mobilized and contested in Southeast Louisiana and were the overt and opaque undercurrents to how Vietnamese refugees were ultimately resettled in the city. In this way, the official landscape into which Vietnamese refugees were resettled was discursively binarized in terms of immigration (citizen: refugee), race (Black: white), and socioeconomic status (under-resourced: adequately-resourced).

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The Catholic Church's wealth and longstanding place in the politics of New Orleans allowed them to make city-level decisions analogous to politicians. In spite of residents voting against accepting refugees of U.S. engagement in Southeast Asia, then-Archbishop Philip Hannan arranged the resettlement of particular "good" refugees he encountered while visiting a U.S. resettlement camp at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas (M. Nguyen 2015). Under Hannan's guidance and through the church's charitable foundation, Catholic Charities of New Orleans, the vast majority of the refugees settled in 1975 identified as former residents of North Vietnamese Catholic Villages Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu who had fled the North and resettled in South Việt Nam following the end of French colonialism (1954) and the shifting political conditions this precipitated, including an

immediate increase in U.S. military presence. The families' history of maintaining their Catholic faith in internal and transnational diaspora appealed to New Orleans' Catholic leaders (Campanella 2006, 2019), and, as Marguerite Nguyen writes, "infus[ed] Vietnamese postcolonial history into the New Orleans landscape" (M. Nguyen 2015:117), which was still shaped by French colonial ideals and nostalgia managed Louisiana through a white, Western European racial imaginary.

This storytelling about Vietnamese proximity to Frenchness was one case the church made for supporting Vietnamese families in a tertiary refugeeism from Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu. It also, significantly, flattened French Colonailism's global effects, refusing to acknowledge the inherent differences between white Louisianian former French colonial space and the colonization of the Vietnamese by the French. In Louisiana, relationships to a French history and genealogy of governance re-emplaced decision-makers into positions of power. French colonialism in Việt Nam, on the other hand, removed Vietnamese people from positions of power and access to their own cultures, knowledges, and ancestry. These hetrogenous French/settler colonialisms were at once central to the formation of New Orleans' Vietnamese community and haunted the political resettlement and daily lives of Vietnamese refugees during and long after resettlement, which I will take up again in chapter three.

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Once Catholic Charities decided to resettle Vietnamese refugees, they identified Versailles Arms Apartments, an existing Section 8 housing development in New Orleans East, as the refugees' new home (Leong et al. 2007:775). As such, Versailles Arms' 400-

unit apartments was immediately the center of the early Vietnamese community in New Orleans, which was home to over 3,000 refugees by the end of 1976 (M. Nguyen 2013). According to Carl L. Bankston III, "The Versailles Arms apartments...offered ample room for new residents. The apartments were considered undesirable by most New Orleanians since they were provided with inadequate bus service…[due to the area's economic hardship] the management of the apartment complex was eager to find residents" (Bankston 1998:81). This clearly outlines first, that Versailles Arms was in an economically depressed and structurally underserved area and second, that Catholic Charities was aware of the same when they chose it as a space of resettlement.

Figure 11. A map of Versailles, which begins on Toulon Blvd. to the west, and ends to the east where "Saigon Dr." Maris the nexus between two canals that come to a point. Chef Menteur Hwy is the southernmost edge of the neighborhood, and to the north, another neighborhood begins at the intersection of Lake Forest Blvd and Michoud Blvd which, in addition to Chef Menteur Highway, Dwyer Blvd., and Alcee Fortier Blvd., are the major thoroughfares of the neighborhood. Mary Queen of Việt Nam is on

Dwyer, and many businesses like restaurants and corner stores and services like a health clinic and VAYLA are clustered around Chef and Alcee Fortier.

What's more, while the apartment's managers were eager to find residents, this did not mean Versailles Arms was unoccupied. Several community elders I spoke with suggested that prior to Vietnamese resettlement, Versailles Arms was an overwhelmingly Black complex; the families who lived there prior to resettlement were displaced by Vietnamese families being moved in. While refugees did not choose where they were resettled, this added to the vexed dynamic between Vietnamese refugees and some Black residents in New Orleans East and city-wide. In addition to being resettled into a space where many existing residents felt underserved and undersupported by New Orleans, this decision making on the part of Catholic Charities ensured Black/Vietnamese tension. As such, it is clear that refugees from Việt Nam were spatially, economically, and socially ghettoized immediately upon being placed in New Orleans and became central players in an ongoing and fraught local racial politics.

	Village de l'est			Orleans Parish			United States		
Racial & ethnic diversity	2000	2013-2017	MOE*	2000	2013-2017	MOE*	2000	2013-2017	MOE*
Black or African American	55.4%	46.9%	4.5%	66.7%	59.1%	0.1%	12.1%	12.3%	0.0%
White	3.6%	1.7%	1.0%	26.6%	30.6%	0.0%	69.1%	61.5%	0.0%
Asian	37.1%	42.1%	3.9%	2.3%	2.9%	0.1%	3.6%	5.3%	0.0%
American Indian	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%
2 race categories	1.2%	0.5%	0.9%	1.0%	1.4%	0.1%	1.6%	2.3%	0.0%
Hispanic (any race)	2.4%	8.3%	0.4%	3.1%	5.5%	0.1%	12.5%	17.6%	0.0%
Other	0.2%	0.6%	3.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.0%

Figure 12. This table indicates the 2000 and 2013-2017 population of Village de l'Est by percentage of Village de l'Est—which, here, is delineated as a voting district distinct from New Orleans East (see figure

X in the introduction)—as compared with Orleans Parish, of which it is a part, and the U.S. These numbers indicate that in 2017, Village de l'Est is overwhelmingly Black (46.9%, which represents a 8.5% decline from pre-Katrina 2000) and Asian (42.1%, with a 5% increase since Katrina). While there are a number of non-Vietnamese Asian/American families and communities in Orleans Parish, the Village de l'Est numbers overwhelmingly indicate Vietnamese/American residents (The Data Center 2019)).

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Bankston later shares an interview with Ms. Carniglia, Director of Resettlement and Immigration Services for Associated Catholic Charities:

> having earlier been in charge of resettlement of Cuban refugees, [Ms. Carniglia] believed that refugees should be concentrated so that they could help one another. 'I said 'no, they need one another.' So I started to resettle them in communities. That's why I looked for housing that could take large numbers of people. The Government saw the success and that's what they started doing elsewhere...New Orleans was a pattern for other places, no doubt about it' (Bankston 1998:81).

If we take Carniglia's narrative seriously, Versailles Arms was meant to serve as a cultural hub. At the same time, whereas Vietnamese/American ethnic enclaves like Little Saigons in Houston, TX and Orange County, CA were established more organically through communities creating economic and cultural hubs in areas with longstanding and ongoing Asian/American presence and infrastructure (Collet and Furuya 2010; Mazumdar et al. 2000; Vo and Yu Danico 2004), 1975 Versailles was isolated from the now-negligible Philipinx and Chinese/American communities in New Orleans (which I address later in this chapter), and contained no existing Asian/American cultural infrastructure.

This mode and space of Vietnamese refugee resettlement is unique, first, because unlike other areas of Vietnamese refugee resettlement in the U.S. where individual families were taken into sponsor homes or otherwise spread across a metro area, Versailles was immediately and definitely a Vietnamese neighborhood. While scholars of Vietnamese

refugeeism to the U.S. and many folks I know make clear that no major site of resettlement was explicitly interested in creating pathways for integrating Vietnamese refugees into full belonging or citizenship, Versailles Arms' specific isolation immediately ghettoized the entire refugee community. Second and related to this, because of its location in New Orleans East, which is separated from the metro area by a large industrial shipping canal that must be traversed by a bridge and Chef Menteur Highway, a narrow, two-lane road, Versailles Arms and Vietnamese refugees were physically separated from the New Orleans metro area. At the same time, this approach to resettlement created spatial and social proximity between refugee families.

Taking all of this together, the decision to resettle refugees in Versailles Arms suggests that while the church wished to act as refugees' wardens, they did not necessarily seek to 'integrate' them into the city. That Ms. Carniglia instrumentalized her knowledge about Cuban refugee resettlement in producing a space where the refugees "could help one another" points to the fact that prior to and during Vietnamese resettlement, there was little promise of support following the initial magnanimity shown them during the politically significant process of resettlement. This is because, as Tang and Patel explain, "Refugees have historically been enlisted by U.S. policymakers to corroborate an American identity most needed at the moment...the one million migrants from Southeast Asia — who constituted the single largest wave of refugees in U.S. history — were quickly cast aside after resettlement" (Tang and Patel 2016). In light of this, they would "need one another" for practical reasons—shared language, experiences, etc.—but more

than that, because in the months and years to come, Vietnamese refugees would effectively be left to their own devices with no one but themselves for support.

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Aihwa Ong unpacks the relationship between citizenship and governance in her work with Cambodian refugees and U.S. citizenship. Ong considers how processes of minoritization impact the ways Cambodian refugees are incorporated into citizenship as a structure of state power. Ong explains that the attributes of a 'good' citizen have changed since the 1970s; then, good citizens recognized themselves as having duties and obligations to the nation. Today, a good citizen is an "autonomous, responsible, choice-making subject who can save the nation best by becoming 'entrepreneurs of the self'" (Ong 2003:9). She calls this good citizen a "flexible homo economicus," or an entrepreneurial subject who engages in a "bootstraps" mentality, inculcated in them by various state apparatuses to be an individual engaged in free market capitalism. Ong goes on to explain that those outside of this system find ways to resist or rearticulate this approach to and understanding of citizenship:

> Because of their multiple, diffused, and open-ended nature, normalizing practices never have a totalitarian effect, as some readings of Foucault's work might suggest. Indeed, Foucault has argued that regulatory programs 'never work out as planned,' not only because different strategies may be opposed, but because subject interpret and act in ways that undo systems of classification (cultural, ethnic, moral), refuse different kinds of objectives (involving needs, desires, behavior), and thwart rules of surveillance and punishment…By exploring the day-to-day experiences of Cambodian refugees in the context of Foucault's power-resistance axis, I demonstrate how liberal governance in its everyday form entails a certain violent subjection in the process of becoming free, so to speak (Ong 2003:17).

Ong's tracing of the expectations of liberal governance was at play in the official landscape that produced the resettlement process outlined above. This is clear in Ms.

Carniglia's story, which highlights how first-wave refugees' communal survival in physical, economic, and social isolation was an expectation of refugees even prior to their resettlement by service organizations throughout the U.S., which was already being imagined through Nguyen's gift of freedom: *they got to live, they owe the nation for this life; they'd better figure this out themselves*.

Early in resettlement, the way Versailles—so named after Versailles Arms—was forced to cohere as a self-sufficient space was heralded by local media and the Catholic church as a success story—the refugees had made a way out of a horrifying situation and were thriving first, because of their mettle and determination, and second, because of the magnanimous support of the church and the nation, to whom the refugees would always owe their lives (M. T. Nguyen 2012). Over time, this forced self-determination became the center of the official narrative about Vietnamese refugees in Southeast Louisiana. As self-determined folks, the community in turn 'kept to themselves' in Versailles. This transmutation of deliberate ghettoization in an economically depressed, isolated space into a story about chosen, deliberate, autonomous self-isolation allowed city, state, and federal officials to depict Vietnamese refugees as people who did not need, and as such were not allocated, substantial support in the decades that follow. This official narrative was so easy to sell—read any story written by a non-Vietnamese/American about the community, and the suggestion of the deliberateness of isolation along lines of race and ethnicity will come early and often (Fertel 2014; Pfefferle 2014; Roahen 2008). This largely because refugees' very existence in the nation underwrote the ways the U.S. imagined itself through the ongoing and 'post-refugeeism' landscape: gift given, debt

now owed, it was time for the refugees to do their part, become good neoliberal subjects and pick themselves up by their bootstraps.

LOUISIANA REFUGEE SURVIVAL & THE MODEL MINORITY MYTH

New Orleans geographer Richard Campanella is heralded as New Orleans' foremost historian and documentarian. As such, his reflections of the city's demography, sociocultural, racial, and structural landscape is looked on as the most exhaustive and representative data of the same. His work on Vietnamese resettlement, published in 2006 a year after Hurricane Katrina's landfall, reflects the now- apocryphal New Orleans-based Vietnamese refugee success story (see chapter two): "Only two months after their arrival, the refugees were responsible for their own rent; within a few years, 'the majority of Vietnamese had jobs, many had automobiles…an increasing number owned their homes, [and] approximately 200 of them were enrolled at the University of New Orleans'" (Campanella 2006:360). The story here is one of socioeconomic success, historically the mode by which immigrants, migrants, refugees, and other 'new' Americans are expected to show achievement—or assimilate—in the U.S. this pivots on the model minority myth, which Edith Wen-Chu Chen and Grace J. Yoo explain is predicated on the assumption that Asian/Americans are economically and educationally more successful than other marginalized peoples (Park 2008).

Historically, the label of 'model minority' has been imposed upon Asian laborers and immigrants to the U.S. as a socioeconomic and cultural expectation. The model minority myth is predicated on the existence of Asian/Americans who reflect these values, specifically and most stereotypically East and South Asian/Americans (Xu and Lee

2013). However, Southeast Asian refugees have typically been used as foils to the model minority myth, where refugees are "Asian" in regulatory metrics like the census and local demographics data collection, but excluded from model minority-ness as an East and South-Asian centric, upper-middle-class status (Wong et al. 1998; Suzuki 1977; Saran 2007). The model minority myth is highly destructive for all Asian/Americans, but is a particular violence for folks who do not meet its criteria, including poor, undocumented, refugee, and disabled Asian/Americans (Espiritu 2006b; Leong et al. 2007; Mereish 2012; Poon-McBrayer 2011; Yang 2004).

This is because the Asian/Americans who stand outside of model minority status are often consumed as failed Asians in the U.S. For Vietnamese/Americans, who, "According to the past three decennial censuses, Southeast Asian refugees have maintained the highest poverty and welfare dependency rates of any ethnic group in the country" (Tang and Patel 2016), economic exclusion from the model minority myth has been a foregone conclusion for decades. This reinforces Nixon's definition of "the poor" as "those people packing resources who are the principal casualties of slow violence" whose "unseen poverty is compounded by the invisibility of the slow violence that permeates so many of their lives" (Nixon 2011:4). Given the disjuncture between refugee and model minority subject positions under the larger yellow peril/model racialization of Asian/Americans (Day 2016), Vietnamese refugees' entrance into the larger body politic of the U.S. was an immediately foreclosed prospect. Bringing Mimi Thi Nguyen and Aiwa Ong's critical work on refugeeism and economic mobility into conversation, it becomes clear that while the directive was for refugees to make themselves economically

and thus, socially, legible neoliberal subjects, their best outcome was to be economically and thus culturally successful enough in the eyes of the state to become only moderately failed persistent debtors.

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As I outlined earlier, in the aftermath of their vexed yet cohering process of refugee resettlement, Versailles' residents had to rely on each other for resources. This ranged from, as I suggested above, youth who quickly learned English to translate for their elders to former commercial fishers entering Louisiana's industry as deckhands, saving until they could pool resources and start their own businesses (Ha 2018). This at once reinstantiated refugees' exclusion and forced them to develop tools outside of the purview of the church, city, and state to support their community, particularly during the first wave (1975-79) of resettlement. Given this, many found work where their lack of English was not a barrier. In Southeast Louisiana, this meant entering commercial fishing as deckhands on boats and taking jobs at factories where largely women did the work of processing shrimp, oysters, and other seafood for sale.

VIETNAMESE REFUGEE COMMERCIAL FISHING

Sue told me that "Our community was built on a boat" (Ha 2014). The labor of fishing did not require an entrance exam and at a processing dock or on a boat, if one was able to execute their work, it was not necessary for them to know how to speak or read English. This is even clear in Campanella's demographic tracing of the community, where he says: "Sources of employment in the early years of Michoud [Versailles] and the West Bank enclaves included commercial fishing, sewing, welding at the Avondale shipyards,

and food services in restaurants, the seafood industry, and processors/retailers" (Campanella 2006:360). In the 1970s, Vietnamese refugees largely commuted one or two hours from Versailles to fishing docks along the Birdfoot Delta, taking work as deckhands on boats anywhere from a day to several weeks at a time or, in lieu of this, working at docks shoveling ice, bringing the catch in, and packaging it for shipping to a processing facility. These jobs were hard manual labor, but at the time, fuel costs were relatively low, shrimp was abundant, and boat captains could make $20/pound for larger white and brown shrimp (Le 2018), allowing them to pay deckhands a relatively good wage compared to other local blue-collar jobs. Over time, shrimping and to a lesser extent, oystering, became the primary fisheries Vietnamese refugees worked in both because they are two of the major fisheries in Louisiana and given the need for labor on shrimp and oyster boats.

As Chú Le, a captain who has been working in Louisiana's shrimping industry since the early 1980s told me "back then, we make a dollar, we save 98 cents" (Le 2018). This fiscal conservatism was imperative particularly in the 70s, as families had access to a limited number of early loans and social services (M. Nguyen 2013) and given the limited number of fields adults could enter into given the constraints of language and the illegibility of former knowledges they carried as professionals and workers in Việt Nam (M. Nguyen 2015). While commercial fishing is a relatively individualized industry—boat captains and dock owners are private small business owners, deckhands and dock workers are contract laborers—in the hands of Vietnamese refugees, it became a communal enterprise, where the money made at the dock, on the boat, and for women

like Sue's mother who worked in seafood processing entered single-family homes, then was re-invested in Versailles.

Sue reflected on this process as she explained to me how her father was able to buy a boat within three years of their being resettled in New Orleans: "When one deckhand saved a decent amount, he'd borrow the rest [of the money he needed to buy a boat] from friends; after he repaid them, he helped other people" (Ha 2018). By reframing commercial fishing as a community-fortifying enterprise, Vietnamese refugees produced an internal lending system that kept capital in the community, allowing heads of households to consolidate and re-invest their income in the industry (Ha 2016). This approach to establishing revenue streams for not just individuals, but families and Versailles writ large allowed Vietnamese deckhands to matriculate to boat ownership and financial solvency more quickly than non-Vietnamese/American fisherfolk who did not have such a structured community lending network to lean on. While some small loans were made available to refugees by the state to support a percentage of the cost of buying a boat (M. Nguyen 2013), it was overwhelmingly the community that facilitated the process.

When refugees were resettled in the East, it had no Vietnamese coffee shops, restaurants, grocery stores, or other imperative, community-sustaining businesses. As Vietnamese deckhands and dock workers transitioned from being workers to boat owners via saving and through a network of interest-free lending, the income boats generated allowed family members and friends to open community hubs like restaurants and stores, support services that provided education, citizenship training, and legal counsel, and gave the seed money for other business integral to the community. Commercial shrimping income

also underwrote the construction of Mary Queen of Việt Nam church, which was greenlit by the Archdiocese of New Orleans In September 1983, after which "funds were collected from Vietnamese Catholics throughout New Orleans and the Mary Queen of Vietnam Church was completed in May 1985. The church has served as a center of both the spiritual and the social life of this little neighborhood" (Bankston 1998:86-7). In every way, then, commercial fishing has solidified the community's social and economic stability.

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The late '70s and early '80s marks a transitional moment between first and second-wave Southeast Asian refugees, who arrived with much fewer resources (Kelly 1986; Kula and Paik 2016; Rumbaut 1989), but into a space where a community network of boats, processing docks, and other fishing-dependent businesses were being established. This allowed many second-wave refugees to immediately begin working in commercial fishing, at once re/producing Southeast Asian presence in Louisiana and solidifying shrimping as the backbone of the community. According to Carl Bankston, by the end of the 20th century "close to one of every ten Louisiana Vietnamese men worked as fishers or shrimpers and the Vietnamese accounted for one out of every twenty workers in the Louisiana fishing industry" (Bankson in M. Nguyen 2013:267).

As more Vietnamese refugees transitioned into Louisiana's commercial fishing industry during the second wave of resettlement, the community spread beyond the siloed space of Versailles. New refugees made home across the river from New Orleans in what is known as the West Bank in Jefferson Parish, which today is a second space of

Vietnamese/Americanness in Louisiana. Additionally, because commercial fishing was a primary impetus for many to come to Louisiana (Bankston 1998), some second-wave refugees and later Vietnamese immigrants decided to move in closer proximity to the fishing docks, creating Vietnamese/American neighborhoods along the Birdfoot Delta in coastal towns from Buras to Cut-Off. While Versailles and the West Bank remain the primary spaces of Vietnamese/American life in Southeast Louisiana, the delta, in addition to being the space of commercial fishing, became a third and significant place of Vietnamese/American residence in the intervening decades, which is important to how the community has been understood, spatialized, and relegated to ongoing refugeeism into the present.

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Chú Le told me about his decision to go to Louisiana once arriving in the U.S. from Malaysia: "[When I left Việt Nam] a lot of people go to California, to Texas…[but I had heard that] a lot of people shrimp here and that's why a lot of people move here—to shrimp" (Le 2018). While he had worked on fin fishing boats prior to resettling in Southeast Louisiana, Le did not know the ins and outs of commercial shrimping in the U.S. So he learned from a Vietnamese captain who had established his own business: "I told [him] 'I don't know how to do anything on the boat right now, but let me learn.'" While many second-wave refugees brought extant skills to the growing Vietnamese/American commercial shrimping industry, others like Le began their shrimping careers in Southeast Louisiana.

In spite of the growing Vietnamese refugee presence in Louisiana's commercial fishing fleets, the modes and means of making life and livelihood remained vexed. It did not take

long before they were targeted for taking white Louisianians' jobs. In this way, we see that while communal, scholastic, and governmental narratives of resettlement were outwardly crafted to ensure refugees' 'easy transition' to the U.S., they materially maintained the ongoing exclusion of Vietnamese refugees and Vietnamese/Americans from full citizenship. There was no way to do refugee right, and every way to do "American" wrong, an internal and communal struggle that played out at varying registers of violence and sites of power consolidation in the burgeoning Vietnamese shrimping industry. At the same time, as I hope to make clear throughout the rest of this text, commercial shrimping, in addition to being economically and socially central to the community, is one of the primary sites of Vietnamese/American community-based knowledge production in the face of official narratives that make them other through a refugee racialization that persistently isolates and excludes them.

THEY'RE TAKING OUR JOBS

On a humid mid-July morning in 2014, I got a cab to cross the Mississippi River from my rental in New Orleans to Gretna for my very first interview of preliminary dissertation fieldwork. My driver Carl rolled the windows up to trap in the AC's cool and asked me what I was doing across the river. I explained that I was heading to a small non-profit, Fisheries Support Services, founded after the BP oil catastrophe in 2010 to help commercial fisherfolk recover and retain their businesses. I was interested, I elaborated, in talking to Executive Director Sue Ha, who had spent her life helping Vietnamese, Khmer, Black, Cajun, and Chicanx commercial fisherfolk maintain their businesses in the increasingly politically and ecologically tenuous Gulf. Carl turned all the way around in

his seat to look at me in spite of our entanglement in I-10 commuter traffic and said: “I was an oysterman for almost thirty years; got out when my boat cost more than I could get for my oysters after the BP oil spill.” He went on “When the Vietnamese first came, you know, they made so much money cuz they brought their families on the boats and worked around the clock.” As he pulled up to FSS’s office in Vietnamese/American strip mall, Carl emphasizes: “*I* don’t have any problem with them, but I know a lot of guys thought the Vietnamese were putting them out of business” (Jones 2014).

As Carl suggests, the institutional story of Vietnamese refugees entering commercial fishing was that they were superhuman unskilled laborers who, through their insistence on working around the clock and because they did not need sleep, took the jobs of everyday ‘American’ workers. This narrative does not take into account the ways refugees were linguistically precluded from doing other kinds of work, nor does it attend to the fact that in the decade during of resettlement, they had little fiscal or social support from New Orleans, Louisiana, or the federal government. For deckhands and newly minted captains to make enough money to support their families, they had no choice but to work longer and harder than white shrimpers who already owned and operated boats on Louisiana’s coast. As Chú Le explains:

> [Back then], all the Vietnamese fishermen, when we go to the ocean, we get a CB [radio, which facilitates communication between boats]—at that time we [were] talking on a CB—we get ten boats, we go out maybe five or six ways—different—and when we put the net down, we get shrimp right here? We’re going to call...all the boats come [to where we found the shrimp]. That’s why at that time, when we go out, we get income very easy. [Because] we worked together. So sometime we stayed home and [made a relationship with] the marine operator. They [would] call your house—my friend [would go out] one day, one day I [would go out]. That’s why we know [everything] happening on the ocean. That way we were out there, it

> was easy [to] get shrimp. At that time, they had the American fishermen too. [Because] they worked in the daytime, the nighttime they [would] get tired and go to sleep. [We would work all day long, but] we not sleep—we keep goin', keep goin'; that's why when we come in, we had more shrimp [than] them (Le 2018).

Here, rather than illustrating a superhuman ability to shrimp for days on end, Chú Le describes a well networked, collective, and thoughtful arrangement whereby Vietnamese boat owners ensured they were able to support their nuclear families and the broader community through their labor. While the 'superhuman refugee' script emerged early after first-wave resettlement in Southeast Louisiana, it continues to underscore the unattainability of cultural and corporeal citizenship for Vietnamese/Americans, and pivots on the perpetuity of their racialization as refugees. Inversely, the collective approach to establishing and concretizing shrimping as a primary site of Vietnamese/American employment, economic opportunity, and cultural capital became central to the stories community members told me throughout my research tenure.

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In Louisiana, the fear and animosity white fisherfolk felt toward Vietnamese refugees largely appeared in small confrontations and a general sense of distrust and dislike between white and Vietnamese boats. Laughing when I asked him about early racial tensions in the industry, Chú Le confirmed that in the early days, he and his compatriots took shrimp from the nets of white shrimpers when they weren't expecting it: "Sometimes they [were] angry...they would [put down their] anchor and sleep, and we would go 'shhhhhhh' and we go close to them and we pick up their nets [full of] shrimp—'oh, there's some here!' 'oh, there's more over here!' They would wake up you know, they'd say 'I don't know what happened'" (Le 2018). While Le depicted this as a

delinquent, almost joking act, at the time, it was in many ways one of desperation: “We [were] just starting out...had to feed our families” (Le 2018). While this certainly gave white shrimpers a reason to feel animosity toward burgeoning Vietnamese boats, the story white shrimpers told elsewhere in the U.S. Gulf during this time was underwritten by a thinly veiled racism that hid behind a veneer of economic distress.

In Galveston, TX, Vietnamese shrimpers organized to file a lawsuit against the Ku Klux Klan after white fishermen enlisted the Klan to intimidate Vietnamese/American shrimpers off their boats in the early ‘80s. As one section of the case explains: “Chief Kerber testified further that the tension between Vietnamese and American fishermen did not stem solely from fishing conflicts. According to Chief Kerber, some American fishermen believe there are just too many Vietnamese people [here] and therefore these individuals will only be satisfied when some of the Vietnamese leave the area” (District Judge McDonald 1981). That white shrimpers recruited the most visible white supremacist group in the nation to mediate this ‘problem’ shows that, rather than a concern of simple economics—our shrimping grounds are oversaturated and there isn’t enough shrimp for everyone—Texas’s white shrimpers’ disdain toward Vietnamese shrimpers stemmed directly from anti-refugee xenophobia and U.S. racism.

The case details several acts of shrimper and KKK threats to Vietnamese boats, including the following:

> The admitted purpose for this introduction was for defendant Fisher [a Texas shrimper] to secure support of Louis Beam and the Klan in order to further the purposes of a group of American fishermen who were ostensibly concerned about "over fishing" in the...area of Texas. Defendant Fisher considered that the Klan was an organization that had the "courage" to stand

> by their convictions and would provide needed publicity to draw the attention of various governmental agencies he felt had failed to address his concerns. This meeting resulted in a rally that was held on February 14, 1981 on the property of defendant Joseph Collins that is located in Santa Fe, Texas. Defendant Joseph Collins leased this property for that purpose for a $1.00 payment from Mr. Stanfield. Defendant Fisher testified that he contacted defendant Beam to speak at the rally. Defendant Beam brought with him to the rally approximately 13 men who he refers to as his "security force" who were dressed in military garb and he gave a speech at that rally. He stated in substance that he would give the government 90 days to rectify the situation, (referring to the presence of the Vietnamese fishermen in the Kemah-Seabrook area) and if that was not accomplished the Klan would take action stating it "may become necessary to take laws into our own hands." He admitted stating in his speech that it was necessary to "fight fight fight" and see "blood blood blood" if this country was to survive. That rally was covered extensively by the news media. At that same rally, Beam demonstrated how to burn a boat. A cross propped with the aid of a pickup truck of defendant Joseph Collins was also burned at the rally. On that evening, defendant Beam offered to train American fishermen at one of the "military camps", later referred to as "locations" during his testimony in Court (District Judge McDonald 1981).

The suit lists many more tactics, from KKK members standing at docks in full regalia to keeping Vietnamese boats from selling their shrimp and getting to land safely and “boat rides” in which hooded Klan members patrolled state waters fully armed on boats equipped with cannons. In spite of the Vietnamese Fishermen’s Association winning the suit, it is clear that even the lawyers who drafted the case understood Vietnamese shrimpers as inherently foreign; rather than identifying KKK members and the white fishermen who solicited their intimidation tactics “white,” the case uses the word “American.” This was at a time when many of the plaintiffs had been in the country for over five years and were either full citizens or lawful permanent residents (LPR)/green card-holders (Alperin and Batalova 2018). For me, this case highlights the ongoing barriers Vietnamese/Americans experienced to full inclusion in Gulf commercial shrimping.

While the Texas case represents the most visible and extreme example of this kind of intimidation and exclusion, it was rampant across the U.S. Gulf Coast. During the 1980s, many dock owners in Bayou La Batre, AL and Biloxi, MS refused to accept shrimp from Vietnamese boats, and intimidated other dock owners who did buy from them to eventually stop accepting Vietnamese shrimp. One shrimper from Biloxi told me the only reason there was still a Vietnamese presence in the industry was because a single white dock owner processed all of the shrimp brought in by Vietnamese-owned and operated boats (Tran 2016). That Vietnamese refugees developing businesses, supporting families, and fostering community by lending the seed money for on-land businesses was seen as a threat to the entire region's commercial fishing industry highlights the imbrication of capital, citizenship, and refugeeism that has made fishing both an imperative industry for Southeast Louisiana's Vietnamese/American commercial shrimpers, and also vexed, often volatile, industry to occupy.

