

Disaster Citizenship to Counter Gendered Reparations: A Case Study of the Great Flood of 1910 in the Seine Basin

CLAIRE MAYO

Between 20 January and 8 February 1910, the Great Flood of the Seine Basin devastated riverain communities from Champagne to Val d'Oise. The *Ponts-et-Chaussées* (Department of Bridges and Highways) had worked to mitigate flooding in the Seine Basin since the 1850s through the construction of canals, dams, and reservoirs. These public works fulfilled the Third Republic's promise of "progress" to stop the annual winter flooding. But in 1910, a rainy season, a warm winter, and failed infrastructure charted a new floodplain for the Seine and each of its tributaries. Though the floodwaters largely retreated to engineered waterways by late February, for riverain communities the disaster had just begun as they had to rebuild lives, livelihoods, and local economies.¹

While waters still lapped against the bottom of second-story windows, women and men built upon the Third Republic's promise to protect and claimed the right to reparations in light of that failed promise. The right to reparations hinged on an exclusive relationship with the State based on their status as disaster victims. Since this citizenship status went beyond the Third Republic's patriarchal laws to include female entrepreneurs in aid distribution, I borrow Jacob Remes's term "disaster citizenship" to refer to the broader claims to political status in the wake of the Great Flood.² My use of "disaster citizenship" resonates with Adriana Petryna's "biological citizenship" as it describes a group's exclusive citizenship status based on their compromised health, as seen, for example, after Chernobyl or the Union Carbide explosion in Bhopal.³ In contrast, "disaster citizenship" hinges on an individual's personal and economic losses from a disaster. My application of the term encompasses an expanded range of disasters as floods, for

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² In his work, the term "disaster citizenship" refers to a belonging among survivors that resisted State intervention. Remes emphasizes that personal choices among survivors heightened a spiritual, emotional, and material solidarity already present among the working-class of the Progressive Era. Jacob Remes, *Disaster Citizenship: Survivors, Solidarity, and Power in the Progressive Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 10, 79, 105, 191-194.

³ Nikhil Deb, "Slow Violence and the Gas Peddit in Neoliberal India" *Social Problems* (2022); Kim Fortum, *Advocacy after Bhopal: Environmentalism, Disaster, and New Global Orders* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Adriana Petryna, *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

example, result in fewer immediate casualties but damage environments and over time directly impact victims' health and wellbeing.

Scholarship on the Great Flood of 1910 has tended to focus on the flood's two-week duration and impact on Paris, which marked a spectacular chapter in urban and environmental history.⁴ By examining disaster recovery, scholarship can extend these previous studies to understand how disasters propel new directions by exposing structural inequalities, provoking disruption, nourishing ways of thinking, and furnishing grounds for contesting pre-existing inequalities.⁵ After the Great Flood, applications for reparations show a pattern of women and men articulating disaster citizenship to secure equal access to the same tax-based funds sourced for private railroads, factories, and champagne corporations. These letters had to contend with the government's definition of what "recovery" meant, which did not align with individual experiences. In the case of the disaster recovery period, new claims on the government based on an individual's status as a flood victim countered the pervasive tendency to award initial reparations based on gender. This study of a particular case of disaster citizenship elucidates a language of rights that disaster survivors accessed to counter gendered reparations.

In the case of the *fin-de-siècle*, scientific study assured the resolution to life's hardships in the political theory of Solidarism, but recovery from the Great Flood highlighted a disjuncture between the ideals of Solidarism and a citizenship differentiated by gender.⁶ Promoted by Léon Bourgeois and refined by Émile Littré, Charles Renouvier, Henry Michel, and Alfred Fouillée,

