

Greenfield Peace Writing Scholarship 2020

First Place

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What many people fail to recognize is that a large portion of the immigrant population in the United States, and all around the world, relocated due to climate disasters in their homes. With climate change increasing the number of natural disasters, an increase in climate refugees comes with it, forcing us to view climate change not only as an environmental issue but as a political and ethical one as well. There is an obvious need for stricter laws and policies to be put in place to save our quickly deteriorating planet. However, climate change also calls for new laws to help the millions of people displaced from their homes due to climate disasters.

In Central America, and many other places around the globe, people are forced to leave their lands because of crop failures and food shortages caused by pollution. As a frontrunner in the contribution to climate change, the United States should be more welcoming to those who can no longer survive in their countries because of the changing climate conditions. New climate justice policies would benefit the people who can no longer survive solely on their farming and crops due to poor environmental conditions.

Although stopping climate change altogether is the ultimate goal, helping people adapt to these changing conditions so that they could survive in their home countries would be a way to decrease the number of climate refugees. In countries where food scarcity is an issue, nonprofits are popping up to teach local farmers how to adapt to changing soil and water conditions as well as teaching people which plant species to plant to thrive in difficult conditions. In areas prone to damaging earthquakes, floods, or any natural disaster, ensuring that houses and buildings in those areas are built to withstand these occurrences would help people be able to recover faster from these natural disasters, allowing them to stay in their homes. If these changes are integrated into modern cultures everywhere, over time, fewer people would see the need to relocate due to natural disasters.

Unfortunately adapting to our changing climate won't help everybody. Climate refugees will always exist, and sadly, many of these people who immigrate to new countries because of climate change affecting their own countries are not recognized as political refugees, therefore they are not given the same protection refugees receive, such as asylum. New laws for climate

justice could protect these climate refugees in the same ways as political refugees, giving them the safe option to seek shelter in neighboring countries when their own countries become unsafe for them to stay in. While a movement for climate justice would help the immigrants displaced by disasters affecting their countries now, it could also, over time, prevent more families from leaving their homes due to the climate in the future.