

**Review: Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future**  
By Mary Robinson

**Reviewed by Blair Vallie**  
*Portland, Oregon, USA*

Robinson, Mary. *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*. New York, New York, USA: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018; 162 pp. ISBN: 9781632869289, hardcover, US\$26.00.

Mary Robinson has spent the majority of her life speaking for communities through her experience as the United Nation High Commissioner for Human Rights and the former President of Ireland. In *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*, she examines the relationship between social justice and climate change, redefining the term as “climate justice.” Robinson writes that when she held her newborn grandchild for the first time she thought, “What will life be like for them in 2050?” An admitted late-comer to climate activism, her efforts to protect the planet began during the launch of her foundation, Realizing Rights, when Robinson traveled to the global South to assist in addressing social inequalities.

Highlighting this issue through a series of case studies, Robinson gives readers the perspective that global warming is experienced in drastically different ways across genders, demographics, and global locations. To shed light on the people who are most impacted, Robinson focuses on women’s first-hand accounts of suffering and their willingness to take action to address climate injustice. Each chapter tells a different story showing the effectiveness of local activism.

Sharon Hanshaw, a salon owner in East Biloxi, Mississippi, had to pick herself up after Hurricane Katrina devastated her community. Katrina’s aftermath had Hanshaw and her children rummaging through their possessions and memories. Hanshaw attempted to superglue a warped mahogany table, trying her best to pick up and start over, even if her possessions were now destroyed. The mahogany table is a metaphor for the community of East Biloxi trying to reestablish itself with limited resources and finances. Hanshaw was appalled by the federal government’s lack of assistance to low-income

survivors during the rebuilding of their community after the hurricane. Hanshaw took matters into her own hands by co-founding Coastal Women for Change, assisting in reestablishing residents by providing resources for those affected.

In the following chapters, Robinson provides concrete examples of global climate justice. One chapter looks at an Arctic indigenous community losing their cultural identity by forced migration due to climate-change induced natural disasters while another chapter focuses on communities in Chad losing their traditional knowledge of weather patterns due to famine and drought. Although these stories are heart-wrenching, they all also include positive elements due to local achievements through activism. For example, a small farmer in Uganda, Constance Okollet, engaged in direct action to push the government to pass a law to reduce CO2 emissions by requiring the planting of five trees for each tree logged.

The book ends on a note to inspire readers to consider what climate justice means for them locally by discussing the 2015 Paris Agreement. Robinson is frustrated by the Trump administration's withdrawal of the Paris Agreement, yet shows optimism when describing California's commitment to lower emissions regardless of Federal decisions.

This book is well-suited for readers who are looking for qualitative motivation through real, direct activism. There is a feeling of hope and that the "ordinary" local voice does matter and can impact the entire planet. This would be an excellent book for undergraduate courses in environmental studies, gender studies, environmental sociology, and other social science disciplines. Although the majority of the book is centered on women's narratives, there is mention of both genders making strides towards climate justice. Robinson does a marvelous job linking countries in the Global South to the poorest areas of the United States, giving readers a strong appreciation for how local struggles contribute to global climate justice.

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