



Puerto Rico can and will be self-reliant to build its future

BACKGROUND

When hurricanes Irma and María struck Puerto Rico in 2017, and the electric grid collapsed, causing the longest power outage in US history, Casa Pueblo, in the rural community of Adjuntas, kept the lights on. While most of the island stayed dark for nearly a year, Casa Pueblo was able to serve as a power oasis, giving immediate and long-term assistance. Lack of electricity was a leading factor in the thousands of deaths that occurred after the hurricanes on the island, as it curtailed medical treatment at hospitals and at homes, where life-saving medicines like insulin could not be kept viable.

Since the destructive hurricanes, many have spoken about the need to rebuild a new power grid, one that can withstand future storms. Casa Pueblo's example, and others around the island, show that communities can be most resilient if they have access to off-the-grid local energy production.

While Puerto Rico's government stumbles in the dark with no clear path to a future energy plan, Casa Pueblo and many others on the island advocate for public policy to establish community-based solar power projects that will allow rural communities, which exist throughout the island, to more easily prepare for and recover from natural disasters.

Casa Pueblo's work is just one instance of the many other community-led initiatives taking place in Puerto Rico. These examples of collective work and decision-making to allocate resources underscores the need to promote policies that encourage more local autonomy, self-sufficiency and socially-responsible entrepreneurship.

WHAT CONGRESS CAN DO FOR PUERTO RICO

Congress has ultimate power of oversight and decision making for all matters related to Puerto Rico's economy and political status, as affirmed by the Supreme Court in 2017.

We ask Congress, under its powers and responsibilities on Puerto Rico, to:

- INCLUDE the island in the Green New Deal proposed legislation.
- APPLY its oversight power to look into the questionable actions of the Fiscal Oversight Management Board (FOMB) work under the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) of 2016.
- CONVENE public hearings in Puerto Rico on the legality of portions of the island's debt and the short & long-term socio-economic consequences of the austerity measures dictated by the FOMB.
- ESTABLISH a 9/11-style commission to investigate and bring accountability to the federal government's response to hurricane Maria (H.R. 229).

In the coming months, *Boricuas Unidos en la Diáspora* will continue its Puerto Rico engagement initiative with members of Congress, and its coalition work with Puerto Ricans everywhere to build support for a better, self-sufficient and empowered Puerto Rico.

Boricuas Unidos en la Diáspora is a network of Puerto Rican professionals ready to activate other Boricuas in the Diaspora to directly fund community-led organizations in Puerto Rico. Since 2017, its members have worked together towards: building bridges between Puerto Rican community leaders and federal lawmakers, educating for structural change and long-term economic development, and educating and activating the Diaspora through an anticolonial and social justice lens.