

# Community-engaged Theatremaking & Musicking for Climate Resilience: two projects out of North Florida

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Arts-based activities such as community-based songwriting & musicking (CBSM) and community-engaged theatre-making can ameliorate compounding crises of loneliness and hopelessness while aiding in our efforts to develop shared understandings of the world and our place(s) in it. This proposal highlights two different community-based arts projects and research efforts, one based in Gainesville, FL and the other in Puerto Rico.

Project One: The State of Florida is a powerful symbol of climate change in the USA, having come to represent both consequence and cause of climate change. Simulated representations of inundated coastlines along the perimeter of the state are frequently used to visualize nearterm consequences of sea level rise. At the same time, some prominent Florida politicians have, over the last decade, taken actions such as prohibiting the use of the phrase “climate change” in state-funded research proposals and openly expressed doubt about the legitimacy of climate change. The seemingly intractable climate contradictions Florida has come to represent can be isolating and encourage an ever-more cynical approach to civic engagement, climate and otherwise.

Part One of this presentation, highlights individual and social health benefits of making and experiencing music together by discussing a facilitated CBSM event that took place in March 2023 in Gainesville, FL. The event resulted in an artistic transformation of participants’ reflections on living through extreme weather events in Gainesville, as well as a public communication object that centers narratives of community cohesion, resilience, and hope.

Project Two: The artists of the San Juan Puerto Rico-based Y no había luz theatre collective (YNHL) reflect and transform expectations of trauma through performances of care. Simultaneously functioning as survivors, witnesses, and responders, artists who respond to disaster occupy the same geographic space as those whose stories they embody. For YNHL, artmaking in the face of disaster is not only about survival but celebration, and a transformation of the very forces that attempt to stamp out or devalue joy. Part Two of this presentation will focus on YNHL’s including collaborations with students in the school of Theatre and Dance at the University of Florida.