⁴ Caroline Ford, *Natural Interests: The Contest over Environment in Modern France* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016); Jeffrey Jackson, *Paris Under Water: How the City of Light Survived the Great Flood of 1910* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁵ My study compliments the findings of disaster scholars across disciplines to consider how the disaster recovery period was a moment of contestation in which individuals used the language of rights and disaster citizenship to access aid previously denied. Vincanne Adams, *Markets of Sorrow, Labors of Faith: New Orleans in the Wake of Katrina* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Bas van Bavel, Daniel Curtis, Jessica Dijkman, Matthew Hannaford, Maïka de Keyzer, Eline van Onacker, and Tim Soens, *Disasters and History: The Vulnerability and Resilience of Past Societies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Cindy Ermus, ed. *Environmental Disaster in the Gulf South: Two Centuries of Catastrophe, Risk, and Resilience* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018); Richard Keller, *Fatal Isolation: The Devastating Paris Heat Wave of 2003* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Christoph Mauch and Christian Pfister, eds. *Natural Disasters, Cultural Responses: Case Studies toward a Global Environmental History* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009); Susanna Hoffman, ed. *The Angry Earth: Disaster in Anthropological Perspective*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999); Sara Pritchard, "An Envirotechnical Disaster: Nature, Technology, and Politics at Fukushima," *Environmental History* 17 (2012): 219-243; Kevin Rozario, *The Culture of Calamity: Disaster and the Making of Modern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

⁶ This adds to a chorus of recent scholarship emphasizing the ways in which individuals performed citizenship to access citizen rights. Nimisha Barton, *Reproductive Citizens: Gender, Immigration, and the State in Modern France, 1880-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020); Andrew J. Counter, "Zola's Fin-de-Siècle Reproductive Politics," *French Studies* 68, no. 2 (2014): 193-208; Annette Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation: How Black Women Transformed Citizenship in the French Empire* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2020).

Solidarism was an alternative, or a "third way," between liberalism and socialism in which the citizen had both rights and duties. Solidarism shaped the Radical Party with leaders like Bourgeois and George Clemenceau holding every major seat of power in the Third Republic. Under the Jules Ferry laws, the Third Republic's education system reaffirmed Solidarism through republican professors, Solidarist societies, Masonic Lodges, etc.⁷ Solidarism became the basis of the French welfare system, replacing Christian charity with human solidarity.⁸ Today, scholars look again at Solidarism as a way to reduce risk to increasingly dangerous ecological disasters, for at its heart, Solidarism is about social security against chaos and economic injustice.⁹ Thus, Solidarism influenced the framework through which flood victims applied for aid after the Great Flood.

Yet, the scholarship on Solidarism's origins overlooks the pervasive practice of differentiating citizenship based on class, gender, and colonial status, differences that the Great Flood exposed.¹⁰ The Great Flood occurred during what scholars have identified as a "crisis of masculinity" in response to the New Woman who claimed access to new modes of dress, workplaces, educational opportunities, and divorce rights. The "crisis of masculinity" attempted to thwart these opportunities, which often translated into the kinds of work available to single

⁷ Laurent Dobuzinkis, "Defenders of Liberal Individuals, Republican Virtues and Solidarity: The Forgotten Intellectual Founding Fathers of the French Third Republic," *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, no. 3 (2008): 287-307; Yves Deloye, *École et citoyenneté: L'individualisme républicain de Jules Ferry à Vichy: controverses*. (Paris: Presses de la FNSP, 1994); J.E.S. Hayward, "Educational Pressure Groups and the Indoctrination of the Radical Ideology of Solidarism, 1895-1914," *International Review of Social History* 8, no. 1 (1963): 1-17; Mona Ozouf, *L'École, l'Église et la République, 1871-1914* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1963).

⁸ Daniel Beland, "Welfare State, Liberalism, and Social Links: The French Experience, From Solidarism to the 'Return' of Solidarity," *Cahiers de recherche sociologique* 31 (1998): 145-164; P.V. Dutton, *Origins of the Welfare State: The Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); J.E.S. Hayward, "The Official Social Philosophy of the French Third Republic: Léon Bourgeois and Solidarism," *International Review of Social History* 6, no. 1 (1961): 19-48; J. Horne, *A Social Laboratory of Modern France: The Musée Social and the Rise of the Welfare State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); P. Nord, "The Welfare State in France, 1870-1919," *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 3 (1994): 821-838; K.A. Sheradin, *Reforming the Republic: Solidarism and the Making of the French Welfare State, 1871-1914* (University of Rochester, 2000); John Weiss, "Origins of the French Welfare State: Poor Relief in the Third Republic, 1871-1914," *French Historical Studies* 13, no. 1 (1983): 47-78.