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In spite of these institutional tactics of exclusion, Vietnamese/American representation in commercial fishing has only grown. Many of the folks I work with came to Southeast Louisiana in a tertiary migration from California, the East Coast, and the Midwest, where they were initially resettled in the 70s and 80s. This is, first, because other family had been resettled in Louisiana, and second and in a parallel migration, because through national and kinship networks, they heard that commercial fishing was a burgeoning Vietnamese industry in need of labor. As Chú Anh told me: "I moved down here from Oklahoma before I finished high school—I knew a captain down here and he said I could make good money" (Anh 2018). Additionally, through the 90s and aughts, immigrants

from Việt Nam joined the community and commercial fishing industry (Marks 2012; Tang 2011). While folks' transit between Việt Nam and Louisiana slowed in these decades, it still has never entirely stopped, as Louisiana refugee networks wended their way back across the Pacific, facilitating close and distant family members to join their kin in Louisiana.

At the same time, folks who landed in Louisiana via tertiary migration were often single men in search of jobs and a place to land. As the extant community was largely composed of dense family networks, many turned to Sue, who has been helping relatives and community members get citizenship and bring family here, to file the paperwork allowing kin and single women from Việt Nam to join them and build families in their new home. In this way, what was originally a small enclave of refugees in Versailles has deepened and extended its reach, both across Southeast Louisiana by making homes throughout the Birdfoot Delta, and in transnational transit between Việt Nam and the Gulf.

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Today, Vietnamese/American fisherfolk comprise almost 40 percent of the commercial shrimp fishery in Louisiana (Louisiana Sea Grant 2015:5). The folks I work with have overwhelmingly suggested that the early tensions I illustrated earlier are no longer present in Southeast Louisiana today. However, my observations during fieldwork showed that rather than being absent, racial tensions are effectively an unspoken matter of course on the water.

During one shrimping trip I went on in 2017, facilitated by work with FSS, I spent the day with a white captain, Abe Johnson, and his white deckhand. As they were waiting for the tide to change so they could begin working, captains who knew each other would tie their boats together, allowing them to effectively build a floating village where they could pass time drinking beer and chatting. While I was in the boat's cabin, I saw the shadow of a stern pass over us, then heard an engine stall. As I went back toward the back of our boat, I looked up and noticed that the boat who had just joined us was flying the US flag at the top of its mast and below it, the rebel flag of the Southern Confederacy. As my heart beat faster, the boat's captain emerged holding beers for the two men I was with; the door that swung closed behind him bore decals of a glittering rebel flag, Robert E. Lee standing on a hill with one leg bent, claiming his territory, and several skulls and crossbones superimposed over other Confederate sigils. The new captain settled onto his freezer box, swinging his legs wide and hiking up his work pants to reveal two crossed Confederacy-era pistols on each shin; his unbuttoned shirt framed a waving rebel flag tattoo that proudly took up his entire abdomen.

In my capacity as a researcher and because I was trapped in the middle of the ocean on a 35-foot boat with nowhere else to go, I stayed for the conversation. Throughout, I was frozen in place like a rabbit who knows its only recourse is to become a statue and breathe more slowly; show neither signs of life nor distress. In the two hours we were tied up together, he shared lament after lament about the jobs Central American dockworkers and deckhands were taking from white shrimpers and how bad his yield had been this season, punctuating each sentence with racist and xenophobic language. At one

point, invoking both the local shrimping community and the increase of shrimp imports to the U.S. from South America and South and Southeast Asia, he said: “The Asians, they’re fucking us up too. Here and in Asia—they’re taking our jobs.” Once he untied and moved on to his shrimping spot, I asked Johnson if he shared his peer’s sentiments, to which he vigorously shook his head. Months later when I looked up the website for Johnson’s LLC, I found that the banner photo for his and his wife’s enterprise showed the same boat I had gone out on flying the rebel flag. I suspect now that because Sue, a Vietnamese/American fisherwoman whose work directly support his business, sent me to him, Johnson had opted to take the flag down during my visit.

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It is valuable to point out that I was on a white captain’s shrimping boat that day because most (though not all) Vietnamese/American captains felt it was too much of a liability to have me on board. This is for several reasons. First, most small boats that shrimp in state waters are not insured because, as Sue has told me, boat insurance costs roughly one-third of a shrimping family’s annual income. Not being covered by insurance makes our clients particularly vulnerable to storms and other decision-maker-produced disasters, because boat owners and deckhands cannot claim or recuperate losses that result from them. It also makes captains more concerned about having folks who are not well-versed in shrimping on their boats; if a visitor gets hurt, falls overboard, or otherwise experiences an accident while on their boat, captains are liable. This, second, concerns folks who are differentially vulnerable—because of race and ethnicity, class, immigration status, etc.—to surveillance and legal processes. In federal waters, the Coast Guard is the primary law enforcement; the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) plays the

same role in state waters. The Coast Guard and LDWF can board a boat for an inspection at any time and while having non-shrimpers on board is not technically illegal, it is not common practice and might raise red flags for inspectors, who can seize boat owners' licenses, act as immigration enforcement and detain folks who are undocumented (a very small number of Vietnamese/Americans are undocumented, and most undocumented Central and South American folks working in commercial fishing stay on land at processing docks rather than risking being on a boat), hand out fines, and otherwise surveil everyone occupying a commercial vessel. Again, for folks more vulnerable to regulation like our clients—even if a boat is up to code and they adhere to the letter of every regulation, a lack of English could make these inspections much more difficult—bringing a relative stranger who is unskilled in the industry on the boat is a liability many Vietnamese/American captains are reasonably unwilling to take on.

CONCLUSION

After this experience, it was abundantly clear to me that, rather than white shrimpers and other fisherfolk welcoming or even adapting to the idea of a large Vietnamese/American presence in their fleet, Vietnamese/Americans have conversely opted to look beyond the overt racism and xenophobia that pervades their industry as a matter of survival. And this brings me back to the gift of freedom; in the same conversations where Vietnamese/American fisherfolk told me they felt safe on the water, they also suggested that they felt lucky to be able to support their families as shrimpers. In the 1970s and '80s, the gift of freedom disciplined Vietnamese refugees to the U.S. into being grateful for their lives in a nation that acquiesced to giving them asylum. In the 2000s, it is still a

part of the community's collective consciousness in Southeast Louisiana: *this place and its chosen people might continue to tell us we do not belong, but we can feed our families and make life here; we should be grateful*.

Three generations into Vietnamese/American presence in Louisiana, their otherness is still deeply attached to their initial entry into the country as refugee debtors to the state. Whereas full culturally legible citizens have the ability to malign, intimidate, and craft legal precedents that exclude Vietnamese/Americans, the folks with whom I work have no recourse but to keep their heads down, bear what comes their way, and be thankful when things are stable enough to survive in Southeast Louisiana. By continuing to live under the irreparable debt of the gift of freedom in an industry that, once codified and regulated, has fundamentally been anti-immigrant and anti-Asian, Vietnamese/Americans are held in the liminal state in which they entered the country: refugees of a nation in which the U.S. waged a war now living in a place that reminds them it is their 'host;' a place where they will always be read as 'foreign' others, asylum-seekers, perpetually abject in both their failures and successes.

CHAPTER TWO: KATRINA, BP, & REFUGEE RESILIENCE

K10, RESILIENCE, & THE NEOLIBERALIZATION OF DISASTER

I moved to New Orleans in the overwhelming heat and humidity of early July to ensure I was in the city for one important event: K10. Branded as such on banners, billboards, and press kits, the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's landfall (August 23, 2005) promised to be a media circus rivaling that of the 1984 World's Fair. For six weeks leading up to the anniversary the local paper, The Times-Picayune, ran regular Katrina stories, eliciting hundreds of comments. During the same period, WWOZ, the local public radio station, aired a weekly hour-long show, "The Debris," (WWNO 2015) which focused on how the storm affected New Orleans communities. Residents used these forums to debate the merits of recuperating stories from a decade ago, divided between questioning each others' taste and tact and yearning for spaces to shed lingering pain and heartbreak.

In the week leading up to the anniversary, then-Mayor Mitch Landrieu's administration rolled out press conference after convening to make plain to media, policymakers, and the "new," post-Katrina New Orleans was economically and infrastructurally rebuilt and better than ever before. Landrieu used the K10 website, designed to aggregate and disseminate information about the week's programming, to declare that "New Orleans has become this nation's—and in many instances, this world's—most immediate laboratory for innovation and change. Now, the opportunity is to position New Orleans as a global leader in resilience." As a city that had not only survived, but in the mayor's words, thrived since Katrina, New Orleans could, with the nation and international community taking notice, retain and replicate its self-designated status as a model of return, rebuilding, and most of

all, resilience. In this way, Landrieu's administration presented New Orleans' resilience as evidence for international and national visibility. By shifting the discourse from rebuilding to resilience, Landrieu set the tone for the whole week. Rather than focusing on what had gone wrong and what remained difficult for his people, the Mayor wanted K10 to serve as an image makeover for New Orleans: globally competitive in the current fervor for innovative approaches to fortify urban and economic centers against risk under an increased awareness of ever-growing disaster and climate change threats.

My first exposure to this discourse came on the Tuesday of K10 week, when, in partnership with The Atlantic Magazine and The Rockefeller Foundation, Mayor Landrieu's administration hosted New Orleans: Ten Years Later*, a day-long series of roundtables and presentations meant to showcase the city's fortitude in light of disaster and devastation. As part of Rockefeller's global 100 Resilient Cities Initiative,* Ten Years Later *preceded their announcement of a "comprehensive" Resilient New Orleans Strategy (now Resilient New Orleans).*

Upon arriving at the CBD Sheraton, I received a lanyard, pen, and program, all emblazoned with the logo specifically created for the week: "Katrina 10" was bolded in all caps, topped by a fleur-de-lis crown, flanked by the anniversary dates—2005 and 2015—and anchored by three capitalized words: "Resilient New Orleans." The text and materials were alternating navy blue and white, a watery memory standing in stark contrast to the bright, blank slate of this, the decade-old new New Orleans (see Figure 13 below).

Figure 13. K10 logo, courtesy of SKDKnickerbocker, the Public Affairs Agency hired to "to manage the overwhelming international media interest in the anniversary, and execute a comprehensive media and communications program, which culminated in a week's worth of commemorative events – including 69 separate media panels and appearances by three United States Presidents" (SKDKnickerbocker 2015).

Thinking I was attending an event honoring the past, the primacy of resilience language quickly reminded me that in fact, I was about to see first-hand how the city was designing itself into a global model of a resilient future.

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New Orleans: Ten Years Later *began with a town hall-style talk, "What Does it Mean to Know New Orleans?" featuring local writers, non-profit directors, city council members, and social justice workers who had all personally lived through the storm and whose community-engaged work had, in many cases, emerged in its wake. During this event, the panelists—including Lolis Eric Elie, one of the city's most beloved social documentarians, Southwest National Student Poet Madeline LeCesne, Tracie Washington, Co-Director of*

the Louisiana Justice Institute, and Minh Nguyen, Executive Director of VAYLA, a non-profit designed to support young Vietnamese/Americans and other youth of color—laid bare the city's insistence on using residents of colors' resilience as a discursive and material tool of imagining a future "new" New Orleans. Addressing policing, education, and the low employment rates of the city's Black men, those present critiqued how the city deployed its peoples as proof of its resilience, effectively using residents' ability to survive immense hardship as evidence of its own structural resilience.

This was one of many panels centering the experiences of New Orleanians of color in the decade since Katrina. However, its panelists—often critical of the current administration and its uneven, slow progress in addressing residents' ongoing hardships both in the immediate aftermath of the storm and in light of its persistence in their daily lives—were interspersed with others that were overwhelmingly policy-centered, intent on driving home the positive attributes of the new New Orleans. For example, Judith Rodin, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, used New Orleans: Ten Years Later *to paint a picture of New Orleans the template, learning experience, and laboratory for 100 Resilient Cities:*

> *New Orleans in some ways was the hotbed, the testbed, for all of these ideas. And it was a springboard for us for more than half a billion dollars we've invested in resilience building in cities of all sizes around the world in the last 10 years. It inspired us to create a network to help Asian cities better prepare for climate impacts and gave us the expertise to help New York to think its own resilience after Superstorm Sandy. And it was the model for 100 Resilient Cities, an almost $200 million dollar commitment to help cities globally build social, economic, and physical resilience. And of course, New Orleans was one of the first cities selected to join (Rodin 2015).*

100 Resilient Cities was born of Katrina, with a broken New Orleans as its model. As the soft side of disaster rebuilding's neoliberal coin, resilience programming presents itself as people-centric, community-based work rather than politically astute or economy-focused. However, its operation and the results it wishes to produce lean on the same structural value systems and implementation models as local and national governments. Its acute interest in generating capital by foreclosing risk belies its attachments to scorched-earth logics where, confoundingly, a city can only secure an adequate future if they begin developing resilience from a terra nullius *corrective: a blank slate resilience (Klein 2008). As Rodin defines it, resilience is wholly imbricated with an emerging local and global concern with the effects of what I call decision-maker-produced climate change, where the risk of disaster looms around every corner and decision-maker-designed and -mandated environmentalism is the only way 'out' of our current predicament.*

Katrina's destruction and sustained impacts on historically Black neighborhoods, in Versailles, and for Chicanx and Latinx communities have allowed New Orleans to stave off risk through its residents' resilience. This state- and foundation-centered logic circulates in a vacuum, effectively denying the fact that for generations, coastal and urban communities had been forced to independently create their own means of survival in response to the structural and environmental vulnerabilities long foisted on them as the byproduct of doing business as usual in Southeast Louisiana.

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Rather than considering how governmental and other infrastructures might self-reflexively produce less change and disturbance in the realms of anthropogenic climate change, intra-

national conflict, and other governance-mandated harms, through resilience, cities, states, nations, and foundations seek to understand just how much pressure systems (in this case, communities) can bear before they break. This cognitive dissonance—between institutionalized resilience and community survival—became most clear when I listened to community leaders who were still navigating the political and cultural vacuum created by Katrina. At the town hall, each panelist's pointed and nuanced critiques of the city's approach to post-Katrina resilience shed light on the way resilience has been institutionalized in Southeast Louisiana. While Rodin and Landrieu had alluded to the value of coalitional work, both held it firmly in the realm of governance and spending. In response to this, Minh Nguyen used his time to argue for New Orleanians' strength and abilities in spite of *rather than because of resilience, asking how those so often made invisible in and by the city might create new infrastructures, new values, new possibilities not with, but outside of decision-maker-crafted logics. Speaking to the by-products of what he and his peers saw as New Orleans' misunderstanding of resilience, Nguyen said:*

> *I am so sick of people telling our narrative and our stories. Even this whole entire week of Katrina 10, I'm kind of sad that the people who have been affected and impacted the most aren't being at these events—haven't even been invited to these events—and they're the ones who we're celebrating or we're commemorating, and there are so many people who have made so much money off of them as well in our city, and they continue to be voiceless. We have to continue to fight, we have to organize, we have to take over our own media, we have to change our narrative. And that's the reason why we're being pushed down; we've been pushed away because right now, people are telling our stories. And that's so sad, that we have to deal with [that]. And I think for us it's just yes, we gotta fight, we gotta organize, we gotta stick together, we gotta work together, to make sure that our voices are being heard (Nguyen 2015).*

Nguyen's critique of the way stories continue to circulate about Vietnamese/American and other racialized residents of New Orleans followed directly from The Rockefeller Foundation's and Landrieu's self-proclaimed resilience goals. He argued that rather than telling people they are resilient, rather than rebuilding at their expense—rather than profiting from their resilience—the city should listen. The fact that he was still asking them to shift both their understanding of and their approach to supporting residents a decade later points to their unrelenting disinterest in doing so. Rather, it seemed, the city's declaration of resident resilience allowed decision-makers to claim a fully rebuilt post-Katrina state for the new New Orleans wherein residents had so effectively managed the effects of their lives under ongoing disaster that New Orleans could actively decide not to be concerned about their wellbeing. It is important to note that Nguyen's appeal was made in earshot of city and state officials, who I watched shift in their seats a bit—it seems that they had not expected folks to be critical of the official resilience narrative, which they ironically continued to use to rhetorically underscore their commitment to New Orleans and its people throughout the day.

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Leading up to K10, posters featuring a quote attributed to Tracie Washington had appeared on telephone poles and bulletin boards. They read: "Stop calling me resilient. Because every time you say, 'Oh, they're resilient,' that means you can do something else to me. I am not resilient." Already the voice of a Black-led response to resilience-based policy, Washington's critique made her a public figure overnight.

As resilience—or the risk mitigation that seems to be imperative to building a new New Orleans—became a formal tool of secondary and tertiary post-Katrina displacement—where communities displaced throughout the region and nation returned to their city to find their homes repossessed and neighborhoods rezoned and renamed—New Orleanians felt the profit-making gaze of gentrification rapidly steal and subsume their most important places. That day, Washington sat next to Nguyen and the other panelists, a five-foot-tall banner with the words "Resilient New Orleans" behind her, and deftly answered question after question, speaking for her self-identified communities and pushing back against the metrics and mobilization of resilience over the last decade. After generative exchanges with her fellow panelists, Washington closed her remarks:

> *So how do we get noticed? Well, we get loud. I evacuated as a single mom with a 12-year-old and a jacked up car, and an American Express and a law degree. So that was an awful combination for the evil ones who didn't want Black folk back, cuz that law degree meant that I could get in any court and fight for anybody. And American Express said you can pay us when you can pay us. That was great. (to LeCesne:) you will vote because you will get angry. You will buy a house because you will want a homestead. And you're gonna say doggonit, I'm not gonna live being forced to be resilient. I don't want to hear that word again. I'm sick and tired of people saying "y'all are so resilient;" resilient means you can do something to me. No! I'm not resilient. I have a right not to be resilient. How do we do this? We keep fighting. You know, I'm here, I told [a friend], I'll be the one turning off the light. This city isn't going anywhere without me. And I say to everybody else who has that same spirit, I say to you [audience member]: we keep fighting. We keep fighting. And we demand that our voice be heard. We just demand it. I got a law degree—25925, you can't take it away from me, that's my bar number. I'll sue to be heard. And I mean that (Washington 2015).*

That both Washington and Nguyen's arguments were grounded in storytelling—if you would just listen *to us—is critical. The city's primary relationship to communities of color is one of surveillance (much of Landrieu's talk centered around policing better rather than*

putting an end to policing writ large), where their behavior is constantly monitored by law enforcement (specifically the New Orleans Police Department and ICE) who presuppose their criminality rather than, as most city officials would argue, to keep them safe. New Orleans' reliance on law-and-order tactics of corporal and cultural management force particularly Black and Latinx community members to negotiate their relationship to space, place, self, group, etc., from a foundation of lack, where their experiences are immaterial in the face of narratives told about and for them. This is clear in Washington's analysis—that there were and are "evil ones who didn't want Black folk back [in New Orleans post-Katrina]" (Washington 2015). *Here, she pointed out that in rebuilding, politicians, policymakers, and urban planners actively created barriers to Black residents' return. Telling reporters that they wished to "clean up" the city to make it more navigable, liveable, and above all else, safe, city officials made it clear that New Orleans, an historically Black city, could do without certain "unsafe" elements in its risk-secured* terra nullius. *Upon returning (or, as often, as they were kept from doing so), Black New Orleanians were told they were resilient as planners rezoned their neighborhoods, seized, tore down, and rebuilt their homes for new residents for a considerable profit, and fed money into beautification and place-making projects rather than basic infrastructure like waste and water management, transit, or accessible grocery stores and pharmacies.*

When Nguyen invoked who was missing from K10's self-referentially commemorative programming—"the people who have been affected and impacted the most"—he too indexed something of what was and continues to be missing from the post-Katrina landscape: a basic acknowledgment that the city has not in fact been rebuilt, revitalized,

and reimagined the same way for or in service to every resident. In Versailles, this looks like poor infrastructure and regular boil water advisories, local nonprofits being forced to provide the community's basic necessities like a multilingual, low-cost health clinic, and an overwhelming concentration of industrial by-product in the air and water. It also looks like one public health study after another, used by the city and the state as the basis of policy, declaring Vietnamese/Americans' resilience, which the rest of this chapter will explore. This elision made clear what the promotional materials did not: for New Orleans to move forward and away from risk, those communities read as risk had to exhibit resilience to circumstances that targeted and harmed them.

Here, I do not mean to flatten the relationship between these abundantly heterogeneous communities and the city, nor between and across communities. Rather, in reading Washington alongside Nguyen, it becomes clear that while Vietnamese, Latinx, and Black residents of New Orleans have very different, nuanced relationships with these discreet and malleable categories of racialization and harm the city's primary frame in addressing communities of colors' hardships post-Katrina was through a resilience that sought to mitigate risk for the city. Washington's inevitable conclusion—that to be resilient is to be used toward the needs of governance—is the direct result of the new New Orleans' self-actualized project. Framed from the standpoint of decision-makers, it functions as follows: if we can't rebuild without Black residents in particular and residents of color writ large, we will continue as planned and tell them their sacrifices are evidence of their resilience. If they push back, we will reiterate that the city—the place they fought to return to in spite of us; the place they will fight to stay and cultivate—can only survive in the future if they

remain resilient. *Between Rodin's framing of resilience and the panelists' it became abundantly clear to me that the new New Orleans—and by extension, the new Southeast Louisiana—while designed to be more resilient to storm surge, regional disaster, and economic fluctuation in the future, sees residents of color as a risk to be mitigated. As a risk that demands a very particular kind of resilience of its residents. As Washington says: Every time they [tell me I'm resilient], that means [they] can do something else to me.*

What was critical about the town hall was its direct response to past administrations' use of the material, social, economic, cultural, and political landscapes of New Orleans to make claims about its present and future. Rather than forcing New Orleanians to be constantly reactive to and prepared for the worst, Washington and Nguyen implored, New Orleans should focus on making residents' lives liveable. This would be much easier, many of the panelists claimed, if decision-makers simply listened to the people they served rather than imposing resilience-centered values on how the space, economy, and cultural values of neighborhoods, communities, and the new New Orleans should look. By nuancing and unpacking New Orleans' national, state, and urban scales of resilience, it becomes clear that what Rodin and Landrieu call resilience is actually a way for decision-makers to make racialized and underserved communities sacrificial to the project of risk mitigation without recourse. For Nguyen and Washington, to be forced into this resilience schema is to be asked to lose, to live with scarcity, and to survive without complaint.

THE SLOW VIOLENCE OF RESILIENCE

That resilience hat it is now firmly a part of the narrative of not just Southeast Louisiana, but a Rockefeller-imagined global network of 'vulnerable' cities, speaks to the institutionalization of resilience as a precedent in the coming catastrophe Haraway and others have gestured to as the logical conclusion of the Anthropocene.

As refuge no longer exists under the Anthropocene—and for the folks with whom I work, specifically at the intersection of governance and decision-making in Southeast Louisiana—"Casualties of slow violence [or attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence by all] become light-weight, disposable casualties, with dire consequences for...projected casualties (Nixon 2011:13)." This is particularly the case as state and federal officials increasingly think of New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana as, hearkening back to Rodin, a "laboratory of innovation" designed to foreclose future risk (Bahng 2018) and make the future a vision of statecraft and institutional environmentalism. This risk mitigation is only possible if "disposable people" (Nixon 2011:4) exhibit and maintain resilience. In South Louisiana, resilience has been a critical part of the post-Katrina landscape. Importantly, in my work, it materially and discursively permeates outward and between two central axes: post-storm urban New Orleans (Adams 2013), and vulnerable segments of the coast, particularly the Birdfoot Delta at the state's southeastern-most edge, replicating and remaking itself as it moves through and settles into place.

As Vietnamese/Americans are sacrificed to imbricated political, socio-economic, and environmental violences in the present, their and their community's future inevitably

becomes more and more tenuous. This chapter attends to three related and complex problems facing Vietnamese/American fisherfolk in Southeast Louisiana. First, I detail the omnipresence of refugeeism as the ongoing center of Vietnamese/Americans' racialization under disaster and disruption. This, second, allows me to trace the ways this produces governmental and other official expectations of Vietnamese/American resilience in increasingly unnavigable environmental and social conditions that attach the community's survival to extractable and volatile ecosystems. Finally, I bring these problematic official frameworks together to unpack how institutional risk mitigation requires the extractability of Louisiana's coastal ecosystems, which bifurcates people from the places they rely on, in turn rendering them rhetorically (and in the new future, corporally) evacuable.

HURRICANE KATRINA: RACE & RESILIENCE

Hurricane Katrina, which made landfall in New Orleans on August 23, 2005, is now firmly a part of the West's political imaginary, providing an example of drastic governmental failure (Grewal 2017). Those who are old enough to remember the storm saw photos of a New Orleans 85% underwater after the levees and eastern flood wall failed to break storm surge: images of families stranded on the roofs of their homes with "SOS" scrawled across sheets; of a Superdome with half the roof missing, and Charity Hospital with every window blown out. We now know how much racial and economic inequality and violence was present in the city's fabric—watched as media at once took New Orleans to task for and amplified the same violences, painting Black residents as criminals and white residents as victims of the flooding (Klein 2008). Writing about the

media's focus on figures of humanitarianism post-Katrina, Inderpal Grewal argues that "Celebrities and welfare providers emerged as responsible individuals, as *exemplary exceptional citizens*, while New Orleans residents were represented as insufficiently neoliberal and thus unable to help themselves" (Grewal 2017:52, emphasis mine). This is significant because as Grewal identifies, there is a third neoliberal subject that emerged following the storm: the failed neoliberal. The failied neoliberal is in many ways akin to the refugee, who operates as a different kind of failed citizen in the U.S.; forever racialized, always excluded, and incapable of fully becoming legible to the nation, the refugee and the failed citizen sit firmly in the interminable liminality of U.S. neoliberalism. This was particularly clear in the way Black New Orleanians were written about and discussed as a community post-Katrina, which I unpack below.

REFUGEE: CITIZEN

I am not a "refugee." I wasn't shipped here…We are not refugees. You hold your head up. We are United States citizens, and you be proud of that. A lot of us are taxpaying, honest, hardworking people. I'm like, when did I come from another country? That's what they used to call people that was in the boats, and that was sneaking over here. I am a survivor. They need to say, "the survivors of Katrina."

- Sharon White, New Orleanian in Baton Rouge shelter, quoted on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, September 7, 2005 (Troutt 2006)

The diaspora that resulted from Hurricane Katrina displaced over a million people in the Gulf Coast region (Plyer 2016). New Orleans residents in diaspora were forced to temporarily support themselves in other cities, living with friends and family or in makeshift housing. While Vietnamese/Americans were the primary refugee group displaced following Katrina, they were not alone in being called "refugee" by the press following the storm; headlines calling all displaced New Orleanians of color "Katrina refugees" became the norm in U.S. publications, from the New York Times to The

Economist. Many Black residents of Southeast Louisiana objected to this language, saying that it divested them of citizenship. As NPR explained following Katrina, Reverend Al Sharpton had a particularly adverse reaction to the media's use of "refugee": "The word refugee has certain connotations. Sharpton's point was that it strips a person of dignity. 'They are not refugees wandering somewhere looking for charity,' he said. 'They are victims of neglect and a situation they should have never been put in in the first place'" (Pesca 2005). Reverend Jesse Jackson echoed this sentiment, explaining that it was "'racist to call American citizens refugees'…[as it implies] that the displaced storm victims, many of whom have been black, are second-class citizens—are not even Americans" (Associated Press 2005). In *After the Storm: Black Intellectuals Explore the Meaning of Hurricane Katrina*, an edited volume of Black scholars reflecting on the way Black New Orleanians were dispossessed post-Katrina, Clement Alexander Price takes up both leaders' arguments, explaining that "the media actually contributed to the radicalized way in which Americans view black people, especially those in trouble and in need of aid. Early on in the crisis, poor blacks were curiously referred to as 'refugees' in the media, as if they were from another country" (Price 2007:71). Together, these responses to the media's use of "Katrina refugee" reified the incommensurability of citizen and refugee, amplifying how each were understood by decision-makers and residents alike in terms of their access to resources and full personhood in a U.S. framework.

Yến Lê Espiritu has reflected on this bifurcation in the space of New Orleans, saying: "As the Katrina controversy reveals...the term 'refugee' triggers associations with highly

charged images of Third World poverty, foreignness, and statelessness. These associations reflect the transnationally circulated representations of refugees as incapacitated objects of rescue, fleeing impoverished, war-torn, or corrupt states—an unwanted problem for asylum and resettlement countries" (Espiritu 2014:4). This highlights that while Black New Orleanians' push-back against "Katrina refugee" might have emerged from anti-refugee sentiments, the much more plausible explanation is that it was a knee-jerk reaction to the violence of an already underserved and harmed community being positioned in a way that stripped them of even more rights, protections, and resources in a rapidly neoliberalizing post-Katrina New Orleans.

Pointing to the effects of calling Black residents of New Orleans refugees, Lisa Cacho explains, "'refugee' was deployed to foreclose empathy for the impoverished African American victims of Hurricane Katrina, and it did so through likening them to differently devalued people of color, whom the debate over the use of 'refugee' erased as victims too" (Cacho 2012:16). If we return to Grewal and consider the ways Black New Orleanians were already positioned as failed neoliberal citizens, we see that by rejecting 'refugee,' while meant to bring them closer to citizenship, Black New Orleanians became trapped in a double bind of exclusion and abjection. If, as Espiritu suggests above, refugees are unwanted dependents, and, as Grewal suggests, failed neoliberal citizens become wards of the state by refusing to do neoliberal citizenship correctly, rejecting refugeeism did not bring Black New Orleanians closer to citizenship; rather, as we will see, it reaffirmed and deepened their extant exclusion from the body politic of New Orleans, Southeast Louisiana, and the U.S. writ large.

MODEL MINORITY, RESILIENT REFUGEE

What the popular media overwhelmingly left out of their Katrina coverage was that in addition to the New Orleans metro area, the hurricane and levee failures' flooding and high winds also reached Versailles. This elision is in part because, while the East is a part of Orleans Parish, it has been rhetorically and geographically positioned as separate from the city. As such, it was not a region that made news immediately following the storm. The way Vietnamese/Americans were incorporated into and excluded from the post-Katrina landscape was not linear but followed a convoluted calculus of refugee debt and neoliberal bootstraps survival that in many ways paralleled the places they lived.

