

Climate Migration Stories

1. Rosamari's Story

"Coming here was a big relief," says Rosamari Palerm. Rosamari was the first student from Puerto Rico to arrive at St. Thomas University, a private Catholic school in Miami Gardens, Florida, after Hurricane Maria struck. The electricity, clean water and cell service available on campus — not to mention college classes — stand in stark contrast to conditions at home.

Much of Puerto Rico is still without power. Water contamination is widespread. The scope of the disaster there is still not completely understood. When the winds died down, sewage water flooded the streets outside her family's apartment, the electric grid was down, and life as Palerm knew it was on hold. "I worked at a mall and the mall is completely destroyed, so I couldn't work," Palerm says. Classes were suspended at Sacred Heart University where Palerm was a senior biology major.

So when Palerm heard through family on the mainland that St. Thomas University was offering free room and board and tuition discounts to students displaced by the hurricane, she jumped at the chance to transfer. "I literally left with nothing. I just had my clothes," Palerm says. At the airport it hit her: "I'm probably not going to come back for a while." But Palerm's family ties hold her tightly, and she says she wants to go back to Puerto Rico eventually. "I love my little island. I want to be a part of helping it get better."

(Adapted from a story by PRI's [The World, 10/19/17](#))

Questions:

- What might Rosamari Palerm have been feeling while in Puerto Rico after the storm?
- What do you think she is feeling now that she's in Florida?
- What were the reasons for her to leave Puerto Rico?
- What do you think lies ahead for Rosamari?

2. Ana María's Story

Ana María Caraballo, 34, a Middle Island, NY, resident who is a morning drive-time personality for the Spanish-language station La Nueva Fiesta, feared for her family back in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. "I was dying of worry," she said.

A relative and a friend drove hours along damaged roads from the Puerto Rican capital San Juan to check on Ana Maria's dad. Days after the storm, they found Miguel Caraballo Pietri, a heart attack and stroke survivor, alone and disoriented in a dark house. A light pole had fallen on the roof and water had poured inside.

On Sept. 29, Ana Maria's father was among scores of storm refugees arriving at New York City's Kennedy Airport, in what could be the start a larger migratory post-storm wave. He came to live with her.

"Those of us who were at the airport waiting for relatives recognized each other from looking at our eyes. We went from a lot of worry and sadness to great relief," Ana María Caraballo said. "And people were coming through the gates and hugging each other and we all clapped."

(Adapted from a story in [Newsday, 10/8/17](#))

Questions:

- What might Ana Maria Carabello have been feeling while her father was in still Puerto Rico?
- What might her father have been feeling before coming to New York?
- What do you think Ana Maria is feeling now that her father is in New York?
- What do you think her father might be feeling?
- What were the reasons for him to leave Puerto Rico?
- What do you think lies ahead for Ana Maria and her father?

3. Lydia's Story

After the hurricane, Lydia Acevedo boarded a flight from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to Homestead, Florida, with her 14-year-old daughter, 22-year-old daughter, her son-in-law, 1-year-old grandson and her 72-year-old mother.

"Having to separate is not easy, but we have to think positive. We have to think that this will pass soon and we will be able to reunite," says Lydia with tears in her eyes. Lydia says she had to take the role of head of household when the hurricane hit. Her husband was helping everyone else in Puerto Rico and she had to take the lead in looking for food and water for her family.

Lydia faced a mixture of traumas, including her fear for the well-being of her 1-year-old grandson, Mateo, who suffers from asthma. He was running out of formula, and then there was the heat and humidity and the insects that come with it. Mosquito bites still cover part of Mateo's cheeks and arms.

Lydia has family in Illinois and for now plans to stay in a hotel. But like everyone else aboard she vows to return to Puerto Rico to reunite with the piece of their hearts left behind."