⁹ Patrick Cingolani, "Solidarity: History of the Concept," *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* 23 (2015); Jeffrey Jackson, "Solidarism in the City Streets: La Société protectrice contre les excès de l'automobilisme and the Problem of Traffic in Early Twentieth-Century Paris," *French Cultural Studies* 20, no. 3 (2009): 237-256; Paola de Cuzzani, "The Principle of Solidarity between Sentiment and Reason: A Reflection Starting from L. Bourgeois' Solidarism," *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* 17, no. 5 (2023): A9-A 10; Anghel N. Rugina, "About the Doctrine of 'Solidarism' in Social Economics," *International Journal of Social Economics* 10, no. 2 (1983): 62-71; T. Zeldin, *France, 1848-1945: Politics and Anger* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) : 294.

¹⁰ I have explored the othering of classes in racist terms in my article: Claire Mayo, "Spectacularizing Parisian "Savages" during the Great Flood of 1910: How *les Apaches* Overshadowed the Cult of the Hero in *les Quatre Grands*," *The Journal of the Western Society for French History* 46 (2018).

women, whether never married, widowed, or divorced.¹¹ The “crisis of masculinity” that hindered women working in certain industries like agriculture also required men to constantly articulate male honor and, for male flood victims, male codes of honor manifested in an insistence on reparations rather than charity. In other words, these applicants viewed charity as hierarchical while disaster citizenship promised equal treatment. Since women did not have official individual political rights until 1944, their letters especially illustrate claims to disaster citizenship and equal treatment based on their identity as flood victims, or what Rachel Fuchs calls a “creative nonfiction” to claim rights not typically attributed to women.¹² In effect, claims to reparations after the Great Flood articulated their disaster citizenship and rarely cited Solidarity, suggesting that this ideology defined conversations in political discourse more than in the streets or shelters.

Flood victims grounded their claims to disaster citizenship on the government's neglect of public works and promise to repair all damage resulting from the flood. The Great Flood occurred in a period when many French people viewed floods as “public calamities” with explanatory causes that could be corrected through government intervention. In the nineteenth century, environmental anxieties about floods took on mythic proportions as people sought to understand the causes of flooding and the means to prevent floods through government intervention.¹³ By 1910, popular responses had moved from a local and fatal mentality to a national and explanatory model.¹⁴ In this framework, floods became problems that could be solved, and the government assumed the responsibility to solve these problems, often through the application of science to quantify earlier floods.¹⁵ The Great Flood thus prompted public critiques of the Third Republic's promotion of “progress” and of engineers of the Department of Bridges and Highways.

¹¹ Margaret Andersen, *Regeneration through Empire: French Pronatalists and Colonial Settlement in the Third Republic* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015); Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Michelle Perrot, “The New Eve and the Old Adam: Changes in French Women's Condition at the Turn of the Century,” in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, eds. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz (New York: Yale University Press, 1987): 52-57.

¹² Rachel Fuchs, *Contested Paternity: Constructing Families in Modern France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008): 6-7.

¹³ Ford, *Natural Interests*, 82, 91.

¹⁴ This can be seen in the number of newspaper reports and publications claiming a national disaster when only a portion of the country experienced the flooding. Alfred Mouly, “Après le Déluge” *L'Informateur*, February 5, 1910; Association des Dames Françaises de la Croix-Rouge, *Secours Donnés*, 5; Anonymous, “Lettre de Paris: Le 3 Février 1910,” February 6, 1910. AP, D3 S4 21; “Revue de la Seine,” *L'Echo Pontoisien*, January 27, 1910.