All rebuilding residents had to live out of state or in neighboring cities for months following their return. Commuting every day or several times a week, community members would convene in Versailles to trade carpentry, roofing, plumbing, and other skills to bring back not just their own homes, but their neighbors'. In an early conversation with Sue, I learned that her experience of post-Katrina rebuilding in Versailles followed the gift/debt blueprint. She and her family fled the storm, staying with relatives in the Florida panhandle as they rebuilt. She explained that for months, she and her husband would start their five-hour drive before dawn, work on their house in New Orleans or boat in Buras all day, then head back to Florida. Expressing that she was not surprised by but felt lucky for the way her community worked together during this time, Sue told me: "We knew no one was going to help us. We had to help ourselves. So when a roofer finished his house, he moved on to the house next door; when a plumber fixed the pipes, his neighbor [returned the favor and] did some carpentry work" (Ha

2015). What she describes was echoed in every formal interview and casual conversation I had with community members throughout my fieldwork: we helped each other because we wanted our neighborhood, our businesses, and our neighbors back. This, importantly, was made possible by two things: the strong economic support networks Vietnamese fisherfolk established in the early days of resettlement and maintained in the following decades, and the imperative of early survival that made Vietnamese/American community-building the work of the community alone.

MODELS OF RESILIENCE

All of these modes of excluding Vietnamese/Americans post-Katrina laid the foundation for critical shifts to how they were subsequently held up as models of disaster survival. Because the Vietnamese/American community had been forced to create strong economic and social survival support systems in-community during resettlement and in the three decades leading up to Katrina, they were now better equipped to rebuild following disaster. In short, their prior subjection and racialization—first as resettled refugees, and later, as refugees living in Southeast Louisiana—had, in the eyes of decision-makers, vested them with the ability to pick up and keep moving under this, just the latest harm.

As the city increasingly relied on neoliberal, bootstraps resilience to parse who was and was not a part of the new New Orleans, decision-makers reasoned that following the storm, Vietnamese/Americans exhibited *model refugeeism*, which is highlighted in the communal rebuilding Sue described above. This was underwritten by public health scholars and disaster analysts, who, in addition to making resilience a foundational Vietnamese/American trait as VanLandingham did in the introduction (Vanlandingham

2015), lauded their 'exemplifying the city at its best' (Airriess et al. 2008; Fussell, Sastry, and VanLandingham 2010; Leong et al. 2007; Vu and VanLandingham 2012). To briefly return to Black New Orleanians' rejection of refugeeism: while Black New Orleanians determined that distancing themselves from refugeeism after the storm would allow them a modicum of legibility in what was absolutely a racist disaster, in fact, as Vietnamese/Americans became 'exemplary' survivors of Katrina, the way refugeeism attached to each community was drastically different. Where it doubly foreclosed Black residents' access to the space of New Orleans, Vietnamese/Americans who, by percent of population and area, returned the most quickly and completely, were celebrated by local business owners, media, and within their own communities for 'doing refugee well' while other New Orleanians—particularly Black, Chicanx, and Latinx residents—"failed" to rebuild and reclaim their belongings and homes (Li et al. 2010; Shelton and Coleman 2009). In this way, Vietnamese/American refugeeism, while still held in firm opposition to citizenship, was exemplary, where Black and other New Orleanians of color were failed refugees, failed citizens—failed neoliberal subjects.

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Reading these effects of post-Katrina Vietnamese/American racialization together, it becomes clear that in valorizing Vietnamese/Americans' 'can-do' attitude and bootstraps rebuilding ethic post-Katrina, the press, along with city and state officials, made model refugees into *models of resilience*. I call this extension of federal, state, parish, and neighborhood-level insistence on refugee-predicated disaster return and rebuilding *resilient refugeeism*. Resilient refugees are, first, exemplary survivors of disaster. In addition to their particular aptitude for assimilating U.S. culture and values into their

families and communities (traits of a good refugee as outlined in chapter one), *resilient refugees* are adept at incorporating disaster policy and coastal regulatory practices into their daily lives. While this reinforced hierarchies of racialization where Vietnamese/Americans were better survivors of the storm, as perpetual refugees, they were still not "American." As neoliberalism at once conscripts people into exceptional citizenship and resilience, it becomes clear that the division between those who are citizens and those who are resilient are diametrically opposed in the calculus of post-Katrina New Orleans. In this way, refugee resilience became yet another model of survival under decision-maker-produced violence and in fact, was just an extension of the slow violence of refugeeism: *as refugees you had to keep your nose down, do better than white folks to survive, and above all else, had to be grateful for the gift of freedom that has allowed you to live in Louisiana. As debt-bearing* resilient *refugees, you survived this disaster well; are now better prepared to survive the next disaster, then the one after that. While we did not protect or support you in the last three decades, resilient refugeeism is the same contract under a different name: don't expect us to show up after the next flood, either, because we know you know how to make do without us.* Refugees' debt, it was clear, was still not repaid.

NEOLIBERAL RESILIENCE

"...bodies need to get in the way to open up a world to others...Smoothing things over often means: eliminating the signs of injury to create a fantasy of a whole. Smoothing things over often means: eliminating those who are reminders of an injury."

-Sara Ahmed, Living a Feminist Life (2017:184)

As Naomi Klein and other scholars of post-Katrina New Orleans and the rise of disaster capitalism show, resilience is a critical next step following sustainable development in

neoliberal disaster rhetoric (Grewal 2017; Klein 2008; Tierney 2015). In the hands of New Orleans, Louisiana, and U.S. decision-makers post-Katrina, resilience underscores and replicates how systems maintain and reproduce themselves in light of shifting material, political, economic, and social conditions. It does this by quantifying how communities rebound from pain, dislocation, and other effects of human-produced disaster and change. As Danny MacKinnon and Kate Derickson posit, "[the external definition of resilience by state agencies and expert analysts] presents something of a paradox of change: emphasizing the prevalence of turbulence and crisis, yet accepting them passively and placing the onus on communities to get on with the business of adapting" (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013:259). By naturalizing both crisis and adaptation, decision-makers weaponize resilience against communities the state has long made vulnerable, trapping them in an unending loop of vulnerability-devastation-rebuilding.

For Vietnamese/Americans, this double bind of ongoing crisis and adaptation showed up immediately following Katrina in three transparent acts of displacement and violence that produced a blueprint of what they are expected to endure in the present and future as resilient refugees. First, immediately following Katrina, non-Vietnamese neighbors and policymakers reflected on Vietnamese/Americans' collective approach to rebuilding in several ways. As one New Orleans-based writer reasoned, given that Katrina hit South Louisiana rather than a region of Việt Nam, it was "easier for the Vietnamese to rebuild because they have no nostalgia holding them back from the future, no template for living in New Orleans that was drawn by their ancestors [there]…this enables them to think

more freely, and with innovation, about how to begin again" (Roahen 2008:176). This belief that Vietnamese/American residents of Southeast Louisiana were 'less' impacted by the storm because they hadn't set down 'roots' was common among non-Vietnamese residents and government officials. That a lack of ancestry in the area means a community is better at 'beginning again' reaffirms the fact that their resilience is predicated on their refugee foreignness. For Roahen and many others, Vietnamese/American residents of Southeast Louisiana had and will always be foreigners on Louisiana soil. It also reinforced Vietnamese/Americans' racialization as refugees, maintaining the now calcified distance between refugeeism and citizenship in the emerging post-Katrina neoliberal landscape.

Figure 14. The Green Dot Map forwarded by city planners immediately following Katrina (Times-Picayune 2005).

The second on-the-ground, resilience-predicated violence that followed the storm was a short-lived but discursively powerful approach to rebuilding: the Green Dot Map (shown in Figure 14 above). In spite of the description on the map, green space was not zoned for public parks, nor was it meant to be space for a wildlife refuge. Instead, the areas designated above were to be set aside to build industrial parks, factories, and office buildings. This showed just how useful the storm was in service to advancing city and state-level economic goals (Adams 2013; Klein 2008; Solnit 2010), which invariably superseded the needs of the people who stood in the way of those goals. The focus on the economic over people was by no means new in Louisiana's extractive postcolonial approach to management, which I explore in more depth in chapter three. However, it underwrote, as Vy, a lawyer who grew up in Versailles argued, that post-storm, the city effectively used the community's resilience as a way of evacuating them from the landscape of Versailles (Nguyen 2016). While the green space initiative was never carried out, in large part due to residents fighting for their homes, Vy told me that at a press conference, one city planner suggested that Versailles had been free of residents prior to Katrina, saying "we didn't know anyone was there" (Nguyen 2016).

Crucially, as Julian Reid shows, the emphasis on the continual need for resilience in the face of inevitable crisis has the effect of constituting a "resilient subject that must permanently struggle to accommodate itself to the world . . . a subject that accepts the disastrousness of the world it lives in as a condition of partaking in that world" (Reid 2013:355). As such, Reid argues, resilient subjects are not political subjects, but rather subjects whose thoughts and actions center on adjusting to external conditions, who have

"accepted the imperative not to resist or secure themselves from the dangers they face but instead adapt to their enabling conditions" (Reid 2013:355). However, Vietnamese/American residents of Versailles did resist the third act of institutional, resilience-predicated violence they were subjected to immediately following Katrina.

In the months that followed the storm, then-New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin mandated that a landfill of toxic Katrina waste, called the Chef Menteur Landfill, be opened just two miles from Versailles. Unlike the green dot initiative, the landfill was built; however, the community stopped the city from renewing its lease a year later with the help of several service organizations and NGOs (Chiang 2014). This act of resistance to refugee resilience shows, on the one hand, the community's attachment to the space and place of Southeast Louisiana and their willingness to fight for it (see chapter four), and on the other, suggests that they had realized something fundamental about how they were meant to live in Louisiana: knowing how displacement works following disaster, Vietnamese/American community leaders recognized that disaster in its broadest sense will never end. This is devastatingly and poignantly illustrated in the fact that while the landfill was closed, the toxic waste remains just two miles out of Versailles and continues to seep in the neighborhood's groundwater, impacts its soil health, and very likely, is affecting the health of all residents in proximity of the site.

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It is important to recognize that resilience is not a verb; it is an adjective and a noun—an attribute, an object. As Chú Anh told me: "what can you do with it? It's not something you can eat. It's not something that can take care of you. It's not something you can *do*"

(Anh 2018). Both in the realms of grammar and in Vietnamese/American fisherfolks' lived experience, resilience cannot be a practice because there is nothing *to* practice. The tacit assumption in Louisiana's resilience is that for the folks I work with to *be* resilient, they must *do* something: survive. To survive, as many movement leaders tell us, is a basic act in the most fundamental sense of 'basic': to continue to exist. Lauren Berlant's conception of slow death is useful to think with here. For Berlant, slow death:

> prospers not in traumatic events, as discrete time-framed phenomena like military encounters and genocides can appear to do, but in temporal environments whose qualities and whose contours in time and space are often identified with the presentness of ordinariness itself, that domain of living on, in which everyday activity; memory, needs, and desires; diverse temporalities and horizons of the taken-for-granted are brought into proximity (Berlant 2007:759).

To live on, then, is not to live well or, as Sue hopes FSS's work with commercial fisherfolk will eventually facilitate, to thrive. It is to occupy space that, from the official perspective of the spectacular, is ordinary. For Vietnamese/American fisherfolk occupying the slow violence of refugeeism, resilience, and disaster as ongoing and devastating prospects that are meant to appear ordinary, or 'normal' from the perspective of the state, living on—surviving—is all they are allowed.

SUCCESSFUL RESILIENCE: RESILIENCE AS COMPLICITY

When asked how it feels to be called resilient, Sue responded: "We *are* resilient! When I started crying about our house flooding [after Katrina and Rita], my mom said, 'Stop it! Katrina is just a little pinky finger compared to leaving.' She's right—we lived on a boat, we got through camps. Almost died. Katrina was nothing compared to that" (Ha 2014). Here, Sue uses her own body to map pain attached to refugeeism and diaspora, which I

have shown are pathologized as *the* primary attributes of Vietnamese/Americanness by academics, psychologists, and social workers (Vanlandingham 2015). In so doing, she invests her whole self into the experience of refugeeism both as a past event and an ongoing prospect, where the present is not only measured, but inhabited alongside, co-constitutively with, and against prior displacements and flight. If Katrina is a pinky's worth of hardship, refugeeism is the size and shape of a whole community—for generations, on land and at sea, in political persecution, and under legal citizenship.

Significantly, Sue's understanding of resilience emerges directly from the same place my own does: our work with decision-makers, NGOs, and philanthropic organizations. She and I have spent the last three years slipping behind the curtain, observing the statecraft of coastal and regional resilience, and in Sue's case, has folded the structural language of resilience into her own calculus of being Vietnamese/American, being a shrimper, and being the executive director of a fisherfolk-centric service organization in Southeast Louisiana. Where my education on New Orleanian, Louisianian, and Vietnamese/American resilience began in 2015 with K10 and has extended into spaces of decision-making like State of the Coast 2016 and 2018, CPRA and coalition meetings, and the day-to-day operations of FSS, Sue has lived under the rubric of resilience since it became a metric for regulating her family, community, and industry. While my analysis emerges from a great deal of participant observation and community engagement, the way Sue internalizes and mobilizes resilience emerges from her drastically different role in the networks of survival and decision-making she occupies.

Critically, communities who are politically, socially, infrastructurally, culturally, and physically marginalized by the U.S. have little recourse but to either use or vocally oppose language produced by institutions to limit and harm them. Reviewing Robin James' *Resilience and Melancholy* Elliott Powell highlights James' understanding that resilience is a technique of Foucauldian biopower, regulating life and death to manage populations. As a disciplining, managing device, resilience "reward[s] those who are complicit and further marginalizes those who are not" (Powell 2017:180). As refugees were forced to learn how to manage mainstream U.S. racism, class logics, and relationship to immigration, migration, and asylum, and as these modes of engaging refugeeism have not changed drastically under racialization, Vietnamese/Americans are disciplined into their own resilience without having a language for it or even knowing that decision-makers have vested this attribute to them (see later section '"Resilience" in Vietnamese').

Powell asserts, "Successfully resilient subjects only become included in hegemonic oppressive systems if they can champion their resiliency to such systems, and thus individuate, normalize, and ultimately shore up oppressive institutions" (Powell 2017:181). Sue's role as a community leader and service provider requires that she tells a story to herself and her clients about their ability to survive and, as she says "thrive." Speaking to a funder about the MBSD, Sue said: "I don't think anybody can rebuild this coast with more heart than our fishermen. They have been resilient all their lives." In two sentences, Sue both makes an appeal for fisherfolks' knowledge and skill—arguably borne of resilience—to be properly considered and utilized by CPRA, and at the same

time, uses this knowledge and skill to make claims about her clients' life-long resilience. This, finally, affirms their value to CPRA, Louisiana, and the federal government. That she continues to circulate this story about the people she works for and belongs to shows both her political savvy—she is telling the right stories to the right people—and emplaces her in the reproduction of resilience as its Vietnamese/American spokeswoman and arbiter. This shows that resilience is the logical and enduring legacy of ongoing refugeeism framed through Mimi Thi Nguyen's gift of freedom, amplifying the attachment between the slow violence of refugeeism and the slow violence of resilience. It is also an airtight alibi for Louisiana, the U.S., and private industry as they continue to sacrifice the very people on whom they rely to maintain resilience in the face of Louisiana's drive to maintain oil capital and other private industry.

Sue's use of the language of resilience is important for several reasons. First, it is clear that it is the direct result of her decades learning about the way policy, NGOs, and other stakeholders operate along the coast. In this way, we are able to see that, second, by appealing both to the official landscape's articulation of resilience and defending her clients' livelihoods, Sue's narrative of refugeeism points directly to how resilience is required of people who are structurally underserved in the past and present, across space, and through generations and who, most importantly, are always in a position of crisis not as coastal residents per se, but as a direct result of the state making them into resilient refugees. This is most clearly confirmed, finally, by the fact that everyone I have spoken to in my work either never heard the word or, if they had, could not define it, a damning paradox I will explore later in this chapter.

RESILIENCE & DISASTER ON THE COAST

As I have traced, Vietnamese/American refugee resilience was produced by scholars and decision-makers using Versailles as a case study. While U.S. and international press coverage of Katrina showed New Orleanians in varying stages of failure through the lenses of refugeeism and resilience, it rarely attended to the storm's effects on coastal communities and ecosystems, where docks were subsumed by storm surge, and coastal communities fled the region. Less than a month later, Rita toppled everything they rebuilt in the interim. Most fisherfolk lost their homes, which they struggled to reclaim or receive compensation for, and those who hadn't lost their boats entirely had to make significant repairs to their gear.

It is important to note that the East-centric Vietnamese/American rebuilding-predicated refugee resilience quickly became the single story of Vietnamese/Americanness in and after Katrina. While I have argued that the Versailles-centric storytelling about refugee resilience is a deeply flawed element of the slow violence the community experiences in Southeast Louisiana, this produced an urban:coastal binary that did not take into account either the community's reliance on the coast for commercial fishing or the fact that Vietnamese/Americans, among many other communities, live south of New Orleans, where residents are particularly vulnerable to storm surge and flooding. However, because refugee resilience was now firmly a Vietnamese/American attribute, it extended from Versailles all the way to the edge of the Birdfoot Delta and far into the Gulf. At the same time, the harm to both home—be it in Versailles or elsewhere—*and* business rendered the region's Vietnamese/American community more tenuous and vulnerable

than communities whose entire industry was not impacted by the storm. For families without savings, an inability to navigate legal (loan, claims, etc.) documents in English, and who were otherwise unable to rebound from the effects of a hurricane, Katrina is, in many ways, still happening.

THE SLOW VIOLENCE OF DISASTER

Chú Anh: I bought a boat in 2005; my mother-in-law loaned me $8,000. And then from the bank, I loaned $60,000 somewhere in March in 2005. And in August, Katrina hit and the boat—the place where I docked the boat—it picked the boat up and put it on land. And I had insurance, but the thing is…the insurance didn't pay me. And I called [the insurance company and] they said they weren't authorized to do business in Louisiana. And the problem was the boat went on land so far—it had to be on the canal or next to the water for the government to pull it back down. The boat didn't meet those criteria, so I lost the boat. I lost everything…The only way I can do anything is to get a SBA [Small Business Association] loan and buy another boat. Because it's going to cost $100,000 just to pull the boat back into the water and then probably going to cost another $150,000 just to fix it because the boat—water got in the engine and it was flipped already. So it's not worth it…A lot of people that were [dealing with Katrina], they called the SBA every day, every day, and it was [always at least] a two-hour wait. It took me half a year of doing that and you know, at the time, the whole family you know...

...the word resilience, it means that a tragedy hit[s] and you can get back on your feet and be better and stronger. And nobody [could] help me—what can I do, really? So I tried to get an SBA loan but a lot of people were in the disaster so it was hard to get

results; you're talking about a year [before] you get those kinds of results. Somehow, one time I called up the SBA, and I didn't mean to call this lady, but somehow I put in [the wrong] extension and I hit her phone. And she asked me what was the situation, and you know what, in two weeks, she resolved everything for me. [It was] just luck—taking me half a year calling in every day. The endurance I go through, you can say that is resilience. But you know, this job here, it requires a lot physically and mentally—you know, sometimes it's so hard. You have to think about your kids and just grind and grind and grind. You know [if I was] by myself I would have probably given up already—say it's not worth it.

Chú Anh's story shows how at once spectacular and slow the post-Katrina and industry-specific violence he experiences are; for him and the majority of fisherfolk, the best they could hope for after Katrina was a loan that would take years to repay. At worst, because insurance premiums often amount to a third of a small boat's take-home income, there was no way for shrimpers to recuperate their losses and were forced out of the industry altogether. As Vietnamese/American fisherfolk returned to their docks and boats following Katrina, their resilience traveled with them. The logic went that as hardworking refugees who were resilient at home and on land, their lives on the water—on the boat, at the dock, and in the markets attached to both—should be resilient as well. The fact that most captains lost their boats, the other fishing-dependent industries they relied on, or local infrastructure did not preclude them from coastal resilience. It mattered less that almost all of them either suffered major damage to or entirely lost their homes as well; resilient refugees were resilient everywhere.

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On a mid-July day during preliminary fieldwork in 2014, Sue brought me down to her clients' docks in Triumph, Buras, and Empire to meet "her fishermen" and learn firsthand what they had experienced over the last decade. I heard many stories that day, but one dock owner, Happy's, was particularly devastating. As we settled down at a picnic table next to a massive shed full of blocks of ice, I remarked at how sturdy the two-story processing area was: its high corrugated metal roofs, concrete walls, and humming hoses and belts that carried shrimp from vessel to create seemed impervious to the elements. Happy smiled kindly, and, waving his hand to take in the vastness of his operation, said: "Katrina blew it all down. We had some walls up—then Rita blew it down [in mid-September 2005]...Then Gustav and Ike blew it down again [in 2008]. We come back after that, I say my wife 'we can open a [grocery] store in town.' She said 'This is what we do. This is all we know.' So we rebuilt" (Vuong 2014). As we worked our way through the losses his business had suffered, Happy ended with the BP oil catastrophe (April 20 - September 19, 2010): "We lost a whole [brown shrimp] season. Then the white shrimp [season]. No one left the dock that year." But, he repeated: "It's what we do. It's all we know."

Stories like Happy's are often romanticized and used as evidence of the enduring spirit and resilience of coastal people the world over. While he and all of the fisherfolk I have worked with do think of the coast as home and feel wedded to commercial fishing as the source of their income, in both cases, they also feel as though they have no recourse but to continue fishing. This is because, for many Vietnamese/American fisherfolk,

commercial fishing is their only source of steady income; a lack of formal education, technical business skills, and/or English proficiency makes it extremely difficult for Vietnamese/American fisherfolk to seek employment outside of commercial fisheries or beyond the coast. By the same token, the impacts of ongoing and growing disaster, as well as the way the notion of disaster is weaponized against them, makes Vietnamese/Americans' reliance on the coast differently devastating and difficult. When I asked Happy what he will do if commercial fishing disappears as an industry, he shrugged, gestured again to his dock, and said: "We'll be here as long as we can."

The way Katrina and Rita stick to Vietnamese/American fisherfolk into the present highlights how disaster becomes slow rather than spectacular violence; where decision-makers declare disaster over and wash their hands of its effects, for risk-mitigating resilient sacrificial communities, the spectacular calcifies, becomes everyday. And yet, decision-maker-predicated environmental and structural disaster has not stopped coming but in fact, erupts even more rapidly and regularly, specifically on the coast. Three years after Katrina and Rita, hurricanes Ike and Gustav rolled through and, while not nearly as severe as Katrina, damaged everything. And then, five years into Katrina, Rita, Ike, and Gustav recovery, the Deepwater Horizon oil platform exploded.

RESILIENCE, FISHING, & THE BP OIL CATASTROPHE

"The Coast Guard got on the radio and called our guys in—everyone thought it was a little thing. Wouldn't take long to get back on the water." — "2010 was the year I felt we fully recovered from Katrina; people were at 90% [financially]—had mostly finished paying back their loans. I kept thinking 'this is our year to come back'. So when BP happened, I caught a panic attack. We all did."

- Sue Ha, interview (2017)

After the Deepwater Horizon platform exploded on April 20th, 2010 just days after the state's brown shrimp season opened, oil rolled into the Gulf unabated for 87 days (through September 19th, 2010). Although boats were allowed back out in October, most stayed off the water, their captains worried that working now would preclude them from repayments from BP on lost income. As British Petroleum's 2.3 billion settlement sifted down the Louisiana court system, individual lawyers turned the disaster to their benefit. Knowing many Vietnamese and Cambodian fisherfolk could not read English, they went into New Orleans and coastal neighborhoods, conning families to agree to receive far less than they were owed, and making them cede a significant percentage of the compensation they did receive to legal fees. In this way, fisherfolk lost a full year of work and compensation for the same.

ENVIRONMENTAL SACRIFICE & COMPOUNDING SLOW VIOLENCE

"The legacy of racial dispossession underwrites how we have come to know space and place, and that the connections between what are considered 'real' or valuable forms of ownership are buttressed through racial codes that mark the body as ungeographic."

-Katherine McKittrick, Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle (2006:3-4)

Vy Nguyen, a lawyer who advocates for communities being subjected to environmental racism and other harms through the weaponization of a community's place against them, was a law student on the West coast at the time of the spill. Having grown up in Versailles, she knew her family and extended community members were being taken advantage of in the wake of one of the worst environmental and economic disasters in the nation's history. After driving two days straight from the West Coast, Vy made it to the docks in the Birdfoot Delta and began examining the paperwork local lawyers were distributing to Vietnamese/ and Cambodian/American dock owners, boat owners,

deckhands, and other fishing- and coast-dependent locals. She quickly realized that more often than not, the people entreating community members to sign legal documents were using language against them: English-only forms were put in front of fisherfolk with little or no interpretation, after which they were urged to sign immediately by lawyers intent on claiming their cut. This was the clearest example of post-BP targeted violence, which, through decision-makers and lawyers, poor Vietnamese/American fishing families lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in payouts from this practice, leading some to leave the industry for good.

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In this post-BP economic, environmental, and political context, Vy helped Southeast Asian/American fisherfolk address concerns over claims, seek temporary work, and navigate the legal language of compensation. In so doing, her longer-term project became helping fisherfolk file a subsistence suit that aimed to secure them compensation for the shrimp and bycatch (unsellable fish and shellfish pulled up alongside shrimp in fishing nets) they brought home to feed their families. While all fishermen took home some of their catch before the disaster, bartering by-catch and shrimp was one of the first economies in Versailles; Sue underwrote this, saying that from 1975 on, "we knew we could feed our families if we were on a boat." The loss of a primary food source was one of the myriad ways the catastrophe specifically impacted Vietnamese/American fisherfolk and by extension, the whole community.

The suit ultimately succeeded and benefitted fisherfolk from white, Cajun, Black, and Southeast Asian/American communities. However, other residents of Southeast

Louisiana balked at the suit, saying that fisherfolk were trying to get handouts from the government on unfounded claims. As the primary plaintiffs were Vietnamese/Americans, this response was clearly racialized and classed, and echoed back to the xenophobia Vietnamese refugees were subject to in their early days in the industry.

Reflecting on how slow violence makes itself both so opaque and so effective, Nixon argues: "In the long arc between the emergence of slow violence and its delayed effects, both the causes and the memory of catastrophe readily fade from view as the casualties incurred typically pass untallied and unremembered. Such discounting, in turn, makes it far more difficult to secure effective legal measures for prevention, restitution, and redress" (Nixon 2011:9). In light of local storytelling about handouts and Vietnamese/Americans' upward battle for restitution and redress, Vy echoed back to her critique of New Orleans' building the Chef Landfill in Versailles after Katrina, explaining that this was a microcosm of the ways Southeast Louisiana local decision-makers, the governor, state representatives, lobbyists, and private corporations "didn't see Vietnamese people" (Nguyen 2016). Chú Bình, a leader among Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American shrimpers, confirmed this in a conversation with Vy, saying: "they spilled on us like we weren't there; like they didn't see us." On its own, this erasure—the assumption that fisherfolk were not on the water, did not rely on it and most pointedly, did not matter—is a damning snapshot of how refugee resilience allowed the state and private industry to not just rhetorically, but materially ignore the needs and presence of Vietnamese/Americans following yet another disaster. However, in addition to not *seeing* fisherfolk, Bình told Vy: "they're *compensating* us like we don't matter" (Nguyen 2016).

This statement reinforces that BP was a pivotal moment for Vietnamese/American fisherfolk for several reasons. It showed first, how the state prioritizes oil companies and their revenue over coastal residents' economic and by extension, social stability by allowing oil companies to harm the coast's ecosystems and human and more-than-human communities. Second, this highlights just how little the families and vast networks of small businesses that relied on the commercial fishing industry factored into federal, state, and private industry-led decisions about Louisiana's coast. That this exclusion was predicated on resilience reinforces that for decision-makers in Louisiana, Vietnamese/Americans were not just beyond, but no longer needed support—they knew how to survive just fine.

While BP is often consumed as a human-made disaster, it is less often explicitly cited as an act of environmental racism, which, through its violent control over communities and the place they occupy, is, again, "state violence" (Pellow 2016:4). With this in mind, the third critical effect of BP was the precedent it set for denying local knowledges under environmental devastation through appropriation, which follows Braun's argument: "In the face of climate change, what we see is that the administration of life—biopolitics—is *itself* changing…taking hold of new knowledges, technologies, and practices that either did not previously exist or *had not previously been appropriated as a means of administration*" (Braun 2014:51, latter emphasis mine). One of the ways this manifested was in how, in the ongoing 'leak' and throughout clean-up efforts, BP left primary decision-making about cleanup to already resilient boat captains whose knowledge they then took credit for.

For example, a senior shrimper I work with was put in charge of leading over ten boats in burning oil off the water's surface for two months during the catastrophe. This work included seeing to other boats' wellbeing, directing day-to-day operations, and keeping up morale. As Stefano Harney and Fred Moten have explained, "Policy will discover what is not yet theorized, what is not yet fully contingent, and most importantly what is not yet legible. Policy is correction, forcing itself with mechanical violence upon the incorrect, the uncorrected, the ones who do not know to seek their own correction" (Harney and Moten 2013:78). This is just one of many examples of the way refugee resilience is taken up by decision-makers to advance state aims. As I have shown, the way disaster, environment, and policy come together under environmental racism—zoning Versailles as a site for toxic Katrina waste, telling community members they were so good at rebuilding that they didn't need help after the dual effects of Katrina and Rita, the uphill battle to receive compensation for lost bycatch—reaffirms the need for Vietnamese/American resilience. By making fisherfolk resilient, then effectively appropriating their knowledge, BP and the state made official the community-based work of Vietnamese/American fisherfolk who knew the Gulf far better than them.