(Adapted from a report on [CNN](#), 9/27/17)

Questions

- What might Lydia Acevedo have been feeling while she was still in Puerto Rico after the storm?
- What do you think Lydia is feeling now that she's on her way to Florida? What do you think her husband might be feeling?
- What were the reasons for her to leave Puerto Rico?
- What do you think lies ahead for Lydia and her family?

4. Jennifer's Story

Jennifer Hernandez already has brought her sister, her sister's husband, their 2-year-old daughter and her 68-year-old grandmother to come live with her and her husband in their one-bedroom apartment in Long Island, NY.

Jennifer and her husband Miguel gave up their bed for her grandmother to use. She and everyone else fit, however they can, in their living room. "I have mattresses all over the place, leaning on the walls," said Hernández, 30, a warehouse supervisor at a thrift store.

Jennifer wants to bring her mom and two sisters to Long Island, she said, "even if I have to live paycheck to paycheck" to do so. She wouldn't feel comfortable here knowing her niece didn't have milk to drink in Puerto Rico, and she worries about others still stranded in isolated areas.

Jennifer's sister, Niulska, said she was starting to become desperate in Ponce, Puerto Rico. "All we had left were the walls, without a roof," Niulska said. "There was no electricity, no water and mosquitoes were everywhere. . . . It was raining inside the house."

(Adapted from a story in [Newsday](#), 10/8/17)

Questions

- What do you think Jennifer Hernandez was feeling about her family in Puerto Rico after the storm?
- What do you think her sister Niulska was feeling while in Puerto Rico after the storm?
- What do you think Jennifer is feeling now that her sister, her sister's husband, their 2-year-old daughter, and her 68-year-old grandmother are with her in Long Island?
- What do you think her sister Niulska Hernandez is feeling?
- What were the reasons for Niulska and her family to leave Puerto Rico?
- What do you think lies ahead for Jennifer and her family?

5. Vanessa's Story

Vanessa Carbia is aboard a plane taking her and her three children, ages 11 to 19, from Puerto Rico to Florida. In the back cargo section of the plane are Vanessa's two Yorkies, Pandylucas and Benjamin. Vanessa wouldn't leave her home without them.

Vanessa says that back in Puerto Rico, she only had food for four days and was left rationing it, never thinking she would have to evacuate on a flight with other families. With a heart heavy from the devastation and the worry that her children would be traumatized, Vanessa tried to manage her children's fears and worries while their father was working. Food and water shortages, she says, were difficult to reckon with.

"When you see children waiting in line for food and water," Vanessa says and pauses. "That was the most impactful." Vanessa and her children plan to stay in a hotel for now, though she has family in Arizona. She plans to go back to Puerto Rico. "My whole life is there," says Carbia.

(Adapted from a report on [CNN](#), 9/27/17)

Questions

- What might Vanessa Carbia have been feeling while still in Puerto Rico after the storm?
- What do you think Vanessa is feeling now that she's on her way to the mainland?
- What were the reasons for her to leave Puerto Rico?
- What do you think lies ahead for Vanessa and her family?

6. George's Story

"Only time will tell how many will return or stay, said George Siberón, 70, a Baldwin, NY, resident and community activist.

George brought his mother, Antonia, 89, and his stepdad, Julio, 88, from Hatillo on Puerto Rico's northern coast to live in Brooklyn. His daughter is considering moving with her husband and two kids from Bayamón, a municipality in the northern coastal valley, to Orlando, he said.

"There was an exodus from Puerto Rico to begin with" because of the struggling economy, Siberón said. "When you don't have electricity and you don't have work and you don't have a job that's necessarily waiting, and the infrastructure is completely devastated, there's a very strong sense that it's going to take years to get some normalcy."

(Adapted from a story in [Newsday](#), 10/8/17)

Questions

- What might George Siberón have been feeling while his mother and stepfather were still in Puerto Rico?
- What do you think George is feeling now that his parents are in New York? What do you think his parents might be feeling?
- What were the reasons for her to leave Puerto Rico?
- What do you think lies ahead for George and his parents