¹⁵ This trend in environmental thinking mirrored larger patterns in European politics that Holly Case describes as the “Age of Questions,” in which questions were characterized as problems that required solutions secured through specific political agendas. Holly Case, *The Age of Questions: Or a First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Before the flood, Parisian daily papers had followed a story about the overlapping jurisdiction of river management, commonly referred to as *les cinq pouvoirs* (the Five Powers). While technically a branch of the Ministry of Public Works, the Department of Bridges and Highways reported to each of the Five Powers: the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Navy, respective municipalities like the City of Paris, and respective departments like the Department of the Seine. Minister of Public Works Alexandre Millerand acknowledged the need for cooperation between the Five Powers to guarantee effective river management.¹⁶ To many, the Great Flood exposed the glaring failures of this system for which the government was liable. For instance, on January 27, when the waters were at their highest in the streets of Paris, Bar-sur-Aube, and Bar-sur-Seine, an anonymous letter circulated among residents of Rue Félicien David in Auteuil, a working-class neighborhood of Paris dotted with factories along the Seine. During the flood, most residents evacuated to higher ground and received aid from the Red Cross and their Municipal Councils. The author of this notice argued that the government failed to implement measures known to reduce flooding like sewer hatches and wells that the law had prescribed:

The flood of which you were victims was not a *force majeure*. The City of Paris brought the Seine to you by its sewers. In this case, the statute prescribes creating an edge of wells around the mouths and the openings of sewers sufficiently high enough to allow water to rise without causing a flood like in a regular well. This work was not done. You should accept aid if you cannot manage without it, but you must then reclaim an allocation from the City to which you have a right considering the Administration's negligence.

In light of the government's negligence, the author insisted that flood victims had the right to compensation from the City of Paris, or disaster citizenship. The letter so alarmed city leaders that it quickly rose up the bureaucratic ladder to the Office of the Inspector General of Paris.¹⁷ In this case, Parisian political leaders recognized that such appeals for disaster citizenship would have resonated with flood victims.

As expected, these same political leaders encountered similar claims to disaster citizenship in reparation letters from male and female victims. To rebuild, large corporations received concierge service to reparations, but self-employed people had to complete an application that had to pass through tiers of bureaucratic approval before ultimate sanction by the Minister of Finance. If their applications were denied or only partially filled, then applicants could appeal by letter to their representatives or the Prime Minister. Without the constraints of an application form, individuals had greater opportunity to illustrate their right to reparations as

¹⁶ Such agencies include but are not limited to the following: public services, fire department, the City of Paris, and navigation. 2 September 1910, "M. Millerand et l'inondation: Nous avons fait ce que nous pouvions pour protéger Paris. Nous continuerons," AP, D3 S4 13.

¹⁷ Handwritten notes on the notice indicate receipt by the neighborhood government, supervisor M. Charles, head engineer of the 6th section, and the Inspector General. "Aux sinistrés de la Rue Félicien David," 27 January 1910, AP, D3 S4 25.

a form of disaster citizenship. One such case was G. Lefèvre, who owned an engraving shop "Riboules-Coby" in central Paris and a hotel in the working-class neighborhood of Alfortville. As required by law, two inspectors verified the amount of damage to her shop, but her initial application to the Aid Committee was dismissed. In her letter to the Mayor of St. Lazare, Lefèvre elaborated on the information in her application form and, like many widows, emphasized her status as a widow in business to provide for young children.¹⁸ Widows in business without children or with grown children often asked male relatives or neighbors to submit a letter on their behalf for business reparations since women did not have political rights to submit them autonomously. These claims, however, were dismissed immediately since working women without small children did not fit the national priorities for pronatalism.¹⁹ Lefèvre took a different approach in her appeal to the Mayor of St. Lazare for a loan of 3,000 francs: she insisted that the government provide compensation for all their troubles for, in her words, "I believe that I have all the more right, since I was forced to close my store on the part of the Boulevard completely submerged for several days." Lefèvre rhetorically distanced herself from the cause of the flooding and positioned the Third Republic as having failed in its political promises of "progress" to stop the annual winter flooding. A note on Lefèvre's letter indicates that the mayor approved her letter for a sixth of her request in reparations rather than a loan.