Weaponizing the landscape Vietnamese/Americans rely on to make home, to make life, to build futures, against them while valorizing their survival was tied directly to their refugeeism as a way of ensuring that the latter remained a central part of their lives on the coast, and in the same move, ensures the endurance of the former. That Vietnamese/American fisherfolks' survival tactics (rebuilding as a community, establishing new boats from loans and immediately repaying them, bycatch subsistence,

responding to BP with fishing knowledge, leading and communicating with one another, etc.) have been written into post-disaster decision-making at varying scales shows that rather than creating new coastal futures in the name of supporting local residents, the state is instead using the coast as it always has: as critical space for producing infrastructure that protects oil, gas, and other capital to the detriment of every human and marine community, home, boat, and processing dock in the way. This also normalizes resilience, making it Vietnamese/Americans' *duty* as gift-bearing debtors to the U.S.

Taking these three major outcomes of the catastrophe into account, I argue that, as I was told by Jonathan in the introduction, BP became a godsend for coastal restoration, especially as the state increasingly became aware of and in turn exerted power over how grassroots environmentalism represented a risk to ongoing oil revenue. In this way, it is clear that Louisiana's environmentalism is predicated on state-produced environmental violence. As Rob Nixon explains:

> Violence, above all environmental violence, needs to be seen—and deeply considered—as a contest not only over space, or bodies, or labor, or resources, but also over time. We need to bear in mind Faulkner's dictum 'the past is never dead. It's not even past.' His words resonate with particular force across landscapes permeated by slow violence, landscapes of temporal overspill that elide rhetorical cleanup operations with their sanitary beginnings and endings (Nixon 2011:8).

Remembering how risk-mitigating state environmentalism seeks a *terra nullius* of a future, Nixon's call to understand how, in the hands of decision-makers, the past is dragged into the present and mapped onto the future through environmental racism returns me to the early recognition that for folks being subjected to slow violence—as in the example of K10–recognizing the value and veracity of past harms allows them to

make claims, heard or not, about how they are being harmed now, and how they will be harmed in the future. In chapter four, I will unpack this through the intervention of visionary responses that allow the folks with whom I work to intervene in foreclosed presents and futures as people already imagined out of them.

At the same time, as the entire Vietnamese/American community's social, political, and economic wellbeing relies on the health of coastal ecosystems to ensure that BP and other international oil companies can continue, and extend, their extractive agendas reifies a already foreclosed risk-avoidant, *terra nullius* future. In this way, formalizing Vietnamese/American resilience acts as a silver bullet for the state to go about the business of creating and maintaining disaster in the name of capital production. While spectacular at the time of Vy's conversation with Chú Bình, BP has become just another slow violence in the lives of Vietnamese/American fisherfolk in the intervening decade, which I will take up more firmly in chapter three and the conclusion, but that also haunts the rest of this discussion.

SACRIFICING THE SHRIMPING ECONOMY

In the almost decade since the oil catastrophe, commercial fisherfolk have felt the economic pressure of its after effects. While Gulf seafood was declared safe to eat within a few months of the 'leak' being capped, the public was reticent to eat Gulf shrimp after seeing images of pelicans, dolphins, and the entire coastline coated in oil. This resulted in a rise in shrimp imports from South America and Southeast Asia (somewhat ironically, a large percent of shrimp imports to the U.S. come from shrimp farms in Việt Nam, China,

and the Philippines), which has only increased annually. As imports flood the market, the prices shrimpers can fetch at the dock goes down (Bittenbender 2018), a problem exacerbated by oil, pollutants, and a hypoxic dead zone, all of which ensure that there are fewer shrimp in the Gulf, and that fewer still can develop to full size (Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana 2017; Louisiana Sea Grant 1999). While Louisiana's shrimpers harvest more shrimp than any other shrimp fishery in the Gulf (Bourgeois et al. 2015), in my conversations with them, it became clear that today the shrimpers I work with are making significantly less than they were even five years ago. This is particularly true for Vietnamese/Americans who are unable to leave commercial fishing; as shrimping becomes less economically viable at the intersection of a shifting global fishing economy, national trade deals, oil extraction, and other modes environmental sacrifice, being a shrimper grows harder each day. For the folks with whom I work, whose lack of English and other technical knowledge effectively keeps them trapped in the industry, being told they are resilient when they are struggling to feed their families is not just damning, but transparently violent. Most importantly, they recognize that like disaster, like not being seen or compensated; like being resilient—this slow disaster is not just a past or present state, but very much of their future.

"RESILIENCE" IN VIETNAMESE

In the spring of 2018, I returned to New Orleans to conduct follow-up interviews with some of FSS's clients whom I had either casually or formally talked to during fieldwork. In anticipation of my visit, I asked Sue to contact them on my behalf and tell them that I specifically wanted to hear about how they experienced resilience, which I had observed

largely from a decision-maker-based standpoint rather than how it was lived on the ground until then. In our conversations leading up to the interviews, Sue said that it was going to be difficult to prepare our clients for the interviews, as there was no word for resilience in Vietnamese. It says a lot about my own gaps as a non-Vietnamese speaking researcher that this had not occurred to me in the two years I had been doing this work to that point. In every car trip, meeting, office day, dock visit, and casual conversation we had in the time I lived in New Orleans, Sue and I had discussed resilience thousands of times. This was particularly the case in my last year of fieldwork, when "coastal resilience" had become *the* buzzwords in grant solicitations geared toward supporting coastal communities and the fishing industries, which I write on behalf of FSS, which I showed in the introduction and above, given the question of Sue's own complicity in affirming her community's resilience. We had strategized for hours about resilience: identified what, in grant speak, it looks like for our clients, how they create it, and what it means to them. But this, it became clear to me then, was us superimposing the language of the state onto our day-to-day work, rather than the inverse.

I had, in spite of my best intentions, personally reinforced the power of resilience by thinking it from the perspective of a grant writer without directly engaging our clients about how they experienced it. And this strategy—if you can call it that—had been successful every time. Each resilience-related grant I wrote brought imperative funding into FSS. These grants allowed my peers to log hours calling Medicaid and interpret for our clients; gave them the resources to teach ESL and computer literacy classes; made it possible for us to set aside two days a week for a month between January and February to

painstakingly walk each boat owner and their family through the convoluted process of filing taxes in English. While this was a win, it did not absolve me of the massive blind spot I had allowed to creep into my research.

Determined not to right this wrong, but to understand it, I got on the phone with Jane, FSS's Senior Project Coordinator who is fluent in both Vietnamese and Khmer, to figure out how to best have this conversation with our clients. I asked her to develop her own transliteration of "resilience" in Vietnamese, thinking after years of doing this work and given her fluency, she would know much better than I what to say. On the day I finally arrived in the office to conduct the interviews, Jane wrote out a phrase on a yellow post-it, breaking down each word for me. It read: " khả năng phục hồi cộng đồng — the ability to change [your] community." I was surprised by Jane's definition; while I had been parsing every word state and local officials, funders, community partners, environmental and big green NGOs, partner academic institutions, and local foundations used to connote our clients' ability to survive better than other coastal residents and small business owners, she had been doing the grounded work of *ensuring they survived*. Given this, Jane's understanding of resilience was inherently one that reflected the community cohesion and collaborative work she had seen foment among the folks we worked with from BP-on: they survived by making clear, deliberate changes to and in their community.

To Jane, this community-level work must be what resilience is, because, as Sue told me that day, "a woman from some university came into our office and said 'y'all are a model of resilience; this is what resilience looks like. How do we copy this?'" (Ha 2018). This

added another layer to what resilience looks like for our clients: as folks perceived as being models of resilience, their basic lived experiences of trying to make a way out of a no-way had become extractable. It was legible enough to outside actors *as* resilience that it could, in turn, be made into a blueprint *of* resilience. Could, in this formulation, be packaged, bullet-pointed, and shipped to the next vulnerable coastal community, as Rodin suggested during K10. Could be modeled and made real in the Mekong Delta, the Solomon Islands, in Alaska or Hawai'i, as the need arose in the already foreclosed future of the decision-maker produced global catastrophe that is anthropogenic climate devastation.

Over the next six hours, I conducted three interviews with four of FSS's clients—the second was a couple—and felt the weight of this blueprint, of their lives enumerated and replicated, with each word. The first three folks I spoke with engaged me primarily in Vietnamese, requiring thoughtful interpretation by Jane. Each of them was over the age of 60, and when we got around to the notion of resilience, balked, saying effectively: we survive. *We know how to do that. What else do you want to know?* In both of these interviews, I chose not to press the issue; it was clear to me from the responses that defining resilience was far less interesting to the fisherfolk I was speaking with than their lived experiences of something like resilience. These included the savings accounts they started the minute they could afford a boat to send their children to school; the innumerable financial and personal losses they had weathered to stay in the business; the too-small shrimp they kept paying too much in gas, ice, deckhands, hours driving from New Orleans to the docks, to catch; the oil 'spills' and 'heavy rain,' wind and water they

had endured to stay afloat. I smiled, nodded, and thanked them for sharing so much with me. These interviews made clear to me that resilience as a state-mandated state of being was not a part of these clients' lives; survivial, however, certainly was.

My final interview of the day was with Chú Anh, a 46-year-old shrimper (cited above) who had moved to Louisiana after being resettled in the Midwest in his 20s because he heard that shrimping money was abundant in the Gulf. He was fluent in English, so Jane left us to our own devices and got back to the pressing work of helping other FSS clients. When I asked Chú Anh to define resilience, he said: "it's like a rubber band—it stretches and then goes back to its original shape" (Anh 2018). Sue remarked later that this was the clearest definition of the term she had ever heard: " I always ask everyone 'you say resilience—what do you really mean?' And they can't tell me. No one knows what resilience actually is!" (Ha 2018). As Anh and I spent an hour parsing exactly what resilience meant, he grew angry: "I mean, they say that and what, just leave the fishermen with their resilient thoughts and ignore them and let them cope with all the [destruction] and the natural disaster or whatever['s] coming their way? Yeah if you're resilient it's good but still, without [decision-makers'] help, the word is only an adjective. It's not a noun." (Anh 2018). He then lamented that he was one in a hundred in terms of his English fluency—had access to the language of governance and decision-making, of licensing and regulation, in ways the majority of his Vietnamese/American shrimping peers did not. In spite of this, he was not necessarily aware that he, a Vietnamese/American shrimper, had been tasked by the state he lives and works in *to* be resilient prior to our conversation. Our discussion of the term for him emerged out of the

current epidemic of gun murder in the U.S.: “you hear after those shootings—oh those people are resilient. It’s like that, right?” And here is the crux of the issue: resilience is not Vietnamese, nor is it Vietnamese/American. In the context of coastal Louisiana, it is a decision-maker-designed concept parachuted into communities for whom Louisiana, CPRA, and others have decided is a central tenet of from an outside they cannot even name. In this way, resilience is not just a burden they must reverse-engineer into their lives if they are ever to survive it—a gift that resembles and now runs in direct parallel to the initial and ongoing burden of refugeeism vested Vietnamese/Americans by the state. A debt they cannot hope to repay and that, in the same way, will haunt them far into an opaque and, as I will show, already foreclosed, sacrificial future. Rather, Vietnamese/American refugee resilience is an official insurance policy—a state recognition that it cannot let the people it made vulnerable and under-resourced from resettlement on get in the way of mitigating risk for future oil investment. To secure and restore the landscape the state needs to make sure that investment remains not just possible, but is ensured.

CONCLUSION: RESILIENCE AS TOOL

Resilience as an apparatus of state control follows Jasbir Puar’s formulation of “debility”: “Those ‘folded’ into life are seen as more capacious or on the side of capacity, while those targeted for premature or slow death are figured as debility” (Puar 2017:153). While debility is profitable for capitalism—folks who are relegated to a non-future/premature death no longer stand in the way of industry and governmental extraction and risk-mitigation that ensures capital gain—“so is the demand to ‘recover’

from or overcome it" (Puar 2017:154). In the hands of local, state, and federal decision-makers, resilience is the mechanism that allows for this kind of future foreclosure and sacrifice. The stories of resilience articulated by Vietnamese/American community members throughout this chapter are discrete and damning reflections of the ways Louisiana's relationship to Vietnamese/American resilience is an ongoing and slow violence: in its transit from refugeeism to resilience, Vietnamese/American 'model'-ness has been reinfolded into refugeeism as a racial category; has been adapted to the contexts of those whom it aims to subsume. From war-contingent to multi-generational, from being predicated on war resettlement to encompassing a wide range of differently resourced presents, from equally homogenizing and overlapping global to U.S. South imaginaries, and from abstract nation to the material space and place of Southeast Louisiana, Vietnamese/Americans are asked to at once acquiesce to slow death and to overcome it.

The constantly moving target of resilience and its attributes ensures that Vietnamese/Americans will always be resilient. By adopting the criteria of resilience to match their already lived experiences— rather than responding to the ways they might need support or fostering their ability to live rather than merely survive—local, state, and federal decision-makers keep Vietnamese/Americans trapped in slow violence of the state's making. In instances where the future is opaque—feels alarmingly like risk—resilience is a story decision-makers can use to avoid reading Vietnamese/Americans into the landscape of an imagined, *terra nullius*-looking and sounding future that does not include them. In this way, resilient refugeeism allows "responsible" agencies like BP,

governmental bodies, and individuals to affirm Vietnamese/American resilience such that responding to radical change like disaster is not just a personal responsibility, but imperative to their ongoing and hyper-productive sacrifice.

CHAPTER THREE: RESTORATION & SACRIFICE AT THE MOUTH OF THE MISSISSIPPI

THE GREAT MISSISSIPPI FLOOD OF 1927 & ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

In the genealogy of my work, the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 is central to understanding how the management of water creates a blueprint for and justifies the management of water-dependent communities on Louisiana's altered and vulnerable coast. This is both because the flooding represented a clear shift in the federal government's deployment of colonial management thinking, and, significantly, is cited by CPRA as the origin and singular source of Louisiana's land loss. To parse the complexity of both the impact of the National Flood Act of 1928 and to give context to CPRA's claims-making about the flood, I use the rest of this section to trace a genealogy of risk, restoration, and power.

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The Mississippi River began to rise in the spring of 1926. It eventually overtopped its banks to inundate cities and food-producing regions from Illinois to the Gulf in the worst flood the nation had seen. Called a 'natural disaster,' the river's flooding was in large part the result of ongoing federal management of the Mississippi's basin, including levees, the designation of floodplains in majority-Black areas, and longstanding social and spatial segregation throughout the watershed (Barry 2007; Earnhardt 2017; Tucker 2011). Colton argues that by draining, filling, and otherwise manipulating the marsh to settle and fortify New Orleans, early French colonial settlers brought the Mississippi and its tributaries into a conversation about resource designation, management, and ownership.

What's more, "When Europeans applied their concepts of rivers as boundaries, they introduced legal notions of exclusive use or control over a fluid resource" (Colten 2014:29). This allows shows that in addition to pre-existing levee structures, thinking rivers as boundaries and sovereign territory made the Mississippi a space of science-backed and military precise coastal and communal management. infrastructure and socio-political precedents for the routes the flooding took, who it affected, and which human and more-than-human communities have been disallowed from recovering, even today.

Historian Susan Scott Parrish highlights how these environmentally and culturally situated violences were particularly transparent in Southeast Louisiana during flooding:

> *The flood's most dramatic moment occurred on April 29, when authorities—hoping to protect New Orleans—dynamited the levee 13 miles below the Crescent City at Caernarvon in order to flood the relatively less populated Acadian region of St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes...Without trees, grasses, deep roots, and wetlands, the denuded soil of the watershed could not do its ancient work of absorbing and stalling water after seasons of intense snow and rain. All the work of water management was meant to be accomplished by the towering levee system, one which had no outlets or spillways at the time. When a four-story-high levee burst, the river emptied itself upon southern land with the fierceness of Niagara Falls. Not only were levee structures a modern, industrial feature in the Delta, then, but the water draining so swiftly into the "funnel" was a byproduct of industrialized environmental development (Parrish 2017).*

Colton goes on to argue that while levees were a dominant part of the post-1927 discourse, "The principle adjustment from the 1927 flood-control policy was the explicit adoption of 'outlets' or structures to guide the 'escape of excess water from the main stem'" (Colten 2014:72), which set in motion the design and implementation of two flood mitigation structures, the Bonnet Carré Spillway and Morganza Floodway, into Lake Pontchartrain

and the Atchafalaya River basin, respectively. I will discuss both in more depth in the conclusion

This approach to ecosystem management—establish a protocol; when it fails, create a second; amend both using a third 'mitigation' strategy, and so on—is a hallmark of today's approach to coastal restoration, itself direct extension of the colonial logics of resource extraction and manipulation Colton pointed to above. It also marks the beginning of a science-dependent model of disaster mitigation and response, which, we will see, relies on developing 'fair and measured' science-based protocols that espouse federal, state, and local governance's objectivity in relation to coastal resources, people, more-than-human species, and futures.

Macarena Gómez-Barris' extractive capitalism is a useful analytic for these overlapping violences, wherein "colonial capitalism has been the main catastrophic event that has gobbled up the planet's resources, discursively constructing racialized bodies within geographies of difference, systematically destroying through dispossession, enslavement, and then producing the planet as a corporate bio-territory" (Gómez-Barris 2017:4). In the Anthropocene, decision-makers have irrevocably altered Earth's hydrologic, atmospheric, geologic, biospheric, and other processes to extract and produce as much capital as possible, and these changes overwhelmingly harm the most underserved, over-exploited, and ostracized communities globally.

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The transference of colonialist environmentalist management to the communities who live, work, and rely on those ecologies was particularly clear in The National Flood Control

Act of 1928, forwarded by the federal government to address the 1927 flooding. Under the act, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) fortified extant levees and built new ones around the mouth of the Mississippi River, locking it into its current meander path (as indicated in the second map in Figure 15, below). While this was meant to keep cities, farms, and industry safe from future major flood events—effectively, mitigating risk—this mode of river management was a short-sighted fix to a complex problem. Prior to the Act, the river flowed into the marshes surrounding its mouth via a network of small streams; after 1928, the Mississippi was forced into one single path that first, closed all of these this marsh-feeding channels, and second, because the river's mouth lines up with the edge of the continental shelf, sent all land-building sediment deep into the ocean.

To protect Baton Rouge and New Orleans from the river, USACE exacerbated the devastation of the landscape below both cities by cutting the Mississippi off from Louisiana's coastal marshes and the human and more-than-human communities who rely on them. In this way, leveeing and damming produced a zero-sum game where either landowners or the coast, cities or marshes, could survive. This follows the way I have discussed risk thus far: to ensure capital is saved, some people must be sacrificed.

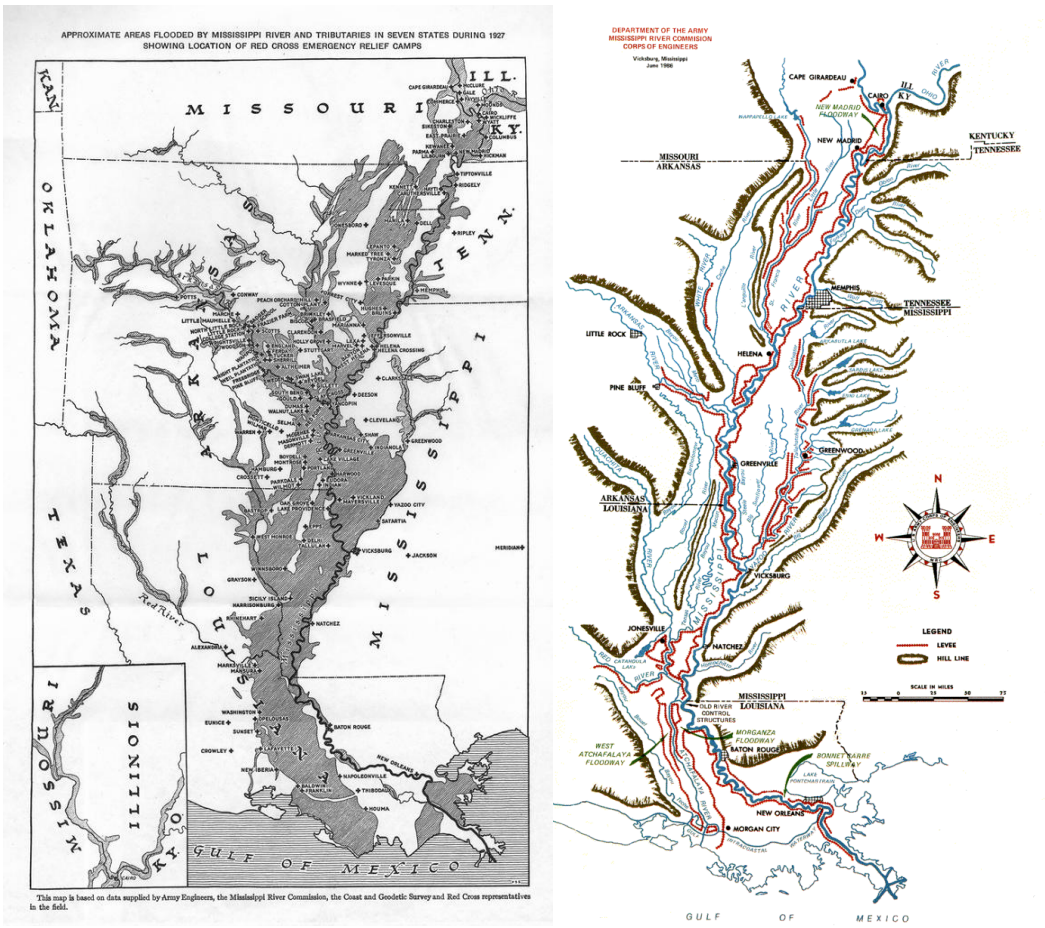

Figure 15. The map on the left, created by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Mississippi River Commission, the Coast and Geodetic Survey, and the Red Cross in 1928 shows "approximate areas flooded by the Mississippi River and Tributaries in Seven States during 1927" (Red Cross 2019). The map on the right, commissioned by the Department of the Army Mississippi River Commission Corps of Engineers in June 1986, shows the levee system (in red) that was produced in light of the 1927 flooding (Department of the Army Mississippi River Commission Corps of Engineers 1986). Both maps indicate how the U.S. Army Corps and its partners understood the Lower Mississippi River Basin as a region, within individual states, and infrastructurally, throughout the post-flooding period.

With these disjunctions in mind, it becomes clear that post-1928, the Mississippi and its tributaries function as imaginary-yet-tangible spaces that are used by decision-makers to contain, exclude, and function as sites of transit for resources and capital, including people (see: Du Bois 1998; Gardner 2019; Lawrence and Lawless 2018; Lawrence 2019) and state-making narratives. Given these properties, the post-National Flood Control Act Mississippi has been used as 'neutral, risk-evacuated space' where local, state, and federal decision-makers can execute and refine approaches to managing coastal human and more-

than-human communities who, largely because of state-produced vulnerabilities, rely on the river the most. This approach to conservation—based on scientific management rather than designed to holistically conserve complex coastal ecosystems, as Gómez-Barris showed in the introduction—paved the way for contemporary Louisianian risk-mitigating environmental restoration. Rather than a temporally fixed event, then, the flooding of 1927 has created a blueprint for how decision-maker-produced disaster and restoration-based responses haunt federal and state approaches to managing Louisiana's water, land, people, and more-than-human species.

This is particularly clear given that many of the communities and people most vulnerable and as such, most comprehensively sacrificed, to the 1927 flooding were Black, poor, and rural-dwelling (Parrish 2017). While what we now call environmental sacrifice reaches much further back into Louisiana's colonial Anthropocene than the late 1920s, as the flood is so often invoked in present-day coastal restoration imaginaries, I think it is worthwhile to be critical of how environmental racism consistently underwrites state-designed disaster response, from restoration to policy that manages disaster-prone places and the people whose lives are lived in them. It is useful to again invoke David Pellow's definition of environmental racism—"a form of authoritarian control over bodies, space, and knowledge systems" which allows us to "more effectively theorize it as a form of state violence" (Pellow 2016:13)—in this conversation about colonial management regimes and Louisiana's water past and present. This is because, as Katrina and BP showed, and as we see here, reaffirming vulnerable communities' ability to survive management-produced and replicated disaster is a neoliberalist bent on environmental sacrifice: everyone in the

way of generating oil revenue must take care of themselves. Every failure to survive and adapt is an individual failure to meet state resilience needs.

RESTORATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SUBSUMPTION

"Fisher[folk] were crying out for restoration—they see the coast bleeding every day. We always thought [oil] drilling was the issue...and we got restoration, but not the way we thought."

-Sue Ha, interview (2017)

According to CPRA, its diversion-centric restoration approach to the coast is a direct response to 90 years of land loss resulting from the Army Corps' leveeing of the river following the Great Flood of 1927. The 2007 Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast, where the Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion was first forwarded, uses the following language: **"**Because the Mississippi River is contained in levees and no longer overtops its banks in regular floods, the wetlands throughout the Deltaic Plain do not receive the sediment and water they need to regenerate. As a result, areas that were land are fast becoming open water. Reconnecting the river to the wetlands using large-scale river diversions will help the wetlands rebuild and reduce rates of land loss" (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority 2007:22-3). In protecting New Orleans and other river-adjacent communities from future flooding, the Corps trained the Mississippi's land-building sediment away from the marsh that protected the region against gale-force winds and storm surge, instead sending it impotently over the continental shelf.

The 1927 flood in many ways represents the beginning of the state's reliance on attritional catastrophe—which is marked by displacement that, across cumulative slow violence, "smooths the way for amnesia" (Nixon 2011:7). CPRA relies on attritional

catastrophe to create distance between the community-level effects of the diversion and its own extractive goals. By centering USACE's management of the river as the primary problem the coast faces, the Authority absolves the federal government and state from culpability in reproducing the very ecosystem-level and climate-related violences that hasten coastal land loss. Both have variously done this by: leasing the Gulf to private oil and gas companies, refusing to implement environmental and ecosystem-level protections, welcoming shipping and river commerce that pollutes the air and water, creating subsidies for large-scale industrial farming, which dumps billions of pounds of nitrates and other runoff into the Mississippi, helping produce a dead zone in the Gulf that grows larger every spring, and more. By pointing the finger solely at levees and poor river management on the part of the Corps, CPRA is able to refuse responsibility for practicing a risk-mitigation whose imperative it is to disappear Vietnamese/American commercial fisherfolk, shrimp and oysters, the community, and all industries and communities linked to them from Southeast Louisiana in a matter of years.

As Sue points out above, whereas Vietnamese/American shrimpers, who suffered economically from and actively cleaned up the BP oil catastrophe, knew drilling was a major culprit of coastal degradation, the institutionalized coastal restoration they got does not reflect this knowledge. Importantly, these two identified harms are not incommensurate; it is clear to everyone who works along the coast that unsustainable and violent oil and gas practices cut up and accelerate the loss of marshes that are starved for silt and sediment from a re-routed Mississippi. That the two are treated as singular and *oppositional* roots of coastal land loss—one or the other can be possible, but not both—

rather than united threads of the fabric of coastal environmental sacrifice points to the ways CPRA, in its official capacity as the coast's protector and restorer, has crafted an official landscape that serves its own best interests.

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As my introduction suggested, in several conversations I had with scholars, community leaders, and water advocates, I was told that the people who fought most fiercely for Louisiana to address coastal land loss had all but been forced out of the conversation once CPRA was codified. As I briefly explained elsewhere, because of the press coverage and governmental oversight engendered by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita's impacts on Louisiana's coast, the state passed Act 8. This established the CPRA, a state agency that partners with marine biologists, soil specialists, and other scientists, non-governmental organizations, and industry heads to solicit and implement three types of restoration projects: structural, non-structural, and restoration. It has a dedicated budget largely comprised of federal- and state-allocated funds, and publicly releases a budget annually to identify how these funds are and will be directed. In creating this organization, Louisiana integrated hurricane protection and coastal restoration, formerly the purview of disparate local authorities and parish governments, under one agency. Tasked with developing a comprehensive, science-vetted plan to stop the coast from washing away, CPRA created the 50-year Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast which, "in its purest sense, is a list of projects that build or maintain land and reduce risk to our communities" (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority 2017:ES-2). What this benign description leaves out is the voracity with which CPRA has positioned itself as the arbiter of Louisiana's neoliberal, state-centric environmentalism whose genealogy can be traced

back to French colonial resource management strategies in Louisiana long before it was annexed as a territory of the United States.

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Historical geographer Craig Colten has argued that European colonialism's impact on the U.S. South remains visible in the region's ongoing relationship to water. From the beginning of French settlement in Louisiana in the 16th century, the water, land, and marsh were spaces to be managed: "Europeans brought with them notions about deriving power from watercourses and legal principles to regulate access to and the just use of water. The colonists arrived with ideas of wetlands as undesirable and even dangerous places that demanded transformation for improved usage" (Colten 2014:12). Colten argues that colonial relationship to water was one of management, which consistently "followed the path of maximum exploitation to meet short-term needs rather than one of sustainability" (Colten 2014:8). Significantly, in Colten's narration, water management was a primary way to impose Euro-colonial values on an Indigenous landscape: "when colonial bodies drew on European concepts of water rights...European transformations ultimately led to [the] demise of some natural resources...It was the combination of expectations and capabilities to alter the waterways that overlaid thoroughly European legal concepts on the water" (Colten 2014:35-7). The irreversibly destructive quality of this approach to coming into relationship with ecosystems has produced today's climate catastrophes, accelerating both disaster and harm at a growing pace. The confluence of colonialisms as a primary tool to consolidate power and the advent of global heating and the extinction of human and more-than-human communities is no coincidence. By mandating environmentalism, restoration, and resilience to coastal peoples ensures CPRA

is able to consolidate its hold on the space and future of coastal Louisiana. By telling its own story about the coast rather than listening to those of residents, CPRA instantiates novel tools of a next-wave superhuman survival under climate change and a 'scientific' environmental relationships to space, place, and 'resource' (Gómez-Barris 2017; Park and Pellow 2011; Voyles 2015).

This is central to CPRA's approach to risk-mitigation, which requires vulnerable coastal people to be resilient under ever-increasing risk-mitigation-predicated harm. This, in turn, makes Vietnamese/American fisherfolk and other coast-dependent communities sacrifice-able under neoliberal logics that require them to survive *in spite of* harm rather than *because of* CPRA support. Under the master plan, to "help the wetlands rebuild and reduce the rate of land loss," the sacrifice will be commercial fishing:

> As sediment rich fresh water enters the system, areas that are suitable habitat for resources such as oysters and shrimp will shift…possibly within just 25 years, the habitat may deteriorate to the point that important fisheries are no longer viable. In a very real sense therefore, we must accept that fishing locations will need to change in order to provide a sustainable landscape over the long-term (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority 2007:22-3).

