

Relief, Renewal, Resilience

Reflections on Hurricane María and her Aftermath

A Raíces Cultural Center Production

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An aerial photograph showing the aftermath of Hurricane María in Puerto Rico. Several buildings are visible, some with significant damage. One building has the word "HELP" painted on its roof. A dark SUV is parked near one of the buildings. The surrounding area is overgrown with vegetation and debris.

Tagline

Fighting for a sustainable, renewable, resilient and just future for Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane María.

Logline

Despite the devastating effects of Hurricane María, there is a movement to fight for a change for the island. “Relief, Renewal, Resilience” highlights some of the efforts underway for a sustainable, renewable, resilient and just recovery for the island of Puerto Rico.

A photograph of a woman sitting on a large log in a lush, green, overgrown area. She is wearing a straw hat, a dark tank top, and patterned pants. She is holding a Puerto Rican flag high above her head with both hands. The background is filled with dense vegetation and trees.

About the Film

Since Hurricane María devastated the island of Puerto Rico over one year ago, organizations, individuals and community groups across the island have been working for a sustainable, renewable and just recovery. From food sovereignty to solar power to sustainable building methods, people across Puerto Rico are answering a call to change for the better, to work together to build for resilience and autonomy, and to protect our Mother Earth. For many, Hurricane María was a wake up call for the island. “Relief, Renewal, Resilience: Reflections on Hurricane María and her Aftermath” tells just some of the countless stories from Puerto Ricans working towards a cleaner, greener and more just future for the island of Puerto Rico.



Directors' Note

By the time Hurricane María made landfall in Puerto Rico, people who were watching from the diaspora were already expecting the worst. In the days that followed, as the reports of the magnitude of the devastation and destruction came out, many in our community in Central NJ had already sprung into action to coordinate relief and recovery efforts. As our organization's founding mission was the preservation of Caribbean cultures, we knew we would be involved in some way.

Almost immediately after the storm hit Puerto Rico, our organization's performance ensemble was asked to play at a benefit concert. The night of the concert, we watched as hundreds of community members came out in support and donated funds and supplies. To our dismay, as we scanned the pile of relief supplies, we saw box after box filled with disposable items. Plastic water bottles, plastic utensils, paper and plastic plates, batteries, flashlights. So many of these relief supplies that seemed to necessary at the time, and that were donated with good intentions, would create a different kind of crisis after they were used, an environmental crisis, on an island which has almost no recycling capacity, and which at the time, for weeks to months after the storm, had no form of waste collection whatsoever.

We were inspired to start an initiative of our own that would address relief and support for relief initiatives in Puerto Rico that focused on sustainability, renewability, resiliency, and a just recovery. We began a supply drive focused water filters, solar lamps, and seeds for farmers and gardeners. We raised funds to support sustainability and ecological initiatives, like supporting solar projects for mountain communities cut off from the grid, repairs on greenhouses and roofs for organic farmers and ecological education centers, installing rainwater harvesting and water filtration systems. Along the way we learned of so many initiatives, groups and individuals working for a green and just recovery for the island, caring for their communities as well as their environment and eco-systems, and fostering a more resilient and sustainable future for the island of Puerto Rico.

With "Relief, Renewal, Resilience: Reflections on Hurricane María and her Aftermath", we wanted to share the stories of those we met along the way, those who are living and working on the island to institute a different way of life in their homes and communities and as a model for the world.

Nicole Wines & Francisco G. Gómez