Though Lefèvre would still have to use multiple survival strategies to re-establish her businesses, reparations rather than a loan indicate a concession on the mayor's part to her claims of disaster citizenship.²⁰ In addition to insisting on a framework that cast the Flood as a human-caused disaster, claimants built their disaster citizenship on political promises to rebuild completely. Politicians were deeply concerned about how the public perceived the disaster response because the year of the flood was also an election year.²¹ The Chamber passed two laws for aid relief: the law of 11 February offered 20 million francs in direct aid to unemployed workers and re-established economic activity; the law of 18 March added 75 million francs to fund commercial loans of up to 5,000 francs to businesses, property owners, and agriculturalists to be repaid over the course of five years. In the first few months after the flooding, individuals submitted reparations claims directly to the office of the Prime Minister, Aristide Briand. Because of proximity, reparation distribution in Paris went more quickly than in the departments, where applications first passed through departmental committees to the Prefect of the Seine, Justin de

¹⁸ Other examples include the following: Letter from Mme. Hédé Poittevin, widow of a painter Louis Le Poittevin, at 40 rue Beaujon, to the Minister of the Interior, 15 March 1910, Archives de Paris, D3 S4 27; Letter from the widow J.C. Anthoine Vachon of *Parfumerie du Harem* to the Mayor of the 8th, 28 April 1910, Archives de Paris, D3 S4 27; Letter from J. Daine of Ceinture Daine Corsets at 422 Rue Saint-Honore to the Mayor of the 8th, 29 April 1910, Archives de Paris, D3 S4 27.

¹⁹ Two examples of this pattern include the following: "Constat" or official report made at the request of Madame Cathiard, 11 February 1910, Archives de Paris, D3 S4 25; Letter from the Director of Finances to the Mayor of the 8th on behalf of Mme. Hédé, 9 April 1910, Archives de Paris, D3 S4 27.

²⁰ G. Lefèvre, 14 April 1910, Archives de Paris, D3 S4 27.

²¹ Archives de Paris, D3 S4 27. Louis Hosotte, *Histoire de la Troisième République: Deuxième Partie* (Paris: Librairie des Saints-Pères, 1912), 2.

Selves, before going to the Prime Minister's office. Thus, to expedite the process, the Chamber decided on 16 July 1910 that the departments should determine for themselves who should and should not receive reparations. This decision put greater onus on elected officials whose direct constituents depended on their approval for reparations. Departmental representatives hedged their positions by asking the mayors to approve reparation applications before sending them to the departmental committees. If an application was particularly difficult, departmental representatives could send them to the national government for review. Politicians, especially in public-facing positions like the Aid Committee, recognized the risk that an arbitrary distribution process posed to re-election. In reparation letters, flood victims referred to these promises to advocate their claims before multiple audiences. These letters are preserved in the national and departmental archives from which I have selected three salient examples.

J. Daine of Paris submitted an application to the Mayor on 13 February for 2,000 francs to rebuild her business: Ceinture Daine Corsets. The Aid Committee visited her shop but ruled that her situation excluded her from reparations since only the basement of the store had flooded. In her 29 April letter to the Prefect, Daine argued forcefully that the government had promised loans to flood victims such as herself, "a flood victim in every sense of the word." Daine then posited that the government had a responsibility for fulfilling their promises "to compensate for all of the considerable troubles that the flooding caused us," which the Department of Bridges and Highways had failed to prevent. A mark in blue notes that this letter received a response on 2 May, and this same blue underlined her concluding thought that, "I do not ask for charity . . . I ask for reparations that were promised to us." A blue mark on her letter indicates that Prime Minister Briand approved a sixth of her requested reparation, which was just enough to pay off loans that she had taken to repair her shop. Like Lefèvre, Daine elaborated on the details in her original application form and emphasized her role as a business owner and widow caring for two children: she closed her letter with, "My future and that of my children hang in the balance." It was her claim to disaster citizenship, however, that secured a response from the government that would have otherwise overlooked her petition as she did not have political rights.²²