By using "we" in the 2007 plan, CPRA reinforces that MBSD is the best plan for the future of *all* Louisianians, a future the Authority itself arbitrates because as an agency, they use "the best available science and engineering" to "speak with one clear voice for the future of Louisiana's coast" (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority 2007). In spite of its own sobering findings, however, CPRA has failed to address these potential impacts to fisheries. To date, MBSD's design includes no mitigation measures to help fisheries adapt to increases in fresh water throughout Southeast Louisiana, nor has CPRA

substantively changed their approach to the diversion based on these findings. In fact, CPRA has slowly backed away from acknowledging that the diversion will harm fisheries at all. In subsequent plans (2012 and 2017), the above language about changes to commercial fisheries has effectively disappeared and been replaced with sections of the plan that position commercial fishing, oil and gas, shipping, and other industry as commensurate in terms of their need for land building.

That this management is predicated on refugee resilience underscores Nixon's claim that the slow violence of environmental catastrophe is an attritional catastrophe, which (re)produces displacement in time, place, rhetoric, and through technologies of violence that render sacrificial communities just another cost of doing restoration. For the folks with whom I work, commercial shrimping, the Birdfoot Delta as a space of daily life, and the future of both have effectively been made irretrievable in CPRA's drive to make the diversion that will preserve the land and water on and in which oil is extracted, refined, and shipped, and that creates a storm buffer for the cities of New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Foreclosing Vietnamese/Americans' present and future smooths the way for a collective amnesia—a forgetting people and more-than-human species are or were ever in the way—that in turn allows for restoration to not just proceed as planned, but to burst through the red tape of environmental protection laws, stopgaps like the USACE's Environmental Impact Statement, which itself deploys parallel logics of presence and absence, and other criteria for building massive diversion structures on an already volatile and tenuous ecosystem, rendering it not just possible, but a foregone conclusion. As the rest of this chapter shows, it is the foregone-ness of the MBSD—in both design and

implementation—and the particular resilience it will require that is most terrifying for Vietnamese/American commercial shrimpers and by extension, the entire community.

COMMERCIAL FISHING & COMMUNITY-BASED EXPERTISE

In a recent meeting I attended remotely in my work with FSS, Kimberly, the executive director of a restoration-based NGO that subcontracts to CPRA reported that for the next master plan, which will go live in 2023, CPRA has switched its decision-making structure. Rather than dividing folks into focus groups, a model that had certainly failed FSS and our clients (see the 'Community Sacrifice and 'Good' Science' section below), they have segmented the coast into zones based on coastal freshwater basins, including Barataria Bay and Breton Sound, the two diversion sites (see Figure 16, below).

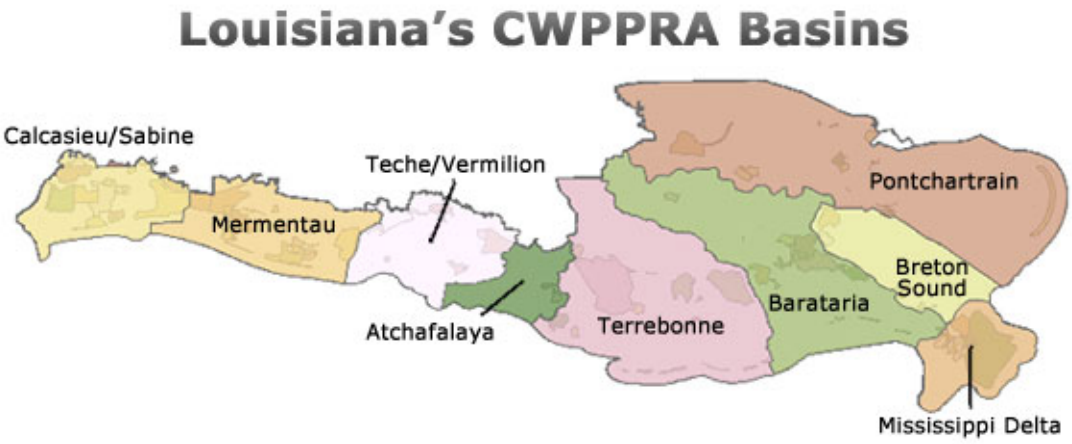

Figure 16. Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) basin map ***(Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Planning Protection and Restoration Act Program 2018).***

She went on to explain that these groups were small and made up of members from the previous stakeholder groups (private landowner, energy and industry, and navigation). When I asked why community-based organizations were not present in the basin-based

focus group model, Kimberly grew exasperated, saying: “making decisions about coastal restoration is *very* technical.” This reinforced what I have been suggesting throughout: ‘the technical’ is the purview of the state. Given this, the technical has crystallized into a set of knowledges based on risk-mitigating scientific data and environmentalism that coastal communities already relegated to resilience are incapable of exhibiting given the metrics that determine technical knowledge: academic degrees, governmental titles, and so on. With said knowledge, coastal decision-makers can, in turn, sacrifice those less knowledgeable, more resilient, to whatever future they imagine.

Immediately after Kimberly deployed this rather transparent formulation of the technical in the meeting, an Elder of one of coastal Louisiana’s First Nations tribes fired back: “Sure, it’s technical, but it’s not *rocket science* either.” Robert Bullard apprehends how “the technical” is deployed against sacrificed/sacrificable communities, writing: “Current environmental decision making operates at the juncture of science, technology, economics, politics, special interests, and ethics and mirrors the larger social milieu where discrimination is institutionalized. Unequal environmental protection undermines three basic types of equity: procedural, geographic, and social” (Bullard 2001:4). In “A Brief History of Asian American Activism and Why It Matters for Environmental Justice,” Sunny Chan addresses the erasure of people of color write large and Asian/Americans in particular from environmentalism: “Because activists against environmental racism work in a style different from the more conventional approaches of environmental conservation, it has been easy to overlook their actions as not environmental in scope” (Chan 2018:172). Institutionalized environmental decision-

making, then, erases what is not legible to it. Namely, the lives of Indigenous folks and people of color and the more-than-human communities and places they create life with.

Taking seriously this notion that Asian/Americans', Indigenous communities', and other people of color's environmentalism is illegible and thus not valuable to decision-makers, Nixon argues that sacrificed communities are "treated as disposable by turbo-capitalism…[and] confronted with the militarization of both commerce and development" (Nixon 2011:4). As such, they "can seldom afford to be single-issue activists: their green commitments are seamed through with other economic and cultural causes as they experience environmental threat not as a planetary abstraction but as a set of inhabited risks, some imminent, others obscurely long term" (Nixon 2011:4). This makes legible the mechanisms by which, as Puar suggested in her work on debility, Vietnamese/Americans, who are already marked for slow death, must always exhibit both their sacrifice (racialized refugee debtors to the nation) and ability to endure in spite of it (refugee resilience) under CPRA's disaster-reinforcing, restoration-based environmentalism which, I will show next, is exclusively interested in the reproduction and maintenance of the state.

COMMUNITY SACRIFICE AND 'GOOD' SCIENCE

While the master plan has placed an emphasis on the value of coastal communities (see Figures 17 and 18 below) in its literature, CPRA regularly disregards community needs and knowledge in its solicitation, research and design, and implementation processes.

Figure 17. A collage of photos representing coastal Louisiana residents, with a caption reading: "While coastal Louisiana provides the state, region, and nation with important natural resources, here the greatest assets are not oil and gas, fisheries, or sugar cane, but the people." The inclusion of these images and the accompanying caption in the 2017 Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast is an example of how CPRA identifies coastal communities as both an asset and a justification for the way it implements restoration projects (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority 2017:ES-3).
Figure 18. This infographic is captioned: "Together, the Louisiana coast and the Mississippi River create billions in economic value" in the master plan. Here, we see that while people matter in the prior image, it is, in fact, the economic value of the region that is central to CPRA's decision-making processes (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority 2017:25).

As I have suggested, one of the easiest ways to keep fisherfolk out of decision-making processes is to deny their expertise of the place they rely on to make life and livelihood. In three years of attending CPRA-led community forums, public comment sessions, and CPRA stakeholder meetings, community 'input' was never spoken about in proximity to expertise or knowledge. When myself, Sue, or others voiced our dismay that the people with whom we work were treated as red tape—public comments and responses to them were presented as a formality rather than used as a site for modifying or responding to

master plan projects, whose parameters were set far in advance of draft plans getting to the public—we were told CPRA had spaces for us to contribute to the plan's design.

The space they spoke about was a "community" focus group, one of five focus groups that brought together representatives from a particular subset of coastal stakeholders and ostensibly created a forum for stakeholder input. I learned later that the private landowner, energy and industry, and navigation groups did in fact function this way. However, the community focus group meetings I attended were sites for Authority representatives to speak about projects, as they were required to do, and nothing more. This met the base metric of a focus group, where attendees are kept informed (however, as CPRA was filtering what they shared with us, this could be debated), the people who ran the meeting consistently left less than ten minutes at the end of each meeting for questions. These meetings and question and answer periods did not give group members the opportunity to actually act as representatives of or advocates for their communities but instead made them passive consumers of state plans. The community focus group was dissolved following the 2017 master plan, and has not been replaced by another institutional or official forum. This shows, first, that 'the community' functions more as a metric than a heterogeneous group of people whose lives and livelihoods matter to the state, and second, that community knowledge will never be given legitimate weight or space—let alone active deference—in the master planning process.

CPRA ENVIRONMENTALISM: LOBBYING & REDEFINING THE LEGAL

CPRA's MBSD narrative—"While coastal Louisiana provides the state, region, and nation with important natural resources, here the greatest assets are not oil and gas, fisheries, or sugar cane, but the people" (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority 2017:ES-3)—follows Anna Tsing's understanding of social mobilizations. For Tsing, who is both critical of and finds value in social mobilizations, they are "facilitated by their appeal to diverse social groups, who find divergent means and meanings in the cause...are held up and redirected by their inclusion of varied groups, who disagree about what are supposed to be common causes and objects of concern. In this process, universalist causes are locally reconfigured, even as they are held by a wider-reaching charisma" (Tsing 2004:245-6). Through its use of risk-mitigation-centric environmentalism, CPRA makes the master plan a broadly charismatic site where differently positioned groups can come together around a common cause. While CPRA's outreach work and rhetorical centering of coastal communities suggests that they have designed the process to be reconfigured at the local level—a narrative they reinforce by 'offering' public comment sessions and at community-style meetings like FSS's—the plan, through its broader charismatic reach, in fact reconfigures the local, reinforcing a single story of proper science-based environmentalism and coastal saviorship.

Most importantly, these mobilizations form around collaborative objects, "which draw groups into common projects at the same time as they allow them to maintain separate agendas" (Tsing 2004:246). This was reinforced by Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards at the fourth State of the Coast conference in 2016. Edwards opened the

conference saying: “Protecting and preserving our coast first, encompasses so much of what [Louisiana is] knowing for—Cajun culture, Native groups, surge barriers, sportsmen—and second, shows the unique ability of [coastal preservation as an] issue to bring folks together with a common cause” (Edwards 2016). By appealing to the value of coastal culture, Edwards reinforced that his administration, and under it, CPRA, has designed a plan of and for the people of Louisiana, effectively making an appeal for the master plan as a collaborative object where all Louisianians can see themselves, and through which they can forward common goals.

For my purposes, and because MBSD has become the most widely written about, advocated-for, and significant project in the plan, rather than the master plan in its entirety, the object of CPRA’s environmental mobilization is the diversion itself. As an object, its primary purpose is building land and specific goal is intervening in disaster as an ongoing process. While variously contested, praised, and forced through red tape other projects would have no chance of meeting the criteria for, as a future event with serious present-day implications, the MBSD functions as a collaborative object that brings together environmentalists, people concerned about coastlines under climate change, folks engaged in restoration as a local and global project, and a myriad of planners, policymakers, governmental representatives, NGOs, in addition to coastal residents, small business owners, and other coast-dependent people at different times, intersecting points of agreement and need.

FSS DIVERSION MEETING

In May of 2017 just after the official master plan was passed, FSS attempted to bridge the divide between CPRA's exclusionary decision-making model and our clients by hosting an MBSD-centered meeting that brought together Vietnamese/American fisherfolk, FSS's partners, which included environmental NGOs like CRCL and Healthy Gulf, and coastal community-based organizations, and CPRA representatives. The meeting was held on the West Bank in the banquet hall of a Vietnamese restaurant next door to FSS's offices. Sue planned this both to make fisherfolk comfortable (she said: "we want them to know this is on our turf—that it's a place our [clients] know and come to" (Ha 2017)) and because the West Bank is a central node for Southeast Louisiana organizations to come together. Its relative proximity to Baton Rouge and our clients' docks made it equally easy and difficult for all invited groups to travel to, although the time cost for our clients was much greater than that of state representatives, whose job it arguably is to travel throughout Southeast and South Louisiana to 'educate' the populace about their work.

On the day, all of us at FSS woke up early and helped the restaurant's staff set up the banquet hall, which, with its crystal sconces, royal blue velvet curtains, and painted gold filigree, was designed to host weddings and private Tết celebrations rather than governmental restoration meetings. As our clients, partners, and CPRA representatives filtered in, we asked each to sign in, allowing us to document the attendees. Additionally, we asked Vietnamese/American attendees to grab Vietnamese language packets my peers had made detailing the MBSD project plan as it had been outlined in the final 2017 master plan. The packet also included a double-sided sheet of paper where they could

give comments regarding what they learned during the meeting. Once our 200-plus guests, overwhelmingly Vietnamese/American fisherfolk, settled in, Sue took the stage, erected five feet above the hall's dance floor, and welcomed everyone with an impassioned speech about the value of coastal education and creating a space for community feedback.

Figure 19. A photo I took during CPRA's presentation during FSS's diversion meeting.

And then it was CPRA's turn. One white man, a scientist who worked on the diversion project, stood behind a podium, allowing him access to a microphone and giving him control of a computer, from which a slide show presentation was projected on a large screen usually reserved for wedding videos and karaoke. The other CPRA representative was also an engineer; today, it is not unreasonable to think that he is the only Vietnamese/American in the entire organization, and was recruited on this trip for that

reason. In the months leading up to the meeting, Sue had suggested that she or Jane, both fluent in Vietnamese and, more importantly, in the language our clients used to talk about their businesses, the coast, and restoration, act as interpreter during CPRA's presentation. Our contacts at CPRA had, in turn, assured Sue that they had their own interpreter, whose scientific acumen made him the ideal interpreter.

As the CPRA portion of the day began, the white scientist launched into a practiced, dense explanation of each of the 30-plus slides. In his presentation, he detailed the USACE's mismanagement of the Mississippi and the resulting coastal land loss, presented CPRA maps of a future with no diversion to highlight its land-building capacity, and explicated the diversion's slated opening times in the spring, its proposed structure, and other minutiae about MBSD. As the white representative started to speak, the Vietnamese/American engineer took his own mic off its stand and assumed the affect of an MC: he paced the stage, initially speaking loudly and gesturing with each word, following the English language presentation of each slide with a passionate, but sparse interpretation. As the crowd continued to sit quietly, the Vietnamese/American scientist's performance diminished. By the middle, he was offering our clients single sentence explanations of ideas it had taken his English-speaking peer over a minute to explicate. By presentation's end, void of his earlier vigor, the Vietnamese/American scientist was muttering into the microphone, barely audible and it was clear even to me, whose Vietnamese has always been just below conversational in spite of years of study, was barely interpreting more than a few words of what his colleague said.

At this point, and much to the chagrin of Sue, who brings what follows up to this day, Vy Nguyen, who is not just a confidante of many of our clients but a long-time friend of Sue's, stood up from her place at a banquet table set to the right of the stage to designate our special guests, and said: "I don't mean to be rude, but less than twenty five percent of what was spoken [by Mr. Brown] was translated. I am going to ask people to raised their hands of they feel like they do not have enough information to comment on what was said." From my station at the back of the room, I silently celebrated Vy's intervention on behalf of the people for whom this presentation was meant but who were no clearer on the goals, and most importantly, the outcomes of the diversion for their fishery, than they had been forty-five minutes prior. As Vy asked her question in Vietnamese, over 80% of the fisherfolk assembled raised their hands, indicating that they had not learned anything from the presentation and as such, could not cconfidently comment on MBSD's operation or output. Sue resumed the stage, her face pale and hands shaking. She thanked the CPRA representatives for their presentation and suggested we all break for lunch.

I walked to the generous buffet our hosts had set up and used my broken Vietnamese to listen in as our clients joked about how horrible the presentation had been. Given their experiences of being underserved as residents, in disaster, and following myriad rounds of public meetings, public comments, and other 'engagement opportunities,' many fisherfolk felt that they were just there to be there. Walking into meetings like this, and after decades of being treated like lab rats in the machinery of Louisiana politics, they *knew* they would be neither educated nor heard. This cycle of receiving the 'opportunity' to engage in the decision-making process through the mechanism of public comments,

learning that their comments largely or wholly went unacknowledged once the final version of the policy, plan, ordinance, etc. is published, then being effectively told that they are not experts on the place, industry, ecosystems, etc. they personally rely on daily and as such, their contributions did not 'fit' the plan, has become so devastating that they expected such a performance from CPRA. That FSS had been the organization to deliver it was both frustrating—*we thought you all had our backs*—and at the same time, softened the blow: *Sue* does *have our best interests at heart, so we just have to grin and bear this most recent reminder of how little we matter.*

When we resumed the meeting, fisherfolk were given the opportunity to ask questions of CPRA. This process followed so many other meetings I had attended prior to this one: as Sue and Jane took turns translating our clients' questions from Vietnamese to English, the white CPRA scientist shook his head: *we just don't know how the MBSD will impact shrimp.* One older Vietnamese/American shrimper stood up, and in crystal clear English said: "you're telling us our industry don't matter," to which the representative, as shaken as Sue had been half an hour before, told him, "Of course you matter! We just can't tell you how diversions will impact shrimp." The muttering of our assembled clients reached a fever pitch even before Sue translated what he had said in Vietnamese. No one bought this and frankly, they had no reason to; it was just more of the same nonsense they had been hearing since at least the 2012 plan, and for some, for a full decade.

The rest of the day, while more community-focused, felt as ineffective. After the CPRA representatives and many of the big greens left, Vy and Sue shared the mic, trying to

make sense of the convoluted feedback form, which had clearly been passed through Google translate, making the resulting language a near-Vietnamese version of CPRA legal/scientific restoration language. This too had been done by CPRA rather than Jane or anyone else who had Vietnamese and coastal, shrimping-centric language acumen. Some overwhelmed, others annoyed, our clients, who cared for everyone at FSS and wanted to see us succeed, diligently scribbled a few words on the comment form, then began filtering out to smoke cigarettes outside of the restaurant, talk shit about another failed meeting, and head home knowing they had lost a day of work for little to no gain.

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Because CPRA's engagement processes refuse the needs and knowledge of coastal residents, the fisherfolk I work with feel as though they have nowhere to turn to address what they know is impending doom. As I suggested above, as people who have also been subjected to innumerable coastal studies following disaster, and given the ways they have been made into objects of research by scholars (see the introduction), Vietnamese/Americans are well aware that the sites in and through which they are brought into conversations about the coast are not for them. Rather, as FSS's diversion meetings and other 'engagement opportunities' I highlight below show, public comment sessions and community forums are a box for decision-makers to check on their road to pushing through policy, projects, and other legislation that was a foregone conclusion long before they reached the communities that will actually be affected by their implementation. At the same time, the way Vietnamese/Americans are brought into this conversation affirms that, rather than being valuable as community members, Vietnamese/American fisherfolk are useful because their resilience in the face of

everything that comes their way makes them a natural fit for caretaking an environmental sacrifice zone.

While we had meant the day to be a community-centric meeting where our clients finally felt empowered to speak their truths and get tangible answers to their real, pressing questions, it had instead reinforced for them that decision-makers do not think about Vietnamese/Americans and fisherfolk as knowledgeable about, let alone experts of, the ecosystems and political landscape of Southeast Louisiana. In our quest to use the official landscape's tools to dismantle it—or, at least make it more community-centric—we, a fisherfolk-centric organization who is not just sympathetic to, but adamant about uplifting Vietnamese/American and other fisherfolks' concerns and deep, generational, heterogeneous, and nuanced knowledge of their industry and the places they live and work, had only reaffirmed and highlighted the ways Vietnamese/Americans are left out of the master plan process in the present such that they are foreclosed from its imagined future.

As this meeting showed and, following Bahng on risk, the MBSD is CPRA's corrective to the fear of a disaster-subsumed future. The state at once produces and seeks to recuperate a former state of pre- or non-disaster through restoration. Each time a CPRA representative reaffirms that they cannot say what the diversion will do to oyster, finfish, and shrimp populations, state waters, and the larger commercial fishing ecosystem, they are writing these populations, state waters, and the larger commercial fishing ecosystem out of existence. The fact that a science-based plan doesn't understand the science of its

own project shows how deliberate Vietnamese/American sacrifice is—it is not that CPRA does not know the science underwriting the project, but rather that it does not focus on the ways this science will impact communities summarily refuses them a place in the state's *terra nullius* future landscape. This elision and erasure is produced by CPRA's restoration-specific, diversion-centered environmentalism, which has been formulated by power brokers and that CPRA emplaces itself in through alliances it builds in relation to the diversion. This was highlighted in my experiences at State of the Coast, where community members, coastal tribal Elders, and small business owners like commercial fisherfolk were not present, but private industry members, 'good' scientists, and governmental and NGO-based representatives were effectively having the conversations that shape the coast today and well into the future behind closed doors. This elision shows, too, how CPRA's environmentalism pivots on upholding some knowledges and rejecting others, namely the wealth of regional, ecosystem-level, and industry-specific expertise Vietnamese/Americans have developed to survive in Southeast Louisiana.

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In the following section, I trace some of the ways Louisiana representatives and CPRA officials have used their primacy as environmental decision-makers to force MBSD through federal and state-level red tape. To do this, I critically trace the ways MBSD functions as an object of statecraft that, packaged in the language of environmentalism, ensures a future for state oil, shipping, and tourism capital, as well as its major cities. This allows me to further interrogate how MBSD-centered environmentalism subjects

Vietnamese/American fisherfolk to ongoing slow violence in the form of disaster- and refugee-predicated resilience in the state's *terra nullius* void of risk.

COASTAL LOUISIANA: AN EMERGENCY

"Projections of futurity abound, each preoccupied with fears of oncoming deterioration, disaster, or accident. Some invite us to buy into these futures markets, placing bets on which will return the best dividends; others imagine things differently."

-Aimee Bahng, Migrant Futures (2018:9)

In spring 2017, USACE was solidifying their approach to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Mid-Barataria, projecting a 5-year timeline to project completion. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards and several congressmen felt this timeline failed to acknowledge the urgency with which they were forwarding the project and, on April 19th, 2017, the same day the final 2017 master plan was approved by CPRA, Edwards declared a State of Emergency for Coastal Louisiana. The State of Emergency was the first of several tactics Louisiana officials employed to appeal to the federal government to accelerate the process. In a press release from his office, Governor Edwards explained:

> The Louisiana coast is in a state of crisis that demands immediate and urgent action to avert further damage to one of our most vital resources…Immediately addressing this crisis will rejuvenate Louisiana's economy and provide benefits across generations and positively impact the nation's economy, including energy production; transportation and refining; intermodal commerce and trade; fisheries; disaster resilience; and natural resources (Office of the Governor 2017).

The press release went on: "Louisiana's coast is home to over half of the state's population and significant industries that provide jobs, taxes, and products that are intertwined with the entire state's wellbeing and economic productivity. These coastal resources are also vital to the national interest in the areas of energy, chemicals, international trade, fisheries, and national defense" (Office of the Governor 2017). By

framing disaster resilience as both an environmental threat and an economic benefit, Edwards appealed to the 45th administration's recent interest in "High Priority Infrastructure Projects." In March of the same year, 45 had signed an executive order entitled 'Expediting Environmental Reviews and Approvals for High Priority Infrastructure Projects,' after which Edwards had sent a letter appealing for 45 to flag the master plan as "high priority," (Edwards 2017) to which 45 did not respond.

A Nola.com article on the state of emergency explained that "The proclamation is to be sent to [45] and members of Congress. Edwards wants [45] to declare coastal erosion a national emergency and pressure the Army Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies to speed approvals for sediment diversion projects and other initiatives outlined in Louisiana's $50 billion, 50-year coastal master plan" (Baurick 2017). This suggests that, rather than stemming from concern over coastal land loss writ large, Edwards was demanding that the EIS process be expedited specifically for MBSD. This is confirmed later in the article: "Edwards also is *asking Congress to change federal laws to exclude coastal restoration projects from environmental laws*. In the alternative, he asked that Congress allow approvals under a special fast-tracked process" (Baurick 2017, emphasis mine). The laws the article refers to are the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (IJFA), which, as I outlined in the introduction, are key laws that regulate fisheries and ensuring the health of more-than-human marine species commercial fisherfolk rely on. Critically, while commercial fisherfolk must observe these laws to the letter—a practice they overwhelmingly benefit from, as fisheries stock are

kept robust through monitoring under each—in the above appeal, Edwards does not believe the state of Louisiana should be required to do the same. The governor and CPRA's eagerness to circumvent environmental laws, which overwhelmingly apply to marine fish and mammal species, shows that the diversion is not intended to (re)build land for commercial fisherfolk or their families, but to preserve the ecosystems needed for continued private oil and gas investment.

As I suggested in the introduction, this commitment to circumventing environmental protections also showed up during State of the Coast 2018 when a prominent CPRA official suggested that they would find ways around all three acts. It is clear now that the irony of this allusion is that the Vietnamese/American and other fisherfolk sacrificed in favor of building and operating the MBSD must adhere to every letter of each of these laws to remain in good standing with LDWF, NOAA, and the Coast Guard to maintain their businesses and community. This, in addition to all of these methods of creating state workarounds to what it sees as hurdles and community members feel the economic, legal, and social pressure of, highlights how MBSD has always and will continue to operate outside of the everyday 'given' structures that contain residents' mobility in service to a governance-produced imaginary that, unbounded in this way, easily elides regulation.

GRAVES' ENDANGERED CAJUNS

While Edwards' letter and declaration of a state emergency failed to elicit a response, they set a precedent for subsequent attempts at accelerating the EIS process or otherwise pushing MBSD through without a full EIS. The most absurd approach was that of former CPRA Director and now-Louisiana Congressman Garret Graves, who introduced an

amendment to designate Louisiana's Cajuns as an endangered species before the House Natural Resource Committee on October 10, 2017 (Graves 2017). Graves argued that by requiring an Environmental Impact Statement for the project, the federal government is preventing CPRA from restoring Cajun habitat. In naming South Louisiana Cajuns' "habitat," Graves makes Cajuns the region's primary stakeholders. This, first, nativizes an early colonial community, at once erasing the existence of Chata, Houma, Chittimacha, Atakapaw, and Chickasaw first peoples and equating settlement with inheritance. Second, in evacuating Indigenous and other communities of color from South Louisiana, Graves re-imagines the relationship between the region's history and its land, water, and people, which sets a precedent for erasing the folks with whom I work from the region.

The primary concentration of the Cajun community is in an area called Acadiana (or land of the Acadians, which was Cajuns' identifier when they fled British colonial persecution in Nova Scotia to Louisiana in the 17th and 18th centuries) spans central coastal Louisiana. As you can see from the map below (Figure 20), Lafourche parish is Acadiana's southeastern-most edge, which lies across the bay from the diversion site, and will not be affected by the proposed Mid-Breton Sound Sediment Diversion at all.

Figure 20. Map of coastal Louisiana indicating the boundaries of Acadiana in orange (American Planning Association Louisiana Chapter 2019).

Examining the map, it becomes clear that declaring Cajuns an endangered species is most useful in that it would set a precedent for implementing future coastal projects. Writing about the erasure of First Nations communities, Winona LaDuke says "This is the problem with history. If you make the victim disappear, there is no crime" (LaDuke 2017). For Graves and his peers, endangerment operates on a spectrum: Indigenous first people, people of color, and all other underserved residents of the coast occupy one end and Cajuns the other. In the middle lie 'resources' including land, water, more-than-human communities, infrastructure, and, most importantly, state legibility. In this configuration, Vietnamese/American shrimpers and their community, Isle de Jean Charles tribal members, oyster leaseholders, and so many others are mobile whereas Cajuns are fixed; many communities must be resilient to survive while one requires that the state adapt to ensure their—or more pointedly, its own—survival. That Isle de Jean

Charles' residents have been forced to adapt to survive the ongoing state-sanctioned genocide to which LaDuke alludes (and are now being asked to resettle), points to the deep power imbalance inherent in Graves' articulation of Cajun "habitat."

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Although Graves' measure failed and CPRA has yet to get the green light to throw marine protections out the window, the very possibility of their appeals simultaneously amplifies and erases how power operates at the intersections of governance, coastal restoration, resource use and management, land and water habitat preservation, race, and class. By using Cajuns as a strawman to center state interests above all else, Graves both irreversibly rearranges the geography of the coast and sets a precedent for how decision-makers deploy it in discourse. This, in turn, reinscribes the value of settler colonialist governance over Indigenous communities', Vietnamese/Americans', and other underserved communities' survival. Put differently, by forwarding and yet ultimately failing to secure endangered species status for Cajuns, Graves highlights the deeply colonialist threads that run through the state's environmental imaginary. Similarly, CPRA's insistence on dissolving environmental protections for some of Louisiana's inhabitants—the ones, incidentally, that shrimpers rely on to make their living and life in Southeast Louisiana—shows that the state's diversion-centered environmentalism is nothing like Vietnamese/American, Indigenous, or other coastal peoples'. Together, Graves, former head of CPRA, and the current representative show that, instead, Louisiana's restoration environmentalism is a technical, 'good science'-backed one that reaffirms the need for diversions—*but not for Vietnamese/Americans*—in Southeast Louisiana.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SCOPING MEETINGS & COMMENTS

In the lead-up to the USACE's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which allows them to develop an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to ensure that a project meets the federal government's definition of environmental justice under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Corps conducted scoping meetings, meant to be informational for attendees as well as sites for locals to submit oral public comments, throughout July 2017.

