



INTRODUCTION

Introduction to *Journal of Climate Resilience & Climate Justice*

William Shutkin

Teaching Associate Professor and Associate Director, Masters of the Environment Program, University of Colorado Boulder

an open access  journal



In any given year, the Front Range city of Boulder, Colorado, can lay claim to a number of accolades—America’s Best City, Most Livable City, Smartest City. The list goes on. But these days, we must add another, less alluring, less desirable attribute. Owing to a series of epochal fires and floods over the past decade, to say nothing of the COVID-19 pandemic, today’s Boulder can be considered a poster city for climate risk, an epicenter of both real and imagined environmental catastrophe. Ironically, some of the world’s foremost climate scientists call Boulder home, at institutions like the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Science (a partnership between the University of Colorado Boulder and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and employer of this journal’s managing editor), the National Center for Atmospheric Research, and the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, among others.

Boulder’s climate experience is not unique. Similar natural disasters, whose increasing intensity and devastation have been linked directly to a warming planet, are occurring with greater frequency around the United States and the world. Climate migration, climate refugees, and climate anxiety have become commonplace terminology among not only climate experts but mainstream media outlets, some of whom, only a few years ago, were skeptical of the very idea of human-induced climate change, let alone its deleterious impacts.

All of this is strong evidence that we’ve reached a tipping point in the climate crisis; our collective consciousness has finally caught up to the creeping reality, almost four decades since then Director of NASA’s Goddard Institute of Space Studies James Hansen first warned the U.S. Congress of the same. It appears there’s no turning back.

Congress itself has responded, finally. In 2021, for the first time, both major U.S. political parties formally acknowledged that we are ill-prepared for the worsening impacts of climate change, enacting the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, H.R. 3684 (U.S. Congress, 2021), with unprecedented funding for climate resilience measures such as flood protection, reducing wildfire risk, drought mitigation, and community relocation. These measures reflect a major shift in how we approach and mitigate climate risks, from responding to disasters after they occur to protecting people, neighborhoods, and facilities before the fact.

Importantly, the bill also addresses climate justice and racial equity, allocating substantial resources to communities of color who, owing to socioeconomic and other factors, are at once more vulnerable to flooding and other climate risks and without the financial wherewithal to rebuild or move to safer ground.

The 2021 infrastructure bill and, more recently, the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, H.R. 5376 (U.S. Congress, 2022), which includes additional billions in climate resilience and climate justice funding, are perhaps the most compelling signal to date that the issue of climate resilience/climate justice is finally landing in the hearts and minds of the American public and people all over the

Citation: Shutkin, W. (2023). Introduction to *Journal of Climate Resilience & Climate Justice*. *Journal of Climate Resilience & Climate Justice*, 1, 1–2. https://doi.org/10.1162/crcj_e_00012

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/crcj_e_00012

Corresponding Author:
William Shutkin
williamshutkin@gmail.com

Copyright: © 2023
Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
Published under a Creative Commons
Attribution 4.0 International
(CC BY 4.0) license.



planet. Climate change as a scientific fact is no longer in debate. The question now is, what are we going to do about it? As Shalini Vajjhala, a former Obama administration official and urban resilience expert, has said, noting that climate threats have become more frequent and widespread, “It’s difficult to oppose solutions to crises that your constituents are suffering through... the constituency for climate resilience is now everybody” (Flavelle, 2021).

The *Journal of Climate Resilience and Climate Justice (CRCJ)* was launched in parallel with these and other pathbreaking policy initiatives, in the United States and abroad, to support the evolving field of climate resilience/climate justice. *CRCJ* is intended to be a timely new resource to support the field’s evolution in this critical growth phase, while providing a novel educational experience for graduate students who help edit and contribute content to *CRCJ*, tomorrow’s climate leaders for whom the equity/justice part of the equation almost goes without saying.

For our inaugural issue, we’ve curated a variety of research reports, essays, and articles representing a wide range of geographic, disciplinary, and policy perspectives, in keeping with the emerging field’s expansive, cross-cutting nature. The response to our call for papers in the summer of 2022 was global. Our Advisory Board and Student Editorial Board culled through the submittals, looking for content that was accessible, practical, and novel, and edited accordingly.

Fittingly, one of the articles, by my former colleague Penn Loh of Tufts University and his coauthors, Neenah Estrella-Luna and Katherine Shor, uses the example of community-led, mutual aid–based responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in Boston as a case study for how low-income and people of color communities might effectively address climate resilience challenges in the years to come. The onset of the pandemic in early 2020 is what prompted MIT Press Director Amy Brand and me to launch *CRCJ*. We figured the pandemic was, like climate change, a singular global collective action challenge and that there might well be lessons from our pandemic responses to be applied to climate resilience and climate justice challenges. Loh and his coauthors convincingly demonstrate this.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to several people for supporting *CRCJ* in its start-up phase. First, to Amy Brand, Nick Lindsay, and Rachel Besen of MIT Press for being both collegial and enterprising in helping develop *CRCJ* from inception; next, to James Cox of the Nell Newman Foundation and Brooks Witter of the Dean Witter Foundation for their moral and financial support, allowing us to offer *CRCJ* to the globe free of charge for readers and contributors alike; to Joel Hartter, Ben Webster, Myles Maland, Mary Hardwick, and my colleagues at the Masters of the Environment program at the University of Colorado Boulder for their in-kind and financial contributions covering *CRCJ*’s production costs; and finally, to my colleague, Managing Editor Gretel Follingstad, our inaugural team of student editors, Anna Buongiorno, Clara Houghteling, Mel Hunter, and Anna Perkins, and our outstanding Advisory Board members, Ana Baptista, Dana Bourland, Anthony Flint, Sheila Foster, Bruce Goldstein, Janelle Knox Hayes, T. Jonathan Lee, Nils Moe, Rushad Nanavatty, Natalie Ooi, Michael Painter, Susie Strife, and Baye Wilson, for all their hard work in making this inaugural issue come to life.

REFERENCES

Flavelle, C. (2021, November 6). Infrastructure Bill Recognizes Climate Change Is a Crisis. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/03/climate/infrastructure-bill-climate-preparation.html>

U.S. Congress. (2021). H.R. 3684 - Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act 117th Congress. Retrieved April 21, 2023,

from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684>.

U.S. Congress. (2022). H.R. 5376 - Inflation Reduction Act 117th Congress. Retrieved April 21, 2023, from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684>.