Artisan P. Bertin of Rue Side cited the political promises made during the disaster to argue for the full requested amount in his initial application. Bertin knew this was possible since he had learned from his neighbors that others received their requests in full. But in response to his initial reparation application on 9 February for 7,522.11 francs to repair his atelier, the Mayor's Office only distributed 1,000 francs. Bertin wrote to the Minister of Finance in September 1910 to request the full amount of his reparation application and an additional 2,500 francs for ongoing damages to his business because of the flooding in his belowground atelier. He explained that his downstairs atelier remained unrepaired because of insufficient funds and that he and his family were still using wooden gangways from the flood to access their home. The latter detail would have been understood as a critique of the disaster response since the Department of Bridges and Highways had failed to repair either the road or the sidewalk. In this letter, Bertin emphasized that he had met all the protocols for requesting reparations: he had submitted his claims to the Minister of Finance Georges Cochery as early as 9 February and did not enter his business again

²² Letter from J. Daine to the Mayor of the Eighth, 29 April 1910, Archives de Paris, D3 S4 27.

until ten days after the flood, which the Third Republic required as a hygienic measure. He was informed that later legislation reduced initial promises to the public for aid relief, so in his second appeal to Cochery at the end of November 1910, Bertin insisted that the government fulfill its promises made during the disaster itself, such as when the Chamber of Deputies decided on 27 February 1910 to distribute reparations and loans impartially to small commercial businesses and artisans. In other words, Bertin reasoned that he was not a poor person in need of charity but an autonomous individual deserving of reparation for a disaster not of his own making. For Bertin, the flood was an ongoing disaster as he wrote that "if the flooding continues," he would have to move when his third child was born. He was frustrated that the Third Republic did not provide sufficient funds for repairing the damages and loss of business to small merchants and artisans. Furthermore, to Bertin, the distribution process appeared arbitrary with some receiving their requests in full while he did not receive enough to meet his business needs. Bertin clearly articulated his disaster citizenship, and while there were no marks in his file for reparations, he was convinced that such appeals would resonate with his representatives almost a year after the disaster.²³

Finally, C. Worms of 1 Rue de l'Eglise of Paris wrote several times to his representative M.J. Poiry of 16 Rue de Bergons about his application for 2,000 francs to reopen his business of twenty years. His first application to the Minister of Finance and the Prefect of the Seine only resulted in 600 francs, which just covered the rent for his business rather than making his shop habitable again. He explained that, like many other flood victims, he was told to go to the Minister of Finance on 30 August to meet a M. Lautier who was sympathetic to Worms' needs. The benevolent promise and positive assurance of aid, however, produced only a fraction of the requested amount. Turning to Poiry, Worms recited Poiry's promise "to help them get back on their feet and to help their families." Worms then cited the Chamber's 27 February 1910 decision that loans should go to small commercial businesses and artisans "to whom the disaster had been particularly fatal" such that the Third Republic would "furnish them with the indispensable means to reopen." Worms replicated this language in his request for 2,000 francs in aid to cover his "indispensable needs," elaborating that the first floor and all its contents flooded. His continued unemployment as a result of the disaster qualified him for the promised aid. Thus, Worms grounded his appeal to Poiry in disaster citizenship and asked Poiry to advocate for his application before the Minister of Finance.²⁴

Claims to disaster citizenship directly countered a pervasive tendency to award initial reparations based on differentiated citizenship. For instance, the Mayor of Roche-Guyon's deliberations over a handful of applicants mirrored larger patterns in reparations distribution after the flood as gendered norms delineated professional opportunities that thereby structured expectations of who the Third Republic should or should not support in business. In a small agricultural community in Val d'Oise, the Mayor of Roche-Guyon toiled over nineteen applications from six women and thirteen men, calculating and recalculating the amount of reparations distribution in light of increasing funds from the General Council of Val d'Oise and

²³ Letter from P. Bertin of Rue Side, November 1910, AP, D3 S4 24.