Sue asked me to go with her to one of the scoping meetings in Belle Chasse, a central node of commercial fishing in the delta, last minute; when we arrived at the Belle Chasse Auditorium at 5:10 pm, I realized that while I had worn my official FSS shirt and good slacks for the event, I had been rushing to meet Sue and instead of more presentable shoes, had worn Birkenstocks to an even well-attended by suit-wearing USACE and CPRA representatives. The auditorium, which, from the outside, looked like an old coastal church, had been renovated earlier that year. Like a church, it had one primary meeting area that ran the width of the building and boasted beautiful vaulted ceilings. Rather than pews, the center of the room was filled with folding chairs, which were overwhelmingly occupied by our clients, who wore what they had worked in that day—house slippers, muddied once-white shrimping boots, jeans and t-shirts—in addition to heavy black headsets. For this and other meetings, the Corps had contracted an interpretation service to interpret the evening's presentations in real time. Three interpreters sat at a collapsible picnic table in the back of the room where, I imagined, they traded off relaying USACE and CPRA's message. I stood in the back corner of the

massive room where I hoped my chipped toe polish and worn-in sandals wouldn't be as noticeable.

My shoe discomfort was borne entirely of the room's tone; our clients, numbering about 200, felt matched in numbers by tall, impeccably dressed agency officials who had set up large, academic-style posters full of diversion maps and statistics against both walls on either side of the folding chairs. At the front of the space, a USACE representative delivered opening remarks from a podium, an enormous screen full of text behind them. As USACE and CPRA officials traded off speaking their piece, I saw fisherfolk examine the program, lean toward their partners, and discuss what they were hearing. It was all incredibly familiar to me at this point; whereas FSS's diversion meeting presentation had gone on for almost 45 minutes, what was being covered this evening was short and basic. As the programming came to a close, a USACE representative gestured to a set of questions on a slide behind him and told the crowd that there were official reporters available following the meeting. The idea was that if folks wished to give oral rather than written comments, the reporters would listen—for up to three minutes, which I had observed was the standard oral comment time for both state and federal business—and record what commenters said such that their ideas would be added to the pool of scoping comments USACE was currently in the process of soliciting. Several well-dressed folks stood up and waved, indicating that they were those to whom comments could be addressed.

I looked up from examining my program as metal folding chairs ground against the newly finished mahogany flooring and our clients began filing out of the

auditorium, realizing that not one 'audience member' took USACE up on the opportunity to give oral comments. USACE has also left a stack of comment cards at the interpreter table, which most of the attendees did pick up on their way out. Sue rushed out the door, and I was left to make small talk with the CPRA representatives and organizational heads I recognized. After about twenty minutes, I went to look for her—she was my ride back to New Orleans—and found Sue squatting on the auditorium's clapboard steps, smoking, and listening to the twenty-odd fisherfolk who had formed a circle around her. Upon seeing me, she said her goodbyes and we walked back to her pickup. Closing the door, she rolled her eyes and said "Another pointless meeting. You know what we're gonna do? We're gonna turn our office into a formal place for our fisher[folk] to give comments. We'll help them and translate and shit—that way they can feel comfortable" (Nguyen 2017).

What our clients had told Sue—what I already knew reading the room—was that the event, as formal as any we had attended behind closed doors, was deeply alienating for them. While they had had access to interpretation, which, in the summer of 2017, was only then becoming something state and federal officials considered when organizing events, hearing everything the speakers said only reaffirmed what they already knew: MBSD was coming, it would hurt them, and not one slide or word addressed how. As one of our clients later wrote in their comments: "the scoping meeting processes wasn't very effective in hearing people's opinions. They instructed us to choose one of the 3 questions presented on the slide and answer it. I felt like my opinion would not be valued."

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A 60-day public comment period (July 6 – September 5, 2017) overlapped the meeting we attended, in addition to two others in Lafitte and Port Sulphur which, to USACE's credit, were also in areas where many of our clients worked, lived, or both. During the comment period, written comments could be submitted by anyone living in the MBSD project area and Southeast Louisiana using a form that, when folded in half, already bore the Corps' local mailing address and pre-paid postage. In the six weeks leading up to the scoping comments deadline, Sue followed through on her plan to make our offices a hub of support: FSS conducted outreach throughout its service area and in our client networks to let residents know they could receive linguistic and technical help submitting their comments. 293 clients participated in this process and wrote their own comments with the help of Jane and Sarah. Many were written by fisherfolk themselves in Vietnamese and English; some were interpreted, then translated by staff members from Vietnamese into English.

Sarah scanned each written comment into digital form and uploaded it to our system, giving every FSS staff member access to our clients' comments. Sorting through them, I chose to screenshot several responses (all of which I removed names from and that have since been made public in the USACE's Scoping Report (USACE 2017)) in English that are representative of the general tenor and breadth of FSS's clients' collective comments. I also chose these comments because they represent the perspectives of fisherfolk who work on boats every day, as well as their partners and dependents, all of whom will be similarly affected by MBSD. More, the authors of these comments represent the

experiences of the majority of Vietnamese/American residents in Southeast Louisiana who are all connected to a commercial fishing boat in some way, be it socially, economically, and through given and chosen kinship networks.

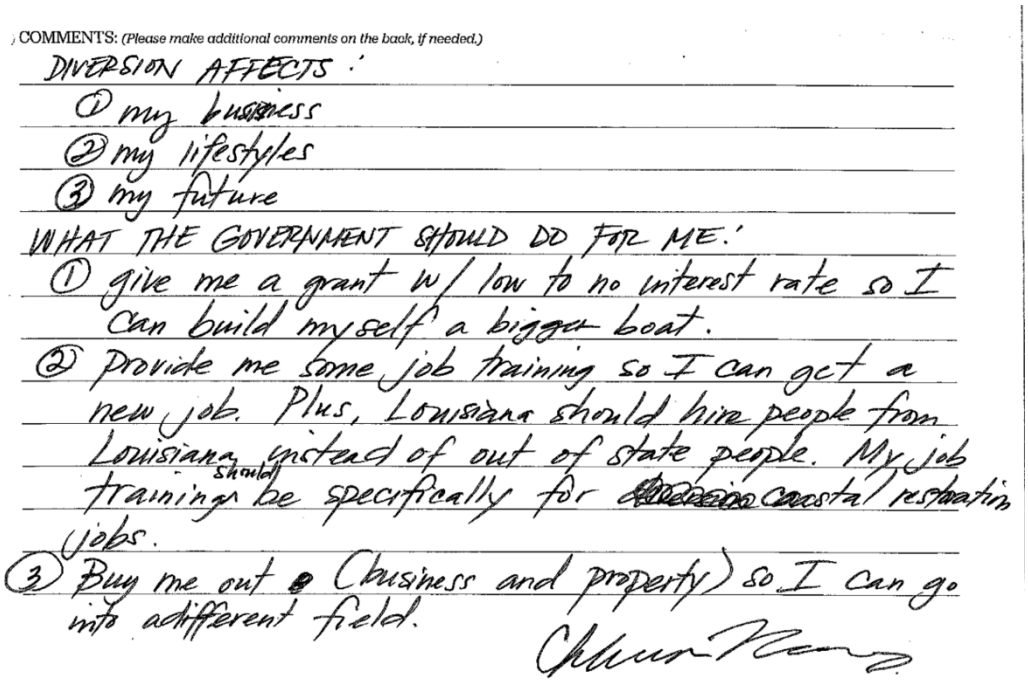
COMMENTS: (Please make additional comments on the back, if needed.)
DIVERSION AFFECTS:
① my business
② my lifestyles
③ my future
WHAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO FOR ME:
① give me a grant w/ low to no interest rate so I can build myself a bigger boat.
② provide me some job training so I can get a new job. Plus, Louisiana should hire people from Louisiana instead of out of state people. My job training should be specifically for coastal restoration jobs.
③ Buy me out (business and property) so I can go into a different field.

Figure 21. Comment 1, which reads: "Diversion affects: (1) my business (2) my lifestyles (3) my future. What the government should do for me: (1) give me a grand w/low to no interest rate so I can build myself a bigger boat. (2) provide me some job training so I can get a new job. Plus, Louisiana should hire people from Louisiana instead of out of state people [to work on the diversion]. My job training should be specifically for coastal restoration jobs. (3) Buy me out (business and property) so I can go into a different field" (GEC 2018a).

Ý KIẾN: (Hãy viết tiếp vào mặt sau nếu không đủ chỗ.)

I do not agree with the releasing of the freshwater into the saltwater for many reasons. My father will not make enough money to pay for our family. He is the worker of our family, meaning he is the one who is paying for our financial bills and education for my brother and me. My mom cannot speak English, so she stays home and takes care of the house and her children. We have friends who have the same occupation as my father, and they depend on the profit that they make to survive. If you decide to release the freshwater, keep in mind all the lives you would make more difficult and all the hard work you would put down the drain. Many of the fishermen have children that, with the release, will have to work in order to help their father. I understand that it's a small thing to

Tape or staple here

ponder about, but the release of freshwater will move the shrimp away, creating less shrimp to profit of. Please don't release the freshwater. It can create a gruesome impact in our lives and many of others who have worked extremely hard for the lives that we currently have this day.

Figure 22. Comment 2, which reads: "I do not agree with the releasing of the freshwater into the saltwater for many reasons. My father will not make enough money to pay for our family. He is the worker of our family, meaning he is the one who is paying for our financial bills and education for my brother and me. My mom cannot speak English, so she stays home and takes care of the house and her children. We have friends who have the same occupation as my father, and they depend on the profit that they make to survive. If you decided to release the freshwater, keep in mind all the lives you would make more difficult and all the hard work you would put down the drain. Many of the fishermen have children that, with the release, will have to work in order to help their father. I understand that it's a small thing to ponder about, but the release of freshwater will move the shrimp away, creating less shrimp to profit [off] of. Please don't release the freshwater. It can create a gruesome impact in our lives and many of others who have worked extremely hard for the lives that we currently have this day" (GEC 2018a).

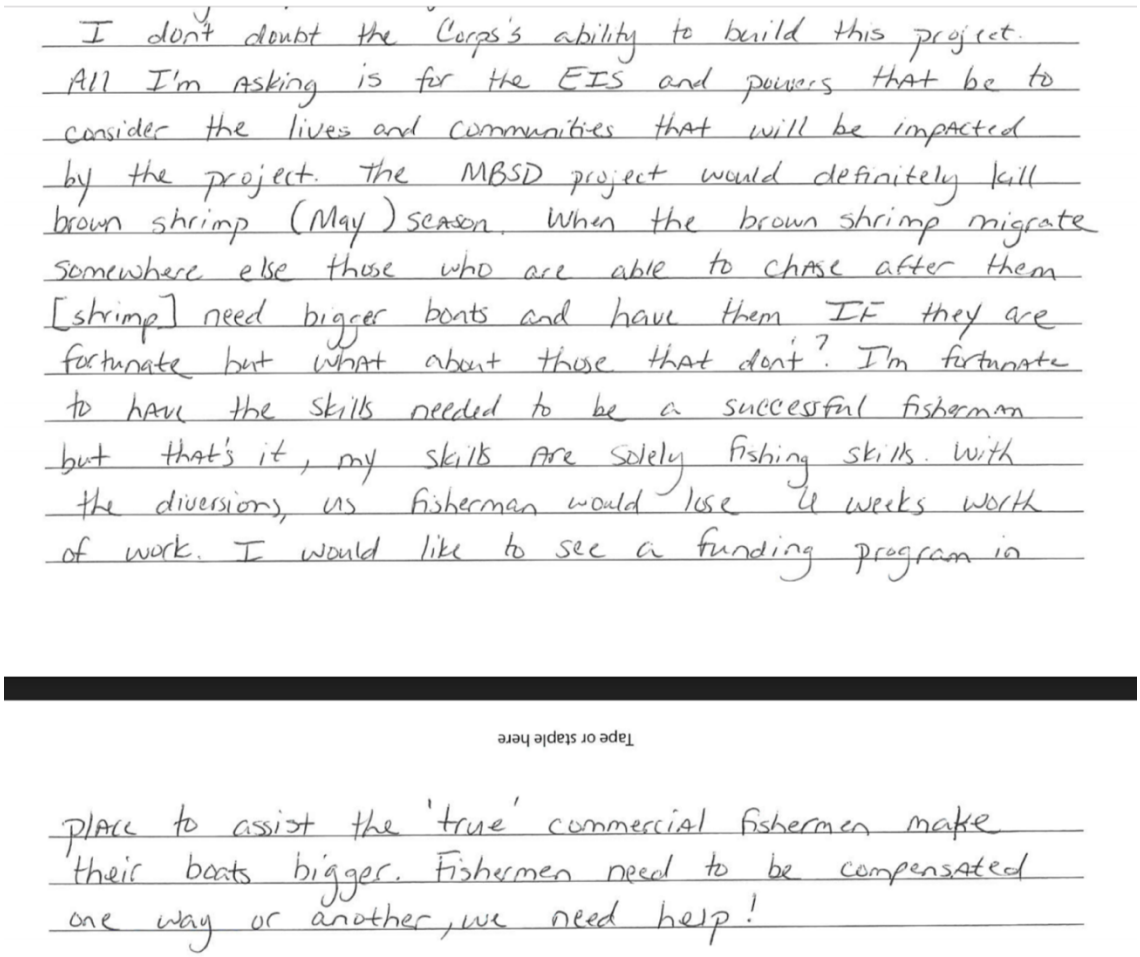

Figure 23. Comment 3, which reads: "I don't doubt the Corp's ability to build this project. All I'm asking is for the EIS and powers that be to consider the lives and communities that will be impacted by the project. The MBSD project would definitely kill brown shrimp (May) season. When the brown shrimp migrate somewhere else those who are able to come after them (shrimp) need bigger boats and have them IF they are fortunate but what about those that don't? I'm fortunate to have the skills needed to be a successful fisherman but that's it, my skills are solely fishing skills. With the diversions, us fishermen would lose 6 weeks work of work. I would like to see a funding program in place to assist the 'true' commercial fishermen [to] make their boats bigger. Fishermen need to be compensated one way or another, we need help!" (GEC 2018a).

Together, the comments above cohere to represent a depth and breadth of community-based knowledges that exist within the Vietnamese/American Southeast Louisiana community that directly confront and engage with the official narrative meant to subsume them. They reflect several key objections to the diversions, which include:

1. **The future of commercial shrimpers requires maintaining a particular kind of ecosystem-level health in Barataria Bay and along the coast more broadly**: Shrimp require primarily saltwater to survive and reproduce; this is particularly true of brown shrimp, who, as Figure 8: Shrimp Lifecycle in the introduction shows, require the muddy marsh to reach maturity. Commercial fisherfolk have a feel for the water's health—they study salinity levels, follow moon charts to know when tides will come in and go out. They know what water and shrimp, other marine communities, wind and weather feel like below their feet and in their bodies. While CPRA says they do not know what will happen to shrimp when MBSD is opened, fisherfolk absolutely do.
2. **An influx of freshwater will push shrimp out of state waters**: As I have suggested, most of FSS's clients are economically dependent on state waters for their income first, because they, as comment 3 suggests, cannot afford to build boats that are big enough to shrimp in federal waters and second, because the permitting and other regulatory processes that govern each kind of shrimping are drastically different—the kinds of licenses, permits, and insurance required to shrimp in federal waters are not just financially prohibitive for lower-income fisherfolk; for a decade, a moratorium on new federal shrimping permits has prevented fisherfolk with the means to build or buy bigger boats from entering federal/offshore waters. If shrimp are no longer abundant in state waters because the water itself is inhospitable to their survival, most commercial fisherfolk will no longer be able to support their businesses, families, and community.

3. **Shrimping is most folks' primary or only skill set:** Specifically for fisherfolk older than 60 and with limited or no formal English, seeking work in another industry feels near impossible. This is not because folks have not tried; commercial shrimping has been a tenuous source of income since BP, and folks who rely it have sought out alternative employment at various times; most have returned to their boats either because they could not find other jobs or because it became clear that they could not support their families with the minimum wage, multiple-shift work they were able to secure outside the industry.
4. **Shrimpers understand the economy of Southeast Louisiana and know they cannot survive without the industry**: This goes to number three, and specifically addresses the portions of comments that suggest government-funded training programs, loans, and buyouts. However, in suggesting these measures—which are often positioned as 'mitigation' measures by decision-makers and which, significantly, CPRA has never included in any master plan or annual plan—FSS's clients are well aware that they will never come to fruition. Rather, these ideas for formalizing a diversion-related set of mechanisms for supporting the effects of freshwater inundation into Barataria Bay recognizes and recenters commercial fishing as an entity unto itself—lifts it up as a set of interrelated and interdependent human and more-than-human communities that will certainly need a new way of life or, barring life, a new way of imagining, once it is wiped out.

While these responses seem to in some ways reflect the official landscape back to itself, by re-centering the value of commercial shrimping not just to individuals, but as an

industry that is firmly situated in the ecosystems of Southeast Louisiana and within the bedrock of the region's Vietnamese/American community, these comments reflect a community-based knowledge of how the coast actually works. By directly addressing the silences that surround and the opacity of CPRA's process, silences that are firmly a part of the Authority's official landscape, FSS's clients refuse their foreclosure in the oil-centric, risk-mitigating *terra nullius* the state has been crafting for a decade. These comments push against a CPRA-produced imaginary of the coast that not just excludes, but evacuates Vietnamese/American and commercial fishing from the delta and the diversion.

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As our understanding of our clients' expertise around the diversion was reinforced by their comments, Sue and I incorporated the above knowledges into an official FSS public comment, which I have replicated in full below:

To Whom It May Concern, *August 30, 2017*

[Fisheries Support Services (FSS)] is the only 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to serving the industry-specific needs of Southeast Louisiana's commercial fisher[folk], fishing-dependent small business owners, and their families. [FSS's] primary function is to support our clients through business technical assistance and training in imperative operational skills, and act as a liaison between commercial fishermen and key agencies to keep them up to date on shifting coastal circumstances.

Over the last 3 years, we have provided outreach and education to our clients regarding the Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion, the projected design and implementation of which could drastically impact the area's shrimp and oyster populations. The majority of [FSS's] 1,300 clients fish highly regulated inside [state] waters, which makes them more economically vulnerable and significantly more reliant on the coast's ecological health. To this end, we wish to submit comments based on the feedback we have received from Southeast Louisiana's commercial fisher[folk] regarding the Army Corps' EIS of the planned CPRA Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion.

Given our clients' feedback, we are concerned about the following ecosystem-level issues:

- *Running diversions primarily in the spring when up-stream water volume is highest will suffocate juvenile shrimp, crabs, and other species, who use the bay to reach maturity from March to May. This will drastically impact both the size and volume of shrimp in the bay and Gulf writ large.*
- *As oysters are stationary throughout their life-cycle, they will instantly die any time the diversion is run. This will harm and potentially indefinitely shut down the fishery in the bay and surrounding areas;*
- *Inundating the bay with fresh water will kill most shrimp larvae in the area. Those that do survive will be pushed further out into the Gulf, beyond the inside water boundary designated by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. This will disallow the majority of our clients from participating in the industry, forcing them to find employment and possibly, residence, elsewhere.*
- ***this study should explicitly identify the impacts of the diversion on brown shrimp, white shrimp, oysters, and other seafood that is the foundation of Louisiana's 3rd largest industry*** *to holistically evaluate the direct effects of diversions not just on marine life, but on the thousands of commercial boat owners, deckhands, fishing-dependent small businesses, and families who rely on them for survival.*

Our clients have also identified several community-specific issues, as follows:

- *The diversion will cause more flooding in low-lying communities; over 20% of our clients live on the coast, and 100% of them dock their boats and process their catch there. Diversion-related flooding is likely to impact local fisher[folks'] homes and displace their families, and inflict physical damages the vessels docked in these areas.*
- *Diverting oyster leases will create job decline throughout Southeast Louisiana. As CPRA has not allocated any mitigation funding for fisher[folk[to relocate or train for new careers, many of the region's oyster[folk] will be out of a job.*
- *Will there be loan and grant programs for commercial fishing and other small businesses to assist in transitioning their operations and perform upgrades to mitigate potential loss for sustainability.*
- *The diversion will severely impact the entire commercial fishing industry, which our clients rely on as their and their families' only source of income. This is particularly true of families living along the coast.*

Louisiana's commercial fisher[folk supply over 26% of the U.S.'s shrimp and Barataria Bay represents at least 41% of that catch. If diversions run as projected, this number could sink into the single digits, disbanding the fishery and devastating its workers. We believe that the Army Corps, CPRA, and other state agencies must create forums for addressing commercial fisher[folk] and their communities' concerns before building a structure that will drastically impact thousands of industry-dependent families. Part of this outreach must include a much more detailed assessment of CPRA's process, their project evaluation and implementation timeline, and most importantly, the true impact of diversions on our fisheries and the future of our industry. *To date, we have only received clear information regarding the division's ability to build land; those in charge must study and circulate equally robust information about its effects on industry-dependent species (shrimp, oysters,*

crab, finfish, etc.) and Louisiana's commercial fishermen and coastal residents. We also specifically ask that the U.S. Army Corps explores other approaches to running the diversion such that it harms brown shrimp, white shrimp, oysters, and other species as little as possible.

Finally, our clients have posed several key questions, including:

1. *Will there be a state-led community mitigation plan if key fisheries and/or the entire industry is harmed by freshwater inundation? Will there be a mitigation plan for damaged boats, docks, and gear?*
2. *Will fisher[folk] who are unable to work as a direct result of the diversion receive financial support to train in new industries and/or transition their businesses.*
3. *Will there be state assistance if the community have to relocate?*
4. *What is the state planning to do with the thousands of oyster leases in Barataria Bay and adjoining waterways?*
5. *Will there be a fund allocated to train fisher[folk] in other industries and help them transition to more economically secure jobs in the face of an uncertain ecological future?*

Our job is to ensure that Southeast Louisiana's fisherfolk can provide for their families as consistently and equitably as possible. Exploring the Mid-Barataria Bay diversion's impact to fisheries is imperative to not only the future of thousands of fishing families, but to the coast as a productive, sustainable, and thriving habitat.

Sincerely,
[Sue Ha]

I feel that the most significant portion of this comment are the five questions at the end. As an aggregate of our clients' comments, this list represents their truest, densest, most personal concerns. Taken together, they can be read as: *why don't you care? When will you, if ever?*

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CONCLUSION: COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE & ACCELERATED TIMELINES

CPRA's official landscape has looked, sounded, and elided the same way for roughly a decade: *If MBSD as it is currently designed pivots on the science of building the most land, and if the problem it was designed to solve is land loss, and if land loss was a problem that first impacted coastal people who asked for state support the mitigate the*

same, then MBSD is not just executing the best possible plan for land building, but for every Louisianian who lives on the coast.

Conversely, the letter FSS submitted to USACE is a contribution to and illustration of the community-centric landscape of Southeast Louisiana commercial fishing and Vietnamese/American life. Whereas the official landscape refuses the very fact of Vietnamese/Americanness, shrimping, and coastal knowledges, FSS's statement firmly uplifts and centers all of these lifeworlds and ways of knowing. At the same time, because we were in a position where we were speaking in a formal capacity as the sole organization who represents commercial fisherfolk in the region and as such, could not wholly alienate CPRA or USACE, our letter reads much more gently than fisherfolks' public comments. The intermediary-ness of Sue and my peers' position knowing much about the official landscape and also as Vietnamese/Americans who live within and (re)produce a collective landscape every day is unique and imperative to the ongoing visibility of this community-based knowledge through our work.

In fall 2017, USACE released its scoping report, which included every comment submitted to them and the final EIS chapters they would be addressed in, which included purpose and need, alternatives, affected environment, environmental consequences, compliance and other environmental laws and regulations, and public involvement chapters (GEC 2018b). While I had witnessed the ways the EIS had failed to do justice for the Standing Rock Sioux tribe in North Dakota—in part because the federal government refused to take USACE's Dakota Access Pipeline EIS findings or recommendations seriously, and in part because the EIS itself understood the capital

interests of private landowners and other economically important stakeholders as just as valuable as tribal concerns about their primary waterway being devastated by pipeline construction and oil spills and their sovereign land being harmed by the same—seeing our clients' comments reproduced in full and flagged as significant to USACE's evaluation process gave me some hope that the Corps would create parameters for the diversion that took commercial fisheries' needs into account.

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Figure 24. The most recent MBSD project timeline in CPRA's 2020 annual plan, where steps in grey (1-3) have already been executed, and those in navy are slated to be completed in the next two years (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority 2019:25).

CPRA's 2020 budget included the most up-to-date timeline for completing the diversion, which is detailed above in Figure 24. As the timeline shows, Edwards', CPRA's, and Graves' lobbying successfully reduced USACE's EIS timeline from the projected 5 to 2 years. This was because, after much outreach on the part of Louisiana's representatives, the 45th administration finally intervened in late January 2018, when it mandated that the EIS take no longer than two years (Stole 2018). More recently, CPRA representatives told a roomful of fisherfolk that they must stop talking about "if," shifting the conversation to "when." Instead of listening to the experts—those whose very lives rely on maintaining and cultivating the coast in spite of decision-maker-produced disaster—

state and federal actors push ever forward in a battle not toward salvation, but for capital. By making land stable, oil can consistently be transported on the region's highways and refined near its small towns, and Baton Rouge and New Orleans retain their land buffers, making them more stable in the face of the next 100-year storm.

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Today, the risk presented by Louisiana's disaster-full future is mitigated through its real-time restoration and environmental work. However, the EIS is a federal rather than state process that is meant to meet the federal government's definition of environmental justice (EJ), which NEPA defines as follows:

> Executive Order 12898, 'Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,' provides that 'each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.' The Executive Order makes clear that its provisions apply fully to programs involving Native Americans. In the memorandum to heads of departments and agencies that accompanied Executive Order 12898, the President specifically recognized the importance of procedures under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for identifying and addressing environmental justice concerns. The memorandum states that 'each Federal agency shall analyze the environmental effects, including human health, economic and social effects, of Federal actions, including effects on minority communities and low-income communities, when such analysis is required by [NEPA].' The memorandum particularly emphasizes the importance of NEPA's public participation process, directing that 'each Federal agency shall provide opportunities for community input in the NEPA process.' Agencies are further directed to 'identify potential effects and mitigation measures in consultation with affected communities, and improve the accessibility of meetings, crucial documents, and notices' (Council on Environmental Quality 1997:1).

The above is the directive USACE must follow when scoping for, undergoing, and creating the final report under the EIS. In the aforementioned coalition meetings FSS

attends, many members of community-based organizations were puzzled by the fact that the timeframe required to *do* environmental justice could change so drastically—what, we wondered, would fall out of the USACE's assessment if the EIS was reduced by three years? As David Naguib Pellow suggests in a roundtable on environmental justice:

> In my community and in my view, environmental justice is a goal, a vision, and a practice in which no community is unfairly burdened with environmental harms and when social justice, democracy, and ecological sustainability prevail. It is also a process and a goal of recognizing that we live in and have always lived in multispecies societies and that we must work to make those multispecies societies *multispecies democracies*. It is also a vision of regenerative development, where our activities don't seek to merely *reduce* socioecological harm (which is generally the rather limited goal of *sustainability*), but rather they seek to produce benefits and prosperity for the denizens of our socioecological systems. In other words, it is a practice and theory of indispensability—where we are all viewed as critical participants in creating and sustaining our democratic collective present and futures (Bauer et al. 2019).

This definition of EJ is much closer to the practices of the folks with whom I work. Although environmental justice is not an immediate part of their communal or shrimping lexicon, as Pinderhughes, Chan, Nixon have variously argued, environmental struggles are the undercurrent of many sacrificed communities' day-to-day struggles for labor, economic, health, and civil rights (Pinderhughes 1996).

The imbrication of folks' struggles for rights is most visible in Pellow's argument that under environmental justice, "our activities don't seek to merely *reduce* socioecological harm (which is generally the rather limited goal of *sustainability*), but rather they seek to produce benefits and prosperity for the denizens of our socio-ecological systems." This approach to environmental justice centers the value of communities as well as their commensurate and thoughtful role within a larger ecosystem, rather than a top-down

analysis that centers neoliberal risk-mitigation, as the EIS does. Kai Bosworth has argued that under NEPA, USACE adjudicates environmental justice through the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process (Bosworth 2018). Put differently, the EIS is the federal government's analog to CPRA's risk-mitigating environmentalism—rather than uplifting the environmental and ecosystem-level knowledge and needs of communities who rely on them, following Harney and Moten's understanding of policy as subsumption, both organizations craft their own understanding of environment and community such that both serve their own ends. The primary difference between CPRA and USACE's use of 'the environmental' is the federal government's insistence that the EIS is actually a practice of *doing environmental justice*. It remains to be seen exactly what this will look like, but given the historical precedent New Orleans, Louisiana, and the CPRA have set in the work of maintaining an official landscape that sees disaster on the horizon and works to secure its economic investments over the livelihoods and lives of Vietnamese/American commercial fisherfolk and all coastal residents.

CHAPTER FOUR: VISIONARY RESPONSE & IMAGINING OTHERWISE IN VIETNAMESE/AMERICAN

As many will remember, several major storms and hurricanes rolled through the Gulf during the 2017 hurricane season; images of Houstonians trapped in situ after Hurricane Harvey and of Puerto Rico and the Solomon Islands ravaged by Hurricane Maria evoked Katrina comparisons in the press and in the nervous systems of all Southeast Louisianians. Prior to Harvey making landfall along Texas' eastern coastline, coastal Louisiana was bracing for impact. As Chú Anh told me: "Katrina taught us what to do next time—we are prepared for another Katrina" (Anh 2018). Wanting to know what this looked like, I called Sue and asked her how our clients were faring: "Simi, they're all on their boats." I was overwhelmed by nerves—knowing a hurricane was coming, the captains, deckhands, dock owners, and dock workers we work with had stayed in or on the Gulf? I had assumed from Chú Anh's simple statement that what "we know what to do" had meant getting their boats out of the water, hauling them to dry land, and taking the family north or east as fast as possible. This assumption, like so many others, was wrong. I could hear Sue rolling her eyes at my audible gasp: "If they stay on the boat, they can move it around so it doesn't hit anything—won't get hurt by the dock or go on the levee. They remember Katrina. Nobody's gonna lose another boat this time." She then told me that all of our boats were in close contact with each other via CB radio, checking in and warning others if they encountered any danger in the increasingly choppy waters. As we hung up, I sat with what Sue had said, thinking about how bad the shrimp season had been so far (this was September, just after brown shrimp season had closed and at the beginning of the white shrimp season, which would only last to the

early days of December). In our conversation, Sue had mentioned the same, saying how desperate "our boys" were to keep working—they had barely recouperated the cost of gas, paying their deckhands, and ice during brown shrimp season, which had been the worst on record to date (soon to be followed by even many republicans meager yields in 2018 and 2019). I realized they were not staying on the boats to catch shrimp, though; rather, they were making sure that no matter what their catch looked like next week, they would *have* a boat, a business, to make shrimping possible.

