

Michelle Irizarry

Speech at “Green for All” press conference and rally

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My name is Michelle Irizarry from Orlando, Florida. I am physically here today but my heart and soul are in my native Puerto Rico and the humanitarian crisis that is unfolding there after Hurricane Maria hit the island. I am a Water Resources Engineer, artist, environmental activist and most importantly a mom to two girls.

As a Water Resources Engineer my job is to assess the vulnerability of Florida’s water resource system to climate change and sea level rise. As 99% of scientists agree, climate change is real and is driven by human activities. Its consequences should not be ignored. From more frequent droughts to more intense and wetter hurricanes.

Recent hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria have given us a glimpse into how climate change will influence future storms. Many experts agree that FEMA 100-year flood maps, which are based on historical data, are no longer relevant. Areas outside historical floodplains are becoming inundated during storms resulting in potential contamination of our water supply from toxic waste and Superfund sites.

Sea level rise already threatens coastal areas of South Florida. Saltwater intrusion and inundation of water supply facilities also threaten our water supply.

Recent storm events give us a glimpse into a how disruptive *a single* event can be under a future climate. Mass migrations resulting from these potentially catastrophic events can cause socioeconomic and political disruption throughout the world.

The effects of climate change on the health of our oceans are also not completely known and more research is needed. The oceans are the biggest producers of oxygen and a sink for CO₂ and it has been said that *if the oceans die, we die*.

This is not the future I want for my children. As moms we fight to have the birth we want, to feed them right, to keep them alive and healthy. None of that is possible if the air that they breathe and the water that they drink are polluted and if our oceans are dying. It is time for us mom to bridge the political divides, join forces and fight for our children’s futures. Cuts to the EPA budget would endanger our children’s lives. To this we firmly say: *“Not on our watch!”*