

# Myth of “America’s First Climate Refugees”

Case Study: A Lesson Learned for Community Resettlement:  
Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe

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<https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/19/>

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**“America’s First Climate Refugees”**

**It’s a myth...**

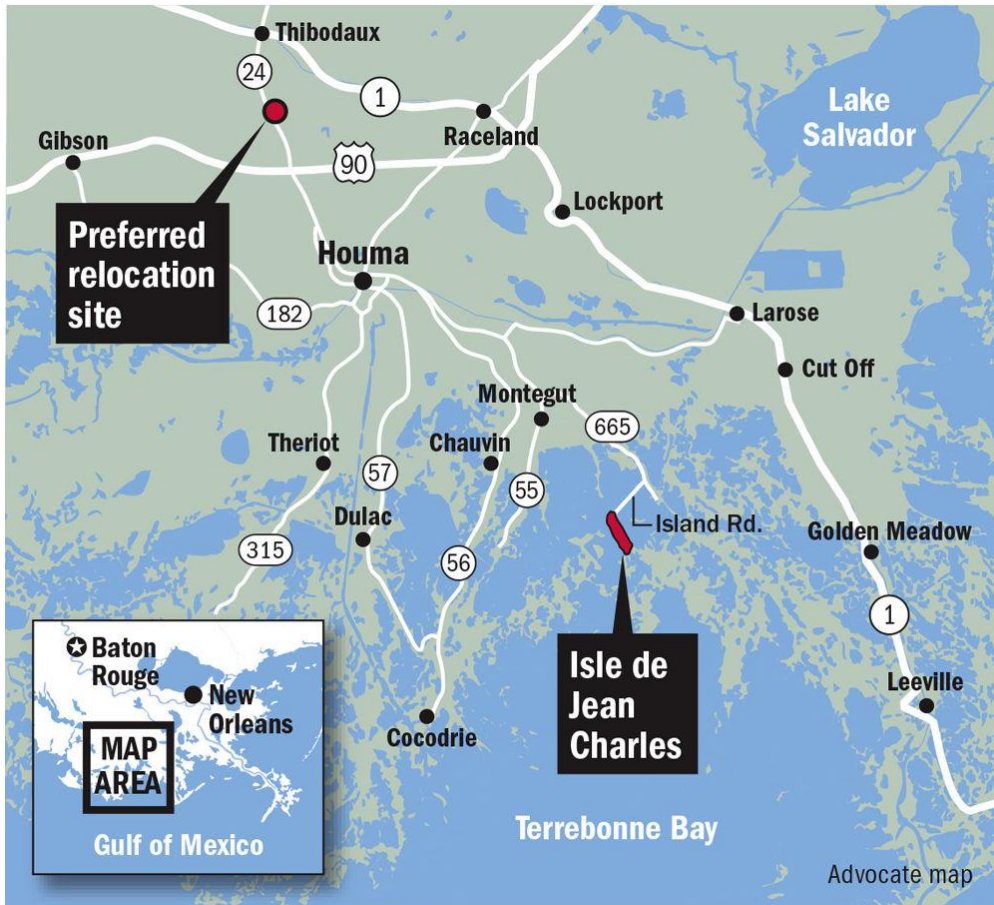
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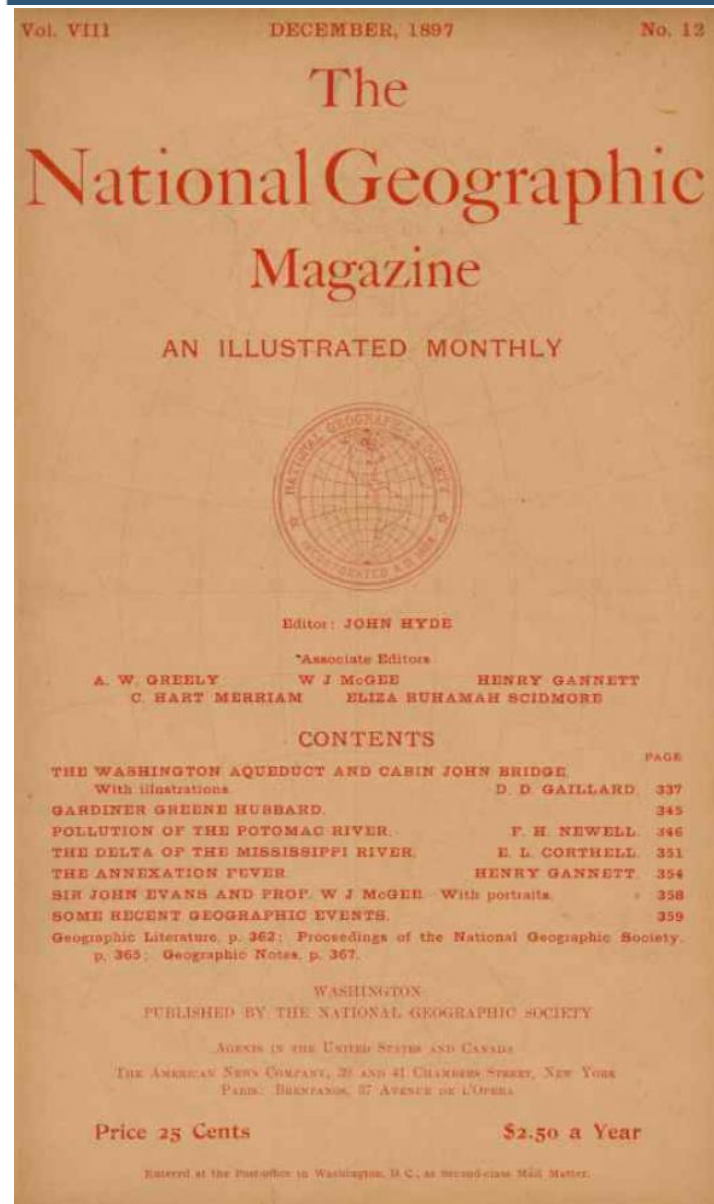
Isle de Jean Charles is a narrow island in the bayous of South Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana, home to the Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw, a tribal community already living the day-to-day impacts of land loss, sea level rise, and coastal flooding. The island has lost 98% of its landmass since 1955 and has only approximately 320 acres (approximately 1/2 square mile) remaining. The population living on the Island has fallen from 400 to 85 people. **The decline is due in large part to land loss and flooding driven by climate change, extreme weather, and unsustainable development practices, which stem from oil and gas production, extraction, and water-management practices. <Bold Added>**