I immediately reached for a yellow legal pad in my Minneapolis apartment, so far away from the doom everyone I worked with was sure would come their way, and started making a list of adjectives that might be used to describe what would be seen from the outside as outright foolishness, and came up with: tenacity, grit, recklessness...finally arriving at the most damning and, in the current landscape, appropriate adjective: resilience. Diagramming how this would be talked about by decision-makers in the weeks to come—*show of resilience; evidence of resilience; adaptability; persistence*—I thought about the fisherfolks' experience of being on the boat as waves grew bigger, the wind kicked up, and the deep blue of a Louisiana summer sky turned dense and grey. No, I thought, this wasn't resilience: it was knowledge. Was a generations-deep knowing that the structures designed to govern them would never protect them. Was a fundamental acknowledgment that they, their boats, their deckhands, and peers, were alone in this now; would be alone in fixing whatever happened next. Was, fundamentally, not an attribute à la VanLandingham and thousands of others who willed Vietnamese refugee resilience into existence, but an action: a community-level response to the official

landscape that already imagined them out of the future. Already refused their survival and told them to survive anyway.

While Harvey, Maria, and the innumerable storms that formed in the Gulf thankfully veered away from the Louisiana coast that summer, I had learned something critical about the folks I worked with: they would not—now or ever—give in to sacrifice. They, experts in the life they and their peers and ancestors led and that other Vietnamese/Americans might lead after them, would always come together and respond.

RESPONSE

"How do our stories of the future chart the ways we invest—financially, politically, ideologically, and intellectually—in the present?"

-Aimee Bahng, Migrant Futures (2018:3)

During fieldwork, I made a regular practice of asking boat owners, deckhands, bookkeepers, and so many others what they would do when the diversion came. No matter the context or season, their answers began to run together, solidifying into a common refrain: *we will do what we always have done: we'll figure it out*. When I returned to my notes, the word folks used most often in these conversations was, not surprising, given my newfound understanding: *"respond"*: *when things happen, we know how to respond; when it feels impossible to do it on our own, we come together, form a plan that brings everything we know together; now that we saw what a storm like Katrina does, now that we have been through BP, we can respond to another thing like that no problem; the state won't tell us about diversions? We'll figure out how to respond*: *we will try out new technology like flash-freezing shrimp on the boat to get a higher yield; we will do what we did when we were first resettled here and share knowledge, telling*

each other when we find caches of shrimp; we will develop a shrimp processing cooperative to make money at each level of the supply chain. Response, as articulated here, is an act of refusal, an act of reckoning—an *act*, full stop—in the face of CPRA's risk-mitigated, evacuated future where Vietnamese/Americans both do not exist and are called on to be resilient. To merely survive knowing full well they are not meant to.

I want to read this response as *a speculative act* that juxtaposes CPRA's rhetorical and material understanding of diversion and resilience and coastal restoration in which Vietnamese/Americans never appear—not even in the present. Following José Esteban Muñoz's call that "We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel *a then and there*" (Muñoz 2009:1), Aimee Bahng offers speculative fiction, which "shifts the emphasis of scientific pursuit from fact-casting to experiment-reveling" as a liberatory space "wherein cultural producers from the global financial undercommons have refused to relinquish the terrain of imagined futures" (Bahng 2018:8). Together, Muñoz and Bahng offer inroads to resisting the state's science-centered, objective, environmentalist formulation of MBSD-specific restoration. In *Octavia's Brood*, which they co-edited, Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown build on a Bahngian speculative fiction to offer a collection of stories that, they argue, represent and extend the genre of *visionary* fiction. In the book's "Outro," brown tells us that the elements of visionary fiction are that it: "explores current social issues through the lens of sci-fi; is conscious of identity and intersecting identities; centers those who have been marginalized; is aware of power inequalities; is realistic and hard but hopeful; *shows change from the bottom up rather than the top down*; highlights that change is

collective; and *is not neutral—its purpose is social change and societal transformation*" (brown 2015:279, emphasis mine). While all of these criteria are essential to producing a present in a foreclosed future, two stand out to me as central to Vietnamese/American response. First, response fundamentally shows—and makes—change from the bottom up and, I would add, directly engages with imbalances of power and governance. Second, the vehemence with which brown addresses the function of visionary fiction—the fact that "it is not neutral"—is imperative to the work of Vietnamese/American response: a community seeking to build their own futures in spite of being explicitly written out of the future of the places and economies they occupy is not neutral, nor is it passive—it is an act of defiance.

In this chapter, I bring Muñoz, Bahng, brown, and others in conversation with the folks I work with to apprehend a restoration-contingent, sediment diversion-centered environmental imaginary that forecloses Vietnamese/American socio-economic futures by forwarding what I am calling *visionary response*, or visioning coupled with fisherfolk-identified and executed response. By centering queer of color critique, and with Muñoz's understanding that "Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (Muñoz 2009:1), this chapter's deployment of visionary response offers a way to make visible the silences and gaps in heterogeneous yet linked imperial, colonial, settler-colonial, governance-crafted, national, transnational, and global histories that are retroactively siloed as unrelated, neutral 'events' in Southeast Louisiana. Using a multi-vocal and patchy (Tsing 2017b) approach that brings together community member testimony from interviews, public

comments, participant observation-derived data, and elements of visionary fiction, I argue that visionary response is fundamental to Vietnamese/Americans' ability to produce and occupy a future in Southeast Louisiana environmental sacrifice. This is because in refusing the flatting singularity of the Asian/American model minority or failed assimilant, Vietnamese/American commercial shrimping response imaginaries allow space for the heterogeneity of thought, experience, class, and practice inherent in the community it represents.

REFUGIA IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

"It's like they don't even know we're here. Or they don't care."
- Chú Bình, Vietnamese/American commercial shrimper, Buras, July 2016

Chú Bình, the shrimper who spoke with Vy post-BP, and Sue, whose story of personal and community rebuilding post-Katrina I recounted in chapter two, are good examples of imagining speculative futures. They teach us that Vietnamese/American residents both understand that the state has already foreclosed their future—"We knew no one was going to help us"—and, given this, that they must look to one another to create spaces of possibility: "We had to help ourselves" (Ha 2015). Critically, this space that exceeds state imagining is nothing like a utopia; because the future is still imagined by the state, it is, as Amitav Ghosh explains, a space where Vietnamese/American residents "confront most directly what Thoreau called 'vast, titanic, inhumane nature'" (Ghosh 2017:62-3).

As I showed in the introduction, the specter of climate change in the Anthropocene as it has been conceived of by CPRA and other governmental actors allows them to claim an environmentalism that is legible to the politics of recognition and place in late liberalism (Povinelli 2016). With the recognition that the Anthropocene is itself a complex and

contested epoch, I explored how, in Southeast Louisiana, restoration's sacrifice of Vietnamese/Americans relies on an extractive capitalism (Gómez-Barris 2017) that pivots on environmental racism as state violence. Writing at this convergence and, to my mind, repositioning the Anthropocene through a speculative imaginary, Amitav Ghosh retemporalizes the Anthropocene: "The Anthropocene has reversed the temporal order of modernity; those at the margins are now the first to experience the future that awaits us all" (Ghosh 2017:62-3). This rendering of the epoch gives me the tools to rethink the imbrication of time, power, and sacrifice. In the context of Southeast Louisiana's Vietnamese/American commercial shrimping fishery, by transfiguring refugeeism and resettlement into resilience, capital-centric environmental racism and sacrifice stretches time: past refugeeism is attached to community members' presents, wherein Vietnamese/Americans are expected to be resilient, an all-encompassing state they must maintain indefinitely. In this framing, resilience is not quite a simulacra (Baudrillard 1994), but instead a specter (Davis 2014) of refugee-centered otherness and xenophobia that promises to reach into the community's tenuous economic and climate futures. To be clear, this is not a passive shift, but one knowingly produced by decision-makers like CPRA representatives, Louisiana Congressmen, oil and gas lobbyists, and so on. Critically, framed through Ghosh's Anthropocene, where fisherfolk and other sacrificed communities are the first to experience the violence of decision-maker-produced climate change and its attendant violences, refugee resilience is a kind of lived speculative fiction, following Bahng above. This is because in building a diversion that preserves and grows state oil revenue by sacrificing the commercial shrimping industry, CPRA cedes those it makes resilient to a future it personally refuses to occupy.

In this multi-valent inhumane nature, decision-makers are both destructively acting on the environment and also weaponizing it against people and more-than-human species made and kept vulnerable by similar processes for generations. Anna Tsing seeks to identify the source of this weaponization in her description of refugia: "the inflection point between the Holocene and the Anthropocene might be the wiping out of most of the refugia from which diverse species assemblages (with or without people) can be reconstituted after major events (like desertification, or clear cutting, or, or, …)" (in Haraway 2015:159). Tsing's use of refugia, forwarded in "Feral Biologies," a paper presented at the 2015 Anthropological Visions for a Sustainable Futures conference, is a site of potential for imagining climate, ecosystems, decision-makers, and communities in conversation. For me, the opening here is that in Tsing's Anthropocene, refugia no longer exists. If there was a point at which ecosystems and communities, human and more, could stitch back together following gross change and harm, this ability has been disallowed them far prior to refugeeism's formulation as a socio-legal category. In a sense, the period Tsing is calling the Anthropocene—which became a coherent global politic through border establishment, imperial declarations of sovereignty, and genocide—has preemptively foreclosed refuge for all people and more-than-human species already in the process of being made vulnerable to environmental sacrifice.

This becomes even more specific to the experiences of Vietnamese/American refugees in Southeast Louisiana if we read it alongside Colten's (2014) argument that Euro-colonial ecosystem management reorganized not just the landscape, but the possibilities and parameters of who could occupy what became Louisiana and how they could do so. In

this formulation, what is called refugeeism and those experiences exceeding the UN's legal definition but that live firmly within refugeeism's lifeworlds were written into a global settler and Euro-colonial politic of space, resource, and extraction long before the Great Flood of 1927; before the Gulf of Mexico was sold to international oil companies; before Louisiana was codified as a U.S. territory, let alone a state. As the folks with whom I work have shown, refugees can never find or completely occupy a space of refuge because while their leave-taking was, to varying degrees, deliberate, what is meant to come next was never a part of the calculus of extraction and accumulation—of their choice-full resettlement by the Catholic Church—in Southeast Louisiana.

While this line of reasoning might read as my crafting a teleology of displacement and violence, I believe it follows prior chapters' refusal of a totalizing state history and present, the occlusions of which Juliana Hu Pegues argues "reveal the designs of the settler state, with its attendant anxieties, limits, and ruptures" (Hu Pegues 2013:21). By consistently repositioning my inquiry into the violences rendered against the folks with whom I work under an official landscape, and with an attenuation to the heterogeneous nature of both 'the official' and 'violence,' I hope to unravel the density of Vietnamese/American environmental sacrifice and engender a productive rejection of the notion that they neither know about the violence of the state nor are they actively responding to this violence.

Those who are sacrificed are well aware of the ways they are being used and harmed by decision-makers in powerful positions. In spite of a long history of decision-makers obfuscating the violence of their decisions by refusing to hear from those they harm,

Vietnamese/American fisherfolk are acting, are living, are imagining their way out of silence and erasure, as I show below.

VISIONARY RESPONSE

As resilient refugees, fisherfolk have learned that their family businesses effectively operate under the auspices of the state to which they owe the debt of their lives. This, in turn, taught them that to do what they need to to support their families, Vietnamese/American boat owners, deckhands, lenders, and on-land entrepreneurs must adopt a sufficiently appreciative attitude toward the state and their coast-contingent industry. This scrubbing of the politics of refugeeism and immigration, race and ethnicity, and community history from commercial shrimping strips Vietnamese/American fisherfolk of autonomy while emplacing and entrapping them in ever-more-tenuous state waters, in environmental racism-produced sacrifice, and in a governance-rendered Southeast Louisiana coastal future all designed for, but without, them.

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I met Vy Nguyen for the first time on election day 2016. Sitting down outside a coffee shop in Mid-City New Orleans, each with an 'I Voted" sticker on our lapels, we talked about her community's survival. After discussing the bycatch subsistence suit she helped usher through the court system following BP (see chapter two), Vy explained that for the fisherfolk in her community, labor and livelihood are the primary sites of personal and communal pain and advocacy. As an industry that most Louisianians have a basic understanding and appreciation of and given its centrality to every element of

Vietnamese/American economic, social, political, and environmental health, as prior chapters have shown, commercial shrimping has become *the* staging ground for decision-makers exercising violent governance and management practices, but also, a primary site for Vietnamese/Americans to articulate and respond to those same violences. As Vy explained, when everything is calm, it is easy to assert the value of one's labor, but "when someone tries to take [our labor, our livelihoods] away from us, we will stand and defend it. That is resistance" (Nguyen 2016). Vy's framing of resistance as defending one's livelihood and labor is significant, because, as Raquel Pinderhughes suggests, environmental concerns are often conceptualized as "community, labor, economic, health, and civil rights issues rather than as 'environmental' issues" (Pinderhughes 1996:239). In the years since our meeting and living in the results of that election day, the linkages between addressing the above issues and ecosystem-level health have become more and more clear to me; small-scale state-waters-dependent Vietnamese/American commercial shrimpers and the community they support suffer at the intersection of poor environmental protections, global white nationalisms, vulnerable oceans and waterways, and in constant yet erratic diaspora.

Without an analysis of how the environment is a part of each rights issue Pinderhughes listed, and in turn, how each issue intersects with the environment and one another, we can neither apprehend the full violence of environmental racism nor see the complexity of community-level responses to it. This is deliberately a part of CPRA's environmentalism; by taking up the mantle of 'fixing' the coast, they make grassroots actions to do the same—actions that do not coincide with the Authority's future

imaginary—opaque and as such, non-existent. This highlights how response, while absolutely related to resistance, mimics resilience in its imbrication with and of all things coastal, commercial fishing, Vietnamese/American, community-oriented, etc. Without this intersectional analysis that allowed response to become clear to me, I personally would not have appreciated the community and future-building value of the double-wide sized garden behind a Venice, LA shrimper's single trailer filled with vegetables, herbs, and citrus trees, all free to neighbors and visitors to the community. Neither could I fathom the myriad positive effects of three shrimping families spending two years establishing their own LLC so they can sell direct to consumers.

If I had decoupled environment from coastal communities and their labor, as CPRA does to produce its risk-free *terra nullius*, I would never have understood why commercial fisherfolk stay on their boats during hurricanes, the value of a CB radio, which allows captains to stay in touch in bad weather and far out in the Gulf, or the overlapping losses represented in a brand new boat being indefinitely stranded on the levee—completely visible, yet just beyond reach—as Chú Anh experienced after Katrina. I also wouldn't have known to ask about the ping pong ball-sized boils across the neck, back, and chest of a commercial shrimper whose only way of making money after BP was to burn oil off the water's surface, after which crop dusters indiscriminately sprayed Corexit, a highly toxic oil 'dispersant', down on boats, crews, and more-than-human marine communities. Without that analysis, I might have overlooked the fact that no part of federal and state ordinances about the coast, as well as master plans, annual plans, and other policy work that directly impacts the folks with whom I work was not translated into Vietnamese until

FSS shifted this precedent during my time there. Finally, I would not have known that redrawing the line that divides state and federal waters off Louisiana's coast by a few yards drastically impacts shrimpers' daily, weekly, and monthly trips—this particular knowledge was gifted me by a shrimper who pulled out a map after the 2017 changes and walked me through where all the sandbars, abandoned oil pipes, gates, and a myriad of other under- and above-water infrastructure thwarted or facilitated his job.

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While the responses outlined above might dovetail with resilience, they are critically distinct from it. Where resilience requires individuals to survive in spite of, in the hands of Vietnamese/American fisherfolk, response is, first, a highly collaborative, community-based rejection of the state resilience model that at once massifies all Vietnamese/Americans as resilient and individuates them as survivors. Second, response is flexible and spontaneous—it does not have protocols or limits, which resilience relies on to ensure that vulnerable people can never live without or outside of resilience. Finally, and most importantly, Vietnamese/American response looks into the future and still sees Vietnamese/Americans and commercial shrimping. This is because it follows hooks' distinction between state/structural nostalgia, or "that longing for something to be as it once was," a central tenet of CPRA's restoration ideology, and communal remembering, or "a struggle of memory against forgetting" (hooks 1990:17).

To reorient Vietnamese/American community survival under the auspice of resilience through Vietnamese/American memory—which I take to mean not just ancestry, history, or culture, but the specific knowledges that emerge from an entanglement of all three—is

to reject structural nostalgia. In this formulation, memory work allows Vietnamese/American commercial fisherfolk, fishing-dependent small business owners, and the families and communities that rely on them to deploy a community-centric queer of color critique, which "provides a unique view from below in a common search for social justice" (Manalansan 2018:1287). From below and beyond state logics—rather than by deploying state logics, as we had during the FSS diversion meeting detailed in chapter three—fisherfolk might begin to reject resilience.

Memory and memory work 'from below,' as Manalansan suggests, is not linear, but instead erupt as fragments: small stories, discrete moments that overlap with and bleed into still more, and the repetition of a practice—mending a shrimping net, feeling the tide and learning how they sync with the moon's phases, praying over dead on the 100th day, or speaking but not reading Vietnamese or English. For Vietnamese/American fisherfolk, memory queers the violence of environmental sacrifice by both understanding and rejecting "how certain bodies matter and certain bodies are located on the wayside" (Manalansan 2018:1287). Each time a wife does the books, as shrimp is passed from boat hull to processing dock, at each Tết celebration in the Mary Queen of Việt Nam church parking lot, memories are invoked, honored, and stretched, allowing those who hold them to emplace memories' practices and knowledges into the future. By doing this memory work in and with the body, Vietnamese/Americans in Southeast Louisiana emplace and voice themselves in spaces, contexts, futures, they have otherwise been rhetorically and materially exorcised from by risk-mitigation, resilience, and refugeeism.

COMMERCIAL FISHING & DOING COMMUNITY RESPONSE

"Improvisational life-forms and experimental practices form ad hoc community networks and resistance movements that coalesce spontaneously and ephemerally, on the fly, on the run, and cobbled together from recycled and repurposed materials."

- Aimee Bahng, *Migrant Futures* (2018:165)

In *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe offers a preliminary framework for immigrant opposition, which "articulates itself in forms and practices that integrate, yet move beyond, the political and economic spheres…[and] produce conceptions of collectivity that do not depend upon privileging a singular subject as the representative of the group [or] prescribe a singular narrative of emancipation" (Lowe 1996:170). Here, I believe that Lowe's celebration of the heterogeneity within distinct Asian/American communities forwards the emancipatory potential of collective imagining beyond and outside of state structures. It also evokes Sara Ahmed's interrogation of queer crip refusal. Starting with the premise that "Perhaps those who are bad for morale can join forces" (Ahmed 2017:184), Ahmed argues that "*Queer* and *crip* are willful words that work by insisting on what they bring up; a charged history, a shattering history; they are shattering words...A queer crip politics might involve a refusal to cover over what is missing, a refusal to aspire to be whole" (Ahmed 2017:185, emphasis original). Like Lowe, Ahmed believes a rejection not just of the status quo, but of the delineating structures that re/produce it is imperative to maybe not liberation, but certainly survival.

By encouraging folks to stop theorizing from a place of lack—as racial, political, economic foils whose not-whiteness, not-legible citizenness, not-upper classness produces a fully realized whiteness in opposition to a failed and evacuated Vietnamese/Americanness (Cheng 2001)—and instead organize and identify as never

whole, Ahmed suggests one way to exceed or partially stand outside of the structures that manage Vietnamese/American life. While a crip standpoint hasn't been discretely present in my analysis thus far, the utility of thinking from a place of refusing dominant narratives produced for but not with one's community is central to the speculation, visioning, and response scaffolding this chapter.

Some fisherfolks' responses I have observed are not nearly as big or far-reaching as one might imagine when synthesizing Lowe and Ahmed. Many are simple, everyday; almost quiet in their execution. The significance of their scale is not in how loud a visionary response is, but the depths—the memory work, the ecosystem-level knowledges, the community-centricity—they are assembled from and make tangible. Throughout my fieldwork tenure, it became clear to me that response is happening at several different registers of access, power, and social capital, and in many sites related to coastal land loss, environmental harm, immigration, governance, and so on. Throughout this dissertation, the two sites have emerged as most important to Vietnamese/American response are: among fisherfolk as community-builders, and with/in FSS and the organizations it brings into coalition and conversation. In both instances, temporality, space, and power overlap within and between each in ways that are at once similar and different. However, the main nexus point of each site's modes of response is improvisation, which I am invoking as it is defined by Bahng above. What we and our clients do on the run from coastal change and official sacrifice reinforce, expand, and rearticulate our response networks and potential for visioning-as-response and responsive visioning every day.

After conducting a survey of my fieldnotes, and with an acknowledgement that, as I suggested above, memory work is fragmented both in community and in the process of re-membering and re-assembling moments from research, I have compiled a list of Vietnamese/American response strategies below:

- At least one a week during brown and white shrimp season, crawfish season, and citrus season, FSS clients would come into the office with 20 lb. coolers full of shrimp, crabs, crawfish, guavas, grapefruit, oranges, and satsumas "just cuz we appreciate you." This care-taking was rooted in rearticulating and making visible kinship networks wherein FSS staff were both understood as family members and as helpers whose day-to-day work supporting individual families' needs in the office and the needs of the industry to representatives, the CPRA, USACE, NOAA, NFWF, and many others fundamentally helped to secure the future of their clients.

- In this same spirit, Sue called all of FSS's clients "my fisherfolk" and referred to herself as their second wife, sister, or daughter.

- Boat captains will take on more deckhands during peak season so they can both harvest more and to produce employment opportunities. These deckhands are always paid before anyone else (ice and gas purveyors, gear sellers, dock owners, who are easier to keep a running tab with), sometimes at a major loss to the boat owner's own income, so that they will be both financially stable and to engender trust and establish an ongoing relationship.

- When they are waiting for the tides to change, shrimpers will tie their boats together, stalling all but one whose engine continues running to effectively anchor the whole. This allows them to not just socialize, but compare notes, discuss policy changes and regulation, and point friends to better shrimping spots, which they fondly refer to as "honeypots."

- Women handle the majority of Vietnamese/American shrimping businesses' finances, and their financial and technological literacy is both celebrated and made visible throughout the industry. This concretizes family and communal networks, and ensures that 100% of businesses' income stay not just in the family, but return to the community, where it is reinvested in Vietnamese/American businesses and community centers in New Orleans East, Gretna, and in coastal towns (Kang 2018).

- As I have gestured to earlier, Vietnamese/American fisherfolk speak a language wholly their own. Following an all-staff meeting with NOAA representatives during which Sue pointed to a 20' x 15' map of coastal Louisiana on the organization's wall, a NOAA representative gifted a copy of the map to FSS. It is now prominently displayed in our office, where place names have been covered by post-it notes displaying their 'real' names. When clients come into the office, they examine the map, suggest edits, and laugh at the vulgarity of what has been written. This map has become a cherished object among FSS staff, who, through building it with clients, have effectively developed an alternative, Southeast Louisiana Vietnamese/American coastal vernacular geography.

Every Vietnamese/American response strategy outlined above pivots on building, maintaining, and rearticulating community, as Lowe suggests. They are also deeply attentive to how power operates—by sharing, celebrating, and consolidating fishing and community knowledges, visionary responses clearly recognize that they are working under structures of power that erase them and work to at once refuse and respond to that erasure: *You don't see us in your future? We do, because we are making it in spite of you.*

Another element of Vietnamese/American visionary response is that it repositions human relationships to the ecosystems and environment fisherfolks rely on. Anna Tsing argues that "where human ways of life are sustained across generations, it is because they have aligned themselves with the dynamics of multispecies resurgence…[which] is the work of many organisms, negotiating across differences, to forge assemblages of multispecies liability in the midst of disturbance" (Tsing 2017a:51-2). As I have shown elsewhere, Vietnamese/American fisherfolk must be stewards of the ecosystems they rely on. Given their deep knowledge of and attachment to place, commercial shrimpers—among many other coastal stakeholders including Indigenous Elders and other community leaders—are natural experts in the water, land, and more-than-human communities that make up coastal Louisiana. This expertise emerges on boats, at processing docks, in trucks, at the dining table, in gardens, and at meetings.

This emergent, environmental and ancestral expertise is to me one of the clearest examples of visionary response I observed during my engagement with commercial fisherfolk. While it follows the above examples in its sometimes quiet, rarely externally visible nature, ecosystem-level stewardship as visionary response is, to my mind, also

completely legible when one has the opportunity to observe it. One such instance for me happened during the last few weeks of my fieldwork tenure, when I took an overnight trip with a shrimping boat owner, his deckhand, and a colleague. After anchoring off of Grand Isle, habitat to an oil processing plant and little else, in the late afternoon, we waited for the moon to rise and bring in the tide.

After dropping the first nets around 10 pm, the captain set a timer for 75 minutes (the legally regulated time a boat can travel, or leave their nets in the water) and began running his engine to push the surrounding water from aft to stern, funneling the surrounding shrimp into the cone-shaped nets skimming the ocean's floor to either side of his boat. I sat on the cooler at the boat's stern to observe the process and in the moonlight, noticed porpoises beginning to circle us. At the same time, a cacophony erupted at the backmost edge of the nets, where sea birds started to flock and giddily dive into the water, emerging with a myriad of sea life still wriggling in their hooked beaks. As the timer shrilled from inside the cabin, the deckhand emerged and pulled up each net, dropping their contents at our feet. Using our hands and flat shovels, we heaped the flopping mass of fish into buckets, then hiked them over our shoulders and deposited them onto a raised, hard plastic sorting table with drains at either end. Using what looked like an ice scraper modified to jut out 90 degrees from its handle, the deckhand showed me how to spot the still floundering shrimp among their peers, and gestured to the base of his middle finger to indicate the size we were looking for. Together, the four of us made quick work of it, throwing prized shrimp into small buckets and scraping all of the other more-than-human beings, who by the end had asphyxiated, into the tables drains and

back onto the boat's floor. During this first pass, I vocally mourned the death of these other beings that the captain consistently referred to as 'bycatch.' All three of the men with me laughed as they scooped the now-dead sharks, crabs, octopus, fin fish, too-small shrimp, and other sea life into baskets. "Honey, this is how it goes," the captain said, heaving one basket after the other off the back end of his boat.

Offended but equally stuck and curious, I followed him. When the dead were let into the water, the same porpoises, bigger fish, and seabirds swarmed us, eating their fill: nothing wasted, everyone fed. As we repeated the process more and more, it became clear to me that this boat—and every other boat on the water that night—was an ecosystem unto itself. While an artificial insertion of human will into the food chain of the Gulf, shrimping boats were also facilitating the ongoing life of the more-than-human species they relied on to make the ocean robust: as fish died, they also fed and in their own way, returned to the ocean.

As midnight came and went, two particular harvest events stood out to me. First, on the fourth go-around, we pulled up a sea turtle who had become tangled in one of the nets. Under Monterey Bay regulations, Louisiana shrimp had been flagged in 2014 as irresponsibly harvested because four species of endangered sea turtles live in the state's waters. In response, several other Gulf states had mandated that shrimping boats begin to use Turtle Excluder Devices, or TEDs, on their boats. The TEDs are positioned at the mouth of each net and look like police blockades—hard, sturdy metal railing with bars positioned just close enough to keep a turtle from getting sucked in. Whereas Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas have legally mandated the use of TEDs in their state

waters, Louisiana has not. However, most small-scale, state waters-dependent shrimpers in the state do use them to ensure first, that they are not caught harvesting endangered turtles by LDWF, who would fine them heavily, and second, because it is common sense to ensure the ongoing livelihood of a community of beings that are close to extinction.

While our boat had TEDs attached to each net, one turtle, unfortunately, snuck in. They measured roughly 2' long, and the minute the deckhand noticed them, he flipped them over, shell marrying deck, put them in a quiet corner of the boat, and resumed sorting the rest of our yield. After 10 minutes, he returned to the turtle, and spoke in soothing tones as he checked their breath. This, I was told, was common practice: a turtle can comfortably survive out of water much longer than shrimp, but being caught and drawn up in a net was a major shock to their system. Laying on their back allowed the turtle to regain consciousness and adapt to their environment. Once the deckhand ensured they were breathing and moving regularly, he gingerly picked the turtle up, said goodbye, and returned them to the ocean while the engine was off to ensure they would not slip through the TED again.

And then we pulled up the nets for the fifth time. I felt and heard a *whoosh* as an enormous stingray fell into the boat. With a wingspan of almost six feet and weighing over 200 pounds by my estimate, they were dense, heavy, and immediately began gasping for air. As we strategized about what to do, the stingray flapped its fins, flinging a small but potent swordfish into the deckhand's leg. As he started to lose blood and after trying to physically hoist the stingray over the boat's side, the deckhand reached for a large hook suspended from a rope hanging from the mast, and deftly threaded it into a

large gill near the stingray's mouth. Pained by their pain, I moved to the boat's front as the three men I had left behind urged the stingray into the air and down into the water. I heard as their 'wings' hit the surface, feeling enormous bodily relief as they were sent home healthfully. Retiring to the back of the boat, I watched as my three companions, now dripping in sweat from exertion, smiled, clearly as relieved as I was.