²⁴ Letter from C. Worms to M. Poiry, Archives de Paris, D3 S4 24.

the Prefect of the Seine-et-Oise.²⁵ The mayor honored the full amount to male day laborers like Auvroy, Perches, Pagny, Chivon, and Guillotin, mirroring the General Council's first distribution to day laborers for the loss of hourly work. The mayor then honored between fifty to one hundred percent of applications from male agriculturalists of wheat and sainfoin and male shop-owners in town, thereby supporting the mayor's largest body of voting constituents.²⁶ In contrast, only two out of the six female applicants received reparations from the mayor's office: Prévaut requested 400 francs to cover an itemized list of losses for her shop of period pieces and clothing; Dethan's farm manager Millard applied on her behalf for 175 francs to replace lost farm equipment and described why they, rather than Dethan herself, failed to recover the farm equipment of 100 stakes and 200 pole pickers.²⁷ While male agriculturalists only needed to itemize their damages for reparations, Millard narrated what happened when the floodwaters arrived unexpectedly. Even then, Dethan received less than a third of the requested amount while her male peers received between fifty and one hundred percent of their applications.²⁸ In contrast, Prévaut detailed her business losses with the price of individual chairs, buffet tables, placards, and linens in addition to the expense of hiring three men to disinfect the shop and the expense of lodging while unable to inhabit her home above the shop. Prévaut received only ten percent of her requested amount, but she is listed on the mayor's scrap sheet alongside Barthélemy's wine and spirits store and Louis Risset's oat mill, both of which were in town as well and received only a portion of their requested reparations.²⁹ In this sense, the Mayor favored agricultural work over other industries in his jurisdiction, and there were more female entrepreneurs in the town than in the field. The mayor denied only one male applicant's request to replace or relocate a livestock shelter washed away to another place on the Nicolle farm.³⁰ The Mayor of Roche-Guyon's initial distribution of aid to claimants demonstrates the dynamic of aid distribution apart from claims to disaster citizenship, resulting in gendered reparations rather than actualizing the ideals of Solidarity.

²⁵ Scrap Sheet, Mayor of Roche-Guyon, Archives Départementales de Val d'Oise, E-DEPOT 2 1I11; "Inondation de 1910: Secours aux sinistrés," 2-10 February 1910, Archives Départementales de Val d'Oise, E-DEPOT 2 1I11.

²⁶ Letter from Paul Guerbois; Letter from Louis Risset; Letter from Michel and Eugène Perier. Archives Départementales de Val d'Oise, E-DEPOT 2 1I11.

²⁷ Submission letter by Debitante Prévaut for 400 francs and received 40 francs; Submission letter by Millard on behalf of Mme. Dethan. Archives Départementales de Val d'Oise, E-DEPOT 2 1I11.

²⁸ Submission letter by Julien for 230 francs and received 180 francs; Submission letter by Jordan Jules for 242 francs and received 142 francs; Submission letter by Risset for 693 francs and received full amount; Submission letter by Paul Guerbois for 190 francs and received full amount; Submission letter by Michel and Eugène Perier for 50 francs and received full amount. Archives Départementales de Val d'Oise, E-DEPOT 2 1I11.

²⁹ Submission letter by Debitante Prévaut for 400 francs and received 40 francs; Submission letter by Louis Risset for 1050 francs and received 200 francs; Submission letter by Barthélemy for 80 francs and received 40 francs. Archives Départementales de Val d'Oise, E-DEPOT 2 1I11.

³⁰ Submission letter by Nicole for 50 francs, Archives Départementales de Val d'Oise, E-DEPOT 2 1I11.