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## Mississippi Delta, Sedimentary Loading, New Orleans Sinking: **1897**

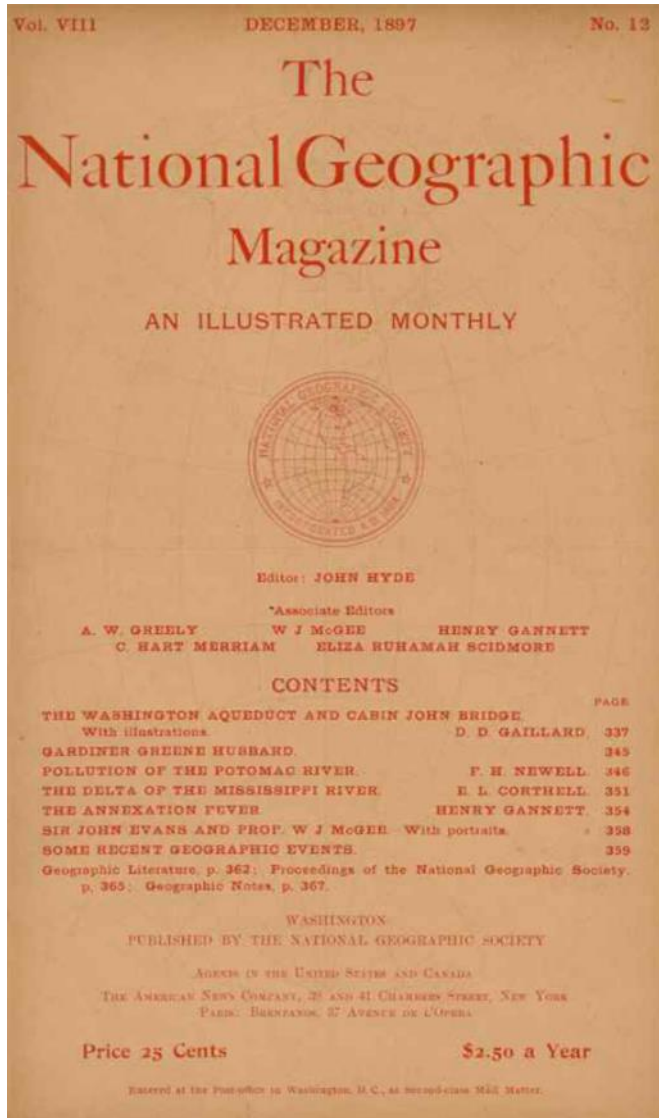
“Discrepancies in bench-marks and level heights and gauges could only be satisfactorily accounted for by the most plausible explanation of the subsidence of the whole delta, making gauges and bench-marks at the mouth of South Pass unreliable. ...**It is a fact well known to people living in the delta of Mississippi that large tracts of land were long ago abandoned in consequence of overflow by Gulf waters, due to the sinking of the lands.**”

h/t: Dr Willie Soon

Reference:

Corthell (1897) National Geographic Magazine, vol. 8 (no. 12), pp 351-354

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The need for the resettlement is real; delta land is sinking about 5 ft per century.

The reason, however is not global warming, climate change, or increased <CO2>

The reason: channelization of the lower Mississippi River to allow boat and barge traffic on the Mississippi, a process begun by French settlers in 1718 to protect New Orleans. This cut annual sediment deposition from up-river.

After the Louisiana Purchase, in 1820, the US Government continued levee construction for river navigation.

<https://web.mst.edu/~rogersda/levees/Evolution%20of%20the%20Levee%20System%20Along%20the%20Mississippi.pdf>

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316596045\\_A\\_brief\\_history\\_of\\_flooding\\_and\\_flood\\_control\\_measures\\_along\\_the\\_Mississippi\\_River\\_Basin](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316596045_A_brief_history_of_flooding_and_flood_control_measures_along_the_Mississippi_River_Basin)

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The population living on the Island has fallen from 400 to 85 people. The decline is due in large part **to land loss and flooding driven by climate change, extreme weather, and unsustainable development practices, which stem from oil and gas production, extraction, and water-management practices.**

Once again, the National Climate Assessment got it wrong, spectacularly so. This is poor scholarship, failure to do a literature search, and find the *National Geographic* article which describes, “subsidence of the whole delta.”

The reason for the land loss was channelization of the lower Mississippi River to allow boat and barge traffic on the Mississippi, begun by the French in 1718 to protect New Orleans.

In 1820, after the Louisiana Purchase, the US Government continued levee construction for river navigation.