It was 7 am by the time we stopped harvesting and, after traversing plant-heavy bayous lush with vegetation and small crabbing and shrimping boats, arrived back at the boat's dock just outside of Cut Off, LA. As I set my feet back on solid land, I reeled, still feeling the gentle swell of coast-adjacent waters below me. My peer nodded and said, "you get why they love it so much now, huh?" I did.

Through the process of working on a boat and observing the practices of shrimpers in Southeast Louisiana, it became abundantly clear to me that where institutional storytelling about commercial fishing positions fisherfolk as enemies of coastal ecosystems, they are in fact engaging in fundamentally personal relationships with them. Because each boat relies on the Gulf to keep producing the shrimp they, their families, other fishing-dependent businesses, and the entire Vietnamese/American community relies on, fisherfolk go above and beyond to ensure that they are in right relationship with it. This, I fundamentally believe, is an act of visionary response: rather than imagining a future without shrimping, fisherfolk work with and care for all of the coast's more-than-human species to ensure they remain healthful, healthy, abundant, and present long into the future. Where oil extraction consistently produces "disasters" that harm, limit, and make extinct more-than-human marine species, fisherfolk look into their own, their

childrens', their place's future, and do not just worry about, but facilitate it. Where shrimp continue to live, so do shrimpers.

FSS RESPONSE

For six years, FSS has been carrying out a restoration awareness protocol, which includes the following elements drawn from several FSS documents and reports:

1. Helping fisherfolk and coastal residents understand more about sediment diversions and why they are a part of the master plan.
2. Identifying and giving resources to leaders in the fishing community who can address community concerns and can represent commercial fisheries at public meetings and in decision-making forums.
3. Working as a community-state liaison on behalf of FSS clients, their families, and their larger communities to do as much as possible to create platforms where coastal knowledges will truly be uplifted rather than facilitating CPRA representatives' longstanding practice of presenting to communities, fielding one or two questions, and leaving without addressing a single problem, changing one approach, or listening to, understanding, and/or integrating what coastal peoples are saying into plans and decision-making processes.
4. Establishing one-on-one and coalitional partnerships with environmental NGOs, community-based nonprofits, independent and university-affiliated scholars, and others whose work includes building community engagement in restoration protocols and projects.

Significantly, FSS's own response work is wholly reliant on the fisherfolk and community visionary response strategies and knowledges articulated above, which, again, rely on Pinderhughes's reorienting of an environment-situated logic of resistance. In my over-three-year tenure at FSS, I have contributed to each of these efforts and gained an intimate understanding of how each operates.

By now, we know that contemporary movements for the environment overwhelmingly leave out Indigenous and arrivant (Byrd 2011) and alien laborer (Day 2016) perspectives of land, water, labor, economy, health, and civil rights struggles. It is important to point out that while my analysis takes place in Southeast Louisiana, which is sovereign Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw, Chata, Houma, Atakapaw, Chickasaw, and United Houma land, the Vietnamese/American visionary responses addressed this far rarely, if ever, are attentive to or think in concert with the visionary response work of Native communities in Southeast and coastal Louisiana. Thankfully, FSS has had the opportunity to amend this elision through the coalition-building work articulated in protocol number four.

In 2016, FSS encouraged a New Orleans-based funder to bring together 12 community-based organizations and environmental NGOs so that each could exchange ideas, strategies, and inform one another of the ways diversions and other master plan projects impact their constituents, clients, and communities. Four of the folks who contribute to this coalition are tribal elders or council members for two separate Indigenous nations, and their voices have not just enriched, but critically informed FSS and other coalition members' approaches to responding to CPRA and USACE. In the three years this coalition has been active, we have drafted public comments in response to the 2017

Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast, CPRA's 2018, 2019, and 2020 annual plans, and the USACE EIS Scoping process, some of which I have addressed and replicated in prior chapters.

By reading our clients' experiences as fisherfolk alongside the experiences of historically Black coastal communities, two Native tribes, youth-centered environmental educators, a Vietnamese/American nonprofit based in Versailles, and several other coastal environmental organizations who are attentive to the commercial fishing industry and coastal change, FSS has refused the structural siloing of racialized, Indigenous, impoverished and rural communities from one another. This in many ways follows Ahmed's queer crip politics—the refusal to cover over what is missing, a refusal to aspire to be whole—as, while our approach brings together a multiplicity of perspectives, it resolutely acknowledges the inevitably of misunderstandings and knowledge-contingent gaps while refusing to capitulate to the edict of presenting a complete and tidy response packaged in the language of or singularly responsive to official narratives about our communities' needs and expectations for a future that includes and is attentive to them.

Through this ongoing, long term process of aggregating our collective and differently-positioned ground-knowledges, FSS has been able to bring the experiences of other coalition members back to the commercial fisherfolk who represent our client base, providing education on differing coast-reliant perspectives and producing spaces where organization leaders and their constituents, clients, and communities stand together not always harmoniously or with one voice, but with a deeper understanding of how their

visions for the future are inextricably linked and as such, must include all presents if they are to build different futures.

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While FSS's protocols are fixed inasmuch as they are foundational to our ongoing work related to the master plan and diversions, they are also incredibly fluid and subject to change based on clients' needs, state and federal decisions, shifts to and in response to new kinds of funding, and the ever-changing work of our collaborators. I have observed that this improvisational approach fundamentally employs a bottom-up community-centered queer of color critique by uplifting community knowledge through storytelling. This has been particularly true since we began our coalitional work, wherein story has become the primary vehicle for other communities to position their experience in relation to those of Vietnamese/American fisherfolk and the day-to-day work of FSS.

As many folklorists and community organizers have suggested (Baker 2005; Banks-Wallace 2002; Bell 2010; Hurston 2008; Todd 2014, 2017; Tuck, Guess, and Sultan 2014), storytelling is both a critical way of retaining and passing on community history, practice, cultural values, and knowledge, and, as such, is one of the most important modes of responding to official violence. Elsewhere in her outro to *Octavia's Brood*, brown explains that "The stories we tell can either reflect the society we are a part of or transform it" (brown 2015:279). I believe FSS does this most clearly in its role as a "broker" (Ha 2014) between state officials, academics, community-based nonprofits, and environmental organizations, and our clients, because in this capacity, FSS staff are made into storytellers based on their ability to be story-holders.

***

Every time Sue is asked to speak to decision-makers about FSS's work—which is now an almost weekly occurrence—she calls me before or after, debriefing me on the ways decision-makers spoke about restoration, the responses of non-government affiliated people in the room, and most importantly, her responses. More often than not, the forums Sue occupies are not just governmental, but host current or potential funders, community-based collaborators, and peers. Sue always chooses her words carefully—and reminds me, each time, how bad I am at containing my ire in the face of similar discussions. At some point, it became a practice for her to tell me to "fix my face and be nice" before every meeting we attended with decision-makers, something I am both proud of and a bit chagrined by to this day—because, as Sue is quick to remind me, "the industry depends on it." At the same time Sue is prone to holding court. The minute she sees an opening to make a case for the needs and hardships our clients experience, Sue, like any good politician in a debate, refuses to answer the question posed her, instead pivoting to her platform: the industry is suffering; yesterday my husband brought in the lowest catch in his 20-year history of shrimping in federal waters; our people can't even afford to buy insurance because the premiums are so high and no matter how many hurricanes they can weather, no matter the re-arranging they might be able to accomplish in the face of an oil 'spill,' MBSD will make their lives so much harder—will chase them out of the Gulf and, she emphasizes, further depress the already-tenuous economy of towns throughout the Birdfoot Delta. After these meetings, she will tell me: "I think people are starting to get it; I think they are hearing us." While I am built to be skeptical, I nod from the other end

of the Mississippi, smile, and say: “We’re all so lucky to have you.” I always mean this. I always hope she is right this time.

Other days, Sue calls me on her long drive from the docks back home in New Orleans East, saying so-and-so just upgraded his boat by adding a chill cool unit (a system that allows shrimpers to flash-freeze and immediately preserve their catch on the boat, leading to higher yields on the market); my mom’s friend told me her family just opened a corner store next to our offices so they can have two income sources; that guy you met at the diversion meeting has partnered with a local chef who wants to buy everything he catches—they settled on a dollar amount per pound that’s better than today’s market value! We have collaborated on so many grants that center ‘resilience’ and ‘adaptation’ that they have become a part of Sue’s vocabulary: “You know our boys know how to adapt—look at ‘em!” She usually goes on: “They’re listening to me—they know the diversion is coming and they’re adapting.” In her excitement, Sue doesn’t recognize that she is telling me stories from an otherwise. In spite of her acculturation into the official rhetoric we must deploy to bring money into the organization and by proxy, into the communities we serve, in these moments, Sue is telling me stories that illustrate and uplift our clients’ own expertise—stories centered on the knowledges they deploy in direct response to official storytelling that dominates the former institutional space where we are constantly called upon to shout into a *terra nullius* void. Stories in Vietnamese/American.

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As we all have experienced, listening to a narrative is not passive; it produces sympathy and empathy, allows one to emplace themselves, from varying degrees of distance or proximity, into an experience they might never live. Listening to a narrative also makes the listener better at re-telling it. As I have shown throughout, FSS staff members—and as I did during fieldwork—spend every day listening to and holding clients' stories, then weave them into acts and texts of advocacy on behalf of clients who have little access to an audience with or do not speak the 'proper' language to engage decision-makers. As staff are highly attuned to the needs and futures of commercial fisherfolk, they are masters at crafting stories in immediate and direct response to those circulated by CPRA, local, state, and federal representatives, and residents whose understanding of Vietnamese/Americanness—both from within and outside of the community—are shaped by the official landscape. The women I work with also use story as a site of transliteration, where what Sue calls "state language" or "government speak" is rendered legible in the language(s) of commercial fishing. By making state languages 'plain' in Vietnamese/American, as I suggested in chapter three, FSS is effectively crafting its own language at the interstices of state and community *but that is only legible to the latter*—a language that CPRA, USACE, parish and state decision-makers, and other decision-makers only have access to when FSS carefully re-interprets for outsiders from its vantage point as community advocate.

By acting as a conduit in both directions, but with vastly different approaches and politics of story in each case, FSS understands the governance-crafted official landscape, learns its language, then uses it to educate fisherfolk about how that landscape operates. This

allows clients to respond, helping them and FSS to co-produce ideas and strategies that, as visionary practices, might seed or immediately effect transformation. This is imperative, as brown extends the above purpose of story, saying: “If we want to bring new worlds into existence, then we need to challenge the narratives that uphold current power dynamics and patterns” (brown 2015:279). Vietnamese/American narratives inherently resist these structures, as they are crafted by people who have been forced out of or were never included in dominant stories about the coast, its people, its oil capital-contingent existence, and its future. By understanding the productive power of storytelling within the community and as a way of retaining and remembering in ongoing refugee racialization and under refugee-predicated resilience, FSS has taken hold of the liberatory potential of story, honoring and deploying it as a critical element of Vietnamese/American visionary response. Through our insistence on listening to and uplifting the experiences and knowledges of our clients as our primary praxis, FSS is following so many speculative and visionary makers in crafting stories that center a violent present to produce visionary responses in a completely tangible, multi-community, environmentally opaque but possible future.

CONCLUSION

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that the most liberatory element of Vietnamese/American response is that it looks into the future and still sees Vietnamese/American commercial shrimping. As I understand Vietnamese/Americans experts of the coast and commercial fishing, I believe that Vietnamese/American commercial fisherfolk and community members and FSS can and have paired our ability

to imagine with concrete responses that, even when ephemeral, set precedents for future responses. Where refugee resilience is haunted by Vietnamese/American refugeeism, visionary response's ability to imagine from below, to tell stories, to come into coalition with other underserved communities, and to articulate itself at the level of community might be the present/future ancestor of a still-alive Vietnamese/American coast.

As a method, then, Vietnamese/American visionary response has the ability to see these power imbalances, the ways top-down logics foreclose Vietnamese/American life and evacuate the landscape of their livelihoods, and, following Bahng and brown, imagine an otherwise. Response does this from a grounded viewpoint that fundamentally understands the impossibility of Vietnamese/Americans surviving by seeking inclusion in official, risk-mitigating state processes that exclude them as a given. Because of this, Vietnamese/American response sounds, looks, and *knows* in Vietnamese/American; is an expertise, a possibility, unto itself. To do visionary response is to reject neutrality and, I argue, produce a future from its own foreclosure. While resilience is hellbent on making live (Foucault 1990), response is focused on the collaborative project of queering a remembering-how-to in an unknown future, on a dying coast, and under the structural violence of environmental erasure.

As I have shown, to remain in debt to the state and to be perceived as a roadblock to state oil capital accumulation is to be erased from its future. Vietnamese/American commercial fisherfolk and their community intervene in this foreclosure by imagining otherwise *from within* all-encompassing environmental racism and sacrifice. Most importantly, through the work of FSS and its coalitional peers, Vietnamese/American visionary response has

begun to come into relation with Indigenous, Black, other impoverished and classed, and other rural and urban futures, refusing the colonial logic of bifurcation, divide and conquer, to envision futures with and alongside the coast as a heterogeneous human and more-than-human imaginary. By folding stories of place, people, ecosystem, and stewardship together, Vietnamese/American visionary response reaches into the void of CPRA's *terra nullius* future and populates it with possibility: *we see the water and sky, feel the tides and wind; we know the storm is coming; we emerge on the other side together, even if, and especially,* because *you refuse to hear and see us.*

...and yet, while things change in community, so much stays the same at the official level.

CONCLUSION: FRESHWATER DISASTER

"Spatial practice, written on by climate and ideology, as well as history and geography, is so impressed by human bodies in relation that it is fair to say that, given the year, one could tell how he or she 'felt' about the Mississippi, either vicariously or experientially."
-Hortense Spillers, "Topographical topics: Faulknerian space" (2004:558)

As I write this in Minneapolis, MN, just south of the Mississippi River's headwaters, the Mississippi River flooding of 2019 has surpassed the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 for number of days at flood stage—over 150 (Grymes 2019). This is unprecedented; the river has been flooding since mid-March and here I am in early July, still watching what is happening downstream and worrying about everyone I know along the coast. At the tail end of the flooding, Southeast Louisiana is feeling the full effects of the Midwest's quick thaw, unseasonably dense and ongoing rains, and generations of infrastructural management across the basin's water networks. It has grown so bad in Louisiana that the 45th president declared a state of emergency in the state (Lane 2019). While all residents are feeling the effects of this flood, it is stalling and completely foreclosing work for many members of Louisiana's commercial fishing fleet, particularly the Vietnamese/American fisherfolk with whom I work because, as I have mentioned, their reliance on the 3 miles of inshore/state waters makes so much fresh water, the specter they have been dreading, since 2007, a death sentence for their incomes, their families' futures, their community. And here it is, even without the diversion.

Wanting to hear how folks were faring, I called Sue yet again. She had just arrived home after a full day of trying to wrestle her boat onto the water a two-hour drive south in Venice, LA, a fishing town on the small strip of land between the Mississippi and Gulf on

Louisiana's Birdfoot Delta. Exasperated, she told me "We couldn't get the boat [out to shrimp] because the water is so high right now—we had to tow it out with a few trucks." The rise in the water along the coast made it hard to navigate the small bayous between all of the delta's shrimp docks and open water. But the main problem is what the inundation of fresh water into the Gulf is doing to the coast's brown and white shrimp, which I anticipated. Sue went on: "we're lucky—we have a big boat [that can go into federal waters]. The small skimmer boats [who can only shrimp in state waters] don't have any shrimp to catch. The [fresh] water keeps pushing the shrimp further and further out [into federal waters]."

Figure 25. A map of the two primary spillways in South Louisiana; the Bonnet Carré and Morganza spillways. The original caption reads: "The Morganza Floodway is located at river mile 280 in central Louisiana. It is 186 river miles above New Orleans on the west bank of the river in Pointe Coupee Parish. It begins at the Mississippi River and extends southward to the East Atchafalaya River. It ultimately meets the Atchafalaya River Basin Floodway near Krotz Springs" (Advocate staff 2019).

In addition to the fresh water that is not organically, but is also not wholly deliberately, surging into the Gulf, to ensure that Baton Rouge and New Orleans are not harmed in the flooding, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is guiding more fresh water into the Mississippi and Atchafalaya, and by proxy, shrimping grounds, via water control structures. USACE has already opened the Bonnet Carré Spillway, which brings fresh water into the Gulf via Lake Pontchartrain, and is deciding whether or not to open the Morganza Floodway, which feeds into the Atchafalaya River (see Figure 25 above), in the next week.

Morganza "is part of a control system to keep the Mississippi River from changing course down the Atchafalaya. Opening the structure allows the Mississippi to partially take that course in a controlled manner" (Daye 2019). If the Corps moves forward, this will only be the third time the spillway has been opened since it was constructed in 1954 "to maintain a flow of 1.5 million cubic feet per second (cfs) below the floodway...The structure is 3,906 feet in length with 125 bays and is capable of diverting up to 600,000 cfs of water if necessary" (Daye 2019). This is the same rate at which the Mississippi discharges into the Gulf on average. That the floodway has only been opened twice in 65 years and given that the flooding has already surpassed the timeframe and volume of 1927, itself a decision-maker-produced event predicated on risk mitigation, as chapter three detailed, highlights that today's flooding is no more "natural" than other climate-change-induced droughts, typhoons, and diasporas. That the federal response to flooding is to *create* floods in areas designated as more 'convenient' to inundate—the rural and coastal versus the urban; the Gulf versus the river meander path; Indigenous and people

of color-dense spaces versus spaces of decision making in Baton Rouge—reaffirms for me that while flooding is the official disaster, for the folks with whom I work, disaster response (flood mitigation and later, structural restoration) and its refusal of coastal knowledges and needs, are the true disasters.

In the month Bonnet Carré has been open, dolphins, sea turtles, and other marine life have been washing up dead in Biloxi, MS, across Louisiana's coastline, and elsewhere along the Gulf coast; in addition to being asphyxiated by the density and rate of fresh water they are encountering along the Louisiana and Mississippi coastline, their bodies are covered in freshwater lesions, evidence of overwhelming exposure (Jeansonne 2019). One shrimping social media forum has been staying up to date on the flooding, posting articles and studies as they are published. In response to an article on the dolphin deaths, which included a photo of a dolphin who had been scarred by the fresh water, one member commented portentously: "poor baby…[first] them then us." As more more-than-human marine communities are harmed and given the potential of Morganza being opened, the Vietnamese/American fisherfolk I work with have made increasingly frantic pleas to state and federal officials with the now-common refrain: *if dolphins and sea turtles are dying from freshwater inundation, what do you think this is doing to shrimp? What do you think it's doing to us?*

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At the urging of many of FSS's clients over several months, Governor Edwards declared a state of emergency for Louisiana's fisheries on June 13th, 2019. The statistics listed in the governor's letter are staggering: between 50% and 100% of oysters are dead upon

harvest today; statewide, brown and white shrimp landings (number of shrimp caught) are down 61%, and blue crab landings are down 37% (Edwards 2019; Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries 2019). This is because, as Edwards writes:

> The extreme duration of high Mississippi River levels since December 2018 has necessitated unprecedented efforts by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to mitigate the threat of levee failures in Louisiana. Such efforts have included the opening of the Bonnet Carré Spillway twice this year; first in late February and again in early May. That structure continues to pass large volumes of river water into Lake Pontchartrain which subsequently flows east into Lake Borgne and Mississippi Sound. The extreme influx of freshwater has greatly reduced salinity levels in our coastal waters and disrupted estuarine productivity. Marine biologists with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) have been monitoring and documenting impacts to both the seafood species and fishing industries since early March 2019...Although the full impacts of the 2019 flood event will not be determined for some time, especially in light of the continued operation of the Bonnet Carré Spillway, I respectfully request that [the U.S. Department of Commerce] begin the initiation of a federal fisheries disaster declaration. Such a declaration is consistent with federal law under both the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (IJFA)...Such a declaration of a federal fisheries disaster for Louisiana may help in obtaining federal financial assistance for our fishers, processors, docks, and for the state to help rehabilitate the important fishery species upon which our seafood industry relies (Edwards 2019).

What is most significant about Edwards' letter is his acknowledgment of the flooding's impact on commercial fishers *as* disaster—maybe the first time this degree of more-than-human marine communities' death has been directly described as a disaster for commercial fisheries in FSS's clients' memories. What is most ironic about this declaration is Edwards' invocation of two federal marine protection laws, the MSA and IJFA, which he claimed CPRA should not be beholden to in his declaration of a State of Emergency for the Louisiana Coast just two years ago (Office of the Governor 2017). This disjuncture between Edwards' 2017 state of emergency declaration and this 2019

fisheries disaster declaration shows me that, as Jonathan pointed to in the introduction, "The genius of Louisiana is getting someone else to pay for its problem" (Smith 2018). By reinforcing a narrative whereby federal and other actors cause the harm they must then fix, Louisiana's decision-makers reinforce their role at the vanguard of coastal environmentalism. Being able to point to USACE's poor decision-making at once evacuates Edwards, CPRA, and their peers of culpability in the sacrifice of coast-dependent communities and allows them to position themselves as *advocates* for coastal communities.

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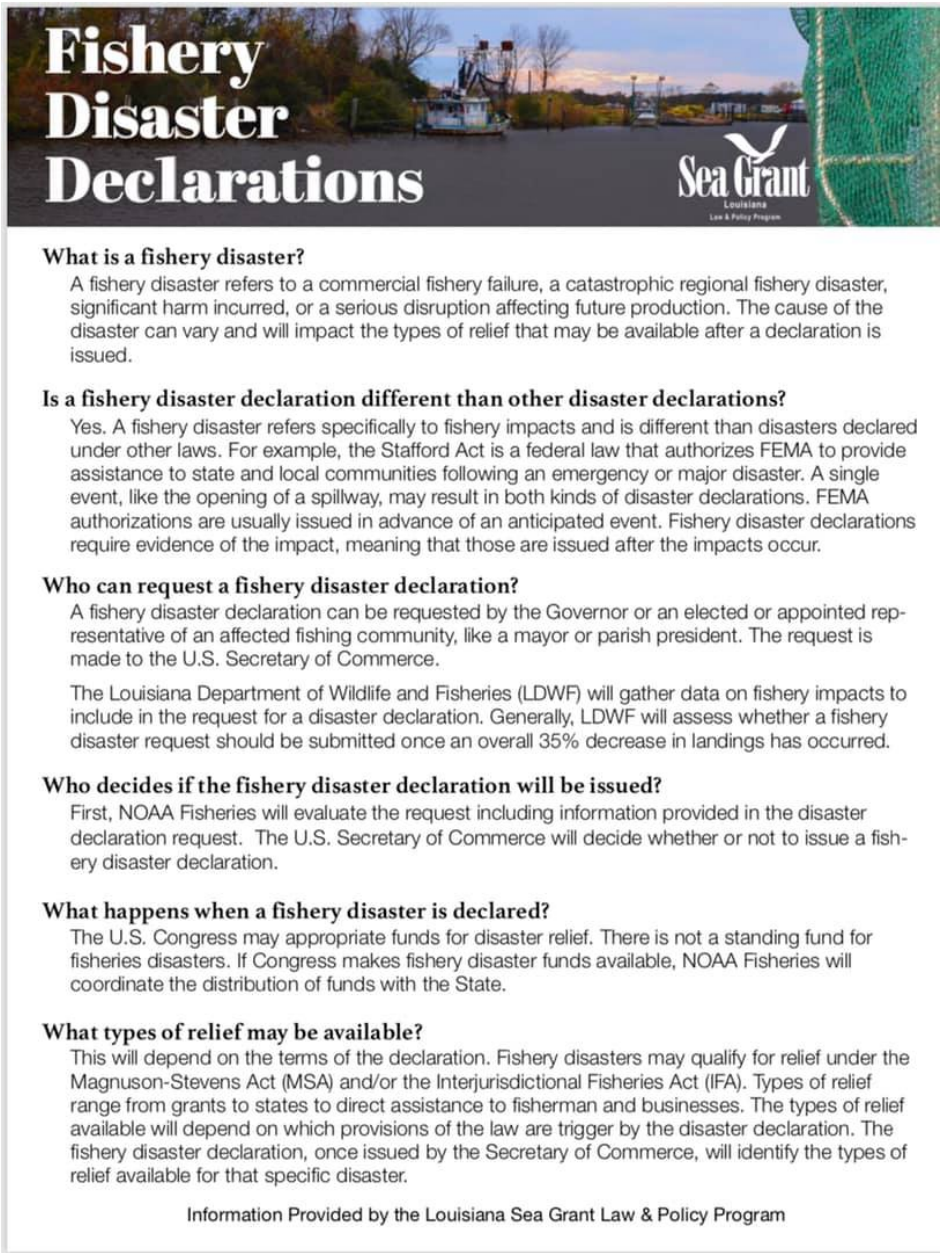
The current flooding crisis along Louisiana's coast and the resulting official declarations of coastal emergency and fisheries disaster highlight, returning to Bahng and Nixon, the slippage between official risk-mitigation that produces an air-tight future, and the ever-increasing effects of spectacular and ongoing slow disaster. This slippage, rather than being a space of liberation where sacrificed communities can claim knowledge or step into decision-making roles, amplifies the racism and xenophobia that underwrites their sacrifice under neoliberal environmentalism. Living in between a state of emergency and fisheries disaster declaration, Vietnamese/American and other fisherfolk, Isle de Jean Charles tribal members, low-income coastal residents, and more-than-human species like oysters once again prove their own evacuation from the state's *terra nullius* future: not valuable on their own, fisheries are suddenly useful in disaster given their ability, as Louisiana Sea Grant illustrates below, to be used as a justification for Edwards to seek more disaster aid.

In light of Edwards' declaration, Louisiana Sea Grant compiled the following fact sheet about the processes necessary to execute a fishery disaster (see Figure 26 below).



Fishery Disaster Declarations

Sea Grant Louisiana Law & Policy Program

What is a fishery disaster?

A fishery disaster refers to a commercial fishery failure, a catastrophic regional fishery disaster, significant harm incurred, or a serious disruption affecting future production. The cause of the disaster can vary and will impact the types of relief that may be available after a declaration is issued.

Is a fishery disaster declaration different than other disaster declarations?

Yes. A fishery disaster refers specifically to fishery impacts and is different than disasters declared under other laws. For example, the Stafford Act is a federal law that authorizes FEMA to provide assistance to state and local communities following an emergency or major disaster. A single event, like the opening of a spillway, may result in both kinds of disaster declarations. FEMA authorizations are usually issued in advance of an anticipated event. Fishery disaster declarations require evidence of the impact, meaning that those are issued after the impacts occur.

Who can request a fishery disaster declaration?

A fishery disaster declaration can be requested by the Governor or an elected or appointed representative of an affected fishing community, like a mayor or parish president. The request is made to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) will gather data on fishery impacts to include in the request for a disaster declaration. Generally, LDWF will assess whether a fishery disaster request should be submitted once an overall 35% decrease in landings has occurred.

Who decides if the fishery disaster declaration will be issued?

First, NOAA Fisheries will evaluate the request including information provided in the disaster declaration request. The U.S. Secretary of Commerce will decide whether or not to issue a fishery disaster declaration.

What happens when a fishery disaster is declared?

The U.S. Congress may appropriate funds for disaster relief. There is not a standing fund for fisheries disasters. If Congress makes fishery disaster funds available, NOAA Fisheries will coordinate the distribution of funds with the State.

What types of relief may be available?

This will depend on the terms of the declaration. Fishery disasters may qualify for relief under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) and/or the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (IFA). Types of relief range from grants to states to direct assistance to fisherman and businesses. The types of relief available will depend on which provisions of the law are trigger by the disaster declaration. The fishery disaster declaration, once issued by the Secretary of Commerce, will identify the types of relief available for that specific disaster.

Information Provided by the Louisiana Sea Grant Law & Policy Program

Figure 26. A Factsheet compiled by Louisiana Sea Grant Law & Policy Program to help fisherfolk and other coastal residents understand what it means for Governor Edwards to declare a fisheries disaster (Louisiana Sea Grant Law & Policy Program 2019).

While at the time of this writing, the declaration is still in process, the chances of all of these measures being executed such that commercial fisherfolk receive real-time support

and financial aid is quite low, even according to Louisiana Sea Grant. In this way, it becomes clear to me that the disaster is not the primary focus of these measures on behalf of Louisiana officials; rather, the value of these declarations is in their ability to bring emergency funds into the state while reinforcing Louisiana's outward-facing environmentalism.

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Fisherfolk are rightfully claiming that the current flooding portends what is to come if MBSD is run as currently designed—if this much 'natural' fresh water entering the Gulf is making their work near impossible, what will a diversion that runs this time every year do to the future of their industry? We already know the answer: it will erase it from the landscape of diversion-contingent, risk-mitigating life in the Gulf. Like FSS's clients, I am, fundamentally, enraged. At the same time, I understand that there is no outside of the subsumption—the resilience-determined sacrifice—facing the folks I work with and care about. So what does their best response look like? Some days, it is surviving—is doing what they do, loving who they love, giving where they can. Some days, like a day in early August 2016, it looks like 300 fisherfolk standing in front of FSS's office holding and wearing signs to protest the ongoing economic strain they feel under stagnant shrimp prices, too-small yields, and growing shrimp imports from Southeast Asia and South America in the U.S. market. Still other days, it looks like upgrading boats, convening to discuss the state of the industry; looks like getting out of bed and going to the docks no matter what happens because children need to go to school and parents need medical care. It turns out, when people are being erased, there is no single way for them to make their pain, their fear, their response, legible to those who have already erased them. And

yet, and always, they keep on doing from a place of knowledge, by seeing the official and community-based landscapes they straddle for what they are, and by *doing*. This is not a tidy life, nor is it anywhere near easy; it is knowingly tenuous, unstable, physically and communally demanding.

Today, the future of Southeast Louisiana's Vietnamese/American community remains murky at best. At worst, it is, as diversion proponents would have it, already over. And yet, because they are equally in love with and trapped in and on the Gulf, Vietnamese/American fisherfolk have no choice but to respond; are given few options but to keep surviving. I do not mean to imply here that this is a positive state to be in—rather, *it is the state they occup*y no matter what the governor or CPRA claim to do on their behalf. While this worries me, I know fundamentally that the folks I work with will keep on keeping on because, as Happy reminds me, shrimping is "what we do. It's all we know...We'll be here as long as we can" (Vuong 2014).

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