Disaster citizenship, however, only expanded claims on the State so far. For this article, I draw on source material from national and departmental archives, but this archival selection obscures the real presence of foreign residents, immigrants, and colonial subjects who were also flood victims but who the Third Republic excluded from reparations both directly and indirectly. Directly, politicians only acknowledged applicants with cultural and/or political significance in their jurisdictions. Indirectly, the Aid Committees accepted applications in French, which barred access linguistically. Instead, other strategies for survival existed for foreign residents, immigrants, and colonial subjects. Some countries aided foreign nationals abroad through organizations like the Committee for the Relief of Flood Victims for British citizens living in France.³¹ Others formed communities of care and solidarity, yet state archives rarely document these communities.³² Glimpses emerge in letters penned by observers, but they require we read against the grain.³³ For instance, grocer F. Prudon of Paris complained that the flood dispersed his clientele after the flood while the Société Haggi continued to offer competitive prices for milk. According to Prudon, "this foreign business" risked becoming a monopoly and pushing out all (French) vendors in the area, so Prudon proposed taxing their society more heavily. While Prudon's business waned due to the displaced population, the Société Haggi continued to thrive. Considering that Prudon needed a thousand francs at minimum to replace the grocery's stock, the Société Haggi's continued operation illustrates that immigrant communities had their own networks of survival overlooked in the archives.³⁴ Thus, the application of disaster citizenship

³¹ Letter to the Mayor of the Eighth, 14 April 1910, Archives de Paris, D3 S4 27.

³² Megan Finn has identified a similar phenomenon in San Francisco's Chinese communities after the earthquake of 1906. Nimisha Barton has joined together disparate sources of information to present a quantitative picture of the immigrant community in Paris in the early twentieth century. Nimisha Barton, "Statistics on Foreigners in France and Paris: Appendix B," <https://www.drnimishabarton.com/appendix-b>; Megan Finn, *Documenting Aftermath: Information Infrastructures in the Wake of Disasters* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018); Kenneth Hewitt, "Disasters in 'Development' Contexts: Contradictions and Options for a Preventive Approach," *Jamba: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 5, no. 2 (July 2013); Raja Swamy, *Building Back Better in India: Development, NGOs, and Artisanal Fishers after the 2004 Tsunami* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama, 2021).

³³ When presented with what Johnson calls a "null archive," reading against the bias requires understanding first our own positionality vis-à-vis the sources and the bias within the sources themselves. Thus, we begin to (re)construct the stories of people that structures erase. This is essential to the historical profession. Rossana Barragán, "Working Silver for the World: Mining Labor and Popular Economy in Colonial Potosí," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 97, no. 2 (2017): 193-222; Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1953); Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020); Robin Mitchell, *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2020).

³⁴ Letter from shopkeeper F. Prudon to M. Dausset, 25 November 1910, Archives de Paris, D3 S4 24.

after the Great Flood had its limits: disaster citizenship opened a door for female but not immigrant entrepreneurs to access reparations due to government negligence.

In letters of appeal, women and men used a framework of disaster citizenship to claim civic rights to government reparations after the extraordinary flood that the Third Republic boasted would never happen under the watch of the Department of Bridges and Highways. This articulation of disaster citizenship was based on government neglect of public works and complied with political promises and legislation. Overall, claims to disaster citizenship most successfully overcame the pattern of gendered reparations to address the disaster's ongoing effects on land and bodies. Women and men defined a new citizenship in contrast to Solidarism to claim equal access to reparations rather than to charity. The Third Republic, however, did not create equitable avenues for immigrant, colonial, or foreign residents in France, which shows the limitations of disaster citizenship in 1910. In the era in which climate change and intensifying environmental disasters are threatening crumbling infrastructure, this case study of disaster citizenship in practice illuminates a way forward for residents to claim reparations from governing bodies.

Claire Mayo, PhD, is a historian of modern France with research and teaching interests in disaster studies, knowledge production, and human rights in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her work on the Great Flood of 1910 in the Seine Basin has been supported by the American Historical Association, the Linda Hall Library, and the Western Society for French History. She is an independent scholar who collaborates with historical societies on creating bridges in the profession for access to scholars working outside of academia. The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful and insightful feedback.